

Role Conflict and Black Underachievement

Paul C. Mocombe

West Virginia State University, Institute, West Virginia, USA

Abstract: Examining the social attitudes and practical consciousness of young black American youth through an analysis of the 1999 rap song, *Bling bling*, by the Hot Boyz, in this work, I review the oppositional culture hypothesis as it pertains to the black/white achievement gap, describe the current debate, and reinterpret the hypothesis within a structural functional reading that focuses on the social functional role that black underachievement plays for black youth in the American social structure of inequality. To this end, I argue that the achievement gap is a result of the role conflict brought about by the American postindustrial capitalist social structure of class inequality, rather than a racial or cultural understanding, “burden-of-acting-white,” of group belonging. **Key Words:** ideological domination, linguistic structure, capitalism, underclass, underachievement, black americans, white/black achievement gap

Introduction

Traditional environmental theories, building on the cultural-ecological approach of John Ogbu, have argued that blacks, given their racial marginalization within the socioeconomic social structure of American capitalist society, either developed an oppositional social “identity-in-differential” that defined “certain activities, events, symbols, and meanings as not appropriate for them because those behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings are characteristic of white Americans” (Fordham and Ogbu 1986: 181), or that such an “underclass” identity stemmed from a “culture of poverty” that devalued educational attainment (Jencks and Phillips, 1998: 10). This thesis has come to be known in the social science literature as the oppositional culture thesis (Gordon, 2006; Tyson et al, 2005; Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey, 1998, 2002; Cook and Ludwig 1998; Wilson, 1998; Farkas et al, 2002; Steele, 1997; Ogbu, 1991). Both positions, essentially, argue that the choice between exercising a black cultural ethos and striving for academic success diametrically oppose one another. Further goes the argument, this role strain or conflict contributes to underachievement among black adolescent students vis-à-vis their white counterparts who do not encounter this cultural opposition because it follows that black students must conceal their academic prowess in order to be accepted by their black adolescent peers. Black students intentionally underachieve for fear of being labeled “acting white” by their black adolescent peers.

This “burden of acting white” hypothesis is problematic in that in spite of countless programs, after-school and mentoring programs offered throughout the nation to help black American youth close the achievement gap based on Ogbu’s hypothesis, black American students significantly continue to underachieve vis-à-vis their white counterparts. Nationally, just 12% of African-American 4th graders have reached proficient or advanced reading levels, while 61% have yet to reach the basic level. In a national assessment of student reading ability, black children scored 16% below white children. Forty-six percent of black adults, compared with 14% of white adults,

scored in the lowest category of the National Adult Literacy survey. The results indicate that blacks have more limited skills in processing information from articles, books, tables, charts, and graphs compared with their white counterparts (Gordon, 2006, p. 32). More perplexing, the students who lose the most ground are the higher-achieving black children. “As black students move through elementary and middle school...the test-score gaps that separate them from their better-performing white counterparts grow fastest among the most able students and the most slowly for those who start out with below-average academic skills” (Viadero, 2008, p. 1).

Highlighting the linguistic structure and social functions of young black youth through a brief content analysis of the 1999 rap song, *Bling bling*, by the Hot Boyz, in this work, I review the oppositional culture hypothesis, describe the current debate, and offer an alternative critical (structural) reinterpretation of the burden of acting white hypothesis vis-à-vis the aforementioned data, which explains this persistence of underachievement in the face of programs, after-school and mentoring programs, intent on promoting black achievement. This critical analysis is a social structural reading that focuses on the social functional role that black underachievement plays for black youth in the American capitalist social structure of class inequality. To this end, I posit that the achievement gap more so speaks to the role conflict brought about by the American postindustrial capitalist social structure of class inequality, rather than a racial or cultural understanding of group belonging.

The basic premise of this critical argument, in other words, is that the “burden of acting white” hypothesis is not entirely inaccurate; it is theoretically simply outdated and uncritical. As such, for a more valid, contemporary, and critical interpretation of its manifestation among black American students in k-12 grades, it needs to be reinterpreted from its mid-twentieth century emphasis on racial and cultural basis to a more relevant social structural reading. That is, the hypothesis represents a structural functional manifestation of the class interest of the black underclass as a sociolinguistic status group in the larger American class social structure of inequality as opposed to a racial or cultural indication of African American group belonging as John Ogbu is suggesting.

As black students matriculate through school systems and become adolescents, their underachievement vis-à-vis whites and lack of effort or concern should not be interpreted as a fear of “acting white.” Instead, it should be interpreted as the social functional disconnect black adolescent students perceive between education and economic success amongst the American class status group, the black underclass in urban inner cities. Education and high achievement are marginalized by this status group, constituted by gangsters, rappers, athletes, and entertainers, because other means not associated with education, such as sports, hip-hop culture, drug dealing and other illegal activities appear to be more viable means or social roles to economic gain or success, status, and upward mobility in the society for blacks. This role conflict is reinforced in much of the media and popular culture to which these students have access (Mocombe, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010). Whereas, Fordham and Ogbu argued that their informants said they attempted to downplay their abilities for fear of being labeled white and used alternative strategies, such as participating in sports, music, or playing the class clown, to camouflage their abilities. These strategies, I am suggesting here in my structural reinterpretation of Ogbu’s hypothesis, should be interpreted as arising from “a mismatch in linguistic social functions,” doing all things black as defined by the black underclass in order to obtain status, popularity, and subsequent economic gain in the larger American postindustrial class social structure

of inequality over the educational avenue of the black American professional middle and upper-middle classes.

This social (structural) functional reinterpretation of the burden of acting white hypothesis contributes to the current debate on the achievement gap in one significant way. Few qualitative studies addressing this problem have focused on the capitalist “social structure of inequality” affecting black achievement (Wilson, 1998: 503). Hermeneutically, in my structural reinterpretation of Ogbu’s hypothesis I attempt to draw a connection between the class stratification in black America and the affects the black underclass as a sociolinguistic status group in that system has on black achievement generally by highlighting the linguistic structure and values of young black Americans as revealed by and through the 1999 rap song *Bling bling* by the Hot Boyz who I use here as a representative of the class elite of the black underclass, which in turn influence black youth in America and throughout the globe. This interpretive exercise, by focusing on the language and agential initiatives of the group as a representative of the black underclass as a status group within the American postindustrial class social structure of inequality, permits greater attention to the potential social functional influence of the American class social structure on black achievement without being too deterministic. It reinterprets the burden of acting white hypothesis as more a “mismatch of linguistic (social class) functions,” role conflict, as opposed to an oppositional cultural worldview. Black adolescent students come to devalue education within the American postindustrial class social structure of inequality not because of cultural or racial peer pressure, but because social functionally they view, and are rewarded for, other means, or social roles, not associated with education as key to economic success, status, and upward mobility in the larger American postindustrial class social structure of inequality. This role conflict within the American postindustrial capitalist social structure of inequality future research should explore as the underlying basis for the perpetuation of the black/white achievement gap amidst constant efforts, head start programs, after-school tutoring, etc., implemented to seek parity.

Black Underachievement in the American Postindustrial Capitalist Social Structure of Inequality

As many globalization theorists of the postmodernist variety have demonstrated (Bell, 1976; Harvey, 1989; Giddens, 1990; Jameson, 1991; Arrighi, 1994; Sklair, 2001; Kellner, 2001) contemporary (1970 to the present) economic conditions in America are no longer characterized or driven by the industrial means for accumulating capital, which dominated the social relations of production of the last one hundred years, instead, the present globalization condition is driven-by, post-industrialism (consumerism)—the new means for accumulating capital—, and in such “developed” societies like the U.S., is characterized not by the industrial organization of labor, but rather by capitalist service occupations catering to the consumerist demands of a dwindling (transnational) middle class.

The rate of economic gain for its own sake or profit has fallen in industrial production due to labor laws and ecological cost in developed postindustrial countries like the US; hence the practice now among investors operating out of the US is on financial expansion “in which ‘over-accumulated’ capital switches from investments in production and trade, to investments in finance, property titles, and other claims on future income” (Trichur, 2005: 165). Globally, the economic bifurcation defining this current conjuncture is characterized, on the one hand, by an expansion or outsourcing of industrial production into developing or periphery and semi-periphery countries

(China, Brazil, Mexico, India, and South Africa), where the rate of labor exploitation has risen given their lack of labor laws; and, on the other, consumerism of cheaply produced goods and high-end service occupations has come to dominate (postindustrial) developed societies (US, Western Europe, Japan, and Australia).

Be that as it may, economically and socially, the major emphasis among governing elites in this US dominated global economy or social relation of production has been participation or integration of cultural “others” (specifically “hybrids”) into the existing configuration of power relations in order to accumulate profits by servicing the diverse financial wants and entertainment needs of commodified cultural groups, throughout the globe. A select few (Leslie Sklair’s transnational capitalist class) live a “bourgeois” middle and upper middle class lifestyle at the expense of the masses working in low-wage agricultural, manufacturing, and production jobs or not at all given the transfer of these jobs overseas to lesser developing countries.

American blacks, as interpellated (workers) and embourgeois agents of the American postindustrial capitalist social structure of inequality, represent the most modern (i.e. socialized) people of color, in terms of their “practical consciousness,” in this process of homogenizing social actors as agents of the protestant ethic or disciplined workers working for owners of production in order to obtain economic gain, status, and upward mobility in the larger American society (Frazier, 1957; Wilson, 1978; Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Mocombe, 2009). They constitute the American social space in terms of their relation to the means of production in post-industrial capitalist America, which differentiates black America for the most part into two status groups, a dwindling middle and upper class (living in suburbia) that numbers about 25 percent of their population (13 percent) and obtain their status as doctors, athletes, entertainers, lawyers, teachers, and other high-end professional service occupations; and a growing segregated “black underclass” of unemployed and under-employed wage-earners, gangsters, rappers, and athletes occupying poor inner-city communities and schools focused solely on technical skills, multicultural education, athletics, and test-taking for social promotion given the relocation (outsourcing) of industrial and manufacturing jobs to poor periphery and semi-periphery countries and the introduction of low-end post-industrial service jobs and a growing informal economy in American urban-cities. Consequently, the poor performance of black American students, vis-à-vis whites, in education as an ideological apparatus for this post-industrial capitalist sociolinguistic worldview leaves them disproportionately in this growing underclass of laborers, rappers, gangsters, athletes, and entertainers at the bottom of the American class social structure of inequality unable to either transform their world as they encounter it, or truly exercise their embourgeoisement given their lack of, what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1973, 1984) refers to as, capital (cultural, social, economic, and political).⁴⁷

Ironically, contrary to John Ogbu’s burden of acting white hypothesis, it is due to their indigent (pathological-pathogenic) structural position within the American

⁴⁷ Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of social reproduction refers to several forms of “capital” (cultural, economic, symbolic, and social). I will not go into details about Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory, what I will say, however, is that the “capital” references refer to the institutional norms, resources, connections, etc. that one needs in their respective societies’ to participate in its cultural, economic, symbolic, and social life. Bourdieu posits that the possession of, for the most part, middle class “capital” is assumed by the educational system in contemporary society, but is not taught. Thus, education theorists (i.e., James Coleman), who have operationalized Bourdieu’s concept, conclude, poor students enter school at a disadvantage (i.e., they lack “middle class capital”), which leads to their “poor” achievement.

capitalist social structure of inequality, as opposed to a differing or oppositional cultural ethos from that of the latter, as to the reason why black American school children underachieve vis-à-vis their white counterparts. The theoretical position here is that the majority of black American school students underachieve in school in general and on standardized test in particular, vis-à-vis their white counterparts, not because they possess or are taught (by their peers) at an early age distinct normative cultural values from that of the dominant group of owners and high-level executives in the social structure that transfer into cultural and political conflict in the classroom as an ideological apparatus for these capitalists. To the contrary, black American students underachieve in school because in acquiring the “verbal behavior” of the dominant powers of the social structure in segregated “poor” gentrified inner-city communities which lack good legal jobs and affordable resources that have been outsourced by capital overseas (outsourcing), the majority, who happen to be less educated in the “Standard English” of the society, have reinforced a linguistic (Black English Vernacular) community or status group of rappers, athletes, and entertainers, the black underclass, as the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for black America, which have been commodified by finance capital to accumulate surplus-value in their postindustrial economy (Mocombe, 2006, 2011).

It is this “mismatch of linguistic social class function,” role conflict, the ideals of middle class black and white bourgeois America against the perceived “pathologies” (functions) of the black underclass as a sociolinguistic status group in the American postindustrial class social structure of inequality, Ogbu and other post-segregationist black middle-class scholars inappropriately label, “acting-white,” “culture of poverty,” or oppositional culture. Blacks are not concealing their academic prowess and abilities when they focus, and defer their efforts, on athletics, music, entertainment, etc. for fear of acting white as Ogbu suggests. They are focusing on racially coded socioeconomic actions or roles commodified in the larger American postindustrial capitalist social structure of inequality that are more likely to lead to economic gain, status, prestige, and upward mobility in the society as defined for, and by, the black underclass financed by finance capital.

The black underclass in America’s ghettos has slowly become, since the 1980s, with the financialization of hip-hop culture by record labels such as Sony and others, athletics, and the entertainment industry the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for the black community in America. Their language and worldview as constituted through hip-hop culture, athletics and the entertainment industry financed by finance capital, has become the means by which black youth (and youth throughout the world) attempt to recursively organize and reproduce their material resource framework against the purposive-rationality of black bourgeois or middle class America. The upper-class of owners and high-level executives of the American dominated capitalist world-system have capitalized on this through the commodification of black underclass culture. This is further supported by an American media and popular culture that glorifies athletes, entertainers, and the “Bling bling,” wealth, diamonds, cars, jewelry, and money. Hence the aim of blacks in the society is no longer to seek status, economic gain, and upward mobility through a Protestant Ethic that stresses hard work, diligence, deferred gratification, and education; on the contrary, sports, music, instant gratification, illegal activities (drug dealing), and skimming are the dominant means portrayed for their efforts through the entertainment industry financed by post-industrial capital. Schools throughout urban inner cities are no longer seen as means to a professional end in order to obtain economic gain, status, and upward mobility, but obstacles to that end because it

delays gratification and is not correlative with the means associated with economic success and upward mobility in black urban America. More black students want to become, football and basketball players, rappers and entertainers, like many of their role models who were raised in their environment and obtained economic gain and upward mobility that way, over doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc., the social functions associated with the status symbol of the black and white middle class of the civil rights generation. Hence the end and social action remains the same, economic success, status, and upward economic mobility, only the means to that end have shifted with the rise of the black underclass as the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination in black America given the commodification of hip-hop culture and their high visibility in the media and charitable works through basketball and football camps and rap concerts, which reinforce the aforementioned activities as viable means to wealth and status in the society's postindustrial economy, which focuses on services and entertainment for the world's transnational bourgeois class as the mode of producing surplus-value.

This linguistic and ideological domination and the ends of the power elites (rappers, athletes, gangsters) of the black underclass, mismatch of linguistic structure and social function, which brings about the role conflict Ogbu interprets as the burden of acting white, are clearly demonstrated in the lyrics of the 1999 hit song "*Bling bling*" by the young rap group, Hot Boyz. The group, rappers, are a representative of the power elites of the black underclass, the language of the track is indicative of the language in the inner cities, and the title of the track in the popular culture has come to signify the "shine," i.e., bourgeois living status, "ballin," associated with "the street life," i.e., diamonds ("ice"), money, gold, women, cars ("bus"), rims on cars, and the finer things that the mainstream society has to offer as a sign of economic gain, status, prestige, and upward economic mobility for young black folk. The song and the interpretation of some of the lyrics are reproduced below. Essentially, the song highlights and glorifies the "Bling bling," wealth, women, jewelry, diamonds, nightlife, and cars these young rappers from the ghettos of Louisiana have attained through rapping and the street life:

Verse One: Baby

Nigga I got these hoes [(women)] iced [(diamonded)] up enough
 While my lil B.G.'s [(gang)] on the bus [(cars)] puttin out cigarette butts
 But me personally playboy I don't give a fuck
 And I'ma always show love to my cut [(gang)]
 Hit the club light tha bitch up
 The Cash Money motto we got to drank til we throw up
 Nigga point the hoe out guaranteed I can fuck
 Wootay I'm tattooed and barred up
 Medallion iced up (diamonded), Rolex bezelled [(diamonded)] up
 And my pinky ring is platinum plus
 Earrings be trillion cut
 And my grill (gold teeth) be slugged up (gold and diamonded up)
 My heart filled with anger cause nigga I don't give a fuck
 Cause one day I'm a give this street life up

Stack my chesse up Beef I don't discuss
 A nigga outta line gone get his motherfuckin head bust
 Cash Money Millionaires plus

Don't touch sum'in nigga you can't fuck
Twenty inches TV is a must
By the year two thousand I'm gut out my bus (car)

Verse Two: Lil' Turk

A lil nigga seventeen playin (making) with six figures
Got so much ice (diamonds) you can skate on a nigga
When you see cash money you know you stay flossin
Catch cha girl down bad ya know we straight tossin
I aint seen a click yet that can stunt like mine
I aint seen a marette that can run like mine
1999, and it's our turn to shine
Fifty or better on our wrist and they all blind
Pourin vodka til I die drank til I faint
Til a nigga tell me I need another drank
My nigga Baby told me work nigga trick to them hoes
Nigga Baby told me work nigga better than treatin yo nose
I'm the freak of the click
Keep it on the tuck so I creep on a bitch
And I play it on the raw never sleep with a bitch
Keep it real with my niggaz
Never weep for a bitch

(Chorus) Lil' Wayne 2#

Bling bling
Everytime I come around yo city
Bling bling
Pinky ring worth about fifty
Bling bling
Everytime I buy a new ride
Bling bling
Lorenzos on Yokahama tires
Bling bling

Verse Three: Manny Fresh

It's the nigga with tha Lex bubble
Candy coated helicopter with tha leather cover
If ya suckin' not fuckin' take off the rubber
Then toss that bitch nigga cause I don't love her
Balla, Manny bought a private plane
Then turned around and sold that bitch to Juve and Wayne
They put 30 inch lorenzos on that thang man
I know you niggaz out there just don't understand

Verse Four: Juvenile

I'm a 1999 driver
I'm a uptown third ward magnolia T.C. driver
Ole ignorant ass always touchin
Big ballin ass nigga you can see him when he comin
Booted up, diamond up

Golds be shinnin' up
Muthafuckas be blindin' up
Niggas at the second line be sayin, "I'll be damned"
Up in they best fits sayin, "Juve got me damn"

(Chorus) 2x
Bling bling
Everytime I come around yo city
Bling bling
Pinky ring worth about fifty
Bling bling
Everytime I buy a new ride
Bling bling
Lorenzos on Yokahama tires
Bling bling

Verse Five: B.G.
I be that nigga with the ice on me
If it cost less than twenty it don't look right on me
I stay flossed out all through the week
My money long if you don't know I'm the B.G.
I be fuckin niggaz bitches all in they home
Niggaz be like, "Look at that Benz on all that chrome"
Diamonds worn by everybody thats in my click
Man I got the price of a mansion 'round my neck and wrist
My nigga Baby gettin' a special built machine
A Mercedes Benz 700 B-14
I know you niggaz can't believe that
I can't wait to see ya haters face when ya see that
Man look at that
Niggaz wear shades just to stand on side of me
Folks say take that chain off boy ya blindin me
All day my phone ringin bling bling bling
Can see my earring from a mile bling bling

(Chorus) 2x
Bling bling
Everytime I come around yo city
Bling bling
Pinky ring worth about fifty
Bling bling
Everytime I buy a new ride
Bling bling
Lorenzos on Yokahama tires
Bling bling⁴⁸

⁴⁸ The term "Bling bling" was made popular in 1999 by the rapper BG and his rap group Hot Boyz, who coined the term in the rap of the same title to explain the shine, i.e., "bling," that is associated with having money, diamonds, and women. As a result of its number one status in 1999 and 2000, the term

The “Bling bling,” i.e., bravado, women, diamonds, nice cars, jewelry, helicopters, money, etc., associated with Rapping, hustling, etc., highlighted in the song represent the desires of the young Louisiana artists for wealth and status in the society, just as it represents the desires (American Dream) of middle class older black and white Americans. However, whereas, for older middle class black and white Americans the means to “Bling bling,” or the American Dream is through education and obtaining a professional job, Rapping, hustling, sports, etc., for younger black Americans growing up in gentrified inner-cities throughout the US, where industrial work has disappeared, represent the means (not education) to the status position of “Bling bling” that has, “A lil nigga seventeen playin with six figures” (a young black male seventeen years of age making six figures). So what I am suggesting here is that black youth, like the Hot Boyz, are not “acting white” when education no longer becomes a priority or the means to economic gain, status, and upward mobility, as they get older and consistently underachieve vis-à-vis whites; they are attempting to be white and achieve bourgeois economic status (the “Bling bling” of cars, diamonds, gold, helicopters, money, etc.) in the society by being “black,” speaking Ebonics, rapping, playing sports, hustling, etc., in a racialized post-industrial capitalist social structure wherein the economic status of “blackness” is (over) determined by the white capitalists class of owners and high-level executives and the black proletariats of the West, the black underclass, whose way of life and image (“athletes, hustlers, hip-hopsters”) has been commodified (by white and black capitalists) and distributed throughout the world for entertainment, (black) status, and economic purposes in post-industrial capitalist America.

Hence, the social structure of class (not racial or cultural worldview) inequality that characterizes the American social environment is subsequently the relational variable that social functionally perpetuates the individual underachievement of black students in the society. In essence the suggestion here is that blacks do not have an oppositional culture to the larger American mainstream end of economic upward mobility and status; quite the reverse, they are more individualistically and economically in tuned with the desires (“Bling bling”) of the American creed of the Protestant work ethic, status, economic gain, and upward economic mobility, only their means to the aforementioned ends are different in America’s service and entertainment postindustrial economy.

The “Burden of Acting White” Hypothesis

The oppositional culture thesis posits that black adolescent students intentionally underachieve in school in general and on standardize tests in particular for fear of being stereotyped white by their black peers. Black adolescent students fear being labeled white, and therefore do not apply themselves to academically succeed or achieve as white students do. As William Julius Wilson (1998) observed, the thesis is the product of the theorization of theorists from opposite sides of the political spectrum who account for the opposition in black America by emphasizing different “individual-levels of analysis,” attributes of individuals versus that of their social situations (502).

has found its way in the lexicon of the popular culture to connote wealth and the shine associated with it.

“Acting white,” “Oreo,” “Uncle Tom,” and “incognegroes,” among black Americans, these terms are used in reference to blacks whose activities and attitudes are considered to be the cultural practices and attitudes of white Americans (Tatum, 1997; Steele, 1997). Although the cultural practices and attitudes considered to be “white” vary by geographic region, social class, and age, for the most part the list of these practices, preferences, and attitudes are constant: skiing; playing sports such as basketball, football, and track rather than hockey, swimming, or fencing; listening to heavy metal and rock music as opposed to rap and rhythm and blues; speaking Standard English rather than Ebonics or Black English Vernacular; and dressing in clothes from the Gap or Abercrombie and Fitch rather than Tommy Hilfiger, FUBU, Timberlands, and Lugz (Neal Barnett, 2001; Bergin and Cooks, 2002; Tatum, 1997). These practices, preferences, and attitudes are class-based notions that juxtapose black “underclass” cultural norms against the cultural practices of upper-middle-class whites. In fact, the term, “acting white,” and its variant forms, are used to put down blacks who think or act like upper-middle-class whites. Beginning in the 1960s, conservative theorists, who invoked the decline of the family to explain social problems, suggested that these terms were the product of the black underclass which had a “culture of poverty,” a cultural milieu in many inner-city black American communities that is characterized by fatalism, resignation, idleness, instant gratification, episodic violence, and anti-school norms, which is antithetical to (the middle-class values) school achievement, the protestant work ethic, the two-parent family, the value of property, and self-reliance, and tends to be passed on between generations (Sowell, 1975, 1981; Murray, 1984; Steele, 1997; Jencks and Phillips, 1998; Wilson, 1998). The acclaimed black public intellectual, Shelby Steele, in his 1990 book *The Content of Our Character* summarized this conservative position: “The middle-class values by which we [middle-class blacks] were raised—the work ethic, the importance of education, the value of property ownership, of ‘getting ahead,’ of stable family life, of initiative, of self-reliance, et cetera—are, in themselves, raceless and even assimilationist...But the particular pattern of racial identification that emerged in the sixties and still prevails today urges middle-class blacks (and all blacks) in the opposite direction” (96).

The Nigerian anthropologist John Ogbu (1978) turned this conservative argument towards liberalism linking it to oppression. Instead of blaming the individual or their culture for pathological-pathogenic habits, values, etc. that are antithetical to the folklore of American middle-class values, Ogbu emphasized social factors, racial oppression and discrimination, as the cause for the pathological-pathogenic cultural habits, values, styles, preferences, etc. Ogbu suggested that all caste-like minorities throughout the world developed an oppositional identity to the cultural practices of their oppressors so as to shield and protect their cultural identity. Ogbu, in fact, argued that it is because of their “cultural inversion” or oppositional cultural ethos, which resulted from the history of discrimination and limited opportunities in the United States, as to why black American adolescents disparage education and underachieve in school vis-à-vis white Americans (1994: 274). Black Americans value education less than other groups in American society because they associate academic success and achievement with “acting white.” White Americans view educational pursuits and high achievement as key to upward socioeconomic mobility, black adolescent Americans equate learning Standard English and academic achievement “with linear acculturation, which is threatening to their culture/language, identity, and sense of security” (Ogbu, 1994: 275).

Ogbu's position has come to dominate the black/white achievement gap debate. Drawing on interviews, surveys, and narratives of academically successful black students from one predominantly black urban high school in Washington DC, Ogbu, along with his coauthor Signithia Fordham (1986), concluded that the larger black community phenomenon of "acting white" has also come to be used in terms of academic performance and achievement, black adolescent students viewed being in honors or advance placement classes and overall academic success as "acting white." Although none of the informants in the study used the term, Fordham and Ogbu concluded that "acting white" was part of an oppositional peer culture constructed by black Americans in response to their history of enslavement, social inequality, and discrimination (183). Black adolescent students do not value academic achievement because it does not payoff for them in the larger society, and it is perceived to be practices and attitudes of white Americans. Consequently, among black students, not only are the black authenticity of academically capable black students called into question by their peers, but the choice between representing an authentic black culture and "acting white" contributes to their relatively low academic achievement and success vis-à-vis white American students. Because of the oppositional peer culture within the black minority community, there is a lack of effort to succeed academically, which leads to black underachievement and the problem of the black/white achievement gap (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Herbert, 2003; Weissert, 1999; McWhorter, 2000).⁴⁹

Assessment of the "Burden of Acting White"

Regardless of the mix and conflicting results reported in the social science literature, the hypothesis that the experience of being ridiculed because of high achievement as the locus of causality for black underachievement and the black/white achievement gap has become a dominant theme in American school systems despite the fact that it does not fully explain the achievement gap (Wilson, 1998: 502). First, the thesis overlooks a glaring methodological and interpretive fallacy. Although the position explains the reason for the lack of black effort from middle through high school among black adolescent students, it does not, however, account for the empirically valid achievement gap between whites and blacks, which precede those years. That is, although the thesis may explain why black adolescent students are not making more effort to catch up with whites, it does not seem to explain why cognitively blacks, from the onset of their schooling and testing experiences, are unintentionally behind their white counterparts (Jencks and Phillips, 1998: 34). Finally, the hypothesis, social structurally, fails to explain why and how the perception of representing an authentic "black" self pays off for those who claim it. It fails, in other words, to answer why "acting black" and underachieving become positive perceptions to start with in an American postindustrial capitalist social structure of inequality that is for the most part differentiated along class lines. The conservative culture of poverty position simply posits that the perceptions and preferences of black students are individual and cultural values, attitudes, habits, and styles that are antithetical to school, black middle class, and American mainstream norms and therefore leads to black American underachievement. The liberal take of Ogbu simply inverts the conservative argument by arguing that the cultural values,

⁴⁹ Retrieved from the world wide web
<http://www.lyrics007.com/B.G%20Lyrics/Bling%20Bling%20Lyrics.html>

habits, attitudes, and styles are the product of social factors, discrimination, racial oppression, inadequate schools, etc., and not individual or cultural preferences. “This ideological split,” as William Julius Wilson (1998) suggests, “results in incomplete analyses of the influence of the environment on social behavior” (503). That is to say, “[t]he evidence they produce reveals the powerful influence of the environment in maintaining the black-white test score gap. However, a good deal of the gap remains unexplained by the measures they use”, because the frameworks emphasize “individual-level analysis,”...“a study of social inequality that focuses on the different attributes of individuals (gender, race, human capital, psychological traits) or their social situations (the schools they attend, the industries in which they are employed, the social networks of which they are a part)” (502). Hence, “collective outcomes (e.g., racial differences in poverty) are derived entirely from individual effects...,” which makes “it difficult if not impossible to consider empirically the impact of the social structure of inequality on racial group social outcomes, including the impact of relational, organizational, and collective processes” (502-503).

This essay attempts to provide an answer to this relational problem by positing a social functional reading of the burden of acting white hypothesis, which seeks to answer, relationally, why and how the perception of failing and acting black amongst black adolescents is a positive perception that pays off for them in the larger American social structure of inequality at the expense of achieving and acting white. In the final analysis, in other words, the work seeks to reinterpret the burden of acting white hypothesis by highlighting the dominant social structural roles, athletes and entertainers, blacks play within the American postindustrial capitalist social structure of inequality, and the subsequent social psychological impact of these roles on black achievement. This differs from Ogbu’s position in that my focus is on accounting for the class issue Ogbu’s racial or cultural position overlooks or attributes to race. Ogbu by emphasizing the racial or cultural influence on black underachievement overlooks the social functional affects of class position, which more accurately explains the burden of acting white hypothesis.

In other words, Ogbu’s thesis is not an oppositional worldview. On the contrary, it is a manifestation of the class interest of the black underclass whose way of life in the inner-city has been commodified in the form of hip-hop culture by finance capital to sell on the global market. This ethos is not grounded in education, but in a class worldview in which the means to economic gain, status, and prestige are in athletics, entertainment, and illegal activities. By analyzing the lyrics of the 1999 rap song *Bling bling* I sought to demonstrate the relationship between the perception of young blacks who come from the black underclass, and the relational impact that their perception possibly play in undermining black academic achievement in the American capitalist social structure of inequality. The content of the rap song and its artists are utilized in place of interviews because of the influence celebrity status, popular culture, and the media play in determining social consciousness and class identity in late capitalist development in America. This is especially true for young black American men and women.

Discussion and Conclusions

Thus against Ogbu’s cultural interpretation, the working premise and conclusion here are that black students have a peer status group in the American capitalist social structure of inequality with its own language, style of dress, music, etc. Contemporarily, the group is institutionalized or occupies a status position in the American class social structure of inequality based for the most part on their academic

(under) achievement and social relation to the means of production. The poor academic achievement of black students disproportionately leaves them at the bottom of the educational system, which leads to poor or no jobs in the American post-industrial labor market, which has transferred these jobs overseas for higher paying financial jobs. As such, the status group is constituted as a class of poorly educated and unemployed or poorly employed laborers, living in predominantly inner-cities where low technical work has disappeared for higher paying financial jobs. They are unable to achieve a better life chance compared to those well educated and employed in high paying service occupations, and therefore turn to other commodified activities (drug dealing, sports, hustling, music, etc.) that are more likely to payoff in the society given their poor education and the outsource of jobs overseas by capital. The successful rappers, gangsters, athletes, and entertainers of the group come to constitute the power elites of the class, which serves as the bearers of linguistic and ideological domination for all blacks in the society.

In other words, the material conditions and practices of this black underclass social psychologically have given rise to ideological and linguistic structures (Black English Vernacular), which appear to stand in contrast to the ideology and language (Standard English) of middle class black and white America. This “mismatch in linguistic function,” role conflict, as constituted through and by the commodification of hip-hop culture is an appearance because the practical consciousness of this black underclass is no different from middle and upper middle class black folks. Their purposive-rational end remains economic gain, status, and upward social mobility (“*Bling bling*”) just like that of middle and upper middle class black and white folks. Only the means to that end have changed in a jobless post-industrial American material condition: athletics, music, entertaining, hustling, etc. serve as means to achieving economic gain, status, and upward mobility over the educational avenues paved by black and white middle and upper class America.

Subsequently, given the commodification of black underclass culture as hip-hop culture and the predominance of the entertainment industry, media, etc., as the medium for its mass dissemination in the American post-industrial landscape, presently, they, the black underclass of poorly educated and poorly (un) employed laborers, rappers, athletes, gangsters, and entertainers, have become the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination in black America to the chagrin of their middle and upper-middle class black brethrens living in the suburbs. Many black American students growing up in inner-cities no longer identify with academic achievement and success as means to obtaining economic gain as previously outlined by the black middle and upper class, but instead they identify with the material practices of the black underclass, which is glorified in the media through hip-hop culture, and seek to have their “blackness” as defined by that status group pay-off for them at the expense of achieving academically.

This role conflict is the social structural and social psychological manifestation of the burden of acting white hypothesis within an American post-industrial capitalist social structure of inequality that predominantly differentiates along class lines, and has institutionalized athletics, the entertainment industry, hustling, etc., as viable means or social functional roles to economic gain, status, and upward mobility in the larger American society for young black Americans. It is this economic payoff associate with hustling, sports, entertainment, etc., for underachieving blacks in the larger American society, which perpetuates the achievement gap, and prevents all effective corrective measures implemented by school systems from achieving complete success.

As black youth become adolescents they are disadvantaged in school by the social functions the black underclass and the larger mainstream postindustrial American society reinforces. That is, success or economic gain amongst this “black underclass,” who speak Ebonics or Black English Vernacular, listen to hip-hop music, participate in sports, is not measured by status obtained through education as in the case of black bourgeois middle class standards; on the contrary, athletics, music, and other activities (illegal ones) not typically “associated” with educational attainment, but which they are rewarded for by finance capital, serve as the means to success or economic gain, status, prestige, and upward mobility. Thus effort in school, in terms of academics, in general suffers, and as a result test scores and grades are further impacted. That is, for these youth, especially the black male in our patriarchal society, there is no logical and obvious connection between academics and economics in their poor and blighted cities; instead, sports, music, drugs, etc., appear to be more accessible and viable means for improving their life goal of economic gain as opposed to the education promulgated by the “black bourgeoisie” (Frazier, 1957). This has led to a retention and expulsion rate in black America that is doubled that of whites, 33 and 18 percent respectively; an ever-increasing criminalization of black urban America, 43.9 percent of the state and federal prison populations; the ever-increasing proletarianization of the black masses; and an ever-increasing academic achievement gap that has the black bourgeois professional class clamoring that there is a conspiracy in the capitalist social system to destroy black boys.

Future sociological and psychological research need to focus and explore more empirically this theoretical relationship between the American postindustrial social structure of class inequality, Black English, ethos, material conditions, and underachievement through sociohistorical analyzes of the development of black American identity within the American capitalist social structure of inequality from slavery to the present; survey research of black Adolescents to assess their world-views and role models; and finally, language and content analysis of black American reading test-score data vis-à-vis their class position to measure the impact of linguistic structure on achievement.

Author Details

Paul C. Mocombe is the president/ceo of the Mocombeian foundation, inc. and assistant professor of philosophy and sociology at West Virginia State University. He is the originator of Mocombe's reading room series, a language based curriculum developed to help inner-city youth close the achievement gap. Email: pmocombe@wvstateu.edu or pmocombe@mocombeian.com

References

- Ainsworth-Darnell, James W. and Douglas B. Downey (1998). "Assessing the Oppositional Culture Explanation for Racial/Ethnic Differences in School Performance." *American Sociological Review* 63: 536-553.
- Altbach, Philip G. (1995 [1971]). "Education and Neocolonialism." Pp. 452-456 in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft et al. London and New York: Routledge.
- Althusser, Louis (2001 [1971]). *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Arrighi, Giovanni (1994). *The Long Twentieth Century*. London: Verso.
- Asante, Molefi Kete (1988). *Afrocentricity*. New Jersey: Africa World.
- Asante, Molefi K. (1990). *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*. New Jersey: Africa World.
- Asante, Molefi K. (1990). "African Elements in African-American English." Pp. 19-33, in *Africanisms in American Culture*, Edited by Joseph E. Holloway. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein (1991). *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London and New York: Verso.
- Bankston, Carl L. and Stephen J. Caldas (1996). "Majority Black Schools and the Perpetuation of Social Injustice: the Influence of De facto Segregation on Academic Achievement." *Social Forces*, 75, 535-555.
- Bergin, David and Helen Cooks (2002). "High School Students of Color Talk About Accusations of 'Acting White.'" *The Urban Review* 34: 113-134.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis (1976). *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Braverman, Harry (1998 [1974]). *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Chase-Dunn, Christopher (1975). "The effects of international economic dependence on development and inequality: A cross-national study." *American Sociological Review*, 40, 720-738.
- Chase-Dunn, Christopher and Richard Rubinson (1977). "Toward a Structural Perspective on the World-System." *Politics & Society*, 7, 4: 453-476.

Coleman, James S. (1988). "Social Capital' and Schools." *Education Digest* 53 (8): 69.

Cook, Philip J. and Jens Ludwig (1998). "The Burden of 'Acting White': Do Black Adolescents Disparage Academic Achievement." Pp. 375-400 in *The Black White Test Score Gap*, edited by Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Coser, Lewis (1956). *The Functions of Social Conflict*. New York: The Free Press.

Dahrendorf, Ralf (1959). *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. California: Stanford University Press.

Domhoff, William G. (2002). *Who Rules America? Power & Politics* (Fourth Edition). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Downey, Douglas B. and James W. Ainsworth-Darnell (2002). "The Search for Oppositional Culture among Black Students." *American Sociological Review* 76: 156-164.

Dreeben, Robert and Rebecca Barr (1983). *How Schools Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Erevelles, Nirmala (2000). "Educating Unruly Bodies: Critical Pedagogy, Disability Studies, and the Politics of Schooling." *Educational Theory* 50, 1, Pp. 25-

Farkas, George et al (2002). "Does oppositional Culture Exist in Minority and Poverty Peer Groups?" *American Sociological Review* 67: 148-155.

Ford, Donna Y. and J. John Harris (1996). "Perceptions and Attitudes of Black Students Toward School, Achievement, and Other Educational Variables." *Child Development* 67: 1141-1152.

Fordham, Signithia and John Ogbu (1986). "Black Students' School Success: Coping With the Burden of 'Acting White.'" *Urban Review* 18, 176-206.

Fordham, Signithia (1988). "Racelessness as a Factor in Black Students' Success," *Harvard Educational Review* 58, 1: 54-84.

Frazier, Franklin E. (1939). *The Negro Family in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Frazier, Franklin E. (1957). *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class*. New York: The Free Press.

Freire, Paulo (1973). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Herder & Herder.

- Freire, Paulo (2000 [1970]). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum.
- Giddens, Anthony (1990). *Consequences of Modernity*. England: Polity Press.
- Giroux, Henry (1992). *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Giroux, Henry and Peter McLaren (Eds.) (1994). *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan (1963). *Beyond the Melting Pot*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gordon, Edmund W. (2006). "Establishing a System of Public Education in which all Children Achieve at High Levels and Reach their Full Potential." Pp. 23-46 in *The Covenant with Black America*. Chicago: Third World Press.
- Gramsci, Antonio (1978). *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, edited by Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Greene, Jay P. et al (2003). "Testing High Stakes Tests: Can We Believe the Results of Accountability Tests?" *Manhattan Institute Civic Report* No. 33.
- Gutman, Herbert (1976). *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Harvey, David (1989). *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Horvat, Erin M. and Kristine S. Lewis (2003). "Reassessing the "Burden of 'Acting White'": The Importance of Peer Groups in Managing Academic Success." *Sociology of Education* 76, 265-280.
- House, James S. (1977). "The Three Faces of Social Psychology." *Sociometry* 40: 161-177.
- House, James S. (1981). "Social Structure and Personality." Pp. 525-561 in *Sociological Perspectives on Social Psychology*, edited by Morris Rosenberg and Ralph Turner. New York: Basic Books.
- Howard, Jeff and Ray Hammond (1985). "Rumors of Inferiority." *New Republic*, 9: 18-23.
- Inkeles, Alex (1959). "Personality and Social Structure." Pp. 249-276 in *Sociology Today*, edited by Robert K. Merton, Leonard Broom, and Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr. New York: Basic Books.
- Inkeles, Alex (1960). "Industrial man: The Relation of Status, Experience, and Value." *American Journal of Sociology* 66: 1-31.

- Inkeles, Alex (1969). "Making Men Modern: On the Causes and Consequences of Individual change in six developing countries." *American Journal of Sociology* 75: 208-225.
- Jameson, Fredric (1991). *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Jameson, Fredric and Masao Miyoshi (Eds.) (1998). *The cultures of globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Jencks, Christopher and Meredith Phillips (Eds.) (1998). *The Black-White Test Score Gap*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Johnson, V.E. (2005). "Comprehension of Third Person Singular /s/ in African American Speaking Children." *Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools*, 36, 2: 116-124.
- Kamhi, A.G. et al (1996). *Communication Development and Disorders in African American Children: Research, Assessment and Intervention*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co.
- Karenga, Maulana (1993). *Introduction to Black Studies*. California: The University of Sankore Press.
- Labov, William (1972). *Language in the Inner-City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Lee, J. (2002). "Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gap Trends: Reversing the Progress toward Equity?" *Educational Researcher*, 31 (1): 3-12.
- Levine, Lawrence W. (1977). *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marshall, Gordon (1998). *A Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (1964). *The Communist Manifesto*. London, England: Penguin Books.
- Marx, Karl (1992). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Volume 1). Translated from the third German edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. New York: International Publishers.
- McLaren, Peter (1988). "Schooling the Postmodern Body: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Enfleshment." *Journal of Education* 170, 1: 53-83.
- McMichael, Philip (1996). "Globalization: Myths and Realities." *Rural Sociology* 61 (1): 274-291.

- Mocombe, Paul (2001). *A Labor Approach to the Development of the Self or "Modern Personality": The Case of Public Education*. Thesis Florida Atlantic University. Ann Arbor: UMI.
- Mocombe, Paul (2005). *The Mocombeian Strategy: The Reason for, and Answer to Black Failure in Capitalist Education*. Philadelphia: Xlibris.
- Mocombe, Paul (2005). "Where Did Freire Go Wrong? Pedagogy in Globalization: The Grenadian Example." *Race, Gender & Class*, 12, 2: 178-199.
- Mocombe, Paul (2006). "The Sociolinguistic Nature of Black Academic Failure in Capitalist Education: A Reevaluation of Language in the Inner city and its Social Function, Acting White." *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 9, 4: 395-407.
- Moynihan, Daniel P. (1965). *The Negro Family*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning and Research, US Department of Labor.
- Murray, Charles (1984). *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980*. New York: Basic Books.
- Myrdal, Gunnar (1944). *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Ogbu, John U. (1974). *The Next Generation*. New York: Academic Press.
- Ogbu, John U. (1978). *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York: Academic Press.
- Ogbu, John U. (1990). "Minority Education in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of Negro Education*, 59, 45-57.
- Ogbu, John U. (1991). "Low School Performance as an Adaptation: The Case of Blacks in Stockton, California." Pp. 129-86 in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*, edited by Margaret Gibson and John U. Ogbu. New York: Garland Press.
- Ogbu, John U. (1994). "Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning." *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 17 (4): 355-383.
- Ogbu, John U. (1994). "Racial Stratification in the United States: Why Inequality Persists," *Teachers College Record* 96, 2: 264-298.
- Ogbu, John U. (1999). "Ebonics, proper English, and Identity in a Black American Speech Community." *American Educational Research Journal*, 36, 2: 147-184.
- Ogbu, John U. (2002). "Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement." *Journal of Education*, 183, 2: 85-95.
- Orr, Amy J. (2003). "Black-White Differences in Achievement: The Importance of Wealth." *Sociology of Education* 76, 281-304.

- Portes, Alejandro (1997). "Neoliberalism and the Sociology of Development: Emerging Trends and Unanticipated Facts." *Population and Development Review* 23 (2): 353-372.
- Sennett, Richard (1998). *The Corrosion of Character*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Sklair, Leslie (1995). *Sociology of the Global System*. Baltimore: Westview Press.
- Sklair, Leslie (2001). *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Smith, Vicki (1998). "Employee Involvement, Involved Employees: Participative Work Arrangements in a White-Collar Service Occupation." Pp. 460-473 in *Working in America: Continuity, Conflict, and Change*, edited by Amy S. Wharton. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Sowell, Thomas (1975). *Race and Economics*. New York: David McKay.
- Sowell, Thomas (1981). *Ethnic America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Spring, Joel (1994). *American Education*, (6th edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Stampp, Kenneth (1956 [1967]). *The Peculiar Institution*. New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc.
- Steele, Claude M. (1992). "Race and the Schooling of Black Americans," *Atlantic Monthly*: 68-78.
- Steele, Claude M. (1997). "A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance," *American Psychologist*, 52 (6): 613-629.
- Steele, Claude M. and Joshua Aronson (1998). "Stereotype Threat and the Test Performance of Academically Successful African Americans." Pp. 401-427 in *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, edited by Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Steele, Shelby (1990). *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Turner, Ralph H. (1976). "The Real Self: From Institution to Impulse." *American Journal of Sociology* 81: 989-1016.
- Turner, Ralph H. (1988). "Personality in Society: Social Psychology's Contribution to Sociology." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 51; 1: 1-10.
- Tye, Kenneth (1999). *Global Education: A Worldwide Movement*. California: Interdependence Press.

Tyson, Karolyn (2003). "Notes from the Back of the Room: Problems and Paradoxes in the Schooling of Young Black Students." *Sociology of Education* 76, 326-343.

Tyson, Karolyn et al (2005). "It's Not 'a Black Thing': Understanding the Burden of Acting White and Other Dilemmas of High Achievement." *American Sociological Review* 70, 582-605.

Thompson, CA and H K Craig (2004). "Variable Production of African American English across Oral and Literacy Contexts." *Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools*, 35, 3: 269-282.

U.S. Department of Education (2003). *The Condition of Education 2003*, NCES 2003 067. Washington, DC.

Van Hook, Jennifer (2002). "Immigration and African American Educational Opportunity: The Transformation of Minority Schools." *Sociology of Education*, 75, 169-189.

Wallerstein, Immanuel (1974). *The Modern World-System*. New York and London: Academic Press.

Weber, Max (1958 [1976]). *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Wilson, William J. (1978). *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Wilson, William J. (1987). *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Wilson, William J. (1998). "The Role of the Environment in the Black-White Test Score Gap." Pp. 501-510 in *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, edited by Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.