

Racial Injustice Issue Group

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Literature Review

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Literature Review

Wealth is defined as the accumulation of resources. It provides a multitude of opportunities for people and it makes it easier to transition between jobs, respond in emergency situations, move to different cities and live in more affluent areas. Wealth differs from income in that it is the money people can spend in the future and income is the earnings from work, social security benefits, etc. needed to meet current spending needs. Wealth allows people to make drastic changes based on the money they already have saved. Essentially, money makes the world go round yet in this country it is unequally distributed by race- particularly between black and white households. This leaves African American families economically insecure and severely decreases the opportunities available to them in all aspects. “The wealth gap persists regardless of households’ education, marital status, age, or income. For instance, the median wealth for black households with a college degree equaled about 70 percent of the median wealth for white households without a college degree”(Hanks). There is a never-ending cycle in which African Americans have a lower income level, which leads to them having fewer opportunities for upward mobility, thus creating limited chances to build wealth and pass it down to their children. According to table 3 in *Systematic Inequality Center for American Progress*, the median wealth of a white individual with a college education is \$325,600 compared to a black individual with a median wealth of \$57,250. The disparities between the median incomes of both

racism are extremely upsetting due to the fact that no matter the circumstance, whites will generally have the upper hand. Furthermore, blacks are more likely to be unemployed than whites. This is due to a large number of these individuals being “negatively impacted by a criminal justice system which has aggressively and persistently targeted communities of color”(Hanks). This vicious sequence persists because people of color, specifically African Americans, are set for failure from the moment they are born. No matter what they do they will always lag behind their white counterparts.

In order to address the inequality in black schools compared to white schools you must look at the per pupil spending in each state. School districts nationwide tend with the highest amount of poor kids and children of color receive less funding than more affluent white neighborhoods from the state. “In most states, districts with high numbers of low-income students receive substantially fewer state and local dollars per pupil than districts with few such students.” (Augenblick, John G., Page 1) This spending gap is narrowing nationwide; however, the spending gap is growing exponentially in nine states.

“While the funding gap between high- and low poverty districts has narrowed somewhat over the past several years in the nation as a whole, it has increased significantly in 9 states. In most states, districts with high numbers of minority students also receive substantially fewer state and local dollars per pupil than do their counterparts with few minority students.” (Augenblick, John G., Page 1)

This funding gap is only made worse by not funding poorer schools in poverty stricken districts. The study found districts with the most people of color and with the poorest students receive the

least amount of state funding. Without less state funding these schools are less effective than their more affluent counterparts. Teachers tend to be paid less, and facilities in poor schools are inferior to wealthier schools. Districts that have the most amount of minority students also get less state funding per pupil. States pass policies that fund their school; therefore, states must act to solve this gap. There must be a more equitable distribution of resources so that minority children's education is as well funded as other states in the group. States need to take a wider responsibility in school funding and stop relying on local funding for schools. States must also have a heavy focus on minority and poverty stricken neighborhoods to have education be equally funded for each district.

The Center for American Progress has proven that schools with low funding lead to underperformance among students, those individuals primarily being people of color (Garcia 1). This poor allocation of funds which disenfranchises so many students does not taper off after high school, but rather, remains a prevalent issue throughout college. Students of color, defined as African American and Latino, have on average "\$1,000 less per year than what is spent on their white counterparts" who attend public universities (Garcia 1). The appropriations of these funds determine the academic resources students have in undergraduate and graduate school. By having less resources for academic success in high school, students will score below their peers and attend less selective institutions. These less selective institutions which are largely attended by people of color do not cater to an affluent population of students, and will suffer in their ability to obtain resources. The public university's inability to provide for their students the right

tools for achievement will lead to ultimate disenfranchisement in which students of color are sent into the workforce lacking skills, grades, and experience that they would have otherwise received.

It is the norm for schools to receive the largest share of their dollars from the American people through property tax. Schools rely on state and local revenue for their survival (Baker et. al 1). The nature of local and state-based funding creates a system where the wealth of the community is reflected in the money allocated to the public schools. In an evaluation of the fairness of individual state school funding, four “fairness measures” are used as parameters (Baker et. al 6). These parameters are: the funding level, the funding distribution, effort, and coverage (Baker et. al 6). The funding level analyzes what state and local dollars are offered to districts, which is quantified by the dollars per pupil in, and is compared across states, taking into account factors such as wages and poverty rates (Baker et. al 6). Funding Distribution compares how public school funding ranges across the state based on the poverty concentration of the area (Baker et. al 6). Effort takes into account state spending on education relative to the funds the state is able to dedicate to public education, which related to the state’s Gross Domestic Product (Baker et. al 6). Coverage focuses on how many students are attending public schools, those students’ median household incomes and student poverty rates (Baker et. al 7). These measures give definitive parameters as to what “fair” funding looks like. These measurements lead to honest conclusions: schools in poor areas will receive minimal funding, which will create obstacles for students to reach their fullest potential. Underfunded public schools perpetuate a culture of poverty among students of color.

Disproportionate funding in public schools has been an ongoing issue for several years now. This deficit of funding has resulted in the lack of resources being appropriated to these schools causing a hindrance to student performance, higher teacher turnover rates, and unfortunately an impact on the health of students. For example, two school children who died as a result of their school not having a nurse on staff due to reduced budgets. Disturbingly, in a study conducted by data scientist, David Mosenkis he discovered that “just the increased presence of minority students actually deflated a district’s funding level” (Mosenkis, paragraph 4). Among the discrepancies discovered throughout different states with regard to this issue is the lack of a formula in order to allocate government aid to the various districts. As it relates to solutions, reforming the allocation of states’ budgets would serve as one, although it would only serve short-term interests. The reasoning is that it will “still build off of the existing, biased funding base for each district—virtually guaranteeing that some level of bias persists” (White, paragraph 8). Bias, especially political and racial, also serves as a major factor in the disproportion in school funding. In all, the prosperity of the future shall not be secured until citizens, lawmakers, and leaders accomplish “the task of providing equal educational opportunities for all children, regardless of color or class” (White, paragraph 10).

To address the issue of oppression towards African-American children in underfunded schools, our racial group will delve into the state standardized test scores of New York. In the report, *Education trust: New York, key education facts and figures*, given by *The Education watch*, the state is trying to “narrow the academic achievement gap”. The test scores of many African-American children from low-income backgrounds living in the state of New York, ranging from elementary to high school, are compared amongst those of their white middle class

counterparts. The report explains the difference and performance development from 1998 and the year 2000, a two year gap. The test scores for African-American children on the reading portion in the year 1998, “Whites performed significantly better than African Americans, with 72 percent of white 4th graders at level 3 compared to 37 percent of African American 4th graders.” (Edtrust 4). In many areas of New York, students come from different backgrounds and economic class structures. Most of the students that receive an education from poorly funded schools and live in neighborhoods filled with poverty, are African-American children. The report explains that because these children do not come from good schools like white, middle class children, they are unable to perform well.

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