

Aboriginal Performance on Standardized Tests: Evidence and Analysis from Provincial Schools in British Columbia

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Abstract

Many indigenous populations are experiencing rural-to-urban migration, motivated by the prospect of better socio-economic opportunities. In making this transition, indigenous peoples are entering industrial societies where most income derives from wages or salaries, and formal education achievement is crucial in determining economic prospects. This research analyzes the gap in test score results between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in public schools in the Canadian province of British Columbia. It finds a strong effect of school quality, as measured by non-Aboriginal achievement, on Aboriginal achievement. It also finds a non-linear negative relationship between Aboriginal achievement and the number of Aboriginal students in a school over the empirically observed range. It thus suggests a possible tradeoff – and dilemma – between policies that enable Aboriginal students to concentrate in a few schools able to provide a culturally sensitive curriculum and, on the other hand, policies to maximize Aboriginal academic achievement.