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Economic Pressure and Family-of-Origin Relationships as Predictors of African American Educational Attainment during Late Adolescence

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Economic Pressure and Family-of-Origin Relationships as Predictors of African American Educational Attainment during Late Adolescence

Abstract
According to a recent Current Population Survey, at the end of the 2008-2009 period, African American and Hispanic families experienced respective poverty rates of 25.8% and 25.3%, a stark contrast to the 9.4% rate experienced by non-Hispanic White families. Minority youth have disproportionately low rates of educational & occupational attainment compared to other ethnic groups.

Keywords
African American, poverty, economic stress, higher education

Disciplines
Family, Life Course, and Society | Finance | Higher Education | Race and Ethnicity

Comments
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Economic Pressure and Family-of-origin Relationships as Predictors of African American Educational Attainment during Late Adolescence

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Educational Attainment

“Education shapes the personal growth and life chances of our children, as well as the economic and social progress of our Nation.”


- Individual Outcomes in Transition to Adulthood (e.g. socioeconomic status)

- Social impacts of education (e.g. family relationships, parenting, communication)
African American Adolescents

According to a recent Current Population Survey, at the end of the 2008-2009 period, African American and Hispanic families experienced respective poverty rates of 25.8% and 25.3%, a stark contrast to the 9.4% rate experienced by non-Hispanic White families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010).

Minority youth have disproportionately low rates of educational & occupational attainment compared to other ethnic groups. (Current Population Reports, 2003; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2002)
Gaps in the Literature

- Limited research on economic pressure and African American families
- Family Stress Model mostly applied to two-parent married households
  - Our study will examine romantic relationships in an unique way
- Lack of longitudinal studies
  - Our study consists of 5 waves of longitudinal data
Research Question

How does the quality of family-of-origin relationships in childhood, coupled with parental economic pressure, influence educational attainment in second generation African American families?
Family and Community Health Study (FACHS)

Over 800 African American families living in Iowa and Georgia.

N = 322

1997-2009

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1. **Economic Pressure**
   - a) Unmet Material Needs (Conger, R. D., & Elder, G. H., Jr., 1994)
   - a) Can’t Make Ends Meet (Conger, R. D., & Elder, G. H., Jr., 1994)
   - a) Financial Adjustments (Conger, R. D., & Elder, G. H., Jr., 1994)

2. **Family-of-Origin Relationships**
   - b) Warmth (Conger, R. D., & Elder, G. H., Jr., 1994)
   - c) Hostility (Conger, R. D., & Elder, G. H., Jr., 1994)

3. **High School GPA**
   “Which of the following is closest to your grade point average now or when you were last in school?”

4. **Educational Attainment**
   “What is the highest level of education you have completed?”
Figure 1. African American Economic Pressure, Family Relationships, and Second Generation Educational Attainment (Standardized Findings)

Chi-Square=94.3 (df=68, p=.019), CFI=.98, RMSEA=.035
†p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
Limitations

1. We did not look at adolescent economic resources such as earnings from a part-time job.

2. Education attainment was measured at a relatively young age in the final wave—many who were pursuing further education may still have been in school—thus, testing this model again when more waves become available may be important to show the full effects which may take more time to achieve.
These findings suggest that children exposed to parental economic pressure are vulnerable to disruptions in both family relationships and material demands for educational attainment in the second generation.