

The Black-Black College Enrollment Gap:
The Role of Extracurricular Participation

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Abstract

While overall enrollment rates of African Americans increased over the past 60 years, enrollments of black men relative to black women declined dramatically from 1984 through the 1990s. Using the NELS: 88/00 data set, this study explores differences in college enrollment between black students: why do young black men enroll in college at a lower rate than their female counterparts. This paper tests whether investment in education for young black men and women outside of school hours is significantly different and is reflected in the college enrollment gap between black students. Binomial logistic regression analysis is used to estimate a standard specification of college enrollment including measures of extracurricular participation and unstructured activity. Given the widespread extracurricular participation rates among high schoolers, extracurricular participation is a small predictor of college enrollment. Instead, I find that while young black men and women are more resilient to low socioeconomic status than their white counterparts, being poor and being retained in school hurts black males more, evidenced in lower postsecondary enrollment rates.

Introduction

Cover stories of the 2004 back to school editions of *Ebony* and *Essence* magazines herald the gross disparity in college attendance rates between young black men and women. Differentials in 2001 enrollment rates were nearly two to one: of the 1,850,400 African American college students, 1,178,000 are women (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). While overall enrollment rates of African Americans increased over the past 60 years, enrollments of black men relative to black women declined slightly, about one percent, between 1965 and 1984, then a more dramatic 7.6 percent from 1984 through the 1990s (Cross and Slater, 2000).

Using the NELS: 88/00 data set, this study explores the phenomenon of differentials in college enrollment between black students: why do young black men enroll in college at a lower rate than their female counterparts. This paper first outlines the contours and proffered explanations of achievement gaps between black and white students, and then suggests the employment of identity capital as a theoretical framework for understanding the intersecting identities of black youth in academic environments. The identities most important here are those associated with race, gender, and academic peer groupings. This latter factor, academic identity, is modeled in the form of extracurricular activity participation (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Eccles & Barber, 1999). In creating this model, most notable is the work of Constantine and Perna (n.d.) who estimate the effects of social and cultural capital on young black men and women, finding that receiving assistance in applying to college, parental involvement in education, and educational aspirations are important factors in the decision to enroll in college.

Building upon their work, the present study explores differential investments by young black men and women in the overall educational experience. Towards that end, I analyze the choice and time investments in extracurricular activities by young black men and women. It may be the case that perceived differences in social and economic returns to education accompanies the college enrollment gap. As returns to education should reflect one's educational investment, differences in projected returns to education may be observable through patterns of extracurricular activity participation.

Black Students, White Students, and Achievement Gaps

Achievement gaps between student groups can be bifurcated to consider gaps in educational attainment, how far students go in school, and educational achievement, generally measured by exam scores. Across racial lines, relative declines in post-secondary enrollment by young men as compared to women are evident in national data sets (Anderson & NBER, 2000; Mortenson, 1999). Note that the source of the relative decline in male enrollment is not associated with fewer men attending college, but that more women are enrolling (King, 2000). The difference in college enrollment rates between traditional aged white students is comparatively small (King, 2000). On the other hand, the attainment gap between black students is strikingly large, with the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education predicting that 100% of bachelors degrees awarded to black students would be attained by black women should attainment trends reflect degree completion patterns from 1977 to 1997 (1999).

Gaps between black and white in both college enrollment and achievement have narrowed over the past 60 years. Current Population Survey (CPS) high school completion

rates for blacks rose from 75 percent in 1970 to almost 84 percent in 2000, about eight percentage points behind whites (NCES, 2001). Likewise, studies of the College Board's SAT and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and mathematics examination scores generally show the increased educational achievement of blacks from the mid-1970's to the mid 1990's, with an approximately 50 point average gain in SAT scores, 30 point average gain in NAEP reading scores and 20 point average gain in NAEP mathematics scores (Hanushek & Somers, 1999). In addition, among 2003 high school graduates, 66.1 percent of whites and 58.3 percent of blacks enrolled in some form of postsecondary education within one year of high school graduation, representing an enrollment gap closure of about 9 percent since 1982 (JBHE, 2004). However, gains in college enrollment by blacks are lopsided and are largely attributable to the successes of black women (Cross and Slater, 2000; Hawkins, 1996; NCES, 2001).

College enrollment differences between adolescent men and women do not appear to be caused by innate characteristics. Differences in educational achievement, as measured by high school achievement examination scores, are small. Using NELS: 88/00, Constantine and Perna found that black women score slightly higher on achievement exams, a one and a half point differential (n.d.). But in using the National Longitudinal Survey of the class of 1972 (NLSY-72), Constantine found that black men perform slightly better than their female counterparts (1999). Similarly, Nettles and Perna (1997) found that black men outperform women on the SAT and ACT. Nor are high school completion rates between black students significantly different. In 2001, 87.5 percent of young black men and 86.7 percent young black women between the ages of 25 and 29 completed high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b).

Differentials in college enrollment matter, as sociological and economics literature reveals that independent of achievement, college enrollment is strongly linked to labor market earnings. To the extent that longer periods of academic training signal the acquisition of skills, human capital, and character qualities such as perseverance, higher levels of college enrollment can increase one's earnings potential (Brewer, Eide & Ehrenberg, 1999; Rivkin, 1995). After controlling for college enrollment, black women earn at least as much as white women (NCES, 2001), and often earn more than black men (Cross and Slater, 2004).

Contemporary academic literature is replete with explanations of different parts of the achievement gap between black and white students and can be examined at the level of the individual student and their peers (Akom, 2003; Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 2002; Downey & Ainsworth-Darnell, 2002; Conley, 1999; Farkas, Lleras, and Maczuga, 2002; Herenstein & Murray, 1994; Jencks and Phillips, 1998; NCES, 2001; Ogbu, 2003), the family and community (Entwisle & Alexander, 1992; Entwisle & Alexander, 1994; Guo & Harris, 2000; Hedges & Nowell, 1999; McNamara Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Orr, 2003; Roscigno, 1998), the teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lubienski, 2002) and school and system-level factors (English, 2002; Farkas, 2003; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Mickelson, 2001; Roscigno, 1998; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, n.d.). Yet, with the exception of factors related to individual students and their peer groups, the variables explored in the black-white achievement gap are constants when considering differences in black college enrollment across gender lines. The key issue is that theories positing socio-environmental factors as an explanation for the low achievement of blacks must also address why the impact of such factors differs by sex. Towards this end, models

of identity capital, which until recently have largely eluded econometric modeling, may be insightful (Akerlof & Kranton, 2002).

Theoretical Frameworks: Human Capital, Identity Capital, & Academic Identity

This study uses a theoretical frame that incorporates identity and human capital development theories to examine the predicative power of academic identity and its interaction with cultural factors on college enrollment of black students as measured by enrollment in a post-secondary institution. The concept of identity capital hails its roots in human capital development theory. Whereas human capital denotes economically derived value from skill-oriented knowledge, identity capital captures a specific skill, the skill of self-placement within a socio-cultural context – the ability to negotiate a given environment (Cote, 1996). The development of identity capital requires both knowledge of self, one's skills and capabilities, as well as a sense of one's socio-cultural environment. Tangible aspects of one's identity capital may include material possessions, one's "good" looks, speech patterns, and one's accomplishments. Intangible aspects are often reflective of personality characteristics such as self-esteem, sense of purpose, critical thinking and moral reasoning abilities, sense of humor, and so on (Cote, 1996; Cote and Schwartz, 2002). One's identity capital may vary from low to high status as the values ascribed to one's identity are contextual. Thus, many low socioeconomic, African-American students living in a state of hyper-segregation may have high currency in identity capital within their community, as the environment negotiated is predominated by others who have value constructs similar to their own. Yet, the same students attending schools with dominant

cultural constructs may be disadvantaged unless they are able to adapt their identity to thrive within that setting.

Race is but one of many factors comprising an individual's socio-cultural identity. In addition to having one or more races, individuals have a sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity(ies), socio-economic status and so on (Ferguson, 2000; O'Connor, 2001). While other indicators are of independent import, this study focuses specifically on the interaction of identities deriving from the racial and gender indicators of black youth. Within the scholastic environment, students carry additional identities: "jock", "nerd", "prep", "burnout", and so forth (Akerlof and Kranton, 2002; Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Eccles & Barber, 1999). It is the intersection, as opposed to the summation, of these identities that dictate the set of socially prescribed behavioral norms associated with these identities (O'Connor, 2001), and become a standard for negotiating the educational environment (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; McNamara Horvat & Lewis, 2003). Identity layers can be selected, deselected, and combined based upon environmental circumstances, most notably the identity projected by peers (Cote and Schwartz, 2002; McNamara Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Stets & Harrod, 2004).

Intersections of Racial, Gender, and Academic Identities

So what does it mean to be a young black high school student? In 1986, Fordham and Ogbu proffered the theory that to be socially accepted by other African American students, black students have the burden of maintaining an oppositional, anti-white posturing. While there are affirmative black identities to which black students can ascribe (Akom, 2003; Clay, 2003), this oppositional posture includes a disdain for academic

achievement and proper Americanized English as both are perceived as attributes of whiteness. While there is some empirical substantiation of this thesis (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Ford & Harris, 1996; McNamara Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Steinberg, 1997), several scholars fail to find evidence of this oppositional culture nationally (Ainsworth-Darnell, 1998; Cook and Ludwig, 1998) and in more regional and localized studies (Akom, 2003; Ferguson, 2001; Tyson, 2002; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, n.d.). In the face of this conflicting literature, most telling is a mixed methods study by Tyson, Darity, & Castellino (n.d.) who explain that students regardless of racial or ethnic identity distance themselves from outward displays of academic achievement. Thus, rather than shunning an “acting white” labeling, African American students like their peers of other races/ ethnicities display risk aversion towards obtaining a negative academic identity, that of “nerd”. This proposition confirms works evaluating the intersectionality of identity, and the resultant influence of identity on student negotiation of the school environment (Chavous, Harris, Rivas, Helaire, & Green, 2004; Frank, Kehler, Lovell, & Davison, 2003; McNamara Horvat & Lewis, 2003).

With respect to gender identities, literature on boys is of increasing popularity within education and the social sciences and largely is of a pejorative tone, exploring the “problems” of young masculinity. While a fluid concept, masculinity in its dominant conception represents, among other things, strength, power, bravery, rationality, and heterosexuality (Young, 2001). As young men develop their masculine identity, they test and exercise aspects of masculinity that fit their persona in demonstrative manners, both positive and negative. It is the negativities of bullying, homophobia, and violence as well as substandard academic performance that are of central concern in the literature (Frank,

Kehler, Lovell, & Davidson, 2003; Ghail, 1996; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). To the extent that African-American males are culturally disadvantaged in the classroom (Norman, Ault Jr., Bentz, & Meskimen, 2001), opportunities for positive displays of masculinity, in the form of classroom leadership for example, may be limited. Towards that end, young black men have tendencies to engage in socially destructive behaviors, displays of strength, power, and “cool”, in an attempt to maintain dignity and pride in the face of perceived oppression (Ferguson, 2000; Majors, 1992). In addition, as black males are penalized more than their white counterparts for misbehaviors, both in terms of disciplinary actions (Ferguson, 2000) and academic actions such as grade retention (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003), greater disengagement from school, and hence lower college enrollment, is likely to result (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Roderick, 1995).

Contrary to intuition, differences in college enrollment rates between young blacks are not normally distributed across income levels. Using data from the National Post-Secondary Education Student Aid Survey, 1995-1996, King finds that at the lower end of the income distribution, the enrollment gap between black students is more than double and narrows to four percentage points among the middle class, and widens to 18 percent among students from families making \$70,000 or more (2000). Thus, just as explanations for declines in black male post-secondary enrollment cannot rest solely on factors associated with blackness, explanations grounded solely in masculinity or poverty also lack for under-inclusiveness.

This leads to a consideration of additional identity factors. Eccles & Barber (1999) propose that peer groupings significantly shape the identities of adolescents. Choice of extracurricular activity reaffirms one’s self-placement within a peer group, as well as the

persona associated with that group. Giving the example of athletes, Barber, Eccles, & Stone (2001) suggest that persons engaged in athletic activities are more likely than non-athletic persons to self-identify as a jock. Thus, while not perfect proxies, activities voluntarily chosen by students during after school hours may give indication of the academic identities, student social persona associated with the schooling environment.

Academic Identity, Identity Capital, and Extracurricular Participation

Beyond identity capital, the power of negotiating the school environment, extracurricular activity participation also represents an investment in education, providing transmission of social and cultural capital, attitudes, skills and the adoption of norms that are helpful in the cultivation of human capital more broadly (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; McNeal, 1998; Otto, 1976). Extracurricular activity is specifically linked to benefits such as enhanced attitude towards schooling, heightened academic aspirations with increases in educational achievement, and attainment, as well as decreases in the probability of high school dropout and substance abuse (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002).

Note that the benefits of extracurricular activity participation extend to students across racial/ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, and intellectual capacity lines (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003), but are not evenly distributed (McNeal, 1998). Of note, in Lisella and Serwatka's study of 766 eighth-graders of various minority backgrounds in urban schools, they found that in almost half of the cases, male participation in extracurricular activities was associated with lower achievement (1996). With respect to female students, the results were more mixed wherein 23 of the 90 analysis of variance (ANOVA)

procedures comparing grade point averages and standardized exam scores to extracurricular participation, women participating in extracurricular activities tended to achieve more. One of the implications of the Lisella and Serwatka study is that all extracurricular activities are not created equal: women participating in academically-based activities tend to achieve more (1996).

Looking specifically at the college enrollment gap between black students, Constantine and Perna (n.d.) using a sample of 895 students from NELS: 88/00 enrolled in a post-secondary institution in 1992, decomposed social and cultural capital factors by sex, finding that differences in enrollment between young black men and women in four-year institutions are largely attributable to assistance in applying for college and financial aid, parental involvement and educational aspirations. Although they consider participation in athletics and find this factor to be positively correlated with post-secondary enrollment, they do not inquire into the effect of other extracurricular activities on college enrollment. The present study further considers the role of extracurricular participation in post-secondary enrollment.

Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to explore the post-secondary college enrollment gap and assess to what extent student investment in education matters, for college enrollment purposes, and is significantly different for young black men and women outside of school hours. It is my hypothesis that investment in education for young black men and women outside of school hours is significantly different and is reflected in the college enrollment

gap between black students. This difference in time allocation can be further divided into three components. First, black male and female adolescents make different choices with respect to the types of after school activities and that these choices are related to one's perceived returns to education. Whereas black women are more likely to participate in academic, social, religious and household activities, black men are more apt to spend time unsupervised with peers or in symbolic activities, largely athletics and entertainment. These choices, in turn, are related to student development of both human and identity capital. Next I posit that young black men and women make different choices with respect to the amount of time allocated to skill-building after school activities, with black women allocating more time to such activities. This factor is a function of human capital. Last, young black men and women engage in skill building activities at different intensities. Thus, even if quantitatively allocating the same amount of time to extracurricular activities, black women get a greater return in skills for the amount of time invested. This greater return in skills is then reflected in increased rates of post-secondary enrollment.

Data

This study uses unrestricted data from the fourth follow-up to the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS 1988/2000), a national database sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The NELS 1988/2000 survey includes data for a nationally representative sample of 26,432 individuals who were eighth-graders in 1988, the base year of the study (Ingels et al., 2002). Since 1988, four follow-up studies have been administered (1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000) in an effort to collect trend information about students' experiences as they leave middle school, progress through

high school and enter into postsecondary institutions and the workforce. The data files from the fourth follow-up are ideal for this study because they provide information about the accomplishments of the 1988 eighth-grade cohort 12 years after the baseline study, at a time when most cohort members had entered and/or completed postsecondary education (Ingels et al., 2002).

Variables

Variables for this analysis are drawn from the NELS: 88/00 first, second, and fourth follow ups. I employ panel weights to account for non-response and missing data bias and use appropriate measures to account for survey design effects.

The outcome variable modeled in this research is college enrollment, as measured in NELS: 88/00 by the self-reported response to the question of in what year did student enroll in their first post-secondary institution. The analysis in this research design, however, can be extended to include other academic and non-academic outcomes including college graduation and early labor market earnings. Control factors include socioeconomic status (SES), a specification of family endowments such as parental education, occupation, and income; neighborhood characteristics – whether urban, suburban or rural; and, previous performance in the form of standardized math and reading scores. These factors and gender are measured in the first follow up. Of primary explanatory focus in this study are measures of gender and extracurricular participation/ unstructured activity. While the former is self-explanatory, the latter requires further discussion.

NELS: 88/00 includes thirteen scholastic extracurricular activities. For purposes of the present study, only the fact of participation in an extracurricular activity will be

included in the analysis, excluding the level of participation in sports and whether the student is an officer in both sports and non-sports activities. The quantity of time allocated to each activity is not measured in NELS, although measures of the amount of time allocated to all activities is available and is included in the analysis. The variable measuring how often a student “hangs out” or drives around with friends is also included in the analysis in order to compare the effects of structured and unstructured after school activity. For purposes of modeling, extracurricular activity variables are measured as a combination of in grades 10 and 12. This set of variables was coded by a general inquiry into high school activity extracurricular activity participation, an amalgamation of years ten and twelve.

Analysis

Binomial logistic regression analysis is used to assess a standard specification of college enrollment for African American students as a function of socioeconomic status, gender, previous academic achievement, neighborhood characteristics, choice of and amount of time spent in extracurricular and unstructured activities. A linear display of the model estimated is depicted as follows:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{SES}_i + \beta_2 \text{Prior Achievement}_i + \beta_3 \text{Neighborhood}_i + \beta_4 \text{Extracurriculars}_i + \beta_5 \text{Extracurricular Time}_i + \beta_6 \text{Unstructured Activity}_i + \beta_7 \text{Gender}_i + \varepsilon_i,$$

where Y_i represents post-secondary enrollment of all students between the years 1989 and 2000. Logit analysis is appropriate for this type of inquiry as the outcome variable used in

this analysis is dichotomous. Logit estimations of the maximum likelihood of an event's probability correct for the non-linearity, non-normal distribution of errors, and heteroscedasticity generated by general regression models using categorical outcome measures (Pedhazur, 1997). This study will first analyze the effects of being involved in any extracurricular activity. I then group the activities by activity types (athletic or non-athletic) to analyze the effects of particular kinds of activities on achievement and whether these effects vary by gender.

A key question in this context is whether the differential outcomes for adolescent Black men and women are accounted for in the allocation of time across activities. If, for example, the cause of differential achievement is differences in time spent on skill-building activities, one would expect that the coefficient on the gender indicator (β_7) to move towards zero. A key empirical distinction in this analysis is whether men and women choose different activities or whether there are differential effects associated with gender by activity for a given outcome.

Results and Discussion

This analysis begins with a test of basic assumptions. First, I assumed that black men and women students face similar environmental factors. In reviewing base year data, I find that gender-related statistical differences do not exist in geographic region ($t=-0.69$, $p<0.25$), population density ($t=-0.75$, $p<0.45$), socioeconomic status ($t=0.96$, $p<0.34$), or family composition ($t=1.36$, $p<0.09$). Neither do I find differences in school factors including the type of schools attended, whether public or private, ($t=-0.80$, $p<0.21$), the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, ($t=-1.31$, $p<0.09$), nor the percentage of minority students enrolled ($t=-0.3$, $p<0.38$).

Within the present dataset, only 53 percent of men as compared to 62 percent of women enroll in post- secondary education.¹ Given the 69 percent college enrollment rate among high school completers in the NELS 88 general population, not only is the difference between black men and women of a considerable size and statistically significant ($t=-3.47$, $p<0.001$), the enrollment gap isolates black men from the rest of the population.

Differences in Time Allocation

A look at the descriptive data reveals that out of our sample of eighth grade students, 77 percent of the 1,038 African-American students participate in some form of extracurricular activity. This compares with a 12th grade extracurricular activity participation rate of 69 percent for the general population in NELS: 88/00. By sex, 75 percent of black men ($N=450$) and 79 percent of black women ($N=588$) participate in some form of extracurricular activity in eighth grade. For women, participation rates drop to 78 percent in grade 10, and further decrease to 71 percent by grade 12. In grade 10, male participation rates for this grade eight cohort, increase to 80 percent and drop 15 percentage points to 71 percent by grade 12. Thus while the overall trend of extracurricular participation is similar for young black men and women, with rises in rates as students move from middle to high school, the decline in participation rates from grade 10 to grade 12 is slightly more dramatic for young men (9 percent) than young black women (7 percent).

¹ Constantine and Perna found enrollment rates of 52 percent for men and 61 percent for women. Their sample is limited to students enrolling in fall 1992 (2000).

Overall, net declines in extracurricular participation rates for both men and women warrant attention, and could point to several factors including, but not limited to, a trade of skill-building activities for less productive use of time or the trade of activities with long-term potential economic benefits for those with a shorter term economic gratification. Tied to the latter, especially for women, is the effect of family creation on a student's ability to enhance their personal growth beyond that of parenthood.² In addition, as competition in men's sports, the primary activity for males, increases from junior to varsity levels, there arises a question of the availability of skill-building activities of interest, including intramural sporting divisions, to young black men who are unable to compete at higher levels, both in schools and in the community.

Looking at extracurricular participation by type of activity, there are statistically significant variations in activity participation by sex. As expected, male students tend to participate in sports at higher rates than women. This difference is broad in grade 10, $\bar{X}^{\text{Men}} = 0.55$, $\bar{X}^{\text{Women}} = 0.36$, and slightly increases in grade 12, $\bar{X}^{\text{Men}} = 0.44$, $\bar{X}^{\text{Women}} = 0.24$. With respect to all other activities, at each grade level, women participate at rates higher than men. This difference is statistically significant at all three levels in music and theatrical activities and in grades 10 and 12 for academic clubs. In fact, by grade 12, women are one-third more likely to participate in academic clubs, $\bar{X}^{\text{Men}} = 0.3$, $\bar{X}^{\text{Women}} = 0.41$, and music/ theatrical activities, $\bar{X}^{\text{Men}} = 0.23$, $\bar{X}^{\text{Women}} = 0.32$. Students are, however, more active during grade ten. In this light, differences between male and female participation rates are greatest in athletics and music/ fine

² A cursory look at other factors with the potential to distract from attainment goals reveals that the present dataset is ill equipped to handle such an inquiry within this narrow subgroup. In 1992, only nine men and eighteen women engaged in employment and these jobs were confined from 0 to 10 hours per week. Only three men and eight women dropped out of school to support family. In addition, three men, including two of the three dropping out to support their family, and fifteen women dropped out due to parenthood.

arts, with men participating at higher rates in sports, $\bar{X}^{\text{Men}} = 0.55$, $\bar{X}^{\text{Women}} = 0.36$, and women participating more in music/ fine arts, $\bar{X}^{\text{Men}} = 0.16$, $\bar{X}^{\text{Women}} = 0.33$.

Trends in music/ fine arts participation are particularly interesting as participation rates among women decline from a high of 51 percent in grade eight to 32 percent in grade 12. Concurrently, male participation rates are cut in half in the move from grade eight to grade 10 and then grow slowly, by 7 percent points, from grade 10 to grade 12. As such, women's participation rates follow a pattern consistent with the professionalization of musical and theatrically based activities, as men do in the arena of sports. A rationale of the sharp decline in young black male participation in music and fine arts is unclear. One possible explanation would lie in the development of male identity: to the extent that organized music and fine arts activities are perceived as feminine (Roulston & Mills, 2000) by young men still trying to develop a male identity, such activities may be shunned in earlier years. As young men become more comfortable with their masculinity, participation in perceptibly feminine activities should rise as they find ways to balance their male identities with other interests. However, such an explanation fails to explain the initially higher levels of male participation in music and fine arts in grade eight, as middle school males are more uncertain of their male identity; hence, more likely to exhibit stronger male behaviors to ward off peer inquiries into their masculinity. Considering the productive/non-productive activity tradeoffs between grades ten and twelve, I find that both men and women spend more time driving or riding around in grade twelve than ten. Gender differentials in this proxy for unproductive activity are small, but statistically significant in both years, in grade 10 ($t = 2.78$, $p < 0.003$), in grade 12 ($t = 2.63$, $p < 0.004$), with black men spending more time in cars with friends.

In terms of the amount of time invested in school-based extracurricular activities, differences in the amount of time allocated for school-based extracurricular activities are statistically significant in both grades 10 and 12. The bracket of time allocated for these activities for tenth graders averages at less than one hour for women and men, $\bar{X}^{\text{men}}=1.24$, $\bar{X}^{\text{women}}=1.08$, ($t=2$, $p<0.022$). By grade 12 the average amount of time spent in extra-curricular activities increases for both groups, $\bar{X}^{\text{Men}}=2.13$, $\bar{X}^{\text{Women}}=1.63$, as do the net differentials in time. These changes are statistically significant ($t=4.57$, $p<0.001$), with women pulling up their average time to the one- to four-hour bracket. Nevertheless, men still spend more time in extracurricular activities, with the number of male students spending 20 or more hours on extracurriculars quadrupling. As such, it seems to be the case that the time factor in extracurricular activities does not impact one's propensity to attend college.

Differential Returns to Activities

In estimating the standard scholastic achievement model, Model 1 predicts post-secondary enrollment by 95 percent (See Table 2). In terms of odds ratios, the likelihood of post-secondary enrollment of an African American engaged in high school extracurricular activities improves by more than two and one-half times ($OR^{\text{Extracurriculars}}=2.58$). Gender, also, has a statistically significant effect with being female raising the propensity for an African American to enroll in post-secondary education by 77 percent, more than doubling the likelihood of enrollment (Model 1: $OR^{\text{Female}}=2.17$; Model 2: $OR^{\text{Female}}=2.23$; Model 3: $OR^{\text{Female}}=2.09$). On the other hand, the aggregate effects of neighborhood characteristics and socioeconomic status are small, and in the case of neighborhood characteristics negative and not statistically significant. The statistical

significance of socioeconomic status fluctuates across the models. When considering odds ratios, the influence of socioeconomic status is significant only in Model 2 ($OR^{SES}=1.58$).

Breaking down extracurricular activity into subgroups in Model 2, the only activities enhancing the probability of post-secondary enrollment are music and fine arts related. Each of the other activities in Model 2, Table 2 is positively associated with post-secondary enrollment, but is not statistically significant. Similarly, time factors, as calculated in Model 3, are not statistically significant. The negative signage associated with time riding around or hanging out with friends was expect; however, the negative signage attached to time spent in extracurricular activities was not. Perhaps this negative charge is emanating from time intensive activities, such as athletics, that may have a strong correlation with post-secondary attainment for African-Americans. In any event, the influence of time, whether in structured or unstructured activities, is indistinguishable from zero. Adding the time factors conflates Model 3. Comparatively, Model 2 is more parsimonious. Furthermore, most of the variation is accounted for in Model 1 (pseudo $R^2 = 0.20$), the significant difference occurs in the move of the significance in extracurricular participation to a specific area, music/ fine arts, in which only 4 percent more variance is explained.

Note that in moving from Table 2 to Table 3, I dropped the neighborhood characteristics variable as it added little to the analysis. In making this move, interactions between race and gender change. Looking at the variables by gender, with the exception of participation in community-based activities, there are across the board statistically significant differences in prior achievement, extracurricular activity participation, and the time invested in structured versus unstructured activities (Table 3). Of note, young black women have slightly higher achievement than their male counterparts. The largest differences are in sports participation (men are high),

participation in music and fine arts (women are high), and in time investment where men are participating in both structured and unstructured activities in greater time quantities than women. However, these investments in time do not translate into higher or lower propensities towards post-secondary education. In fact, in Model 3 both Tables 2 and 3 the time factor is not statistically significant for either structured or unstructured activities.

In each of the Table 3 models, extracurricular participation is statistically significant in the post-secondary enrollment of young black men ($OR_m^{\text{Extracurriculars}} = 3.74^*$) with music and fine arts having the strongest influence (Model 2: $OR_m^{\text{Music}} = 5.92^{***}$; Model 3: $OR_m^{\text{Music}} = 6.38^{***}$), athletics participation a more modest bearing (Model 2: $OR_m^{\text{Sports}} = 1.75^*$; Model 3: $OR_m^{\text{Sports}} = 2.23^*$). However, extracurricular participation itself is not a statistically significant predictor of postsecondary enrollment for young black women (Model 2: $OR_f^{\text{Extracurriculars}} = 2.41$), although participation time has a small positive association, as noted above.

Thus, returns to participation in extracurricular activities is unevenly distributed across the sexes, with African American men nearly four times as likely to enroll in postsecondary education if engaged in high school extracurricular activities, in particular music and the arts. While the association between postsecondary education and extracurricular activities is positive for young black women, the influence is not statistically significant. In fact, for young black women prior achievement is the strongest predictor of postsecondary enrollment, a factor that fails to register as statistically significant for young black men. Instead, for young black men socioeconomic status seems key. This fact highlights both the resiliency of black women and the particular influence of money on the decision of young black men to attend college.

To disentangle the influence of race from gender, I reran Table 3 using white students, finding that like young black men, the postsecondary enrollments of young white men and

women are sensitive to socioeconomics, to a greater magnitude. This finding confirms that for each socioeconomic level, African Americans are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education. Thus young black men and women are both resilient with respect to socioeconomics to some degree, young black women more so. Yet, because black men are still socioeconomically sensitive, and tend to be poorer, the effects of this sensitivity is more pronounced in their lack of postsecondary enrollment *vis a vis* their white peers.

I also found positive, statistically significant associations between each of the extracurricular activities and postsecondary attainment for white students, with the exception of music. Thus, the strong positive influence of music and the fine arts on postsecondary enrollment seems unique to African American men. As such, this group more than others carries the brunt of cutbacks in music and fine arts programs.

With respect to other factors in the model, the postsecondary attainment of black women mimics that of white students. Only for black men is prior achievement not significant. Also only black men fail to gain statistically significant returns on their time investment in extracurricular activities. Such uniqueness suggests that the postsecondary education decision process of African American men vary significantly with the general population, including black women.

Conclusion

As noted in both popular and trade literature, differentials in post-secondary enrollment rates between young black men and women are alarming. Eccles, Barber, Stone, and Hunt (2003) find overall that students participating in extracurricular activities have better educational outcomes, without regard to race, class, gender, or intellectual capacity. They argue that

extracurricular activities provide mediating mechanisms that enable academic identity development and build peer groups supportive of academically engaged identities.

What I have seen is that black male and female adolescents do, in fact, make different choices with respect to the types of after school activities. These differences, however, are small, especially in comparison to the differential impacts on post-secondary enrollment received by black men and women. In addition, the impact of the differences in extracurricular activity participation is relatively minor. Moreover, the modular fit is relatively low, in total suggesting that academic identity is more than a reflection of extracurricular experiences. It stands to reason that additional factors reflective of the total scholastic experience would be of import in shaping how a student may see himself or herself as an academic being. These factors should include student perceptions of teacher expectations (Ladson-Billings, 1995) as well as measures of academic (grade retention) and disciplinary actions (suspensions/ expulsions) (Davis & Jordan, 1994).

Most strong and alarming is the degree to which disparities in college enrollment between African American students are largely attributable to the differential impact of low socioeconomic status on African American young men. While young black men and women are more resilient to low socioeconomic status than their white counterparts, being poorer than whites hurts black males more, evidenced in lower postsecondary enrollment rates. Participation in music and fine arts programs, and to a lesser degree athletics, helps mitigate the financial circumstances of young black men. However, young black men have less access to the music and fine arts programs which seem to capture the benefits of extracurricular participation: the scholastic engagement and other factors that predict college enrollment. It is particularly disturbing to find that prior academic achievement has no significant bearing on college

attainment for this populous. Combined with the findings of Constantine and Perna (2000) revealing that black males tend not to receive aid on college and financial aid applications, it seems to be the case that college-able black men are engaging in scholastic activity, but are not able to recoup the benefits of being engaged.

The implication of these findings is that there is a disjuncture between student engagement and postsecondary attainment for young black men. In order to bridge this disjuncture, translators of the academic process, i.e. guidance counselors, role models and mentors, seem needed to engage young black males beyond the “cool pose” (Majors, 1992). These translators need to hold expectations high for this group of students, while simultaneously conveying the practical significance of educational engagement: the returns to education. To the extent that fiscal constraints have led states and localities to cut extracurricular activities, students most in need of these outlets may be disproportionately impacted, and may help explain why black boys are less apt to enroll in post-secondary education. It may be the case that extracurricular activities should not be considered as extras for some students, but essentials for a productive academic career extending through college enrollment. It is through the further decomposing of cultural and academic identity factors we may gain a better sense of the attributes of the college enrollment gap between black students, and become better equipped to develop meaningful policy interventions.

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Table 1 – Differences in Choice of Activities

	Grade 8			Grade 10			Grade 12		
	Men	Women	Difference	Men	Women	Difference	Men	Women	Difference
Sports, including Cheerleading	0.61 (0.49)	0.49 (0.5)	3.87**	0.55 (0.49)	0.36 (0.48)	6.43***	0.44 (0.5)	0.24 (0.43)	7.4***
Music and Theatrical Arts	0.35 (0.48)	0.51 (0.5)	-5.2***	0.16 (0.33)	0.33 (0.42)	-6.83***	0.23 (0.42)	0.32 (0.47)	-3.29***
Academic Clubs	0.48 (0.5)	0.53 (0.5)	-1.6	0.29 (0.45)	0.35 (0.48)	-2.15*	0.3 (0.46)	0.41 (0.49)	-3.77***
Community Activities	0.44 (0.5)	0.47 (0.5)	-.96	0.58 (0.49)	0.62 (0.48)	-1.37	0.56 (0.5)	0.57 (0.5)	-0.34
Overall Participation	0.75 (0.43)	0.79 (0.4)	-1.55	0.80 (0.)	0.78 (0.41)	0.67	0.71 (0.45)	0.71 (0.44)	-.07

* p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001. Note – Dropouts are included as non-participants

Table 2 – Mean Values and Maximum Likelihood Estimates of Post-Secondary Enrollment African American Students

	Mean Values	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Socioeconomic Status	-0.38 (0.05)	.53* (0.21)	.46* (0.21)	0.37 (0.28)
Neighborhood	1.6 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.16)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.03 (0.19)
Prior Achievement	45.38 (0.51)	0.08* (0.04)	0.09* (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)
Female	0.5 (0.03)	0.77** (0.3)	0.8** (0.3)	0.74* (0.35)
Extracurricular Activities	0.9 (0.02)	0.95** (0.36)		
Sports	0.79 (0.06)		0.28 (0.2)	0.29 (0.27)
Music/Fine arts	0.36 (0.03)		0.93** (0.32)	0.92** (0.35)
Academic Clubs	0.49 (0.03)		0.02 (0.29)	-0.13 (0.3)
Community-Based	0.76 (0.03)		0.1 (0.32)	0.01 (0.45)
Participation Time	2.1 (0.12)			-0.06 (0.13)
Unstructured Time	3.05 (0.14)			-0.18 (0.19)

* p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 3- Mean Values and Maximum Likelihood Estimates of Post-Secondary Enrollment African American Students

	Mean Values		Difference	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Men	Women		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Socioeconomic Status	-0.34	-0.42	1.68*	0.76*	0.45	0.76*	0.41	0.76*	0.13
	(0.8)	(0.81)		(0.34)	(0.25)	(0.34)	(0.25)	(0.38)	(0.23)
Prior Achievement	44.9	46.2	-2.52**	0.03	0.18***	0.05	0.18***	0.05	0.16***
	(8.3)	(8.7)		(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Extracurricular Activities	0.9	0.87	1.31*	1.32*	0.88				
	(0.3)	(0.33)		(0.59)	(0.48)				
Sports	0.65	0.44	8.3***			0.56*	0.16	0.8*	-0.02
	(0.48)	(0.5)				(0.25)	(0.22)	(0.38)	(0.26)
Music/Fine arts	0.3	0.45	-5.56***			1.78***	0.2	1.85***	-0.03
	(0.45)	(0.5)				(0.51)	(0.37)	(0.53)	(0.42)
Academic Clubs	0.47	0.52	-1.77*			-0.66	0.56	-0.77	0.4
	(0.5)	(0.5)				(0.4)	(0.37)	(0.47)	(0.37)
Community-Based	0.75	0.75	0.1			0.23	0.12	0.23	-0.22
	(0.4)	(0.44)				(0.39)	(0.36)	(0.39)	(0.49)
Participation Time	2.35	1.9	4.73***					-0.36	0.38*
	(1.54)	(1.4)						(0.2)	(0.17)
Unstructured Time	3.15	2.98	2.69**					0.11	-0.24
	(0.93)	(0.94)						(0.27)	(0.19)

* p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.