

# The scarring effects of primary-grade retention?

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An article released by *Social Forces* titled, "The Scarring Effects of Primary-Grade Retention? A Study of Cumulative Advantage in the Educational Career" by Megan Andrew explores the effect of scarring in the educational career in the case of primary-grade retention. Just as is the case for labor-market careers, events early in the educational career can leave lasting scars. Through the study, Andrew finds that primary-grade retention has lasting effects on educational attainments well after a student is initially retained: Retaining a child in early primary school reduces his or her odds of high school completion by about 60 percent in propensity score matching and sibling fixed-effects models.

These results suggest that the scarring effects of primary-grade retention operate mainly at high school completion—despite previous findings to the contrary. Based on the research here, grade retention in [primary school](#) leaves lasting scars on students' educational careers, lowering the odds of completing a [high school](#) credential with the best hopes for recovery relatively early in the educational career. Given the advent, maturation, and extension of a high-stakes environment in US education, it is important to understand the implications of potential triggering events in the educational career often tied to singular indicators of ability.

Megan Andrew is an assistant professor of sociology in the Center for Research on Educational Opportunities at the University of Notre Dame. Her primary research interests lie in the intergenerational and social psychological sources of young adults' educational and health

attainments. She has previously published on educational decision-making and expectation formation, intergenerational health selection and financial transfers, and partial proportional odds models. She is currently working on dynastic education models and peer influence in decision-making.

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