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ASSESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL CAPITAL ON POST- SECONDARY EDUCATION ATTENDANCE IN CANADA

ABSTRACT

This paper extends the current literature on access to post-secondary education by investigating the role played by various family background characteristics related to the home environment and family habits and behaviours. Exploiting the extraordinary richness of the Youth in Transition Survey in this regard, we include whether the family ate dinner together, whether they discussed current affairs, and how often their children went to concerts - and if so, what kind of concerts. Many of these factors are found to have a significant relationship with attending post-secondary education, university in particular. Furthermore, these factors are in addition to - and at least to some degree independent of - more conventional influences such as parental education and family income. With appeal to the paradigm of 'cultural capital' - which refers to the knowledge, experiences, and connections which help individuals succeed in life - these results indicate how advantages in accessing higher levels of education accrue to those from families that are rich in this kind of asset, while others are left behind.

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