

# Impact of Family Structure Change on College Entrance among Black Youth: A Person-Centered Approach

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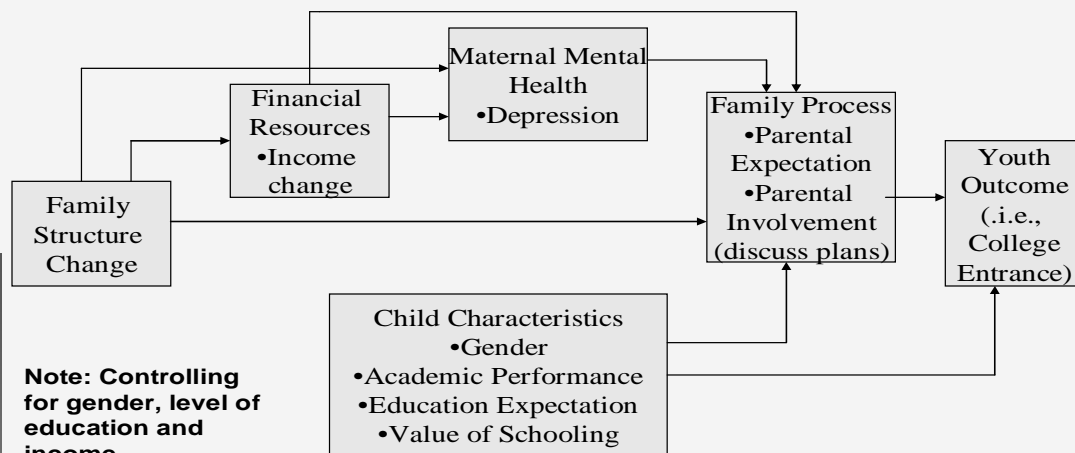
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Previous researchers on family structure have focused on GPA (Mulkey, Crain & Harrington, 1992), standardized test scores, high-school graduation (Wotjkiewicz, 1993; Painter & Levine, 2000), and number of years of schooling (Sandefur & Wells, 1999), but few have investigated college entrance as an indicator of academic achievement. Fewer researchers have examined the impact of family structure change, that is, the transition involved in moving from one family type to another (e.g., two-parent to single-parent), and especially within Black families. Using data from the Maryland Adolescent Development In Context (MADIC) longitudinal study, the present study explores whether family structure change predicts educational pursuits of Black youth following high school while controlling for family income, maternal mental health, parental involvement and expectation, and youth characteristics. Participants (N=879) were classified into four family types: continuously stayed intact, became non-intact, continuously non-intact or became married/re-partnered from 1991 (Wave 1) to 1996 (Wave 4). Family structure change had little explanatory power in the model that controlled for parent and youth factors. Instead, youth Wave 1 GPA ( $B = 1.28, p < .001$ ) and youth Wave 4 educational expectation ( $B = .50, p < .01$ ) were the most significant predictors of college entrance. Person-centered analyses were conducted with those families ( $n = 33$ ) that changed from a two-parent to a single-parent household. The current presentation focuses on the findings from the person-centered approach which allows for a closer look at the experiences of this small group of families and their adolescent children. The findings from the 33 case profiles were congruent with the multivariate results and revealed the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation.

## Conceptual Model



## Method

*Procedure*

- *Wave 1:* In 1991, descriptions of the study were sent to the homes of 1700 7th graders of select schools in the county. Families interested in the study signed and returned consent forms. A total of 1,482 families participated. In-home surveys with parents and target adolescents conducted.
- *Wave 2:* In 1992, target adolescents (n=1188, 80% of the wave 1 sample) and their parents (n=1223 parents, 83% of the wave 1 sample) were surveyed by phone.
- *Wave 3:* In 1993 (during the adolescents' 8th grade year), 1449 families were relocated and 1060 were re-interviewed.
- *Wave 4:* In 1998, target adolescents (11th graders) and their parents were re-interviewed.
- *Wave 5:* One year post high school graduation. Target youths completed mail-in surveys.
- *Wave 6:* Three years post high school graduation. Mail-in surveys and telephone follow-up conducted with target young adults.

## Results

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of the Black Sub-sample (n=879)*

Demographic Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
W1 family income <sup>a</sup>	812	9.49	4.30	1	16
W4 family income <sup>b</sup>	560	11.79	5.68	1	25
W1 highest educational level in home	876	14.14	2.45	5	26
W4 highest educational level in home	876	14.23	2.48	5	26
W1 adolescent's age <sup>c</sup>	879	12.78	.56	11.00	16.00
W4 adolescent's age	619	17.08	.58	15.52	20.00
W4 self-reported grade point average	522	2.80	.71	.00	4.00

<sup>a</sup> 1 = <\$5,000, 2 = \$5,000-\$9,999, 3 = \$10,000-\$14,999, 4 = \$15,000-\$19,999, 5 = \$20,000-\$24,999, 6 = \$25,000-\$29,999, 7 = \$30,000-\$34,999, 8 = \$35,000-\$39,999, 9 = \$40,000-\$44,999, 10 = \$45,000-\$49,999, 11 = \$50,000-\$54,999, 12 = \$55,000-\$59,999, 13 = \$60,000-\$64,999, 14 = \$65,000-\$69,999, 15 = \$70,000-\$74,999, 16 = >\$75,000.

<sup>b</sup> 1 = <\$5,000, 2 = \$5,000-\$9,999, 3 = \$10,000-\$14,999, 4 = \$15,000-\$19,999, 5 = \$20,000-\$24,999, 6 = \$25,000-\$29,999, 7 = \$30,000-\$34,999, 8 = \$35,000-\$39,999, 9 = \$40,000-\$44,999, 10 = \$45,000-\$49,999, 11 = \$50,000-\$54,999, 12 = \$55,000-\$59,999, 13 = \$60,000-\$64,999, 14 = \$65,000-\$69,999, 15 = \$70,000-\$74,999, 16 = \$75,000-\$79,999, 17 = \$80,000-\$84,999, 18 = \$85,000-\$89,999, 19 = \$90,000-\$94,999, 20 = \$95,000-\$99,999, 21 = more than \$100,000

<sup>c</sup> Age given in years.

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviation of Study Variables Overall and by Family Structure Groups at Wave 1*

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Stayed intact</b>	<b>Became non- intact</b>	<b>Stayed non- intact</b>	<b>Became remarried/repartnered</b>
Highest level of education in the home	14.14 (2.45)	15.14 (2.41)	14.66 (3.00)	13.34 (2.13)	14.26*** (2.17)
Income	9.49 (4.30)	12.31 (3.39)	11.16 (4.23)	6.67 (3.25)	9.03*** (4.18)
Maternal depression	1.71 (.69)	1.54 (.62)	1.96 (.81)	1.86 (.70)	1.69*** (.69)
Parental educational expectation	6.70 (1.82)	7.28 (1.50)	6.83 (1.89)	6.38 (1.91)	6.55*** (2.00)
Parental involvement (parent-child communication)	3.91 (1.62)	3.82 (1.56)	3.83 (1.62)	3.74 (1.76)	4.39* (1.57)

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