EXTENDED ABSTRACT

**Objectives & Theoretical Framework.** Many studies have investigated the implications of place for educational aspirations and attainment. Several studies suggest rural students show lower educational achievement and are less likely to attend college than comparable non-rural students due to a lack of social capital resources in rural families, schools, and communities, including lower levels of parental education, school funding, and labor market opportunities (Smith, Beauleiu, and Seraphine 1996; Roscigno & Crowley 2001; Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey, & Crowley 2006). Proximity to higher education institutions can also increase attendance, with each additional college in proximity to a high school’s zip-code significantly increasing the likelihood of students attending a four-year college (Turley 2009). Additionally, studies have demonstrated the positive impact of educational expectations on educational attainment without considering urbanicity (Sewell, Haller, & Portes, 1969; Goyette, 2008, Reynolds & Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2011). Byun et al. (2012) claim rural students’ educational aspirations are most influenced by parental and teacher expectations for students, as well as parent-child discussions of post-secondary plans. One way to gain insight into the heart of rural education disadvantage that has yet to be sufficiently investigated is to examine rural students’ educational expectations in relation to their non-rural counterparts. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of urbanicity on student’s educational expectations. Specifically, this study measures differences in student’s certainty for finishing high school and continuing into higher education based on the urbanicity of their school, taking into account parental educational attainment, income, educational value, and school attachment.

**Methods & Data Sources.** This study uses data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS) collected by the National Center for Education Statistics. The survey included over 24,590 eighth graders, with four follow up surveys conducted at approximate two year intervals in a nationally representative sample. This study uses socioeconomic and urbanicity measures from the first wave of the study to best capture the environment in which the student grew up. Educational expectation measures are
taken from the second wave, since sophomores in high school can be expected to have greater knowledge and more realistic expectations for their post-secondary and occupational plans than they did in middle school. Linear regressions are calculated for rural and suburban students (relative to the urban reference group) for students with low, middle, and high socioeconomic status as measured by parental education and family income. The model then accounts for possible mediating variables including the value students place on education to obtaining a job after high school and school attachment.

**Findings.** The findings of this study show that for disadvantaged students with low socioeconomic status (lower family income and parental education level), rural students have significantly lower levels of expected educational attainment and certainty of pursuing higher education than their urban counterparts. This increased disadvantaged for low socioeconomic status rural students remains significant when controlling for the value students place on education to later occupations and school attachment. Additionally, high socioeconomic status rural students show no significant disadvantage relative to similarly high status urban and suburban students for the same educational expectation outcomes.

**Conclusion.** These findings suggest that while the social capital provided by high SES mitigates urbanicity differences in educational expectations, for low SES students, rural disadvantage is greater than urban disadvantage for socio-demographically equivalent students.

Better Late Than Never: Are There Costs To Having Late College Aspirations?

Emily Persons (Duke University)
Angel L. Harris (Duke University)

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

**Objectives & Theoretical Framework.** Recent initiatives led by the White House and the US Department of Education reflects a national focus on early college awareness. In many middle schools, students are being exposed to college through programs that take them on college visits as early as 5th grade. Many students spend their time in college-themed classrooms during the school day. As such, many middle school youth are being socialized in a “college-for-all” environment and are encouraged to invest in activities that will increase their likelihood of wanting to pursue a college education as early as the 8th grade.
Prominent work in status attainment theory has established that educational aspirations influence status outcomes (Sewell et al 1969, 1970, Campbell 1983). Studies have examined the role of parental expectations and involvement (Ceja 2004, McCarron et al 2006), peer influence (Cohen 1983) and background factors such as socioeconomic status (Chenoweth, et al 2004) in the formation of children’s college aspirations. However, there is a dearth of empirical evidence that examines the financial return on having early college aspirations. The purpose of this study is to examine whether having early college aspirations leads to better short-term (i.e., psychological outcomes) and long-term outcomes (i.e., wages) for black and white youth, and if there is a cost to developing these aspirations during high school as opposed to middle school.

Methods & Data Sources. Data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) are used to assess whether having aspirations to attend college during the 8th grade has implications for youths’ levels of self-perception, locus of control, and peer influence during high school and for their income during early adulthood (at age 26). The analyses are reported separately for black and white students. These differences are assessed net of school factors and respondents’ family and general background factors.

Findings. For white students, having early aspirations has a positive relationship with their concept of self, locus of control, and the peers they associate with in high school. White students with early college aspirations also experience higher levels of income than those who do not have early college aspirations. For black students, relative to those who do not have early college aspirations, students who have a desire to attend college do not experience higher levels of self-perception, locus of control, peer influence, or income. The difference in income between black students with early college aspirations and those without early college aspirations can be explained by background factors. There is no cost or gain to developing college aspirations in high school for both black and white students.

Conclusion. Early college aspirations are associated with higher wages for white students, net of self-esteem, locus of control, and peer influence. In contrast, early college aspirations do not appear to be a resource for increasing earnings for black students. Thus, this study suggests that while early college aspirations are a resource for wages during early adulthood for white youth, this benefit does not extend to black children.

The Un-American Dream: Social Class, Academic Achievement, and Income Determination

LesLeigh Ford (Duke University)
Angel L. Harris (Duke University)

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Objectives and Theoretical Framework: For decades, the ethos of the American Dream has emphasized the belief that individual effort and talent determines one’s upward mobility. Status attainment and social
mobility has been an area of sociological interest for decades. Prominent work in status attainment theory has established that social class influences future earnings (Wright 2011).

Previous studies have shown the implications of race and social class on achievement and social mobility. In general, scholars find that when African Americans and Latina/os are compared to Whites with comparable incomes, the well-documented achievement gap still exists (Ladson-Billings 2006). Reardon (2011) finds the relationship between income and achievement has grown over the last fifty years. According to his research, family income is now nearly as strong as parental education at predicting student’s future income. There is a lack of empirical research that demonstrates which factor – academic achievement or social class of origin – is more consequential in determining individuals’ future earnings and therefore future social class. The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which social class of origin and academic achievement explains future earnings.

**Methods and Data Sources.** Data for this study are from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) to assess whether the relative importance of academic achievement (measured in 8th grade) and social class of origin for both determining income and for explaining differences in income at age 26 between white, black, and Hispanic Youth. These differences are assessed net of parent education, family structure, and youth’s gender.

**Findings.** The findings show that higher social class of origin is associated with higher wages for all groups. However, the robustness of the link between social class origin and wages varies by race. Among whites, youth who come from families with lower levels of social class have lower wages than their more affluent counterparts regardless of students’ academic achievement. For black students, the strength of the link between social class of origin and wages is tempered after accounting for academic achievement. This suggests that black students with higher levels of social class experience higher levels of income than their less advantaged counterparts only when their academic achievement is higher. For Hispanic students, higher social class of origin is associated with higher wages, but less so than for their black or white counterparts. Furthermore, social class origin explains more of the racial wage gap than students’ academic achievement.

**Conclusion.** Higher social classes of origin are associated with higher wages net of parent education, family structure, and youths’ gender. Although this pattern persists net of academic achievement for all groups, achievement accounts for nearly half of the wage advantage for affluent blacks. Overall, it seems that social class of origin is a significant predictor of wages, even more so that students’ own academic achievement. This study suggests that the benefits of one’s own academic achievement are not strong enough to overcome the link between one’s social class of origin and wages.

**Parental Occupation, Social Capital, and Academic Achievement:**
Does Parental Occupational Prestige Influence Adolescent Academic Achievement?
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Objectives & Theoretical Framework. Bourdieu (1977) argues that the transmission of cultural and social capital through class status reproduces social inequalities. The occupation structure is one example of the ways in which class status leads to disparate social outcomes. For example, previous studies have examined the influence of parental occupational prestige on youth outcomes. Conley and Yeung (2005) finds that parental occupational prestige has a positive impact on child academic achievement and health status, though this finding applied only for white families. However, little research has examined the implications that parental occupational prestige has for students’ achievement. Furthermore, little research has examined the extent to which the implications of cultural and social capital transmission differ by race.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is an intergenerational transmission of human capital that extends to youths’ academic outcomes. Specifically, we examine whether youths whose parents hold professional occupations have higher academic outcomes (i.e., math achievement, grades, and college enrollment) than those whose parents hold blue-collar occupations or are unemployed. Additionally, we examine whether the link between parental occupation and youths’ academic outcomes is the same for blacks and whites.

Methods & Data Sources. Using data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), a nationally representative dataset of American youth who were in grades 10 and 12 in 2002 and 2004, respectively, we stratify the sample by whether parents’ occupational status is blue-collar, professional, or no occupation. These groups are used to predict students’ twelfth grade achievement, measured in terms of their final high school grade point average and standardized mathematics test scores, and their college enrollment status.

Results. The findings suggest that student achievement is greater for youth whose parents have professional occupations relative to their counterparts whose parents have blue-collar occupations and/or are unemployed. However, in the case of math scores and grades, socioeconomic factors account for this difference. These findings are the same regardless of whether the parent in question is the youths’ mother or father. For college enrollment, mothers’ occupational prestige remains important even after accounting for socioeconomic background. Whereas these results are consistent across racial groups when father’s occupational prestige is examined, the patterns vary by race when the analyses are conducted based on mothers’ occupational prestige; the gains associated with having professional mothers is lower for black youth than it is for their white counterparts.
Conclusion. The results from this study suggest that although there is an advantage in terms of achievement and college enrollment associated with having parents with professional occupations, when mothers’ occupation is considered, this advantage does not extend to black youth. It appears that within black families, parents’ occupational prestige does not translate into achievement gains. In general, this study suggests that the benefits associated with having parents who hold professional occupations is more nuanced than posited by previous research.

Classroom Trauma:
Middle School Children’s Experiences of Discrimination

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Objectives & Theoretical Framework. The relationship between experiences of discrimination and negative health outcomes has long been a theme of race scholarship. Many researchers have found that repeated experiences of racism, racial segregation, and poverty lead to major health issues, including hypertension, diabetes, and obesity (Massey 2004). There is an entire segment of epidemiology dedicated to examining the social determinants of health, again, including racial discrimination and poverty (Krieger 2005). Several studies go even farther, demonstrating chronic stress during pregnancy – caused or exacerbated by experiences of discrimination and poverty – negatively alters the fetal environment and exposes children to higher risks of serious diseases (Kuzawa 2009). The extant research clearly establishes social environments have real, lasting, intergenerational effects on health.

In addition to physiological health, social scientists have studied the psychological impact of racism and discrimination. In The Many Costs of Racism, Feagin and McKinney (2005) draw on over two hundred interviews with middle-class Black Americans to detail what one respondent termed the “psychological warfare” waged on Blacks in America. Respondents consistently described feelings of rage, depression, insomnia, and thoughts of suicide as accompanying their experiences with discrimination. Psychologists find that perceived racism also increases risks of low self-esteem, paranoia, and lowers overall quality of life (Utsey 2008). Missing from this discussion is an extension to classrooms. There is an absence of research on how children’s perceptions of discrimination by teachers in classrooms affect their mental
health. This study examines the relationship between students’ perceptions of teachers’ race- and sex-based discrimination, their mental health outcomes, and their academic achievement.

Methods & Data Sources. This study relies on data from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS) to assess whether middle-school students’ experiences of subtle discrimination is associated with their mental health and academic achievement. Experiences of subtle discrimination include feeling that teachers call on students less, discipline them more, deem them of lower intelligence, or discourage them from taking advanced courses because of their race and sex, respectively. Negative mental health outcomes include feelings of anger, depression, and suicidal ideation. The analyses use students’ experiences of subtle discrimination during middle school to predict their academic achievement during high school net of family and general background factors.

Findings. Black male students perceive teacher discrimination based on race and sex to a greater degree than white males, white females, and Black females. Black female students also perceive racial discrimination by teachers more than their white classmates. Further, students who perceive discriminatory treatment based on race and/or sex are more likely than those who did not to feel angry, depressed, and consider suicide. They also have lower academic performances achievement.

Conclusion. It appears that prior findings on the negative physical and mental health outcomes associated with discriminatory treatment hold true for children in classrooms. Black students’ experiences with discrimination are negatively associated with their mental health and compromise their academic achievement.

School Discipline, School Attachment, And Beyond: Does School Discipline Compromise More Than Just Attachment To School?

Zimife Umeh (Duke University)
Angel L. Harris (Duke University)

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Objectives & Theoretical Framework: In recent decades, the degree of zero-tolerance policies and other forms of school discipline have increased in the United States. To date, researchers have attempted to assess the consequences of such policies and forms of school discipline on academic achievement, self-esteem, and psychological well-being. Other current work addresses the connection between discipline
and involvement in the juvenile system. However, few studies have attempted to understand the impact of discipline outside of school, and mechanisms for the pathway between discipline and the “school to prison pipeline.”

Research suggests a lack of financial resources, teacher perceptions and training, and literacy are linked to the “school-to-prison pipeline” (Tuzzolo & Hewitt 2006, Raible & Irizarry 2010, Winn et al. 2011). Other studies suggest school discipline exacerbates the "push out" syndrome and is the greatest predictor of future involvement in the criminal justice system (Wald & Losen 2007, Fowler 2011). One way to gain insight into the extent to which schools might serve as a pipeline to prison is to examine the role discipline might play in adolescent disengagement. The purpose of this study is to investigate the link between school discipline and civic engagement, both in-school and outside of school. A lack of civic engagement has greater implications for postsecondary outcomes, and may contribute to involvement in the juvenile system.

Methods & Data Sources. This study uses data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002) to analyze the relationship between school discipline in 10th grade and the civic engagement of adolescents in the 12th grade. This relationship is examined net of youths’ family background factors and civic engagement at baseline.

Findings. The results suggest discipline has a negative relationship with civic engagement. Students who are disciplined are less likely to participate in interscholastic sports (e.g. basketball, cheerleading, individual), and school clubs (e.g. student government, yearbook, band/choir). However, what is more disconcerting is that students who are disciplined are also less likely to participate in community service, and volunteer work (e.g., nursing home, church, community center). This suggests the impact of school discipline extends beyond the schooling context. The results also suggest that discipline has a greater impact on out-of-school engagement. The findings are consistent for both in-school and out-of-school discipline, suggesting that in-school suspension is as consequential for civic engagement as out-of-school suspension. The findings are consistent across racial groups.

Conclusion. Both in-school and out-of-school discipline are associated with lower levels of civic engagement for adolescents. These results provide insight into the mechanism for how schools might serve as a pipeline to prison for some youth; school discipline appears to compromise youths’ attachment to institutions that instill (and prepare young people for) citizenship. These findings have implications for policy surrounding the elements and practices of discipline within secondary schools. They suggest civic engagement should not be neglected when researchers examine mechanisms of the school-to-prison pipeline.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Objectives and Theoretical Framework: Numerous studies have documented relationships between early pubertal development and negative psychosocial effects. However, only a small number of studies have examined the effects of early-puberty on academic achievement (Cavanagh, Riegle-Crumb, & Crosnoe, 2007). Although puberty is widely accepted as a stressor for adolescent girls, many researchers hypothesize that when girls experience early pubertal development, they also experience more negative psychosocial effects in comparison to their later-developing peers. Such effects include both external (gender discrimination, peer sexual harassment, association with deviant and older peer groups, and popularity) and internal factors (depression, self-esteem and body objectification, social anxiety, academic self-concept, and reorientation of values in favor of popularity over school). The purpose of this study is to test whether these psychosocial factors explain early puberty’s association with subsequent academic achievement.

Methods: Using data from the Maryland Adolescence Development In Context Study (MADICS), we test 11 possible mediating factors for the association between early pubertal development in adolescent girls and lower academic achievement. The analysis is conducted among girls present in grades 7, 8, and 11 (N=417). We employ three measures of early pubertal development (menarche before/after grade 7, perceptions of pubertal timing, and age of breast development) and two measures of academic achievement (grades and college enrollment). The 11 mediating factors consist of the following: perceived gender discrimination, peer sexual harassment, negative peer characteristics, depression, self-objectification, gender identification, affect towards school, value of popularity, social anxiety, academic self-concept, and socioeconomic background.

Results: The findings show that beginning menarche by grade 7, earlier breast development, and perceptions of earlier pubertal timing are associated with lower grade point average in grade 8. Although each mediating psychosocial factor has an association with academic achievement, none of these factors fully explain the puberty-achievement link. Breast development, but not timing of menarche or perceptions of pubertal timing, still predict college enrollment one year after high school even after accounting for all psychosocial factors.
Conclusion: Findings indicate that early pubertal development in adolescent girls can have long-term consequences on academic achievement and the likelihood of enrolling in college. Factors that could explain this association are not fully understood or present in current theories. Furthermore, measures of pubertal development other than age at menarche, such as breast development and relative pubertal timing, are important to consider when analyzing early pubertal development’s long-term effects. Overall, the study suggests that experiencing puberty at an early age is burdensome for young girls in ways that compromise their academic outcomes.

Keep Your Head In The Game: Discrimination, Mental Health, and the Advantage Of Organized Activity

Steven Jefferson (Duke University)
Angel L. Harris (Duke University)

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Objectives & Theoretical Framework. An extensive body of scholarship suggests that racism adversely affects the mental, physical, and socioemotional well-being of racial and ethnic minority groups. Further, research has shown that perceptions of racial discrimination among blacks are related to higher levels of psychological distress, lower levels of life satisfaction and happiness, poor physical health, chronic stress, generalized anxiety, and depression (Landrine and Klonoff 1996; Williams 1997; Keesler et al. 1999; Brondolo et al. 2008). While substantial evidence suggests that individuals who perceive discrimination have worse health outcomes, there is a dearth of research on the link between discrimination and mental health among children. For example, do youth who perceive discrimination have worse mental health outcomes than those who do not?

Another line of research suggests that participation in organized activities is associated with positive adjustment for children across a range of academic, educational, social, psychological, and civic outcomes (see Mahoney, Harris, and Eccles 2006). Moreover, some scholars argue that organized activity—in particular sports participation—reproduces forms of cultural, social, and bodily capital (Curtis et al. 2003) and that children who participate in organized activities (e.g., after-school programs, extracurricular activities, sports) draw upon processes of ‘concerted cultivation’ (Lareau 2003) for favorable identity development, sense of belonging, entitlement, initiative, and self-worth (Mahoney and Eccles 2008). While previous research has linked sports participation with many positive outcomes, few studies have focused on the connections between youth engagement in organized activities and the effects of discrimination. The purpose of this study is to explore whether the benefits of sports participation moderate the effects of discrimination. Specifically, we examine the extent to which engagement in organized activity serves as a resource for black youth against the negative impacts of perceived racial discrimination within schools.
**Methods & Data Sources.** Data for this study come from the Maryland Adolescence Development In Context Study (MADICS), which consists of a sample of 5,000 black and white adolescents (51 percent male and 49 percent female) drawn from a county on the Eastern seaboard of the US. The MADICS includes extensive measures on physical, social, psychological, and personal development among youth. We examine the estimated effect of sports participation on perceptions of racial discrimination from teachers in grade 8. We also examine whether the implications of perceptions of racial discrimination from teachers on two important youth outcomes (i.e., mental health and sense of academic belonging) varies by youths’ sports participation status.

**Findings.** Results show that black athletes perceive more discrimination from teachers (i.e. called on less, graded harder, disciplined more harshly, viewed as less smart, discouraged from taking certain courses) because of their race than black non-athletes. However, perceptions of racial discrimination are much more consequential for the mental health and sense of academic belonging of black non-athletes.

**Conclusion.** Although black non-athletes perceive less discrimination than black athletes, they face far more negative outcomes, which suggest that sports participation serves as a resource for black youth and a buffer against the negative effects of discrimination.