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I (Don't) Hate School: Revisiting Oppositional Culture Theory of Blacks' Resistance to Schooling

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This study provides an extensive test of Ogbu's oppositional culture theory that accounts for student maturation over time. Using data from the Maryland Adolescence Development In Context Study (MADICS), I test the proposition that blacks resist school more than whites, and that this difference grows with age. Analyses were conducted across 24 outcomes and revealed two major findings with implications for the study of race and school achievement. First, five major tenets of the theory were not supported, which challenges the existence of a pervasive oppositional culture among black Americans. Second, maturation after grade 7 had minimal impact on white-black differences on the outcomes. Findings are discussed in terms of their implications for sociological theory and educational policy.

Introduction

By age 17 the average black student is four years behind the average white student; black 12th graders score lower than white 8th graders in reading, math, U.S. history and geography (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 2003).¹ Although there was a convergence in black-white test scores from the early 1970s to approximately 1990 (Grissmer, Flanagan and Williamson 1998; Hedges and Nowell 1999) the convergence has been slow. For example, using data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – created by Congress in 1969 to regularly test nationally representative samples of students in grades 4, 8 and 12 (or sometimes ages 9, 13, 17) – Hedges and Nowell (1999) conclude the rate of change over the past 30 years suggests gap convergence would take 30 years in reading and about 75 years in math. They also conclude gap convergence on non-NAEP surveys would take 50 years in reading and more than a century in math. However, more recent analysis of achievement trends in the 1990s indicate the modest convergence in reading and math gaps made in the 1970s and 1980s has either ceased (Smith 2000) or reversed (Grissmer et al. 1998).

Many theories and studies have attempted to explain the gap's persistence. Prominent explanations include blacks' inferior genetic makeup (Jensen 1969; Herrnstein and Murray 1994) – no longer seriously considered given lack of

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empirical evidence (Nisbett 1998) – their greater exposure to non-intact family structures (Moynihan 1965), and various forms of economic disadvantage (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987, 1996). Even standardized testing has been critiqued for rigidity and lack of accounting for the overall academic experience (Kozol 2000; Meier 2000), or for having racial biases making minorities destined for lower scores (Sacks 1999). However, differences in background resources generally account for no more than a third of the achievement gap, and the gap exists on non-test measures such as grade point averages, even among middle-class blacks in suburbs (Ogbu 2003:35). The literature makes the gap appear intractable and creates fertile ground for theories suggesting its origin is rooted in the culture of minorities and their own refusal to succeed.

It is important to distinguish between the terms “black” and “African American.” To some, “African Americans” are a subgroup within a larger black community that includes those who may be first-generation immigrants or who do not identify as African American. A theory garnering much attention within the social sciences is the oppositional culture explanation (or resistance model) (Ogbu 1978), which contends the achievement gap occurs because blacks perceive lower returns to education and fewer occupational opportunities than whites. Ogbu (1978) argues motivation for maximizing school achievement results from beliefs that more education improves chances for attaining better jobs and higher wages and social status. Because African Americans are involuntary minorities – groups historically enslaved, colonized or conquered who interpret the incorporation of their group into the United States as forced by white Americans (i.e., dominant group) – they experience or perceive barriers to success with regard to future employment and earnings due to racial discrimination and structural inequalities.^{2,3} These experiences/beliefs lead them to become disillusioned about the future and doubt the value of schooling. Consequently, they develop a culture oppositional to the dominant group and resist educational goals, often resulting in early school withdrawal altogether. Thus, an assumption of the theory is that ameliorating the achievement gap will require a change in their culture. While all subjects in my research self-identified as African American, to remain consistent with terminology in previous research, I employ the term “black.”

Popularity of the Resistance Model

In the past decade, the theory has moved from the academy into the mainstream press. In the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, for example, Thomas Sowell (1994) wrote, “the most painful of the new developments has been the growth of an attitude in ghetto schools across the country that trying to learn is ‘acting white.’” Similarly, Brent Staples (1996) of *The New York Times* wrote, “some education experts demean the gifted programs as elitist and unfair. Even rival students get into the act, harassing the achievers for ‘acting white.’” Bob Herbert (1995) of *The New York Times* provides a more scathing description: “Some African Americans, unable to extricate themselves from the quicksand of self-defeat, have adopted the incredibly stupid tactic of harassing fellow blacks who have the temerity to take their studies seriously. According to the poisonous logic of the harassers, any attempt at acquiring knowledge is a form of ‘acting

white.” These excerpts illustrate the pervasiveness in the belief blacks have an antagonistic relationship toward schooling. Also, in addition to strong sales in books propagating this belief (Steele 1990; McWhorter 2000), the theory that blacks resist schooling has been embraced by educators and the general public and is practically regarded as “common sense.” Although some studies fail to find support for this theory (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1997, 1998), Farkas, Lleras and Maczuga (2002:154) conclude “it is premature to reject oppositional culture as one of the possible mechanisms influencing lower school performance among ethnic minorit[ies]. . .” The debate regarding the theory’s merit is still ongoing.

Limitation of Previous Research

Despite the resistance model’s popularity, some aspects of the theory are largely untested. An often-overlooked component of the theory is that involuntary minorities *develop* perceptions that their educational efforts are undervalued within society. As they transition into adulthood, they gain awareness of other minorities’ misfortunes with the opportunity structure and system of social mobility. In his most recent analysis of poor achieving blacks in the affluent suburb of Shaker Heights, Ohio, Ogbu (2003:20) describes their academic efforts as decreasing markedly from elementary to high school. He (2003:154) notes that although lack of effort “might not be serious in the early grades, it became more serious as students got older and began to think that they, too, would have difficulty in the opportunity structure . . . just because they were black.” He suggests they do not try hard despite believing in American ideals (e.g., success through education and hard work) because they are “mistrustful, ambivalent, and skeptical, especially as they got older and moved up in their school career.” (Ogbu 2003:41)

Previous studies provide limited assessments of the theory’s maturation component. Quantitative studies examining school resistance across multiple age groups (e.g., Farkas, Lleras, and Maczuga 2002; Downey and Ainsworth-Darnell 2002) use cohorts comprised of different children; these studies consist of cross-sectional analyses of different cohorts and focus on only one component of the resistance model: the “acting white” hypothesis.⁴ Tyson (2002, 2003) qualitatively examines the development of oppositional schooling attitudes among blacks in elementary school. In general, she finds black children begin school very much engaged and achievement-oriented and that the rejection of school norms does *not* characterize the larger black culture. However, she finds the schooling experience plays a central role in the development of negative schooling attitudes. In addition to poor achievement, school officials place strong emphasis on transforming many aspects of black children’s culture, which inadvertently communicates inadequacy associated with “blackness.” She notes children’s negative statements reflect desires to avoid further failure in school, implying schooling attitudes are part of a developmental rather than cultural process. Unfortunately, her observations are limited to one school year and assessing the relative change in school resistance between blacks and whites across adolescence was not her purpose.⁵

Another limitation of previous quantitative studies is the lack of breadth in resistance measures among datasets used to assess the theory. The resistance model is a rich, multi-dimensional theory. Although Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) and Cook and Ludwig (1997) systematically compared African Americans and whites across resistance measures, they were unable to provide a more exhaustive test due to the relatively few indicators of school resistance across waves within the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS). This data limitation forced them to employ a cross-sectional design. In contrast, recent qualitative studies (Akorn 2003; Carter 2005; Horvat and Lewis 2003; O'Connor 1997; Tyson 2002; Tyson, Darity and Castellino 2005) – which find little support for the theory – have been able to capture the theory's richness. However, they do not assess school resistance across adolescence. As such, no study provides a systematic assessment of the theory that accounts for many of its nuances within the same sample.

This study contributes to the literature by providing a test of the resistance model that might bridge the aforementioned qualitative studies, which capture the theory's multi-dimensionality, and quantitative studies, which make systematic racial comparisons of only certain components of the theory. I use panel data that contains a rich collection of measures allowing for the examination of whether blacks become more resistant to schooling over time. Because the goal of this research is to determine if an oppositional culture exists among involuntary minorities relative to whites, immigrant blacks and Latino/as are excluded from this study.

Methods

Data

Data for this study come from the Maryland Adolescence Development In Context Study (MADICS), which contains a unique collection of measures on 1480 adolescents. The MADICS (51 percent male and 49 percent female) sample was drawn from a county on the Eastern seaboard of the United States and consists of 1,407 black and white families (66 and 34 percent, respectively). Data were collected from the time the target youths entered middle school in the fall of 1991 until they were three years removed from high school. The sample was selected from approximately 5,000 adolescents in the county that entered middle school during 1991 using a stratified sampling procedure designed to get proportional representations of families from each of the county's 23 middle schools. As such, students' socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds are varied as the sample includes families from neighborhoods in low-income urban areas, middle class suburban areas, and rural farm-based areas. While the mean family income in the sample is normally distributed around \$45,000-\$49,000 (range \$5,000-\$75,000), white families report significantly higher incomes (\$50,000-\$54,999) than black families (\$40,000-\$44,999).

The current study uses white and black students from the first three waves of the MADICS, which were collected when they were in grades 7 ($n = 1407$), 8 ($n = 1004$), and 11 ($n = 954$). In supplemental analyses not shown, blacks were

not more likely to attrite than whites; the proportion of whites and blacks within the sample remains the same for each wave. Thus, any white-black differences observed over time in this study could not be an artifact of differential rates of sample attrition. It is also important to note most attrition occurs between grades 7 and 8; only 3 percent of the sample is lost between grades 8 and 11. This suggests it is unlikely sample attrition results from students dropping out of high school (see Appendix for an assessment of attrition bias).⁶

Although MADICS is primarily used by psychologists for understanding psychological determinants of behavior and developmental trajectories during adolescence, it is well suited to the goals of this study. It has the necessary quality and greater breadth than previous datasets used to assess the resistance model. Its richness and longitudinal design provide a good opportunity to determine whether development from middle school to high school leads to greater opposition toward schooling among blacks than whites using a wide range of measures.

One unfortunate limitation is that MADICS was not designed to draw inferences to the national population of students. However, I am unaware of theoretical models positing that the underlying causal mechanisms of school resistance vary by social class or geographic area (e.g., east/west, urban/suburban). The resistance model attributes an oppositional cultural frame of reference to the wider "black community." (For further elaboration, see Tyson 2002:1166-67.) However, findings from this study indicate results based on MADICS yield similar conclusions to studies that use national data (i.e., Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998). This is not surprising given there is no prior theoretical or empirical basis for expecting the processes and parameters underlying school resistance in the current study to differ from those observed in nationally representative samples. The strength of MADICS is that it allows for the resistance model to be tested with greater depth, which should compliment previous studies that use nationally representative samples.

Analytic Plan

This study consists of a series of racial comparisons on numerous factors. Four models are estimated for 24 outcomes using pooled cross-sections and developmental effects are tested by interacting grade level and race. Whereas the first model regresses the outcome on race to determine whether racial differences exist, the second model controls for grade level. Because Ogbu posits being an involuntary minority leads to oppositional culture independent of social class, the third model assesses racial differences net of grade level and socioeconomic (SES) factors associated with race and the outcomes such as family income, parental education and family structure. To determine whether blacks fare worse on the outcomes as they move closer to adulthood relative to whites, the final model includes interaction terms between grade level and race. Because an individual can enter the sample three times, robust standard errors are used to account for correlation across individuals.

Table 1 contains detailed information on all outcomes. Constructs comprised of multiple items are weighted sums; responses were added and the sums divided

by the number of items. It is important to note not all resistance measures were collected in each wave. Therefore, the number of observations varies across outcomes. Item non-response rate is .05 or less for outcomes measured in all waves, .06 or less for outcomes measured in only two waves (i.e., grades 7 or 8 and 11), and less than .02 for outcomes measured only in grade 7. Although the within grade racial differences in means in Table 1 appear similar, models discussed above allow for systematic racial comparisons to be made after adjusting for SES.

The Oppositional Culture Model: Five Hypotheses and Results

Hypothesis 1: *Black children perceive fewer returns to education and more limited opportunities for upward social mobility than white children.*

Ogbu (1978) notes the expected gains from education held by children and their parents or community serve as an important determinant of school performance. Furthermore, Ogbu (2003:154) notes older black students become discouraged from striving academically in part because of their greater perceptions of limited chances in the opportunity structure. Hypothesis 1 is tested by determining whether black children perceive *fewer returns to education*, have lower *educational aspirations*, and lower *educational expectations* than white children. Also, the extent to which blacks perceive more limited opportunities for upward social mobility than whites is examined by determining whether there is greater discrepancy between their aspired and expected educational attainment. Presumably, how far students believe they will go in school (educational expectations) should be similar to the educational level they wish to attain (i.e., educational aspiration). However, because blacks are posited to perceive more limited opportunities with regard to upward mobility, their expected educational attainment should increasingly diverge from their educational aspirations as they move closer to adulthood.

Table 2 shows no support for the first part of Hypothesis 1. Specifically, while black students report greater returns to education and have higher educational aspirations than whites ($b = .091$ and $.123$ for each outcome in Model 1, respectively), the bottom panel of Table 2 shows a non-significant difference between whites and blacks in educational expectations. Furthermore, when background factors are controlled in Model 3, blacks' advantage on perceived returns to education increases by 27 percent (to $b = .116$), their advantage on educational aspirations nearly doubles ($b = .239$), and they have greater educational expectations than whites ($b = .123$). In addition, while Model 3 shows perceived returns to education decreases for both groups over time, Model 4 for these outcomes indicates group differences remain constant over time.

Studies using NELS also find that blacks perceive greater returns to education than whites and that no differences exist in educational expectations between these groups (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Voelkl 1993; Cook and Ludwig 1997). Blacks' perceptions are consistent with analyses that show each step along the educational ladder yields an increase in earnings (Thernstrom

and Thernstrom 2003). In fact, blacks actually earn more than whites when achievement is held constant (Farkas and Vicknair 1996).

Analysis for the final outcome in Table 2, however, shows blacks perceive greater limited educational opportunities than whites ($b = .193$ in Model 1), 41 percent of which is due to differences in SES (b declines to $.114$ in Model 3). The discrepancy between the educational attainment students would like to reach and the educational attainment they believe they will reach is greater for blacks, even after controlling for SES; something other than SES contributes to their greater belief that they will not reach their educational goals. The racial difference in this belief remains constant over time.

Hypothesis 2: Black children have less favorable affect toward school than whites.

It is unclear whether black students differ from whites on attitudes toward education. Although studies show they have more favorable schooling attitudes than whites (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Coleman et al. 1966), Mickelson (1990) notes attitudes toward education are multidimensional. She notes students have abstract attitudes (e.g., education is important) that reflect dominant ideology regarding the ideal role of education and concrete attitudes rooted in life experiences. She finds that concrete attitudes predict achievement behavior and that blacks hold less positive concrete attitudes than whites, which she attributes to the material realities they experience that “challenge the rhetoric of the American Dream.” (p. 59) However, these studies assess schooling attitudes by asking youths to estimate future educational returns.

To assess Hypothesis 2, the previous analyses are repeated for *affect toward school* – students’ liking of school and schooling activities. According to Ogbu (1978), black children should have lower affect toward schooling than whites, and this difference should increase as they get older. Racial differences are also assessed on *go to school because enjoy classes* and *go to school because have to*. The aim here is to determine if mandatory school attendance becomes a greater reason for blacks’ school attendance rather than enjoyment of classes relative to whites. These measures further tap into students’ affect toward school without asking them to estimate the future payoff of schooling.

Table 3 shows blacks have greater affect toward school ($b = .104$ in Model 1 and $.118$ in Model 3) and rate enjoyment of classes as more important for their school attendance ($b = .308$ in Model 1 and $.320$ in Model 3) than whites. While blacks maintain greater affect toward school than whites over time, the difference in the importance of class enjoyment for school attendance narrows by grade 11, although blacks still maintain a minimal advantage ($b = -.278$ for black \times G11 in Model 4, but only marginally significant). There is no racial difference on the importance students attribute to mandatory school attendance for their attending school.

The current findings show both groups experience similar rates of decline over time in school affect and feeling that class enjoyment is important for their school attendance, and an increase in feeling they attend school because it is

Table 1: Unadjusted Means, Standard Deviations and Descriptions for Variables

Variable Name	Description	Metric				Alpha		
		White	Black	White	Black			
Perceptions of Future Opportunities (Hypothesis 1)								
Perceived Returns to Education	(a) I have to do well in school if I want to be a success in life. (b) Schooling is not so important for kids like me.* (c) Getting a good education is the best way to get ahead in life for the kids in my neighborhood.	4.18 (.62)	4.29 (.65)	4.10 (.71)	4.18 (.75)	4.08 (.77)	4.15 (.73)	.61
Educational Aspirations	If you could do exactly what you wanted, how far would you like to go in school? 1 = 8th grade or less 9 = J.D., Ph.D., M.D.	7.57 (1.47)	7.67 (1.59)	7.77 (1.29)	7.83 (1.41)	7.51 (1.51)	7.75 (1.47)	—
Educational Expectations	We can't always do what we most want to do. How far do you think you actually will go in school? 1 = 8th grade or less 9 = J.D., Ph.D., M.D.	6.89 (1.52)	6.78 (1.77)	7.13 (1.38)	6.99 (1.64)	6.86 (1.58)	6.93 (1.63)	—
Limited Educ. Opportunities	Discrepancy between educational aspirations and educational expectations.	.69 (1.21)	.90 (1.48)	.64 (.98)	.84 (1.30)	.66 (.94)	.82 (1.20)	—
Affect Toward School (Hypothesis 2)								
Affect Toward School [†]	(a) most of my classes or subjects are boring.* (b) homework is a waste of time.* (c) in general, you like school a lot. (d) Grades are very important to you.	3.69 (.63)	3.75 (.62)	—	—	3.45 (.74)	3.61 (.65)	.65
Go to School Because Enjoy Classes	Importance of the following reason for attending school: I go to school because I enjoy my classes.	4.24 (1.72)	4.65 (1.84)	3.95 (1.70)	4.26 (1.72)	4.26 (1.63)	4.40 (1.70)	—
Go to School Because Have to	Importance of the following reason for attending school: I go to school because I have to.	4.87 (2.08)	4.96 (2.21)	5.00 (2.04)	4.82 (2.11)	5.25 (2.04)	5.23 (2.01)	—

Effort to Improve Academically (Hypothesis 3)									
Seek Help	When you're having trouble on schoolwork, how often do you go to (a) your teachers for help? (b) other adults in the school, like a tutor, for help? (c) other students for help? (d) your parent(s) for help? (e) your friends for help?	1 = Almost Never 5 = Almost Always	3.07 (.73)	3.14 (.72)	2.77 (.73)	2.91 (.73)	2.69 (.76)	2.82 (.73)	.60
Time on Schooling/Academic Activities									
School Activities/ Clubs	During the last year how often did you spend time on any other school activities (such as clubs or student government)?	1 = Less than once a month 6 = Usually every day	1.44 (1.93)	1.42 (2.03)	1.86 (1.87)	1.60 (1.97)	2.28 (2.12)	2.02 (2.23)	—
Homework ^a	Think about the last two weeks, about how often did you do homework?	1 = Never 6 = Daily, more than 1hr	4.92 (1.16)	4.92 (1.22)	—	—	4.36 (1.67)	4.22 (1.59)	—
Learning Activities ^a	Think about the last two weeks, about how often did you (a) watching news, educational or cultural shows on TV? (b) read books or magazines for pleasure? (c) read newspapers?	1 = Never 6 = Daily, more than 1hr	2.84 (.96)	2.88 (1.03)	—	—	3.30 (1.12)	3.28 (1.21)	.58
Truancy and Delinquency									
Skip School	How often, if ever, have you skipped school or cut classes?	1 = Never, to 4 = Often	1.14 (.45)	1.13 (.44)	1.52 (.85)	1.67 (1.00)	2.06 (1.06)	2.02 (1.07)	—
In Trouble ^b	Number of times youth has been suspended from middle school and high school (asked in grades 8 and 11, respectively).	1 to 10 or more	—	—	.25 (.91)	.65 (1.44)	.42 (1.43)	.77 (1.81)	—

Table 1 continued

Importance of Academics Relative to Non-Academics									
Importance of Academic Activities	Compared to other things you do, how important are each of the following activities to you? (a) Math? (b) Other school subjects?	1 = Much less important to me than other things 7 = Much more important to me than other things	5.27 (1.25)	5.61 (1.27)	4.89 (1.29)	5.27 (1.28)	4.54 (1.43)	5.08 (1.32)	.81
Importance of Sports	Compared to other things you do, how important are (sports) to you?	1 = Much less important to me than other things 7 = Much more important to me than other things	4.36 (1.95)	4.38 (1.88)	4.43 (1.84)	4.75 (1.81)	3.93 (1.94)	4.17 (1.90)	—
Good Performance As Acting White and Popularity Measures (Hypothesis 4)									
Act White	Is getting good grades part of "acting white"?	1 = Yes, 0 = No	—	.17 (.37)	—	—	—	—	—
Ability to Make Friends Relative to Peers ^c	Compared to other kids your age, how well do you do in making friends.	1 = much worse than other kids 7 = much better than other kids	5.09 (1.49)	5.53 (1.42)	—	—	—	—	—
Trouble Getting Along with Kids ^d	How often do you have trouble getting along with other kids?	1 = Almost Never 5 = Almost Always	1.95 (1.01)	1.96 (1.10)	—	—	—	—	—
Popularity	Compared to other kids your age, how popular are you?	1 = Much less popular 7 = Much more popular	4.21 (1.55)	4.76 (1.63)	4.49 (1.31)	4.98 (1.41)	4.66 (1.20)	5.07 (1.28)	—
Number of Friends ^b	Youths assessment of the number of friends s/he has.	0 = Wish I had more or do not have any friends 1 = Have plenty of friends	—	—	.75 (.44)	.78 (.41)	.69 (.46)	.79 (.41)	—

Peer Culture Measures (Hypothesis 5)									
Negative Peer Behaviors	How many of the friends you spend most of your time with (a) are in youth or street gangs? (b) have stolen something worth more than \$50? (c) put pressure on you to use drugs?	1 = None of Them 5 = All of Them	1.09 (.31)	1.08 (.24)	1.28 (.53)	1.37 (.65)	1.38 (.48)	1.42 (.61)	.69
Negative Peer Values^b	Would your friends think it was cool or uncool if you (a) drank beer, wine, or liquor? (b) used pot, marijuana or other illegal drugs? (c) had a baby or fathered a baby while in high school? (d) talked back to teachers (e) did what you wanted to do even if it meant breaking a school rule? (f) did risky and dangerous things?	1 = Very Uncool 5 = Very Cool	—	—	2.41 (.86)	2.40 (.83)	2.62 (.76)	2.60 (.79)	.81
Negative Peer Values on Schooling^b	How many of the friends you spend most of your time with (a) think working hard to get good grades is a waste of time? (b) cheat on school tests? (c) don't like having to come to school? (d) think being popular with friends is more important than getting A's in school? (e) think it's okay not to do their homework if their friends want to do something else instead?	1 = None of Them 5 = All of Them	—	—	2.28 .69	2.15 (.70)	2.31 (.68)	2.17 (.66)	.68

Table 1 continued

Positive Peer Values on Schooling	How many of the friends you spend most of your time with (a) do well in school? (b) plan to go to college? (c) like to discuss schoolwork or other intellectual things with you? (d) think it is important to work hard on school-work?	1 = None of Them 5 = All of Them	3.41 (.70)	3.52 (.77)	3.37 (.70)	3.37 (.69)	3.41 (.80)	3.39 (.78)	.71
Educational Performance Measures									
School Performance ^d	Grade point average (GPA) calculated from students' self-reported grades on last report card in the following manner: $(A's \times 4) + (B's \times 3) + (C's \times 2) + (D's \times 1) + (F's \times 0)$, divided by the total number of letter grades student received.	0 to 4.0	3.31 (.52)	3.08 (.52)	3.35 (.57)	2.97 (.61)	3.04 (.79)	2.82 (.72)	—
Good Performance	Dichotomous variable for students with GPAs in the top quartile of the GPA distribution.	0 = no, 1 = yes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Poor Performance	Dichotomous variable for students with GPAs in the bottom quartile of the GPA distribution.	0 = no, 1 = yes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes: * Items are reverse coded. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations. Valid cases range from 3184 to 3357 (95% or greater of the total sample).

^a These measures were not collected in the eighth grade and will only be used in longitudinal analyses that assess changes from grade 7 to 11. Valid cases range from 2226 to 2336 (94% or greater of the total 7th and 11th grade sample).

^b These measures were not collected in the 7th grade and will only be used in longitudinal analyses that assess changes from grade 8 to 11. Valid cases range from 1832 to 1930 (94% or greater of the total 8th and 11th grade sample).

^c These measures will be used only for analysis among 7th graders. Valid cases range from 1380 to 1398 (98% or greater of the total 7th grade sample).

^d Valid cases = 2901 (86.2% of the total sample)

required. Whites' greater school achievement leads researchers to overlook this phenomenon. Ogbu (2003) emphasizes that affect toward school declines over time for blacks. However, he builds a theory of group differences by observing one group. The current findings suggest white-black achievement differences results from factors other than affective schooling attitudes.

Hypothesis 3: *Black children exhibit greater resistance to school than whites.*

Ogbu (1978) contends that because blacks do not share the premise that education leads to success, they resist school. He notes "[I]s it logical to expect that blacks and whites would exert the same energy and perform alike in school when the caste system, through the job ceiling, consistently underutilizes black training and ability and underrewards blacks for their education?" (Ogbu 1978:195) According to Ogbu, blacks' repudiation of schooling is marked by truancy, delinquency and lack of serious effort.

Ogbu (1991:444) notes using students' attitudes toward school to measure school resistance is inadequate because "direct questions will generally elicit responses similar to those given by white Americans." School resistance is better gauged by assessing students' behavior; what they do or fail to do to improve academically (Ogbu 1991). As such, Hypothesis 3 is tested by assessing whether blacks *seek help*, and spend time on *school activities/clubs*, *homework*, and *learning activities outside school* less than whites.

The analyses in Table 4a do not support the claim that blacks put forth less effort to improve academically than whites. Findings show blacks seek help more and spend the same amount of time on homework and educational activities than whites. Also, both groups spend a similar amount of time on school activities/clubs after adjusting for socioeconomic differences. The lack of significant interaction terms indicates these patterns remain constant over time. These results do not contradict Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey's (1998) finding that black students put forth less effort in school than whites. Whereas their measure of effort was a scale of teacher assessments regarding student effort, this study measures effort as the things students do to improve academically. This measure makes issues of teacher bias in evaluations of minority students, which has been well documented (Alexander, Entwisle and Thompson 1987; Ferguson 1998; Leacock 1985), less important.

The finding of no difference in time on homework is consistent with other nationally representative studies (Cook and Ludwig 1997; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 2003). Studies finding group differences generally show only a modest black disadvantage (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998). This does not mean blacks are efficient with their time on homework, however. For example, in an analysis of 15 affluent school districts, Ferguson found black students were 20 percent less likely to complete their homework than whites (also, Thernstrom and Thernstrom 2003:143).

Hypothesis 3 is further tested by repeating the analyses for *skip school* and *in trouble*. Group differences on the importance students attribute to academic and non-academic activities are also examined. Ogbu (1978) notes the American caste system encourages a dual system of social/status mobility leading ethnic minorities to disinvest from academics and focus on perceived non-white domains such as sports, which they perceive will be more rewarding. In his recent study of

Table 2: Unstandardized Coefficients from Regressions of Perceptions of Future

Ind. Variables	Perceived Returns To Education ^a				Educational Aspirations ^b			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	4.129*** (.021)	4.193*** (.024)	3.902*** (.075)	3.892*** (.076)	7.615*** (.043)	7.550*** (.054)	5.524*** (.166)	5.546*** (.170)
Black	.091*** (.026)	.089*** (.026)	.116*** (.026)	.133*** (.036)	.123* (.054)	.123* (.054)	.239*** (.054)	.204* (.085)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	-.097*** (.029)	-.103*** (.029)	-.089 (.048)	—	.178** (.060)	.092 (.059)	.107 (.094)
Grade 11 (G11)	—	-.124*** (.031)	-.142*** (.031)	-.118* (.052)	—	.035 (.066)	-.124 (.066)	-.227* (.106)
HH Income	—	—	.004 (.004)	.004 (.004)	—	—	.027*** (.008)	.028*** (.008)
Parental Education	—	—	.008 (.005)	.008 (.005)	—	—	.105*** (.010)	.105*** (.010)
<i>Interactions</i>								
Black * G8	—	—	—	-.022 (.060)	—	—	—	-.023 (.120)
Black * G11	—	—	—	-.036 (.063)	—	—	—	.158 (.131)
R ²	.004	.010	.036	.036	.002	.004	.073	.073

Shaker Heights, he notes (2003:28), “one major issue in prioritizing was deciding between sports and academics.” Therefore, blacks should find academic activities less important and value sports relative to whites, particularly as they get older.

Table 4b indicates that although blacks do not skip school/cut classes more than whites, they are in trouble (i.e., suspended) more often than whites. Only a little more than one-third of their higher suspension levels can be attributed to

Table 2 continued

Ind. Variables	Educational Expectation ^c				Perceived Limited Educational Opportunity (Education Aspiration – Expectation) ^d			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	6.954*** (.045)	6.866*** (.057)	3.976*** (.173)	4.009*** (.178)	.664*** (.032)	.694*** (.044)	1.575*** (.141)	1.565*** (.146)
Black	-.071 (.058)	-.070 (.058)	.123* (.056)	.073 (.088)	.193*** (.044)	.192*** (.044)	.114* (.045)	.130 (.075)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	.215*** (.067)	.083 (.064)	.099 (.097)	—	-.046 (.053)	.001 (.053)	.000 (.077)
Grade 11 (G11)	—	.081 (.072)	-.161* (.069)	-.301** (.107)	—	-.056 (.054)	.028 (.054)	.067 (.078)
HH Income	—	—	.057*** (.009)	.058*** (.009)	—	—	-.030*** (.007)	-.030*** (.007)
Parental Education	—	—	.140*** (.012)	.139*** (.011)	—	—	-.036*** (.009)	-.035*** (.009)
<i>Interactions</i>								
Black * G8	—	—	—	-.025 (.128)	—	—	—	.002 (.104)
Black * G11	—	—	—	.217 (.136)	—	—	—	-.061 (.105)
R ²	.000	.004	.114	.114	.005	.006	.026	.026

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. White and grade 7 are the omitted categories for race and grade, respectively. Models 3 and 4 also include controls for sex and family structure. ^a N = 3227 ^b N = 3239 ^c N = 3231 ^d N = 3230
*p < .05 ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

Table 3: Unstandardized Coefficients from Regressions of Affect toward School

Ind. Variables	Affect Toward School ^a				Go to School Because Enjoy Classes ^b				Go to School Because Have to ^c			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	3.596*** (.025)	3.666*** (.026)	3.460*** (.086)	3.478*** (.087)	4.156*** (.051)	4.307*** (.063)	4.333*** (.186)	4.270*** (.193)	5.015*** (.062)	4.943*** (.076)	4.208*** (.224)	4.143*** (.232)
Black	.104*** (.030)	.099*** (.030)	.118*** (.031)	.088* (.037)	.308*** (.064)	.307*** (.064)	.320*** (.065)	.422*** (.101)	-.027 (.078)	-.023 (.077)	.006 (.080)	.110 (.123)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	—	—	—	—	-.355*** (.073)	-.346*** (.073)	-.285* (.121)	—	-.042 (.088)	-.073 (.089)	.099 (.147)
Grade 11 (G11)	—	-.179*** (.029)	-.185*** (.030)	-.236*** (.052)	—	-.152* (.075)	-.138 (.077)	.044 (.124)	—	.313*** (.091)	.255** (.093)	.313* (.153)
HH Income	—	—	-.004 (.004)	-.003 (.004)	—	—	-.004 (.010)	-.005 (.010)	—	—	.005 (.012)	.005 (.012)
Parental Education	—	—	.009 (.006)	.009 (.006)	—	—	-.010 (.013)	-.010 (.013)	—	—	.043** (.015)	.043* (.015)
<i>Interactions</i>												
Black * G8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.091 (.152)	—	—	—	-.263 (.184)
Black * G11	—	—	—	.078 (.062)	—	—	—	-.278† (.155)	—	—	—	-.087 (.189)
R ²	.006	.023	.037	.038	.007	.014	.019	.020	.000	.005	.009	.010

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. White and grade 7 are the omitted categories for race and grade, respectively. Models 3 and 4 also include controls for sex and family structure.

^a Data not collected in grade 8. As such, n = 2216 (94% of the 7th and 11th grade sample). ^b N = 3223 ^c N = 3208

†p < .10 *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

socioeconomic differences ($b = .375$ in Model 1 and $.232$ in Model 3). Findings also show while all students skip or cut classes more as they matriculate through the school system ($b = .487$ for grade 8 and $.899$ for grade 11 in Model 2), blacks report being truant slightly more than whites in the 8th grade ($b = .154$ for black x G8 in Model 4). However, their truancy levels are similar to those of whites by grade 11. The similarity between blacks and whites in frequency of skipping class has also been found among 10th graders in the NELS (Cook and Ludwig 1997).

It is important to note “in trouble” (and skipping school) is not necessarily equivalent to school resistance. Several studies on blacks’ differential disciplinary rates suggest school practices are partially to blame (e.g., Delpit 1995; Lewis 2003; Ferguson 2000; Tyson 2002, 2003; Morris 2005). Specifically, these studies find cultural discontinuity between black families and the institutionalized structure of schools, which value cultural norms and standards of “mainstream” white middle-class society, results in school personnel placing greater emphasis on black children’s behavior. For example, Ferguson (2000) finds school personnel view the dress and behavior of black males as recalcitrant and oppositional and exert strict control over them. She notes culturally based assumptions about black males lead them to face constant regulation of their dress, behavior, and speech. Similarly, Morris (2005) finds whereas white and Asian American children are viewed as non-threatening, black (and Latino/a) children are considered dangerous and therefore face constant surveillance and greater discipline for behavioral infractions. In sum, these studies show “schools react to students based on perceptions of race and gender and use these concepts as a basis for specific patterns of regulation.” (Morris 2005:28) Thus, “in trouble” might reflect differential treatment black children experience in schools. The causal ordering might be reversed; being “in trouble” might be an effect of being a target of school personnel.

The bottom panel of Table 4b shows blacks place greater importance on academic activities than whites ($b = .416$ in both unadjusted and adjusted models). Furthermore, although the importance placed on academics declines over time for both groups ($b = -.352$ and $-.600$ in Model 2 for grades 8 and 11, respectively), the non-significant interactions indicate blacks maintain this advantage as they matriculate through school. The findings also show blacks place greater importance on sports than whites ($b = .178$ in Model 1). However, this difference disappears after adjusting for social class. Interestingly, sports increase in importance for both groups in the 8th grade ($b = .267$ in Model 2) and become least important for both groups in grade 11 ($b = -.283$ in Model 2).

Hypothesis 4: High-achieving black children are negatively sanctioned by their peers to a greater degree than high-achieving white children: The “acting white” hypothesis.

The most widely known tenet of the oppositional culture theory is the “acting white” hypothesis (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Ogbu (1994) notes subordinate groups define certain behaviors, in this case achievement, as inappropriate for them because they are the domain of their oppressors. Therefore, academic

success is equated to “acting white.” (Fordham and Ogbu 1986) There is empirical evidence showing that school resistance manifests as a fear of “acting white.” (Fordham and Ogbu 1986) However, no study has systematically compared blacks with low achievement to those with high achievement on whether they regard education as a “white” domain. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) do show high-achieving blacks are more popular than their white counterparts regardless of whether achievement is measured as standardized test scores or grades. Furthermore, Cook and Ludwig (1997, 1998) find blacks do not experience

Table 4a: Unstandardized Coefficients from Regressions of Effort to Improve Academically

Ind. Variables	Seek Help When Having Trouble in School ^a			Time Spent on School Activities/Clubs ^b			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	2.873*** (.023)	3.042*** (.027)	3.007*** (.080)	1.807*** (.059)	1.540*** (.071)	-4.932* (.207)	-.519* (.213)
Black	.116*** (.028)	.112*** (.027)	.128*** (.028)	-.169* (.074)	-.166* (.073)	-.010 (.074)	.124 (.112)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	-.250*** (.030)	-.243*** (.030)	—	.250** (.081)	.214** (.080)	.343** (.133)
Grade 11 (G11)	—	-.343*** (.032)	-.334*** (.033)	—	.671*** (.089)	.579*** (.088)	.757*** (.144)
HH Income	—	—	-.003 (.004)	—	—	-.010 (.011)	-.010 (.011)
Parental Education	—	—	-.006 (.006)	—	—	.109*** (.015)	.109*** (.015)
<i>Interactions</i>							
Black * G8	—	—	—	.071 (.063)	—	—	-.193 (.166)
Black * G11	—	—	—	.049 (.067)	—	—	-.268 (.179)
R ²	.005	.045	.066	.002	.020	.065	.066

greater social cost for high achievement than whites. Unfortunately, these studies were unable to tap into students' perceptions regarding whether good school performance is "acting white."

Table 5a shows whether low-achieving blacks differ from those with high achievement in the belief that getting good grades is a part of "acting white." In addition to this direct test of the "acting white" hypothesis, findings are reported for whether high-achieving blacks receive greater negative sanctioning from their peers than white students. Specifically, this study assesses whether

Ind. Variables	Time Spent on Homework ^c				Time Spent on Educational Activities ^c			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	4.701*** (.051)	4.962*** (.051)	3.855*** (.172)	3.821*** (.174)	3.025*** (.038)	2.857*** (.040)	2.382*** (.135)	2.362*** (.135)
Black	-.062 (.062)	-.063 (.061)	-.020 (.062)	.073 (.069)	.017 (.047)	.020 (.046)	.040 (.048)	.071 (.057)
Grade 11 (G11)	—	-.653*** (.062)	-.718*** (.063)	-.628*** (.107)	—	.416*** (.047)	.403*** (.048)	.455*** (.078)
HH Income	—	—	.005 (.009)	.004 (.009)	—	—	-.015* (.007)	-.015* (.007)
Parental Education	—	—	.055*** (.012)	.055*** (.012)	—	—	.041*** (.010)	.041*** (.010)
<i>Interactions</i>								
Black * G11	—	—	—	-.135 (.130)	—	—	—	-.078 (.097)
R ²	.000	.051	.077	.078	.000	.034	.043	.044

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. White and grade 7 are the omitted categories for race and grade, respectively. Models 3 and 4 also include controls for sex and family structure.

^a N = 3197.

^b N = 3344.

^c Data not collected in grade 8. As such, the number of observations is 2316 for time spent on homework and 2326 for time spent on educational activities (98.1 and 98.5 percent of the total 7th and 11th grade sample, respectively).

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

ability to make friends and *trouble getting along with other kids* differ between high-achieving blacks and high-achieving whites. Because MADICS does not contain these measures in multiple waves, these analyses are conducted only among 7th graders.

Findings indicate an equal proportion (only about 17 percent) of poor-performing blacks (those in the bottom quartile of the 7th grade GPA distribution) and good-performing blacks (those in the top quartile of the 7th grade GPA distribution) believe good school performance is “acting white.” This suggests

Table 4b: Unstandardized Coefficients from Regressions of School Resistance

Ind. Variables	Skip School or Cut Classes ^a				In Trouble: Number of Times Suspended from School (Grade 8 omitted) ^b			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	1.516*** (.026)	1.113*** (.023)	1.455*** (.088)	1.476*** (.088)	.328*** (.047)	.261*** (.051)	1.581*** (.237)	1.572*** (.236)
Black	.027 (.033)	.029 (.030)	-.019 (.030)	-.055* (.027)	.375*** (.066)	.379*** (.066)	.232*** (.067)	.245*** (.077)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	.487*** (.033)	.496*** (.033)	.395*** (.051)	—	—	—	—
Grade 11 (G11)	—	.899*** (.037)	.914*** (.037)	.939*** (.063)	—	.140* (.071)	.176* (.072)	.194* (.096)
HH Income	—	—	-.003 (.004)	-.003 (.004)	—	—	-.009 (.012)	-.009 (.012)
Parental Education	—	—	-.010 (.006)	-.010 (.006)	—	—	-.050*** (.015)	-.050*** (.015)
<i>Interactions</i>								
Black * G8	—	—	—	.154* (.065)	—	—	—	—
Black * G11	—	—	—	-.036 (.077)	—	—	—	-.028 (.133)
R ²	.000	.171	.182	.184	.015	.017	.061	.061

the fear of appearing white for performing well in school is not the reason for differences in school performance between these groups. The findings also show students' level of school performance is not related to their ability to make friends and blacks find it easier to make friends than whites at all levels of school performance (note the non-significant interaction terms in Model 4). Perhaps the best illustration of whether good performance is negatively sanctioned is contained in the last outcome of Table 5a. These models show good-performing students have less trouble getting along with their peers ($b = -298$ in Model

Ind. Variables	Importance of Academic Activities ^c				Importance of Non-Academics (Sports) ^d			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	4.949** (.040)	5.225*** (.046)	5.102*** (.141)	5.144*** (.144)	4.256*** (.057)	4.257*** (.070)	4.888*** (.187)	4.985*** (.194)
Black	.416*** (.049)	.407*** (.048)	.416*** (.050)	.351*** (.073)	.178* (.070)	.178* (.070)	.104 (.068)	-.046 (.104)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	-.352*** (.053)	-.348*** (.054)	-.377*** (.091)	—	.267*** (.077)	.253*** (.072)	.079 (.129)
Grade 11 (G11)	—	-.600*** (.057)	-.600*** (.059)	-.723*** (.101)	—	-.283*** (.081)	-.276*** (.077)	-.440** (.139)
HH Income	—	—	-.006 (.008)	-.006 (.008)	—	—	.001 (.010)	.002 (.010)
Parental Education	—	—	.009 (.010)	.009 (.010)	—	—	.009 (.013)	.009 (.013)
<i>Interactions</i>								
Black * G8	—	—	—	.043 (.112)	—	—	—	.264 (.155)
Black * G11	—	—	—	.189 (.121)	—	—	—	.247 (.165)
R ²	.022	.057	.059	.059	.002	.014	.148	.149

^aN = 3303. ^bData not collected in grade 7. As such, N = 1845 (94% of the 8th and 11th grade sample).

^cN = 3241. ^dN = 3325.

Table 5a: Unstandardized Coefficients from Regressions of Performance

Ind. Variables	Good Grades = Acting White (Blacks Only) ^a				Making Friends ^b				Trouble Getting Along with Peers ^b			
	Odds Ratio		Odds Ratio		Odds Ratio		Odds Ratio		Odds Ratio		Odds Ratio	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	—	-2.159* (1.119)	5.112*** (.077)	5.149*** (.092)	5.710*** (.293)	5.711*** (.295)	1.986*** (.054)	2.078*** (.064)	2.364*** (.202)	2.396*** (.205)	2.364*** (.202)	2.396*** (.205)
Black	—	—	.396*** (.092)	.405*** (.095)	.404*** (.095)	.424** (.135)	-.051 (.066)	-.119 (.067)	-.126 (.066)	-.183 (.096)	-.126 (.066)	-.183 (.096)
Good Perf. (GP)	—	—	—	-.046 (.103)	-.057 (.105)	.045 (.164)	—	-.298*** (.071)	-.243*** (.073)	-.354*** (.109)	-.243*** (.073)	-.354*** (.109)
Poor Perf. (PP)	.215 (.332)	1.240 (.365)	1.229 (.107)	.206 (.107)	-.123 (.108)	-.225 (.229)	—	.118 (.081)	.076 (.082)	.092 (.172)	.076 (.082)	.092 (.172)
HH Income	—	.052 (.051)	1.054 (.013)	—	.001 (.013)	.000 (.013)	—	—	-.022* (.010)	-.022* (.010)	-.022* (.010)	-.022* (.010)
Parental Education	—	.010 (.077)	1.010 (.022)	—	-.056** (.022)	-.058** (.022)	—	—	.002 (.014)	.003 (.014)	.002 (.014)	.003 (.014)
<i>Interactions</i>												
Black * GP	—	—	—	—	—	-.183 (.209)	—	—	—	-.190 (.142)	—	-.190 (.142)

Table 5b: Unstandardized Coefficients from Regressions of Popularity and Number of Friends

Ind. Variables	Popularity ^a				Number of Friends ^b			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	4.434*** (.045)	4.269*** (.068)	4.536*** (.179)	4.536*** (.182)	.923 (.090)	1.085 (.124)	.706 (.355)	.857 (.367)
Black	.478*** (.056)	.470*** (.058)	.464*** (.059)	.468*** (.083)	.350 (.116)	1.419** (.118)	1.388** (.123)	1.511*** (.178)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	.211*** (.066)	.210** (.066)	.199** (.071)	—	—	—	—
Grade 11 (G11)	—	.294*** (.066)	.305*** (.069)	.304*** (.072)	—	-.100 (.115)	.904 (.118)	.885 (.124)
Poor Perf. (PP)	—	.102 (.068)	.092 (.069)	-.011 (.129)	—	-.181 (.140)	.835 (.144)	.912 (.264)
Good Perf. (GP)	—	-.022 (.067)	-.005 (.068)	.047 (.099)	—	-.217 (.138)	.805 (.143)	.752* (.204)
HH Income	—	—	.012 (.009)	.012 (.009)	—	—	.032 (.018)	1.032 (.018)
Parental Education	—	—	-.026* (.012)	-.026* (.012)	—	—	-.020 (.024)	.980 (.024)
<i>As school performance gets worse, do black children become more popular than white children? Do they experience greater social cost for good performance than whites?</i>								
Black * PP	—	—	—	.133 (.151)	—	—	—	.325 (.311)
Black * GP	—	—	—	-.128 (.171)	—	—	—	.528 (.323)

Do black children experience greater social cost for good school performance than white children as they move through the school system?

Black * G8 * GP	—	—	—	—	—	—
	.062					
	(.188)					
Black * G11 * GP	—	—	—	—	—	.970
	.012					(.386)
	(.224)					
R ²	.024	.033	.035	Chi-Square	9.14**	12.18*
						27.44***
						31.40***

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. White is the omitted category for race. Models 3 and 4 also include controls for sex and family structure. ^a OLS Regression Models. Grade 7 is the omitted category for grade and average-performing students is the omitted category for performance (students in the second and third quartiles of the GPA distribution, which are GPAs between 2.71 and 3.50, mean = 3.15). Poor performance are GPAs < 2.71 (mean = 2.21) and good performance are GPAs > 3.50 (mean = 3.76). N = 2862.

^b Logistic Regression Models. Grade 8 is the omitted category for grade and average-performing students is the omitted category for performance (GPAs between 2.61 and 3.50, mean = 3.10). Poor performance are GPAs < 2.61 (mean = 2.08) and good performance are GPAs > 3.50 (mean = 3.77). N = 1716 (88% of the 8th and 11th grade sample).

†p < .10 * p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

fact, differences between these groups favor blacks. Also, school matriculation has no effect. Horvat and Lewis (2003) introduce a framework that helps reconcile Fordham and Ogbu’s findings with those of this and other studies that show no support for the “acting white” hypothesis. They found students “navigated and negotiated multiple friendship groups within the African American peer group. There were some cases of students modifying or downplaying their academic success . . . [and also] instances in which students share their academic success with peers who are supportive of their academic endeavors.” (Horvat and Lewis 2003:266) Thus, the resistance displayed by some may be conditional on the peers present within a particular setting; they can “camouflage” their success around poor achieving blacks as Fordham and Ogbu (1986) observe, and they can also “discuss freely and receive applause for their academic achievements and aspirations” among high-achieving blacks as Horvat and Lewis find (2003:266).

Hypothesis 5: *The peer groups of black children have a greater counter-educational culture than those of white children.*

The hypothesis that blacks view academic success as “acting white” and negatively sanction high-achieving students suggests they negotiate a social space with a culture counterproductive to academic pursuits. Hypothesis 5

is examined by first assessing whether black students' peers have a negative culture in general (i.e., *negative peer behaviors* and *negative peer values*), which might lead to more opportunities for resisting school. Finally, the extent to which the peers of blacks place a lower value on academics than the peers of whites is examined.

Table 6: Unstandardized Coefficients from Regressions of Peer Behaviors and Values

Ind. Variables	Negative Peer Behaviors ^a				Negative Peer Values (Grade 8 Omitted) ^b			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	1.232*** (.014)	1.063*** (.014)	1.301*** (.055)	1.325*** (.055)	2.515*** (.032)	2.416*** (.038)	2.558*** (.110)	2.561*** (.115)
Black	.031 (.018)	.036* (.017)	.010 (.017)	-.029 (.017)	-.016 (.040)	-.016 (.039)	-.033 (.040)	-.038 (.057)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	.256*** (.021)	.255*** (.021)	.198*** (.032)	—	—	—	—
Grade 11 (G11)	—	.320*** (.021)	.325*** (.021)	.296*** (.031)	—	.200*** (.037)	.202*** (.037)	.196** (.062)
HH Income	—	—	.002 (.003)	.002 (.003)	—	—	.007 (.006)	.007 (.006)
Parental Education	—	—	-.008* (.004)	-.008* (.004)	—	—	-.001 (.007)	-.001 (.007)
<i>Interactions</i>								
Black * G8	—	—	—	.086* (.041)	—	—	—	—
Black * G11	—	—	—	.044 (.040)	—	—	—	.010 (.077)
R ²	.001	.083	.117	.118	.000	.015	.053	.053

Table 6 illustrates black students do not have peers that engage in negative behaviors more than whites after controlling for differences in SES. Furthermore, negative behaviors among peers increase for both groups as they get older ($b = .255$ and $.325$ in Model 3 for grades 8 and 11, respectively), though the increase

Ind. Variables	Positive Peer Values on School ^a				Negative Peer Values on School (Grade 8 Omitted) ^b			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	3.399*** (.022)	3.458*** (.027)	2.798*** (.076)	2.757*** (.079)	2.294*** (.027)	2.281*** (.031)	2.333*** (.101)	2.336*** (.102)
Black	.038 (.027)	.037 (.027)	.089*** (.027)	.152*** (.041)	-.137*** (.034)	-.136*** (.034)	-.143*** (.035)	-.147** (.047)
Grade 8 (G8)	—	-.114*** (.030)	-.125*** (.030)	-.064 (.049)	—	—	—	—
Grade 11 (G11)	—	-.085** (.034)	-.118*** (.033)	-.034 (.054)	—	.027 (.032)	.026 (.032)	.020 (.054)
HH Income	—	—	-.001 (.004)	-.001 (.004)	—	—	.010* (.005)	.010* (.005)
Parental Education	—	—	.029*** (.005)	.029*** (.005)	—	—	-.002 (.007)	-.002 (.007)
<i>Interactions</i>								
Black * G8	—	—	—	-.090 (.061)	—	—	—	—
Black * G11	—	—	—	-.128 [†] (.067)	—	—	—	.009 (.066)
R ²	.001	.005	.074	.075	.009	.009	.032	.032

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. White and grade 7 are the omitted categories for race and grade, respectively. Models 3 and 4 also include controls for sex and family structure. ^a Number of observations is 3171 for negative peer behaviors and 3194 for positive peer values on school. ^b Data not collected in grade 7. As such, the number of observations is 1899 for negative peer values and 1826 for negative peer values on school (97 and 93 percent of the total eighth and eleventh grade sample, respectively). [†] $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

is slightly larger among the peers of blacks ($b = .086$ for black \times G8 in Model 4). However, negative peer behaviors are similar for the groups by grade 11. Negative peer values also increase over time, though there are no group differences.

The findings in the bottom panel of Table 6 are consistent with those in the top panel. Positive peer values on school decline for both groups toward the end of middle school ($b = -.125$ for grade 8 in Model 3) and in grade 11 are still lower than they were in grade 7 ($b = -.118$ for grade 11 in Model 3). Although Model 3 shows blacks' peers have modestly higher positive values toward school after adjusting for SES ($b = .089$), the findings in Model 4 are consistent with the resistance model; the positive values on school decline more over time for the peers of blacks than those of whites ($b = -.128$ for black \times G11 in Model 4). However, results for the final outcome suggest this decline is not synonymous with an increase in negative peer values toward schooling. In addition to having less negative values toward school than the peers of white students ($b = -.137$ in Model 1 and $-.143$ in Model 3), the non-significant interaction term in Model 4 indicates blacks' peers maintain lower levels of negative values on schooling than whites' peers over time. This is consistent with Ferguson's (2001) findings that black students' peers are not more oppositional to achievement than the peers of whites in Shaker Heights, the same community studied by Ogbu (2003).

Discussion

The goal of this study was to provide an extensive quantitative test of Ogbu's oppositional culture theory. Two major findings emerged that have several implications for the study of race and school achievement. First, major tenets of the theory were not supported, which challenges the existence of a pervasive oppositional culture among blacks. It seems the resistance model fails to account for the high degree of variability within this population. Second, maturation after grade 7 had minimal impact on group differences in the outcomes. While Ogbu's theory may hold true for some subgroups of the population, these findings suggest the extent to which the oppositional culture theory explains racial differences in achievement is limited. This raises two primary questions.

1. *Is there an alternative interpretation for the counterproductive schooling behavior by some blacks documented by Ogbu and his colleagues?*

The oppositional culture observed by Ogbu and others (e.g., Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu and Simons 1998; Ogbu 2003) among some blacks might not result from students' perceptions of their prospects within the opportunity structure or from their resentment of the dominant group. Tyson (2002) finds younger children are capable of having deep ambivalence about their relationship to school independent from beliefs about the opportunity structure. In a study of two all-black elementary schools, Tyson (2002:1184) finds "[C]hildren who were experiencing academic failure were more likely to express negative school-related attitudes than children who were not . . . children's negative statements about school reflected a desire to avoid further experiences of failure."

The same might be true regarding schooling behaviors. Congressional testimony by Braddock (1990) warned that children who “suffer a crisis in their academic abilities . . . will begin adopting counterproductive, effort-avoidant strategies.” The narratives of some children in Tyson’s study provide evidence of the onset of this process. Therefore, poor performance early in the schooling process might be partially to blame for the counterproductive schooling behavior observed among some blacks during adolescence, a reverse order of causation than the resistance model suggests. Tyson (2002) raises the question of whether negative (or oppositional) schooling attitudes and behaviors among *some* blacks reflect the masking of feelings such as fear, hurt or embarrassment resulting from prior academic failure and constant negative feedback from school officials about their cultural norms. Furthermore, numerous studies show despite having poor school performance and ineffective schooling behaviors, many black youths desire to learn and become upwardly mobile (e.g., Tyson 2002; Tyson, Darity and Castellino 2005; Carter 2005). Whereas negative attitudes of some blacks might reflect desire to avoid future experiences of failure, ineffective schooling behaviors might reflect deficiencies in skills necessary for academic success rather than lack of desire to learn. The divergence between the current findings and those of Ogbu and his colleagues highlight the importance of separating students’ academic behaviors/results from their academic intent.

2. How can future research add to the existing literature on the resistance model?

Future studies should assess the resistance model among preadolescent children. Most prior studies focus on adolescents because counterproductive schooling behaviors are posited to be heightened during this stage, presumably because adolescents have more developed perceptions of the opportunity structure than younger children. However, although previous quantitative (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1997; 1998) and qualitative studies (O’Connor 1997; Akom 2003; Tyson, Darity, and Castellino 2005; Carter 2005) do not find an oppositional culture to be pervasive among blacks during adolescence, it is possible lack of academic success early in the schooling process leads to poor educational practices prior to adolescence that compromises children’s achievement throughout their academic careers.

Future efforts of data collection should focus on improving the breadth and quality of cultural measures in national datasets. Although the current study quantitatively assesses some nuances of the oppositional culture theory, it should be regarded only as a starting point. Ogbu’s work tended to involve qualitative methods, which perhaps allowed him to solicit experiences and processes current quantitative data cannot. The lack of strong support for Ogbu’s theory in this study suggests perhaps more dynamic quantitative techniques are necessary to find greater explanatory contributions of this theory. Perhaps quantitative researchers can better capture how adolescents process ordinary daily experiences by using more open-ended questions or obtaining respondents’ reactions to descriptions of scenarios they might encounter. Whereas nothing can substitute for the rich information obtained through participant observation, coding such information

would approximate the data gathered via qualitative methods. Also, further collaboration between quantitative and qualitative researchers is necessary.

It is important to note the advantage held by blacks relative to whites on most measures in this study (even prior to adjusting for SES) should not be considered solely positive bias in their response patterns. As Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) eloquently note, determining whether blacks are overestimating or whites are underestimating the value of schooling is a non-resolvable debate. It is quite possible blacks' attribute greater value to schooling than whites because they base their assessments on a more disadvantaged reference group than whites. Furthermore, findings from this study are consistent with other studies that use nationally representative samples to assess racial differences in school resistance (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998), suggesting the patterns observed in this study might be systematic. The decline in youths' favorable attitudes for academics during adolescence found in this study – regardless of race – was also found four decades ago by Coleman (1961) and more recently by Steinberg (1996).

Conclusion

Theories address *why* and *how* things occur and guide social science literature and policy-making. The way problems and their causes are perceived is equally important as (if not more important than) proposed policies. The implications of policy based on theories lacking widespread empirical support can be staggering. For example, in the late 1960s and 70s Jensen suggested a series of proposals for improving black achievement directly following from his theory of black genetic inferiority. He suggested since the basis for the gap was genetic, the gap in inherent intelligence could not be closed. Instead, Jensen (1969:112-17) proposed black children should be educated through special forms of classroom instructional techniques that emphasize associative learning (e.g., memorization or rote learning, trial-and-error learning).

Despite work by numerous scholars challenging the notion that an oppositional culture is prevalent among blacks (O'Connor 1997; Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998; Akom 2003; Tyson 2002; Tyson, Darity and Castellino 2005; Carter 2005), the theory remains popular among researchers, educational practitioners, and the general public. For example, in *The Content of our Character* (1990:51) Shelby Steele sternly asserts even in the very worst schools "there are accredited teachers who teach the basics, but too often to students who shun those among them who do well, who see studying as a sucker's game and school itself as a waste of time. One sees in many of these children almost a determination not to learn, a suppression of the natural impulse to understand, which cannot be entirely explained by the determinism of poverty." More recently, John McWhorter (2000:28) argued blacks suffer from a culture of "self sabotage" that "condones weakness and failure." However, treating the theory as an overriding explanation for racial differences in achievement might lead policymakers to narrowly conceive of the gap's causes and assume convergence is unlikely because blacks refuse to learn.

The current study's lack of support for many of the theory's major tenets suggests blacks' lower school performance should be open to alternative

explanations. Given the current findings (and those reported by O'Connor 1997; Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998; Akom 2003; Tyson 2002; Tyson, Darity, and Castellino 2005; Carter 2005), researchers and policy makers should reconsider the extent to which they attribute blacks' lower school achievement to lower levels of desire for success. Evidence suggests black youths want to learn; they simply are not acquiring skills necessary for academic success.

Notes

1. I use the term black to refer to people of African Diaspora, and to such populations residing within the United States.
2. Previous studies employ the term "black" when racial comparisons are made on academic outcomes within the United States (e.g., black-white achievement gap). However, not all blacks have the same minority status within Ogbu's minority classification scheme (Ogbu and Simons 1998). Whereas African Americans are involuntary minorities, immigrant blacks (e.g., Caribbean Americans) are voluntary minorities – groups who willingly move to the United States seeking better opportunities (e.g., employment, greater political or religious freedom). They have no history of being oppressed by white Americans and are more trusting of them and their institutions for upward mobility. For further discussion on characteristics of black immigrants, see Waters (1999), who documents differences between African Americans and immigrant blacks from the West Indies.
3. Although Ogbu (1978) extends the resistance model to Latino/as, they are excluded from this study. Ogbu claims Mexican Americans – who comprise nearly two-thirds of the Hispanics living in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau 2000) – also feel alienated from American society because of bitter memories of their incorporation into the United States via American imperialistic expansion in the 1840s. However, roughly 50,000 Mexican nationals remained within the newly acquired U.S. territory, a small fraction of the more than 20 million people of Mexican Ancestry currently living in the United States; most Mexican Americans are immigrants or descendants of immigrants who arrived after the Mexican revolution of 1910 (see Jaffe, Cullen and Boswell 1980). Despite often being regarded as the largest oppressed minority group within the United States, almost all Latino/a children in American schools derive from voluntary immigration. Ogbu's classification of this group as involuntary minorities is highly implausible (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 2003).
4. It is important to note Downey and Ainsworth-Darnell (2002) were replying to Farkas, Lleras and Maczuga (2002), who provided a retest of the "acting white" hypothesis conducted earlier by Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998).
5. The resistance model was developed with reference to high school students. A key component of the theory is that school resistance

results from perceptions of an unfair opportunity structure. Connections between societal conditions (e.g., structure of opportunities and system of social mobility) and individual-level characteristics (e.g., race) are more developed during adolescence. Nevertheless, Tyson's (2002) work informs us younger children are capable of having deep ambivalence about their relationship to school.

6. Table 7 serves as a further check for attrition bias. The first three columns for each group shows the seventh grade mean on the 24 outcomes in this study for the full sample, the retained sample (i.e., students present in the final wave), and the attrited sample (i.e., students not in the final wave). The difference between the retained and full sample is shown in Column 2-1. There are no significant differences on any of the outcomes between the retained and full samples for both groups. Furthermore, Column 3-2 – which is informative in determining who attrites – indicates students who attrited from the sample do not differ from those who did not attrite on most outcomes. Relative to blacks retained in the sample, those who attrited had lower educational aspirations and expectations, affect toward school, and greater negative behaviors among their peers. However, with the exception of affect toward school, these differences also exist among whites, indicating group differences on these outcomes over time are not likely due to attrition bias. With regard to white students, those who attrited had lower perceptions of educational returns, spent less time on educational activities, and skip school and were in trouble more than those who did not attrite. The bias on these outcomes favors whites; in the current analyses, the retained black sample – which does not differ on these outcomes from their attrited counterparts – is being compared to the retained white sample which fairs better on these outcomes than their attrited counterparts.

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Appendix

Table 7: Seventh Grade Mean on Outcomes for Full, Retained and Attrited Sample by Race

Outcomes	Whites						Blacks			
	Full (1)	Retained (2)	Attrited (3)	Differences (2-1)	Differences (3-2)	Full (1)	Retained (2)	Attrited (3)	Differences (2-1)	Differences (3-2)
<i>Hypothesis 1</i>										
Return to Education	4.18	4.22	4.09	.04	-.13*	4.29	4.30	4.26	.01	-.04
Educational Aspirations	7.57	7.67	7.35	.10	-.32*	7.67	7.75	7.51	.08	-.24*
Educational Expectations	6.89	7.02	6.61	.13	-.41**	6.78	6.91	6.52	.13	-.39*
Limited Educ. Opportunity	.69	.66	.74	-.03	.08	.90	.85	.99	-.05	.14
<i>Hypothesis 2</i>										
Affect Toward School	3.69	3.71	3.65	.02	-.06	3.75	3.78	3.69	.03	-.09*
Attend to Enjoy Classes	4.24	4.25	4.23	.01	-.02	4.65	4.67	4.61	.02	-.06
Attend b/c have to	4.87	4.92	4.78	.05	-.14	4.96	4.95	4.97	-.01	.02
<i>Hypothesis 3</i>										
Seek Help	3.07	3.07	3.07	.00	.00	3.14	3.17	3.08	.03	-.09
Time on School Act./Club	1.44	1.55	1.19	.11	-.36	1.42	1.38	1.52	-.04	.14
Time on Homework	4.92	4.92	4.94	.00	.02	4.92	4.97	4.82	.05	-.15
Time in Educational Act.	2.84	2.90	2.69	.06	-.21*	2.88	2.91	2.83	.03	-.08
Skip School/Cut Classes	1.14	1.10	1.22	-.04	.12**	1.13	1.11	1.16	-.02	.05
In Trouble ^a	.25	.19	.53	-.06	.34**	.65	.64	.72	-.01	.08
Importance of Acad. Act	5.27	5.26	5.30	-.01	.04	5.61	5.60	5.62	-.01	.02
Importance of Sports	4.36	4.37	4.33	.01	-.04	4.38	4.34	4.47	-.04	.13

Table 7 continued

<i>Hypothesis 4</i>											
Good Grade = Acting White	—	—	—	—	—	.17	.16	.19	-.01	.03	
Making Friends	5.09	5.06	5.15	-.03	.09	5.53	5.54	5.52	.01	-.02	
Trouble with Peers	1.95	1.97	1.89	.02	-.08	1.96	1.93	2.03	-.03	.10	
Popularity	4.21	4.14	4.36	-.07	.22	4.76	4.69	4.91	-.07	.22	
Number of Friends ^a	.75	.74	.79	-.01	.05	.78	.80	.73	.02	-.07	
<i>Hypothesis 5</i>											
Negative Peer Behaviors	1.09	1.06	1.17	-.03	.11**	1.08	1.07	1.11	-.01	.04*	
Negative Peer Values ^a	2.41	2.39	2.52	-.02	.13	2.40	2.39	2.46	-.01	.07	
Positive Peer Val. (School)	3.41	3.44	3.34	.03	-.10	3.52	3.54	3.48	.02	-.06	
Negative Peer Val. (School) ^a	2.28	2.26	2.38	-.02	.12	2.15	2.12	2.24	-.03	.12	
N =	469	325	144			938	629	309			

^aData not collected in grade 7. Values are eighth grade means.

*p < .05 **p < .01 (two-tailed tests)