BRIEF REPORT

Gender Differences in Motivational Pathways to College for Middle Class African American Youths

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Using a sample of predominantly middle-class African American adolescents and parents (N = 424), the authors tested a path model linking parental expectations for children's future educational attainment, youths' motivation during Grade 11, and youths' subsequent on-time postsecondary educational progress. Parents' expectations were positively related to adolescents' educational attainment aspirations, attainment expectations, utility values (i.e., beliefs about the usefulness of education), and perceptions of racial barriers to upward mobility. Relationships between parents' expectations and youths' aspirations and expectations were mediated by youths' perceptions of parents' expectations. For boys, but not girls, Grade 11 educational expectations and utility values each uniquely predicted college attendance 1 year after high school graduation. In addition, boys' perceptions of racial barriers were negatively related to subsequent postsecondary progress through their influence on values. Findings underscore the importance of academic achievement motivation as a developmental resource for African American boys and suggest that boys are especially likely to benefit from interventions promoting positive motivational beliefs.

Keywords: educational expectations and values, gender differences, African American adolescents, educational attainment

In the United States, completion of a postsecondary degree is associated with multiple quality-of-life indicators, including financial well-being, physical health, and life expectancy. Despite the importance of educational attainment, little research has focused on processes that precede postsecondary outcomes for African Americans. In the present study, we examined how parents' and students' motivational beliefs during high school are related to youths' on-time postsecondary educational progress, as defined by completion of 1 year of college immediately after high school graduation. Youths who follow this on-time trajectory are more likely to attain a postsecondary degree than those who delay college enrollment. Bozick and DeLuca (2005) found that delaying college entry by just 1 year reduces the odds of eventual degree completion by 64% and that African Americans are more likely to delay postsecondary enrollment than are White and Asian students.

Our research is grounded in Eccles's and Wigfield's (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, Tonks, & Klauda, 2009) expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation. According to the theory, task-specific motivation depends heavily on an individual's expectation for success at the task and the level of value that he or she attaches to the task. We hypothesized that the level of education African American adolescents expect to complete successfully and the degree to which they view education as useful in accomplishing their goals for the future (i.e., educational utility values) predict on-time postsecondary progress. In addition to expectations and values, we examined educational attainment aspirations as a predictor of postsecondary outcomes. Whereas expectations reflect beliefs about future outcomes that (in theory) take into account relevant constraints, aspirations refer to what an individual ideally would like to achieve in the future, given few limitations. Consistent with expectancy-value theory, we posited that educational expectations would be a stronger determinant than aspirations of on-time postsecondary progress.

Although direct relationships between African American parents' expectations and youths' motivational outcomes have been established (e.g., Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007), no prior studies have examined relations between parental expectations and youths' postsecondary outcomes; moreover, little is known about factors that mediate these relationships. In this study, we posited that adolescents' perceptions of parents' educational expectations for them partially explain (i.e., mediate) relationships between parents' self-reported expectations and adolescents' educational...
aspirations, expectations, and values. This hypothesized pattern of relationships is consistent with expectancy-value theory, which holds that reflected appraisals—an individual’s beliefs about how others perceive him or her—play a role in views about the self. Gill and Reynolds (1999) did not find support for this mediating role of reflected appraisals in an African American sample. However, they tested this hypothesis with 6th graders—whose perceptions of parents’ beliefs might be less accurate than those of high school youths—and they examined the relation between parents’ expectations and children’s academic achievement, rather than educational attainment.

A second factor that may mediate relations between parents’ expectations and youths’ motivation are youths’ perceptions of racial barriers to upward mobility. Although racial barrier perceptions may lead to academic disengagement (Mickelson, 1990), students whose parents have high educational expectations for them may be less likely to hold such perceptions. Especially by mid to late adolescence, it is likely that parents who expect their children to go to college actively engage them in the process of preparing for postsecondary education (e.g., by encouraging them to enroll in honors/advanced courses and to research potential colleges; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). By activating concrete strategies for accomplishing educational goals, high parent expectations may increase youths’ sense that their goals are within reach while decreasing the salience of racial barriers (Auerbach, 2004). We hypothesized that parents’ expectations are negatively related to youths’ perceptions of racial barriers to upward mobility, and that barrier perceptions, in turn, are negatively related to expectations and values.

In addition to testing the direct effects of youths’ motivation on postsecondary outcomes, we also examined the moderating role of gender for these relationships. Research has documented gender differences favoring girls in African Americans’ educational expectations and values (Taylor & Graham, 2007; Wood et al., 2007); however, little is known about whether relations between these motivational variables and educational outcomes vary as a function of youths’ gender. Given the absence of strong theoretical or empirical evidence concerning the moderating role of gender, we tested two competing hypotheses. One hypothesis is that relationships between motivational beliefs and postsecondary outcomes are stronger for boys than for girls. More so than girls, African American boys are believed to experience a host of social-context risk factors (e.g., denigrating social stereotypes, institutional/personal discrimination; Noguera, 2003). Holding strong expectations and values during high school could be instrumental in helping boys to overcome these risks, thereby setting the stage for adaptive long-term educational trajectories. On the other hand, the multiple risks faced by African American boys might make it difficult for them to advance toward their educational goals, even when motivational beliefs are strong. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) theorized that the salutary effects of factors typically associated with developmental competency may be essentially drowned out in the context of strong environmental stressors. In accordance, our competing hypothesis was that strong motivational beliefs would be less beneficial for boys than for girls.

**Overview of Present Study**

Using a sample of predominantly middle class African American adolescents and their parents, we tested pathways linking parents’ expectations during youths’ 11th grade year to postsecondary educational progress measured 1 year after high school graduation (see Figure 1). We hypothesized that parents’ expectations are related to youths’ motivational beliefs (i.e., educational aspirations, expectations, and values) both directly and indirectly via their influences on youths’ perceptions of parental expectations and youths’ perceptions of racial barriers to educational/occupational attainment. Of particular interest were longitudinal pathways linking 11th grade motivation to subsequent educational progress. We hypothesized that Grade 11 expectations, values, and perceived racial barriers (but not aspirations) predict college outcomes. We also posited that gender moderates the relationships between motivational variables and postsecondary progress. Although prior research has demonstrated the role of expectations in predicting postsecondary attainment (Mello, 2008), the specific set of relationships tested in the present study has not been examined previously. Moreover, our tests of these linkages are conservative because we control for prior academic achievement and family

![Figure 1. Hypothesized path model.](image-url)
background variables, a methodological approach that enables us to isolate the effects of motivational variables on postsecondary outcomes.

Method

Data Source and Sample

Data for this study were drawn from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS; Eccles, 1997), a six-wave longitudinal study spanning the period between participants’ seventh grade year and 3 years post-high school graduation. In 1991, 1,482 youths and their families (61% African American) agreed to participate in the project. Participating families resided in a single county on the Eastern seaboard of the United States that was characterized by relative socioeconomic equality between African American and White residents. For details regarding the MADICS sampling and data-collection procedures, see Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff (2003) and the MADICS website (http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/pgc/home.htm). Data presented here were collected during youths’ 11th grade year (Wave 4) and 1 year post-high school graduation (Wave 5).

Only youths who reported their postsecondary educational progress at Wave 5 were included in the sample, which consisted of 424 adolescents (38.4% boys) and their primary caregivers (PCGs). These individuals represent approximately 47% of African American families initially recruited to MADICS. At Wave 1, PCGs of study sample youths reported significantly higher annual incomes and educational attainment than PCGs of youths who were excluded because of missing Wave 5 data. At Wave 4, PCGs of included youths reported a median annual household income of $50,000–$54,999. About 6% of primary caregivers had not completed high school, 70% had earned a high school credential, and 24% had completed a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Measures

Except for demographic information, prior achievement, and postsecondary outcomes, all reported data were collected when youths were in Grade 11. Youths reported their educational progress 1 year after on-time high school graduation.

Parents’ expectations for youths’ future educational attainment. Parental expectations were measured with an item asking parents to report how far they believed their child would actually go in school. Parents selected from a set of response options, which were coded in the following manner: 1 = 11th grade or less; 2 = graduate from high school; 3 = graduate from 2-year college with associate’s degree or other paraprofessional degree; post-high school vocational training, or some college; 4 = graduate from 4-year college; 5 = master’s degree or teaching credential; and 6 = MD, PhD, law, or other doctoral degree.

Youths’ perceptions of parental expectations. Perceived parental expectations were assessed with an item asking, “How far do you think your parent(s) believe(s) you will go in school?” Response options were identical to and coded in the same manner as those for parental expectations.

Youths’ perceived racial barriers. Youths responded to two items regarding the extent to which racial discrimination would impede their future educational and employment opportunities (i.e., “How much do you think discrimination because of your race might keep you from getting the [amount of education/job] you want?” 1 = not at all, 5 = a lot). Item responses were averaged to yield a single score ($r = .49$).

Youths’ educational attainment aspirations. Adolescents were asked, “If you could do exactly what you wanted, how far would you like to go in school?” Response options were identical to and coded in the same manner as those for parental expectations.

Youths’ educational attainment expectations. The expectations measure immediately followed the measure for aspirations and read, “We can’t always do what we most want to do. How far do you think you actually will go in school?” Response options were identical to and coded in the same manner as those for parental expectations.

Youths’ educational utility values. Beliefs about the utility of education for accomplishing goals for the future were measured with five items (e.g., “I have to do well in school if I want to be a success in life”; reverse coded). Response options ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) and were averaged to yield a single score, with higher scores indicating stronger values ($\alpha = .70$).

On-time postsecondary educational progress. On-time postsecondary progress was assessed 1 year after youths’ high school graduation. Participants who reported having completed 1 or more years of college received a score of 1. Those who reported completing less than 1 year of college received a score of 0.

Control variables. Measures of prior achievement and socioeconomic status (SES) were entered as control variables in the path model because of known associations between these variables and motivation. Prior academic achievement was a composite of youths’ Grade 5 standardized test scores and Grade 8 grade point average, both of which were obtained from school records. SES measures included the PCG’s Wave 4 report of annual household income and the PCG’s highest degree attained.

Analysis Plan

Analyses were conducted using Mplus Version 5.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2007). Mplus estimates model parameters using full information maximum likelihood (FIML), which is appropriate for datasets with missing data. (Percentage of data missing for each variable is shown in Table 1). FIML permits all available data to be included in an analysis and generates parameter estimates that are less biased than those obtained using traditional missing data techniques (e.g., listwise deletion; Schafer & Graham, 2002).1

In the first step of the analyses, we tested hypotheses concerning linkages between the focal study variables by simultaneously estimating six sets of regression relationships for boys and six sets for girls (i.e., one set for each endogenous variable shown in Figure 1). This procedure yielded estimates of direct relationships between variables, while controlling for SES and academic achievement. Next, we used a series of Wald tests of parameter constraints to assess whether regression coefficients for boys and

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1 To increase confidence in results of the FIML models, we also analyzed the data using multiple imputation procedures. The resulting models were substantively comparable to the FIML models. Multiple imputation results are available from the first author upon request.
girls were significantly different (in other words, to test the hypothesized moderating influence of gender; “Introduction to Mplus,” n.d.). Finally, for both boys and girls, we obtained estimates of indirect effects between variables in the path model by calculating the product of the coefficients leading from the (theoretically) causal variable of interest to the corresponding dependent variable. Wald tests were used to assess significant differences between indirect effects across gender groups.

**Results**

Means and correlations for study variables are shown in Table 1. On average, parents expected their children to complete a 4-year college degree. Adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ expectations and self-expectations were somewhat higher. For girls in particular, the mean perceived expectation score of 4.82 showed that, on average, girls thought their parents expected them to complete a master’s degree/teaching certification. Girls reported significantly higher parental expectations, self-expectations, and aspirations than did boys. When asked about the degree to which racial discrimination would prevent them from attaining educational/occupational goals, the average score for both genders corresponded with “a little” on the response scale. Mean utility value scores were near 4, indicating agreement with statements about the value of education.

**Pathways Between Parents’ Expectations and Youths’ Motivation**

Regression coefficients for direct effects between study variables are shown in Figure 2, and regression results including control variables appear in Table 2. As hypothesized, parents’ expectations were significantly and positively related to youths’ perceptions of those expectations; thus, even with achievement controlled, youths’ perceptions of parents’ expectations appeared to be grounded in parents’ actual expectations. Unexpectedly, parental expectations were positively related to perceived racial barriers: Youths whose parents reported higher expectations perceived more racial barriers than did youths whose parents held relatively low expectations. Parental expectations were also positively associated with youths’ aspirations, expectations, and educational utility values. Youths’ perceptions of parental expectations were significantly related to youths’ aspirations and expectations but not values. The relation between perceived parental expectations and youths’ self-expectations was significantly larger for girls than for boys, Wald $\chi^2(1, N = 424) = 1.20, p = .31$.

Effects for indirect pathways linking parents’ expectations to the three motivational variables are shown in Table 3. For both genders, perceived parental expectations mediated relationships between parents’ expectations and youths’ aspirations and aspirations. The path linking parents’ expectations to youths’ values via perceived barriers was significant for boys but not for girls; moreover, the difference between coefficients for boys and girls approached significance, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 3.48, p = .06$.

**Pathways to On-Time Postsecondary Educational Progress**

Consistent with hypotheses, educational aspirations did not predict on-time postsecondary educational progress (see Table 2 and Figure 2). Youths’ educational expectations and educational values during Grade 11 predicted on-time progress for boys but not for girls. Moreover, the regression coefficients for these relationships differed for boys compared with girls: for expectations, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 4.52; $ for values, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 5.76, ps < .05$.

For boys, the pathway linking parents’ expectations to postsecondary progress indirectly via perceived parental expectations and self-expectations was significant (see Table 3). Although the cor-

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**Table 1**

**Estimated Sample Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Boys (N = 163) and Girls (N = 261)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>M (SD) for Boys</th>
<th>M (SD) for Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Income</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.43*</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>— .03</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>12.62 (6.19)</td>
<td>11.55 (6.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parent education</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>— .00</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>1.62 (1.73)</td>
<td>1.54 (1.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prior achievement</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>— .25*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.38*</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>0.23 (0.88)</td>
<td>0.07 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parent expectation</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>— .29*</td>
<td>— .46*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.40*</td>
<td>.50*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>4.18 (1.19)</td>
<td>4.34 (1.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Perceived expectation</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>— .23*</td>
<td>— .47*</td>
<td>— .54*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.58*</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>4.39 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.82 (1.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Perceived barriers</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>— .08*</td>
<td>— .03*</td>
<td>— .13*</td>
<td>— .17*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>2.20 (1.06)</td>
<td>2.03 (1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Youths expectation</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>— .21*</td>
<td>— .41*</td>
<td>— .54*</td>
<td>— .66*</td>
<td>— .15*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.63*</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>4.63 (1.38)</td>
<td>5.15 (1.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Youths perception</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>— .24*</td>
<td>— .47*</td>
<td>— .57*</td>
<td>— .71*</td>
<td>— .01</td>
<td>.73*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>.57*</td>
<td>3.70 (1.10)</td>
<td>4.55 (1.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Youths values</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>— .11*</td>
<td>— .15*</td>
<td>— .22*</td>
<td>— .13*</td>
<td>— .03</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>4.03 (1.03)</td>
<td>4.09 (0.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Educational progress</td>
<td>.40*</td>
<td>— .28*</td>
<td>— .65*</td>
<td>— .48*</td>
<td>— .48*</td>
<td>— .02</td>
<td>.42*</td>
<td>.52*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% missing for girls</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% missing for boys</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Values shown for educational progress are the proportion of boys and girls who reported on-time postsecondary educational progress. There was no significant difference in the proportion of boys and girls who reported on-time progress, $\chi^2(1, N = 424) = 1.20, p = .31$.

*p < .05.

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responding pathway for girls was not significant, there was no significant difference between the coefficient for boys and that for girls, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 0.36, p > .10$. The direct paths linking Grade 11 barrier perceptions to on-time progress were nonsignificant for both genders; however, the path linking perceived racial barriers to on-time educational progress via educational values for boys was both significant and different from the corresponding path for girls, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 4.98, p < .05$. Thus, boys who perceived fewer racial barriers reported greater educational utility, which in turn increased the probability of on-time postsecondary progress.

**Discussion**

In this study, we documented motivational pathways linking parents’ expectations to adolescents’ on-time postsecondary educational progress in middle-class African American families. Youths who transition to college immediately after high school graduation are more likely than college-delayers to eventually attain a postsecondary degree (Bozick & DeLuca, 2005). Our results show that among African American high school boys, educational attainment expectations, educational utility values, and perceptions of racial barriers differentiate youths who follow this adaptive educational pathway from those who do not. Unexpectedly, motivational variables were unrelated to college outcomes for girls.

**Parental Expectations and Youths’ Motivational Beliefs**

In the first segment of our model, we examined factors that mediate links between parents’ expectations and youths’ aspirations, expectations, and utility values. Parents’ expectations were related to youths’ motivational outcomes both directly and indirectly via youths’ perceptions of those expectations. Moreover, perceived parental expectations appeared to be grounded in parents’ actual expectations, even when controlling for prior academic achievement and family background variables. Results also suggest that perceived parental expectations were incorporated into youths’ academic identity-related beliefs (i.e., their aspirations and expectations). Even with perceived parental expectations in the model, pathways between parents’ self-reported expectations and youths’ aspirations and expectations remained statistically significant. In other words, parents’ expectations and youths’ perceptions of those expectations each appear to exert a unique influence on motivation.

Hypotheses about the mediating role of youths’ perceptions of racial barriers to educational/occupational attainment were partially supported. As expected, perceived racial barriers were unrelated to aspirations. Moreover, barrier perceptions were associated with lower educational expectations among girls and lower utility values among boys. These findings are consistent with the idea that, although youths who anticipate racial barriers to upward mobility may endorse the dominant ideology concerning education (as indicated by high aspirations), they may not view education as central to their own future pathways because they believe that effort invested in school will yield low returns (Mickelson, 1990). Contrary to hypotheses, parents’ expectations were positively related to adolescents’ perceptions of racial barriers. We originally posited that parents who hold high attainment expectations for their children would be particularly likely to connect youths with concrete strategies for attaining their educational goals, thereby decreasing the salience of racial barriers to upward mobility. A plausible alternative hypothesis is that parents with high expectations are more likely than low-expectation parents to alert adolescents to the racially biased treatment they may encounter as they
attempt to access the opportunity structure. Such preparation for bias may increase youths' awareness of racial... on-time postsecondary educational progress.

| Table 2 |
| Identifying Regression Coefficients, Standard Errors, and \( R^2 \) Values of the Hypothesized Path Model for Girls and Boys (\( N = 424 \)) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Perceived expectations ( B (SE) )</th>
<th>Perceived barriers ( B (SE) )</th>
<th>Youths' aspirations ( B (SE) )</th>
<th>Youths' expectations ( B (SE) )</th>
<th>Youths' values ( B (SE) )</th>
<th>On-time educational progress ( B (SE) )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.04 (.02)*</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
<td>-.03 (.01)*</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>-.01 (.10)</td>
<td>-.01 (.09)</td>
<td>-.03 (.03)</td>
<td>-.03 (.03)</td>
<td>-.04 (.08)</td>
<td>-.00 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>.39 (.10)*</td>
<td>.34 (.12)*</td>
<td>.05 (.07)</td>
<td>-.06 (.09)</td>
<td>.09 (.09)</td>
<td>.13 (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent achievement</td>
<td>.00 (.09)</td>
<td>.00 (.09)</td>
<td>.03 (.09)</td>
<td>.07 (.10)</td>
<td>.09 (.09)</td>
<td>.19 (.09)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent aspiration</td>
<td>.25 (.07)*</td>
<td>.30 (.07)*</td>
<td>.22 (.07)*</td>
<td>.33 (.09)*</td>
<td>.25 (.17)</td>
<td>.20 (.10)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent expectation</td>
<td>.09 (.09)</td>
<td>-.01 (.10)</td>
<td>.09 (.09)</td>
<td>.13 (.10)</td>
<td>.02 (.06)</td>
<td>.19 (.09)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>.00 (.09)</td>
<td>-.01 (.10)</td>
<td>.03 (.09)</td>
<td>.07 (.10)</td>
<td>.09 (.09)</td>
<td>.19 (.09)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>.59 (.08)*</td>
<td>.24 (.11)*</td>
<td>.65 (.07)*</td>
<td>.43 (.06)*</td>
<td>.05 (.05)</td>
<td>.07 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>.11 (.10)</td>
<td>.17 (.11)</td>
<td>.06 (.08)</td>
<td>.55 (.07)</td>
<td>.04 (.08)</td>
<td>.05 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>-.03 (.17)</td>
<td>-.23 (.17)</td>
<td>-.15 (.08)</td>
<td>.09 (.07)</td>
<td>.21 (.07)*</td>
<td>-.02 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>.05 (.12)</td>
<td>.14 (.14)</td>
<td>.08 (.08)</td>
<td>.57 (.07)</td>
<td>.09 (.13)</td>
<td>.51 (.13)*</td>
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<td>Aspirations</td>
<td>.40*</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>.07*</td>
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<td>.57*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>.53*</td>
<td>.57*</td>
<td>.08*</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.51*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Values in boldface are significantly different for boys and girls (\( p < .05 \)) based on results of Wald tests of parameter constraints.

* Probit regression coefficients are presented in the model for on-time postsecondary educational progress.
† \( p < .10 \).  * \( p < .05 \).
outcomes. Moreover, to our knowledge, ours is the first study to test contributions of educational values and perceived racial barriers to African Americans’ postsecondary outcomes and to examine the moderating influence of gender for these relationships.

Unlike past motivational research conducted with African Americans, which has tended to use relatively low-income samples, our work focuses on predominantly middle-class families. Although they are overrepresented among the poor, a majority of African Americans are not poor. In 2008, 75% of Black Americans were not considered poor by federal guidelines, and 34% of Black households reported annual incomes of $50,000 or more (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2009). More research on middle-class African Americans is needed to better understand motivational and family processes within this group.

Our findings highlight the need to identify developmental antecedents of perceived racial barriers, attainment expectations, and educational values for African Americans and to examine longitudinal processes through which these variables influence academic outcomes. As our findings suggest, it is likely that these pathways are gendered. For example, high expectations have been linked to lower rates of adolescent childbearing among African American girls (Hockaday, Crase, & Shelley, 2000) and to fewer behavior problems among African American boys (Joseph, 1996). Given their continuing underrepresentation among the college population of the United States, it is critical that researchers continue to develop knowledge about predictors of African Americans’ postsecondary outcomes.

### References


Received July 12, 2010
Revision received November 24, 2010
Accepted December 7, 2010

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