

Black-White Differences in Occupational Prestige

Their Impact on Child Development

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This article examines whether differences in parental occupational prestige mediate or moderate race differences in four indicators of child development—reading scores, math scores, Behavior Problems Index, and health status—using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics Child Development Supplement. The authors find that although for behavioral problems there is no impact of parental occupational prestige, for reading, math, and health there are significant academic returns to parental occupational prestige, but only for White families. The authors hypothesize that this racially distinct dynamic may be a result of ongoing discrimination in the labor market, thereby reducing the association between ability (job and parenting) and prestige; or it may be a result of the difficulty of Blacks to translate occupational prestige gains into other benefits as a result of discrimination outside the labor market; or finally, it may be the result of a generational lag between occupational status and parenting practices.

Keywords: *African Americans; occupational prestige; child development*

Black-White differences in employment have been pronounced throughout American history. The Black-White unemployment ratio has always hovered near 2 to 1, in good times and in bad (Darity & Myers, 1998). Even among those who are employed, African Americans have consistently been disproportionately trapped in the secondary labor market, where there is little room for upward mobility and job security (Doeringer & Piore, 1971; Kaufman & Daymont, 1981; Spilerman, 1977; Tolbert, Horan, & Beck, 1980). Data reflect this; for example, among those employed, Blacks are about half as likely as their

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White counterparts to hold a professional or managerial job (DeBarros & Bennett, 1997). And of course, Black incomes and wealth levels are lower as a result of these occupational differences (Conley, 1999).

Much research has gone into explaining why the occupational fortunes of Blacks (men, in particular) lag behind those of Whites.¹ However, little research addresses the impact of this occupational inequality on the home life of Black and White parents. Specifically, this article asks whether the race gap in occupational status (as measured by prestige score) explains the race gap in child development measures. Furthermore, it asks whether the child development returns to occupational status are different for Whites and Blacks—in other words, whether there is an interaction effect between race and occupational prestige on one hand and child development indicators of offspring on the other hand. Before discussing our specific hypotheses, first we review the literature on race, class, and child development.

RACE AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SES) DISPARITIES IN CHILD OUTCOMES

Race differences in child health and development are staggering in the United States. Starting with birth, for example, the rate of low birth weight (< 2,500 grams) for Black infants in 1997 (13.01 per 1,000) was almost twice the rate for White infants (6.46 per 1,000; see Ventura, Martin, Curtin, Mathews, & Park, 2000). These differences translate into differences in infant mortality rates. The infant mortality rate among Black infants in 1997 (13.7 per 1,000) is more than twice the rate for White infants (6.0 per 1,000; see Hoyert, Arias, Smith, Murphy, & Kochanek, 2001). Among infants who survive past the 1st year of life, race differences in child health and development measures persist. Far beyond the 1st year of life, Blacks are faced with higher rates of death and sickness than their White counterparts.² Race plays an equally important role in cognitive development measures. For example, although the difference in child IQ is initially small, by adolescence, the Black-White difference approaches a full standard deviation (Roscigno, 1999).

The research tradition on race, SES, and child outcomes is vast and cannot be done justice in the brief space here (see, e.g., Hauser, 1994, for a review). That said, this literature is perhaps best summarized in a cumulative, life-course framework over childhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Starting with birth, much research shows that African American race, lower income, and lower maternal education lead to a greater risk for delivering a low birth weight baby, due to both prematurity and intrauterine growth retardation (Cramer, 1995; Gortmaker, 1979; Starfield et al., 1991; Stockwell, Goza, & Roach, 1995). This higher incidence of low birth weight among the low-SES and minority population partially, but not completely, accounts for the higher infant mortality rates among these groups (Cramer, 1995; Gortmaker 1979; Tresserras, Canela, Alvarez, Sentis, & Salleras, 1992). If children survive the 1st year of life, those

from lower SES and non-White families face increased risks of childhood mortality, primarily due to increased chance of accidental death (Mare, 1982; Wise, Kotelchuck, Wilson, & Mills, 1985).

Aside from increased mortality rates, children from minority and low-SES families suffer from other developmental risks as well (Egbonu & Starfield, 1992; Wise & Meyers, 1988).³ For instance, there is an inverse relationship between child blood lead levels and SES (Brody et al., 1994; Klerman & Parker, 1990; Mahaffey, Annest, & Roberts, 1982; Quah, Stark, & Meigs, 1982). Likewise, Korenman and Miller (1997) showed that lower SES and minority children are more likely to exhibit low height-for-age (stunting) or low weight-for-height (wasting), two reliable indicators of nutritional status that in turn, predict other health outcomes (Elo & Preston, 1992; Martorell & Ho, 1984; Miller, Fine, & Adams-Taylor, 1989). Other researchers have shown an effect of race and SES on children's number of bed days and school absences (McGaughey, Starfield, Alexander, & Ensminger, 1991), on acute illnesses (Starfield, 1991), and on chronic conditions such as asthma (Ernst, Demissie, Locher, & Becklake, 1995).

In addition to physical health problems, children from poor or minority families tend to enjoy worse mental health and display more behavioral problems than their nonpoor counterparts (S. Campbell, 1995; McLeod & Shanahan, 1993). Race and SES may also affect cognitive development. For example, a number of researchers have found that race and income are correlated with child cognitive indicators such as the Peabody Individual Achievement Tests and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Chase-Lansdale, Gordon, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Korenman, Miller, & Sjaastad, 1995). Research based on test results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress conducted from 1971 to 1996 shows a substantial lag in the achievement of Black students. These gaps have been observed to exist before children enter kindergarten, widen as they move through elementary and middle schools, and persist into adulthood (Phillips, Crouse, & Ralph, 1998). Analyses by Hedges and Nowell (1998) show a decline in racial differences but a slowed rate of decrease since 1988. Even worse, results from the early 1990s indicate that the gap has widened again (J. Campbell, Harnbo, & Mazzeo, 2000). The early achievement gap between Blacks and Whites not only has important implications for an individual's own life chances but also has intergenerational consequences through transmission of resources and values to the next generation. Understanding factors contributing to this gap, therefore, is of paramount importance.

The problem, however, with estimating "race" differences is the long list of other factors that vary by race and that may affect child outcomes—ranging from residential segregation to overt discrimination to occupational differences. Perhaps strongest among these considerations are socioeconomic differences between Whites and non-Whites in America. After family socioeconomic characteristics are controlled, most Black-White differences are attenuated. Many

studies, however, find that racial disparities persist after controlling for SES (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).⁴ Accounts of these residual race differences generally fall into two camps. The “conservative” approach interprets residual race differences as the result of either deeply enmeshed cultural differences that vary by racial group or even of genetic differences in racial group endowments (see, e.g., Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). “Liberal” theorists see the residual as the effect of overt and institutional racism. For example, one hypothesis in this vein is that racial residential segregation confines African Americans to disproportionately live in areas where access to labor market opportunities, quality schools, and adequate health care is limited (Massey & Denton, 1993).⁵

RACIAL GAPS IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT MEASURES AND THE ROLE OF OCCUPATION

Although the relationship between parental occupational prestige and child development may not have been adequately theorized as of yet, income differences have; explanations for income gradients can roughly be divided into three camps. First, some researchers have focused on the *material deprivations* that low income induces, such as poor nutrition, lack of adequate medical care, or unsafe environments (see, e.g., Callan, Nolan, & Whelan, 1993; Mack & Lansley, 1985; McGregor & Borooah, 1992; Ringen, 1987, 1988). Research in this tradition shows that low-income households do experience a degree of deprivation and that this may explain part of the effect of income on child cognitive outcomes (Mayer, 1997). For instance, some work shows that poor children are less likely to have educational toys or books in the household, and such items are positively associated with healthy cognitive development (Duncan et al., 1994; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997; Zill, 1988; Zill, Moore, Smith, Stief, & Coiro, 1991).

A second paradigm, often called the *family stress hypothesis*, sees low income, variable employment, a lack of cultural resources, and a feeling of inferiority from relative social class comparisons as exacerbating household stress levels, frequently exhibited in parental depression, which in turn leads to detrimental parenting practices such as yelling, shouting, and hitting that are not conducive to healthy child development (Conger et al., 1992; Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Elder, Nguyen, & Caspi, 1995; Hanson, McLanahan, & Thomson, 1997; Hashima & Amato, 1994; Lempers, Clark-Lempers, & Simons, 1989; McLeod & Shanahan, 1993; Whitbeck et al., 1991).⁶

The last theory asserts that it is not poverty, lack of nonmonetary resources, or relative inequality that is so detrimental to child development as much as it is the fact that low-income parents differ from higher income parents (Mayer, 1997). Scholars in the *no effect* camp have asserted that the association between income and child developmental outcomes is largely spurious. They have claimed that the same parental characteristics that lead to low income also lead to detrimental developmental outcomes for offspring. These unmeasured

characteristics may range from parents' mental health to aspirations to genetic endowments.

One important variable that has been infrequently measured in this literature, yet which may play an important role in explaining differential developmental outcomes among (Black and White) children, is parental occupational prestige. The issue of the effects of parental occupational prestige on child development is particularly salient to race gaps in this country because—as mentioned above—Black-White differences in job quality (as measured by prestige) are quite substantial. (For example, in our data, the mean occupational prestige score for Blacks is 26.9, whereas it is 42.9 for Whites.) Below, we discuss how occupational prestige may play a role in each of these paradigms.

Material deprivation. By now, many scholars have acknowledged that single-year income measures are woefully inadequate in capturing the overall economic resource levels of a family. Particularly at the low end of the economic spectrum, income has been shown to substantially vary from year to year (Duncan, 1988; Solon, Corcoran, & Laren, 1991). Thus, it has now become standard to use multiyear income measures. Research in this vein shows that a 5-year average is ideal and that the returns to the addition of more years are negligible and not worth the missing data and attrition costs (Mayer, 1997). However, even if researchers have made significant progress in reducing the measurement error associated with income, they may be neglecting an even better proxy for “permanent” income—occupational prestige—because it is much more stable over time and also may reflect other benefits such as health insurance provision, pension plans, and other quasi-financial perks.

Family stress. Income is also said to matter to children's health and cognitive development by affecting parental stress levels—where more income leads to more positive parenting practices and/or decreases the likelihood of family breakups (Yeung & Hofferth, 1998). However, research shows that subjective feelings of financial pressure do not vary substantially across income brackets and that Black families have a greater disjunction between income and sense of financial well-being (Clark-Nicolas & Gray-Little, 1991). Another version of the family stress hypothesis—as noted above—emphasizes the psychosocial aspects of relative comparisons. It is here that we would expect to find an important role of parental occupational prestige. Although relative income comparisons may be made by children (or their parents) through markers such as house size, presence or absence of consumer goods, and so on, a much more ready comparison may be through the question, What does your mom or dad do? In fact, central to most theories of stratification is the notion that occupation is one of the most fundamental aspects of identity—or at least, class identity. So the negative effects of income comparisons might really be acting as a bad proxy for comparisons along the dimensions of parental occupational prestige.

No effect. Theorists who claim that evidence shows that the effect of income may be largely spurious base their claims on a couple of main findings. First, additional dollars from non-labor market sources (such as welfare) do not appear to have much of a positive effect on child development (Mayer, 1997).⁷ Second, marginal changes in income have a weak effect on outcomes (Mayer, 1997). Occupation is worth considering in this paradigm as well—as an alternative to income. However, if income is seen to be endogenous, occupational prestige is perhaps even more so. In other words, the qualities that help someone land a prestigious job may be very much in line with the qualities that make a successful parent. When compared directly, in fact, one may reasonably argue that occupational prestige would pick up most of the variance in unobservable characteristics that may be driving the income-child outcome relationship, leaving income to reflect a more purely financial dynamic. If occupational status is indeed highly correlated with unobserved characteristics that make for good parenting, this does not diminish the importance of examining this variable; instead, it changes the interpretation of results. Rather than saying that the prestige (or other aspects of work life that prestige scores pick up) matter to children, it argues that prestige acts as a particularly good proxy for the otherwise unobservable qualities that lead to success in the labor market and child-rearing realms. After all, we may rhetorically ask, What constitutes a better test of skill, a one-time test such as the Armed Forces Qualification Test (which is often used in surveys, most notably the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, to measure “ability”) or the lifelong process by which individuals work their way up the employment ladder—be it through credentials or experience? We would argue the latter. Although conceding that a lot more than skill goes into occupational standing, certainly it is plausible to believe that occupational standing captures skill better than one-dimensional exams. Research shows that parents of different social class vary in child-rearing values, language styles, and other parenting practices (Kohn, 1969; Lareau, 2003; Massey & Denton, 1993). Through various child-rearing practices, parents transmit their cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills to the next generation (Bourdieu, 1977). Such “cultural capital” is rarely examined explicitly in empirical models and, thus, constitutes part of the unobserved heterogeneity. We argue that parental occupational prestige is a better proxy for such attitudinal or behavioral characteristics than parents’ Armed Forces Qualification Test score or even income.

RACE-OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE INTERACTION EFFECTS

With this theoretical background in place, we can now offer some direct hypotheses with respect to the relationship between race, occupational prestige, and child development indicators:

Main Effect: First of all, for all the reasons illuminated above, we expect to find a strong main effect of parental occupational prestige score on child development measures—net of other demographic and class background controls.

Mediating Effect: Second, we expect that this effect of parental occupational prestige mediates a substantial portion of the race difference in child outcomes. This hypothesis comes out of a class-based tradition (beginning with Wilson, 1978, at least) that states that in the post–civil rights era, class has become more determining of life chances than race (although class status itself varies significantly by race, of course). The young children in our sample should provide a good test for this, because they have been born well after the civil rights triumphs of the 1960s—indeed, their parents are young enough, on average, to have benefited from the occupational opportunities opened up by these changes. Furthermore, we expect occupational prestige to also mediate the income–child development relationship, picking up some of the unobserved nonfinancial aspects associated with permanent income.

Interaction Effect: There is also ample reason to expect a significant interaction effect between race and occupational prestige with respect to child outcomes. In one paradigm, we might expect the returns to social prestige to be lower for the children of Blacks than for Whites. This may be the case for several reasons. First, if significant labor market discrimination still exists, holding back talented Blacks over and above class-based inequalities, then we might expect unobserved ability and occupational status to be less correlated for Blacks than for Whites. In other words, there may be more talented Black workers (and by extension parents) stuck in lower prestige occupations than there are within the White population. Second, it may be a result of the difficulty Blacks may have in translating occupational prestige gains into other benefits (such as social esteem or self-confidence) thanks to discrimination outside the labor market. Finally, Blacks in the professional class are more likely to have come from working-class origins than their White professional counterparts. This may mean that Black professionals were themselves raised with working-class values, which they then reproduce in their own parenting—leading to the SES–child development paradigm. Put another way, the class socializing effects on parenting practices may lag by a generation and, thus, the returns to prestige would be lower. However, there are also competing reasons to expect a stronger return to occupational prestige for Blacks than for Whites. Namely, if discrimination and other social structures still stack the deck against Black occupational attainment, then we might interpret this to mean that the parents who do achieve in the labor market are super skilled (in both realms). Second, because Blacks have been thwarted from other forms of class attainment—such as wealth accumulation (Conley, 1999; Oliver & Shapiro, 1995; Shapiro, 2004) or upward residential mobility (Massey & Denton, 1993)—occupation may take on a particularly important role as a status marker and, thus, have more salience to child developmental measures than, say, income or wealth, for Black families as compared to their White counterparts.

METHOD

We conduct a regression-based analysis to examine the return of parents' occupation to children's health, cognitive, and behavioral well-being. Our analysis is based on data collected in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics

(PSID; see Hofferth, Davis-Kean, Davis, & Finkelstein, 1998), which includes a nationally representative sample of American households and individuals with an oversample of low-income Black families. The PSID Child Development Supplement includes approximately 3,400 PSID children who were aged 0 to 12 in 1997. For this article, we include only school-age children between the ages of 6 and 12 in 1997. Only Black and White children are included in our analyses because the PSID does not have an adequate sample of children of other ethnic identities that would allow us to make meaningful cross-group comparisons.

We estimate the net effect of occupation and investigate whether occupation interacts with race in its effect on children's well-being. Each child outcome is analyzed separately. A series of regression models that include different groups of predictors in the models is estimated. The first model includes race and other basic child and parental demographic characteristics and three indicators of family SES—parental education, family permanent income, and wealth, but no occupation. A second model is estimated with family head's occupational prestige added, and a final model is estimated with an interaction term between occupation and race added. Our models have Huber-White-adjusted standard errors that allow for multiple respondents from the same family. Recall that we anticipate occupation to have a significant impact on children's well-being and that the return of occupation to the next generation is uneven for Black and White parents.

DEPENDENT MEASURES

Children's cognitive skills are conceived broadly to include language skills, literacy, and problem-solving skills and are measured with the Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test-Revised (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989). As the name suggests, the Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test-Revised is a measure of children's achievement, not IQ. Children received Letter-Word and Passage Comprehension subtests as well as Applied Problems and Calculation subtests. The Calculation test and the Applied Problem subscales are combined to form the broad math scores, and the Passage Comprehension and the Letter-Word subscales are combined to form the broad reading scores. These scores are standardized to children's age (see Hofferth et al., 1998, for details about these measures).

Child's health status is measured with mother's rating of the child's general health on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *poor*, 2 = *fair*, 3 = *good*, 4 = *very good*, and 5 = *excellent*. About half of the mothers (49%) reported that the child enjoyed an excellent health status, only four children were reported to have a poor health status. We conducted two sets of analyses with the child's health status measure: first, a logistic regression predicting the probability of a child in an excellent health status; second, an ordered-probit regression model estimating the probability of a child being in one of the four health statuses—excellent,

very good, good, and a combined fair-or-poor status. The results are similar, thus, we present only results from the logistic regression models.

The emotional well-being of the child is assessed with the Behavior Problems Index (BPI) developed by Peterson and Zill (1986). This scale is based on mothers' response to how often a child exhibits a list of 30 problem behaviors (1 = *often*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *never*). These behaviors are divided into two subscales to characterize problems typically seen as internal and external problems. Internal problems include measures of withdrawn or sad behavior, such as the child feeling no one loves him or her or being fearful, anxious, or unhappy. Measures of external behavior problems include those assessing how often the child cheats or lies, is restless or overly active, or cries too much (see Hofferth et al., 1998, for details on how these measures were constructed). These two scales are in raw scores, with high scores indicating more behavior problems. We examine the internal and external behavior problems separately as well as a combined BPI. As results are similar across these measures, we report only findings on the combined BPI.

INDEPENDENT MEASURES

Parental occupational prestige. Parental occupational prestige is measured by a Hodge-Siegel-Rossi prestige score (see, Nakao, Hodge, & Treas, 1990) and is recorded for the head of the child's household. This scale translates the 1970 three-digit U.S. Bureau of the Census occupational codes (which the PSID used in the 1997 study) into a hierarchical scale with a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 82 in our distribution. For those family heads who are not employed, a value of 0 is assigned to the prestige score. In the multivariate analysis, we include a dummy variable that indicates whether an individual is employed at the time of the interview.

Family income. Our income measure is the total pretax income of all family members, inflated to 1997 price levels using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-UX1) and averaged over all of the years since the child's birth through 1996, 1 year prior to the time child well-being was assessed. These data are drawn from the annual reports of family income collected in the 1986-to-1997 waves of the PSID. We use income from multiple years because single-year measures of income are not particularly reliable given yearly fluctuations (Duncan et al., 1994). The average family income since birth variable used in our analysis is scaled in US\$10,000s. For our multivariate analysis, we use a logarithmic transformation of family income.

Wealth. Family wealth data were drawn from measures collected in 1994. The PSID collected information about the value of owner-occupied real estate; real estate other than the main home; vehicles or other assets on "wheels"; farm

or business assets; shares of stock in publicly held corporations, mutual funds, or investment trusts, including stocks in IRAs; checking and savings accounts; money market funds; certificates of deposit; savings bonds; treasury bills; and other investments in trusts or estates, bond funds, life insurance policies, and special collections. The family wealth is measured as the sum of all above items minus the value of debts other than mortgages, such as credit cards, student loans, medical or legal bills, and personal loans. As family wealth distribution is rather skewed, we use the logarithmic form of the total net wealth for the analysis.

Parental education. Parental education is measured with years of parents' completed schooling, where 12 years is equivalent to a high school degree. In two-parent families, the higher of the two values are used in the model.

Demographic controls. An extensive battery of control variables is used in the present study, including child's characteristics, parental characteristics, and family characteristics that may be associated with children's achievement and behavior. Characteristics of the child include age, gender, race, and whether the child had a low birth weight. Parental characteristics we control for include family head's age and mother's cognitive ability measured with a Passage Comprehension score. Other family characteristics include family structure, number of children in the family, region of residence, and whether the family resided in a metropolitan area.

The age of child ranges from 6 to 12 years. Child gender is coded as 0 = boy and 1 = girl. Child's race is coded as 0 = White and 1 = Black. Low birth weight status is coded as 1 = low birth weight (less than or equal to 5.5 pounds at birth) or 0 = birth weight greater than 5.5 pounds.⁸

Mother's cognitive ability is assessed with a Passage Comprehension test of the Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test-Revised (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989) at the time of the PSID Child Development Supplement interview. Raw scores on the test range from 6 to 43. Family structure is coded into four dummy variables: two biological/adoptive parents, biological/adoptive mother with stepfather, single mother, and other family structure; two biological/adoptive parents is the omitted category for all analyses. Whether the family resides in a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) in 1997 is measured as 1 = MSA (urban) and 0 = non-MSA (suburban/rural).

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the family income, wealth, parents' education, occupational prestige, and child's test scores; general health status; and the BPIs for Black and White children. Consistent with the literature, marked differences exist between these two groups. White children enjoy significantly higher status as indicated

TABLE 1: Weighted Means and Standard Deviations of Parental Socioeconomic Status and Children's Well-Being

	<i>Black</i>			<i>White</i>		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Parental education	733	12.6	1.42	820	14.1	2.68
Occupational prestige	718	26.9	11.15	796	42.9	19.81
Log average income since birth	734	9.9	0.57	821	10.8	0.85
Log 1994 wealth, including home equity	726	5.8	3.09	805	9.8	4.44
Reading score	584	98.7	10.70	640	110.2	23.16
Math score	579	97.5	10.48	644	109.6	21.28
Child's health status ^a	728	4.0	0.59	818	4.5	0.88
External behavior problems index	723	23.4 ^b	3.76	805	22.7 ^b	7.10
Internal behavior problems index	723	16.7 ^b	3.48	810	16.6 ^b	5.29
Total behavior problems index (range = 30 to 90)	715	40.8 ^b	5.76	796	40.0 ^b	10.5

a. Measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *poor*, 5 = *excellent*).

b. Group means are not statistically different at .05 level.

in all four SES measures, often more than 1 standard deviation higher than Black children, particularly in occupational status and the family wealth level. They also have significantly higher test scores. The indices for behavior problems for Black and White children are not statistically different.

Table 2 shows the results of a series of regression analyses for children's cognitive ability measured with age-standardized math and reading scores and child's behavioral problem indicators. Our first regression model includes race/ethnicity, family income, wealth, and parents' education as main predictors and all the demographic controls described above. In Model II, we add parental occupational prestige and in Model III, we add an interaction term between occupation and race.

From the models for child's reading scores, we found that parental occupation has a significant positive effect on the test scores, and this effect persists after controlling for child and other family characteristics. Furthermore, there is a significant interaction effect between race and occupation, such that there are no reading score returns to parental occupational prestige for Black children. Put another way, for Whites, reading scores increase among children of higher prestige parents, but for Blacks, reading scores are the same among children of parents with low- and high-prestige occupations. This inability to turn occupational gains into reading gains in offspring may reflect any number of dynamics, as suggested earlier—an issue we return to in the Discussion section. (Adding parental occupation measures and the race/occupation interaction term increases the explanatory power of the models moderately.) We found similar patterns in models for child's math scores. Without the interaction term, parental

TABLE 2: Estimates of Parental Occupation Prestige on Children's Test Scores, Health, and Behavior Problems Index (BPI), Models I, II, and III

	Reading Score (OLS)			Math Score (OLS)			Health—Whether Excellent (Logistic Regression, Odds Ratio)			Total BPI (OLS)		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
	Parental occupation prestige	0.10** (0.05)	0.15*** (0.05)	0.12** (0.06)	0.07 (0.05)	0.12** (0.06)	0.12** (0.06)	1.01** (0.01)	1.02*** (0.01)	1.02*** (0.01)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)
No work	-0.05 (2.28)	-0.28 (3.68)	-4.87 (4.68)	-0.06 (2.57)	-4.87 (4.68)	-4.87 (4.68)	1.58 (0.52)	1.84 (1.25)	1.84 (1.25)	1.58 (1.62)	1.58 (1.62)	4.24 (3.05)
Occupation/race		-0.17** (0.08)	-0.17** (0.09)		-0.17** (0.09)	-0.17** (0.09)		0.98* (0.01)	0.98* (0.01)			-0.02 (0.04)
No work/race		-2.93 (4.67)	2.76 (5.69)		2.76 (5.69)	2.76 (5.69)		0.59 (0.46)	0.59 (0.46)			-3.62 (3.59)
Whether Black	-1.95 (1.23)	-1.87 (1.24)	4.41 (3.31)	-3.24** (1.33)	-3.21** (1.37)	2.56 (3.68)	0.66** (0.11)	0.70** (0.12)	1.45 (0.65)	-2.24*** (0.72)	-2.25*** (0.74)	-1.16 (1.91)
Family income since birth	0.80 (1.25)	0.42 (1.15)	0.37 (1.17)	1.12 (0.94)	0.87 (0.90)	0.82 (0.92)	1.55*** (0.21)	1.48** (0.21)	1.48** (0.21)	-0.39 (0.46)	-0.16 (0.44)	-0.17 (0.44)
Log net family wealth	0.09 (0.14)	0.05 (0.14)	0.06 (0.14)	0.18 (0.15)	0.14 (0.15)	0.15 (0.15)	0.99 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	-0.23*** (0.09)	-0.20** (0.09)	-0.20** (0.09)
Parental education	1.52*** (0.31)	1.27*** (0.32)	1.23*** (0.32)	1.91*** (0.32)	1.73*** (0.34)	1.71*** (0.34)	1.09 (0.04)	1.05 (0.05)	1.04 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.21)	-0.01 (0.22)	-0.01 (0.22)
Family head age	0.04 (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	0.06 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)	0.07 (0.08)	0.06 (0.08)	1.00 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
Mother's vocabulary score	0.77*** (0.11)	0.73*** (0.11)	0.75*** (0.11)	0.62*** (0.12)	0.60*** (0.12)	0.62*** (0.12)	1.00 (0.02)	1.01 (0.02)	1.00 (0.02)	-0.13 (0.08)	-0.13 (0.08)	-0.13 (0.08)
Child characteristics												
Age	0.27 (0.24)	0.30 (0.24)	0.30 (0.24)	-0.10 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.26)	-0.07 (0.26)	1.03 (0.03)	1.03 (0.03)	1.03 (0.03)	0.19 (0.14)	0.18 (0.14)	0.18 (0.14)

Whether girl	3.24****	3.31****	3.18****	-1.17	-1.12	-1.21	1.23	1.19	1.17	-1.58****	-1.52****	-1.54**
	(0.93)	(0.93)	(0.93)	(1.04)	(1.04)	(1.04)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.52)	(0.53)	(0.53)
Whether low birth weight	-2.61	-2.47	-2.57	-4.07**	-3.87**	-4.00**	0.91	0.91	0.89	1.52	1.42	1.43
	(1.67)	(1.69)	(1.65)	(1.72)	(1.73)	(1.73)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.95)	(0.96)	(0.96)
Other family characteristics												
Number of children	-2.08****	-2.13****	-2.15****	-0.76	-0.82	-0.88	0.95	0.94	0.93	0.10	0.02	0.02
	(0.45)	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.50)	(0.51)	(0.51)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.32)
Family structure (omitted group = two parent)												
Single mother	-0.82	-0.63	-0.79	-0.16	-0.04	-0.12	1.11	1.06	1.04	1.92**	1.82**	1.78**
	(1.49)	(1.47)	(1.47)	(1.60)	(1.60)	(1.60)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.86)	(0.86)	(0.86)
Mother with stepfather	-5.19****	-4.81**	-4.83**	-5.05****	-4.71**	-4.57**	0.91	1.00	1.04	2.89****	2.88****	2.84****
	(1.80)	(1.85)	(1.85)	(1.90)	(1.98)	(1.97)	(0.23)	(0.25)	(0.20)	(1.02)	(1.05)	(1.06)
Other family structure	1.36	1.47	1.74	0.73	0.90	1.55	1.30	1.02	1.07	2.30	3.26	3.31
	(2.47)	(2.52)	(2.46)	(2.76)	(2.82)	(2.72)	(0.55)	(0.46)	(0.47)	(2.66)	(2.87)	(2.87)
Whether reside in metro area	0.72	0.56	0.54	-0.93	-1.02	-0.97	1.04	1.07	1.06	0.96	0.95	0.91
	(0.98)	(0.98)	(0.98)	(1.08)	(1.09)	(1.09)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.57)	(0.57)	(0.58)
Constant	52.06****	56.11****	54.53****	50.63****	53.32****	51.91****				51.99****	49.34****	48.86****
	(11.20)	(10.65)	(10.87)	(9.73)	(9.50)	(9.67)				(4.85)	(4.71)	(4.74)
Wald χ^2							76.96****	76.96****	77.89****			
Adjusted R ² /Log P-likelihood	0.255	0.262	0.267	0.231	0.234	0.239	-760.35	-746.22	-744.32	0.080	0.087	0.088

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01. ****p < .001.

occupation is insignificant; but this is a result of the fact that there is, again, a race-occupation interaction effect. Model III in the math score analysis shows that the occupation-race interaction effect approximates the conventional significance level ($p = .07$); meanwhile, the main effect (that is, for Whites) becomes significant. The pattern appears to be the same as was the case for reading scores: White children experience math score stratification by parental occupational prestige, but Black children do not. Furthermore, race is a significant predictor of child's math score in both Models I and II but becomes nonsignificant when the occupation-race interaction term is entered into the model—suggesting that the race effect is really taking place only at the higher end of the parental occupational prestige distribution. This pattern is also observed in models for child's health status. However, for child's BPI score, parental occupation has neither a main effect nor an interaction effect with race. For this behavioral measure, the gender of the child and family structure seem to be stronger predictors, with boys and children in single-mother and step families having more behavior problems.

Other parental SES indicators are also significantly associated with these child development indicators. Parental education and mother's verbal test scores are significant predictors of child's cognitive ability but not of children's health or behavioral outcomes. However, it is notable that family income (since birth, no less) was insignificant for all but one of our developmental measures (health). Meanwhile, family wealth has a significant effect on children's behavioral problems but not on other outcomes.

DISCUSSION

To summarize, parental (head's) occupational prestige has a positive impact on children's test scores and mother-reported health status (not significant for math in the noninteractive model, however) but no effect on the BPI (the combined index of internalizing and externalizing symptoms). However, this overall positive effect of occupational prestige does not seem to mediate the race-child development relationship but instead, moderates it. First, there is no observed main race effect for reading scores. Second, for math score, health, and the behavioral problems index, the inclusion of the uninteracted version of occupational prestige does little to the main race effect.

However, considering race and parental occupation separately masks what is really going on in the data when race-occupation interactions are introduced. The Black-White differences in math scores, health, and BPI were eliminated after the interaction terms were added to the models. When the effect of occupational prestige is allowed to vary by race, we found that for both reading and math scores, there are significant occupational returns to reading scores for White children but none for Black children. Put another way, the real differences in child cognitive development are taking place at the upper end of the

occupational (or SES) distribution. This is a very different picture than that portrayed by the underclass debate in the 1990s—with its focus on poor, inner-city Blacks. It is not the children of low-status Black workers who are falling behind their White counterparts (that is, who have parents with similar jobs); rather, it is among the higher prestige occupational strata that the real race problem lies—at least with respect to offspring's reading and writing abilities.

This significant race-occupation interaction may reflect several dynamics. First, it may be the case that significant labor market discrimination still exists such that talented Blacks are underemployed (with respect to the prestige of their occupations), resulting in a situation where unobserved parenting ability and occupational status is less correlated for Blacks than for Whites. Such a dynamic could be exacerbated if those Blacks who do obtain high-prestige occupations do it more often through dynamics of tokenism—as Peter Blau and Otis D. Duncan (1967) hypothesized when trying to explain the weak relationship between father's and son's occupation in the Black community. Alternatively, it could be the case that discrimination outside the labor market is key: The lack of returns to parental occupational prestige may result from difficulties Black parents face in translating occupational prestige gains into other benefits (such as social esteem or self-confidence) as a result of discrimination outside the labor market. It is possible that discrimination occurs at the child level. One explanation for the lower test scores return for Blacks is that teachers may hold a lower expectation for Black than for White students (whose parents hold the same occupation) and this differential expectation may partially account for the Black-White test score gap, a hypothesis advanced by scholars such as Ronald Ferguson (1998). Finally, it could be the case that high-prestige Black parents were themselves socialized by low-prestige parents and that the change in parenting practices lags by a generation.

We could not fully test whether occupational prestige mediated part of the income-child development relationship, as income since birth was not significant for three of our four outcomes (although the magnitude of the income coefficients reduced considerably after occupation variables were added). In the models for child's health, including occupational prestige reduces the income coefficient only marginally. These patterns suggest that much of the literature concerned with income effects on child development measures may, in fact, be misguided. Occupational prestige—at least for Whites—seems to matter much more than income. Theorists may want to devote more time to thinking through new paradigms of child development that privilege the social status and work conditions that are captured by parental occupational prestige and decrease the focus on monetary aspects of parental SES. Such a shift in focus would change the debate considerably, because the SES-child development literature has been bogged down in questions of the “true” effect of dollars received through work versus transfers (a concern that emerges from debates about welfare). A focus on understanding the impact of parental occupational prestige, by contrast, would entail unpacking whether it is social prestige, work autonomy, authority,

or some other mechanism that explains the SES gradient, moving away from the materialist accounts implicit in the focus on family income.

NOTES

1. Explanations include overt discrimination (Kirscheman & Neckerman, 1991), statistical discrimination (Kirscheman & Neckerman, 1991), spatial mismatch (Ellwood, 1988; Semyonov, Hoyt, & Scott, 1984), skills mismatch (Cancio, Evans, & Maume, 1996; Farkas & Vicknair, 1996), differences in the quality of schooling (Link, Ratledge, & Lewis, 1976), social capital inequalities (Royster, 2003), and parental economic status (Conley, 1999).

2. These health differences become cumulative and result in adult morbidity and mortality differences. For instance, as of 1998, risk of death for the Black population compared with the White population was at least 1.5 times greater for seven of the leading causes of death. The largest difference among cases of death was found in the category of homicide, where a Black individual has 5.7 times the likelihood of being murdered as a White individual. The next largest racial difference was in rates of death from hypertension, with a Black individual being exposed to 3.8 times the risk of death from this cause. Septicemia, kidney disease, and diabetes similarly presented differential risks for Blacks and Whites with rates ranging between 2.4 and 2.7 (Murphy, 2000). As an implication of these rates for particular causes of death, Blacks have significantly shorter life expectancies than Whites. A Black man born in 1998 could expect to die almost 7 years before a White man. A Black woman born the same year could expect to die approximately 5 years earlier than a White woman (Hoyert et al., 2001). In addition to these differentials in survival, African Americans are more likely to have their health negatively affect the quality of their lives. Among adults, Blacks (15.1%) are almost twice as likely as Whites to self-assess their health as fair to poor and are more likely to report that a chronic condition limits their activity (15.8% vs. 13.4%; National Center for Health Statistics, 1993).

3. These increased risks may be compounded by the more limited access to health services on the part of this population (Perrin et al., 1989; St. Peter, Newacheck, & Halfon, 1992).

4. Some research finds that socioeconomic status is more highly associated with child outcomes for Whites than for Blacks. Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), for instance, showed that poverty was associated with the likelihood of having a low birth weight baby, after controlling for mother's marital status, education, age, and smoking status, but only for White and not for Black mothers. Korenman and Miller (1997) used National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data to demonstrate that long-term poverty was associated with growth stunting for White, but not for Black, children.

5. For example, results based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data demonstrate that the Black-White test score gap is reduced not only by controlling for maternal education but also for the quality of the school the mother had attended (Phillips, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Crane, 1998).

6. Although these two mediating pathways have typically been examined separately in the literature, several recent studies show that the two sets of constructs interact with each other and that an analytic model that incorporates both material deprivation and family stress variables has greater explanatory power than models that consider only either set of the mediators (Guo & Harris, 2000; Yeung, Linver, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002).

7. The theory is that income from earnings is much more likely to be associated with positive parenting qualities such as skill and responsibility. Income from welfare is independent of these unobservable characteristics; however, income from welfare may be negatively correlated with unobserved factors that correlate with positive parenting and positive child outcomes.

8. A second measure of birth weight was created to indicate whether the child weighed less than 4.5 pounds at birth. As results are similar, we present only one set of numbers.

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