

Calling for a Greater Understanding and Consideration of Experience in Lower SES
A Letter to the Editor Regarding Jarrin, McGrath, Quon (2014)

Jarrin, McGrath, Quon (2014) found evidence that linked objective and subjective measures of socioeconomic status to sleep-related health outcomes. In children, objective SES was related to self-reported sleep duration, while subjective SES was related to daytime sleepiness and parent-reported sleep duration. In adolescents, objective SES was related to parent-reported sleep disturbances and subjective SES was related with sleep quality and parent-reported sleep duration. Therefore, sleep may be a mediator of the positive correlation between socioeconomic status and health outcomes, the relationship known as the SES gradient. This is an important contribution to the field because it provides another important consideration as we examine our own privilege and work to understand others' experience.

The next step would be to explore factors that may affect sleep for those with more impoverished backgrounds, taking nothing for granted. Attree (2006) talked about the social cost of poverty for children, who may be more subject to verbal abuse, teasing, or bullying; this may include teasing related to what a child is wearing. Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) also suggested also factors such as inadequate nutrition, instability of residence, and family violence. Children may wake up hungry, be hypervigilant in response to family violence, or feel insecure in a house without fire alarms (Underlid, 2007).

This article also has made me think more deeply about my work. I am an instructor at a commuter school, and many students work in addition to attending classes; indeed, it is not unusual for me to hear that one of my students is taking four or five courses, working 30 hours a week, while also commuting half an hour or more to school. It can be hard to remember this when I see a student nodding off in class, but considering the possibility of sleep difficulties

gives me more empathy. In addition, it makes me think about the concept of “flipping the classroom” (Berrett, 2012) much more seriously. With this concept, teachers assign readings and lectures for students to learn at their home, while they complete more structured exercises and assignments, akin to “homework”, in the classroom with the instructor providing help or facilitating peer instruction. For any fellow instructors reading this letter, we must carefully consider assigning appropriate amounts of homework and reducing it when possible.

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