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Family and Education
Familia y Educación

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine the intimate link between family and education and reveal the underlying social and educational implications of the former on the latter, concentrating on parental union, parental involvement, family structure (i.e. the composition of a household, defined by the presence or non-presence of father and mother figures), and religious practice. This review considers these categories as interrelated and as major determinants of children's educational success or failure. From our review of the literature, we draw four major observations: (1) intact families perform the best on all measurable educational outcomes; (2) parental involvement, predicated on strong parental unity, strongly improves educational outcomes and behavior; (3) the children of married two-parent biological family perform best academically across the spectrum; and (4) religious practice, mediated through the family, protects and improves the educational attainment of children. Together, these data make a compelling case for the close connection between education and family.

Keywords: family; education; parental involvement; academic performance.

 Resumen: El objetivo de este trabajo es examinar la relación íntima entre la familia y la educación y revelar las implicaciones sociales y educativas subyacentes del primero sobre el segundo, en concreto en la unión parental, participación de los padres, la estructura familiar (es decir, la composición del hogar, definida por la presencia o no presencia de la figura del padre y de la madre), y la práctica religiosa. Esta revisión considera estas categorías relacionadas entre sí y como los principales factores determinantes del éxito o el fracaso escolar de los niños. A partir de la revisión de la literatura, dibujamos cuatro observaciones principales: (1) las familias protectoras representan el mejor de todos los resultados educativos medibles, (2) la participación de padres, declarada en una fuerte unidad parental, mejora fuertemente los resultados educativos y la conducta, (3) los niños de familias biológicas de dos padres casados poseen un mejor rendimiento académico en todo el espectro, y (4) la práctica religiosa, mediada a través de la familia, protege y mejora el nivel de educación de los niños. En conjunto, estos datos suponen un ejemplo convincente para la estrecha relación entre la educación y la familia.

Palabras clave: familia; educación; participación de los padres; rendimiento académico.

Parental union

The family sets the social, emotional, and intellectual dynamics in which children reside and function; and its viability rests decidedly on the marital bond between a husband and a wife, the strength of which, in turn, shapes the quality and depth of the parent-child relationship. It follows that when the parental union is fractured, the rapport between a parent and child is also splintered, if not severely compromised.

Scores of studies have shown the dire psycho-social consequences of parental breakup on children. As over a million American children suffer the divorce of their parents each year, the effects of family breakdown cannot be denied. The damage manifests itself acutely in children's educational outcomes and behavior. Put simply, marital stability is another form of human capital that advances educational attainment, while its opposite, hinders it (Biblarz and Gottainer, 2000; Ruben, 2004, p. 220).

While in some instances divorce might pose as an advantageous option, the long-term and often irrevocable harm that it causes children cannot be ignored, as a growing body of research is showing. It decreases in general an individual's quality of life and puts some "on a downward trajectory from which they might never fully recover" (Amato and Booth, 1991, p. 1269). This phenomenon is true for adults and, assuredly, even more so for children.

Divorce wreaks havoc on many levels. It inflicts serious financial injuries on both families and society (Fagan and Churchill, 2012, p. 1). Beyond its "material" damage, divorce brings to bear far graver psycho-social effects on children, and impairs the psychological stability of many children (Hill, 1993). Children from divorced families have more emotional problems (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdalem, and McRae, 1998) and less psychological well-being (Amato, 2003).

Divorce primarily renders the relationship between children and parents significantly more fragile (Meneghan and Parcel, 1995). It has been said that when spouses divorce each other another sort of divorce between parents and child occurs, leading to a loss of emotional support, economic hardship, and an increase in the number of other negative life events (Amato, 2000, p. 1282).

Divorce leads to a decline in the frequency and quality of parent-child contact and relationships (Amato and Booth, 1991, p. 27), and it becomes difficult for non-residential parents, 90% of whom are fathers, to maintain close ties with their children (Peters and Ehrenbergm, 2008). When the parent-child contact is reduced after a divorce, the children's relationships with their parents consequently worsen (Amato, 2001; Sun, 2001). Marital disruption creates distance between parents and

children (Rossi and Rossi, 1990) even compared to children living in married but unhappy families (Amato, 2000).

Parental union provides children a low-conflict environment and emotional stability; divorce undermines these benefits. Children from divorced families receive less emotional support from their mothers, who are unable to provide this crucial support despite their best intentions (Miller and Davis, 1997); the same is true with regard to divorced fathers (Riggio, 2001, p. 106).

Divorced mothers tend to have less affection and communication with their children, and discipline them more harshly and inconsistently (Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1982). Similarly, divorced fathers are less nurturing (Schwartz and Finley, 2005, p. 207), and more likely to drift away from younger children if denied legal custody at the time of the divorce (Weiss and Willis, 1985). On the other hand, the proportion of children who enjoy a consistently close relationship with their father is much higher among adolescents whose parents remain married (48%) than among those whose parents divorce (25%) (Scott, Booth, King and Johnson, 2007, p. 1201).

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The weakened parent-child relationship described above almost always results in diminished parental involvement, which in turn negatively affects school achievement.

At its basic level, parental involvement consists of active parent-child interaction, which often takes the form of deliberate parental engagement in children's school work and extra-curricular activities. While it implies passive aspects such as quality time and parental interest, parental involvement necessarily includes active parenting skills. Regardless of the channel through which the parent-child relationship is nurtured, this "face time" is critical to children's development and behaviors during early education.

By virtue of their gender and role, fathers and mothers transmit to their children different sets of skills and virtues, and the manner by which they engage their children likewise varies. These should not be seen as diametrically opposed, but rather as both necessary and complementary.

David Armor (2003) insists on the importance of the presence of both parents because it helps children reach greater educational achievements (pp. 59-63). Children in intact families do best, for the simple reason that when two parents are present in the child's home, they share the responsibility in monitoring the child's activities and in providing encouragement and discipline as needed (Marcon, 1999).

Conversely, when parents live apart, the task of supervision and affording of moral support also diminish naturally. In such situations, the residential parent often

becomes the primary provider of both economic and parental resources. These competing responsibilities and time constraints lead to less monitoring and socializing of children. Furthermore, the non-resident parent interacts less regularly with the child owing to the physical distance between them; consequently, regular involvement in the child's day-to-day activities decreases (Carlson, 2006, pp. 780-781).

School Performance

Early School Years

Parental involvement makes a substantial difference in children's overall educational performance during early school years. By placing parents in the best position to create the optimal environment for learning, the Harvard Brookline Early Education Project found that parental involvement immensely improved children's school performance (White, 1985, p. 42). Likewise, compared with children whose parents had low levels of school involvement, preschoolers whose parents were very involved with their schools had greater mastery of basic, early academic, social, and behavioral skills (Marcon, 1999).

The more time parents spend on "cognitive stimulation" activities during infancy, which behavioral scientists distinguish from other types of parenting activities, the higher the children's IQ and math scores by the time they reach school age and the higher their academic achievement after they have started school (Armor, 2003, pp. 58, 60).

A study of the daily parent-child interactions and behaviors of forty-two children from varied socio-economic categories discovered "extreme differences" in both the quantity and quality of parent-child interaction, which corresponded to significant differences in vocabulary growth curves and subsequent intelligence tests. The study cautions that although vocabulary could always be increased through intervention, a vocabulary growth curve is already established quite early and usually becomes fixed (Risley and Hart, 1995). Thus, the involvement of both parents proves to be crucial to the acquisition of language skills and helps foster and improve attention skills (Ruff and Rothbark, 1996).

Middle and High School Years

As in early school years, parental involvement proves to be just as critical to students' academic success during middle and high school years. Students whose teachers reported higher levels of parental involvement were more likely to complete a

higher grade in high school and to graduate high school than their peers whose parents were less involved. The more years a parent was involved, the greater was this association with grade completion (Barnard, 2004).

A study on the effects of family background and parental involvement on Egyptian adolescents' academic achievement and school disengagement found that family structure does indeed affect a parent's likelihood to involve himself or herself in a child's schooling. The same study affirms that intact family seems to be the family structure to facilitate parental involvement in children's education (Abd-El Fattah, 2006, p. 153). Children who live in intact married families reported that their parents participated more in school, discussed school more with their parents, and knew more of their friends' parents than those from single-parent families and stepfamilies (Pong, 1997, p. 741).

A review of several studies concluded that "biological parents in two-parent households spend more time than other parents" in helping with and/or engaging their children in homework activities (Balli, Demo and Wedman, 1998, p. 150). This same study discovered that children who live with single parents or stepparents report less monitoring of schoolwork by both mothers and fathers, compared to those who live with both biological parents.

Drawing on the work of Acock and Demo (1994), Balli *et al.* (1998), analyzing the National Survey of Families and Households, found no significant differences in mothers' homework involvement across varying, continuous family structures. However, fathers' involvement was higher in first married families than in stepfather families, and academic performance was somewhat higher among adolescents in first-married families. The same study further reported that parents in first-married two-parent families were much more likely to help with homework than were step-parents or single-parents (Balli *et al.*, 1998, p. 150).

When parents go through divorce, they also spend less time monitoring school work, supervising, and communicating with their children. This relationship is strongest with regard to paternal homework supervision, due in large measure to the fact that the mother most often gets child custody (Astone and McLanahan, 1991, p. 317). Therefore, students who experience more of their nonresident father's involvement, such as interpersonal conversations and paternal attendance at important events, are less likely to experience school failure. Moreover, adolescents with more involved fathers tend to exhibit lower levels of behavioral problems. The greater was a father's involvement, the less severe were adolescents' behavioral problems and negative feelings (Carlson, 2006). All of these were significant results even after accounting for adolescents' reported closeness to their fathers.

Parenting Roles

Children learn from their parents often by imitation. Nevertheless, they acquire a distinct set of skills and virtues from each parent because fathers and mothers fill unique modeling roles. Studies confirm that the active parenting skills of both parents are requisite to children's early psycho-social and mental development.

As with parental involvement, the quality of "parenting" depends largely on family structure. Sara Mclanahan and Gary Sandefur firmly establish that a non-intact family structure is generally not conducive to "good parenting." The "quality of parenting" is likely to be lower in families where the mother remarries or cohabits with an adult male than in families with two biological parents (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1997). Parenting among these women is worse because children perceive their step-parent –either a parent's boyfriend or girlfriend– as a disruption in their lives.

Paternal Role and Support

Fathers' involvement remains distinctly critical to children's development, especially in their sons' lives. This holds true in early cognitive abilities: the more time a father spends on and with his child, the better is the child's cognitive ability. By contrast, fathers who spend only up to 15 minutes a day interacting with their infants attribute significantly less social-cognitive maturity to their infants than those who spend more time with their children (Ninio and Rinott, 1998, p. 659).

Sons learn specific attributes and acquire certain masculine sensibilities from their fathers Osheron, 1986, p. 4). However, the impact of fatherhood on young adolescent males' sense of self and identity is of far greater importance. Based on a longitudinal study of 370 men, Osherson shows that sons who experienced rejection from their fathers or grew up with an absent father became adults with a distorted sense of masculinity.

Maternal Role and Support

The maternal role has equally consequential and far-reaching effects on children. The mother's behavior and cognitive and emotional support tend to have a strong bearing on the child's school readiness, academic achievement, and "emotional" development. Furthermore, maternal parenting behavior and the physical environment affect children's cognitive school readiness, whereas maternal mental health was strongly associated with children's behavioral school readiness.

The extraordinary link between the mother's mental health and her child's behavior cannot be overlooked because it has social ramifications. A study found that, even after controlling for maternal parenting behaviors, which are themselves adversely affected by poor maternal mental health, the mother's mental health predicted children's behavior (Lovejoy, Graczyk, O'Hare and Neuman, 2000). Additionally, maternal stress and depression are associated with insecure child–parent attachment (Atkinson, Paglia, Coolbear, Niccols, Parkerand and Guger, 2000), which in turn undermines children's peer relations and classroom behavior, resulting in fewer friends (Berlin, Cassidy and Appleyard 2008).

David Armor reveals the effect of maternal employment during the first months of the children's lives to be distinctly negative upon children's school readiness. The mother's full-time employment before a child's ninth month significantly predicted lower school readiness scores at 36 months, even when controlling for both quality of care at home and quality of child care (Brooks-Gunn and Waldfogel, 2002).

Teaching Styles

Parents have the primary responsibility of nurturing, raising, and educating their children. Yet, just as with parenting roles, studies have shown that a father's mode of parenting is simply not interchangeable with that of the mother's or vice-versa.

In his study of toddlers, Michael Yogman found that while fathers' nurturing activities revolve, predictably, around play involving mainly "a rough-and-tumble approach," those of mothers are associated with "caretaking" tasks. Yogman insists that these two modes of parenting are not interchangeable, and instead are both equally crucial to children's development (Roopnarine, Rivera, Fuchs, Toso, Ossadon and Guelfand, 1985; Yogman, 1982).

David Popenoe (1996) likewise asserts that fathers and mothers have "their own respective teaching strengths on children" (p. 11). He observes that while fathers have a general tendency to underscore the value of competition, challenge, initiative, risk taking, and independence, mothers, who often fill the "caretaking" role and evince "emotional security and personal safety," naturally teach children to be cautious (p. 144). Thus, fathers impart skills that encourage "autonomy and independence," while mothers offer "comfort and emotional acceptance" (p. 11).

As for discipline and conversation, children perceive fathers generally as "more powerful" and "authoritative" but consider mothers as "soft and responsive" (Popenoe, 1996, p. 145). Both parents convey differing disciplinary expectations because they naturally approach parenting differently. In the end, children benefit from

"firm" as well as "responsive" techniques. Studies reveal that married parents' children have more empathy or better mental health than those whose parents are divorced or separated (p. 155). What matters is the collaboration of both styles.

Family structure

As stated earlier, the degree of parental involvement is very much predicated on family structure. A reliable predictor of parent-child interaction, family structure is also a sure determinant of children's academic performance as well as school behavior and engagement.

Academic Performance

Early School Years

David Armor's research exposes a 15 point gap in IQ between children in two-parent families and those in homes of never-wed mothers. Armor underscores the disturbing result because children whose mother never married comprise 8% of the national sample, and another 32% have absent fathers, which leaves only about 60% of children with both parents at home (Armor, 2003, pp. 79-80). The analysis shows that children from intact families have much higher math scores compared with those from non-intact families, outperforming the two comparative categories by 4 and 11 points respectively.

In the majority of studies, a recurring trend appears: children in intact families fare better than those in non-intact families in an array of assessments. A national longitudinal study of 699 elementary children found that children from intact biological families did better on a wide range of school and health assessments than those in single-parent families. (Guidubaldi, Perry and Nastasi, 1987).

Across the board, elementary children in intact families receive the best scores in reading and math, compared with students from single-mother families and cohabiting families (Armor, 2003, p. 80). A study from the University of Otago revealed that children 8-13 years old who experienced their parents' separation before entering school had lower scores on reading, math, and science tests than those from intact families (Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood, 1994, p. 1081).

Daniel Potter concluded that any change in the family structure, but particularly divorce, severely impacts elementary children's academic performance in math and reading in contrast to the intact family. Furthermore, this gap continues all the way through elementary school (Potter, 2010, p. 941).

Children from non-intact families, who generally fare worse on reading and math tests, have to deal with additional negative elements. Among children living in stepfamilies, the presence of half-siblings in stepfamilies was found to be a negative factor for children's outcomes on reading and math test scores. One survey of 6,300 families found that children raised in continuous single-parent families scored, on average, 13 points lower on the reading test than those raised in continuous two-parent families (Carlson and Corcoran, 2001, p. 789).

Middle and High School

The impact of family structure on children's educational performance continues to manifest significantly during middle and especially high school years (Steele Sigle-Rushton and Kravdal, 2009, p. 565). Students' subject scores are directly correlated to family structure.

Students who come from intact married families have higher scores on math, science, history and reading tests than their counterparts (Sanz-deGaldeano and Vuri, 2007, p. 329; Sun and Li, 2007, p. 456). Suet-Ling Pong found that students who lived in intact families scored about four points higher on math and reading tests than students from single-parent families. They also scored about three points higher in math and two points higher in reading than students from stepfamilies (Pong and Dong-Beorm, 2000, p. 741).

On the Peabody Vocabulary Test (PPVT), children living in married stepfamilies (with stepfathers) and those living in intact married families performed similarly. However, compared to adolescents in intact married families, those living in single-mother families or those living in cohabiting stepfamilies (with their biological mother) tended to fare worse on the PPVT (Manning and Lamb, 2003).

Another study shows that both male and female GPA scores dropped significant in non-intact families as opposed to intact families. Furthermore, it becomes evident that these effects are more pronounced for females by 1.7 percentage points (Ham, 2003).

In stepfamilies, the presence of step-siblings brings an added negative dimension into young children's school performance; the same holds true for adolescents' school performance. The more time an adolescent has spent in a family with step-siblings, the lower is his or her GPA (Sun and Li, 2009, p. 628). The mean outcomes of math and reading tests among children in disrupted families declined almost linearly when the number of their siblings increased. The mean outcomes of math and reading tests among children in two-biological parent families also decreased

as the number of siblings increased. But this decrease was *not* linear due to an actual increase in mean outcomes with the first sibling (Sun and Li, 2009, p. 628).

School Behavior

Early School Years

Family structure has as much an impact on children's academic performance as on their social behavior in school and society at large. The majority of studies directly link delinquent school behavior to disrupted family structures.

Criminologists lay bare the cold facts: children in intact two-parent biological homes have much lower crime rates than those living in broken or reconstituted homes (Gottfreson and Hirschi, 1990, p. 103). Other studies indicate that children from intact married families are more inclined to have better school behavior than those from non-intact families. Based on teacher reports, children born to single or cohabiting mothers are more likely to exhibit disruptive behaviors with peers and teachers (Cavanagh, Schiller and Riegle-Crumb, 2006).

Middle and High School

Adolescents who come predominantly from non-intact families have the highest delinquency frequency. One study found that parental divorce is not only associated with more truancy but also with more negative attitudes toward school (Astone and McLanahan, 1991, p. 317).

A number of studies also expose the corollary effects of single-parenting and cohabitation. Children living in single-parent families or married or cohabiting stepfamilies were more likely to have ever been suspended or expelled from school, more likely to have engaged in delinquent activities, and more likely to have exhibited problematic school behavior (Hanson, 1999, p. 1304; Manning and Lamb, 2003). Children whose parents started an either cohabiting or marital union after a divorce are more likely to skip school than children whose parents stayed single after a divorce (Hanson, 1999, p. 1305). In the same vein, one study (Amato, 2005, p. 86) found that children who live with single parents are more likely to be suspended from school than those in intact married families (40% and 21% respectively).

School-related behavioral issues tend to be significantly worse amongst adolescents in households where fathers are absent (Heard, 2007, p. 441). The consequences of absentee fathers prove to be far worse in the black community. Black

males with no male role models exhibited the most behavioral problems and did the worst in school. By contrast, black males who identified their fathers as their role model reported significantly less truancy than peers who identified a member of the extended family as a role model or who lacked a role model. Among black female students, however, one observes a different scenario: those who identified a brother rather than their father as their male role model were significantly more likely to use alcohol and exhibit violent behavior than peers with paternal models (Bryant and Zimmerman, 2003).

School Engagement

Early School Years

Overwhelmingly, studies reveal that the degree of children's school engagement depends extensively on their environment and family structure. Children from married families are more engaged in school than their counterparts, according to an analysis of The National Survey of America's Families. After controlling for children's individual characteristics, the survey validates that children in intact married families tend to be more engaged than those in non-intact families (Brown, 2004, p. 362).

Middle and High School Years

Family structure is also a reliable predictor of school engagement (i.e. the degree to which adolescents take their schooling seriously and participate actively in extracurricular activities) among adolescents during middle and high school years. The more intact the family structure is, the greater the home stability and, by extension, the greater the school engagement among children.

According to the 1999 National Survey of America's Families, children ages 6-11 in non-intact families demonstrate lower school engagement than those in intact married families (Brown, 2004, p. 362). Likewise, another study found that adolescents who live in blended families and stepfamilies are less positively engaged in school than those from intact families (Halpern-Meekin and Tach, 2008, p. 445).

A change in family structure brings a considerable disruption into adolescents' lives. Susan Brown (2006, p. 454) discovered that these family transitions correlate with increased adolescent delinquency and depressive symptoms and decreased school engagement, compared with those in two-biological-parent families.

Transitions from single-mother families into married and cohabiting stepfamilies correlated with similar increases in delinquency and depressive symptoms,

but transitioning into a cohabiting stepfamily correlated with greater school disengagement (Brown, 2006, p. 457). Adolescents from divorced families have also shown a significantly higher risk of failing at least one year than those from non-divorced homes (Roizblatt, 1997).

Family structure has a substantial bearing on adolescents' rate of success or failure with regard to completion of grade level. Adolescents born into single-parent families were 25% less likely to complete Algebra I in the ninth grade and were more likely to have repeated a grade than those born into intact married families (Amato, 2005, p. 86; Cavanagh, Schiller and Riegle-Crumb, 2006, p. 344).

Family background also contributes to high school dropout rates. Regnerus (2003a, p. 367) draws our attention to the fact that adolescents who come from an intact family have increased educational expectations. Another study reveals that children from single-parent families and cohabiting families are more likely to have higher dropout rates than children from two-parent families (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1997, p. 79). Students who come from stepfamilies and single-parent families are almost three times as likely to drop out of school as students from intact married families. Even when controlling for socio-economic status, this pattern persists (Zimiles and Lee, 1994).

Breakdown of family structure compels children to endure the negative effects of family transitions. Students who experienced family transitions were more likely to drop out of school than those who did not undergo similar changes, and this difference was prevalent among each researched ethnic group (Pong and Dong-Beorm, 2000, p. 156).

Family structure tremendously influences graduation rate. A number of studies found that children in intact families have generally a higher graduate rate than those in non-intact families. The following percentage breakdown paints a contrasting reality between intact and non-intact families: 85% of children who live in intact married families graduate from high school, compared to 65.4% in stepfamilies, 67.2% in single-parent families, and 51.9% who live with no parents (Sandefur, McLanahan and Wojtkiewicz, 1992, p. 112). Another researcher found that 78.4% of children with parents who stay together graduate. This dropped to 56.4% for divorced parents, and to 40.4% for those living in families with three or more transitions (Strohschein, Roos and Browneil, 2009, p. 92).

Family transitions also have consequential effects on school completion. Students from non-intact families or who experience multiple family transitions tend to complete fewer years of school. Moving from a single-parent family into a cohabiting or married stepfamily is associated with fewer years of school, the results being worse for the children who moved into a cohabiting stepfamily (Brown, 2006, p. 457).

College years

Those who come from intact families exhibit the highest graduation rate, while those in non-intact families demonstrate the worst rate.

One study affirms that coming from a non-intact family is a significant negative predictor of four-year college completion. Although the effect becomes smaller after controlling for family income, students from disrupted families are still 4% less likely to complete college, compared to their peers from intact married families (Ver Ploeg, 2002).

Consistently, students coming from divorced single-mother families showed negative results with regards to college completion. Children from divorced single-mother families are less likely than those from biologically intact families to graduate from college. However, children from widowed-mother families are not significantly different from those in biologically intact families in this regard (Biblarz and Gottainer, 2000, p. 537).

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

One of the major mediating factors between family and educational attainment is religious practice. The beneficial effects of religious practice on education are transmitted to students through various channels within the family of origin and through peers and church community (Fagan, 2010).

Intact married family structure is the most conducive to facilitating religious practice, which has been proven to be very beneficial to children's education (Fagan, 2010). In this type of family structure children's social life includes, in most cases, religious activities, and it has been found that children's involvement in "religious socialization" are strong predictors of academic achievement as well.

Religious Involvement

In general, studies demonstrate that religiously involved students spend more time on their homework, work harder in school (Muller and Ellison, 2001), and achieve more as a result (Donahue and Benson, 1995). Likewise, a study of 451 two-parent Iowa families reveals that youth who in eighth are religiously involved will have a higher academic competence in the twelfth grade (Elder and Conger, 2000, p. 158).

It is interesting to note that spiritual and religious involvement affects educational outcomes more than income does (Fagan, 2010, p. 6). One analysis (Hanson and Ginsburg, 1988) of a national sample of 30, 0000 tenth 10th grade students

found that, for both black and white students, the impact of pro-social values was stronger than the effect of socio-economics status on reading and math proficiency (44% greater for white students and 51% greater for black students).

These beneficial effects of religious practice on vulnerable youth increase still more when the at-risk children have grown up in two-parent families (Regnerus, 2003a, p. 401).

Religious Service Attendance

Numerous studies have revealed that religious attendance is strongly associated with academic performance. Analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that increased religious attendance correlates with higher grades. Students who attended religious activities weekly or more frequently were found to have a GPA 14.4% higher than students who never attended (Glanville, Sikkink and Hernández, 2008).

Teenagers who attend religious services weekly or more had the highest average combined English and Math GPA (2.0). Those who attend at least once a month (2.8) and those who attend less than once a month (2.7) have lower GPAs, and those who never attend religious services have the lowest GPA (2.6) (Fagan, Johnson and Butcher, 2006).

Parents' religious attendance is also a significant indicator of school attainment: one study found that Dutch students who held a strong "Christian worldview" and whose families attended religious services scored higher academically than those who did not report religious involvement (Dijkstra and Peshcar, 1996). In addition, teens who are devoutly religious have higher educational expectations for themselves (Muller and Ellison, 2001).

Church attendance also significantly determines adolescents' graduation rate and/or school completion: those who attend church regularly tend to complete more years of school (Loury, 2004). In addition, students who attend church weekly while growing up have significantly more years of total school by their early thirties than their peers who do not attend church at all. Frequent religious attendance also correlates with lower dropout rates and greater school attachment (Glanville, Sikkink and Hernández, 2008).

Religious practice among the poor

Religious practice benefits the education of the poor even more than it does that of advantaged children. An analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent

Health found that church attendance strengthens educational progress among children in high-poverty neighborhoods (Regnerus, 2002, p. 10). Church attendance also has a more positive impact on the academic performance of youths in lower-income neighborhoods than on the performance of their more affluent peers (Regnerus, 2003b, p. 646). While religion for the advantaged is only one resource among many, for the poor, the effect of religious practice is significant because it is one of the few robust positive influences in their lives (Regnerus, 2002, p. 8).

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a review of the intimate link between family and educational attainment. Specifically, it examined the dynamics of parental union, parental involvement, family structure, religious practice and revealed their effects on children's academic performance. The building block of society, the family, has been extensively weakened over the last few decades, and as we can see from this study, children's educational attainment along with it. This paper thus emphasizes that any educational rehabilitation must be concomitant with a renewal and strengthening of the family.

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