

Parent Involvement and the Summer Slide: Does parents' time spent with children vary by race?

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Introduction

The well documented racial educational opportunity gap has persisted over time. There has been an ongoing debate as to whether this gap stems largely from school environments during the school calendar year such as unequal funding and facilities, or instead is created by non-school environments during summer months like family composition and extracurricular activities (Downey & Condron 2016). Previous work on the non-school environment side of the debate suggests racial and socio-economic gaps in educational achievement widen during summer months while remaining relatively steady during the school year (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson 2007). Time diary data are often used to study parents' time with children, but have less frequently been used to examine assumptions about how this may contribute to racial and socio-economic gaps in educational achievement. To unpack the gaps widening during summer, we propose comparing parents' engagement with children during the school year with the summer months.

Gershenson (2013) tested for socio-economic status (SES) differences in parental engagement with children during the summer. Using American Time Use Survey (ATUS) time diaries, Gershenson found that parents with higher SES and higher education levels spent more time caring for their children during the summer months than parents with lower SES and educational levels. Knowing there are real differences in parents' education level, SES, and employment by race, we will expand previous work by examining group (racial) differences in parents' time engaged in activities including children during the summer. This leads to our

research questions: 1) *Are there racial differences in how parents spend time with children outside of school during the summer?* 2) *Are there racial differences in the type of activities parents engage in with their children during the summer compared to the school year?*

While parents' SES and educational levels are an important factor of explaining children's educational gaps, it is equally important to consider race. One reason is that African Americans do not receive the same economic returns from education as those seen by their White counterparts (Wilson 2017). Focusing on the education levels of parents assumes that economic realities of Black parents are similar to white parents, which is why race is an important factor to include.

Gershenson's work on SES differences in parental engagement during the summer is both important and influential. We aim to improve upon and expand it by (1) considering race in addition to SES and (2) employing a broader and richer set of measures of the kinds of activities parents engage in with children. Types of activities broadly drawn from the literature include extracurricular activities, educational programming, and family leisure, which all build cultural and social capital (Covay & Carbonaro 2010; Crosnoe & Trinitapoli 2008; Lareau 2011).

Data and Methods

We use integrated ATUS data (Hofferth et al, 2013) to examine how parents' time spent with children during the summer months vary by race in the United States. The ATUS is a time diary study of a nationally representative sample of Americans. ATUS data are collected using a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI), and the respondents report the activities they engaged in over a 24-hour period from 4:00 a.m. of a specified day until 4:00 a.m. of the following day, as well as where, when, and with whom activities were done. Data are collected

all days of the week, and weekends are oversampled. Sample weights correct for the survey design such that aggregating across different days of the week results in a representative picture of average time use among the population. Our results are based on pooled cross-sections from 2003 to 2017.

The ATUS is well-suited for this research because sample sizes are large enough to carefully examine racial subgroup differences. Second, it allows for an examination of the ages of children parents are with when engaging in activities shown to increase children's educational attainment. Previous work has demonstrated how different types of activities benefit children's development as they age (Kalil et al, 2012). In a multidisciplinary study on parents' time with children, Kalil et al find that parents transition from time spent on basic care (physical care) to managing (organizing/planning) children's time as children age. To assess whether these transitions look the same by race, we look at parents with children ages 3-12. To do this, we split them into three age groups: 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. These age groups generally reflect pre-K, K-3rd, and 4th-7th grades respectively.

Measures/Analyses

Our dependent variable here is parents' time spent engaging with their children in specific activities. Gershenson (2013) looked at three general types of activities: physical care (caring for and watching children), facilitating children's activities (planning activities, chauffeuring children, attending events, and waiting for children), and parent-child interactions (talking, playing, and arts & crafts). Going more in-depth, we will focus on specific types of activities. Examples of specific activities that are said to build social and cultural capital include: traveling, arts and entertainment not including sports, and volunteering activities.

Our key independent variable is parents' race. We construct our race variable from parent's reported race on the ATUS. The different categories of race will include White, Black, Asian, and non-White or non-Black Hispanic. Included below is our sample size both during the school year and the summer months of June, July, and August. As noted previously, we will also compare the summer months to the school year, to further assess what may be different between the two parts of the year.

Sample

	Summer Months	Academic Year
Race of Parent Respondents		
White	N=32,078	N=98,616
Black	N=6,273	N=19,256
Hispanic	N=6,397	N=19,616
Asian	N=1,512	N=4,705
Total	N=46,260	N=142,193

For our analyses, we plan to utilize OLS regressions. The choice to go with OLS instead of Tobit is based from Stewart's (2013) work on time-use models. Our analyses will primarily consist of describing racial differences in time use in activities mentioned previously with children, before and after adjusting for confounders, separately by children's age groups, and separately for summer and school year months.

Conclusion

This research engages with the extensive literature on racial achievement gaps, summer learning gaps, time use, and parenting. We believe this research is necessary to further our understanding of racial differences in parents' time use and previous notions on the belief of its connection to children's educational achievement. Gershenson initiated this discussion of parents' time-use and summer learning. We are excited to add to and extend this conversation by utilizing the ATUS further in depth. By looking beyond the general child care categories that are provided by ATUS, we will be able to replicate Gershenson's work with recent data and potentially draw new conclusions based on more specific data.

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