

Racial-Ethnic Disparities in Attachment to School and Teachers among U.S. Adolescents

Research Question

- Do Black youths differ from other youths in school bonding in terms of their relationships with their peers and teachers?

Significance

- School experiences are critical for the academic achievement and psychological functioning of Black adolescents (Dotterer et al., 2009).

Background

- Black students reported lower levels of school attachment than White and Hispanic students (Dotterer et al., 2009).
- Black students reported lower levels of school identification and valuing school than White students (Dotterer et al., 2009).
- Teachers—especially White teachers—evaluate Black students' behavior and academic potential more negatively than those of White students (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013).
- Black students are disproportionately represented within students placed in special education programs for emotional and behavioral disabilities (Sanchez et al., 2008).

Hypotheses. Black youths are more likely than other youths to report (1) feeling less close to people at school and (2) feeling that their teachers treat students unfairly.

Data and Sample

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
- Wave 1 (1994 – 1995) public data (N = 6,504)
- U. S. adolescence in grades 7- 12

Dependent Measures

- School bonding
 - Closeness to people at school: “Do you feel close to people at your school?”
 - 0 = strongly agree or agree 86.6%
 - 1 = strongly disagree or disagree 13.4%
 - Teacher fairness: “Do teachers treat students fairly?”
 - 0 = strongly agree or agree 79.6%
 - 1 = strongly disagree or disagree 20.4%

Independent Measure

- Race and ethnicity
 - White 57.5%
 - Black 24.9%
 - Hispanic 10.9%
 - Other race 6.7%

Control Measure

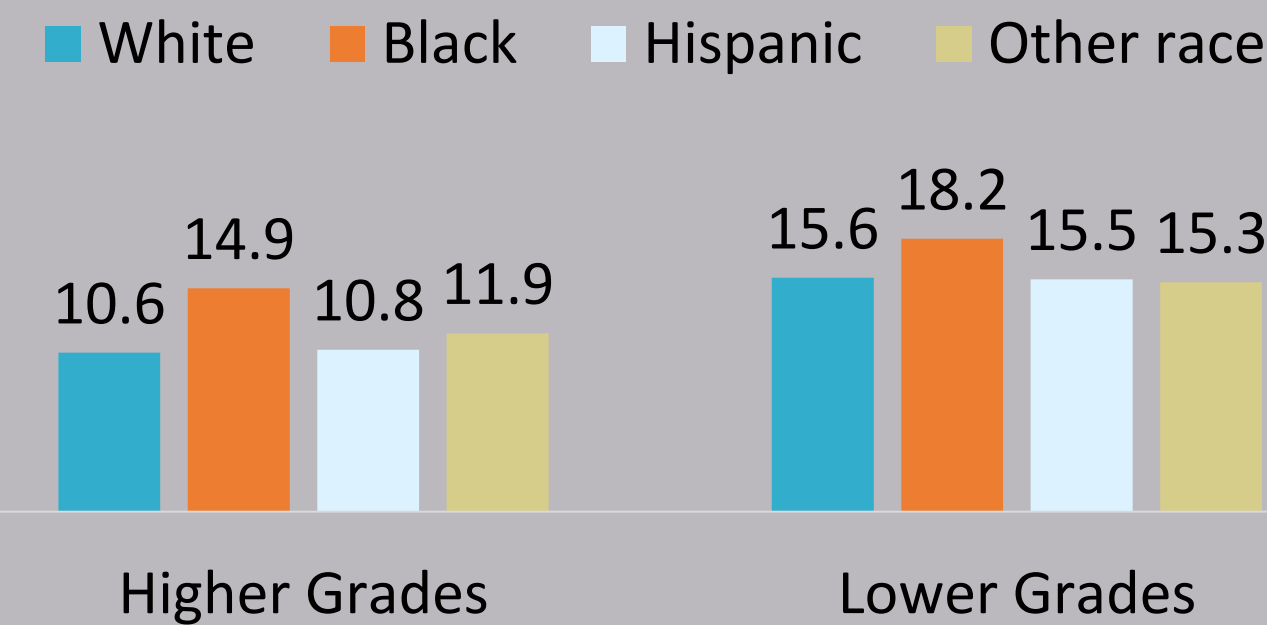
- Academic ability
 - English Grade
 - 1 = A or B 66.3%
 - 2 = C or lower 33.7%

Analysis

- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

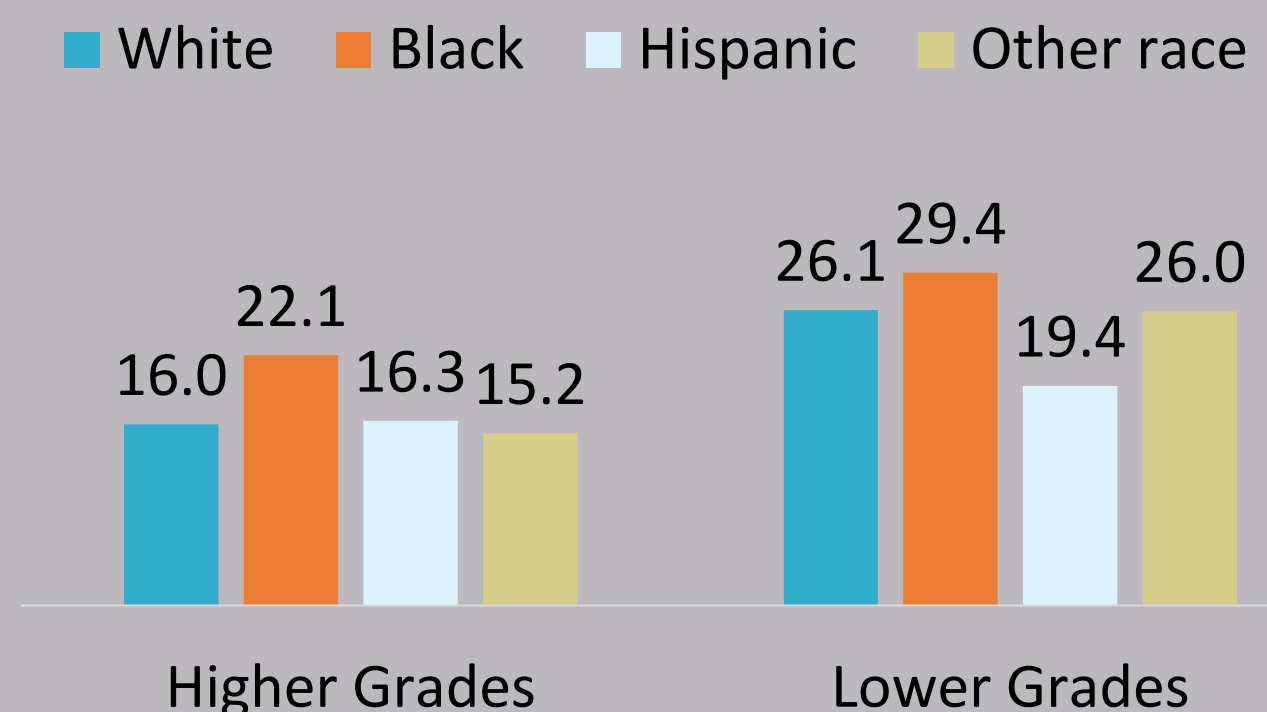
Results

Figure 1. % Adolescents Reporting Not Feeling Close to People at School by Race/Ethnicity and Academic Ability



Note. Chi-square tests were significant at $p < .001$ for higher grades but not significant for lower grades.

Figure 2. % Adolescents Reporting that Teachers Treated Unfairly by Race/Ethnicity and Academic Ability



Note. Chi-square tests were significant at $p < .001$ for higher grades and at $p < .05$ for lower grades.

Summary of Results

- Black adolescents are less likely than adolescents of other racial-ethnic groups to report less closeness to people at school. Such racial differences are significant among those who do better at school only.
- Regardless of academic performance, black adolescents are less likely than adolescents of other racial-ethnic groups to feel their teachers treated them fairly.

Policy Implications

- 85%-90% of all school teachers who educate Black students are middle class White women (Feistritzer, 2011).
- Cultural sensitivity training for teachers may be needed.
- National recruitment for Black teachers-- More Black male teachers.

References

- Dotterer, A. M., McHale, S. M., & Crouter, A. C. (2009). Sociological factors and school engagement among African American youth: The Roles of racial discrimination, racial socialization, and ethnic identity. *Applied Developmental Science, 13*, 61 – 73.
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- Sanchez, L. A., Banks, T. I., Anhalt, K., Der, H. H., & Kalis, T. (2008). The association between externalizing behavioral problems, teacher-student relationship quality, and academic performance in young urban learners. *Behavioral Disorders, 33*, 167 – 183.

- This project is based on my Sociology Capstone (SOC 4800) course paper.