Race, Parental SES, and K-12 Schooling

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Overview of talk

• Parental income and children’s school readiness
  • How and why race matters, kindergarten class of 2010

• Parental income and children’s achievement since Brown
  • Comparison of income and race trends
  • How and why race matters, high school cohorts from 1960-2010

• In K-12 schooling, the experience of family poverty (and of family affluence) has, and continues to, differ by race.
  • Implications for teaching, research, and policy.
School Readiness Gaps Between Children Whose Parents are at 90th vs. 10th Income Percentile, Kindergarten Class of 2010

Source: Reardon and Portilla (2016)
“[A]t the same time that family income has become more predictive of children’s academic achievement, so have educational attainment and cognitive skills become more predictive of adults’ earnings...As the children of the rich do better in school, and those who do better in school are more likely to become rich, we risk producing an even more unequal and economically polarized society.” -Reardon (2011, p. 111)
Why do children of affluent parents begin school more ready to learn (Bassok et al. 2016; Garcia and Weiss 2017)?

• Compared to children of disadvantaged parents:
  • Stronger parental beliefs about skills needed for kindergarten, higher parental educational attainment expectations
  • More children’s books, home literacy activities, learning activities (e.g., museum trips)
  • *Demographics*: higher parental education and likelihood of being married
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Developmental psych: parental SES related to children’s early development via “beliefs and behaviors” (Davis-Kean 2005)
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Demography: “Diverging destinies” and the second demographic transition (McLanahan 2004)
Race, class, and life chances

• Race and class intersect to influence Blacks’ social experiences and outcomes
  • *Intragenerational*: how one fares in institutions such as schooling and the labor market
  • *Intergenerational*: transmission of (dis)advantage from parents to children

• Pioneering Black sociologists (e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois)
• Process of stratification tradition (Blau and Duncan, Featherman and Hauser)
• Decades of subsequent work (e.g, Massey and Broadmann 2014)
Questions about income gaps in school readiness

1. Do Black children receive the same school readiness returns to their parents’ incomes that White children do?

2. If not, why not (relative to the beliefs, behaviors, and demographics explanations)?

3. What are the implications of 1 and 2 for early childhood education policy?
Fall Kindergarten Academic Skills, by Race, Gender, and Income Percentile

Math

Reading

Score (SDs)

Income Percentile

Source: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 (ECLS-K:2011). Numbers of Observations: Math (9,100); Reading (9,200).
90th percentile, B-W math gaps

Boys: .33 SDs **
Girls .21 SDs *
Why do Black students begin school with worse academic readiness than same-income Whites?

• “Belief-behavior paradox”

  • Compared to same-income White families, Black families have:
    • Higher educational attainment expectations for their children and beliefs about skills for kindergarten, BUT
    • Lower educational resources and frequency of developmental activities

• Demographics
  • Less likely to be two-parent households
  • Mothers work more hours
Black-White Differences in % of Parents Who Expect Child to Attain PhD, MD, or Other Advanced Degree (Girls)

10th Percentile: 14%
50th Percentile: 25%
90th Percentile: 36%
Black-White Differences in # of Children's Books in the Household (Girls)

- 10th Percentile: -43
- 50th Percentile: -45
- 90th Percentile: -47
Black-White Differences in % of Two-Parent Households (Girls)

10th Percentile: -34
50th Percentile: -23
90th Percentile: -12
Policy Implications

• Recommendations to reduce income gaps in school readiness
  • Whole-child programs
  • Direct resources to families, indirect resources from community (e.g., high-quality preschool)
  • “Mitigate poverty-related impediments to effective teaching and learning” (Garcia and Weiss 2017, Economic Policy Institute)

• Conceptualize disadvantage in an intersectional manner
  • Low income: Blacks disadvantaged relative to Whites in ways not expected based on income alone
  • High income: Blacks disadvantaged relative to Whites when not at all expected based on income alone

• Black’s strong educational beliefs provide clear evidence against cultural explanation for disconnect between beliefs and behaviors (or expectations and environment)

• Demographics and wealth
Intersection of race and income trends

• At a given income level, have Black parents been as successful as White parents as translating their income into children’s achievement?

• Why or why not?
Percentage of Schoolmates From Households in First (Bottom) Income Quintile

Gaps in 2009

1Q +8.92**
3Q +3.85*
5Q +9.30**

Year and Income Quintile
First Quintile Third Quintile Fifth Quintile
Black White

** Black
* White
Percentage of Schoolmates From Households in Fifth (Top) Income Quintile

Year and Income Quintile


First Quintile Third Quintile Fifth Quintile

Gaps in 2009

1Q +.62
3Q -.77
5Q -6.26*

Black
White

Percentage

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Blue
Orange


First Quintile Third Quintile Fifth Quintile

Year and Income Quintile
Decomposition Results for School Composition (% of Gap Explained)

- **Fifth Quintile**
  - 1960
  - 2009

- **Third Quintile**
  - 1960
  - 2009

- **First Quintile**
  - 1960
  - 2009

Legend:
- Blue: Income Composition
- Orange: % Black