

# Examining the Impact of Race/Ethnicity and Gender on Education Attainment among Foster Youth: Which Matters More?

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## ABSTRACT

- The rates of intragenerational discrepancies when comparing race/ethnicity and gender between foster youths/former foster youths' educational achievement is staggering and concerning.
- The current study is a secondary data analysis of data collected by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN).
- A series of Chi-Square test was conducted to examine if race/ethnicity and gender had a significant impact among educational attainment among foster youth.
- The study examined the educational attainment among foster youth ( $N=13,750$ ) who self-identified as Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic-Black, Non-Hispanic Other, and Hispanic.
- Finding of the present study will serve to inform the social welfare practice and the education system which serve the unique and everchanging needs of foster youth on how to implement more effective interventions to support foster youth post-secondary achievement.

## INTRODUCTION

### Significance of Study

- Children who had previous or current involvement with the child welfare system continue to be at a disadvantage when compared to their non-foster youth peers in respect to educational attainment.
- It stands to reason that as the number of children entering the child welfare system continues to rise, the gap in educational achievement within foster youth could also increase.

### Purpose

- Examine if race/ethnicity and gender had a significant impact on the youths' educational attainment to advance the understanding of low educational attainment among current or former foster youth.

### Research Question

- Does race/ethnicity and gender have a significant impact on post-secondary achievement of foster youth.

### Hypothesis

- It is hypothesized that educational attainment will differ among diverse race/ethnic groups.
- It is projected that Black or African American foster youth will show lower education attainment compared to other race/ethnic groups.
- It is hypothesized that foster youth males will show lower education attainment compared to the female foster youths'.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- Previous research have established that foster youth is a population that is at a higher risk of low educational achievement due to the underachievement of education rates, specifically post-secondary education. Previous research also suggests gender disparities in higher education among male and female students exist.
- The California Department of Education (CDE) reported that lowest high school graduation rates where from foster youth. In 2018, foster youth students accounted for the highest dropout rates at 28.4% which was a slight decrease from 28.8% in 2017.
- The results of the research that does exist suggests that low education attainment among foster youth is associated with: Housing instability, financial instability, and lack of access to higher education.
- However, there is gap in the existing research regarding intragenerational discrepancies within the foster youth population and if race/ethnicity and gender has a significant impact on foster youth post-secondary achievement

## METHODS

### Research Design

- The current study is a secondary data analysis of data collected by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN).
- The purpose of the larger study, NDACAN was to examine certain well-being, financial, and educational outcomes as foster youth get older.
- The NDACAN consisted of three waves, starting with the 2011 federal fiscal year, and every three years thereafter, all youth who reach their 17th birthday.
- The present study will focus on a cross-sectional data collected from Wave 2 (age 19;  $N=13,750$ ). The data will be specialized to include Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, and Hispanic foster youth.
- Under NYTD rules, states have the discretion to choose the methods used to administer the Outcomes Survey to youth (e.g., in person, online, or over the phone) provided that the survey is administered to the person directly. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary.

### Sample

- Sampling consisted of all youth in foster care "at any point during the 45-day period beginning on their 17th birthday.
- The total sample size was 13,750 participants all of who were all 19-years old.
- The sample consisted of 6,487 foster youth who were Non-Hispanic White, 4,512 who were Non-Hispanic Black, 577 who were Non-Hispanic Other, and 2,172 who were Hispanic.
- The sample study also consisted of 6,984 foster youth who male and 6,766 who were female.

### Measures

#### Independent Variable:

- The independent variables of interest are race/ethnicity and gender:
- *Race/Ethnicity:* Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic-Black, Non-Hispanic Other, and Hispanic.
- *Gender:* Male or Female.

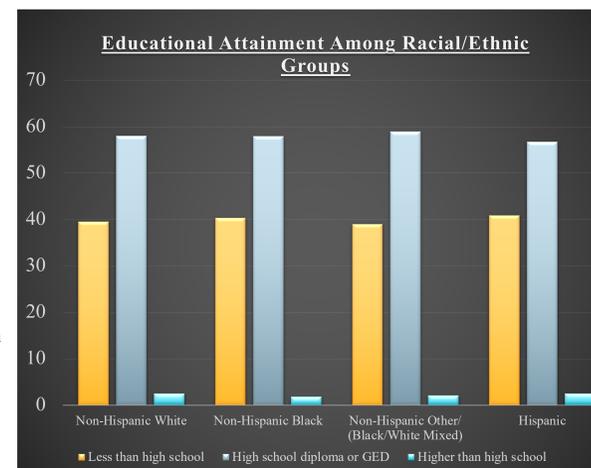
#### Dependent Variables:

- The dependent variables of interest pertaining to foster youth were the rates which included the results for education attainment.
- *Education Attainment:* Less than high school, High school graduation or GED, or Higher than high school

## RESULTS

### Racial/Ethnic & Education Attainment

- A Pearson chi-square was calculated to determine the significance of the relationship between gender and education attainment.
- Based on the results of the chi-square test, there was no significant relationship between race/ethnicity and educational attainment ( $\chi^2(6) = 27.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).



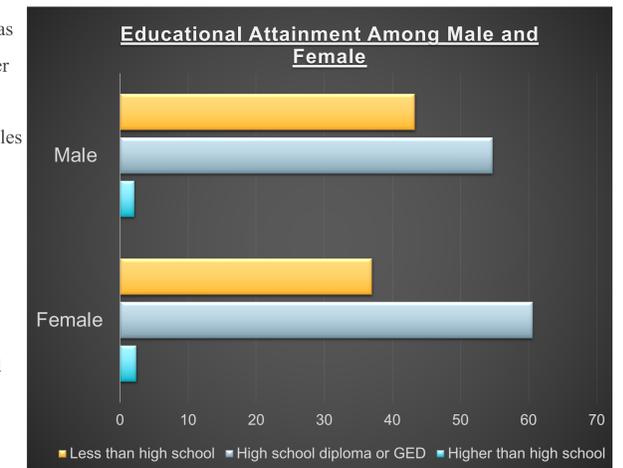
## RESULTS CONT.

### Racial/Ethnic & Education Attainment

- The Educational Attainment Among Racial/Ethnic Groups graph results show how 39.5% of Non-Hispanic White foster youths' has less than high school completion, Non-Hispanic Blacks had about the same rate education at 40.3%. Non-Hispanic others (Black/White mixed racial) had almost similar rates at 39% and Hispanics had about the same rate as the other ethnicities/races for completing less than high school at a 40.9%.
- Similar, all the participating racial/ethnicities had similar scores for High school completion or GED at an average rate of 58%.
- Furthermore, all the participating racial/ethnicities had similar low scores for higher than high school completion at an average rate of 2%.

### Gender & Education Attainment

- A Pearson Chi-Square test was calculated to examine whether frequencies of education attainment differ between males and females.
- A significant relationship was found between sex and educational attainment ( $\chi^2(2) = 27.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while a Cramer's V statistic suggested a weak but significant relationship (.06).



- The graph presents how male foster youth were more likely to have less than a high school diploma at 43.3% compared to the female foster youth at 37.0%. Similar, male foster youth were less likely to complete high school or obtain a GED at 54.7% compared to the 60.6% of female foster youth who completed high school or a GED. Furthermore, although small, there was still a difference in male foster youth who were less likely to obtain an education higher than high school at 2.1% compared to the 2.4% female foster youth.

## DISCUSSION

- Inferential statistics revealed both significant and insignificant results. Inconsistent with the current study's hypothesis, the study found that there was no significant association between the foster youth's race/ethnic background and their educational attainment.
- Conversely, this study found statistically significant associations between the foster youth's gender and their educational attainment. Consistent with the current study's hypothesis male foster youths' were more likely than females to have a lower academic achievement.

### Limitations & Strengths

- The current study was only able to use four categories for racial/ethnic background as the independent variable which limits the present study's generalizability. Additionally, Self-reporting may limit the accuracy of the data provided given that the information provided may or may not have been an accurate description.
- The present study's strengths include a large sample size to understand the relationship between the variables and education attainment. The study also consisted of a well-controlled age group as it only collected data of 19-year old youth youths'/former foster youths'. Additionally, the large sample of multi-race/ethnic sample was another great strength which helped diversified the study

### Implications & Future Research

- The present research findings illustrate the consistently documented negative effects that being part of the child welfare system has on educational attainment. Further research is needed on the specifics that warrant the discrepancies in educational attainment between foster youth males and females.
- The findings of the present study highlight the importance of addressing the intragenerational inequalities within the foster youth population concerning race/ethnicity and gender. Further, the findings point to a need to address the lower education achievement rates among male foster youth.