Asian Americans’ success at high school, aiming for top-tier colleges, is causing white Americans to send their children to lower-achieving, less competitive, whiter schools.

Richard Keiser  Original text in English

This development is rich with irony. During the second half of the 20th century, whites called Asian Americans the model minority in comparison with African Americans and Latinx. This did not challenge the superordinate status and meaning of whiteness; rather, it reinforced white supremacy, and blamed the victims of structural discrimination by providing support for spurious claims of equality. This is a model of educational hard work because of strong family values. But now that they are displacing upper-middle-class white children and threatening the educational hierarchy, a new narrative devalues achievement: their children aren’t focused on sports, dance, after-school socialising and other indicators of social normality. The students are fleeing for being too driven, a term loaded with amateur psychological assessments.

Beyond irony, this unmasksthe tactics deployed to maintain white supremacy in the social and economic hierarchy. These are not new tactics or discourses: they are the like the treatment of Jews by the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) establishment. Jerome Karabel has documented how the admission of Jewish students through new definitions of normalcy, and the exclusion of others, shifted from meritocratic competition when first- and second-generation Jews became the top achievers in top US high schools as the culmination of the American dream, white parents discredited these accomplishments as the product of an unhealthy, stress-inducing, excessively narrow focus on education.

From celebrating the superior academic achievements of Asian American students in top US high schools as the culmination of the American dream, white parents have switched their children from excellent high schools to ensure that their children are in that prestigious segment. There is no doubt that whites, particularly male, still dominate the heights of American capital; at Google, whites still take 66% of leadership roles. But Asian American women overtook white women among new hires at Google in 2019, more Asian American men than white men were hired, for the first time. In 2020, the path to success is no longer the patriarchy of whites; the educational hierarchy is being overturned.

White parents are also working to change the definition of excellence to include balance between high grades and test scores, and a newer concern with diversity of interests, well-roundedness, and less stressed, normal students.

What does normal mean?

What does normal and well-rounded actually mean? We need first to discover what is abnormal. Historically, male and white has been inherent in defining what is normal. Non-white has often been written off as deviant or margin. When women fought for suffrage and political equality, they were called irrational and excessively emotional: women in American politics continue to be portrayed by men as psychologically unfit. Similarly, the strategies for racial equality as well as the political rights of immigrants have had to refute claims of mental disability (low IQ and psychological abnormality (absence of temperament for democracy).

Far from celebrating the superior academic achievements of Asian American students in top US high schools as the culmination of the American dream, white parents have switched their children from excellent high schools to ensure that their children are in that prestigious segment. There is no doubt that whites, particularly male, still dominate the heights of American capital; at Google, whites still take 66% of leadership roles. But Asian American women overtook white women among new hires at Google in 2019, more Asian American men than white men were hired, for the first time. In 2020, the path to success is no longer the patriarchy of whites; the educational hierarchy is being overturned.

White parents are also working to change the definition of excellence to include balance between high grades and test scores, and a newer concern with diversity of interests, well-roundedness, and less stressed, normal students.

What does normal mean?

What does normal and well-rounded actually mean? We need first to discover what is abnormal. Historically, male and white has been inherent in defining what is normal. Non-white has often been written off as deviant or margin. When women fought for suffrage and political equality, they were called irrational and excessively emotional: women in American politics continue to be portrayed by men as psychologically unfit. Similarly, the strategies for racial equality as well as the political rights of immigrants have had to refute claims of mental disability (low IQ and psychological abnormality (absence of temperament for democracy).

Far from celebrating the superior academic achievements of Asian American students in top US high schools as the culmination of the American dream, white parents have switched their children from excellent high schools to ensure that their children are in that prestigious segment. There is no doubt that whites, particularly male, still dominate the heights of American capital; at Google, whites still take 66% of leadership roles. But Asian American women overtook white women among new hires at Google in 2019, more Asian American men than white men were hired, for the first time. In 2020, the path to success is no longer the patriarchy of whites; the educational hierarchy is being overturned.

White parents are also working to change the definition of excellence to include balance between high grades and test scores, and a newer concern with diversity of interests, well-roundedness, and less stressed, normal students.

What does normal mean?

What does normal and well-rounded actually mean? We need first to discover what is abnormal. Historically, male and white has been inherent in defining what is normal. Non-white has often been written off as deviant or margin. When women fought for suffrage and political equality, they were called irrational and excessively emotional: women in American politics continue to be portrayed by men as psychologically unfit. Similarly, the strategies for racial equality as well as the political rights of immigrants have had to refute claims of mental disability (low IQ and psychological abnormality (absence of temperament for democracy).

Far from celebrating the superior academic achievements of Asian American students in top US high schools as the culmination of the American dream, white parents have switched their children from excellent high schools to ensure that their children are in that prestigious segment. There is no doubt that whites, particularly male, still dominate the heights of American capital; at Google, whites still take 66% of leadership roles. But Asian American women overtook white women among new hires at Google in 2019, more Asian American men than white men were hired, for the first time. In 2020, the path to success is no longer the patriarchy of whites; the educational hierarchy is being overturned.

White parents are also working to change the definition of excellence to include balance between high grades and test scores, and a newer concern with diversity of interests, well-roundedness, and less stressed, normal students.

What does normal mean?