Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Relationship between Self-Evaluations and the Likelihood of Adolescent Pregnancy

The sexual behavior of adolescents continues to be a popular and controversial issue for policymakers, researchers, and the general public. Concern and action among these social actors has primarily focused on the prevention of adolescent sexual relations and the subsequent likelihood of pregnancy and childbearing. Indeed, adolescent childbearing often results in negative health and economic outcomes for teenage parents and their children. Although teen pregnancy and childbearing rates have declined substantially, the United States has the highest pregnancy and childbearing rates of all industrialized nations. In addition, large disparities in early pregnancy and birth rates by race and ethnicity still persist (Abma et al 2004; Martin et al 2006).

Adolescent pregnancy has been attributed to various individual, community-level, and macro-level factors. Racial and ethnic differences in adolescent pregnancy are often explained by the differential social structural and cultural locations of non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, and Hispanic adolescents. Self-evaluations, including efficacy, mattering, and 'possible selves' (i.e., educational expectations and aspirations) serve as mechanisms through which societal-level factors influence adolescents' individual decision-making and behavior leading to pregnancy.

Previous studies have hypothesized that non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic adolescent girls' higher rates of pregnancy may be partially attributed to their negative self-evaluations, since positive self-evaluations are generally negatively related to pregnancy. However, some research has found that Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black adolescent girls have more positive or equal self-evaluations when compared to their white counterparts, indicating that either self-evaluation processes are unrelated to pregnancy or operate differently for non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic girls.

This analysis utilizes Wave I of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (ADDHealth) to examine how the relationship between self-evaluations and the likelihood of having ever been pregnant may differ by race/ethnicity among 3,312 adolescent girls. The specific research questions include: 1.) Are adolescent girls with high self-evaluations less likely to have ever been pregnant than those with low self-evaluations? 2.) Does the relationship between self-evaluations and pregnancy operate differently among non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic girls?

Table 1 provides logistic regressions of the likelihood of pregnancy by self-evaluations and race/ethnicity among adolescent girls with the full models controlling for age, immigrant status, mother's education, household income, and the occurrence of menstruation. Preliminary analyses indicate that mattering and educational aspirations (i.e., the desire to go to college) are significantly negatively related to the likelihood of having ever been pregnant among all adolescent girls. However, efficacy and the perceived likelihood of going to college (i.e., educational expectations) are unrelated to the likelihood of pregnancy. Also, the relationship between self-evaluations and pregnancy appears to be stronger for non-Hispanic White girls than for non-Hispanic Black or Hispanic girls, at least in regard to mattering, the desire to got to college, and the perceived likelihood of going to college. However, the only significant relationship after controls are introduced is between mattering and pregnancy for non-Hispanic White girls. Interestingly, although not significant, mattering and educational aspirations are positively related to the likelihood of pregnancy for Hispanic girls.

Preliminary findings indicate that racial/ethnic differences are evident in the levels of self-evaluations and in the relationship between the latter and the likelihood of having ever been pregnant among adolescent girls. Given the likely negative consequences and exacerbation of inequality that are a result of adolescent pregnancy, it is necessary to

contextualize the relationship between race/ethnicity and the likelihood of pregnancy among adolescents. Self-evaluations can serve as mechanisms linking macro- and micro-level demographic processes and help explain racial/ethnic differences in the likelihood of pregnancy. Further work for the full paper will utilize multiple waves of the AddHealth dataset to analyze the influence of self-evaluations at Wave I on the likelihood of pregnancy at Wave II among non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, and Hispanic adolescent girls in an attempt to determine causality and the temporal ordering of the relationship between self-evaluations and the likelihood of pregnancy.

References:

Abma, J.C., G.M. Martinez, W.D. Mosher, B.S. Dawson. (2004). Teenagers in the United States: Sexual activity, contraceptive use, and childbearing, 2002. *Vital Health Statistics,* 23(24), Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

Martin, J., B. E. Hamilton, P.D. Sutton, S.J. Ventura, F. Menacker, S. Kirmeyer. (2006). Births: Final data for 2004. *National Vital Statistics Reports,* 55(1), Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

Table 1: Logistic Regression of the Likelihood of Pregnancy by Self-Evaluation Processes and Race/Ethnicity among Adolescent Girls

	All Adolescent Females		Non-Hispanic White		Non-Hispanic Black		Hispanic	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Self-Evaluation Processes								
Efficacy	0.03	0.00	0.03	-0.01	0.08	-0.01	-0.08	-0.11
	(.03)	(.03)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.07)	(.08)
Mattering	-0.09 ***	-0.07 ***	-0.10 ***	-0.10 **	-0.09 **	-0.06	0.01	0.02
	(.02)	(.02)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)	(.06)	(.07)
Possible Selves:								
Desire to go to College	-0.25 **	-0.18 *	-0.28 *	-0.19	-0.29 *	-0.27	0.03	0.21
	(.08)	(.09)	(.12)	(.13)	(.14)	(.15)	(.26)	(.28)
Perceived Likelihood of Going to College	-0.15	-0.09	-0.27 *	-0.17	-0.06	0.00	-0.05	-0.19
	(.08)	(.08)	(.11)	(.12)	(.13)	(.15)	(.24)	(.25)
Controls								
Year of Age		0.55 ***		0.64 ***		0.51 ***		0.60 ***
		(.05)		(.08)		(.08)		(.15)
Immigrant Status (1=immigrant)		-0.69 *		0.33		-0.31		-1.47 *
		(.33)		(.79)		(.83)		(.68)
Mother's Education:								
(Less Than High School Omitted)								
High School Graduate or GED		0.12		-0.05		0.11		0.28
		(.21)		(.36)		(.34)		(.53)
Some College, no degree		-0.10		-0.21		-0.14		-0.13
		(.24)		(.40)		(.40)		(.69)
College Graduate or higher		-0.45		-1.29 *		-0.15		0.51
		(.31)		(.59)		(.47)		(.91)
Household Income		-0.01 ***		-0.01 *		-0.01		0.00
		(.00)		(.01)		(.01)		(.01)
Occurrence of Menstruation (1=menstruated)		0.67		0.85		1.35		-0.43
		(.42)		(.77)		(.80)		(.81)
-2 Log Likelihood	1629.05	1442.15 ***	756.51	648.02 ***	550.38	488.38 ***	182.80	159.84 *
df		11		11		11		11
N	3,312	3,312	1,900	1,900	816	816	377	377

Note: All statistics are unweighted for this preliminary analysis.
Standard errors in parentheses.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001