

Educational Inequality in the United States

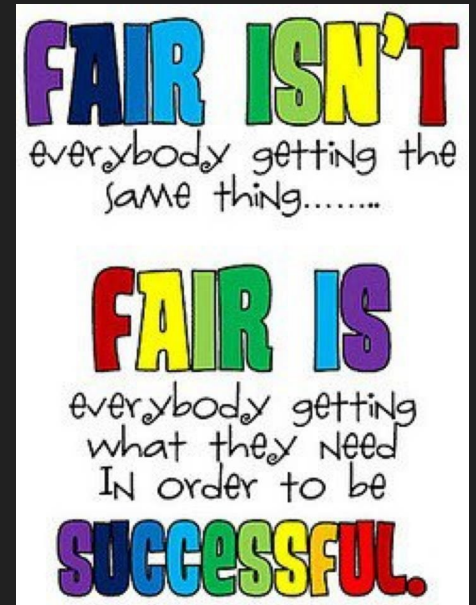
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“Until we get equality in education, we won’t have an equal society” -Sonia Sotomayor

The ins and outs of educational equality in the United States

This presentation will discuss:

- The rates of educational achievements
- How inequality in childhood affects life chances
- The flaws of the educational system
- Other causes and effects of educational inequality



Rates of educational achievements

- Over the past decades the achievement gap between blacks and whites has gotten smaller. The gap between the rich and poor has grown. (Dasgupta)
- In 1972 Americans at the upper end of the income spectrum were spending 5 times as much per child compared to low income families. (Dasgupta)
- Programs like the No Child Left Behind Act focused so much on test scores and promoting charter schools that they didn't take into account the severe handicap faced by poor children (Dasgupta)
- The increasing educational gap in the United States reflects the deeper divide in wealth and income between communities. Fewer resources in poorer communities means that the schools must get rid of extra programs as in the arts, music, etc.
- Schools are forced to drop advanced placement classes, adequate libraries, and science laboratories. (Dasgupta)
- The communities that suffer are most often minority and immigrant communities (Dasgupta)

How inequality in childhood effects life chances



- Extensive research has conclusively demonstrated that children’s social class is one of the most significant predictors—if not the single most significant predictor—of their educational success. (*Garcia, E., Weiss, E.*)
- Children who start behind stay behind—they are rarely able to make up the lost ground.
- These trends would not be such a major concern if our education system compensated for these inequities by helping level the playing field and enabling children to rise above their birth circumstances. (*Garcia, E., Weiss, E.*)
- The undeniable relationship between economic inequalities and education inequalities represents a societal failure that betrays the idea of the “American dream.”
- Low educational achievement leads to lowered economic prospects later in life, perpetuating a lack of social mobility across generations.

What families can provide based on SES

High SES

- Early education programs
- College-preparatory education
- SAT (and other standardized testing) Prep
- Tutoring opportunities
- Higher standardized test scores (SD + 15 points)
- Smaller class sizes
- More academically rigorous
- Extracurricular opportunities
- Social capital (internships)

Low SES

- Focus on health
- Less opportunities
- Unpredictability in home life
- Increase risk for one parent households
- Food insecurity
- Increase risk for association with criminal lifestyles
- The need to help with family economic concerns (getting jobs)
- Lower parental involvement

Flawed foundations of the education system

Promising policies

- Federal reconstruction, 1863-1877 : After the emancipation, the US government attempted to provide public schooling to many freed African American slaves by confiscating land and buildings for educational purposes. This action led to many supporting the government's involvement in education. (Das Gupta)²
- Servicemen's readjustment act 1944 (G.I. Bill): Government assistance for people coming out of the service to help them adjust back into society, by helping them financially in order to continue pursuing their education.(Das Gupta)²

Unresolved issues & results

- Due to segregation underlying the foundation of our present day system, many issues in social mobility are unfortunately still present as seen in residential segregation. This can be seen in the high percentage of African Americans, Latinos, and other minority immigrants residing in low socio-economic areas, where there are higher crime rates and cases of neglect. (Das Gupta)²
- This promotes a disadvantage when it comes to receiving a fair education because there are large differences in public school funding and resources from the lower property taxes in poor areas vs. wealthy areas. (Anderson)¹
- Past event: Philadelphia announced it would be closing 23 public schools and instead investing millions of dollars into a new prison complex. (Das Gupta)²

Flawed foundations of the education system

Policies that were promising but backfired

- Head start program - President Lyndon Johnson's effort to diminish poverty with the link between socioeconomic status and educational achievement. (Das Gupta)²
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 - In an effort to hold schools accountable the government required passing standardized test scores otherwise they would force the schools to shut down or give less funding. (Das Gupta)²

Unresolved issues & results

- There was now more pressure on schools to get higher standardized test scores, faculty was more concerned with good grades than their students, resulting in some students falling through the cracks. (Das Gupta)²
- Students were learning less information and had a decreased quality of education because schools just wanted them to get passing grades in order to stay open. (Das Gupta)²
- The scores often did not take into account the amount of resources the schools had. (Anderson)¹ Underprivileged schools' resources versus the wealthier areas which were able to promote test preparation. (Das Gupta)²
- The areas who needed the most help and funding were being punished instead, which continued the never ending cycle. (Das Gupta)²

How the digital divide plays into educational inequality

The digital divide has generally been defined as the gap in access to technology by socioeconomic status, race, and/or gender.

- Only 43% of low SES families have the access to computers compared to 93% of families with a high SES. (*Dasgupta, K.*)
- Computers & internet are essential for job applications, school work, and to gather information.
- By closing the **digital divide**, people **would** be given equal opportunity to communicate and support their quality of life. The **digital divide** prevents people from getting an **education** because they don't have access to the right technology (*Block, Judy*).



Who wins and who loses in respect to education?

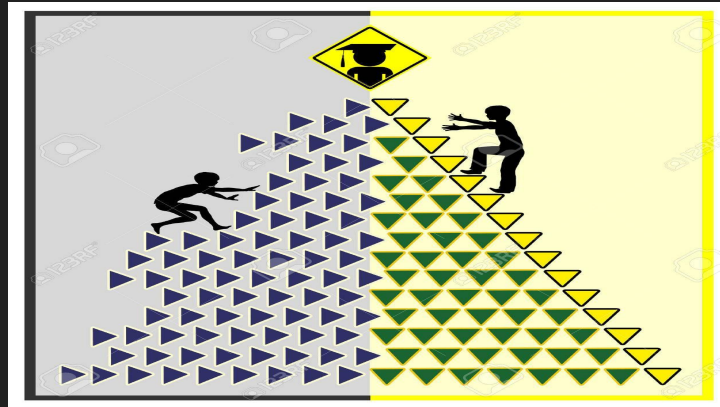
- People of minority groups fare the worst in regards to their educational mobility. This including people of African American or Hispanic descent. But immigrant children and children that come from economically challenged families struggle as well.
- Children's social class is one of the most, if not the most significant predictor of their educational success.
- The lower in social class a child is, the less fulfilling their education is going to be. While upper class children tend to get better educational experiences. Including going to private schools, that lower class children cannot afford. This leading upper class children to have better opportunities for college and later career success.
- Minority groups are more likely to be living in densely populated areas with poor public schools systems and little room for climbing the economic ladder, in areas with high levels of pollution and other emissions.
- Children of racial minorities are disproportionately likely to live in concentrated poverty area also more likely to do so over prolonged periods of time.

Social Class AND Educational Inequality



Statistics on Educational Success

- Across the nation, districts with the most students of color receive 15% less per student in state and local funding than the whitest of districts.
- Minority students are more likely to be taught by inexperienced teachers in 33 states.
- Only $\frac{1}{3}$ of public high schools with high African American and Latino enrollment offer calculus.
- Fewer than 3 out of 10 students in gifted and talented programs are African American or Latino.
- African American students in NYC only have a 68.1% on time graduation rate.



References

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- 2 DasGupta, K. (2015). *Introducing social stratification: the causes & consequences of inequality*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
- 3 García, E., & Weiss, E. (2017, September 27). Education inequalities at the school starting gate: Gaps, trends, and strategies to address them. Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/publication/education-inequalities-at-the-school-starting-gate/>
- 4 Wbur. (2018, August 27). Family Income Affects Kids' Success More Than Public Vs. Private School, Study Finds. Retrieved from <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2018/08/27/public-private-school-family-income-study>
- 5 Yin, Alice. 2017. “Education by the Numbers.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved April 11, 2020 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/08/magazine/education-by-the-numbers.html>).