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Do Unpaid Internships Favor the Rich?

We all have heard complaints that unpaid internships equal the exploitation of the young and unemployed.

Now an article in this month's *Tatler* magazine highlights a second form of internship inequity—children of wealthy families are nabbing the top spots. The article, called “The Interns: Never have so many battled to get coffee for so few” makes the case that wealthy families are buying internships for their children, shutting out more qualified, harder working, nonwealthy young workers.

According to a [summary of the *Tatler* article in the *Times*](#), interns at major media companies, art galleries and fashion houses are being “chosen like racehorses—legs and breeding don't count for nothing.”

Some prized internships are even sold, with “parents slugging it out at charity auctions in a social bidding war whenever one of these prize positions comes up. The last *Tatler* one went for £50,000.”

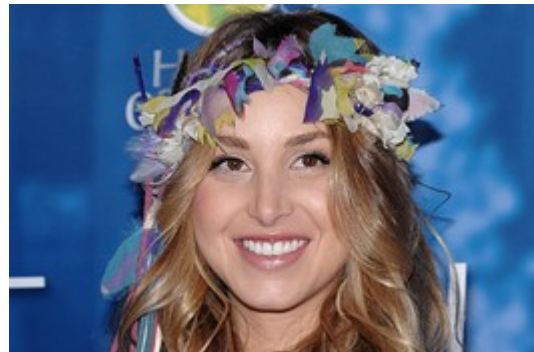
The young and wealthy interns don't seem to be ashamed. Asked about her summer internship at Armani, 18-year-old Olympia Emo Capodilista, a blond Italian countess said “Daddy organised it — as usual.”

Why do today's aristokids even bother working? The author of the *Tatler* piece, Richard Dennen, chalks it up to Whitney Port, the star of MTV's “*The Hills*,” who was a glamorous *Teen Vogue* intern and who has become something of a celeb among privileged youth in Britain. “Every bored teenager in the country was transfixed by the programme,” he writes.

I wonder, though, whether the three industries he mentions—media, fashion and art—have always leaned toward the young, wealthy and socially connected given their businesses.

What is more, just because a child gets an unpaid internship doesn't mean he or she will get a job or be successful. It is one thing to work for free—quite another to land and keep a paid job. Eventually the harder-working, not-so-wealthy should rise through the ranks.

Do you think the wealthy are cornering coveted internships for their children in the U.S.?



Bloomberg News

Is Whitney Port boosting or ruining the unpaid internship?

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