

# ***Social Inequality and Education***

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**Abstract:** This is a literature review in search of how elite education and selection involving race may affect formation of social class.

## **1. Introduction**

From era of plantation and slavery to modern era, superficial peace was currently achieved by human society. However, prejudice and stereotypes have hardly ever been outside this stage: people tend to consider Asians to be mathematically advanced, while African Americans to be more athletic. As genetic differences playing the role of one source in differentiation, educational field turns out to be severely affected by factors other than an individual's overall performance. To illustrate the problem of how education reproduces social stratification by selecting students basing on non-academic performance, one has to demonstrate how the college acceptance of students' applications shifted over the years, both on the aspect of admission patterns and criteria.

## **2. Hypothesis1: Impression and Preparation**

Before While Sotto-Santiago depicted the generalization of defining oneself as a “minority” and the effects of stereotyping that comes along<sup>[1]</sup>, African Americans' performance on campus shows no sign of improvement as the study of negative racial peer effects by <sup>[2]</sup> reveals. Various studies about to be presented in this section revealed how race and ethnicity play a role in selection of students. There are arguments that occur depending on the obvious effect of academic performance of this certain race; one of them was genetic, claiming that the intrinsic factors have been driving the group to be disadvantaged. As a response, the study “Explaining the Gap in Black-White Scores on IQ and College Admission Tests” <sup>[3]</sup>, revealed possibilities of the tests containing bias in the first place, justifying for the considerable misinterpretation of forming such idea. Implicit bias brought up by many researchers as a possible explanation may play an important role in forming the standpoint. The phenomenon, known as people unintentionally relate irrelevant facts altogether and create misunderstanding as well as illustrate

a possibility that the same process may take place on other existing races and ethnicities, for the individual does not match predetermined expectations. As long as there is a bias, it means that students may in face of an even harsher life after entering elite system, which surely has a negative impact on students' academic performance. The question lies on how this may influence selection of students. Is poor academic performance a reason or a consequence of bias is a dilemma each elite institution is questioned with. Implicit bias plays a role in selection of students, while prejudice affects the academic performance of students from minority groups after they have been admitted to higher education, and vice versa, the tendency of poor academic performance may reinforce stereotypes.

Hypothesis 1a: A poor academic performance before entering college (or an expectation of performing badly after entering) changes the selection, outcome, or both of the higher education on students.

Despite impression, students' preparation prior to entering the school also matters. As an example, Ivy League universities in the United States stand as a symbol of the top-ranking college education and their caring for non-academic traits of students <sup>[4]</sup>. As an international student applying for American colleges and universities, the case seems to be evident: despite GPA (high school academic performance), TOEFL, SAT, and AP scores, other activities such as highly academic competitions and benevolent programs are highly recommended to take on a monthly basis. Additional academic achievements are required if a student applies to schools that have higher ranking. Though tuition increases dramatically even taking into account of rate of inflation <sup>[5-6]</sup> students are still more than willing to pay tuition and owe their debts over the years to complete a bachelor's or postgraduate education. The status-attainment model <sup>[7]</sup> reveals that increasing years of education could in turn increase job outcomes, and the effectiveness of creating elites can still be found in world-famous schools' employment rate of their graduates each year, examples include Harvard University and Princeton University as third and twelfth places in 2020 QS Graduate Employability Rankings globally. However, instead of providing access or opportunity to be better off, universities of America now turn to be recognized as a producer of younger generation of elites and minority, underprivileged groups, stratifying and solidifying current social classes and widening gap between their social statuses. As a study based on Pell Institute and PennAHEAD warned, "Their [people from low socioeconomic status backgrounds] aspirations are low, supporting resources are low, and even if they graduate, the barriers to success are still formidable <sup>[5]</sup>." Researchers try to compensate for the knowledge gap between interpreted equality and actual discrimination based on non-academic effects, efforts are being made studying students of minority groups on campus <sup>[13]</sup>, intrinsic factors of students (The JBHE Foundation, 1998), policies <sup>[8]</sup> and economic status or tuition fee policies <sup>[11-12]</sup>. Yet the criteria based on the selection of students and assumptions on how might this acquisition of students of each authority academics hardly associate with formation of current status and this series of phenomena. Considering the problems mentioned above, merely did former researchers connect racial prejudices during process of admitting students with the creation and reproduction of social inequality within education system altogether. I will review studies and data given by former researchers and try to theorize how racist prejudices and bias and a student's family status and personal traits may exclude the person from "ladder of opportunity" and create more unequal distributions of social and educational resources.

Hypothesis 1b: Backgrounds such as family underprivileged groups live in may lead to lack of certain necessary acquisition in non-academic activities.

Taken together, elite schools in America care a lot about non-academic aspects of applicants, and to have had some kind of private lessons or investment plays an important role in achieving former outcomes <sup>[4]</sup>. In other words, whether or not the student enters a better education system is not entirely

independent of what kinds of classes his or her family has the ability to afford.

### 3. Hypothesis2: SES Backgrounds Standing in the Way of Education

Disadvantaged family SES status has created difficulties for students more than this. The nation's most selective private schools and universities have raised their tuition fee by 300 percent after outweighing the effect of inflation, says a research conducted by JBHE mentioned above in 1994.

The fact that tuition fee has long been more than that of when the research was conducted (\$5,000) can have a severe impact on minority groups' involvement of higher education. For instance, though there has been considerable expansion in the size, security, and, arguably, salience and influence of the black middle class, proportion of whites in the low-income category in 2008 was approximately 20 percent, half the proportion of African Americans <sup>[8]</sup>. Though top universities such as Harvard offer a considerable amount of scholarship, the average spending of US\$99,417 is still required over the course of students' degrees. Similar to the hypothesis mentioned in the paragraph above, students without sufficient opportunity to increase soft skills have the chance of being turned down when acquiring additional financial support from colleges. Therefore, tuition fee still plays as an effective barrier of racial minority group to acquire higher education. Additionally, though segregation was abolished in the case Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, wealthier people tend to shelter themselves in a similar community. Racial landscape in the US creates a relationship web that may block certain groups of people and keep out possible opportunities to step out of social class restrictions.

Hypothesis 2a: Tuition fees played a vital role in facilitating closed social meritocracy even considering the possible financial support, for the lack of policies to measure economic status.

Social costs such as inequality and class solidification due to bias can be underestimated. Social meritocracy is proven to be an effective tool of creating enclosed barriers as well as a vital outcome of elite education mentioned above. A research <sup>[9]</sup> revealed that graduates from 14 elite boarding schools turned out to be more likely leaders of Fortune 500 Business. The graduates of certain academies gain promising future, but the road to these opportunities can be quite indeterminate. Weak economic conditions and declining general revenue support from state legislatures have put substantial pressure on public college and university administrators and their governing boards to increase tuition, according to a study <sup>[6]</sup> in which they also revealed the decline of 4-years public college choices as tuition fee increases rapidly. Schools that offer Need-Blind based scholarships are quite few and are most advanced. Most of others are Need-Based or Merit-Based, setting up barriers to applying for disadvantaged students. What's more, even when such students manage to attend the education system, their completion rates are low with a degree of low labor market value <sup>[10]</sup>.

Hypothesis 2b: Only a few of the underprivileged students have the chance to acquire education of higher level that offers a more facilitate scholarship and other financial assistance toward them, therefore making the current situation hard to change.

To sum up, it seems that both family SES backgrounds and expectancy enabled the reproduction of elite education, making it not an opportunity to change destiny, but just a heritage given to youngsters. Therefore, possible causes of the outcome in elite education include factors such as family status that education system's evaluation excludes, and internal expectations or bias. They have been acting together to prevent students from becoming better off. Considering subtle effects and barriers made by people, highlighting the importance of understanding patterns behind selection of students admitted to higher education institutions can be vital. By reducing personal bias, we might be a step closer to a more academic-based, uninfluenced structure of education.

## 4. Conclusion

In this essay, I reviewed the main possible causes of educational discrimination along with their further passing down the generation to form social class system, or more precisely to replicate. With two main hypotheses brought up and prior education being reviewed, the text may bring up ideas toward such problems.

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