



## **ASA NEWS**

CONTACT: Daniel Fowler

(202) 527-7885 or (914) 450-4557 (cell)

[pubinfo@asanet.org](mailto:pubinfo@asanet.org)

**On-site Press Room** (Aug. 20-23): Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, Sorrento Room, (702) 866-1916

**EMBARGOED until Tuesday, August 23, at 12:01 a.m. EDT**

### **Bullying Victims Often Suffer Academically, Particularly High Achieving Blacks and Latinos**

LAS VEGAS — Victims of bullying often suffer academically, and this is particularly true for high achieving black and Latino students, according to new research to be presented at the 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association.

“Although academic achievement is largely influenced by family background and school characteristics, our study suggests that the experience of being bullied also influences students’ grades,” said Lisa M. Williams, a doctoral student in sociology at Ohio State University, and lead author of the study. “We find that bullying has implications for achievement regardless of racial and ethnic background, but seems to be especially detrimental for subsets of certain racial and ethnic groups.”

The study relies on nationally representative data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS), which, among other things, asked students whether they were bullied during the 2001-2002 academic year, when they were in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Williams and her co-author, Anthony A. Peguero, a sociology professor at Virginia Tech, compared the academic achievement (the GPAs) of ELS participants in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, before the bullying occurred, with their academic achievement during the 2003-2004 school year, when they were in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The scale for GPA ranges from zero (lowest) to four (highest). Their sample consisted of 9,590 students in 580 schools, including 1,150 Asians, 1,360 blacks, 1,470 Latinos, and 5,610 whites. Racial and ethnic minorities are oversampled in ELS to obtain a sufficient representation for statistical analysis.

According to the study, students who were bullied in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade experienced a .049 points decrease in 12<sup>th</sup> grade GPA. “This effect, though small, is highly significant and suggests that bullying negatively affects GPA even after factoring in previous grades, family background, and school characteristics often associated with achievement, which are all variables the study controls for,” Williams said.

But, Williams said, the most striking aspect of the study is the considerable negative effect bullying has on the GPAs of high achieving black and Latino students. For example, Williams and Peguero found that black students—who had 3.5 GPAs in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and were bullied in 10<sup>th</sup> grade—experienced a .3 points decrease in their 12<sup>th</sup> grade GPAs. The effect of bullying was even greater for high achieving Latinos. Latino students with 3.5 GPAs in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, who were bullied in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, had 12<sup>th</sup> grade GPAs that were .5 points lower. By way of comparison, white students—who had 3.5 GPAs in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and were bullied in 10<sup>th</sup> grade—saw their GPAs decrease by .03 points in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

“Stereotypes about black and Latino youth suggest that they perform poorly in school,” Williams said. “High achieving blacks and Latinos who do not conform to these stereotypes may be especially vulnerable to the effect bullying has on grades.”

In terms of the study’s policy implications, Williams said the study makes the case that policy-makers and educators should be thinking about the effect bullying has on student achievement. “We urge them to

invest resources into protecting students from bullying, which will have implications for achievement, especially the achievement of racial and ethnic minorities,” Williams said.

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#### **About the American Sociological Association**

The American Sociological Association ([www.asanet.org](http://www.asanet.org)), founded in 1905, is a non-profit membership association dedicated to serving sociologists in their work, advancing sociology as a science and profession, and promoting the contributions to and use of sociology by society.

The paper, “The Impact of School Bullying on Racial/Ethnic Achievement,” will be presented on Tuesday, Aug. 23, at 8:30 a.m. PDT in Caesars Palace Las Vegas, at the American Sociological Association’s 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

To obtain a copy of the paper; for more information on other ASA presentations; or for assistance reaching the study’s authors, members of the media can contact Daniel Fowler at [pubinfo@asanet.org](mailto:pubinfo@asanet.org) or (202) 527-7885. During the Annual Meeting (Aug. 20-23), ASA’s Public Information Office staff can be reached in the press room, located in the Sorrento Room of Caesars Palace, at (702) 866-1916 or (914) 450-4557 (cell).