DataHaven
Classroom Materials

Title of Material: Social Mobility

Topics Discussed: Social mobility, socioeconomics, education, race

Skills Utilized: Reading skills, annotations, reflection questions

Format: Individual or with a partner

In Person or Online: Either

Procedure/Instruction Suggestions:

Also works well without the graphing section.

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Social Mobility

Directions: Read and annotate the following background information on social mobility in Connecticut and answer the thought questions.

Background:

In society, there are several social classes. While these are not an official "label" printed on every person, they are very real and very impactful. These classes can be defined by your family, your appearance, your socioeconomic status, the power you have, and so on. This can have a profound impact on an individual and their whole family. Those in the "lower" social classes do not have as many resources, opportunities, or as much success on average as those in the "higher" social classes. These inequities stem from discrimination spanning back from hundreds of years to today (see "Redlining in the United States"). This can last generations.

While it is difficult, you can move up in your social class. For example, you may grow up in poverty, but you can make a lot of money and gain wealth throughout your life. Your children will not live in poverty, will have more resources, and will continue to live within that elevated social class or may even move further upward as well. This is called upward social mobility, or when an individual or group of people are able to reach a higher social class than the one they were born into.

Upward social mobility has a close relationship with education. The quality of a child's education is highly correlated with upward mobility, but a person's economic future is largely dependent upon the circumstances of their youth. The place a child grows up, their race, and their family's income will generally determine whether that child will move up the socioeconomic ladder.

Children in Connecticut are slightly more advantaged than children

> ### Redlining in the United States
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> *The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), founded in 1934, began the practice of redlining. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) was created to help fund mortgages for homebuyers. HOLC created maps of cities that rated neighborhoods from A ("Best") to D ("Hazardous"). It denied families of color from purchasing certain houses in certain areas, which prevented them from living where they liked, gaining property-based wealth, and integrating with the white families. Redlining gets its name from a practice that mortgage loaners used — drawing red lines around parts of a map to indicate "high risk of defaulting" areas where they would not give loans. Red-shaded parts of these maps would be a "warning" for loaners rooted in racism; do not loan to families here as they probably won't be able to pay. These areas were predominantly Black and Latino, which was the basis of these assumptions. Without these loans, these families could not buy houses. This not only segregated America, but also worsened the already present wealth inequalities, housing inequalities, resource inequalities, education inequalities, and other detrimental impacts on the families afflicted. It is important to recognize that this practice was backed by the US government and impacted some of the nation's biggest cities. Though the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 helped put an end to these racist Jim Crow era ways, racism in America, including the legacy of redlining, still exists today.*

nationwide—partially due to the state's overall wealth—but other disparities are evident. White children in Hartford and Tolland Counties, regardless of their family's income, are more likely than their Black or Latinx peers to experience upward economic mobility. **In these counties, the probability of a low-income white child growing up to be within the top 20 percent of households by income (18 percent) is higher than that of a high-income Black child (13 percent) and more than three times that of a low-income Black child (5 percent).** As a result of factors beyond their control, these children are subject to the effects of differential access to quality education, discipline in schools, postsecondary and employment opportunities, and wealth-building opportunities. Those with better access tend to have correspondingly better overall health and higher quality of life than people with limited access to those opportunities.

Thought Questions:

1. What is social upward mobility?

2. How has social upward mobility been impacted historically?

3. What are the benefits of being in a "higher" class or of moving upwards?

4. What conclusions can you draw from the bolded data?

5. What could be a reason that a low-income white child is more likely to move upward in social class than a high-income black child is to stay in their current high class?

6. What can we do to address the gaps in social upward mobility?