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Lifting All Boats

In today's society, a major component of success is measured by the level of education an individual has. Education plays an imperative role in jobs, income, and social status. While public education opportunities exist for all students across America, a steep divide exists across the levels of education a student receives. A large component of this gravitates around parental experience with education, and implicitly, affluence. For families with high levels of educational attainments, moving to tax brackets praised for their schooling and funding external resources to elevate student academic performance are second nature; however, for students whose parents do not have high levels of education, the lack of resources implements a growing divide in education. Generational educational attainment elevates a student's academic incentive in school, creating a disparity between access to intellectual resources; therefore, access to resources should be elevated for schools in underprivileged districts.

The educational attainments of a student's parents create disparities through variations in school districts, allowing affluent parents to send their children to districts with higher levels of competition. The link between generational education and affluence has been ever-present across tax brackets. Wealthy suburban schools better serve the privileged through resources, while educational standards linger in poor inner-city schools. This societal trend cultivates a culture where affluent families get access to further resources, while the poor remain isolated from privileged-induced assets. When analyzing parental motives, better-educated parents are more

likely to consider the quality of school systems when deciding which neighborhood to live in (Egalite). Families' wealth serves as a crucial factor in the allocation of wealth towards their children's education; investment in housing serves as an indicator of educational investment, making students' educational experience highly stratified. This level of separation is also evident when analyzing competition across school districts. According to David Labaree, historian and educator at Stanford University, competition is more intense at upper levels of stratified schooling, where gifted and advanced placement tracks are evident. Conversely, the urge to compete on vocational tracks and poor inner-city schools is weaker, resulting in a relaxed struggle for academic achievement (Labaree 57). The lost competition further reduces educational drive, as the lack of incentive typically prevents students from rising above average distributions. In response to poor competition at low-income schools, students in attendance should be academically elevated through an increase in mentorship, allowing for higher levels of academic incentives amongst all students.

Educated parents influence their children's educational growth at early ages, creating disparities between inequitable resources early on. As corroborated by Anna Egalite, an associate professor at North Carolina State University, educated parents demonstrate more frequent reading to their children in comparison to less educated counterparts (Egalite). It was found that children from low-income backgrounds "hear less than a third of the words encountered by their higher-income peers" (Egalite). This serves as a discrepancy factor, as varied language syntax differs between households before elementary enrollment. The concerning difference in available resources and exposure at young ages contributes to a culture of privatization, where children from affluent backgrounds benefit from external academic resources, even before schooling begins. At the commencement of K-12 education, these children are typically placed on gifted

tracks, whereas low-income counterparts lack such privilege. Moreover, in educated households, parents are more likely to pay attention to the quality of their child's education and get involved in parent-teacher organizations, essentially attending resources to their child's needs (Egalite). Through this involvement, parents focus on ensuring that their child is placed on a gifted learning path and accelerated academic opportunities. While gifted tracks typically exist in less affluent districts, the student audience they cater to tend to be from families with educational attainments higher than the median. The focus should shift to integrating opportunities aligned with gifted programs in the daily curriculum, in an attempt to immerse all children, regardless of backgrounds. Through this, gifted programs can co-exist with educational practices that elevate all students' intellectual skills, essentially lifting all boats, and creating an immersed educational atmosphere within schools.

The advantages external resources afford select students extend to aspirations, which reflect parents' experiences with education. The transference of cultural capital through parental experience plays a critical role in allowing children to perceive high levels of academic attainment and success. This cultural capital is accounted for through "teaching children the specific behaviors, patterns of speech, and cultural references that are valued by the educational and professional elite" (Catsambis). This disparity serves as a high indicator of the educational privileges children raised in educated families receive. Continued patterns of external resources ameliorate the success of students in school, growing as students reach higher levels of schooling. Alfie Kohn, an author and lecturer in the area of education, argues that the type of job a parental unit has heavily shapes goals for their children. Where affluent students from well-educated families are brought up immersed in expectations regarding their educational success, the lack thereof in low-income families deters students from establishing future

expectations and goals before they enter high school and advanced-level courses. Varied perspectives are also evident when analyzing working class versus professional careers; working-class families prioritize obedience, whereas parents in professional careers heavily emphasize intellectual curiosity (Eccles). The differences in parental focuses account for a divide in the intellectual pathways a student is naturally inclined toward. Parental involvement in academics also plays a crucial role in academic performance: “the academic achievement of secondary school students is also positively related to factors such as parent/student discussions regarding school experiences and academic matters” (Catsambis). When discussing academic matters, educated parents are more likely to enforce intellectual curiosity due to their own educational experiences. The enforcement of intellectual curiosity helps instigate academic incentives early on in children, as a reason for academics is established through inquiry.

While it is argued that attending heavily resourced schools harms a student’s chances of admission into an elite university due to higher levels of competition, it is essential to acknowledge the immense resources readily available to attending students (Klugman). Moreover, educated parents ensure that their children are enrolled in a plethora of extracurricular activities; in turn, this maximizes their children’s ability to distinguish themselves in areas valued by college admission officers. These students are also more acquainted with higher-level classes in high school, which in turn makes the shift to college less abrupt. This weakens the argument of privilege hurting students, as resources give students a wide variety of perspectives.

Through both intellectual and financial resources, parental education can be identified as one of the strongest correlates of children’s educational success. The U.S. education system and economy have instigated a culture where the wealth and success of one's parents dictate the drive and success of the student. To remedy this flawed system, districts with lower socioeconomic

status should be given accessible opportunities for further external resources. Education should work to uplift all students to their true potential, not exclusively those atop educational and affluence social ladders; by working to collectively improve education, starting at the bottom, society can work towards improving learning for all.

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