



# Intergenerational Mobility and Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities

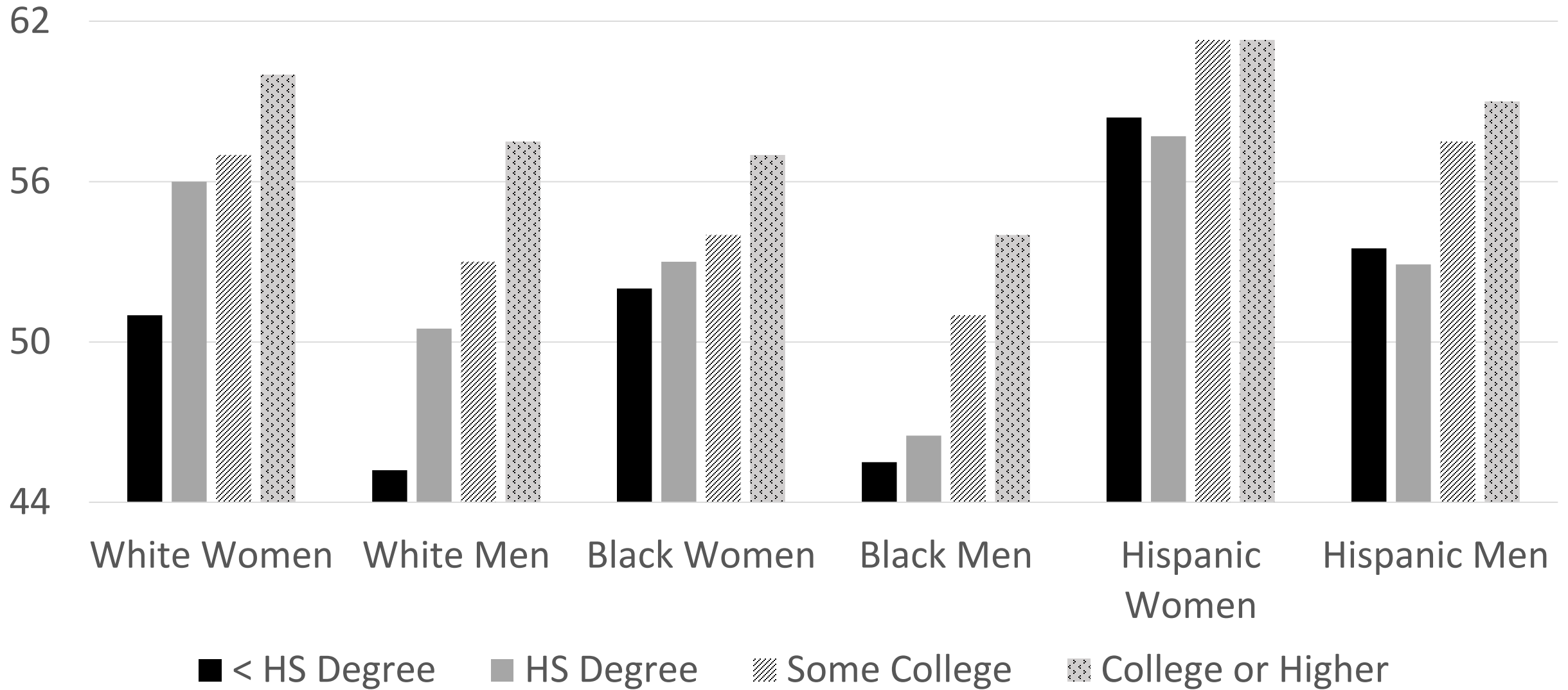
Lauren Gaydosh  
Vanderbilt University  
NASEM CPOP Meeting  
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@lauren.m.gaydosh  
lauren.m.gaydosh@vanderbilt.edu

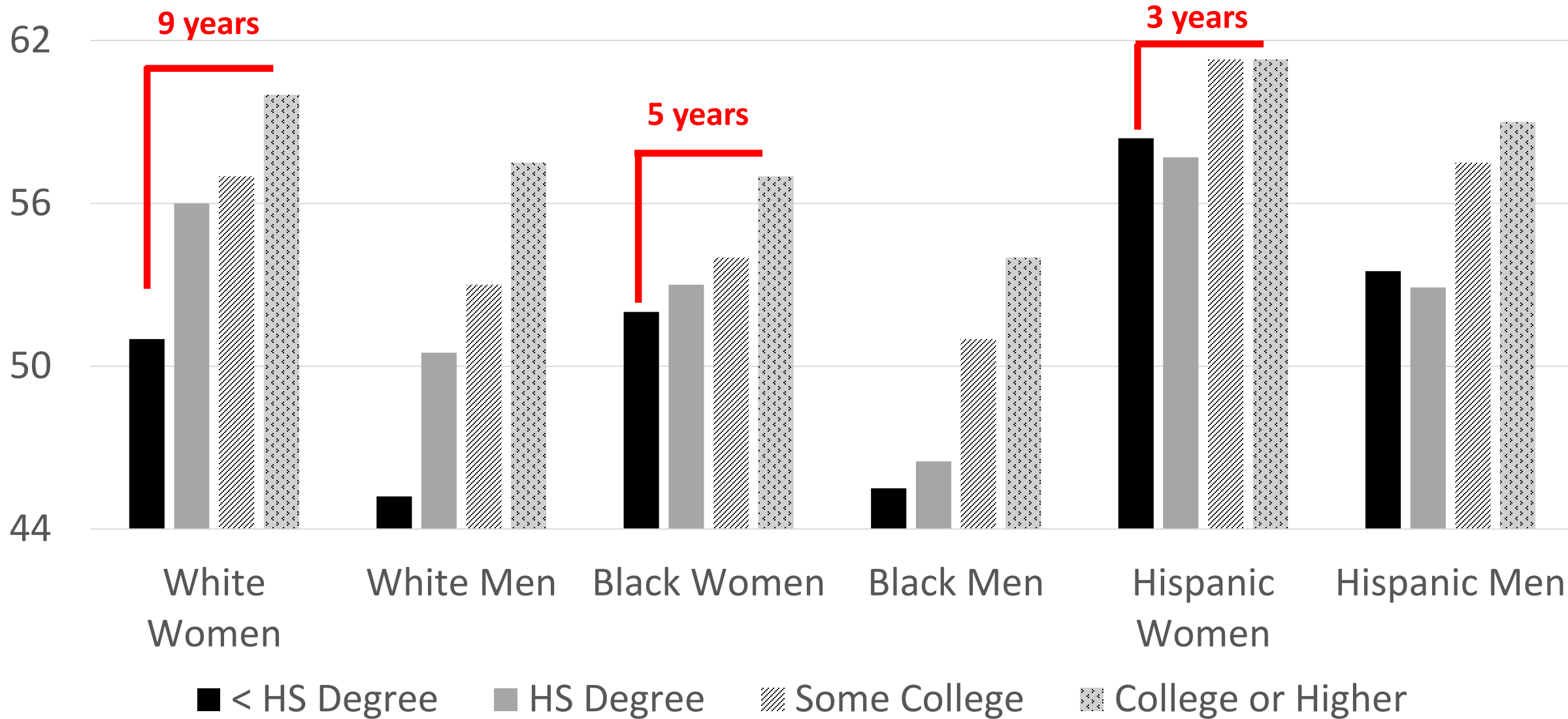
# Outline

- How is intergenerational mobility related to health and racial/ethnic health disparities?
  - Can achieved status compensate for early life exposure to disadvantage?
  - Does disadvantage in early life moderate the health benefit associated with achieved status?
  - Patterns and explanations
- Focus on health in young/early adulthood (18-30s)
  - This is when mobility is achieved
  - Less subject to selective mortality
  - Rich prospective data on early life
  - Sets health and aging trajectories

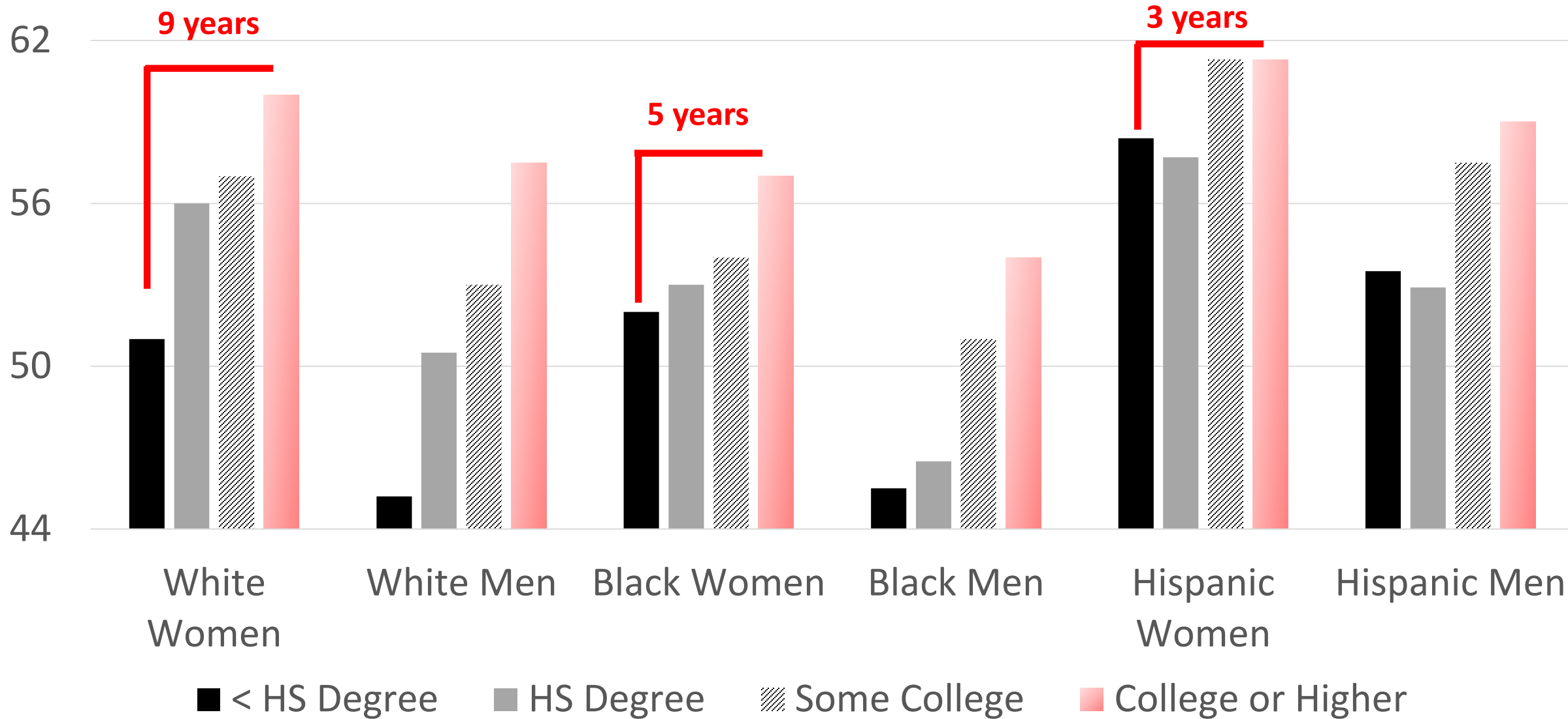
## Life Expectancy at 25 by Education and Race/Ethnicity



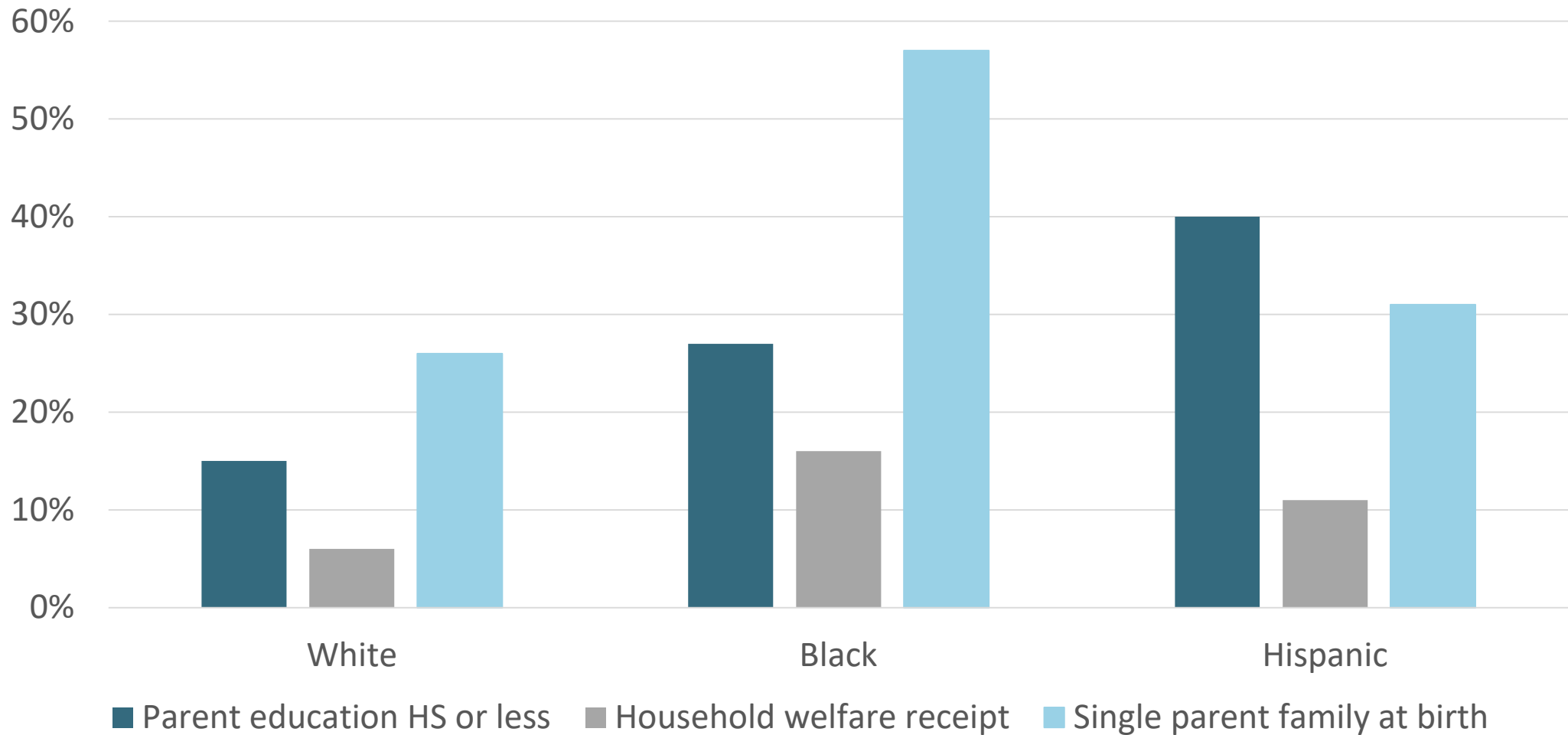
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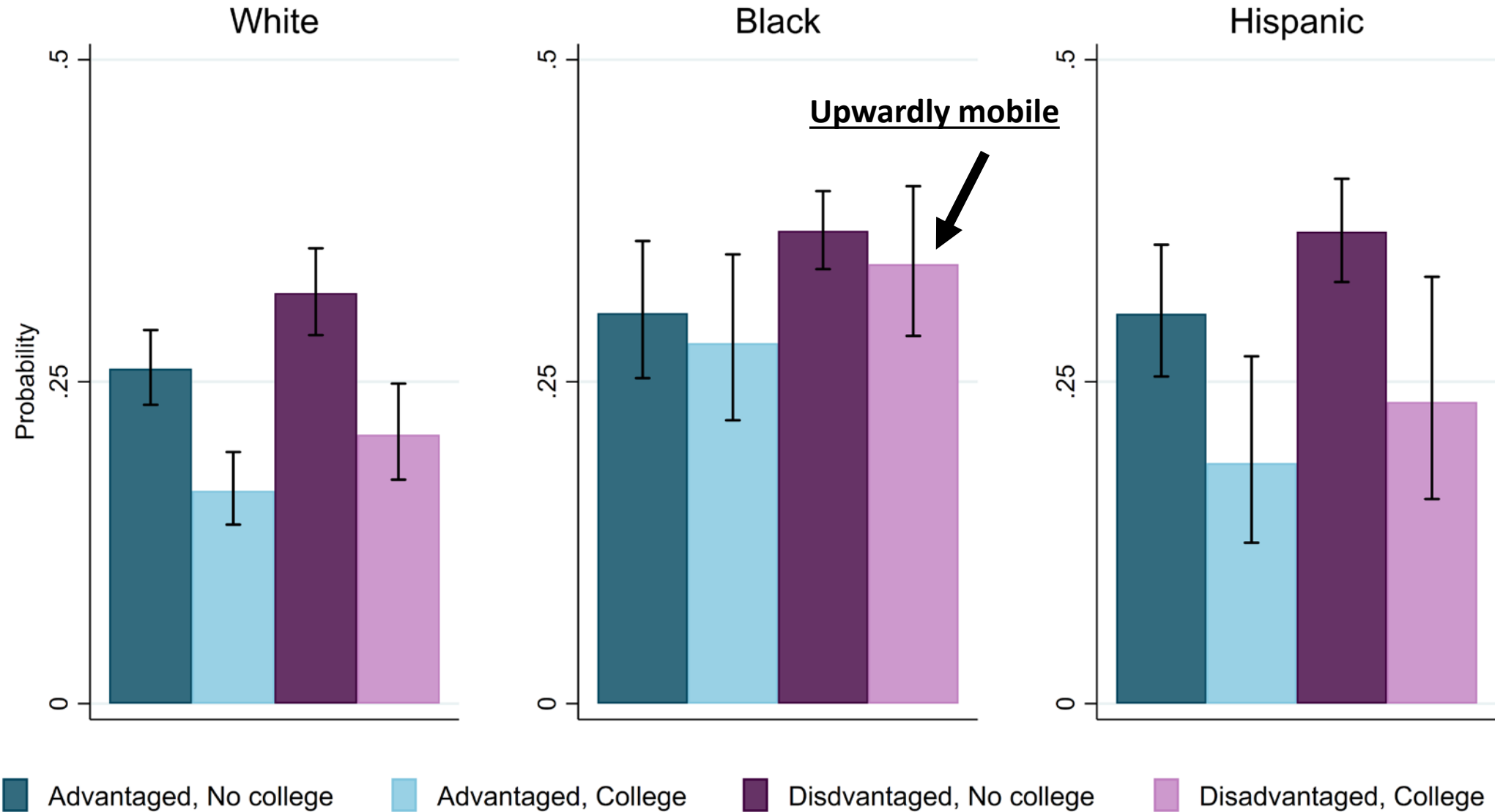


## Exposure to Childhood Disadvantage Among College Graduates



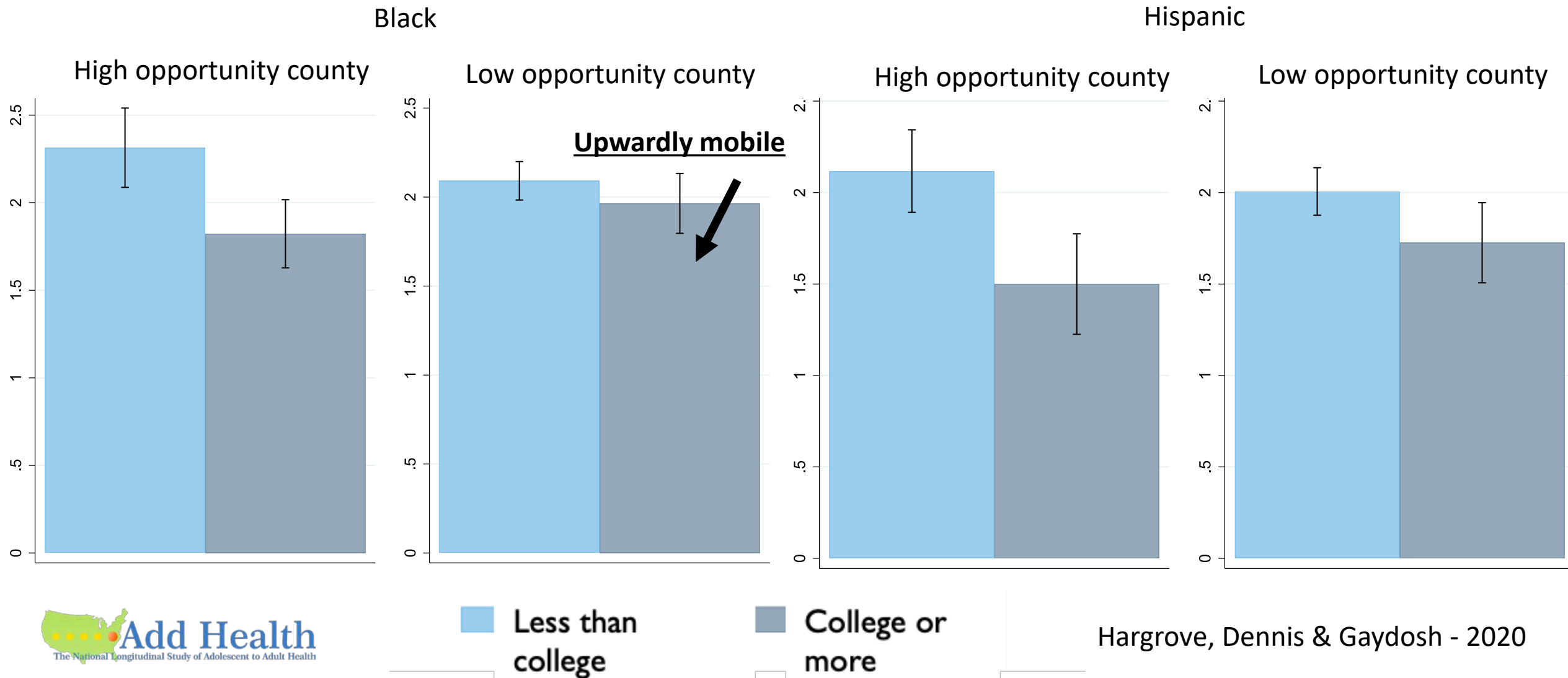
Can adult status compensate for  
early life exposure?

# Metabolic Syndrome by Childhood Background and College Completion



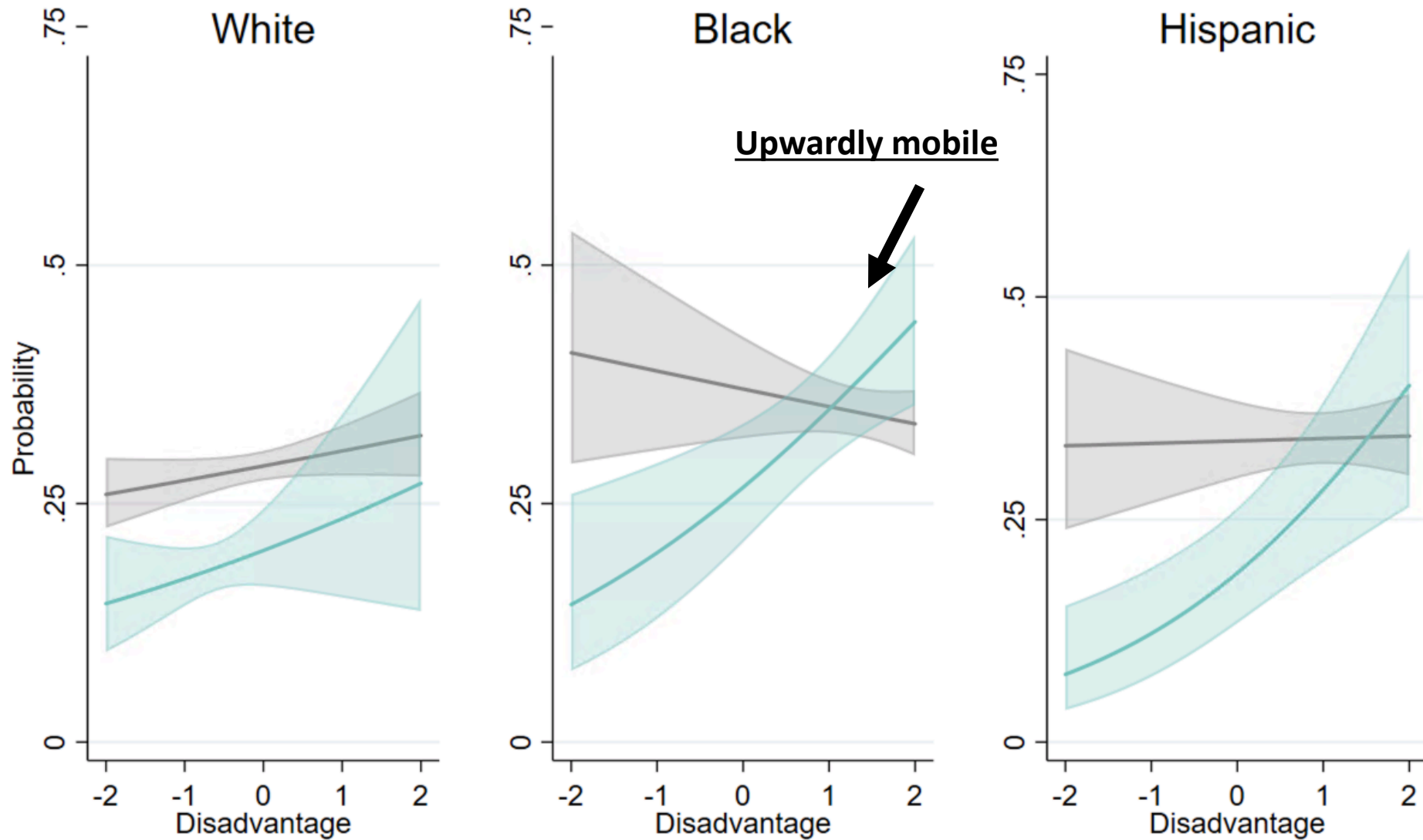


# Cardiometabolic Risk in Young Adulthood by Childhood County Context

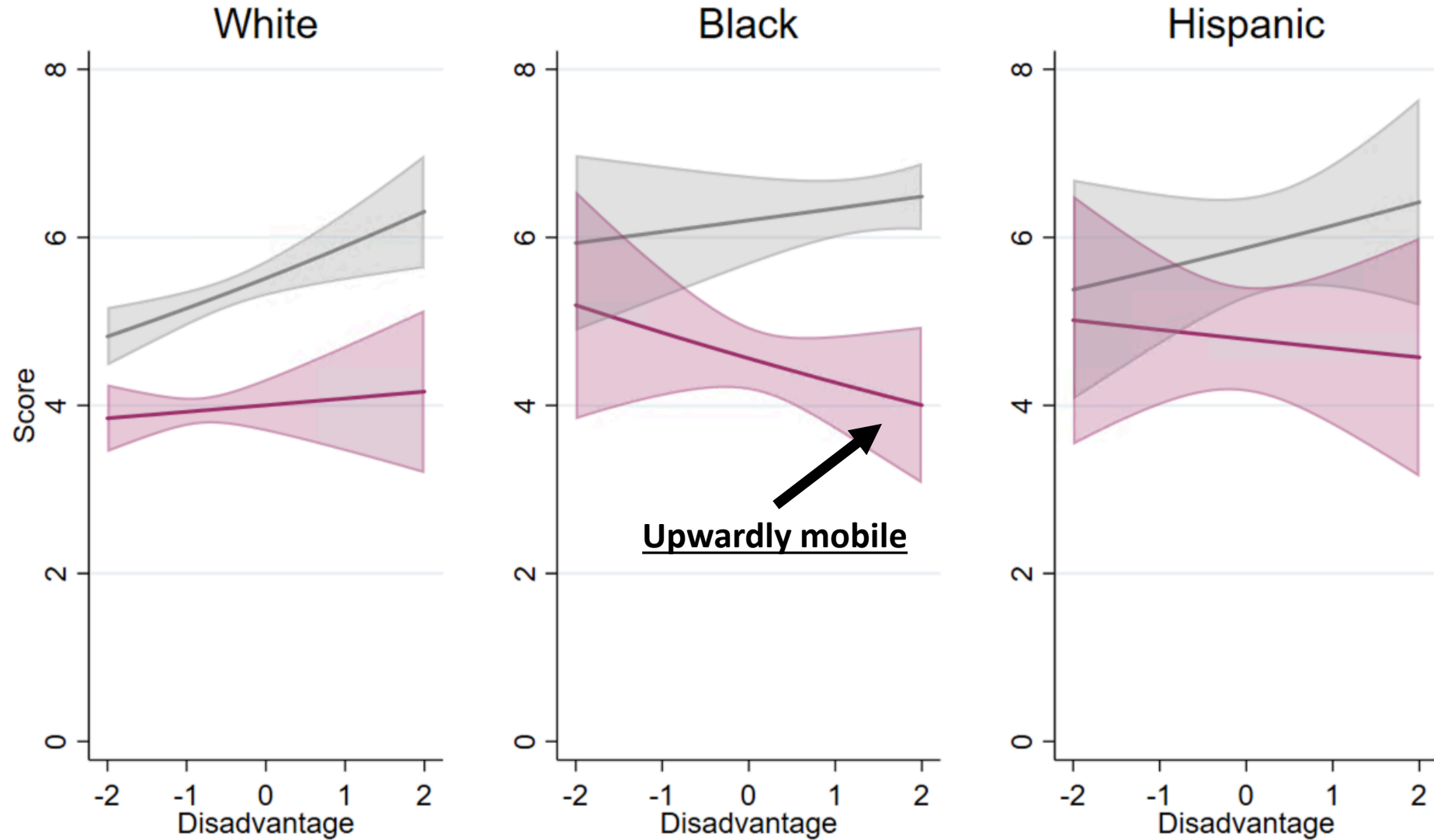


Does early life exposure  
moderate the benefit of adult  
status?

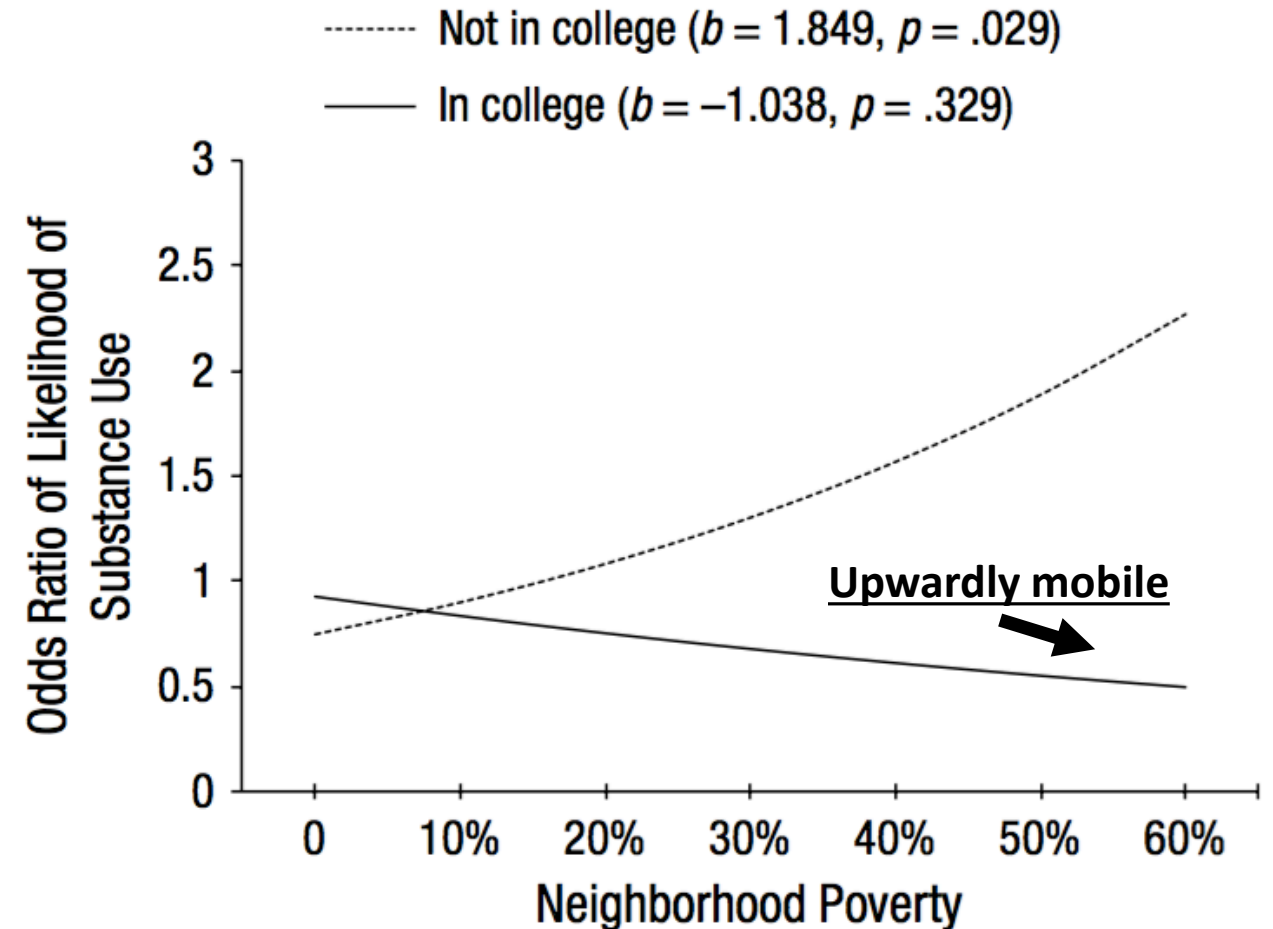
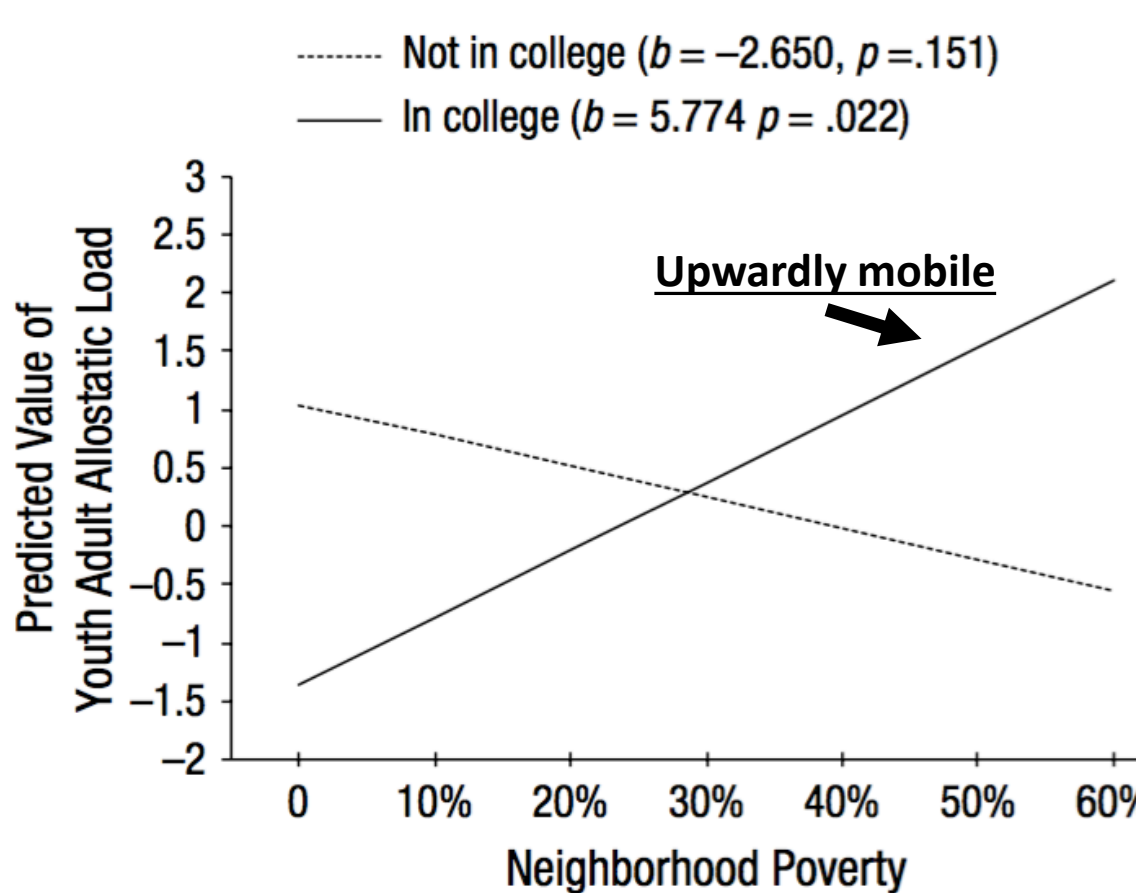
# Metabolic Syndrome by College and Disadvantage



# CESD by College and Disadvantage



# Physical and Mental Health among young adult African Americans

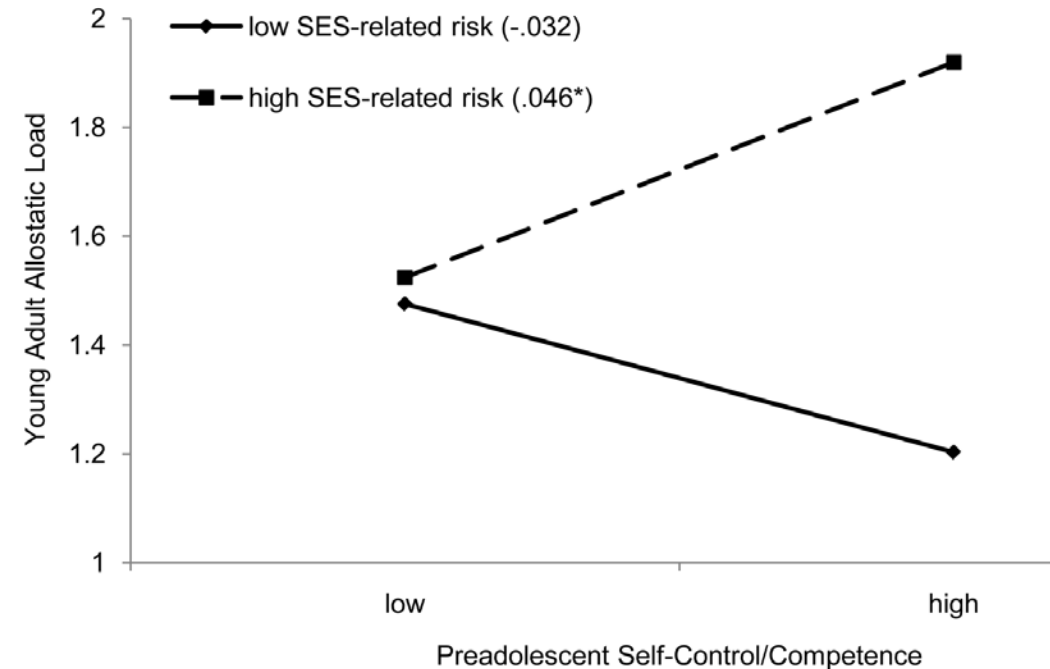
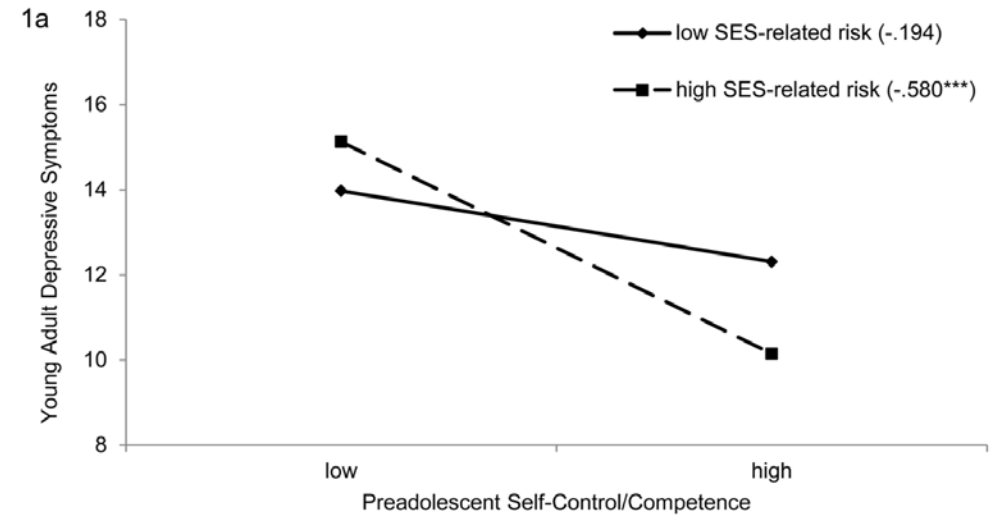


# Summarizing patterns

- High status Black and Hispanic adults exposed to greater early life disadvantage compared to White peers
- Achieved adult status cannot compensate for early life disadvantage among Black and Hispanic young adults
- Upward mobility for Black and Hispanic young adults may exact a physical health cost but mental health benefit
- Why?
  1. Skin-deep resilience
  2. Discrimination
  3. Educational contexts

# 1. Skin-deep resilience

- Emphasis on effortful coping and determination to succeed when faced with routine psychosocial stressors – John Henryism (James 1983)
- Resilient children who “beat the odds” must exert high levels of self-control (Brody et al. 2013)
- Psychologically protective but physiologically taxing



# Skin-deep resilience

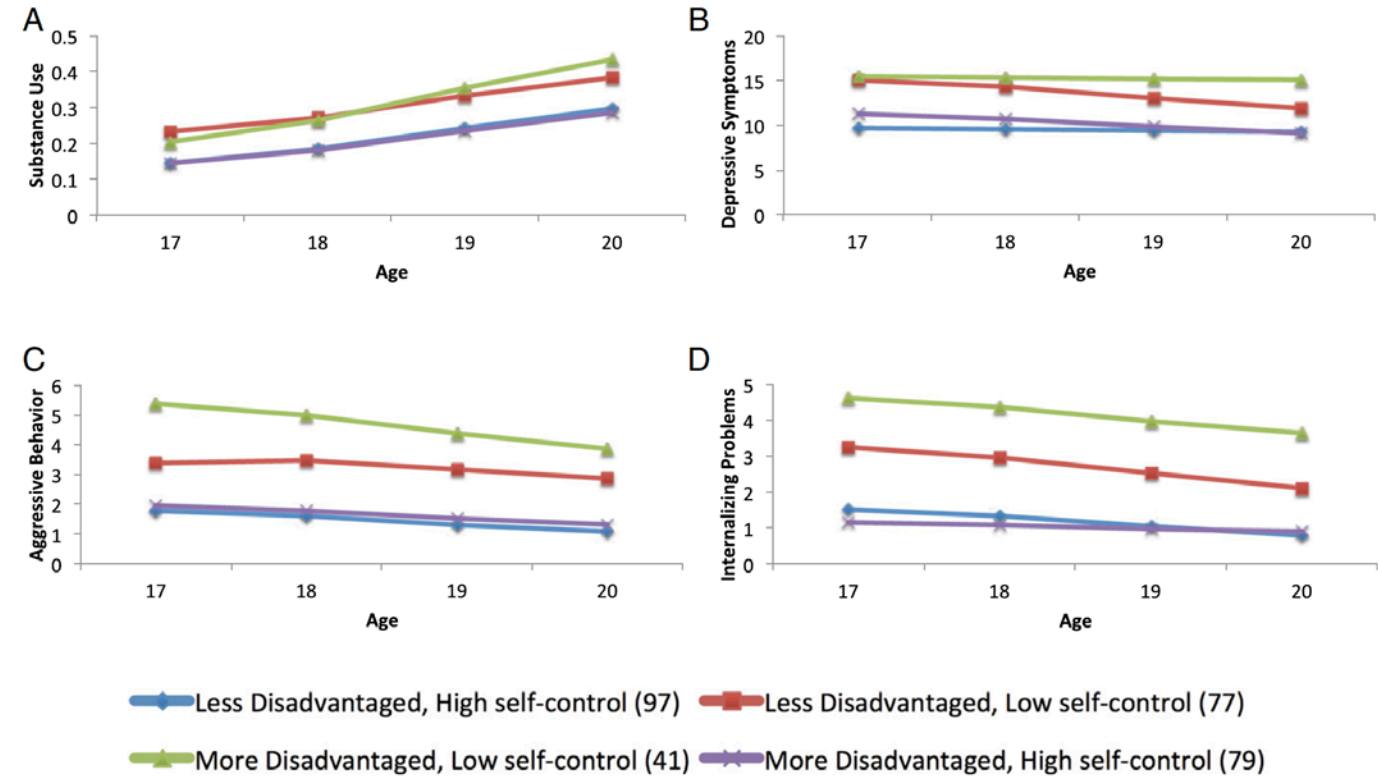
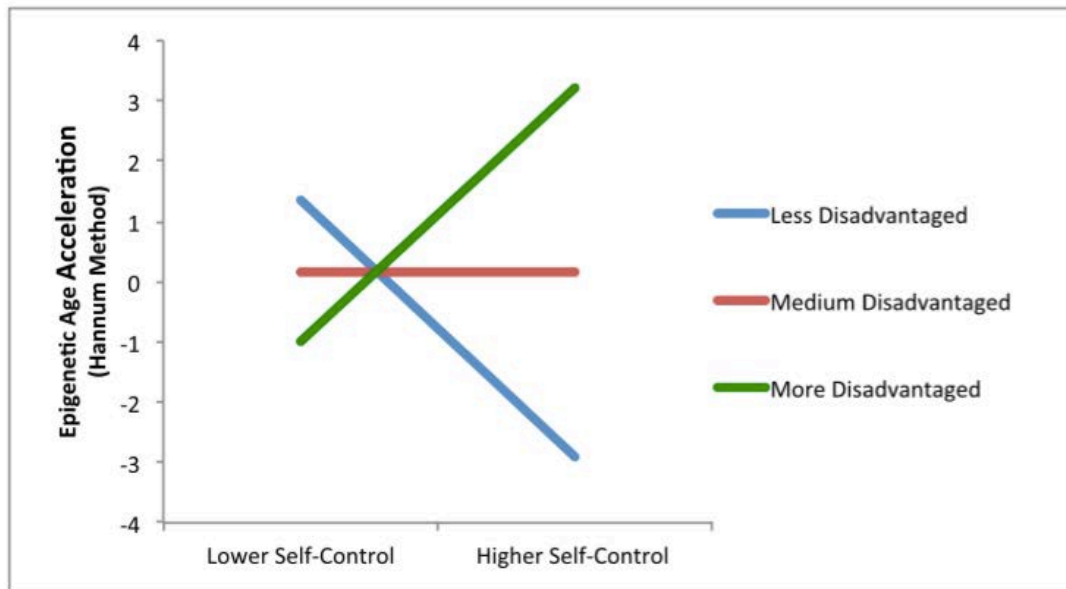


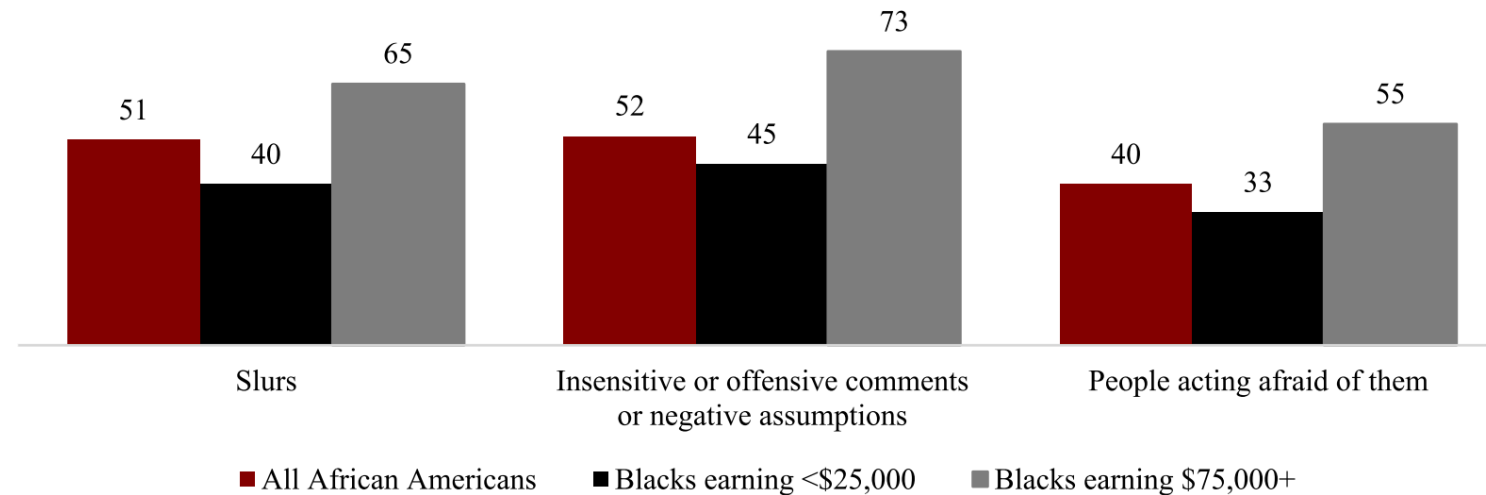
Fig. 3. Trajectories of psychosocial adjustment from ages 17 to 20 y as a function of latent class grouping on self-control and socioeconomic disadvantage. Outcomes are substance use (A), depressive symptoms (B), aggressive behavior (C), and internalizing problems (D).



## 2. Discrimination

- Greater opportunities for/exposure to discrimination (Hudson et al. 2016)
- Experiences of racism get under the skin (Goosby et al. 2018)
- Planning for or anticipating such experiences leads to vigilance (Lee & Hicken 2016)

Figure 4:  
Percent of African Americans, By Income Level, Saying They Have Personally Experienced Various Forms of Individual Discrimination Because of Their Race



NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views of African Americans, January 26 – April 9, 2017. Q63a/Q64a, Q63b/Q64b, Q63c/Q64c. Based on half-sample. Total N=802 African-American U.S. adults.

# Navigating predominantly White educational and occupational settings

- Hypervisibility

- ““We want someone with your perspective’...so beyond my daily work for my job email, there’s an influx of we need your—we want your perspective. And do you say no? Well, I don’t know, I’m the only one, you know. Uh, so there’s a level of stress of being responsive, um, not only to people you directly report to, but people within the institution you work for who see—who are trying, you know, in their good efforts to be more open and more inclusive, don’t necessarily recognize in that effort, you’re also placing more stress on me.”

- Vigilance

- “...when I’m in a professional environment, whether it be work or a conference or something, I also feel an expectation to represent black people in the best light and to be opposite of all the negative stereotypes.”

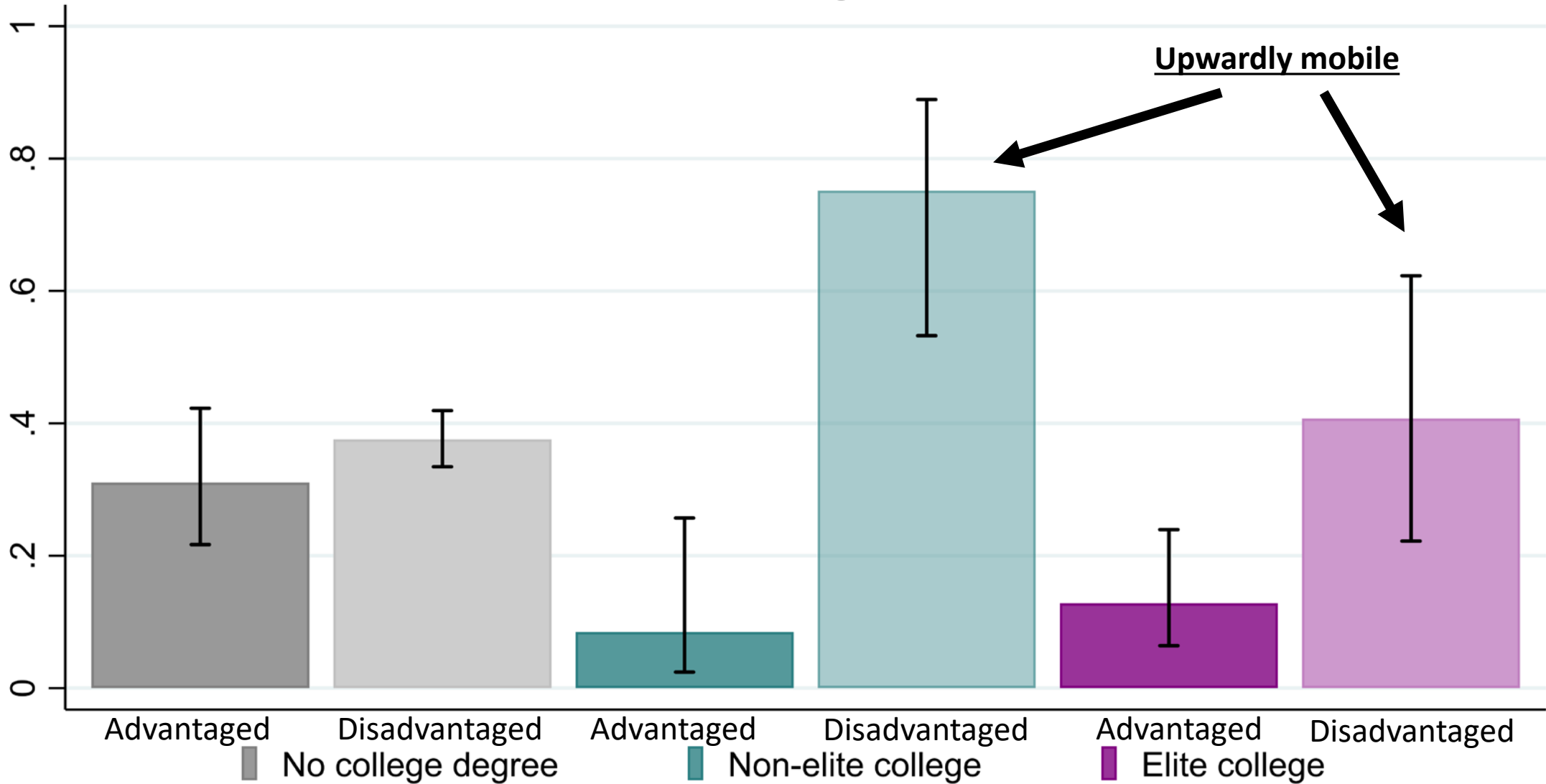
### 3. Educational contexts

- Non-equivalence of conventional socioeconomic indicators across race (Pearson 2008)
- Differential labor market and residential returns to equivalent level of educational attainment (Massey 2015; Pager & Pedulla 2015; Hamilton & Darity 2017)
- Black and Hispanic young adults more likely to attend poorer, lower ranked, less well-resourced schools (Gaydosch & Harris 2020), historically excluded from elite institutions



# Metabolic Syndrome by Childhood Background and College Type

## Black Young Adults



# Conclusions and considerations

- Higher attained socioeconomic status does not universally convey health benefits
  - Smaller (or no) returns for racial/ethnic minorities in young adulthood
  - Variation by childhood background – upward mobility may come at a cost
  - Differences for physical vs. mental health
- Findings are in early adulthood – benefits may accrue as individuals age?
- Further investigation into mental vs. physical health associated with upward mobility
- Greater consideration to how institutional and contextual characteristics constrain or promote health costs of upward mobility