

Ethnicity-Related Achievement Gaps

A Longitudinal Study From Hawaii

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The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 has helped to focus attention on ethnicity-related inequity in public education. However, its definition of ethnicity-related disadvantage is problematic in Hawaii for two main reasons. First, the historically disadvantaged Native Hawaiians are included in the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) category. Second, NCLB relies on a simplistic difference in the proportion of proficient students between a minority group and the White peers, ignoring confounding factors such as social-economic inequities and academic foundation. Those concerns call for a more careful and more meaningful reconceptualization of ethnicity-related disadvantage for Hawaii.

Recommendations: In light of the common criticism of the fairness or usefulness of the NCLB accountability actions, we provide three considerations:

- Measure ethnicity-related disadvantages separately for the major subgroups within the AAPI category.
- Estimate ethnicity-related disadvantages at the elementary, middle, and high school grade intervals separately so that administrators, teachers, and staff can focus on stage-specific targets.
- Include academic readiness in any model as a causal factor to allow the ethnic disadvantage estimates to be adjusted in consideration of academic readiness.