
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NAME: Aprile D. Benner

eRA COMMONS USER NAME: abenner

POSITION TITLE: Associate Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Sciences

EDUCATION/TRAINING

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY
Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN	BS	05/1997	Psychology
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN	MS	05/1999	Child Development & Family Studies
University of California, Los Angeles, CA	PhD	09/2007	Psychological Studies in Education
The University of Texas at Austin, TX	Postdoctoral	09/2007-07/2008	Postdoctoral Fellow in Human Ecology
The University of Texas at Austin, TX	Postdoctoral	08/2008-07/2011	NICHHD Postdoctoral Fellow

A. Personal Statement

I am a developmental psychologist, and my program of research, broadly defined, centers on adolescence, investigating how social contexts influence the well-being of minority and low-income youth. As a developmental psychologist, the core of my research program is a fundamental developmental question—what are the continuities and changes in the social, emotional, and cognitive growth and maturation of young people? Theoretically, I work at the intersection of ecological and life course perspectives to answer this broad question. Through this theoretical lens, my research attends to how developmental patterns are embedded in the groups, contexts, and social structures of society and how matches or mismatches between adolescents and their contexts matter for development. Specifically, my research falls into two primary streams: race/ethnicity and social class as developmental contexts and the influence of multiple and shifting ecological contexts in young people's lives. Within the UT Austin Population Research Center (PRC), my work primarily contributes to the focus on Demography: Education, Work, and Inequality. This research typically uses large-scale nationally representative datasets (e.g., Education Longitudinal Study, Add Health, Monitoring the Future) to examine the educational experiences of American youth and variations in those experiences across major sociodemographic characteristics. My work is particularly attuned to the larger structural characteristics of schools and communities that reinforce or mitigate educational inequalities and the contextual supports with important others that protect youth at risk. My current data collection (year one of a three-year longitudinal study) is focused on unpacking academic achievement gaps across racial/ethnic groups by investigating adolescents' experiences of discrimination and marginalization tied to their various social identities (race/ethnicity, social class, weight, sexual minority status). Project findings will suggest not only critical points of intervention but also whether intervention and prevention efforts could be effectively targeted to certain student populations by identifying where youth are in the most trouble or doing best, and, and within settings, who is at risk and who is resilient.

In addition, I am initiating a new line of research that fits into the UT Austin PRC's research area focus on Population Health. I recently wrote a K01 award focused on biodemography. The overarching goal of the K01 research project is to examine how race/ethnic discrimination gets under the skin, influencing adolescent health. Such research is poised to make a significant contribution, as studies that attempt to shed light on the origins of health disparities have significant potential to inform efforts to improve population health. In this work, I will use survey data, daily diaries, biomarkers from both saliva and blood, and anthropometric data (i.e., blood pressure, heart rate, BMI) to investigate the biopsychosocial pathways by which racial/ethnic discrimination influences underlying biological processes as well as young people's physical and mental health. If the K01 is

not funded, I plan to revise the K01 project into an R01 application for NICHD in Spring 2017, and I am strongly committed to pursuing this line of research in the immediate future.

As a faculty affiliate and member of the governance committee, I am deeply committed to the UT Austin PRC, and I find the support and collaborative opportunities the center provides to be imperative for my own professional development and the advancement of my program of research. I have twice participated in the PRC Summer Grant Bootcamp, and this has resulted in funded grants from NIAAA (R03) and NSF as well as the K01 application referenced above. The Administrative core has played an essential role in the preparation of my many grant applications, and their skills and expertise in this area are impressive. For my awarded grants, members of the Administrative Core assist with hiring of key personnel, tracking budget expenditures and assisting with financial reporting, and providing day-to-day administrative support to address any issues that we encounter as we undertake our research activities. The Science & Technical Core have also played an integral role in my research activities. They have assisted me in applying for restricted secondary data access (from NCES, Add Health, Monitoring the Future), set up and maintained the restricted data and the computing systems necessary for data analysis, and assisted with reporting and renewal applications necessary for maintaining restricted data licenses. My students have also benefited from the data analysis support activities (e.g., brown bags, statistical computing) offered by the Science and Technical Core. I am certain that both the Administrative Core and Science and Technical Core will continue to play central roles in my research and my students' professional development in the years to come.

B. Positions and Honors

Positions and Employment

1997-1999	Preschool Teacher, Purdue Child Care Center, Purdue Lab School
1998-1999	Research Assistant, Purdue University
1999	Teaching Assistant, Purdue University
1999-2001	Research Analyst, Texas Center for Educational Research
2001-2003	Senior Research Analyst, Texas Center for Educational Research
2003	Research Associate, NCEA, The University of Texas at Austin
2003-2004	Graduate Student Researcher, CRESST/CSE
2004-2007	Graduate Student Researcher, UCLA
2006	Teaching Assistant, Child Development and Social Policy, UCLA
2007	Teaching Assistant, Adolescent Development, UCLA
2007-2008	Postdoctoral Fellow, Human Ecology, The University of Texas at Austin
2008-2011	NICHD Postdoctoral Fellow, Population Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin
2011-present	Assistant Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences, The University of Texas at Austin

Other Experience and Professional Memberships

2010-2013	Submission reviewer for the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Panel 4 (School and Achievement)
2011	Application reviewer for the NICHD Summer Research Institute
2012-2014	Member, Innovative Small Grants Committee · Society for Research on Adolescence
2013-2014	Co-organizer, <i>Society for Research on Adolescence Peers Preconference</i>
2014	Submission reviewer for the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Panel 14 (Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Context)
Present	Member: American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, Population Association of America, Society for Research in Adolescence, Society for Research in Child Development
Present	Consulting Editor, <i>Child Development</i>
Present	Editorial Board Member, <i>Journal of Youth and Adolescence</i>
Present	Editorial Board Member, <i>Adolescent Research Review</i>
Present	Member, Dissertation Awards Committee, Society for Research on Adolescence
Present	Rotating review panel member, <i>Social and Behavioral Education Research Scientific Review Panel, Institute for Education Sciences (IES), Department of Education</i>
Present	Ad hoc reviewer for <i>Developmental Psychology, Journal of Adolescent Health, Journal of Educational Psychology, Journal of Family Psychology, Journal of Health and Social</i>

Honors

2004-2006	Spencer Foundation Research Training Grant Fellow
2006-2007	Haynes Foundation Dissertation Fellow
2006-2007	Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellow
2007	Outstanding Dissertation Award, Graduate School of Education, UCLA
2008-2011	Grant # F32HD056732, <i>Race, School Transitions, and Child and Adolescent Development</i> , NICHD Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award
2009	Fellow, NICHD Summer Institute on Applied Research In Child and Adolescent Development
2009	Exemplary Dissertation Award, Spencer Foundation
2010	Outstanding Dissertation Award, American Educational Research Association, Division E Human Development
2010	Hershel D. Thornburg Dissertation Award, Society for Research on Adolescence
2010-2011	Grant #201000113, <i>The Transition to High School and Later School Dropout</i> , Spencer Foundation
2010-2012	Grant # UTEX-3-10, <i>Selection into Pre-K-3</i> , Foundation for Child Development
2011-2013	Grant # UTA11-000630, <i>Marginalization and Educational Performance during Adolescence</i> , National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow
2011-2014	Grant # R03 DA032018, <i>School Demographics, Marginalization, and Adolescent Substance Use</i> , National Institute on Drug Abuse.
2012-2013	Internal Grant, <i>Discrimination, Peer Relations, and Adolescents' Development</i> , Office of the Vice President for Research, UT Austin
2013	Award for Early Career Research Contributions to Child Development, Society for Research in Child Development
2013	Monitoring the Future Visiting Scholar Program Fellow
2013-2018	Grant # 181891, William T. Grant Foundation Scholar

C. Contributions to Science

1. Elucidating the antecedents and consequences of racial/ethnic discrimination for adolescents of color. Experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination, or unfair treatment attributed to one's race or ethnicity, are part of the everyday life experiences of adolescents of color. In a series of studies, I have examined the precursors and consequences of discrimination for racial/ethnic minority youth, investigating whether the mechanisms and contexts of discrimination operate similarly for Asian American and Latino adolescents as they do for the oft-studied African American population. Addressing the lack of studies examining potential precursors to adolescents' perceptions of discrimination, one study (Benner & Kim, 2009, *Journal of Marriage and Family*) found that Chinese American parents' racial socialization practices and perpetual foreigner stress mediated the relationship between parents' experiences of discrimination and their adolescents' perceptions of discrimination, bicultural stress, and values of education. The second found that the structural characteristics of schools and neighborhoods influence the processes around race/ethnicity that occur therein, which in turn, are linked to discrimination by peers, school personnel, society (Benner & Graham, 2013). In relation to the consequences of discrimination, I have published one of the few studies documenting the directionality of links between racial/ethnic discrimination and adolescents' well-being (Benner & Kim, 2009, *Developmental Psychology*), and I am also the one of the first to document the differential effects of discrimination by the perpetrator of mistreatment, such that discrimination by peers was linked to socioemotional wellbeing, discrimination by teachers to academic performance, and societal discrimination to racial views (Benner & Graham, 2013). This series of studies has culminated with the submission of a meta-analysis documenting the pernicious influences of discrimination for adolescents' socioemotional well-being, academics, and risky health behaviors (Benner et al., revised and resubmitted, *Psychological Bulletin*). From this meta-analysis, I identified the dearth of knowledge around the effects of discrimination for under-the-skin biological processes and general physical health, and my planned future research will examine the biopsychosocial processes through which discrimination influences population health disparities.

2. Identifying the repercussions for numeric marginalization tied to race/ethnicity and social class. Diversity has empirically established academic benefits for young people, yet it is not without its challenges,

particularly regarding the socioemotional well-being of children and adolescents whose lack of demographic “fit” with their schools puts them at risk for social marginalization. Protection against socioemotional risks, according to a recent National Academy of Education report, can be promoted by ensuring students have a critical mass of same-demographic peers. In two recent papers, I examine the effects of experiencing a lack of critical mass (termed numeric marginalization) for adolescents’ well-being and the processes by which marginalization exerts its influence. The first found that adolescents who were racial/ethnically marginalized at school (i.e., who had less than 15% same-ethnic peers at school) reported significantly poorer school attachment, which was linked to greater depressive symptoms. More depressive symptoms, in turn, were associated with higher levels of subsequent marijuana and alcohol use. Marginalization emerged as particularly problematic for race/ethnic minority youth and those in racially/ethnically segregated schools (Benner & Wang, 2015). The second study observed that socioeconomic marginalization was detrimental for adolescents’ academic performance, whereas race/ethnic marginalization was linked to poorer school attachment; the few students who experienced both race/ethnic and socioeconomic marginalization were at particular risk across developmental domains (Benner & Wang, 2014). This work is particularly timely as policymakers and educators struggle with issues around integration and segregation within the confines of recent Supreme Court cases such as *Parents Involved* (2007). I am currently expanding on this work in my new NSF study, examining how mistreatment and marginalization tied to race/ethnicity, social class, weight, and sexual minority status influence educational inequalities.

3. Placing school transitions into larger developmental a context and explicating the role of person-context interactions for transition success. The U.S. K-12 educational system is structured such that students typically make normative school transitions when they move from elementary to middle school and again from middle to high school. Although predictable in nature, young people face both academic and socioemotional challenges as they navigate school transitions, and my research centers on the notion that shifting school contexts play a role in these challenges, particularly when the middle and high school contexts are more divergent. I investigate the developmental consequences of these changing contexts in two primary ways. The first are person-context interactions that specifically capture ethnicity in context. Here, I explore the extent to which large, negative shifts in the percentage of same-ethnicity peers across the high school transition (i.e., ethnic incongruence) affect students’ transition outcomes. Findings indicate that transitions are disruptive across developmental domains, but particularly so for young people who experience ethnic incongruence, which compromises feelings of school belonging and educational success (i.e., grades and attendance; Benner & Graham, 2007, 2009). The second means by which I capture changing contexts across the transition is to directly compare the structural characteristics of students’ middle and high schools. Findings from this line of research suggest that when students move to high schools that are more in line with their developmental needs than their middle schools (i.e., high schools with more experienced teachers, more affluent or larger high schools with greater academic and social options for students), students’ attendance trajectories across high school are similar to or better than their attendance trajectories across middle school (Benner & Wang, 2014). Similarly, more ethnically-diverse high schools enhance feelings of belonging and are linked to improved school attendance (Benner & Graham, 2009). These benefits of ethnic diversity, however, seem to be contingent on young people having a critical mass of same-ethnic peers (Benner & Crosnoe, 2011). The totality of my transition research has culminated in a review article using life course theory to document current knowledge about the high school transition and identify critical areas for future inquiry (Benner, 2011). In my current William T. Grant Scholars Award, I am specifically focused on how shifting school norms from middle school to high school influence adolescents’ academic achievement and potentially contribute to educational inequalities.

Complete List of Published Work in MyBibliography:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/myncbi/aprile.benner.1/bibliography/48126099/public/?sort=date&direction=descending>

D. Research Support

Ongoing Research Support

BCS-1551954 (A. Benner, PI)

National Science Foundation

Discrimination and Achievement Disparities in Adolescence

06/15/16-05/31/19

This study focuses on adolescents' day-to-day experiences of discrimination -based on race/ethnicity, social class, weight, and/or sexual orientation- that may contribute to achievement disparities.

Role: Principal Investigator

Responsibilities: Oversee all facets of the project including the data collection, data analyses, finding dissemination, and mentoring and overseeing undergraduate and graduate research assistants.

#181891 (A. Benner, PI)

07/01/13-06/30/18

William T. Grant Foundation

Adolescents and the Social Contexts of American Schools

This project will explore social contexts of schools as defined by the prevailing student norms, investigate how adolescent development varies across different school social contexts, and identify the mechanisms by which prevailing norms promote or inhibit adolescents' well-being. I am overseeing all aspects of the project. I have a postdoc and two research assistants working on data analysis and write-up.

Role: Principal Investigator

Responsibilities: Oversee all facets of the project including the data collection, data analyses, finding dissemination, and mentoring and overseeing undergraduate and graduate research assistants.

Completed Research Support

R03DA032018 (A. Benner, PI)

08/01/11-07/31/14

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

Social Demographics, Marginalization, and Adolescent Substance Use

This study examines how demographic mismatches between adolescents and schools can contribute to risky health behaviors—alcohol and drug use—that can disrupt life course trajectories.

Role: Principal Investigator

Responsibilities: Overseeing and participating in all facets of the project including the data analyses and finding dissemination and mentoring and overseeing graduate research assistants.

Grant # UTA11-000630 (A. Benner, PI)

01/01/12-06/30/13

The National Academy of Education

NAE Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

The general goal of this project is to examine whether, why, and when students who do *not* have a critical mass of same-demographic peers are more likely to struggle both socioemotionally and academically. The project will highlight critical points of intervention and will inform educational policy efforts that seek to better promote the full academic benefits of diversity in America's public schools.

Role: Principal Investigator

Responsibilities: Overseeing and participating in all facets of the project including the data analyses and finding dissemination.