

# Gender and Incongruity between Educational Expectations and College Enrollment

The Roles of Race, Social Class, and Significant Others

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## Introduction

- Gender gaps exist in educational expectations enrollment, and degree completion (Buchman, 2009; King, 2010; Wells et al., 2010)
- There also exists an incongruity between expectations and enrollment - more students expect to attend college than actually enroll.
- Is there a gender gap in this incongruity? If so, what contributes to this gap? How have these outcomes changed over time?

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## Related Research

- Factors that are related to gender gaps in expectations and enrollment include:
  - Social class indicators: family income and parental education (e.g., Grodsky & Jackson, 2009; McDonough, 1997; Walpole, 2006).
  - Significant others' influence: parental expectations and peers' plans (e.g., Hanson, 1994; Perna & Titus, 2005; Tierney & Venegas, 2006)
  - Race/ethnicity (e.g., King, 2010; Lopez, 2003)
- Factors that are related to incongruity between expectations and enrollment
  - Race/ethnicity (Hauser & Anderson, 1991; King, 2010)
  - Social class (Hanson, 1994; MacLeod, 1995)

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## Purposes of Research

- Examine the differential influence of social class indicators, significant others' influence, and race/ethnicity on the incongruity between educational expectations and postsecondary enrollment for men and women.
- Investigate the extent to which the incongruity gender gap—the difference between the proportion of men and proportion of women who do not enroll in ways that match their expectations—can be attributed to differences between men and women in their characteristics compared to the influences of, or returns on, those characteristics.

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## Data

- Four national datasets over 35 years
  - National Longitudinal Study (NLS: 1972, 1974)
  - High School & Beyond (HS&B: 1980, 1982)
  - National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS: 1992, 1994)
  - Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS: 2004, 2006)
- Analytic sample = students who expect a four-year degree or more
- Multiple imputation used for missing data

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## Methods

- Logistic regression by gender, for each cohort
  - Dependent variable: Incongruity (dichotomous)
    - student does not enroll in a four-year institution within 2 years of high school graduation
  - Statistical comparison of coefficients for men and women
- Decomposition of the incongruity gender gap
  - Gap may be due to group differences between men and women in their characteristics or assets
  - Or it may be due to the differences that men and women experience in the returns to those assets.

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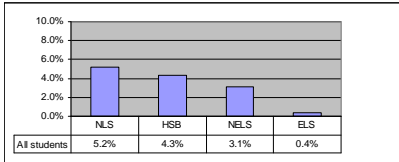
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## Results - Descriptives

- Men have consistently had greater incongruity between their expectations and enrollment than women, but that the gap is narrowing.




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## Partial Results - Decomposition

	NLS		HSB		NELS	
	Female spec	Male Spec	Female spec	Male Spec	Female spec	Male Spec
Peers plan college	6%	7%	-1%	-1%	12%	20%
Black	12%	11%	4%	5%	3%	7%
Test Score	-20%	-23%	-59%	-49%	15%	11%
Total explained	-10%	-6%	-74%	-70%	-4%	10%
Total unexplained	110%	106%	174%	170%	104%	90%
Total gap	0.0507	0.0507	0.0411	0.0411	0.0351	0.0351

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## Partial Results - Decomposition

- Group differences by gender for our variables are associated with a slight narrowing of the incongruity gender gap overall, rather than exacerbating it.
- Therefore, the incongruity gender gap is not primarily due to differences in "how much" of these characteristics men and women have, but is more due to the differential "effects" these characteristics have for men and women (i.e., examining regression coefficients).

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### Partial Results – Logistic Regression

#### Parental education

- Influence has shifted from a gender socialization effect in 1972 to one where both parents appear to play more significant roles for their daughters and sons in 2004.

#### Parent expects a bachelor's or greater

- In the earliest cohort, reduced the odds of students' incongruity by 60 percent. In the present cohort, exerts no statistically significant influence on incongruity .

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### Partial Results – Logistic Regression

#### Race/Ethnicity

- Students of color generally experience less incongruity, controlling for the other factors in our models.
- Generally this relationship is greater for women than men.
- A stronger relationship for Black students than other students of color, compared to White students
  - E.g., decrease in odds of experiencing incongruity for Black students compared to their White peers - 45 percent and 29 percent lower odds for women and men, respectively, in 2004.

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### Partial Results – Logistic Regression

#### Peers plan to attend college

- Consistently related to reduced odds of experiencing incongruity
  - E.g., In 2004, the odds of experiencing incongruity was about 50 percent less than for students whose peers do not plan to attend college.

#### Standardized test scores

- Since 1980, more related to reducing incongruity for women than men
  - E.g., In 2004, an increase in one standard deviation in standardized test score decreased the odds of incongruity by a factor of 65 percent for females, but only by 52 percent for males

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### Three Themes of Our Results

- There are trends in the incongruity gender gap over time
- Group differences between men and women explain little of the incongruity gap
- The processes by which students experience the “returns” from their characteristics differ by gender, which is a critical component contributing to the incongruity gender gap.

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### Implications - Programmatic

- Pre-college programs should encourage students' expectation formation but, importantly, also provide students with the knowledge and skills to realize those expectations and the preparation necessary to enroll accordingly.
- Transition initiatives need to address the complex environments in which these characteristics possess (or do not possess) currency and relevance for different student populations
- Encourage programmatic initiatives to modify approaches based on differences related not only to gender, but also to racial/ethnic groups within gender.

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### Implications for Future Research

- Better understand the social, economic, and political contexts that may lead to differential effects of the variables over time.
- Assess the evolving notion of gendered peer networks.
- Explore the relevance of test scores for male students.
- Examine the gendered enrollment and transfer patterns at community colleges, as well as the factors influencing these trends, for their role in students' incongruity.
- Investigate other operational definitions of incongruity and alternate conceptualizations of the processes at work.

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For questions or a copy of the paper,  
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