COLLEGE ENROLLMENT GAP BETWEEN CHILDREN OF NATIVE-BORN BLACKS AND CHILDREN OF BLACK IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.

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I. Introduction

Inequality exists across the various racial groups in the United States. Looking closely, the socio-economic gap between African-American and Whites remains to this day. Wealth gap between White and African-American families is huge. This is caused by such factors as lifetimes earning rates, unemployment and wealth endowments. Also, there is gap in educational achievement between blacks and whites. In fact, Whites are more likely to attend college after high school and have higher college graduation rates than African-Americans. Consequently, the lifetime earning power among African-Americans (Blacks) tend to be low due to their lower college attendance and graduation rate. Bridging this gap has the potential to enhance the welfare of African-Americans in the United States.

In this regard, we seek to examine the factors that may account for the low college enrollment rates of Native born Blacks. Within the Black community (everyone considered to have African origins), college enrollment rates for students with immigrant parents are higher than those for students who were born in the US. Understanding this question may help measure the scale of societal discrimination versus other factors in accounting for the education success gap. Our analysis seeks to answer the question: is there a difference in college enrollment between Native-born Blacks household children and African immigrants household children? Lower college enrollment rates for students with native-born Black parents than Black students with immigrant parents would imply that discrimination alone does not explain the success gap.

II. Literature Review

In years past, a large body of research that seeks to understand what accounts for different rates of college attendance. Massey, Mooney, Torres and Charles (2006) looked at attendance rates of black immigrants and native-born blacks at selective colleges. They were seeking to understand what accounted for the overrepresentation of immigrant blacks versus native-born blacks at selective

colleges and universities. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshman, they found that the over representation of immigrant blacks was more pronounced at private institutions than in public colleges. First and second generation immigrants account for 13% of the African American population, but account for 29% of freshman at private colleges and 23% of freshman at public colleges.

Their analysis of demographic, economic, and social factors found few differences to explain the differing college enrollment rates. Income, wealth, parental employment, academic achievement and parental involvement were found to be nearly identical between the two groups. However, the immigrant children were more likely to come from two-parent households, and most significantly, the immigrant children were far more likely to have a father who graduated from college and held an advanced degree. The authors take this fact and assert that, "Possibly as a result of this difference, immigrant children were more likely to attend private schools, and in this setting they experienced a lower exposure to violence than the children of native blacks and modestly more exposure to members of other groups." Based on the evidence presented up to this point, there is no evidence to support this assertion, as it was not a variable used in their analysis.

Also the authors suggest that the higher level of parental education for immigrant students is consistent with the self-selection of immigration itself. Only those with drive and ambition for better outcomes will leave their home country to come to the US in the first place. This suggests that some higher degree of value of education may be at play in immigrant households than in households of native-born blacks.

The main finding of their study is that, aside from parental education and higher rates two- parents in the home, there are no appreciable differences in the economic and demographic characteristics of the two groups. Thus, any factors affecting enrollment rates for blacks versus whites are at work for both native born and immigrant students.

Bennett and Lutz (2009) look at college enrollment rates for whites, native-born blacks and

immigrant blacks and reach different conclusions. They find that immigrant blacks have the highest college enrollment rates of the three groups (75%), followed by whites (72%) and blacks (60%). Their analysis showed that compared to whites, native-born black students and immigrant blacks have similarly disadvantaged socioeconomic characteristics, with access to fewer resources. But, immigrant blacks resemble their white counterparts in terms of educational attainment of their parents and coming from two-parent households.

Given the same resources as whites, Bennett and Lutz find that immigrant blacks would be 3.9 times and native-born blacks 2.9 times more likely to attend college than whites. Given the similar socioeconomic backgrounds between native-born blacks and immigrant blacks, the authors dismiss the notion that college enrollment rates vary between the two groups because of cultural differences, as was suggested by Masey et al. Instead, Bennett and Lutz point to structural causes to explain differing college enrollment rates. Reduced access to educational and economic resources explains the lower enrollment rates for blacks. Expanding access in these areas is where they believe policy should be focused.

Jones (2009) looks at differences in poverty rates between native-born black children and immigrant black children. While immigrant blacks have lower child poverty levels than native born blacks, Jones finds that immigrant black families have more hurdles to overcome to achieve gains in economic standing. Immigrant black families must work more hours than native blacks to achieve the same gains in welfare. Jones also dismisses the notion from Massey et al that differing cultural attributes give immigrants an advantage in terms of social mobility.

While Jones's research confirms the findings of lower poverty levels among immigrant black families versus those of native-born black families, he finds that household composition affects poverty rates. The highest risk of poverty is for children in single parent immigrant households. There is an interaction between family structure and immigration status that creates a hierarchy of likelihood of poverty, which is a main determinant of outcomes later in life.

Additionally, Jones shows that the human capital accumulation by heads of black immigrant families can be counteracted by the status of their race. He found that poverty rates were higher for African immigrant families than Asian and non-Hispanic white families with similar socio-economic characteristics. This was even though the head of the household in an African immigrant family tends to have more schooling than their respective Asian or non-Hispanic white counterpart

III. Data

We used data from the Current Population Survey (CPS). This is a monthly survey of U.S. households conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the Census Bureau. It is a comprehensive survey of economic, employment and demographic information. We accessed the CPS data from the IPUMS project of the Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota. The data in our regression was from the March 2013. We excluded respondents reporting more than one race/ethnicity, and those whose race/ethnicity is unknown. We further restricted the sample to individuals aged 18-25 years old (n=18,566). Some individuals reported a negative family income. We treated these cases as outliers and excluded them from our model.

From our examination of the literature, we established five core independent variables that have an established effect on whether an individual will enroll in college. These are age, sex, income, educational attainment of the parents, and family structure. (Table 1) We included these variables in our model to try and isolate the effects of the independent variables that are the focus of our study, race/ethnicity and nativity of the parents. We measured income using family income. We measured educational attainment of the parents with a dummy variable based on whether the head of the household has a bachelor's degree or higher. We accounted for family structure using a dummy variable based on whether the head of the household is married with the spouse present. The Race/Ethnicity variables were organized as follows: Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The Hispanic variable in the CPS is classified as an

ethnicity variable, not a race variable. Thus it is possible for an individual to be classified as Hispanic and Black, Hispanic and White, etc. For the purpose of this study, any individual who is classified as Hispanic is not classified as any of the other racial groups. Thus, a Black individual is Black and not Hispanic. A White individual is White and not Hispanic.

We created the dummy variable FOREIGN_HEAD to tell us whether the head of the individual's household is of foreign birth. The dummy variable CITIZENSHIP tells us whether the individual is a citizen of the United States of America. AFRICAN_HEAD tells us whether the head of the household was born in Africa and CARRIBEAN_HEAD tells us whether the head of the household was born in the Caribbean.

IV. Method

We ran a series of binary logistic regressions. The dependent variable was whether the individual was attending college (full time or part time) or not attending college at all. The first regression looked at the core socioeconomic variables and the race/ethnicity variables. The second regression looked at the core socioeconomic variables and the race/ethnicity variables but restricted the sample to California. This was to observe whether the affirmative action ban in California would have an effect on the educational enrollment of the different groups. Our third regression restricted the sample to only Black population and provided a baseline for the second part of our model, looking only at the core variables. The fourth regression added FOREIGN_HEAD as an independent variable to answer our question of whether having a foreign-born head of the household. The fifth regression added CITIZENSHIP to see if there was any advantage to being a citizen of the United States. The fifth regression looked at the core variables and AFRICAN_HEAD to see if Blacks children with an African head of the household had increased college enrollment. The sixth regression looked at the core variables and CARIBEAN_HEAD to see if Blacks children with a Caribbean head of household have increased college enrollment rates.

V. Results

All of the core variables (Table 2, Section 1) are significant and their magnitudes and direction agree with the established literature, except for stable marriage. Increased age decreases college enrollment rate. Females are more likely to be enrolled in college than males. This is a trend that has been studied and noted. Income, even though positive and statistically significant, has a near-zero effect on college enrollment. Other studies suggest that when you control for the education level of the parents, income becomes a less of a determinant of college enrollment. This may because of the availability financial aid to people who wish to go to school. Also, the borrowing requirements for student loans are minimal and students have easy access to credit markets to finance their education, allowing poorer students to overcome the financial challenges of obtaining a degree. Stable marriage is not significant, that means we cannot conclude if it has any effect on college enrollment.

Being black has statistically significant effect college enrollment rates, after controlling for different socioeconomic factors. This is one indication that institutional discrimination against Blacks is not as prevalent as it once was. This finding does not suggest that overall Blacks are achieving at the same rates as Whites. It is encouraging to note that there is no statistically significant difference in college enrollment between Blacks and Whites. There may be differences in graduation rates, retention rate, employment after graduation, and other areas that need to be explored.

The second regression looks at California only (Table 2, Section 2). In 1996, the State of California banned the use of affirmative action. To test the effects of the ban on college enrollment rates, we restricted our sample in this regression to the state of California. Black enrollment is still not significant. Hence, we cannot make any conclusion as to the effects of the ban on affirmative action in California on college enrollment rates among blacks. However, Hispanic enrollment is statistically significantly worse 5% level of significance. This indicates that Hispanics in California are less likely to enroll in college compared to whites, indicating that the ban on affirmative action may be adversely affecting Hispanic students' chances of enrolling in colleges in California.

The first regression for part two provides the baseline for the second part of our analysis, which looks solely at the Black population. All the core variables are similar to what was noted in the first part of our analysis. The second regression adds the FOREIGN_HEAD variable (Table 3, Section 2). It is significant and positive. This means that black children with foreign head of household are more likely to enroll in college than those with native-born head of household.

The third regression adds CITIZENSHIP (Table 2, Section 3). It is not significant, so we cannot conclude that citizenship status has an appreciable effect on college enrollment rates among Black population. Having an African head of the household has a positive effect on college enrollment rates (Table 3, Section 4). This is in line with previous literature that says that first and second generation Blacks with African ancestry are overrepresented in the Black college going population. A similar result emerges for those with a Caribbean head of household (Table 3, Section 5).

VI. Conclusion

The differences in educational enrollment that used to exist between Blacks and Whites has largely vanished. However, college enrollment is just one piece of the puzzle. Getting access to higher education is the first step. Individuals must be able to acquire human capital while there and apply their knowledge and skills via employment. The Black population suffers in these areas. Blacks have lower graduation rates, lower incomes and higher unemployment rates (compared to whites). The progress in Black enrollment indicates that institutional discrimination that once hindered access to higher education is gone. Hence, the Blacks population must make sure to take advantage of these opportunities to improve their lot in life.

There is a gap in college enrollment rate between Blacks with native born head of household and Blacks with a foreign born head of household. This further supports the claim that institutional discrimination is not as big an obstacle as it once was to higher education among Blacks. There is

no reason to believe that such discrimination would differ appreciably between immigrants and natives, if it exists. Hence, it makes sense to assume that there may be some cultural element that can help explain this gap in enrollment rates. Individuals with African born and Caribbean born heads of household have a higher college enrollment rate than the native Black population. These are the two main sources of black immigration to the United States. Future studies should seek to explore the difficult to measure differences in culture and ideology of these groups to try and correct the lower enrollment rates of native Blacks.

References

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Regression Variables

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Variable Name	Description
WTSUPP	Weight used to correct for sampling error in the CPS
AGE	Age of the Respondent
FE MALE	Dummy variable for males
FTOTVAL	Family income of respondent
BACHELOR_HEAD	Dummy variable to ascertain if head of household has a bachelor's degree or better
STABLEMARRIAGE	Value=1 if head of household is married and spouse is present
FOREIGN_HEAD	Value=1 if head of household is foreign born
AFRICAN_HEAD	Value=1 if head of household was born in Africa
CARRIBEAN_HEAD	Value=1 if head of household was born in the Caribbean
CITIZENSHIP	Value=1 if respondent is a US citizen
BLACK	Value = 1 if respondent is Black and not Hispanic
WHITE	Value=1 if respondent is White and not Hispanic
NATIVEAMERICAN	Value=1 if respondent is American Indian/Aleut/Eskimo and not Hispanic
ASIAN	Value =1 if respondent is Asian and not Hispanic
PACIFICISLANDER	Value=1 if respondent is Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and not Hispanic
HISPANIC	Value=1 if respondent is Hispanic
COLL_ATT	Value=1 if respondent is enrolled in college full-time or part time

Table 2. Regression 1 Results

WTSUPP	.0001 (.000)***	.000 (.000)
AGE	-.1367 (.0071)***	-.1327 (.0201)***
FEMALE	-.3943 (.0316)***	-.3009 (.0877)***
FTOTVAL	.0000 (.0000)***	.000 (.000)
BACHELORS_HEAD	.5037 (.0376)***	.1634 (.1154)
STABLEMARRIAGE	.0611 (.0347)	.1296 (.0933)
BLACK	-.0625 (.0505)	-.1114 (.2021)
HISPANIC	-.0298 (.0399)	-.3549 (.1149)**
ASIAN_N	.6554 (.0671)***	.3287 (.1515)*
PACIFICISLANDER	-.1978 (.2239)	-.6393 (.5173)
NATIVEAMERICAN	-.6714 (.1893)***	-.1135 (.8126)

* p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01

Table 3. Regression Results (Blacks Only)

	1	2	3	4	5
WTSUPP	.000***	.000	.000	.000	.00000
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.0000)
AGE	-.0876***	-.0862***	-.0864***	-.08824***	-.8620***
	(.0206)	(.0267)	(.0206)	(.0206)	(.2063)
FEMALE	-.5970***	-.6086***	-.6090***	-.6092***	-.5962***
	(.0925)	(.0930)	(.0930)	(.0928)	(.0206)
FTOTVAL	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.0000***
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.0000)
BACHELORS_HEAD	0.6422***	.6159***	.6150***	.6216***	.6398***
	(.1190)	(.1195)	(.1196)	(.1194)	(.1191)
STABLEMARRIAGE	.2451*	.2197*	.2193*	.2405*	.2265*
	(.1049)	(.1054)	(.1054)	(.1052)	(.1053)
FOREIGN_HEAD		.5781** *	.5587**	--	--
		(.1340)	(.1467)		
CITIZENSHIP			.0818	--	--
			(.2513)		
AFRICAN_HEAD				.5965 **	--
				(.1890)	
CARRIBEAN_HEAD					.4834*
					(.1980)

* p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01