

Reflection #3

“Low income, underrepresented ethnic minorities – and first generation students often come from schools with fewer academic resources – have less academic preparation and may have lower expectations” (p. 131). The most interesting concept I’ve found in this weeks readings ties directly into the question the readings brought up for me as well, if there is already knowledge that lower income and ethnic minorities are not as prepared for higher education as they should be, why is more not being done to alleviate the problem at the secondary school level?

The readings for this week focused on access to higher education as it relates to race/ethnicity, students that come from homes with lower socioeconomic statuses, non-traditional students, and so forth. Affirmative Action’s original intention was to ‘level the playing field’ for academically and/or financially disadvantaged high school graduates by awarding extra points during consideration for admission to those individuals who identified with a minority group either racial/ethnic minority, lower-S.E.S. families, etc. There should have been a glaring problem with that idea from the forefront! If there was already a concern that students of certain demographics were not as qualified ‘because of their background’ how did researchers and admission’s committees anticipate they’d fare among highly-prepared, top-notch, competitive students? That alone puts those students for whom they wanted to ‘assist’, at an even greater disadvantage then they’d begun with; the educational system especially at a larger institution can be highly unwelcoming to students who are not adequately prepared for the rigors and the independency the curriculum requires.

It is said that “Poverty is the biggest barrier to college attendance” (p. 129), and once in college (whether one was admitted as a result of efforts to diversify the student body or genuinely of their own accord) these students need additional resources to ensure their success, especially to compete among those who are more privileged and more prepared. Now that there are student organizations specifically designed to support minority students, contribute to their retention, adjustment and attachment to the institution made available on campuses, they are being met with apprehension. As stated in chapter 18, “some observers have expressed serious concerns about the strain and tension related to the proliferation of student organizations that are differentiated by racial and ethnic lines” (p. 526). What is expected of individuals in these oppressed groups? How are they expected to succeed?

“Unless higher education institutions work with low-wealth schools and communities to advocate for increased resources and to improve their students’ college readiness, U.S. society will lose the talents of a growing segment of the population” (p. 132). This statement sums up my original question, if there is already knowledge that lower income and ethnic minorities are not as prepared for higher education as they should be, why is more not being done to alleviate the problem? Now, if the concern is actually a lack of

prepared and qualified students entering higher education institutions, instead of allocating more funding to those institutions, why not allocate educational funding to high schools and other preparatory programs? “Young adults from families in the bottom income bracket are eight times less likely than others in their age group to complete a bachelor’s degree. Financial burden, lower levels of academic preparation, and lower expectations – all of which correlate with poverty and parental education – contribute to these negative outcomes” (p. 130).

When attempting to move from an elite-only access to a mass access in higher education by incorporating criteria that examine the student’s history and not simply grades and test scores, the efforts are met with criticism and reverse-discrimination law suits. In attempting to foster positive support networks for those individuals who identify as members of an oppressed group, critics are concerned with the effects it has on the campus. Again, what are these group members supposed to do? And if the income disparity is really what is creating the widening gap in success rates and preparedness for higher education, why isn’t more funding allocated to the educational system prior to entering college?