In contrast to broad trends that show persistent racial inequality in educational attainment, recent studies have found a ‘net black advantage’ in post-secondary enrollment. This pattern indicates that controlling for socio-economic background and academic characteristics, Black students are more likely to enroll in college than their White counterparts. The current research expands on these findings by investigating this pattern using an educational careers approach. This approach investigates how race affects educational transitions across a key portion of students’ educational careers, and considers the role that subjective factors, operationalized as students’ expectations and perceived parental aspirations, may play in producing the net black advantage pattern. Results from the National Educational Longitudinal Study indicate that a net black advantage exists in educational transitions from high school entry through post-secondary enrollment. In addition, results suggest that differential impact of students’ educational expectations help explain these differences, particularly for the transitions to post-secondary education. These findings call into question extant explanations of the net black advantage and of racial inequality in education more generally.

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