

## Reflection from Abdul-Jabbar's Article

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The most thought-provoking part of Abdul-Jabbar's article for me is that some African Americans treat sports as their primary path out of poverty and thus devote most of their energy to training for sports (Abdul-Jabbar, 2018). Even though there is no evidence that Black athletes play better than white ones, it is obvious that athletes in some sports are predominately Black (Karen, 2012). Even so, only a few Black athletes actually find success in sports, even after years of dedication and hard training.

I was curious about why playing sports is the major goal for some Black Americans, so I did some research on the current situation facing Black individuals in the U.S. I was shocked to learn that there is still substantial inequality and separation between the white and black communities. A study by Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) shows that the wealthiest 10% of school districts in the U.S. (which are, incidentally, located primarily white neighborhoods), have educational funds almost ten times that of the poorest 10% of school districts (which are found mostly in Black communities) (Nickens & Smedley, 2001). Those Black students who—despite increased likeliness of an inferior educational environment— manage to gain entrance to and graduate from college, then face intense systemic racism in the workplace, with only 42% of Black graduates finding work compared to 72% of white graduates (Nickens & Smedley, 2001). The reality of being treated differently in school and in the workplace has formed a vicious spiral for African Americans, preventing them from getting out of poverty via academic advancement. Stereotyping and systemic racism are among the fundamental reasons Black Americans seem to be drawn toward a different path to success, one that appears to be more “equal” than the

academic environment.

In a way, this struggle reminds me of some of the difficulties of being Chinese. Most Chinese parents are very concerned about their child's academic achievements. Careers which are most valued in Chinese culture—civil servants, doctors, teachers, and lawyers—all demand rigorous academic and professional training. Although only a few people would say they genuinely have passion for these jobs; because Chinese culture promotes respect for parents, most Chinese students study hard to pursue prestigious career paths that require stellar academic performance. As a result, Chinese students are often regarded as “nerds” in Western culture.

More than wanting children to be successful, there is another reason behind Chinese parents' preoccupation with their child having a “good” career. Overpopulation is big problem in China that started after World War II when Chinese families were encouraged to have as many children as possible to build the army and grow the country's workforce (Verrill, 2016). Over the decades, overpopulation has led to severe competition in the Chinese job market due to limited openings and an abundance of highly trained applicants (Gallup, 2016). As a result, jobs that do not require rigorous academic qualifications are usually low-paying, while high-paying jobs are typically offered only to those with advanced academic degrees. That is one of the primary reasons why Chinese students value grades more than other students.

I learned from Abdul-Jabbar's article that stereotypes can be formed for various reasons. To eliminate the influence of stereotypes, it is important to understand some of the historical reasons behind them and work to see people as people, not just as part of a specific group or culture.

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