The Construction of Oppositional Culture in Hip-Hop Music: An In-depth Case Analysis of Kanye West and Tupac Shakur

Running Head: Oppositional Culture in Hip-Hop Music

Travis L. Gosa and Hollie Young
The Johns Hopkins University

Word Count: 8996

Abstract

Given the prominent, yet controversial theory of oppositional culture used to explain the poor academic achievement of black youth and recent concerns that hip-hop is leading black youth to adopt anti-school attitudes, we examine the construction of oppositional culture in hip-hop music. Through a qualitative case study of song lyrics (n=250) from two of hip-hop's most influential artists—"conscious" rapper Kanye West and "gangster" rapper Tupac Shakur, we find oppositional culture in both artists' lyrics. However, our analysis reveals important differences in how the two artists describe the role of schooling in adult success, relationships with teachers and schools, and how education is related to authentic black male identity. Our findings suggest a need for reexamining the notion that oppositional culture means school resistance.

Acknowledgements & Correspondence

We thank Karl Alexander, Katrina Bell McDonald, and Pamela Bennett for comments that have improved this manuscript. Portions of this paper were presented at the Southern Sociological Society meetings, New Orleans, LA, March 25, 2006. Direct correspondence to Travis L. Gosa, Department of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University, 3400 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218; E-mail: Lgosa1@jhu.edu.

Introduction

While black youth coming to age in post-Civil Rights America have made striking gains in academic achievement and attainment (Ferguson 2001; Lee 2002), there are growing concerns that some black youth are adopting identities that eschew working hard in school and shun high achieving blacks as betraying "real" blackness.[1] Classified as *oppositional culture* and the *burden of acting white* (e.g., Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Fordham 1996), this collective black identity maintains negative assessments of the opportunity structure, distrusts schools, and labels pro-schooling behaviors and attitudes as "inauthentic" or "acting white." Black boys appear doubly burdened by oppositional culture, as emerging notions of authentic black masculinity may label intellectual pursuits as "feminine" or "soft" (Reese 2004).

One of the probable culprits in transmitting oppositional culture to black youth is hip-hop.[2] The ascendancy of hip-hop as the dominant black youth culture in the late 1980s coincides with the stalling of black achievement gains (Ferguson 2001), and even affluent black youth seem to be negatively influenced by hip-hop (Pattillo-McCoy 1999). As a black male-dominated genre, the "gangsta-thug" conception of black masculinity prevalent in hip-hop has been said to sabotage the achievement of black boys (Reese 2004; Tucker 2006; Kane 2005). Despite the belief that hip-hop "holds blacks back" (e.g., McWhorter, 2005), little is known about achievement-related judgments and messages in hip-hop music. Is hip-hop telling our black youth that school does not pay off? Or, that resisting school is "keeping it really black"?

In response to concerns about the corrosive influence of hip-hop music on black youth development and achievement, we examine the construction of oppositional culture in hip-hop music. Specifically, we examine what rappers are saying about the utility of education, trust and conflict with schools, and the relationship between school success and black/male authenticity.

Our case analysis of oppositional culture in hip-hop focuses on two rappers whose music embodies the two dominant, rival strands in the genre: the "conscious political camp" and the "gangsta camp" (Boyd 2002). Textual content analysis of this powerful youth culture are drawn from songs (n=250) by prominent “conscious” rapper Kanye West and “gangsta-thug” rapper Tupac Shakur. Our analyses utilize QSR-Nudist, a qualitative computer software package that identifies thematic patterns in unstructured data.

Comparing the lyrics of Kanye and Tupac, we found similarities and differences in their construction of oppositional culture. While both artists perceive blocked labor market opportunities, distrust most white institutions, and define blackness in opposition to white society, they differ in their representation of schooling. The “conscious” Kanye raps about the uselessness of schooling for black success, teachers and schools as agents of black oppression, and black authenticity without education. “Gangsta” rapper Tupac develops an achievement ideology that presents education as a profitable route to upward mobility for black youth, and as an authentically black way to subvert white oppression. These findings support recent research showing that oppositional culture can function to encourage academic achievement (e.g., Akom 2003).

Oppositional Culture and the Schooling of Black Youth

Popularly known as oppositional culture and the burden of acting white, Ogbu’s and Fordham’s cultural ecological thesis posits that the poor academic achievement of black youth can be attributed to the adoption of an oppositional collective identity. Black youth who adopt oppositional culture maintain negative assessments of the opportunity structure, distrust dominant (white) group members and institutions, and label pro-schooling attitudes and

behaviors as inauthentic or "acting white" (e.g., Ogbu 1978; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Fordham 1996).

Sociologists have long noted that adolescents of all backgrounds generally dislike school and tease peers for being "uncool" or "nerds" (e.g., Coleman 1961); however, oppositional culture, as defined by Ogbu, is not simply about ubiquitous peer pressure. It connects the larger ecology of racial disadvantages and white supremacy to the schooling strategies and beliefs of black youth (Ogbu and Simons 1998; Ogbu 1992, 1994). According to Ogbu, three forms of discrimination—"instrumental" (e.g., racialized curriculum tracking), "relational" (e.g., unwarranted negative assessments by teachers) and "symbolic" discrimination (e.g., degradation of black speech)—dramatically shape black collective identities and schooling trajectories (Ogbu 1979, 1987, 1994, 2003).

As a coping mechanism and form of resistance to discrimination, blacks may adopt a collective social identity or "sense of we-ness" (Ogbu 2004:3) that opposes whites and their oppressive treatment, and, by extension, interprets education as yet another way to dominate blacks (Ogbu 1994; Fordham 1999). Similar to Bourdieu's (1977) concept of "habitus," this oppositional "cultural model" is "the way that members of a minority group understand or interpret their world and guide their actions in that world" (Ogbu and Simmons 1998:169) and "allows choices of action that result in individual differences in schooling outcome" (Ogbu 1992:287).

Three decades of ethnographic research conducted by Ogbu and associates document how the adaptation of oppositional culture hinders the academic achievement of black youth across socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, in both low-income "Capital High" in Washington D.C (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Fordham 1996; 1999) and in the affluent, suburban

schools of Shaker Heights, Ohio (Ogbu 2003), three types of oppositional beliefs are found to prevent black students from reaching their full academic potential.

Oppositional instrumental beliefs include believing that going to school and studying hard will not be rewarded with good paying jobs due to continuing racial discrimination. Failing to view schooling investments as a profitable enterprise, blacks maintaining oppositional instrumental beliefs instead pursue alternative routes to success not involving education, including illegal activities, entertainment, and sports (Ogbu 2003).

Oppositional relational beliefs include a strong degree of distrust toward whites and agents of white institutions, especially schools and teachers. School rules and norms are interpreted as potentially destructive, and teachers are seen as not having the best interest of black youth in mind. As a result, those who subscribe to oppositional relational beliefs are in conflict with the schooling institution or disengage altogether.

Oppositional symbolic beliefs represent appropriate black attitudes and behaviors defined in opposition to those thought to be appropriate for whites. Such beliefs include the interpretation of typical pro-schooling attitudes and behaviors (e.g., speaking "standard English" and studying hard) as symbolically wanting to be like "them" rather than "us." Engaging in these activities is viewed pejoratively as "acting white." When school achievement becomes racialized, black students who want to pursue academic success have to cope with the burden of acting white by proving that they are still authentically black (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Fordham 1996, 1999). While many black youth are able to circumvent these accusations through clever strategies, such as masking their high marks, the concern is that too many succumb to these understandings of school achievement and chose not to work hard in school.

Oppositional Culture and the Schooling of Black Males

The emerging research on oppositional culture suggests that black boys may be more susceptible to adopting oppositional identities than black girls. Given the educational crisis facing our black male youth, we are concerned that otherwise intelligent black boys are rejecting formal education as a means of success, adopting instead identities that eschew school achievement and peer groups that privilege street culture over school culture.

We know that black boys, like most other children, begin school as eager learners, indistinguishable from other students in their professed interest in school and desire to do well (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson 1997). Black boys also begin school with levels of achievement similar to that of black girls (Fryer and Levitt 2004). Before long, though, black males are seen as displaying problem behaviors by teachers (Rong 1996), and are most likely to be labeled deviant, reprimanded, and sent to the principal's office (Irvine 1990). As the conflict escalates, many black males are "tracked out" in early high school, by way of suspension and expulsion (Hrabowski, Maton and Greif 1998; Irvine 1990), or remain "tracked into" special education at rates double other students (Polite and Davis 1999:35). By the end of high school, only 43% of America's black males who enter 9th grade graduate from 12th grade (Orfield et al. 2004).[3] Young black men are noticeably missing from the post-secondary landscape (Harvey 2002), as they are more likely to be incarcerated or somehow involved with the legal system than enrolled in college.[4]

More so than black females, black males seem to be having a difficult time being "smart and black" (e.g., Akom 2003; Horvat and Lewis 2003). For instance, Ogbu and Fordham's original City High study (e.g., Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Fordham 1996) indicates that black males may be seen as unmanly when they achieve. More recently, Carter (2005) finds that most

of the black (and Latino) males in her New York study are "non-compliant believers," who disengage from school, cut classes, fail to complete assignments, and struggle with the various social and cultural codes of formal schooling (Carter 2005:36).[5] In what could be called the "feminization of acting white," she finds that these males of color are relatively unsuccessful at simultaneously asserting their black masculinity and succeeding in school. National data on adolescents shows similar problems. Fryer and Torelli (2005), for example, find that black males face a heightened risk of losing friends when they achieve academically.

Hip-Hop and Oppositional Culture Themes

Concerns over oppositional culture among black youth, especially black males, has led some to wonder how hip-hop may be involved. Hip-hop has emerged as a major site of cultural production and agency for today's generation of black youth. For many black youth, hip-hop has "transcended the realm of entertainment to become an integral aspect of identity and a lens through which [they] understand the world" (Ferguson 2001:372). Despite growing commodification and white appeal, hip-hop maintains a relatively strong effect on the beliefs, behaviors, and identities of black youth (Anderson 2003), and black youth use hip-hop to define a sense of blackness, black masculinity, and history (Dimitriadis 2001).

To be sure, youth construct their identities and judgments about schooling from parents, teachers, peers, and their own sense of the world. But at the same time, it is understandable the way many black youth look to hip-hop. Faced with structural dislocation from economic opportunities and the fragility of traditional black families, the "hip-hop generation" now receives much of their information, culture, and identities from hip-hop (Kitwana 2002, 2005; Dimitriadis 2001). For disadvantaged black youth, hip-hop artists may be the only source of

"social capital" to black adults who are financially secure (Carter 2005). And for middle class black youth, hip-hop provides a way to maintain connections to less fortunate peers (Pattillo-McCoy 1999). Concerning boys specifically, the hyper-masculine swagger and bravado idealized by rappers may help protect black males from the harshness of white society (Majors and Billson 1992), and facilitate social bonds in urban settings where interpersonal violence is common place (Anderson 1999; Stanton-Salazar 1997).

Given this context, it is appropriate to inquire whether messages about achievement, blackness, and masculinity that are promoted in hip-hop are sabotaging the achievement of black youth. Reese's (2004) study black males in Los Angeles and Atlanta suggest that emerging notions of black masculinity and authenticity include anti-intellectualism, "being hard," and hyper-sexed. In his "Realness Survey" "gangsta-thug" rappers are seen as "real black men," while potentially more "positive" role models are ignored. For example, 92% of black males knew that Surge Knight was the co-founder of gangsta rap label Death Row Records—only 31% knew that Kwesi Mfume was the director of the NAACP.

Reese (2004) finds black males in his study interpreting anti-education messages from hip-hop, such as "reading is not cool" (40% of his sample had not read a non-school book in the past year), while national trends indicate a wider relationship between hip-hop and black achievement. Using test score data from 1971 to 1996, Ferguson (2001) observes that declines in black overall black achievement and pro-schooling behaviors (e.g., reading outside of school) mirrors the ascendancy of hip-hop music. According to Ferguson, black youth who identify with the messages of hip-hop music are turning away from schooling.

Of course, correlational trend data alone do not prove that hip-hop *causes* black youth to turn away from schooling, but it supports what teachers, parents, and children are telling us.

Among lower-class blacks in Baltimore, teachers report that black boys in the third grade consider getting shot nine times and going to jail (a la 50 Cent, a popular gangsta rapper) to be a promising route to occupational success (Kane 2005). More, it appears that even affluent black children are not immune to what Pattillo-McCoy (1999) calls the "ghetto trance" of hip-hop music. Affluent black parents in a recent CNN documentary report that their children are turning to "rap music's gangstas and thugs" for "an alternative to be authentically black." Seeing good grades as acting white and education unlikely to pay off, one youth profiled in the documentary comments: "I'm going to be a rapper...Rappers don't study" (CNN 2004).

Research Design, Data, and Analytic Strategy

In response to these concerns about the corrosive influence of hip-hop music on black youth development and achievement, we examine the construction of oppositional culture in hip-hop music.

While there are various "flavors" of hip-hop music, it is useful to distinguish between two dominant voices in hip-hop today: 1) the "gangsta camp," defined by those like Tupac, Jay-Z, or Snoop Dogg; and 2) the "conscious political camp" associated with Kanye West, Common Sense, Mos Def, the Roots, and Talib Kweli (Boyd 2002). These two subgenres differ on their emphasis of violence and sex, and their social class orientation. Gangsta rappers typically present lower class, inner-city perspectives, while conscious rappers are typically more middle class in their outlook (Boyd 2002).

We employed an in-depth case study design to explore how these two different types of hip-hop construct understandings concerning the importance of formal education, relationships with "white institutions," and race-gender authenticity and school success, We compared the lyrical content of the most famous "thug-life" rapper Tupac Shakur with that of "conscious

rapper" Kanye West. Beyond being a "gangsta" and a "conscious" rapper, respectively, Tupac and Kanye have become the most influential male, black rappers from these two camps (See Table 1 and Table 2).

Qualitative content analysis was conducted on the lyrics of 250 songs from these two artists' commercially available albums (Kanye, n=2; Tupac, n=12). QSR-Nudist computer software was used to discover thematic and conceptual patterns in the lyrics. Based on the three major components of Ogbu's oppositional culture thesis, we examined the presence of achievement-related judgments concerning (1) *instrumental beliefs* about the opportunity structure, including the role of education in "making it," perceived returns to schooling, and alternative routes to success; (2) r*elational beliefs* about trust and conflict with white institutions, including trust/distrust and conflict with teachers and the schooling process; and (3) *symbolic beliefs* about black and black male authenticity, specifically how notions of real blackness and masculinity are presented in relationship to pro-school behaviors, values, and success.

A semi-open, iterative analysis approach was used to probe the instrumental, relational, and symbolic content of the songs. We systematically listened to the songs, read the lyrics, and applied thematic codes to lyrics pertaining to three types of beliefs. Also, "open" codes were applied to lyrics within the three areas, and to content that didn't quite fit pre-existing notions of oppositional culture. This semi-open approach allowed for deducing the major tenants of oppositional culture, while still allowing new themes to inductively emerge from the hip-hop artists themselves. During the process of listening, coding, reading, and recoding, analytic memos were used to capture emerging themes and contradictions in the song content. Rapdict.org, a popular on-line dictionary of hip-hop terms, was used for clarification when the meaning of hip-hop jargon was in question.

Results

Kanye West and Oppositional Culture

Our analysis of Kanye's music reveals a dense set of achievement-related judgments that mirror Ogbu's oppositional culture thesis. Kanye describes a racialized opportunity structure wherein schooling does not pay off, and blacks must pursue alternative routes to success, such as drug dealing and hip-hop. Kanye's lyrics implicate racist employers, teachers, and police in the oppression of blacks, and he constructs a black collective identity in opposition to most white institutions and their agents. While he resists the gangsta-thug conception of black masculinity, Kanye deems education as inappropriate for black males and holds materialism and consumerism in high esteem. According to Kanye, both anti-education attitudes and showing off through material wealth are ways of opposing white oppression and demonstrating black authenticity.

"Table 1: Kayne West Case Background"

Kanye West - Instrumental Beliefs

Throughout his music, Kanye describes four potential routes to success for young blacks: service industry jobs, drugs, hip-hop, and school. With the exception of selling drugs and becoming a hip-hop artist, Kanye presents a closed, racialized opportunity structure that provides few options for black success.

Kanye equates paid employment in service industry jobs as "modern day slavery" patrolled by racist white overseers/employers. Kanye describes his own servitude as a "token blackie" at the Gap retail clothing store, where he is plagued by low wages and a racist manager who accuses him of stealing khaki pants (Spaceship, College Dropout). In addition, Kanye illustrates the prevalence of racial discrimination by referencing the experiences of his family

and friends. For example, Kanye recounts the experience of his younger cousin: "His job trying to claim that he too niggerish now/Is it cuz his skin blacker than licorice now?/I'm sick of it now" (I Heard 'Em Say, Late Registration).

In contrast to the disadvantage of black skin in service industry employment, Kanye sends a sympathetic salute to young black males who hustle in the streets (We Don't Care, College Dropout). He presents crime as an understandable, yet dangerous response to blocked economic opportunities. While he notes that drug dealing typically leads to two places, "either dead or in jail" (Two Words, College Dropout), Kanye indicates that young black boys, including himself, often look up to drug dealers who are closest to achieving economic success: "Where I'm from the dope boys is the rock stars/ But they can't cop [buy] cars without seein' cop cars" (I Heard 'Em Say, Late Registration).

The folk theory of achievement through selling drugs is closely linked to the possibility of success through hip-hop. While Kanye says that he isn't trying to "Sell 'em no dream" of becoming a rapper (Gone, Late Registration), it is noteworthy that the only successful black men in his music are those who sell drugs and/or become hip-hop artists. The possibility of "Writin' rhymes just to blow up" (We Major, Late Registration) provides an alternative route to success when other opportunities are blocked. Going from "bein' a brokeman" to a successful rapper is "inspiration for tha mos and tha folks man" (Crack Music, Late Registration) according to Kanye.

While writing hip-hop songs might provide "inspiration" for young blacks, Kanye's music illustrates how blacks who pursue formal education will not be successful. Due to the lack of financial returns to schooling and the weak connection of credentials to labor market

success, Kanye dismisses education as a worthy endeavor. In fact, both of his full length albums revolve around his lucrative decision to pursue hip-hop rather than finish college.

Thematically, the extensive use of comedic sketches and musical interludes conveys the message that school achievement brings few financial or material returns. For example, several sketches on *The College Dropout* (2004) chronicle Lil' Jimmy, a boy whose father dies penniless due to his pursuits of higher education. As such, Lil' Jimmy is left homeless and uses his father's college degrees to keep warm at night. At the end of the satirical saga, Lil' Jimmy aspires to follow in his father's footsteps: "I'm going to learn too. I'm going to get super smart, so I too can die without money. But I'll be the smartest dead guy. Who has that?" In addition to a lack of financial returns, Kanye's sketches suggest that black men who work hard in school will end up being virgins (School Spirit Skit 1, College Dropout).

On his sophomore album *Late Registration* (2005), Kanye parodies black fraternity "Broke Phi Broke" to demonstrate the lack of material and romantic returns to schooling. In a college step show they perform the following routine:

> *Broke, broke, broke phi broke*
> *(We ain't got it)*
> *Don't spend no money*
> *Ain't got no clothes*
> *Ain't got no cars*
> *Ain't got no hos*
> *We broke, broke, broke phi broke*
> *Buncha niggas*
> (Skit #2, Late Registration)

The brothers of "Broke Phi Broke" are not presented as role models, but as losers, due to their lack of money, clothes, and women. Kanye ridicules these black men pursuing college education: they are described as being so poor that they share one pair of jeans among all fraternity members (Skit #1), and eat their breakfast cereal with forks to save on the cost of milk (Skit #3).

While being "broke" in college might be seen as a temporary delay of gratification for future success, black men who gain college degrees remain "broke niggas" in Kanye's lyrics. He indicates that educational credentials lead to low-paying jobs that are especially degrading for black men. For example, in his autobiographical recount his decision to drop out of school Kanye rhymes:

> *Back to school and I hate it there, I hate it there*
> *Everything I want I gotta wait a year, I wait a year*
> *This nigga graduated at the top of my class…*
> *I went to Cheesecake [Factory], he was a motherfucking waiter there!*
> (School Spirit, College Dropout)

In no uncertain terms, Kanye connects his "hate" for school with the observation that even the valedictorian of his college class will end up waiting tables at a restaurant, or working as the "secretary's secretary" (School Sprit Skit #1, College Dropout). Taken together, the instrumental value of education in Kanye's music is quite low: working hard in school leaves black men with "no money, no cars, no ho's."

Kanye West – Relational Beliefs

Kanye's "hate" for school goes beyond the belief that education will not likely yield future rewards—rather, his oppositional stance towards education implicates a deep distrust of and conflict with schools and teachers. Amounting to a triad of racial oppression, schools, criminal justice, and government are said to be complicit in the on-going oppression of blacks.

Kanye represents education and teachers as agents of black subordination. Teachers are represented as powerful enemies that degrade black youth at every given opportunity. Throughout both *The College Dropout* (2004) and *Late Registration* (2005) albums, teachers constantly insult and demean Kanye, usually by calling him a "nigga," but "in no nice way"

(Graduation Day, College Dropout). For example, as Kanye sleeps through class, the teacher yells:

> *You ain't got nothin' else to do*
> *You ain't doin nothin wit yo life…*
> *Kanye!*
> *Nigga! Is you snorin' in my class?*
> *Wake up Mr. West! Mr. West!*
> (Wake up Mr. West, Late Registration)

Mean spirited teachers are another reason why Kanye "hates" school, and curriculum tracking is represented as a tool to humiliate blacks and deny them access to educational opportunities. Instead of interpreting track placements as equitable solutions to differences in student ability, Kanye suggests that the hidden agenda or motive to tracking is a belief that blacks are intellectually inferior:

> *We scream, "rock, blow, weed, park"*
> *So now we smart*
> *We ain't retards the way teachers thought*
> *Hold up hold fast we make mo'cash*
> *Now tell my momma I belong in the slow class*
> *It's bad enough we on welfare*
> *You trying to put me on the school bus with the space for the wheel chair*
> (We Don't Care, College Dropout)

In this telling narrative, schools are wrongfully attempting to track poor, black males into special education. Black males are seen by teachers as "retards" deserving to be segregated to the short, special bus. Kanye describes feeling "insulted" by his exclusion from the "good classes" (Late, Late Registration), and spends much time rebuking these negative teacher assessments.

Instead of working hard in school or getting good grades, Kanye responds to teacher discrimination by pursuing success elsewhere. Referring to the above excerpt from "We Don't Care" again, Kanye challenges black intellectual deficiency by showing how "smart" blacks are by their ability to profit from selling crack ("rock"), cocaine ("blow"), and marijuana ("weed") in the streets. Kanye says he dropped out of school to prove his teachers wrong: "My teacher said

I'se a loser/ I told her why don't you kill me/I give a fuck if you fail me, I'm gonna follow/My heart, and if you follow the charts, to the plaques or the stacks/You ain't gotta guess who's back, you see" (Get 'Em High, College Dropout).

Teachers and schools are only part of the problem, as the government and the criminal justice system are also represented as oppressing blacks. In addition to stifling blacks with low wages, Kanye suggests that the government is involved in chemical warfare against blacks: "Before you ask me to get a job today/ can I at least get a raise on a minimum wage?/And I know the government administered AIDS" (Heard 'Em Say, Late Registration). Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush Sr. are said to have introduced drugs to the black community as the new way to "lynch" potential black leaders (Crack Music, Late Registration). Similarly, the criminal justice system is represented as a way to harass, imprison, and even kill young black males: "I guess they want us all behind bars/I know it" and "They wanna pack us all in a box like Styrofoam" (Crack Music, Late Registration).

Taken together, these narratives reveal the construction of an oppositional black identity that equates fundamental societal institutions with white oppression. Importantly, for the oppositional culture thesis, schools are represented as yet another site of black exploitation—where teachers do not have the best interest of blacks in mind, and tracking is used to undermine black achievement. As a result, Kanye promotes the decision to drop out of the schooling process and prove black ability in the entertainment and street worlds.

Kanye West – Symbolic Beliefs

Black collective identity in Kanye's music is defined by the continual oppression by white institutions and their agents, and as a result, Kanye attempts to construct a sense of authentic "we-ness" in opposition to schools, criminal justice, and the government. Although Kanye

constructs a black male identity that embraces religion and family, education is not part of an authentic black self. Instead, explicit material consumption without education is elevated as black male achievement.

Part of Kanye's oppositional identity involves fashioning an authentic black masculinity opposite the gun-toting, gangsta-thug. By purposefully "rhyming without usin' nines and guns" (Family Business, College Dropout), Kanye promotes black male involvement in traditional family life (e.g., Family Business, College Dropout; Roses, Late Registration; Hey Mama, Late Registration) and religion (Jesus Walks, College Dropout). Instead of endorsing inner-personal violence, Kanye raps that a positive relationship with other black males is not "soft" or feminine: "You can still love your man and be manly dog" (Family Business, College Dropout).

While Kanye's redefinition of black masculinity includes a softer side, unfortunately, it also eschews school success and intellectualism, and promotes material wealth as a way to achieve a valid black identity. Besides casting college educated black men as broke losers who will never have sex with women, Kanye's music constructs an oppositional black identity that celebrates the outward rejection of education as resistance to oppression. For example, in the song Drive Slow (Late Registration), he provides a vivid archetype of what it takes to be "the man":

> *Plus he had the spinner from his Dayton's in his hand*
> *Keys in his hand/ reason again/ to let you know he's the man*
> *Back when we rocked Alesis he had dreams of Caprice's*
> *Drove by the teachers/ even more by polices*

Not only does his expensive car and rim "spinners" indicate that he is "the man," but also his disregard for police and teachers. The flagrant display material wealth without school achievement is portrayed in Kanye's music as the ultimate realization of success for black males.

This black oppositional identity is realized through "shining," the acquisition and display of material things and wealth, including expensive clothes and diamond jewelry. Kanye portrays the drive toward acquiring material wealth an inherent part of blackness and the litmus test of success: "It's in a black person's soul to rock that gold/Spend ya' whole life try'na get that ice (Diamonds From Sierra Leone, Late Registration)." Although Kanye recognizes that adorning diamonds is connected to "blood diamond" wars in Africa, he still sees "shining" and "flossing" (engaging in flagrant displays of conspicuous consumption) as a way to gain respect and self-worth: "We shine because they [whites] hate us/floss cause they degrade us/We trying to buy back our 40 acres" (All Falls Down, College Dropout).

While Kanye does not explicitly call school achievement for blacks "acting white," every black person actively engaged in the schooling process is ridiculed or emasculated. The only black male portrayed in Kanye's music as successfully obtaining upward mobility through traditional routes of success is portrayed as going outside of the race: "He gone make it into a Benz out of that Datson.../This week he moppin' floors/ next week it's the fries.../But when he get on/ he leave yo' ass for a white girl" (Gold Digger, Late Registration).

Tupac Shakur and Oppositional Culture

Tupac defines a black collective identity based on the daily struggles of inner-city plight. Plagued by few local economic opportunities, drugs, and racist police, Tupac recognizes the necessity for alternative routes for black survival, while touting education and resistance to police as culturally relevant oppositional strategies to fight white oppression. Portraying no distrust of or conflict with schools or teachers, Tupac focuses his anger at the government and police as mechanisms of black exploitation. His music is infused with a gangsta-thug image;

however, he expands the definition of authentic blackness and masculinity to include pride in being educated.

"Table 2: Tupac Shakur Case Background"

Tupac Shakur – Instrumental Beliefs

The central theme throughout Tupac's songs (n=213 songs, n=12 albums) is how blacks are "trapped" in an "American nightmare" characterized by poverty, discrimination, and violence. The "American Dream," as he sees it, "Ain't nothing but another calculated scheme/To get us locked up shot up back in chains" (Panther Power, The Lost Tapes). In response to this hyper-racialized opportunity structure, Tupac advocates education as a way of escaping the perils of the inner-city.

Tupac dedicates much of his music to exposing how blocked economic opportunities are destroying black male psychological well-being, gender relations, and family formation: "This is for the masses/ the lower classes/The ones you left out/ jobs were givin'/better livin'/But we were kept out" (Words of Wisdom 2pacalypse Now). He gives voice to the internal thoughts of drug dealers, pimps, prostitutes, and single mothers that inhabit the city streets—the anger, pain, and occasional joy of blacks attempting to achieve minimum levels of human dignity in a racialized caste system.

Black male powerlessness in response to few viable economic options is vocalized throughout Tupac's work. Access to service industry jobs at the Gap are not available in his representation of the opportunity structure. Instead, Tupac vividly demonstrates the emotional and physical strain blacks endure when using crime to survive. On the track entitled "Po Nigga Blues" (Loyal to The Game), he characterizes this reality as being "trapped in slavery":

Crazy, I gotta work with what'chu gave me
You claimin' I'm a criminal and you the one that made me
They got me trapped in this slavery
Now I'm lost in this holocaust headin' for my grave G

Pursuing crime due to few alternative economic opportunities is associated with feeling "crazy" and "trapped." The feeling of being trapped leaves Tupac to ask: Is life worth living should I blast myself?/I'm tired of being poor and even worse I'm black/My stomach hurts so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch (I Wonder If Heaven Got a Ghetto, R U Still Down).

Indeed, much of Tupac's music portrays crime, specifically drug trafficking, as a way for young black males to survive and pursue their unfilled dreams of material comfort. However, "stacking mail" (getting rich) by "doing dirt" (crime) is always depicted by Tupac as only a temporary strategy with disastrous consequences:

I'm just a young black male, cursed since my birth
Had to turn to crack sales, if worse come to worse
Headed for them packed jails, or maybe it's a hearse
My only way to stack mail, is out here doin' dirt
(Heavy in the Game, Me Against the World)

In direct contrast to Kanye West, Tupac posits that education is one of the few alternatives for blacks to escape the realities of the inner city. Instrumentally, education is portrayed not as leading to being broke, but as way to escape "the packed jails" and the "hearse." Reflecting on his own life, Tupac says that he was a "fool" for dropping out of school (Pour Out A Little Liquor, Thug Life) and encourages young black males to avoid being "dumb niggas" by pursuing education:

Stay strong nigga
You could be a fuckin accountant, not a dope dealer
YouknowhatI'msayin? (Go to school nigga, go to school)
Fuck around and, you pimpin out here
You could be a lawyer (really doe)…
Don't be a dumb nigga, listen, young niggaz
(Young Niggaz, Me Against the World)

In addition to representing education as a route to obtaining lucrative, prestigious occupations in the labor market, Tupac often describes disengagement from school as leading to disastrous consequences. For example, as a "big homie" (older black male), Tupac attempts to impart this knowledge ("game") to younger black males:

> *Skippin' class, and livin' fast, will get yo' ass*
> *Stuck in the pen, doin' life plus ten*
> *Young brother pump yo' brakes for me, before you choke*
> *Won't ya soak up some game from yo' big homies?*
> *This ain't livin', we givin' you jewels, use 'em as tools*
> *Explode on they industry and fade them fools*
> (This Ain't Livin', Until The End of Time)

Instead of encouraging immediate material returns from crime, Tupac begs young blacks to delay gratification ("pump yo' breaks") and focus on their education. The street life, according to Tupac, will lead to imprisonment or death. Through engaging in the schooling process, Tupac predicts that black youth can use education as a way to be successful ("explode on they industry"). Tupac's explicit message in the instrumental power of education can be summed up in his saying, "It's a cold world, stay in school" (Shorty Wanna Be A Thug, All Eyez On Me).

Tupac – Relational Beliefs

Tupac's message to delay gratification and invest in schooling is possible due to his positive description of schooling. While schooling is represented by Kanye as a site of exploitation and oppression, Tupac often reminisces about how great things were back in school. In fact, the only clear instance of distrust of schooling in Tupac's music is expressed by Young Nobel of "The Outlaws" (Tupac's protégé rap group) who comments, "In school I knew, e'rything I read wasn't true" (Black Jesus, Still I Rise). Instead, the twin issues of distrust and conflict are confined to the government and the criminal justice system.

We find a general distrust of the government, specifically the belief that politicians do not care about blacks or address the needs of black people. As Tupac says of politicians: “Dreamin of riches, in a position of makin’ a difference/Politicians and hypocrites, they don't wanna listen” (Me Against The World, Me Against the World). More, there is the notion that the US government is involved in a “premeditated scheme” of first, introducing drugs to black communities, then using harsh penalties to incarcerate blacks (Military Minds, Better Dayz).

Working in conjunction with a corrupt criminal justice system, the police are represented as the symbol of white oppression in Tupac’s music. Police officers are likened to plantation overseers who violently patrol, harass, and “lynch” black youth:

> *I got lynched by some crooked cops, and to this day*
> *Them same motherfuckers on the beat gettin’ major paid*
> *But when I get my check they takin’ tax out*
> *So, we payin’ for these pigs to knock the blacks out*
> *Ain't that a bitch, some officers are getting’ rich*
> *Whoopin’ on thugs and robbin’ drug dealers for they shit*
> (Point the Finga, Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.)

In addition to reaping financial rewards for brutalizing blacks, Tupac asserts that police corruption isn’t isolated to a few officers, but is institutionally rewarded: “Cops give a damn about a ne-gro/Pull a trigger/ kill a nigger/ he's a hero” (Tupac, I Wonder If Heaven Got A Ghetto, R U Still Down).

In response to this “enemy occupation” of the black community by the police, Tupac echo’s Malcolm X’s idea of self-defense against attacks. In response to “crooked police,” Tupac says that he’s going to be a “crooked nigga too” and start shooting back: “When the punk motherfuckers get to trippin’/ I got shit too!” (Crooked Nigga Too, Loyal To The Game). Tupac uses his lyrics as a call for black men to take up arms against the police: “This aint just a rap song/black song/Tellin’ all my brothers/get they strap on” (Holla if you Hear Me, Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.).

Tupac – Symbolic Beliefs

By telling blacks to "get they strap on" and "they learn on," so to speak, Tupac develops an oppositional black collective identity that is defined by resistance to white oppression in the form of police brutality and blocked economic opportunities, but embraces schooling. Tupac's achievement ideology promotes education and protection of the black community as part of an authentic, black male identity, which he calls the "Thug-N.I.G.G.A."

Tupac attempts to redefine the archetype gangsta-thug persona, characterized by sexual prowess and promiscuity (e.g., I Get Around, Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.), flaunting of material possessions, and violent tendencies. Instead of being just a "thug," Tupac develops a black male identity that is the "Thug-N.I.G.G.A.," an acronym for "Never Ignorant Getting Goals Accomplished" (Words of Wisdom 2pacalypse Now). Drawing on Black Nationalist ideology of the Black Panthers, Tupac promotes an authentic sense of black masculinity that includes supporting black women, defending black communities against the police, and pursuing education.

In this thug identity, violence is only condoned when it is against the police. Being a real, masculine black man is defined by violent resistance to the "punk" (soft) police. In the song Where Do We Go From Here (R U Still Down), Tupac repeats, "Who's afraid/ of the punk police?", and beckons:

> *Heyyy niggaz, where your heart at?*
> *See motherfuckers killin' babies, killin' mommas*
> *Killin' kids, keep missin' they motherfuckin' mark*
> *Now what type of mixed up trick would kill the future of our race*
> *Before he would he look his enemy dead in the eye, and open fire?*
> (Where Do We Go From Here, R U Still Down)

Black males who commit violence against their own community are ostracized as "mixed-up tricks," a "trick" being a less-than-virtuous female or "ho." By fashioning this violent masculinity against would-be threats to the black community, Tupac calls black men who do not use violence to protect the black community "sell-outs" who "are ashamed to be" a real "nigga" like Tupac (Violent 2pacalypse Now).

In addition to being a thug-solider, "never ignorant" in Tupac's construction of an authentically black masculinity emphasizes the goal of education and intelligence. Education is not just presented as an instrumental way to avoid the pitfalls of street violence or to make a better living—it is also a form of black empowerment, a way to fight against white oppression. Intelligence is portrayed as way to "explode on they [the white man's] industry and fade them fools" (This Ain't Livin', Until The End Of Time). In the song "Words of Wisdom" (2pacalypse Now) Tupac explains:

> *They shine upon the strength of an nation*
> *Conquer the enemy with education*
> *Protect thy self, reach with what you wanna do*
> *Know thy self, teach what we been through*
> *On with the knowledge of the place, then*
> *No one will ever oppress this race again*

While Tupac acknowledges that educational opportunities may be limited (Still I Rise, Still I Rise), he touts education as a way to protect the black nation, and as a weapon against white oppression. In fact, he claims that "The most dangerous weapon/ [is] an educated black man" (Rebel of the Underground 2Pacalypse Now). Tupac suggests that intelligent blacks should resort to self-help when educational opportunities are not available: "One nigga, teach two niggaz/Teach three niggaz, teach fo' niggaz (I hear ya!)/Teach mo' niggaz, and we could run this shit!" (Souljah's Revenge, Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.).

To further advance this idea of bridging the hyper-violent mobster with the scholar, Tupac employs the alter-ego of "Makaveli The Don." As Makaveli The Don, he appropriates and combines the image of 16th century Italian philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli (author of *The Prince* and the *Art of War*) and the leader of a Mafia crime family. For Tupac, being smart and black is not portrayed as "acting white" or being a "punk," but an authentic part of being a strong, black man.

Discussion

Transcending the realm of entertainment, hip-hop is now a major site for the production of cultural meanings and agency for today's generation of black youth, especially black males, and there is growing concern that it may be leading some black youth to adopt anti-school behaviors and attitudes. In response to these concerns, we examined achievement-related judgments in the lyrics of two of hip-hop's most influential artists—conscious rapper Kanye West and thug rapper Tupac Shakur. Our qualitative case study revealed the presence of oppositional culture in both Tupac and Kanye's lyrics. However, our analysis uncovered important differences in how the two describe the role of schooling in adult success, relationships with schools, and what it takes to be authentically black and male in America.

The overall similarities and differences in the construction of oppositional culture in the music of Kanye West and Tupac Shakur are summarized in Table 3. Concerning instrumental beliefs about the opportunity structure, both Kanye and Tupac rap about continuing discrimination in a racialized opportunity structure. Perceiving blocked economic opportunities for blacks, both artists present crime and drug dealing as a dangerous, yet understandable decision for black youth. Also, Kanye and Tupac concur in their relational beliefs about the criminal justice system and the government. Both artists make claims that the police and

government attempt to brutalize and disenfranchise the black community. Together, Kanye and Tupac define black male collective identity in opposition to white oppression. Resistance to white institutions is symbolically constructed as authentic blackness and maleness.

"Table 3: Comparison of Kanye West and Tupac Shakur on Three Components of Oppositional Culture"

We also find important differences along the three components of oppositional culture. On instrumental beliefs, we find divergent representations of employment in the opportunity structure and the utility of schooling. Kanye's music is thick with the belief that traditional employment for blacks is rife with discrimination and racist employers. Because of the racialized opportunity structure, even those who obtain education will reap few financial or status rewards, and will be stuck in undesirable jobs. Tupac, on the other hand, envisions education as the only alternative for the success of inner-city blacks, especially black males. Since jobs are not available, he encourages the younger black boys on the street corners to invest in education as a way to escape street violence and obtain profitable occupations in the future.

Tupac and Kanye not only differ on the usefulness of education for mobility in the status system, they also differ in their relational beliefs of schools. Kanye posits that schools are organized to depress blacks, and his lyrics reveal a deep distrust of teachers and curriculum tracking. Tupac reminisces about the good of days of school, and provides no sense that education is a site of black exploitation.

Both artists construct oppositional black identities, but resistance for Kanye means opposing oppression through school dropout. Kanye taunts and emasculates black males who pursue education, as their emphasis on school leaves them broke and womanless. We find that Tupac develops a black achievement ideology that equates education with subverting whiteness. His conception of the "Thug-N.I.G.G.A." explicitly incorporates education as a key component

to forwarding the goals of a strong, black community. Rather than ridicule black males who pursue education, like Kanye does, Tupac instead portrays intellectualism as a part of an authentic black male identity.

Conclusion

This analysis has implications for oppositional culture theory and the study of black schooling. While previous examinations of oppositional culture have been conducted in schools, our case study of hip-hop lyrics demonstrates that oppositional culture can be found outside of the immediate schooling context. As Ogbu (2004) asserts in one of his postmortem manuscripts, oppositional culture is not only about oppositional school culture, but a complex of beliefs about what it means to be an oppressed minority group in America. Schools are not islands. And our analyses point to the continued need for researchers to understand how out-of-school culture connects to the school culture of black youth.

Given the public concern about gangsta rap, that Tupac's music is filled with pro-school values and beliefs comes as a surprise, and reminds us to "not judge a book by its cover." While we question the utility of presenting oneself as a "thug" or "nigga" to society, any popular artist that attacks anti-intellectualism by making schooling an authentic part of black male identity should not be dismissed altogether.

In addition to demonstrating the heterogeneity in achievement-related beliefs in hip-hop music, this analysis supports recent research showing that oppositional culture can function to encourage academic achievement. This finding is similar to Akom's (2003) qualitative study of female high school students in the radical black Nation of Islam who are able to achieve academically without giving up their racial identity. The black power ideology and conservative

religious tenants held by these girls includes interpreting school success as "acting black," an authentically black way to fight the white system and undermine racial stereotypes. We find the same construction and operation of oppositional culture in Tupac's music. This suggests the need to reconceptualize oppositional culture theory to acknowledge that oppositional culture does not always mean school resistance, or negative attitudes towards school success.

Our analysis of oppositional culture in hip-hop music also points to the need to avoid reducing oppositional culture to only beliefs about race and schooling. Rather, oppositional culture can be better understood as a larger worldview about the meanings and consequences of race across multiple social spheres of life including education, labor market, and criminal justice.

Of course, we can not say how representative these findings are of all hip-hop music. Future research must be conducted to better understand what rappers are saying about black identity and schooling. Nor can we use content analysis to predict how black youth may interpret or react to these lyrics. All youth are active agents in (re)constructing culture and identity given their historical and immediate contextual realities. We recognize the possibility that black youth may focus on Kanye's messages about the importance of individuality, family, and religion, and disregard his representations of formal schooling—or, that Tupac's messages about education may get overshadowed by his vivid tales of high-speed shootouts with the police. Therefore, we call for more research to illuminate if, when, and how black youth occupying various structural positions are embracing or rejecting the representations of education revealed by this analysis.

Notwithstanding these limitations, we see this analysis as beginning a dialogue between researchers, educators, parents, and black youth about hip-hop, oppositional culture, and schooling—a conversation in which the voices of black youth, not researchers, should be the

loudest. Rather than dismissing or attacking hip-hop, those concerned about the achievement and development of black youth need to “tune in” to this so-called “black man’s CNN.”

Table 1: Kanye West Case Background

Hip-hop producer, turned rapper Kanye West has emerged in the last few years as the most influential rap artist since Tupac Shakur. Named one of Time Magazine's 50 Most influential Americans in 2005, Kanye's *College Dropout* (2004) and *Late Registration* (2005) albums have become two of the most critically acclaimed hip-hop albums of all-time. Much of his fame revolves around his softer, gentler rap style, in which he combines sped up RandB songs with non-gangsta rhymes. Kanye's "sweeter" rap image takes on a middle class sensibility, as the majority of his rhymes take place at up-scale retail shops and college campuses (Kanye's parents are both middle class, college professors). While many rappers project the image of a "gangsta," Kanye is the self-proclaimed "Louis Vuitton Don." He is more likely to be mistaken as Gap or Banana Republic model, than as a rapper: Kanye adorns pastels, usually pink or purple, polo shirts and Gucci loafers. Instead of rapping about guns, Kanye focuses his attention on consumer goods, college life, family, church, and social issues facing the black community. Kanye West has become the antithesis of gangsta rap by publicly admitting being a "mama's boy," calling for an end to homophobia in hip-hop, and criticizing President Bush's response to Hurricane Katrina in the southern gulf region. This Midwest rapper associates with positive "backpack" rappers, including Common Sense, Mos Def, and Talib Kweli, and has become the first of his camp to be embraced not only by mainstream America and black leaders, but also by hip-hop's tougher side.

Table 2: Tupac Shakur Case Background

Tupac Shakur is considered the most successful rapper of all time. Although he was murdered in 1996 in the mist of the East Coast-West Coast hip-hop wars with New York's Notorious B.I.G., Tupac's continued influence on popular culture is fueled by the release of new music every year since his death (8 of his 12 albums were released posthumously), conspiracy theories that he is still alive, MC's arguing over who is most Tupac-like, and a string of documentaries and books about his life. In addition, academics have taken an interest in Tupac, producing scores of manuscripts and articles about his influence on black culture. In many ways, Tupac epitomizes the gangsta-thug rapper that frightens mainstream America and blacks of the Civil Rights generation. He appeared in public heavily armed, wearing sagging pants, "Thug-Life" tattoos, and his middle-finger in the air. His constant embattlement with the law landed Tupac in and out of jail, and after surviving being shot 5 times, he explicitly mocked his own mortality by daring his enemies to kill him. Tupac's gangsta image and music have become the litmus for "real" gangsta thugs—a hair trigger predisposition for violence, the extravagant flaunting of wealth and women, and a disregard for authority. At the same time, Tupac music combines the image of the fearless gangsta-thug with the intelligent, revolutionary prophet. Amid the gritty realism of gun-shots and high-speed shootouts, Tupac delivers Black-Power inspired sermons encouraging black males to protect black communities against police violence, to embrace education, and to support single black mothers.

Table 3: Comparison of Kanye West and Tupac Shakur on Three Components of Oppositional Culture

	Similarities	**Differences**	
		Kanye West	**Tupac Shakur**
Instrumental Beliefs			
Opportunity Structure	• Racialized opportunity structure • Blocked opportunities • Drugs and crime as alternatives	• Jobs equivalent to slavery • Racist employers	• Jobs not available
Returns to Schooling	----------	• No returns to schooling • Education does not provide social mobility	• Long-term returns to schooling • Education can provide opportunities for social mobility
Relational Beliefs			
Distrust/Conflict	• Distrust of US Government • Conflict with police	• Strong distrust of schools and teachers • Conflict with teachers and school practices	• No distrust of or conflict with schools or teachers
Symbolic Beliefs			
Collective Identity	• Resistance toward whiteness/white oppression	• Resistance toward whiteness accomplished by avoiding school (e.g., dropping out) • Pursuing education *not* authentically black • Displaying material wealth without education	• Resistance toward whiteness accomplished through taking arms against police and pursuing education • Education as black empowerment

Notes

1. In this paper, we use the terms black and African American interchangeably, while recognizing that these labels may obscure ethnic and nativity differences within the black community.

2. There has been long standing debate among academics, music aficionados, and artists over the difference between “rap” and “hip-hop.” In this paper, we understand and use the term hip-hop to imply not only music, but also the worldview, identity, or culture attached to it.

3. For purposes of comparison, in 2001 the black gender gap was more than twice that of whites: nationally 71% of white males graduated versus 77% of white females. Only 43% of black males graduated, versus 56% of black females.

4. Black males in their early 30s are more likely to have a prison record than a bachelor degree (22.4 versus 12.4; Pettit and Western 2004).

5. By "non-compliant believer" Carter means black males who understand pro-school attitudes lead to academic, social, and economic success, but “favor their own cultural presentations and exert little effort to adapt to the cultural prescriptions of the school and white society."

References

Akom, A.A. 2003. “Reexamining Resistance as Oppositional Behavior: The Nation of Islam and the Creation of a Black Achievement Ideology.” *Sociology of Education* 76(4):305-325.

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. W.W Norton & Company.

Anderson, Raymond D. 2003. *Black Beats for One People: Causes and Effects of Identification with Hip-Hop Culture.* Ph.D. dissertation, Regent University.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Carter, Prudence L. 2005. *Keepin' It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White*. Oxford University Press.

CNN. 2004. CNN Presents the Gap: 50 Years after the Brown Ruling. Originally aired May 16, 2004.

Coleman, James S. 1961. *The Adolescent Society: The Social Life of the Teenager and Its Impact on Education*. New York Free Press of Glencoe.

Dimitriadis, Greg. 2001. *Performing Identity/Performing Culture: Hip Hop as Text, Pedagogy, and Lived Practice*. Peter Lang Publishing.

Entwisle, Doris R., Karl L. Alexander, and Linda Steffel Olson. 1997. *Children, Schools, and Inequality.* Westview Press.

Ferguson, Ronald F. 2001. “Test-Score Trends Along Racial Lines, 1971 - 1996: Popular Culture and Community Academic Standards.” *America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences.* Vol.1. Neil J. Smelser, William Julius. Wilson and Faith Mitchell, editors. National Academy Press.

Fordham, Signithia, and John Ogbu. 1986. “Black Students and School Success: Coping with the Burden of Acting White.” *Urban Review* 18:176-206.

Fordham, Signithia. 1996. *Blacked Out: Dilemmas of Race, Identity, and Success at Capital High*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1999. “Dissin' "The Standard": Ebonics as Guerrilla Warfare at Capital High.” *Anthropology & Educational Quarterly* 30(3):272-293.

Fryer, Roland G., and Steven D. Levitt. 2004. “Understanding the Black-White Test Score Gap in the First Two Years of School.” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 2:447-464.

Fryer, Roland G., and Paul Torelli. 2005. An Empirical Analysis of "Acting White". Harvard University.

Harvey, William B. 2002. “The Data Speak: No Rest for the Weary.” *Making It on Broken Promises: Leading African American Male Scholars Confront the Culture of Higher Education.* Lee Jones and Cornel West, editors. Stylus Publishing.

Horvat, Erin McNamara, and Kristine S Lewis. 2003. “Reassessing the "Burden of Acting White": The Importance of Peer Groups in Managing Academic Success.” *Sociology of Education* 76(4):265-280.

Hrabowski, Freeman A., Kenneth I. Maton, and Geoffrey L. Greif. 1998. *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males*. Oxford University Press.

Irvine, Jacqueline Jordan. 1990. *Black Students and School Failure: Policies, Practices, and Prescriptions*. Greenwood Press.

Kane, Gregory. 2005. “As His Son Was Selling Drugs and Getting Shot, Where Was 50 Cent’s Father?” *Baltimore Sun*, July 7.

Kitwana, Bakari. 2002. *The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African*

American Culture. Basic Civitas Books.
———. 2005. *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.
Lee, Jaekyung. 2002. "Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gap Trends: Reversing the Progress toward Equity?" *Educational Researcher* 31(1):3-12.
Majors, Richard, and Janet Mancini Billson. 1992. *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*. D.C. Heath and Co.
McWhorter, John H. 2005. *Winning the Race: Beyond the Crisis in Black America*. Gotham Books.
Ogbu, John U. 1974. *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Academic Press.
———. 1979. "Social Stratification and the Socialization of Competence." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 10(1):3-20.
———. 1987. "Variability in Minority School Performance: A Problem in Search of an Explanation." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 18:312-334.
———. 1992. "Adaptation to Minority Status and Impact on School Success." *Theory Into Practice* 31(4):287-295.
———. 1994. "Racial Stratification and Education in the U. S.: Why Inequality Persists." *Teachers College Record* 96(2):264-298.
Ogbu, John U., and Herbert D. Simons. 1998. "Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities: A Cultural-Ecological Theory of School Performance with Some Implications for Education." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 29(2):155-188.
Ogbu, John U. 2003. *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement.* Lawrence Erlbaum.
———. 2004. "Collective Identity and the Burden of "Acting White" in Black History, Community, and Education." *The Urban Review* 36(1):1-35.
Orfield, G., D. Losen, J. Wald, and C. B. Swanson. 2004. "Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis." The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and the Urban Institute.
Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. 1999. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class*. University of Chicago Press.
Pettit, Becky, and Bruce Western. 2004. "Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration." *American Sociological Review* 69(2):151-169.
Polite, Vernon C., and James Earl Davis. 1999. *African American Males in School and Society: Practices and Policies for Effective Education*. Teachers College Press.
Reese, Renford. 2004. *American Paradox: Young Black Men*. Carolina Academic Press.
Rong, Xue Lan. 1996. "Effects of Race and Gender on Teachers' Perception of the Social Behavior of Elementary Students." *Urban Education* 31(3):261-290.
Rose, Tricia. 1994. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. University Press of New England.
Stanton-Salazar, Ricardo D. 1997. "A Social Capital Framework for Understanding the Socialization of Racial Minority Children and Youths." *Harvard Educational Review* 67:1-39.
Tucker, Cynthia. 2006. Thug Culture Threatens the Black Community. *Baltimore Sun,* January 17, 2006.