The forms of capital and the developed achievement of Black males

Ezekiel J Dixon-Román, University of Pennsylvania

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/ezekiel_dixon-roman/12/
The Forms of Capital and the Developed Achievement of Black Males
Ezekiel J. Dixon-Román

Urban Education published online 27 November 2012
DOI: 10.1177/0042085912463707

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://uex.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/10/22/0042085912463707

Published by:
SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

Additional services and information for Urban Education can be found at:
Email Alerts: http://uex.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts
Subscriptions: http://uex.sagepub.com/subscriptions
Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav
Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

>> OnlineFirst Version of Record - Nov 27, 2012

What is This?
The Forms of Capital and the Developed Achievement of Black Males

Ezekiel J. Dixon-Román

Abstract
This study sought to examine the association of the various forms of capital on the developed achievement of Black males. As one of the richest longitudinal family economic data sets, the Child Development Supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics is used to estimate multilevel growth models of the math and reading achievement of Black males. Results suggest that the family’s permanent income has a large positive effect on the level of both math and reading achievement. Of the practices of social/cultural capital, parental emotional/cognitive stimulation, parents observing the classroom, and parental attendance at school events each had meaningful positive effects on the level of both math and reading achievement.

Keywords
Black males, subjects, parental involvement, social, academic achievement, urban education

Introduction
The public’s imagination toward Black males continues to be heavily laden with language of pathology, deficiency, and crisis. Some of the top links returned in a Google search on “Black males” are “Young Black Males

1University of Pennsylvania, USA

Corresponding Author:
Ezekiel J. Dixon-Román, Penn School of Social Policy & Practice, University of Pennsylvania, 3701 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA
Email: ezekield@sp2.upenn.edu
Headed for Extinction?” or “Plight Deepens for Black Men.” Substantial academic literature on Black males has attempted to challenge or provide alternative narratives/understandings to the social ontologies of being Black and male in the United States (E. Anderson, 1999; Baker-Fletcher, 1995; Brown, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Caton, 2012; Cohen, 2010; Gordon, Gordon, & Nembhard, 1994; Harper, 2009; Mandara, 2006; Miller, 2012; Mincy, 2006; Noguera, 1997, 2003, 2009; Pinn, 2010; Polite & Davis, 1999; Rice, 2008; Stinson, 2006; Strayhorn, 2009; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). This literature has been helpful in producing knowledge about Black males that counters the dominant narratives of pathology and deviance. However, a number of questions continue to remain under examined. For instance, how are parents better able to facilitate their child’s developed achievement? More specifically, given the substantially documented differential treatment of Black males and their parents by school service providers (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Noguera, 2003) to what extent do parental practices of social capital with school institutional actors covary with the developed achievement of Black males? To what extent are parental practices of cognitive and emotional support associated with the developed achievement of Black males? Are these associations completely independent of the family’s economic capital or to what extent do these practices potentially covary with the family’s economic capital? By statistically modeling the effect of the various forms of capital on the developed achievement of Black males this study examines how the family social class variability of Black males is associated with their parent’s practices with them and efforts to engage their school service providers and ultimately the association these processes have with their developed achievement. The results of this study will add to the field’s knowledge about the experiences not just of those from economically marginalized families but also the little known experiences of middle-class and upper-middle-class Black males.

Beyond the reasons mentioned above, I strategically focus this study on Black males for conceptual and methodological reasons. The focus on Black males enables the analysis of the variability of those discursively constructed bodies and self-identities of Black and male; an analysis of the variability of the doxic social ontologies particular to being Black and male. As Noguera (2003) reminds us, there are Black males who are doing well. Thus, the questions examined here is what are the social and cultural practices that may be associated with the development of math and reading achievement for Black males. By focusing on Black males, I am better able to move away from the traditionally framed “cultural deficiency and difference” narrative (Brown,
that has essentialized the Black male experience toward an analysis of the variability of their particularities, especially by social class. The forms of capital provide a theoretical lens to analyze the variation of social class experiences of Black males, with particular attention to middle-class and upper-middle-class Black males. The forms of capital also situates these processes as universalized particularities of the project of hegemony; the institutional legitimating and authorizing of particular ways of being; and, how in which institutional actors fail to be responsive to the multiplicity of their student consumers. Finally, the focus on Black males better enables the informing of what Stinson (2006) calls the “discourse of achievement” by identifying parenting practices that are meaningful for the developed achievement of Black males.

I begin by discussing the literature on Black males and achievement more broadly focusing on the various narratives and perspectives taken and how this study seeks to contribute to that literature. Given the theoretical lens of the forms of capital employed, I then briefly review the literature on economic capital and achievement followed by a review of the literature on social and cultural capital and achievement. After the reviewing of this literature, I then conceptually discuss the relevance of the forms of capital for the developed achievement of Black males.

Black Males and Achievement

Substantial research has documented the inequitable social issues and conditions that Black males face (see E. Anderson, 1999, 2008; Brown, 2011; Cohen, 2010; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gordon et al., 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Mandara, 2006; Mincy, 2006; Moynihan, 1967/1965; Noguera, 1997, 2003, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Polite & Davis, 1999; Rice, 2008; Stinson, 2006; Wilson, 2009; Woodland, 2008; Young, 2004). Much of this literature, for instance, has reported the disproportionately higher rates of incarceration, unemployment, violence, school dropouts, expulsion, and special education placement of Black males while also documenting their lower levels of achievement and standardized test performance. More importantly, this literature has offered different narratives and perspectives on the social ontologies of Black males. With respect to achievement, several explanations have been purported, conceptualized, and examined.

These conceptualizations and perspectives can be thought of as different narratives on the knowledge construction of Black males. In Brown’s (2011) analysis of the social science and educational research literature on Black males since the 1930s, he finds that there have been four dominant narratives:
absent and wandering, impotent and powerless, soulful and adaptive, and endangered and in crisis. As a way of displacing the genetic deficiency narratives of the early 1900s, the absent and wandering narrative emerged regarding Black men suggesting that they were absent as fathers, sexually irresponsible, and Black boys were increasingly growing up fatherless and delinquent. This narrative ultimately informs and becomes reappropriated by the Moynihan Report, and a later narrative referred to Black males as powerless and emasculated because of their absent fathers and mother-centered families. As a way to depart from the pathologizing narrative of Black males as impotent and powerless, a new narrative emerged of Black male culture as unique, misunderstood, and profoundly adaptive to their conditions of political and economic marginality. Given the essentializing of Black male culture, the soulful and adaptive narrative reinstated the pathology and deviance constructions of previous narratives by focusing on the assumed deficits and differences of Black males. This perspective was never completely displaced but rather informed a new national discourse that emerged in the 1980s of Black males as endangered, in crisis, and on the verge of extinction. The crisis narrative is where the national discourse continues to remain and Brown (2011) suggests that the field needs to be asking and examining a new set of questions that examine the variability of Black males and moves beyond the dominant tropes of pathology and deviance.

Relatedly, Stinson (2006) posits that existing in the current crisis narrative are three competing discourses: discourse of deficiency, rejection, and achievement. The deficiency discourse suggests that Black males are socially deficient, culturally deprived, and lack the social and behavioral skills to be academically successful. Apart from the deficiency discourses, theories that purport that Black youth exhibit oppositional behavior or identities particularly as a coping strategy such as Majors and Billson’s (1993) “cool pose theory” or Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) “acting White” theory are what Stinson refers to as a discourse of rejection. These discourses of rejection ultimately fall trap to the pathologizing and deviant constructions of the Black male body and fail to move completely from the ideas of the deficiency discourse, since implicit in the theorizing of rejection is an affirmation of that which they do not have. Stinson ultimately argues that the field needs to focus on the examination of successful resources, processes, and practices that explain the educational outcomes and achievement of Black males; a discourse of achievement.

As noted earlier, there are Black males who are doing well and we need to better understand what has attributed to their achievement. Both Stinson and Brown offer questions for future research on Black males in order to push the
knowledge production beyond the deficit, pathologizing, and rejection narratives. Of those proffered questions I seek to analyze (1) the extent to which the variability of Black males’ family economic capital is associated with parental social and cultural practices and their developed achievement, particularly for middle-class and upper-middle-class Black males, not just those economically marginalized; and (2) in line with a “discourse of achievement,” identifying the social and cultural parenting practices that schools seem to be and not be responsive to for Black males. As such, I lean on the forms of capital as a theoretical lens to examine these processes and associations.

Research on Economic Capital and Academic Achievement

Of the forms of capital that have been researched in the literature, economic capital has been the most widely examined with educational outcomes. Family income, as one measure of economic capital, has consistently been found to be associated with academic achievement (Blau, 1999; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Datcher-Loury, 1989; Dooley & Stewart, 2004; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Orr, 2003; Phillips, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Crane, 1998; Rothstein, 2004; Sirin, 2005). For instance, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY), Blau (1999) found meaningful positive effects of permanent income (i.e., a multiyear average of income) on the Peabody Individual Achievement Test mathematics and reading comprehension scores, as well as on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R). Phillips et al. (1998) not only found a meaningful positive effect of income on the PPVT-R using data from the Children of the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (CNLSY), but levels of income were also related to meaningful reductions in the Black–White differences in academic achievement. In addition, Sirin’s (2005) meta-analysis of the research literature for the decade from 1990 and 2000 on socioeconomic status and achievement indicated that, on average, there was a modest effect size (i.e., 0.29) for family income on academic achievement.

While there is substantial research evidence on the meaningful relationship between family income and achievement, there has been less research on family wealth, as another indicator of economic capital, and achievement. Moreover, the findings in the existing literature on the association between family wealth and achievement are not as consistent. For instance, in their chapter Family Background, Parenting Practices and the Black–White Test Score Gap, Phillips et al. (1998) found that after controlling for parent’s income and occupation that wealth had little effect.
While the Phillips et al. (1998) finding was not too promising others have found more suggestive results. Given the work of Oliver and Shapiro (1995) and Conley (1999) in exposing the large disparities that exist in the accumulation of wealth, Orr (2003) examined the effect of family wealth on the achievement gap. Using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, she found that wealth has a positive effect over and above the traditional measures of socioeconomic status (SES). In particular, Orr found a greater effect for income-producing assets than for nonincome-producing assets.

More recently, Yeung and Conley (2008) examined the direct and indirect effects of wealth on the Woodcock-Johnson Revised Math and Reading Achievement scores for both preschool and school-aged children. They reported a small, positive association between a family’s total value of stocks and mutual funds and mathematics achievement for the school-aged cohort. Family wealth was also associated with a higher quality home environment, effective parenting practices, and children’s private school attendance; each of these factors, in turn, had a meaningful, positive association with academic achievement. Some of these findings have informed the current study, which examines the direct and indirect effects of both family income and wealth on the developed achievement of Black males. This research topic is particularly important, given the research evidence on the larger effect of family resources on achievement and cognitive outcomes during early child development versus adolescents (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Yeung & Pfeiffer, 2009). Moreover, while many of these studies have not focused on Black males several have found that even after accounting for family economic resources that Black males still underperform compared to their White male, White female, and Black female counterparts (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Everson & Millsap, 2004; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Rothstein, 2004; Sirin, 2005). Thus, this study focuses specifically on Black males and attempts to identify some of the developmentally effective processes of social and cultural capital that are independent of and enabled by economic capital.

**Research on Social/Cultural Capital and Achievement**

In recent years, scholars and researchers have sought to examine the relationship between parental involvement as social and cultural capital and achievement (see Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Due to the current national concerns for inequality in educational achievement, increasing attention and study have been given to the social and cultural influences on academic performance. For example, the concept of social capital has captured the attention
of educational researchers and policy makers in the United States (Dika & Kusum, 2002). Educational researchers have also become increasingly interested in cultural capital, as findings have suggested that a composite measure of cultural capital has a significant impact on grades—controlling for family background and measured ability (DiMaggio, 1982). Thus, the following literature review delineates the interplay between the aforementioned forms of capital and achievement.

The concept of social capital has gone through various evolutions beginning with Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Coleman (1988). Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 21)

Thus, the value of one’s social capital is contingent on the size of one’s social networks and the value of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital one possesses. In contrast, Coleman was more interested in the kinds of social ties that privied agents to the social norms of dominant institutions (e.g., schools). While both describe individual forms of social capital, Bourdieu’s conceptualization was more focused on the status and resources in the social networks; whereas, Coleman seemed to be more focused on the kinds of social relationships that lead to social congruence in social norms that can enable the support of agents ability to better competently navigate dominant institutions.

In order to demonstrate the potential spurious effects of social capital, Portes (2000) examines Coleman’s individual social capital and the parental closure of social networks. While his bivariate analyses indicate meaningful positive relationships between social capital and academic achievement the introduction of student demographics such as parental SES, knowledge of English, and length of U.S. residence reduced the effects of social capital to statistically weak and nonmeaningful effects.

Other research has demonstrated the association between strong social relationships and student achievement (Bank & Slavings, 1990; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Garnier & Raudenbush, 1991; Goddard, 2003; Jones & Maloy, 1988; Lareau, 1987; Lee & Croninger, 1994; Sui-Chu & Douglas, 1996). For example, Goddard (2003) examined the theoretical rationale for relational networks, norms, and trust as structural and functional forms of
social capital that can facilitate student achievement. Results indicate that social capital is meaningfully associated with increases in students’ odds of passing both assessments. Even after adding disadvantaged SES as a school-level predictor social capital was still a meaningful predictor. Thus, schools with higher levels of reported social capital had higher pass rates for their students on the Metropolitan Achievement Test of mathematics and writing suggesting the importance of school social capital for achievement.

In order to fully understand the dynamics of the relationship of social capital to achievement we also have to consider its related nonmaterial resource of cultural capital. As suggested by Bourdieu (1986), both social and economic capital can be converted into/enabled by cultural capital. Cultural capital is manifested in three states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. The embodied state of cultural capital is the embodiment of cultural capital in a scheme of socially structured dispositions and externalized practices. The objectified state is the material forms of culture such as books, magazines, art, or music. The institutionalized state refers to the degrees or certifications conferred upon by dominant institutions of schooling. Each state of cultural capital is situated in social structures, socially distributed, and socially structured.

Several studies have found meaningful associations of cultural capital and achievement (Carter, 2003; DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2006; Farkas, 1996; Lareau, 2003; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). DiMaggio (1982) found a strong positive association between cultural capital and grades in all subjects, English, and history providing evidence of the thesis of cultural reproduction. In addition, the cultural capital effect was found to be larger among non-high school graduate fathers than fathers who are college graduates supporting the cultural mobility model. Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell’s (1999) results indicate that Black students were, on average, less likely to go on cultural trips and to participate in extracurricular cultural classes and had significantly less in the way of household educational resources than did their White counterparts. It was also discovered that while the racial differences in students’ grade point averages and mathematics-reading achievement remained significant, relatively large portions (approximately 53% and 39%, respectively) were explained by SES and family structural differences across race.

By employing cultural capital theory other studies took a different perspective to the relationship of the parent involvement mesosystem to school success. Lee and Bowen’s (2006) hierarchical regression analyses indicated that parent involvement variables explained 9% of the variance in academic achievement beyond the effects of the demographic variables. In addition,
the effects of parents’ educational level on children’s academic achievement were mediated through the effects of parent involvement activities. Dumais (2006) examined the effect of cultural capital and parental habitus in early childhood on teacher’s perceptions. Although the main effect of cultural activities was not meaningful there was consistently a meaningful interaction between cultural activities and child socioeconomic status. Moreover, the parent’s college expectations and desire for their children to have drawing skills had meaningful effects on teacher’s perception providing some empirical support for parental habitus. Even though this study did not examine achievement as an outcome it did find evidence to partially support Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital and parental habitus. What this literature has produced less empirical knowledge of is on the particularities in the processes of the forms of capital for Black males and to what extent they covary with the variability of their developed achievement.

The Forms of Capital and Their Pedagogic Influences on Black Males

While the previously reviewed research literature on the forms of capital and achievement suggest a positive association with achievement this literature did not focus on the developed achievement of Black males. Moreover, each of the forms of capital have been found to have differential effects by race and, in some cases, gender too. Furthermore, it would be erroneous to assume that the forms of capital either materialize the same by race let alone have the same institutional responses by race and gender. Thus, I explicate here how the forms of capital may not only manifest themselves differently for Black males but achieve different returns because of the assumptions made in the discursive constructions of their bodies.

While economic capital has been consistently found to have a meaningful association with achievement, it has also been found to have a differential association by race (Dixon-Román, in press; Dixon-Román, Everson, & McArdle, in press). Dixon-Román et al. (in press) have found that family income has a larger association on SAT performance for Black test takers than for White test takers, especially at lower income levels. In addition, Dixon-Román (in press) found that parental wealth has a larger association on the level of performance in reading achievement for Black children than for White children. Moreover, the intergenerational economic capital reduced the race differences more for females than for males indicating that the resources of economic capital were substantially more associated with higher levels of performance for Black females than males.
Although economic capital is an indicator of a family’s social position—which also indicates the family’s social distance from the social and cultural norms of dominant institutions of schooling—the taken-for-granted assumptions that are associated with the discursive constructions of their bodies produce differential treatments. These assumptions include their bodily signifiers being read as good athletes or musicians but dangerous, bad boys, criminals, to be feared, and the need to police and control their bodies (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Noguera, 2003). Thus, as Ladson-Billings (2011) states, when embodied acts of fear and avoidance occur “almost exclusively to Black men—any Black man (regardless of class, education status, and age)—we know that there exists a widespread fear of them throughout the society” (p. 9-10). Thus, given the known particular pedagogical treatment of Black males in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Stinson, 2006) this raises the question of to what extent parental social capital practices with school service providers are effective. For instance, a parent who has more substantial and frequent contact with school service providers is more likely to be in the know of his or her child’s classroom and more able to provide pedagogically supportive resources and practices outside of school as well as more effectively advocate for his or her child when necessary in school. Some of these enabled practices might include a parent having the time to invest in going to the school to attend a school event that the child participates in, observing the child’s classroom, having informal conversations with the child’s teacher or principal, participation in Parent Teacher Association, or having conversations with the child about school. Each of these social relationship practices invests time into strong relationships between the parent, child, and school service providers that can privy the parent to the social and cultural resources that the institution confers upon.

However, not only is there an economic privilege to these practices by way of time, there is also evidence to suggest that Black parents engagement with school service providers is not similarly responded to, regardless of social class (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Lareau and Horvat (1999) find this in their ethnographic study of how social capital becomes raced in and through the differential responsiveness of school service providers to Black parents; where even Black middle-class parents who were privy to the cultural norms of how to navigate the dominant institutions of schooling were treated differently from their White middle-class counterparts. In effect, the differential treatment produced different orientations and additional practices by the Black parents in order to ensure/advocate for the equitable treatment of their children. Thus, the practices of social capital that might have been found to be associated with achievement
outcomes may function qualitatively different for Black males and may manifest themselves in varied ways. When the Black male body is read as threatening and the need to be controlled it creates the need for more parental school engagement than otherwise.

This study is also interested in the embodied state of cultural capital or what Bourdieu referred to as the externalized practices of habitus. These socially structured practices might include parenting practices of child cognitive stimulation; emotional or affective support; going to the museum, zoo, concert, or playing with the child; the parent’s educational expectations of the child; working with the children on their homework; or encouraging older children to read, and reading with younger children. It is these practices that are associated with family economic and social capital that likely support the pedagogical experiences of schooling and the dominant cultural skills that are assessed on the measures of achievement of schooling that contribute to social and cultural reproduction.

However, similar to social capital, these embodied practices of cultural capital are not universal. That is, beyond the social class distribution of these practices there is also racial and gender divisions in these practices and in the effect of these practices. As Bourdieu (2001) reminds us, the gender relations of power socially structure the cognitive structures of habitus. These gendered dimensions of habitus subsequently materialize in heterogeneous linguistic acts and embodied practices. This functions along racialized dimensions of power as well and, as a result, has direct implications for the materiality of habitus and its effects for Black males.

Others have pointed out that nondominant forms of cultural resources do exist (Bourdieu, 1986; Bullen & Kenway, 1996; Carter, 2003; Dixon-Román, 2009; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Nasir & Saxe, 2003; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Thornton, 1995; Yosso, 2005). As Carter (2003) describes

“non-dominant cultural capital” embodies a set of tastes, or schemes of appreciation and understandings, accorded to a lower status group, that include preferences for particular linguistic, musical, or interactional styles. Non-dominant cultural capital describes those resources used by lower status individuals to gain “authentic” cultural status positions within their respective communities. (p. 138)

The deployment of dominant versus nondominant forms of cultural resources function differently depending on the field in which the capital is used. The nondominant cultural capital for Black males would function at home, among peer spaces, or in various community spaces constituting
authenticity, style, taste, and status, but would likely misrecognize or misfire in the spaces of dominant institutions such as schooling. In contrast, dominant cultural capital is conferred upon by the dominant institutions of schooling. In addition, as a result of the assumptions made of bodies that are constructed as Black and male, school service providers respond to seemingly similar practices of dominant cultural capital differently for Black male students and their parents (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Others have examined and found particularities in the cultural processes of math and reading performance for Black males (Martin, 2009; McGee & Martin, 2011; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012; Terry, 2011). While I theoretically acknowledge the nondominant forms of social and cultural resources that are particular for Black males, this study ultimately seeks to examine what parental embodied practices seem to support the developed achievement of their child, what parental practices with school service providers seem to be associated with their developed achievement, and which practices seem to indicate a lack of responsiveness and failure by those school institutional actors.

Method

Participants

This study employs the Child Development Supplement (CDS) to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID; Hill, 1991). The PSID is a preexisting longitudinal data set containing information about families and all individuals in those families collected through interviews. These interviews collected individual and family information such as detailed income sources, employment, education, family composition, and residential location. The Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan began collecting data for this study in 1968 annually until 1996 and biannually starting in 1997. The PSID tracked members of its first wave of families including all those leaving to establish separate family units.

Data for the CDS were collected on children’s age-graded assessments of the cognitive, behavioral, and health status of the children. The CDS provides parent measures of economic strain, psychological distress, family and home environment, and parent involvement in the child’s school as well as the courses and grades for six instructional areas in two prior academic terms for the child.

The CDS collected data from 2,394 families of the PSID with 3,563 children aged 12 and under in 1997. In 2002 to 2003, CDS recontacted families
in CDS-I that remained active in the PSID panel as of 2001. CDS-II successfully reinterviewed 2,019 families (91%) that provided data on 2,907 children and adolescents aged 5 to 19 years (Mainieri, 2005). This study focused on the 636 Black males of the 2,907 children and adolescents interviewed in 1997 and 2002.

**Instruments**

*Woodcock Johnson-Revised (WJ-R) Achievement Test.* The WJ-R for reading and math from both 1997 and 2002 CDS data collections were used as two time measurements in order to assess change. The WJ-R is designed to measure academic achievement for the assessment of students’ strengths and weaknesses for special program planning (Bell, Rucker, Finch, & Alexander, 2002). The CDS participants’ scores were based on the broad reading and broad math dimensions of the assessment.

The independent variables in this study included composite indicators of economic capital (permanent income and wealth), and several items of materialized practices of social and cultural capital. The parent’s educational attainment is employed as a measure of the institutionalized state of cultural capital and the parent’s occupational cultural capital is also measured (described further below).

*Permanent income.* Family income was measured for each family. However, given the instability of family income a 1-year measure of family income is not a reliable measure. The 1-year measure includes both simple measurement error and transitory shocks that may cause earnings in that particular year to be higher or lower (Mazumder, 2005). These transitory shocks might include unemployment, pay raises, pay cuts, and being laid off. In order to account for this instability in measurement, economists have averaged income over a range of years rather than 1 year. This is what economists refer to as a measure of permanent income, a proxy for long-term or lifetime economic status (Blau & Graham, 1990; Bowles, Gintis, & Groves, 2005; Mazumder, 2005).

The total family income was extracted from the income plus supplement of the PSID. The income plus supplement of the PSID contains detailed data on the total family income and each of its components from 1993 to 2000. In order to estimate the permanent income for the parents in this study the total family income was averaged over 4 years: 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

Prior to estimating the permanent income, each year was adjusted to 1997 constant dollars then the mean estimate was taken of the adjusted annual income estimates.
**Wealth.** An imputed measure of wealth was used from the wealth supplement of the PSID. The wealth supplement includes a sum of values of seven asset types, net of debt value, and value of home equity. The values of seven types of assets include the value of an owned farm or business, the total value of checking/savings accounts, total equity of real estate (excluding main home equity), total equity of main home, the net value of all stocks, the total value of all vehicles in the family, the total value of any other savings or assets, and the total value of private annuities or individual retirement accounts.

Economists and sociologists generally refer to two measures of wealth: net worth and net financial assets (Blau & Graham, 1990; Conley, 1999; Oliver and Shapiro, 1995; Spilerman, 2000; Wolff, 2001). Net worth is the sum of all assets minus total debt, whereas net financial assets excludes the total value of main home equity. The distinction between the two measures is that net financial assets are more immediately available and liquid than net worth, and based on the work of Oliver and Shapiro (1995) and Conley (1999), the greatest degree of racial inequality lies in net financial assets. In addition, given that net worth and net financial assets are highly correlated, and given that the more liquid the capital the easier it can be converted to other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Orr, 2003), net financial assets is used as the composite measure of wealth in the modeling.

The measurement of net financial assets was estimated for the parents in 1994. The wealth measurements were adjusted to 1997 constant dollars.

**Educational attainment.** The parent’s educational attainment was measured as defined by the PSID in actual number of years up through 17 years of education that would represent some postgraduate work.

**Occupational cultural capital.** Occupational cultural capital refers to the degree to which occupations demand competence of the hegemonic social and cultural norms. I operationalize this variable to capture the potential exosystem developmental influences via what the parent might bring home from work. For instance, while domestic service work such as nanny or maid may receive a lower score for occupational status or prestige, they received a higher coding for occupational cultural capital given the demand for competence in the social and cultural norms of the dominant group in the place of employment. I constructed this variable to theoretically better reflect the conferred upon cultural particularity of schooling with that of the workplace.

Occupational cultural capital was measured as an ordinal categorical variable on a scale from 0 to 3 with increasing exposure to hegemonic social and cultural norms demanded at the workplace. The 0 included those that were unemployed; 1 included all positions of manufacturing, laborers, nonhousehold service workers, farmers, craftsmen, and so on; 2 included clerical/assistants...
and related work, secretaries, messengers and office boys, health service workers, and private household workers; and 3 included all professional, technical, managerial, administrative, and sales work.

**Materialized social/cultural practices.** The materialized practices of social and cultural capital are variables that I constructed from several existing items in the Child Development Supplement. These items measured whether or not the parent had met with his or her child’s teacher coded as 0 for no and 1 for yes; had a conference meeting with his or her child’s teacher coded as 1 for not in the current school year, 2 for once, and 3 for more than once; observed his or her child’s classroom coded as 1 for not in the current school year, 2 for once, and 3 for more than once; attended a school event coded as 1 for not in the current school year, 2 for once, and 3 for more than once; the child’s relationship with his or her teacher was coded 1 for poor, 2 for fair, and 3 for good, and 4 for excellent; and if the parent participated in the Parent Teacher Association coded as 0 for no and 1 for yes. In addition, The Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment scale (HOME; Caldwell & Bradley, 1984) was used to measure embodied parenting practices of cognitive stimulation and emotional support. This measure ranged from 8 to 26.

**Child demographic variables.** The child’s age in 1997 and 2002 are controlled for in the models and age is specified in years.

It is critical to note here that measurement is a semiotic process. Thus, while I am referring, for instance, to the measurement of items more globally as materialized social and cultural practices, as a researcher conducting secondary data analysis, I am far removed from the variability in which these items were read, understood, and ultimately the multiplicity of meanings of the responses. Thus, the below quantitative results are discursive signifiers that provide tangentially descriptive information on the social processes of Black males.

### Analysis

The modeling of the developed achievement of Black males was conducted with multilevel growth curve modeling with the PROC NLMIXED procedure of the SAS version 9.1.3 statistical software package (SAS Institute, 2006).

### Modeling of Black Male Developed Achievement

In order to statistically model the developed achievement of Black males and the influence of the externalized parental practices of social and cultural capital, multilevel growth curve modeling was employed. This study employed multilevel modeling in order to estimate growth curves on the two time measurements of the WJ-R. Multilevel growth curve modeling is
a flexible statistical method that enables the estimation of growth, change, or development over the repeated measures of an outcome. Because PROC NLMIXED is a SAS procedure that estimates nonlinear models I was better able to model the nonlinear growth of achievement. This was estimated by using the participants’ age at the time of administration as the time measurement rather than the year of measurement. Because of the different initial ages of the participants the study design enables for the use of longitudinal multilevel analyses of time lags and considers age as a predictor variable in the equation (McArdle, Ferrer-Caja, Hamagami, & Woodcock, 2002). Also known as an accelerated longitudinal design, this type of design links all of the different age cohorts as they move throughout the two time measurements (McArdle et al., 2002). In particular, this approach also permits one to estimate individual growth over a long period of the lifespan and use multilevel models that estimate parameters of individual trajectories including intercepts and age slopes (McArdle et al., 2002). For the current data, trajectories were estimated using multilevel growth curve models from the age of 3 to 18 on the WJ-R math and 6 to 18 on the WJ-R reading.

The multilevel models were built up in stages. In other words, the multiple measures of achievement were nested in children. The growth curve models were estimated first, then the effect of the parents background variables were estimated, and, finally, the social and cultural practice variables were included. This approach of “building up” the models provided me with a better understanding of what is occurring for each level and input on the model all the way to the full multilevel growth curve model with parent’s economic, social, and cultural capital predicting the child’s trajectory of achievement.

**Modeling**

A growth curve model was fit to the two time measurements of the WJ-R reading and math in order to estimate the average trajectories of developed achievement. Several change models were examined, but eventually the linear growth model was chosen as the baseline model. The intercepts and slopes were treated as random. The final multilevel growth curve model is described below and provided with the multilevel equations as consistent with Raudenbush and Bryk (2002).

\[ Y_{it} = \pi_{0i} + \pi_{1i} (\text{age}_{it} - L) + \pi_{2i} (\text{age}_{it} - L)^2 + \epsilon_{it} \]

\[ \pi_{0i} = \beta_{00} + \beta_{0i} \text{Economic Capital} + \beta_{0k} \text{Social/Cultural Practices} + r_{0i} \]

\[ \pi_{1i} = \beta_{10} + \beta_{1k} \text{Economic Capital} + \beta_{1k} \text{Social/Cultural Practices} + r_{1i} \]

\[ \pi_{2i} = \beta_{20} \]
where $\pi_{0i}$ is the first-level coefficient where $p = 0$ or 1 and $i$ is the individual child, $L$ is a constant ($L = 10$) in order to center age, $\varepsilon_{iti}$ is the level-1 residual where $t$ indicates the first or second measurement, $\beta_{0p}$ is the level-2 coefficient where 0 indicates it is the intercept, and $r_{pi}$ is the random component for $p$. Each level-1 growth parameter has a substantive meaning. The intercept, $\pi_{0i}$, represents the growth rate for person $i$ at age $L$ (10), the slope component, $\pi_{1i}$, is the growth rate for person $i$ at age $L$ (10), and the quadratic component, $\pi_{2i}$, is the fixed curvature rate for person $i$ at age $L$ (10).

**Results**

I begin the analyses by examining the descriptive statistics in order to characterize and provide univariate understanding of the data. Following the presentation of the descriptive statistics I discuss the growth model results for reading and math achievement separately. Finally, I present and discuss the indirect estimates of family economic capital via social and cultural practices.

**Descriptive and Exploratory analyses**

In order to begin to characterize the sample of Black males a series of descriptive statistics were analyzed. The age of the Black male children of this sample ranged from 3 to 13 in 1997 and 5 to 19 in 2002 to 2003. Their parent’s (or caregiver’s) age ranged from 14 to 72 with a mean age of 33.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the achievement measures and the family background variables for the parent. The estimates of the parent’s net financial assets and permanent income were adjusted to 1997 constant dollars.

Table 1 shows that, on average, there appears to be growth from 1997 to 2002 in both math and reading achievement for Black male children. The minimum age of 5 in 2002 reflects those Black males who were of age 0 in 1997. While the modal number of years of education was a high school diploma or equivalent we also see that the parent’s education ranged from fourth grade to graduate or professional school. Similar to the large range of education, we also see that while family permanent income, net financial assets, and the parent’s occupation appear to be, on average, of working-class status there is a very large range in each of these covariates indicating the variability of family background. In addition, there is substantial range in the social and cultural practice variables.
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (Sample Size, Percent Missing, Mean, and Standard Deviation) Estimates of Achievement, Age, Family Background, and Social/Cultural Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% Missing</th>
<th>µ (SD)</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WJ-R math 97</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>22.71 (11.56)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ-R math 02</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>33.02 (8.52)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ-R reading 97</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>52.02 (19.02)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJ-R reading 02</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>62.68 (16.26)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 1997</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>7.49 (2.97)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 2002</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>11.74 (3.68)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Fourth grade</td>
<td>Graduate school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>US$23,655</td>
<td>US$1,105</td>
<td>US$167,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family net financial assets</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>US$13,300</td>
<td>US$99,850</td>
<td>US$6,206,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent occupation</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>Nondomestic service work</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOME</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting w/teacher</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference w/teacher</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>&gt;Once</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>&gt;Once</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended school event</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child relationship w/teacher</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA participation</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;Once</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Estimates are means with standard deviations contained in parentheses. The model estimate was used with parent education, occupation, and social/cultural practices and the median estimate was used for family income and net financial assets. The min and max for parent education are based on number of years of school and the financial estimates are in 1997 constant dollars.

More importantly, there is a very large range of scores on both math and reading achievement. In fact, by 2002 there are Black males who scored at the highest levels that can be attained on both measures. Again, empirically demonstrating that there are Black males who are doing well and the question here is what parenting practices may attribute to their high level of achievement. In a comparative study these high-performing Black males become
masked and overlooked in the reporting of means and constructed narratives. It is this variation and the potential covariates that can account for this variation that are of interest of this study. While comparative studies may tell us something about where Black males perform in comparison to their counterparts they tend to overlook the actual variation of performance in the outcome and more group-specific covariates that may matter leading to singular narratives about Black males who often pathologize their social ontologies.

**Growth Models**

Multilevel growth curve modeling was employed via SAS PROC NLMIXED. This meant estimating growth curves over two time occasions for each individual child in the sample. As mentioned earlier, it was expected that a quadratic growth model would fit the growth of math and reading achievement from ages 6 to 18 and 3 to 18, respectively. In order to examine this, a linear growth model was fit to the data first as a baseline model (e.g., Model 1). Model 2 fits the quadratic model and was compared to the fit of the baseline model. Model 3 then includes the parent’s education and occupation as predictors on the intercept and linear slope. Model 4 includes the parent’s economic capital (e.g., family permanent income and net financial assets). Finally, Model 5 adds the social and cultural capital measures.

**Math Achievement Growth Models**

Tables 2 and 3 present the growth curve model variance components, fit statistics, and parameter estimates with standard errors in parentheses. The quadratic growth model of Model 2 appears to substantially improve the fit from the linear growth model (Model 1). Given that there was a decrease of more than 10 units of the AIC, this indicated that the quadratic model had a closer fit to the data than the linear growth model. There was a meaningful amount of variation in the intercept in both models. However, the variation of the linear slope reduced substantially by the modeling of the quadratic term. The coefficient for the quadratic term was fixed for the math achievement growth model because of the lack of variation in the quadratic term suggesting that the individual quadratic terms are fairly parallel in this model. Table 2 presents each growth models variance component and AIC. It appears that Model 5 was the best fit model with a residual variance of 5.28 and an AIC of 3,520. This indicates that the parent’s economic capital and materialized social and cultural practices have a close fit to the data and account for a substantial proportion of the model’s variance (50%).
Table 2. Math Achievement Growth Curve Model Variance Components (Standard Errors) and Fit Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>6.21 (2.64)</td>
<td>12.75 (1.39)</td>
<td>12.09 (1.33)</td>
<td>12.19 (0.23)</td>
<td>13.00 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.09 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.05 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.00)</td>
<td>0.26 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>18.40 (3.30)</td>
<td>10.52 (1.38)</td>
<td>10.32 (1.33)</td>
<td>10.62 (0.75)</td>
<td>5.28 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>6,081</td>
<td>5,563</td>
<td>5,527</td>
<td>5,272</td>
<td>3,520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Parameter estimates are maximum likelihood estimates with the standard error in parentheses.

As can be seen with Model 5 in Table 3, the linear growth of math achievement by age was, on average, 2.37 points indicating that for every 1 year of increase in age there was a 2.37 point increase in math achievement. The parent’s occupational cultural capital had a positive association on the intercept indicating that as the parent’s occupational cultural capital increased the child’s level of math achievement increased. While the family’s permanent income did have a meaningful positive association on the random intercept in Model 4 it appears that the introduction of the social and cultural practice variables in Model 5 meaningfully reduces the direct permanent income association to be negligible. We will see later in this article that this reduced direct effect is a result of the social and cultural practice variables largely mediating the permanent income effect. The parent’s education and family net financial assets had no meaningful effect on the random intercept. The HOME, which is a composite measure of parental practices of both child cognitive stimulation and emotional support, had a meaningful positive association with the intercept. Both the parent’s frequency of classroom observation and attendance at school events had positive relationships with the intercepts. The parent’s frequency of conference meetings with the teacher had a small negative association with the random slope indicating that as the frequency of conferences with their child’s teacher increases the rate of math achievement development for Black males decreases 0.15 units.

Reading Achievement Growth Models

I now turn to the reading achievement growth models. Tables 4 and 5 present the growth curve model variance components, fit statistics, and parameter estimates with standard errors in parentheses. The quadratic growth model (Model 2) appears to substantially improve the fit from the linear growth model (Model 1). There was also a meaningful amount of variation in the random intercept in both models. However, the variation of the linear slope
| Parameter Estimates (and Standard Errors) for Math Achievement Growth Models and Covariates |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
| Level-1 models |
| Intercept | 29.89 (0.29) | 31.80 (0.21) | 31.70 (0.23) | 31.78 (0.24) | 27.04 (1.74) |
| Age | 2.50 (0.07) | 2.39 (0.04) | 2.40 (0.04) | 2.41 (0.04) | 2.37 (0.37) |
| Age\(^2\) | — | −0.44 (0.01) | −0.44 (0.01) | −0.44 (0.01) | −0.35 (0.02) |
| Level-2 models |
| PCH occupation | | | | | |
| Log income | | | | | |
| Log NFA | | | | | |
| PCH education | | | | | |
| HOME | | | | | |
| Meet w/teacher | | | | | |
| Conference meet w/teacher | | | | | |
| Observe classroom | | | | | |
| Attended school event | | | | | |
| Child relationship w/teacher | | | | | |
| PTA | | | | | |

Note. Parameter estimates are maximum likelihood estimates with the standard error in parentheses. The level-2 model random intercept and slope outcomes are represented by \(\pi_0\) and \(\pi_1\), respectively. Age was centered at 10. Permanent income and NFA were centered at their median values. Occupation and education were centered at their median values as well. Practical or meaningful significance is determined based on a greater than or equal to 2 ratio between the parameter estimate and its standard error.
reduced substantially by the modeling of the quadratic term. The coefficient for the quadratic term was fixed for the reading achievement growth models because of the lack of variation in the quadratic term, similar to math achievement. Table 4 presents each growth models variance component and AIC. Model 5 was the closest fit model to the data.

As can be seen in Model 5, the linear growth of achievement by age was 5.88 points indicating that for every 1 year increase in age there was a 5.88 point increase in reading achievement. The parent’s occupation and permanent income each had positive associations with the random level of performance. The parental practices of child cognitive stimulation and emotional support, parent’s frequency of observing their child’s classroom, and parent’s frequency of attending school events each had meaningful positive associations. However, the parent meeting with the child’s teacher had a meaningful negative association.

**Indirect Effects**

Table 6 presents the indirect association estimates. HOME appears to be the largest mediator among the social and cultural practice measures. In fact, the largest indirect association is with permanent income where the association of permanent income mediated by HOME was 1.09 on the level of math achievement and 2.20 on the level of reading achievement. All in all, social and cultural practices appear to substantially mediate the association of economic capital, particularly that of permanent income.

In sum, the parents’ occupational cultural capital had a meaningful positive association on the level of performance in math and reading achievement. The family’s permanent income had a large association on the level of performance in math and reading. The HOME had a large positive association on the level of performance in both math and reading achievement and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Reading Achievement Growth Curve Model Variance Components (Standard Errors) and Fit Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Parameter estimates are maximum likelihood estimates with the standard error in parentheses.*
Table 5. Parameter Estimates (and Standard Errors) for Reading Achievement Growth Models and Covariates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level-1 models</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>55.73 (0.58)</td>
<td>59.20 (0.52)</td>
<td>59.23 (0.57)</td>
<td>58.98 (0.58)</td>
<td>57.79 (4.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>3.40 (0.16)</td>
<td>5.19 (0.14)</td>
<td>5.16 (0.15)</td>
<td>5.13 (0.16)</td>
<td>5.88 (0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age²</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>−0.97 (0.05)</td>
<td>−0.94 (0.05)</td>
<td>−0.94 (0.06)</td>
<td>−0.94 (0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level-2 models</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCH occupation</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.29 (0.51)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.12)</td>
<td>1.07 (0.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log income</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>7.69 (1.46)</td>
<td>−0.56 (0.33)</td>
<td>7.73 (1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log NFA</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.32 (0.26)</td>
<td>0.08 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.25 (0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCH education</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.42 (0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOME</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet w/teacher</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference meet w/teacher</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe classroom</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended school event</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child relationship w/teacher</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Parameter estimates are maximum likelihood estimates with the standard error in parentheses. The level-2 model random intercept and slope outcomes are represented by $\pi_0$ and $\pi_1$, respectively. Age was centered at age 10. Permanent income and NFA were centered at their median values. Occupation and education were centered at their median values as well.
Table 6. Parameter Estimates of Direct (and Indirect) Effects for Math and Reading Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HOME</th>
<th>Meet w/ teacher</th>
<th>Conference meet w/ teacher</th>
<th>Observe classroom</th>
<th>Attended school event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent occupation</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(math indirect)</td>
<td>(-0.08)</td>
<td>(-0.04)</td>
<td>(-0.004)</td>
<td>(-0.03)</td>
<td>(-0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reading indirect)</td>
<td>(-0.20)</td>
<td>(-0.40)</td>
<td>(-0.008)</td>
<td>(-0.03)</td>
<td>(-0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(math indirect)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(-0.002)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reading indirect)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(-0.03)</td>
<td>(-0.004)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(math indirect)</td>
<td>(0.99)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(-0.02)</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reading indirect)</td>
<td>(2.44)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(-0.04)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family NFA</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(math indirect)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reading indirect)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Parameter estimates are maximum likelihood estimates. The indirect associations are based on the direct association estimates in Model 5 predicting both math and reading random intercepts. PCH represents parent household head and NFA represents net financial assets. Permanent income and NFA were centered at their median values and in log base 10 units. Occupation and education were centered at their median values as well. The direct association parameter estimates on the meet with teacher dichotomous outcome was based on a logistic regression.

was the largest mediator, particularly with permanent income. The parent’s observation of the classroom had a positive association on the level of math and reading achievement as did their attendance of school events. However, the parent having a conference with the teacher had a negative association on the rate of growth in math achievement and meeting with the teacher had a negative association on the level of performance in reading achievement.

Discussion

This study examined the association of economic capital and the externalized parental practices of social and cultural capital on the level and developed achievement of Black males. This study focused on Black males in order to examine the often masked and overlooked variation of Black male achievement. As was presented above, there is substantial variation in the performance in math and reading achievement in this sample of Black males that includes scores at the top end of the score distribution. Thus, the interest of
this study was to examine to what extent does the covariation of family economic capital and the materialized parental practices of social and cultural capital account for the variation in the developed achievement of Black males. The results of this study indicate very much so.

Summary of Findings

Quadratic growth models were fit to the CDS data in order to estimate the developed academic competence for both math and reading achievement. Without accounting for any family variables, Black males developed at a rate of 2.46 points per year in math competence and 5.15 points per year in reading competence.

The parent’s occupational cultural capital had a positive effect on the level of both math and reading achievement indicating the influence of parental occupational exosystem influences on the developed achievement of Black males. It was argued earlier that certain occupations provide greater access to dominant cultural capital than others. A parent’s degree of exposure to hegemonic culture in the workplace may transmit into the context of the home and parenting practices. These parenting practices may be closer to the social view and cultural skills that are conferred upon by dominant institutions and their assessments. In as much as my constructing and naming of occupational cultural capital captures these processes, this finding empirically suggests yet another process of cultural reproduction.

The family’s permanent income had a positive direct association on the level of reading achievement. In fact, while the direct family permanent income association was 3.94 points for reading achievement there was a 7.22 points total association of family income on reading achievement. This indicates that, accounting for the total association of family income, there was a 5-point difference between those Black males who came from a family income of US$20,000 versus US$100,000. Although the direct association of family income on math achievement became nonmeaningful with the introduction of the social and cultural practice variables the total association was 1.3 points. This data suggest that family income is an important indicator of family social position and is positively associated with the materialized practices of social and cultural capital that meaningfully mediate the family income association. However, given that the meaningful direct association of the parental practices of social and cultural capital rendered the direct association of family income nonmeaningful this data also indicates the substantial importance of these practices for the developed achievement of Black males, regardless of economic capital.
Of the externalized practices of social and cultural capital the parent’s practices of cognitive stimulation and emotional support (as measured by the HOME), the parent’s observation of the classroom, and the parent’s attendance of school events each had meaningful positive effects on the level of both math and reading achievement. These meaningful direct effects are evidence of the parental practices of social and cultural capital that do matter for the developed achievement of Black males. Moreover, the family economic capital and parent’s education indirect associations via these practices of social and cultural capital indicate that there is a social distribution to these practices. Thus, a middle- or upper-income parent potentially has more financial flexibility to invest this indicative amount of time into observing their child’s classroom in the middle of a work day or attending school events.

However, the parent having a conference with the teacher had a negative association with the random slope of math achievement and meeting with the teacher had a negative association with the level of reading achievement. As discussed earlier, it has been found in ethnographic research that schools pedagogically treat Black males differently (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Noguera, 2003) as well as respond differently to parents by race (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Ladson-Billings (2011) describes several examples of how Black male behaviors in the classroom are feared and not tolerated whereas their White or Asian American counterparts’ behaviors are much more tolerated. This results in greater incidences of behavioral problems and labeling. As such, this will often result in the parental engagement with the school. Lareau and Horvat (1999) found that even though Black middle-class parents tend to be savvier at socially navigating the service providers of schools they were still not responded to in the same way their White middle-class counterparts were. The racialized responsiveness of schools may symbolically exclude Black parents from being in an affirmative position of advocacy for their child while also marginalizing the parent from being in the know of the classroom and their child’s experience in the classroom. Consequently, Black males become further academically marginalized and their chances of progressing affected. This indicates not only the lack of responsiveness to the variability of Black males by school service providers but also the failure of those service providers to equitably respond to their pedagogical needs.

Conclusions

This study was not without limitations. While SAS PROC NLMIXED employs full information maximum likelihood methods to account for data missing-at-random in the outcome variable, it does not account for incomplete
cases in the covariates. While the imputation of categorical missing data with SAS PROC MI has been found to be unreliable, Allison (2005) has found through a simulation study that complete case analysis does just as good of a job as imputation. Thus, there was a substantial loss in sample size for the final model (approximately 33%), but this should not have introduced too much bias in the estimates, if any at all. Also, not only was the family head’s education and occupation only employed (leaving out other potential contributing family members) the measure of social and cultural capital was very limited. Finally, given that the data set only measures the child’s racial and gender identification this study was not able to model the ethnic variation of Black males let alone their sexual and gender variability. The ethnic variation of Black males can range from first-generation African immigrants to Spanish-speaking Afro-Latinos; each having their own particularities that can and do affect their experience of schools and society. Although we know very little about the association of gender and sexual variability and achievement we do know that due to heteronormativity and homophobia there are substantial social and psychological factors that do disproportionately affect gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students including being harassed, mental depression, lower self-esteem, and homelessness (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009; Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010); each of which may have adverse effects on their developed achievement. Hence, the ethnic, gender, and sexual variability of Black males are social formations that might have provided a much more complicated account of the social ontologies of Black males.

Despite these limitations, this study examined the association of family economic capital and the manifest practices of social and cultural capital on the growth of math and reading achievement for Black males. The results indicate that not only does family income matter, but that the family income association is substantially mediated by the practices of social and cultural capital for both math and reading achievement. Moreover, the models suggest that there was a 2.3-point difference in the level of math achievement and 10.2-point difference in the level of reading achievement at the age of 10 between Black males coming from traditionally middle-class homes versus poverty. Based on the growth models of this study, this translates into a 1-year developmental lag in math achievement and a 1.7-year developmental lag in reading achievement at the age of 10. These social reproductions in the developed achievement of Black males are nonnegligible. They speak to both the challenges and the possibilities.

While the effects of occupational cultural capital may seem determinative, there are at least two ways in which these effects can possibly be offset or
mediated. The first is based on meaningful practices found in the current study such as the parent’s observation of the classroom or the parent’s attendance of school events that could plausibly offset the effects of the parents’ occupational cultural capital. As Iversen and Armstrong (2007) cogently argue, employment has to provide more than a job but enabled benefits to support oneself and family. Enabled benefits might include policies that require employers to grant paid leave time for parents to support child education and development. Paid leave time for parental support of child education and development would enable more parents the opportunity to observe their child’s classroom or attend their child’s school events. The second approach is more broadly via out-of-school community embedded programs and projects that complement, supplement and support the optimal development of human potential (Dixon-Román & Gordon, 2012). More comprehensive approaches to education can offset, enable, and provide the meaningful developmental supports to mediate the effects of differences in parental occupational cultural capital and social and economic position.

The results of this study also speak to the shortcomings of comparative research studies and the importance of studying the variation of an outcome and its covariates rather than focusing simply on estimates of group means, differences, and total sample associations. The dangers of doing comparative research have been argued by many others (Anderson, 2008; DuBois, 1970; Frazier, 1940; Gutiérrez & Dixon-Román, 2011; Mincy, 2006; Noguera, 1997). It is, in part, the results of comparative research that has contributed to the deficit and pathology narrative constructions of Black males. The findings of this study certainly counter those narratives.

Moreover, this study demonstrates the influence of family economic capital and the manifest practices of social and cultural capital for the developed achievement of Black males; thus, further empirical evidence of the problem of social and cultural reproduction in their educational achievement. This indicates that school service providers need to find better strategies to (1) de-myth the constructed assumptions of Black males; (2) be more responsive to the variability of Black males; and (3) be responsive, affirming, and supportive to their parental school engagement. This might mean that school service providers may need to develop better strategies of outreach with parents such as regular proactive home visits, e-mail, and phone communication, especially for those of economically marginalized homes. Will we continue to reproduce the deficit and pathology narrative of Black males or move more toward a discourse of achievement? Ultimately, the institutions of schooling and their actors will have to aid in these ideological shifts.
Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to the Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences and Northwestern University’s Institute for Policy Research for postdoctoral research support. The author thanks Edmund W. Gordon, Waldo E. Johnson, and Larry Hedges for helpful feedback.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was supported by a grant from the American Educational Research Association which receives funds for its “AERA Grants Program” from the National Science Foundation and the National Center for Education Statistics of the Institute of Education Sciences (U.S. Department of Education) under NSF Grant #DRL-0634035.

References


**Bio**

**Ezekiel Dixon-Román** is an assistant professor in the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. He does work on the intersections of the sociology of education, cultural studies, and quantitative methods. Currently, he is completing his first single authored book manuscript, *Inheriting [Im]Possibility.*