

“A Dream Deferred”: How Discrimination Impacts the American Dream Achievement for African Americans

Journal of Black Studies

2019, Vol. 50(3) 227–250

© The Author(s) 2019

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/0021934719833330

journals.sagepub.com/home/jbs

Joslyn Armstrong¹, Fiorella L. Carlos Chavez²,
Julia H. Jones¹, Shar'Dane Harris¹,
and Gregory J. Harris¹

Abstract

The American Dream (TAD) is an ideological symbol of achievement and success in American culture. Historical barriers to equal opportunities and economic attainment through racial discrimination have limited access to TAD for African Americans. Barriers of discrimination also reduce the perception of one's life satisfaction, which can further affect the beliefs of ever obtaining TAD. The present research evaluated the effects of discrimination and life satisfaction on perceptions of achieving TAD among a sample of $N = 1,081$ African American adults. Results showed that higher levels of discrimination led to higher odds of African Americans believing that they would never achieve TAD. Income was also significantly associated with TAD attainment, as were age, marital status, and education level. Group differences were found for marital status, age, income, life satisfaction, education, and being worse off financially compared to one's parents. These results support strain theory and racial threat theory by identifying the relationship between discrimination and perceptions of being able to achieve TAD. Those who reported having achieved TAD were more likely to have higher life

¹Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, USA

²University of Missouri, Columbia, MO, USA

Corresponding Author:

Joslyn Armstrong, Florida State University, 120 Convocation Way, 230 Sandels Building,
Tallahassee, FL 32304, USA.

Email: ja15n@my.fsu.edu

satisfaction, more successful careers, more financial wealth compared to previous generations, and higher education levels, showing distinct group differences. The study concludes with recommendations for future research into the definition and measurement of TAD and the barriers to attainment for African American families.

Keywords

The American Dream, African Americans, discrimination, life satisfaction

The American Dream (TAD) is a merit ideology deeply embedded in the consciousness of American citizens. Scholars traditionally define TAD as an ideology promoting the attainment of material and economic success, whereas other researchers defined TAD as a steadfast optimism against adversity to achieve any opportunity and personal fulfillment through hard work (Hanson & White, 2010; Hauhart, 2015; Kwate & Meyer, 2010). Historically, African Americans were excluded from the promises of TAD in the form of barriers specific to their minority status such as racial discrimination and poverty (Cernkovich, Giordano, & Rudolph, 2000). Surprisingly, researchers stress that African Americans remain committed to the promises of TAD. Many African Americans are less optimistic about TAD and are less likely to feel they can attain TAD (Cohen-Marks & Stout, 2011). Yet, little research exists examining TAD attainment in African American samples (Cernkovich et al., 2000). In addition, few empirical studies focus on the influence or experiences of discrimination on TAD and its promises of prosperity through hard work (Cernkovich et al., 2000).

For many African Americans, experiences of racial discrimination occur on a daily basis (Barnes & Lightsey, 2005). Interestingly, 96% of African Americans reported experiencing racial discrimination over the past year (Barnes & Lightsey, 2005). Discrimination is inversely related to life satisfaction for African Americans, where higher incidences of discrimination are associated with lower rates of life satisfaction (Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). Oftentimes, African Americans reported poor well-being and health outcomes when faced with chronic discrimination (Utsey et al., 2000). Due to the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in contemporary society, researchers are obligated to investigate the impact of discrimination on African Americans' perceptions of their attainment of TAD. The current study examined this phenomenon through the strain theory and racial threat theory perspectives. Strain theory explains that experiences of discrimination, and lower career attainment are causes of strain,

dissatisfaction, or frustration that lead to African Americans' inability to obtain the promises of TAD (Cernkovich et al., 2000). On the contrary, racial threat theory states that the majority population uses institutional racism and other forms of oppression to restrict African Americans from experiencing advances in society in order to exert their privilege and power (Dollar, 2014). Thus, discrimination is another structural tool used by the dominant group to isolate African Americans from the promises of TAD achievement (Dollar, 2014). As such, the present research has two fundamental goals: (a) to address the inequalities African Americans face in their attainment of TAD such as racial discrimination and (b) to examine how their current stressors may be impacting their perception of TAD attainment.

Literature Review

TAD Ideology

The present study defined TAD attainment based on African Americans' attitudes of attainment. TAD ideology was defined as perceptions of attaining economic success and achievement. This present study did not examine how African Americans define TAD but their perceptions of if they have attained TAD. Questions pertaining to education and income status, and employment success were used to assess TAD attainment as well. Another aspect of TAD is African Americans' perceptions of how they are achieving in comparison to their parents and previous generations in their families. This present study created variables to account for this specific aspect of TAD by asking African Americans whether they feel more successful or worse off financially in comparison to their parents. Thus, the questions that assessed perceptions of TAD asked African Americans to rate whether they have achieved TAD at that present time, and whether they feel they are more successful or worse off than previous generations in their families.

TAD was created in 1931 by James Truslow Adams. He defined TAD as a dream where life was richer, better, fuller for everyone, and opportunities were dependent upon each person's ability and achievement (Combs, 2015). An alternative definition was created years later by author Thomas Clayton Wolfe (Combs, 2015) adding material success and wealth aspirations to the dream as well (Combs, 2015). TAD proposes that opportunities are equally based and closely associated with other American values such as freedom and equality (White & Hanson, 2011). A central characteristic to TAD is the belief that with hard work and perseverance any success, opportunity, and achievement are guaranteed (Cohen-Marks & Stout, 2011; Hanson & Zogby, 2010;

Hauhart, 2015). In addition, these opportunities are attained only through a person's ambition and ability (Akomo, 2008).

For much of American history, African Americans have been traditionally excluded from the promises of TAD. This deeply held American mythology is problematic because the mythology ignores the unique experiences of African Americans in attempting to attain the dream (Kwate & Meyer, 2010). Researchers may question how successful African Americans have truly been to capture TAD ideology. Maloney (2016) reported that one in four African Americans lived in poverty; a number that doubled that of Whites. Also, the median annual income for African American workers was about 20% lower than Whites and the unemployment rate for African Americans doubled that of White Americans (Maloney, 2016). Indeed, African Americans have been historically denied full access to subscribe to the economic and material successes TAD promises (Cernkovich et al., 2000). The persistent belief that America is a land of opportunities may be an encouraging yet pervasive ideology (Kwate & Meyer, 2010). Such a belief is problematic because opportunities are not evenly distributed nor are they arranged solely by the meritocratic criteria (Kwate & Meyer, 2010). Thus, the likelihood of achieving TAD for African Americans is slim yet its promises may be grandiose (White & Hanson, 2011). Failure of attaining TAD may be detrimental for the well-being and mental health among African Americans (Cernkovich et al., 2000). The structural components that lead to TAD failure include racial discrimination, unemployment, and incarceration (Cernkovich et al., 2000). If reasons for failure are seen as isolated in nature, then they could be overcome by hard work, education, and motivation (Cernkovich et al., 2000). Nevertheless, African Americans continue to face inequalities from these structural components that restrict their attainment of TAD. Although Kwate and Meyer (2010) assert that agency and resiliency can lead to economic success, this is not what African Americans may be experiencing.

Longitudinally, perceptions of attaining TAD are declining throughout society. The persistence of TAD as an ideology in American society is a testament of the dream being an ideal but not a reality (Cohen-Marks & Stout, 2011). Some Americans report that TAD seems unattainable and out of their reach while other Americans disagree that TAD is impossible to achieve (Combs, 2015). A vast majority of the literature on TAD have examined behaviors associated with TAD and have ignored race differences or inequalities when considering TAD (Akomo, 2008; Cernkovich et al., 2000). Oftentimes, class is used as a proxy for race or race is used as a control variable (Cernkovich et al., 2000). Few scholars have focused on examining TAD in African American populations nor have they explored the behavioral consequences of TAD's influence on African Americans

(Cernkovich et al., 2000). As a result, researchers know very little regarding African Americans' commitment to TAD (Cernkovich et al., 2000). Previous studies that have explored perceptions of TAD for African Americans have produced mixed findings. There potentially is an association between race and class in examining TAD for African Americans. African Americans from low socioeconomic status report maintaining ideals of TAD despite facing significant disparities in poverty (Cernkovich et al., 2000). Overall, African Americans report being skeptical about attaining TAD (Cohen-Marks & Stout, 2011). African Americans are least likely to believe they have achieved nor will achieve TAD (Cohen-Marks & Stout, 2011). Most African Americans attribute their inability to achieve TAD from disparities they face in society related to institutional and structural barriers and access to education, jobs, or other opportunities for success previously mentioned (Cohen-Marks & Stout, 2011).

Researchers propose advantages and disadvantages of African Americans aspiring to possess TAD. Cernkovich and colleagues (2000) suggested that commitment to the dream would impact their outlook on life to where they would place higher confidence in mechanisms for success such as hard work and education. The goal of economic success may captivate African Americans to become more engaged in hard work and effort. In contrast, Akom (2008) and Cohen-Marks and Stout (2011) suggested that African Americans' commitment disregards the structured inequality they experience and how imbalanced the economic structures are for them. They warn researchers that TAD may just be blaming African Americans for their own victimization in society (Akom, 2008). Hanson and Zogby (2010) caution researchers against applying the TAD ideology toward African American experiences because equal opportunities are not available to them. They emphasize researchers to consider structural inequality, wealth gap, incarceration, poverty, and discrimination when applying the TAD framework to African Americans.

Racial Discrimination

A significant barrier to African American achievement and hard work is racial discrimination. Racial discrimination is defined as unfair and differential treatment determined by race and is a behavioral characteristic of racism (Mouzon, Taylor, Woodward, & Chatters, 2017; Ong et al., 2009; Andoh-Dawson, & BeLue, 2011). A vast majority of African Americans report experiencing chronic discrimination in their daily lives (Banks, Wood-Kohn, & Spencer, 2006; Hopkins, & Shook, 2017; Mouzon et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2018; Pittman, 2011; Sellers, 2003; Utsey et al., 2000; Williams, Chapman,

Wong, & Turkheimer, 2012). African American men report more instances of discrimination in their daily lives than women (Banks et al., 2006; Ngyen Chatters, Taylor, Aranda, Lincoln, & Thomas, 2018). Racism impedes the promise of equality underlying in the meritocratic TAD ideology (Kwate & Meyer, 2010). Few studies exist that examine the mechanisms by which discrimination impacts TAD attainment (Carter, Walker, Cutrona, Simons, & Beach, 2016). Thus, if African Americans “fail” to achieve the dream, they are more likely to attribute their inability to discrimination and opportunities being unavailable to them due to institutional barriers (Cernkovich et al., 2000). Yet limited research has explored the impact of discrimination on TAD attainment for African Americans.

Furthermore, racial discrimination serves as a method for implementation of structural barriers that impede the advancement of African Americans. According to Jones (1981), African Americans are exposed to three types of racism (i.e., individual racism, institutional racism, and cultural racism). Institutional racism encompasses structural barriers to include policies, social norms, and practices that facilitate inequalities among racial groups. Economic barriers are a particularly salient form of institutional racism, being that African Americans experience more difficulty gaining access to resources and opportunity that would aid in financial mobility and breaking out of poverty (Gabbidon & Peterson, 2006). In addition to institutional racism, individual racism is relevant to our study. Individual racism refers to person-to-person interactions in which one is degraded or humiliated because of their race (Jones, 1981). African Americans are more likely to experience chronic exposure to individual racism as evidenced by reports of everyday and lifetime encounters with racism (Mouzon et al., 2017; Pittman, 2011; Soto et al., 2011; Utsey et al., 2000).

As cultural racism shapes social norms, beliefs, and attitudes, institutional discrimination becomes implemented to reflect these societal values (Bowser, 2017). There is also a direct relationship between the larger scale of structural barriers and the interpersonal scale of individual racism. Individual racist beliefs are often a result of being taught those beliefs through cultural racism and are reinforced by institutional racism. Individual racist beliefs reduce when opportunities to challenge the assumptions are available, such as through positive interactions or education, which shows how they are interrelated (Bowser, 2017). Racist attitudes are also maintained out of fears of loss of power or advantages provided by the majority race through institutional racism (Henkel, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2006) and thus may remain after institutional discrimination has been challenged. As cultural values have changed so have discriminatory laws which reduces institutional racism. However,

discriminatory attitudes and beliefs are still maintained by cultural racism, and are often evidenced through interactions with others (Ruggs, Martinez, & Hebl, 2011). In our study, we measure perceived racial discrimination based on those person-to-person interactions, remaining aware of the context of institutional and cultural racism in which they are imbedded.

Life Satisfaction

The influence of racial discrimination and race-related stressors on the life satisfaction of African Americans has been substantiated through numerous studies (Broman, 1997; Driscoll, Reynolds, & Todman, 2015; Hughes & Thomas, 1998; Utsey, Payne, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Utsey et al., 2000). Racial inequalities have been associated with African Americans' perception of negative life satisfaction (Hughes & Thomas, 1998). Gabbidon and Peterson (2006) proposed the phrase, "living while Black" when conducting their analysis of the impact of racial and social stressors on the quality of life for African Americans. They argue that racial stressors, such as institutional racism, are associated with negative life satisfaction for African Americans. Furthermore, institutional racism contributes to economic stressors (i.e., poverty and lower wage earnings) which are significantly correlated with life satisfaction among African Americans (Gabbidon & Peterson, 2006). Economic achievement and success are pillars of TAD, but how does one attain TAD when one is exposed to racial inequalities and economic barriers on a daily or lifetime basis?

Broman (1997) stated, "to be of African descent in the Western industrialized world is then to face daily: the stress of racism and to be a potential victim of discriminatory treatment" (p. 47). This quote is several decades old but is still relevant to contemporary America. African Americans are victims of discrimination and multiple types of racism that include individual, institutional, and cultural racism. Racial discrimination and race-related stressors have been indicated as strong predictors of life satisfaction for African Americans (Broman, 1997; Driscoll, Reynolds, & Todman, 2015; Utsey et al., 2000). Utsey and colleagues (2002) suggested that continuous exposure to racism and discrimination throughout the life span impacted African Americans' life expectancies as well as their life satisfaction. African Americans have shorter life expectancies and greater reports of negative life satisfaction than White Americans. Continuous exposure to racism, discriminatory acts, and economic stressors have been associated with negative life outcomes such as poor quality of life, chronic and stress-related illnesses, lower self-esteem, and lower psychological well-being among African Americans (Gabbidon & Peterson, 2006; Utsey et al., 2002; Utsey et al., 2000).

Strain Theory

Strain theory was first established by Robert Merton (1938). Strain theory refers to several categories of concepts: health (i.e., stress, anxiety, depression, and poor physical health), economic hardships (i.e., unemployment and labor problems), and social problems (i.e., abuse, family problems, victimization, and perceived gender and racial discrimination) (DeLisi, 2011). Predominantly, however, strain theory has applied to monetary success. Conflicting research indicates that for some people there are universally held goals that apply across class levels, but for others class distinctions leave some Americans feeling that they must lower their aspirations for success (Cernkovich et al., 2000). The pull of TAD can help some people overcome barriers of discrimination, for others it may feel as an unattainable dream “as society continues to grapple with the reality of inequality, the promise of the American dream is brought into sharp relief, and many have questioned whether it holds any sway over those who continue to face failure in its wake” (Cernkovich et al., 2000, p. 132).

Strain theory also explains the effects on a person who experiences negative relationships with others. There are three ways this process happens: being prevented from achieving positively valued goals, being threatened of removal of positively valued stimuli, or being presented with negative stimuli (Agnew, 1992; Jang & Lyons, 2006). A key avenue of negative experiences that African Americans face is discrimination. When economic or educational achievement is blocked as a result of discrimination and lack of opportunities, strain theory posits that a person would have negative emotions as a result (Agnew, 1992). Experiencing strain can lead to emotional problems such as anger, anxiety, and depression (DeLisi, 2011; Jang & Lyons, 2006). These emotions can lead to deviant coping behaviors to alleviate strain and the unpleasant emotions. It can affect perceptions of life satisfaction, quality of life, health, or other avenues of achievement, and possibly one’s belief in the attainment of TAD (Agnew, 1992).

Racial Threat Theory

Another important consideration in how TAD ideal has remained elusive for some can be explained by racial threat theory. This theory states that members of the dominant group use their disproportionate power to have institutionalized control over minorities (Dollar, 2014). As minority populations grow in power and education, the dominant group would enforce even more strict and controlling practices to maintain the status quo (Dollar, 2014). One way this control is used is through economic power, job availability, stability, or wages.

If the dominant group perceives there is a threat to their control and the establishment, then they could minimize that threat through discriminatory acts. Job competition activates the threat, but economic inequality reduces that threat, which can happen at an interpersonal level rather than a state sanctioned level (Dollar, 2014) thus influencing the achievement of TAD.

Together, these two theories inform our research in important ways. Racial threat theory explains how discrimination continues to affect African Americans' attainment of TAD. As the dominant group feel concerns of sharing resources, they increase and maintain institutionalized racism to bar minorities from access to jobs and housing. When laws and cultural values change, and institutionalized processes weaken, discrimination is still used at an interpersonal level. As a result, the barriers of discrimination alter one's perceptions of being able to achieve TAD (Dollar, 2014). General strain theory further explains that when achievement is blocked it leads to emotional problems including anxiety, depression, and anger, which can also affect the perception of future TAD attainment or ability to attain (Agnew, 1992; DeLisi, 2011). This study will test these two theories by analyzing the relationship between TAD and discrimination for African Americans.

The purpose of the research study is to understand the association between African American perceptions of TAD attainment and their experiences with discrimination. To achieve this goal, the present research study aimed to gain further understanding of the nuances of TAD attainment of African Americans when researchers account for structural and institutional stressors unique to this ethnic group. The following hypotheses help to explore this issue:

Hypothesis 1: Discrimination would be negatively associated with TAD attainment.

Hypothesis 2: Life satisfaction, feelings of being more financially successful than parents, feelings of being successful in employment, income, and education would be positively associated with TAD attainment.

Hypothesis 3: There would be group differences in the three TAD groups in the variables of life satisfaction, feelings of being more financially successful than parents, feelings of being successful in employment, income, age, geographic region, gender, and education.

Method

Sample

The data were collected from the Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS) 2013 Survey of African Americans consisting of primarily

telephone interviews ($N = 1,081$; ages 18 to 65 years, M age = 54, $SD = 1.1$; 58.5% male and 41.5% female; please see Table 1). The majority of participants were in middle (32.7%) and lower classes (53.4%), and 65.5% had a family income below US\$50,000. A third of the participants were either never married (30%) or married (38%). Participants were mostly heterosexual (95%), and most of them self-identified as Protestants (64%) and other Christian denominations (17%). A majority of the sample was full-time workers (36%), and unemployed (52.6%). The majority of the participants resided in urban city locations (64%) and in the Southern region (64%).

Measures

TAD. TAD concept was created from one item (i.e., "People sometimes talk about the American Dream. Which of the following comes closest to your view?"). Participants rated their perspectives on a 3-point Likert-type scale (3 = *you have achieved the dream*, 2 = *you have not achieved the dream but you feel that you will do so eventually*, and 1 = *you will never achieve the dream*). Higher scores indicated participants feeling confident they have achieved TAD.

Discrimination. A discrimination scale was created out of five items (i.e., "People act as if they are afraid of you; you feel threatened or harassed; you are treated with less courtesy or respect than other people; people act as if you are not smart; and you receive poorer services than other people at restaurants or stores"). Participants rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale the frequency of their encounters with discrimination throughout the year (6 = *almost every-day* to 1 = *never*). Higher scores indicated frequent or chronic exposure to discrimination. The α value was .74.

Life satisfaction. The life satisfaction was created out of two items that assessed participant's overall life satisfaction and how satisfied they were in the area where they lived. Participants rated their satisfaction on a 4-point Likert-type scale (4 = *very satisfied* to 1 = *very dissatisfied*). Higher scores indicated higher satisfaction levels with their life and well-being.

Covariates. In addition, dummy binary variables were created out of two questions: (a) "Would you say you were worse off financially than your parents at your age?" and (b) "How successful do you feel in your career?" These variables were created to explain other factors influencing the

Table 1. Sociodemographic Information (N = 1,081).

Characteristics	Participants	
	(N = 1,081)	%
Age		
M	53.97	
Range	[18-94]	
Gender		
Female	632	41.5
Male	449	58.5
Race		
Black (non-Hispanic)	1,049	97.0
Black Hispanic	32	3.0
Relationship status		
Married/living with partner	412	38.1
Divorced/separated	200	18.5
Widowed	134	12.4
Single	328	30.3
Education attainment		
Did not graduate from high school	154	14.2
High school graduate	326	30.2
Technical school	32	3
Some college	267	24.7
College graduate	181	16.7
Graduate school+	120	11.1
Employment		
Full-time	390	36.1
Part-time	122	11.3
Not employed	569	52.6
Region		
Northeast	140	13.0
North Central	176	16.3
South	700	64.8
West	41	3.8
Income		
Lower class	578	53.4
Middle class	353	32.7
Upper class	136	12.6

experiences of TAD in the sample. Also, dummy binary variables were used for education and income level for the sample. The variables of geographic location, gender, age, and relationship status were used as covariates.

Table 2. Study Variables Correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Relationship status	—										
2. Age	-.21**	—									
3. Region	-.02	-.07*	—								
4. The American Dream	-.147**	.12**	.03	—							
5. Income	-.19**	-.01	-.06	.26**	—						
6. Life Satisfaction	-.13**	.15**	.11**	.29**	.17**	—					
7. Discrimination	-.04	-.24**	-.02	-.13**	-.04	-.26**	—				
8. Education	.09**	.08**	.01	-.23**	-.28**	.01	-.07*	—			
9. Gender	-.04	.04	-.04	-.04	-.05	.03	-.04	.05	—		
10. Successful	.05	-.10**	-.06	-.29**	-.17**	.23**	.09**	.13**	.03	—	
11. Worse off	-.09**	-.09**	.03	.13**	.04	.01**	-.08**	.04	-.003	-.04	—

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Results

Preliminary analysis were conducted to examine distribution of and bivariate correlations between the variables of interest. The study variables were adequately normally distributed as indicated by a skew of less than|2| and a kurtosis of less than|7| (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). The researchers completed a multinomial logistic regression and chi-square analysis using SPSS 25.

Hypothesis 1

In the first model were the predictors of discrimination and income, and the outcome of attainment of TAD. The covariates of geographic region, age, gender, education, and marital status were incorporated in the model as well. The variables applied to the three subgroups of the TAD variable were “never achieved, will achieve, and have achieved.” The overall model fit was significant, $\chi^2(18)$, $p < .05$ (please see Tables 2 and 3). Overall, discrimination was significantly associated with African Americans perceptions of TAD attainment. For every one-unit increase in discrimination, the odds of African Americans reporting they will never achieve the dream versus they will achieve the dream increases by 8.9%, while holding all other variables constant. African Americans reported that higher perceived discrimination was significantly associated with the odds of reporting they have never achieved TAD in comparison to those who have achieved the dream ($\beta = .085$, $p < .05$; $\beta = -.085$, $p < .05$). On the contrary, discrimination was not significantly associated with African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD versus having achieved the dream ($\beta = .28$, $p > .05$). Thus, discrimination is not associated with the odds of African Americans possibly attaining the

Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting.

Predictor	Model 1 ^a					Predictor	Model 2 ^b				
	b	SE	p	OR	95% CI		b	SE	p	OR	95% CI
Never achieved = 1											
Relationship status	0.17	.06	.01**	1.18	[1.04, 1.34]	Will achieve = 2					
Age	−0.15	.14	.30	0.86	[0.65, 1.14]	Relationship status	−0.09	.06	.11	0.91	[0.82, 1.02]
Discrimination	0.09	.03	.003**	1.09	[1.03, 1.15]	Age	−.66	.13	.02*	0.52	[0.90, 0.99]
Income (=0)	1.73	.33	<.001	5.67	[2.98, 10.78]	Discrimination	−0.06	.02	.02*	0.94	[0.90, 0.99]
Gender (=0)	−0.24	.34	.48	0.79	[0.41, 1.52]	Income (=0)	−.48	.32	.13	0.62	[0.33, 1.15]
Education (=0)	−1.08	.27	<.001	0.34	[0.20, 0.58]	Gender (=0)	.11	.29	.70	1.12	[.63, 1.99]
Region (=0)	0.27	.99	.76	1.31	[0.19, 8.93]	Education (=0)	.46	.24	.05*	1.58	[0.99, 2.53]
Will achieve = 2											
Relationship status	0.08	.05	.11	1.08	[0.98, 1.18]	Have achieved = 3					
Age	−0.81	.11	<.001	0.44	[0.36, 0.55]	Relationship status	−.17	.06	.01*	0.85	[0.75, 0.96]
Discrimination	0.03	.02	.21	1.03	[0.98, 1.08]	Age	.15	.14	.30	1.16	[0.88, 1.54]
Income (=0)	1.25	.21	<.001	3.49	[2.33, 5.24]	Discrimination	−0.09	.03	.003**	0.92	[0.87, 0.97]
Gender (=0)	−0.13	.27	.64	0.88	[0.53, 1.49]	Income (=0)	−1.73	.33	<.001	0.18	[0.09, 0.34]
Education (=0)	−0.62	.21	.003**	0.54	[0.36, 0.81]	Gender (=0)	.24	.34	.48	1.27	[0.66, 2.44]
Region (=0)	−0.04	.70	.95	0.96	[0.25, 3.74]	Education (=0)	1.08	.27	<.001	2.95	[1.74, 5.01]
						Region (=0)	−.27	.98	.79	0.77	[.11, 5.23]

Note. OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval.

^aReference category is 3.

^bReference category is 1.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

dream versus having attained the dream. However, discrimination is significantly associated with African Americans reporting the odds if they will attain TAD versus never attaining the dream ($\beta = -.057, p < .05$). For every one-unit decrease in discrimination, the odds of African Americans reporting they have not yet attained the dream versus they will never achieve the dream increases by 5.6%. Thus, discrimination is a significant contributor to African Americans' perception differences on having achieved, on way the to achieving, and never achieved.

Overall, income was significantly associated with TAD attainment. Income is significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they have achieved TAD versus they will never achieve ($\beta = -1.734, p < .05$). For every one-unit decrease in income, the odds of African Americans reporting they have achieved TAD versus never achieved increases by 82%. On the contrary, income was not significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD versus never achieved ($\beta = -.484, p > .05$). For every one-unit decrease in income, the odds of African Americans reporting they have not yet achieved TAD versus never achieved increased by 38.4%. Also, income is significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD in comparison to they have achieved ($\beta = 1.250, p < .05$). For every one-unit increase in income, the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD versus they have achieved increases by 2.489 units. Thus, income is a significant contributor to African Americans' perception of likelihood of TAD attainment.

The covariates of age, marital status, and education demonstrated mixed association with TAD attainment, whereas gender and geographic location were not significantly associated with TAD attainment ($p > .05$). Education is significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they never achieved TAD versus they have achieved ($\beta = -1.083, p < .05$). In addition, education is significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD versus they have achieved ($\beta = -.623, p < .05$). Also, education approached significance with the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD versus never achieve ($\beta = .460, p > .05$).

Marital status was significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they have achieved TAD versus never achieved ($\beta = -.167, p < .05$). Thus, those who are married are more likely to report having attained TAD than those who are single or never married. In comparison, marital status was not significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD versus they have achieved ($\beta = .075, p > .05$). Similarly, marital status is not significantly associated with

the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD versus they never will achieve ($\beta = -.092, p > .05$).

Age was not significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they have achieved TAD versus never achieved ($\beta = -.149, p > .05$). On the contrary, age was significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve TAD versus have achieved ($\beta = -.812, p < .05$). Also, age was significantly associated with the odds of African Americans reporting they will achieve versus never achieved ($\beta = -.663, p < .05$). Thus, older African Americans are more likely to report they will achieve versus never achieved TAD.

Hypotheses 2 & 3

The researchers ran a chi-square test to assess for differences between the groups of “never achieved, will achieve, and have achieved” in attainment of TAD for the variables of life satisfaction, feeling more successful in career, feeling worse off financially compared to parents, geographic region, gender, age, income, education, and marital status (please see Table 4). Geographic location is not significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were no differences between groups for geographic location on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(6), p > .05$. Marital status was significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were differences between groups for marital status on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(12), p < .05$. African Americans who reported they never achieved TAD were more likely to be never married and widowed in comparison to African Americans who reported they will achieve or have achieved were more likely to be married and never married. Age was significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were differences between groups for age on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(8), p < .05$. African Americans who never achieved were 50+ years in comparison to those who will achieve and have achieved were 50 to 64 and 65+ years, respectively. Income was significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were differences between groups for income on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(2), p < .05$. African Americans of higher income reported have achieved TAD in comparison to those of lower income reporting will achieve and never achieved. Life satisfaction was significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were differences between groups for life satisfaction on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(12), p < .05$. African Americans reported higher life satisfaction when they have achieved TAD in comparison to those who reported low to moderate life satisfaction were a part of the will achieve and never achieved groups. Gender was not significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were no differences between groups for gender on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(62), p > .05$. Thus, men and women

Table 4. Chi-Square Table ($N = 1,081$).

Independent variables	Never achieved		Will achieve		Have achieved		χ^2	p
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Life satisfaction	162	15.7	545	52.9	324	31.4	108.31	<.001
Successful in career	166	15.8	551	52.6	331	31.6	100.20	<.001
Worse than parents	166	15.8	551	52.6	331	31.6	19.33	<.001
Income	116	15.8	551	52.6	331	31.6	75.83	<.001
Education	166	15.8	551	52.6	331	31.6	54.99	<.001
Age	166	15.8	551	52.6	331	31.6	151.20	<.001
Gender	122	16.3	387	51.7	240	32	1.11	.57
Relationship status	166	15.8	551	52.6	331	31.6	104.62	<.001
Region	160	15.6	537	52.4	328	32	5.84	.44

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

reported similar rates of TAD attainment across groups. Education was significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were differences between groups for life satisfaction on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(2)$, $p < .05$. African Americans with more education were more likely to report having achieved and will achieve than those of lower education reporting never achieved. African Americans being more successful in their career was significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were differences between groups for career success on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(2)$, $p < .05$. African Americans who reported feeling more successful in their career were more likely to say having achieved in comparison to those who were not successful reporting will achieve and never achieved. Finally, feeling financially worse compared to parents was significantly associated with TAD attainment. There were differences between groups for worse off financially on TAD attainment, $\chi^2(2)$, $p < .05$. Interestingly, African Americans being better off financially in comparison to parents tended to report in all groups. Thus, African Americans being of a higher socioeconomic status or having more wealth in comparison to family members tended to report they never achieved, will achieve, and have achieved in the sample.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to assess whether discrimination was a significant barrier for African Americans in their perceived American dream attainment. We hypothesized that discrimination would be associated with lower

ratings of African Americans' TAD attainment, and that life satisfaction, feelings of being more financially successful than parents, feelings of being successful in career, income, and education would be positively associated with TAD attainment. In addition, we hypothesized that there would be significant differences between the groups of "never achieved, will achieve, and have achieved" in the factors mentioned previously as well as in employment, income, age, geographic region, gender, and education. We examined these factors using the frameworks of strain theory and racial threat theory.

The results from the study were supported by the two theoretical frameworks. Strain theory states that African Americans may experience strain from their lack of achievement of TAD. Their frustrations can stem from both experiencing chronic discrimination and their inability to feel like they have attained TAD. Our results support the propositions of strain theory because most African Americans reported feeling they have not fully achieved TAD and most are working toward fulfillment. Furthermore, older African Americans reported maintaining hope that someday they will achieve TAD. Thus, African Americans will go through life continuing to cope with the disappointment of not achieving the promises of TAD. The lack of present attainment can cause African Americans to experience frustration and strain resulting in detrimental mental and physical health symptoms. The measurement of mental health outcomes was beyond the focus of this particular study, but it is important to mention that the African Americans in this sample could exhibit various mental and physical health responses to cope with the strain they feel (DeLisi, 2011; Jang & Lyons, 2006). Racial threat theory states that there are structural and institutional barriers in place to limit African Americans' success and power in society. The theory explains that discrimination is a tool used to exert power and hinder African Americans from experiencing the opportunities promised from TAD achievement. Our results support the propositions of the racial threat theory because most African Americans perceive they have not achieved TAD and that the opportunities available from TAD achievement are unavailable to them (Cohen-Marks & Stout, 2011). In addition from the results, discrimination is a critical factor in whether African Americans feel they have and will achieve the dream. Both theoretical frameworks offer different explanations in African Americans' perseverance toward TAD.

The results indicate that chronic discrimination lowers the odds of African Americans reporting they have achieved TAD compared to saying they never will achieve. Also discrimination lowers the odds of African Americans reporting they will eventually achieve TAD compared to they never will achieve. Ultimately, experiences of discrimination did not differentiate between participants who said they have already achieved versus those who

will someday achieve. Thus, discrimination may lower the assurance African Americans feel in achieving TAD (i.e., monetary success and accomplishment) when we account for other factors such as age, education, income, geographic location, gender, and marital status. This result supports our hypothesis that discrimination would be a significant restriction to TAD attainment for African Americans. Our results illustrate that African Americans are more likely to attribute their “failure to attain” due to experiences with discrimination and other structural barriers (Cernkovich et al., 2000; Cohen-Marks & Stout, 2011). Also, African Americans may view TAD attainment as unrealistic for them because of the prevalence of discrimination in their everyday lives as well.

The three group characteristics illustrated what we assumed of each group. The results indicated that African Americans who reported having achieved TAD tended to report higher life satisfaction, more success in career, more financial wealth within their extended family, and higher education in comparison to the other groups. These results supported our hypothesis that there would be group differences in TAD attainment.

Gender, age, and marital status demonstrated mixed influence on TAD attainment. There were no gender differences found in whether African Americans reporting attaining TAD nor were there gender differences between the groups. Thus, there was no imbalance present from the data on men and women experiencing TAD attainment. These results were surprising because previous research on gender differences in discrimination proved that men experience discrimination at higher rates than women (Banks et al., 2006; Nguyen et al., 2018; Seller, 2003). We expected that with more discrimination that men face, they would report less achievement of TAD compared to women. On the contrary, the results show that there are no distinct gender differences despite there being a higher proportion of male participants in the sample. In regard to marital status, relationship status increased the odds of African Americans reporting they have achieved versus never will achieve. African Americans who were married were more likely to report they have achieved the dream. Thus, being in a committed relationship or married has greater impact on whether African Americans felt they had achieved the dream. Perhaps married African Americans can share the burden of perseverance toward attainment and combine their wealth and status together to reach attainment. Then, married African Americans have additional support to cope with the detrimental effects of discrimination, which could be a buffer in TAD attainment. In addition, age was another factor that impacted TAD attainment. The age of African Americans impacted their reporting to strive to achieve TAD. Age lowered the confidence African Americans feel in achieving TAD when we account for education, income, geographic location,

gender, and marital status. As African Americans aged, the odds of them saying they will achieve TAD increased. Thus, older African Americans were more likely to report they will someday achieve in comparison to have achieved or never achieved. Perhaps as African Americans grow older, they have more coping skills to deal with discrimination and the disappointment for lack of attainment. They may remain hopeful that they will achieve and are more likely say they are still striving for attainment. They also gain more life experience and wisdom to acknowledge that the dream may be unrealistic or inequitable for them and their life circumstances; hence, they stop actively pursuing the dream but maintain assurance that they will eventually or someday achieve with more stability in life.

The results indicate that income and education are significant factors contributing to TAD attainment. Lesser income lowers the odds of African Americans reporting they have achieved in comparison to never achieved. African Americans with higher income have higher odds of reporting they will achieve TAD versus they have achieved. Income did not differentiate between those reporting they will someday achieve versus never achieve. Education produced similar results to income. African Americans with lower education levels had lower odds of reporting they will never achieve and they will achieve TAD versus they have achieved the dream. Education did not differentiate between those who say they will achieve versus those who have already achieved. Thus, depending on the education and income level of African Americans, income and education may decrease or increase the confidence African Americans have in achieving TAD when we account for other factors such as age, gender, geographic location, and marital status. Cohen-Marks and Stout (2011) found that if African Americans had similar financial advantages as Whites, then they would be more likely to report they have achieved TAD. This result is important because a characteristic of TAD is financial and material wealth or success. Due to African Americans having higher poverty and lower education levels in the United States, examining TAD attainment based solely on financial aspirations may be an inadequate measurement for African Americans (Hanson & Zogby, 2010; Maloney, 2016).

Limitations

There are several limitations to the present study. First, our data was cross-sectional and therefore causality between variables cannot be established because perception of the level of attainment could be different at another time point than was sampled. However, our results indicate correlations between discrimination and African Americans' perceptions of attainment

of TAD, therefore supporting the claim that chronic discrimination is a significant predictor of TAD attainment. Second, the measures utilized to assess TAD attainment and life satisfaction were limited in quantity and were subjective in nature. The structure of the survey caused some of the outcome variables to become binary variables. Third, the measure for discrimination assessed participants' likelihood of experiencing everyday or person-to-person discrimination and not their experiences of structural barriers related to discrimination. Although discrimination was measured more relationally than structurally, personal experiences provide the context in which African Americans interact with structural or institutional barriers that do limit opportunities for them, hence influencing their attitudes about success and advancement. Although the measurement of these outcome variables were limited, they provided context for TAD attainment and the factors impacting African Americans' attainment of TAD. Fourth, the present study aimed to be representative of the African American population, but 64% of the present sample were from the southern region of the United States. In addition, majority (59%) of the sample was male. Thus, the results from the study are not representative of all African Americans living in the United States because of the restrictions of the demographics. Finally, there was a significant amount of missing data in the present study and lowered the overall sample size for the study. The missing data were not incorporated in the analysis for this study. Despite exclusion of participants with missing data, the study maintained a sufficient sample size that maintained adequate statistical effect size and power.

Conclusion

TAD is a merit ideology deeply embedded in the consciousness of American citizens. TAD is a pervasive ideology prevalent in African American families, despite historically being excluded from its promises (Cernkovich et al., 2000). African American's adherence to the economic success and career achievement propaganda of the dream is understudied in literature. Despite its deep-rooted pervasiveness in African American families, the attainment of TAD continues to evade African Americans (Cernkovich et al., 2000). Scholars know very little of the importance of TAD to African Americans' health outcomes, monetary success, perceptions of discrimination, and life satisfaction (Cernkovich et al., 2000). Few studies exist that examines African Americans' perceptions of TAD and their achievement of the dream despite barriers. The current study aimed to examine how experiences with discrimination impacted African Americans' perceptions of achieving TAD. The results indicate that discrimination is a significant factor in TAD achievement

for African Americans. In addition, income, education, and life satisfaction may be other characteristics that measure distinct aspects of TAD concept. The study emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive measurements for African Americans when examining financial success and opportunities. The study challenges the assumptions of TAD ideology that all can succeed by examining the inequalities of African Americans.

Future Directions

Future research will need to focus on developing a concise measure for TAD concept. The study demonstrates that in solely defining the concept as financial success may produce inaccurate and distorted illustrations of TAD aspirations for African Americans. The study proposes examining other aspects of TAD such as hard work and perseverance keeping in mind the structured inequality present in society that restricts advancement for African Americans. Scholars can examine the individual experiences of African Americans in regard to TAD, such as how this ethnic population defines the concept and their perceptions on its importance in their pursuit of financial wealth and success. In addition, researchers can explore the impact of “failure to attain” on African Americans’ mental and physical health through various symptomology and coping mechanisms. Researchers will have a better understanding into the nuances of TAD attainment for minority populations. Also, mental health professionals will have an accurate representation into the unique cultural stressors for this ethnic group as well. Mental health professionals must support healthy coping strategies in African American families to counteract the disadvantageous effects of TAD. More research is needed to explore the dimensions of TAD for various groups in broader society, particularly those that face significant inequalities. Researchers will need to explore the role of discrimination in American dream achievement for African Americans and corresponding outcomes.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge Dr. John Reynolds, who was the department chair and an associate professor for the sociology program at Florida State University (FSU), for consulting with the authors on the analysis for the research study. We thank you for your assistance and critical feedback.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30, 47-88.
- Akom, A. A. (2008). Ameritocracy and infra-racial racism: Racializing social and cultural reproduction theory in the twenty-first century. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 11, 205-230.
- Banks, K. H., Wood-Kohn, L. P., & Spencer, M. (2006). An examination of the African American experience of everyday discrimination and symptoms of psychological distress. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 42, 555-570.
- Barnes, P. W., & Lightsey, O. R., Jr. (2005). Perceived racism discrimination, coping, stress, and life satisfaction. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 33, 48-61.
- Bowser, B. P. (2017). Racism: Origin and theory. *Journal of Black Studies*, 48, 572-590.
- Broman, C. L. (1997). Race-related factors and life satisfaction among African Americans. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 23, 36-49.
- Carter, S. E., Walker, R. L., Cutrona, C. E., Simons, R. L., & Beach, S. R. H. (2016). Anxiety mediates perceived discrimination and health in African-American women. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 40, 697-704.
- Cernkovich, S. A., Giordano, P. C., & Rudolph, J. L. (2000). Race, crime, and the American dream. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency*, 37, 131-170.
- Cohen-Marks, M. A., & Stout, C. (2011). Can the American dream survive the new multiethnic America? Evidence from Los Angeles. *Sociological Forum*, 26, 824-845.
- Combs, S. L. (2015). The American dream: Divisible economic justice for all. *Race, Gender, & Class*, 22, 228-235.
- DeLisi, M. (2011). How general is general strain theory? *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 39(1), 1-2.
- Dollar, C. B. (2014). Racial threat theory: Assessing the evidence, requesting redesign. *Journal of Criminology*, 2014, Article 983026.
- Driscoll, M. W., Reynolds, J. R., & Todman, L. C. (2015). Dimensions of race-related stress and African American life satisfaction: A test of the protective role of collective efficacy. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 41, 462-486.
- Gabbidon, S. L., & Peterson, S. A. (2006). Living while Black: A state-level analysis of the influence of select social stressors on the quality of life among Black Americans. *Journal of Black Studies*, 37, 83-102.
- Hanson, S. L., & Zogby, J. (2010). The polls-trends: Attitudes about the American dream. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74, 570-584.
- Hanson, S. & White, J. (2011). *The American dream in the 21st century*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Hauhart, R. C. (2015). American sociology's investigations of the American dream: Retrospect and prospect. *American Sociology*, 46, 65-98.
- Henkel, K. E., Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2006). Institutional discrimination, individual racism, and Hurricane Katrina. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 6, 99-124.
- Hopkins, P. D., & Shook, N. J. (2017). A review of sociocultural factors that may underlie differences in African American and European American anxiety. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 49, 104-113.
- Hughes, M., & Thomas, M. E. (1998). The continuing significance of race revisited: A study of race, class, and quality of life in American, 1972 to 1996. *American Sociological Review*, 63, 785-795.
- Jang, S. J., & Lyons, J. A. (2006). Strain, social support, and retreatism among African Americans. *Journal of Black Studies*, 37, 251-274.
- Jones, J. M. (1981). The concept of racism and its changing reality. In B. J. Bowser & R. J. Hunt (Eds.), *Impact of racism on White America* (pp. 27-49). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Kwate, N. O. A., & Meyer, I. H. (2010). The myth of meritocracy and African American health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100, 1831-1834.
- Maloney, C. B. (2016). *The American dream on hold: Economic challenges in the African American community* (U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee). Washington, DC: Dirksen Senate Office Building.
- Merton, R. K. (1938). Social structure and anomie. *American Sociological Review*, 3, 672-682.
- Mouzon, D. M., Taylor, R. J., Woodward, A. T., & Chatters, L. M. (2017). Everyday racial discrimination, everyday non-racial discrimination, and physical health among African Americans. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 26, 68-80.
- Nguyen, A. W., Chatters, L. M., Taylor, R. J., Aranda, M. P., Lincoln, K. D., & Thomas, C. S. (2018). Discrimination, serious psychological distress, and church-based emotional support among African American men across the life span. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 73, 198-207.
- Ong, A. D., Rowell-Fuller, T., & Burrow, A. L. (2009). Racial discrimination and the stress process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 1259-1271.
- Pittman, C. T. (2011). Getting mad but ending up sad: The mental health consequences for African Americans using anger to cope with racism. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42, 1106-1124.
- Ruggs, E. N., Martinez, L. R., & Hebl, M. R. (2011). How individuals and organizations can reduce interpersonal discrimination. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5, 29-42.
- Soto, J. A., Andoh-Dawson, N. A., & BeLue, R. (2011). The relationship between perceived discrimination and generalized anxiety disorder among African Americans, Afro Caribbeans, and non-Hispanic Whites. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 25, 258-265.
- Utsey, S. O., Payne, Y. A., Jackson, E. S., & Jones, A. M. (2002). Race-related stress, quality of life indicators, and life satisfaction among elderly African Americans. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 8, 224-233.

- Utsey, S. O., Ponterotto, J. G., Reynolds, A. L., & Cancelli, A. A. (2000). Racial discrimination, coping, life satisfaction, and self-esteem among African Americans. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 78, 72-80.
- West, S. G., Finch, J. F., & Curran, P. J. (1995). Structural equation models with nonnormal variables: Problems and remedies. In R. H. Hoyle (Ed.), *Structural equation modeling: Concepts, issues, and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
- White, J. K., & Hanson, S. L. (2011). Introduction: The making and persistence of the American dream. In J. K. White & S. L. Hanson (Eds.), *The American dream in the 21st century* (pp. 1-16). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Williams, M. T., Chapman, L. K., Wong, J., & Turkheimer, E. (2012). The role of ethnic identity in symptoms of anxiety and depression in African Americans. *Psychiatry Research*, 199, 31-36.

Author Biographies

Joslyn Armstrong, MS, is a doctoral candidate at Florida State University (FSU). Her primary research interests include studying the father identity in African American families and studying its impact on father-child relationships; father and child mental illness and its impact on father-child closeness; and the impact of African American fathering on child outcomes.

Fiorella L. Carlos Chavez, PhD, is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Her research interests are in the field of family-life stressors of Latino families, immigrants, migrant youth, and ethnic minority college students and how present life challenges impact their overall well-being. She focuses on qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods methodologies.

Julia H. Jones, MS, is a doctoral student in marriage & family therapy (MFT) at FSU. She studies the physiological and neurological processes of stress and how they affect individuals and relationships. She is particularly interested in parent-child relationships and seeks to identify and improve therapy interventions that can reduce the impact of stress on families.

Shar'Dane Harris, MS, EdS, NCC, is a first-year doctoral student at FSU. Shar'Dane received dual degrees, master's degree and education specialist degree, in counseling and human systems from FSU. Her primary research interests include fathering, father-child relationships, and risk and protective factors of children raised in single-parent homes.

Gregory J. Harris, PhD, is the associate dean of Academic Affairs, the director of Advising and Student Success, and a faculty member at FSU. His research interests include studying inequities in psychosocial and health status among racial-ethnic families across the life course in the context of the family and the community.