SAMPLE RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS’ COMMENTS (2)

Below is an actual response to a paper I reviewed sometime ago. In this case, the author took the reviewers’ comments, scanned them in, and then put her/his responses within. A very impressive way to do it!

I include it here so you can see the level of detail/discussion I expect for your letter.

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Response to Reviewers

“TITLE OF PAPER” (XXX-XXX)

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who took the time to offer their careful criticism and advice. As you can see, I took this guidance very seriously. I believe that the revised manuscript is now much improved. Below I respond to each reviewer in turn. For purposes of clarity, throughout my responses, 12/4/5 will mean page 12, paragraph 4, line 5 of the revised manuscript. Also, I have provided my responses to each comment in italics below the original reviewer comment. As much as possible, this memo includes the exact changes made to the manuscript.

COMMENTS FROM THE EDITOR:

1. It is quite important to examine what proportion of the black population are black immigrants rather than African American. If immigrants comprise a significant proportion of the black population, you will need to consider differences between African Americans and immigrants.

   I agree that this it is important to distinguish between “Black” and African American.” Although neither Ogbu nor other scholars that study the resistance model pay this much attention, this distinction is not a minor one within Ogbu’s framework. I discuss this further in comment #14 from Reviewer 2.

2. It is risky to completely reject the ideas of those you disagree with when you provide no evidence of what is responsible for the gap. Things often are not all or nothing. The lack of support for Ogbu’s interpretation in your data is important, but that finding does not tell us what accounts for the gap.

   After considering the reviews, I realize that I over-stated the results. I am more cautious in my discussion of Ogbu in the discussion section. I discuss this further in comments #7, 10, 11, and 12 from Reviewer 2.

3. Equally important, you should reconsider what you say about Coleman on page 30. You say his findings have dangerous policy implications. Well, the first question should be if the findings are correct and there is a lot of evidence that family background affects student success in school. Do you think differences in family backgrounds of white and black children have nothing to do with differences in academic success? Of course what is good policy is also important, but that is a separate question.

   I agree that my comments about Coleman were strong (and perhaps unfair). They are no longer part of the manuscript as the conclusion has been rewritten to reflect the comments from the reviewers.
COMMENTS FROM REVIEWER 1:

This paper empirically examines several of the main tenets of oppositional culture theory. It draws on a useful dataset that allows for an exploration of some aspects of oppositional culture theory that have been so widely accepted they are practically “common sense”. I think the paper is well written and organized and is publishable with some revision. I have two overarching concerns and some other suggestions which I will list below.

1) Because of the breadth of analyses done and the number of hypotheses tested, some get inadequate discussion. The paper at times becomes a long list of findings and then ends with rather meager discussion.

   *I have rewritten the discussion and conclusion sections of the paper. However, it is important for me to note that I discuss each finding within the results section after testing each hypothesis. As such, I do not discuss them much in the discussion/conclusion sections. Instead, I give a more overarching discussion of the topic toward the end of the paper.*

2) There is a resounding silence on the role of schools in educational outcomes. The paper ends with very wishy-washy and vague set of statements about moving away from Ogbu. Okay, if Ogbu is wrong, then what else should we consider? For instance, there is an abundance of recent research suggesting that school practices matter (e.g., Anne Ferguson, Karolyn Tyson both alone and in her work with William Darity, Amanda Lewis, Carla O’Connor, Pedro Noguera, Prudence Carter, Roslyn Mickelson, Annette Lareau, Erin Horvat, etc.). The absence of this literature is also felt at other points in the paper (e.g., see point below about “in trouble”)

   *See comment “b” from reviewer 1 (about school practices) below, then see comments #7, 10, 11, and 12 from Reviewer 2 (about moving away from Ogbu).*

Other Suggestions

a) The paper states on page 7 that it is inappropriate to test the resistance model on elementary aged children. While it is likely that the ways elementary aged children understand their relationship to schooling is different than high school students it seems unnecessary and wrong to just declare 10-year-olds unlikely to think about future returns to education. In fact, children in at least 4th, 5th, and 6th grade are capable of having deep ambivalence about their relationships to school. Also, in this section, Karolytn Tyson actually has done some work on the developmental aspects of Ogbu’s theory that should be cited.

   *I agree with this comment. Therefore, I have rewritten this part of the paper to include Tyson’s work. It is now in the 2nd paragraph of the LIMITATIONS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH section following a paragraph that discusses the maturation component to the resistance model and how Ogbu posits that school resistance is heightened during adolescence (see page 6 or read below):*

   **Previous studies provide a limited assessment of the theory’s maturation component.** Quantitative studies that examine Blacks’ school resistance relative to Whites across multiple age groups (e.g., Farkas, Lleras, and Maczuga 2002; Downey and Ainsworth-Darnell 2002) use cohorts comprised of different sets of children; these studies consist of cross-sectional analyses of different cohorts and focus on only one component of the resistance model: the “acting White” hypothesis. In a qualitative study on the prevalence of school resistance among Blacks in elementary school, Tyson (2002; 2003) examines the development of oppositional schooling attitudes. In general, she finds that Black children begin school very much engaged and achievement-oriented and does not find that the rejection of school norms characterizes the larger Black culture. However, in cases where children express negative schooling attitudes, she finds that the schooling experience plays a central role in the development of these attitudes. Specifically, in addition to achievement outcomes, school officials place strong emphasis on transforming many aspects of Black children’s culture, which inadvertently communicates the existence of inadequacy associated with “Blackness.” She notes that children’s negative statements reflected a desire to avoid further failure in school, implying that schooling attitudes are part of a developmental rather than cultural process. Unfortunately, in addition to being
limited to observations for one school year, her purpose was not to assess the relative change in school resistance between Blacks and Whites during adolescence, when the oppositional culture is posited to be heightened.\(^5\)

In addition, I include the following footnote (5) that brings across my original point about the theory being developed with reference to high schoolers:

“The theory was developed with reference to high school students. A key component of the resistance model that explains why children resist school is that they project ahead to the differences in the opportunity structure they will encounter as adults relative to Whites. These connections between societal conditions (e.g., the structure of opportunities and system of social mobility) to individual-level characteristics (e.g., race) are more developed during adolescence. Nevertheless, Tyson’s (2002) work informs us that younger children are capable of having deep ambivalence about their relationships to school.”

b) On page 19 in the exploration of students’ school resistance, the author’s examine questions on skipping school and being “in trouble” as if they equivalent measures or signs of resistance to school. There is an abundance of literature on blacks’ differential disciplinary rates which suggest that school practices (e.g., various forms of institutional racism) are at least in part to blame. That is, your measure of “in trouble” might well be read more accurately as a sign of the kinds of differential treatment African American children experience in schools. The causal ordering here is thus, I would suggest, confused. Is being “in trouble” a sign of resistance or is resistance an effect of being a target of school personnel? For more on this see Anne Ferguson’s Bad Boys, William Ayers edited volume on zero tolerance policies and some of Pedro Noguera’s work.

I have incorporated this comment in several places within the paper. It is incorporated in the section that Reviewer 1 is referring to. Now on page 20, the exact wording is as follows:

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

Also, in addition to mentioning the impact of schools earlier in the discussion section, I added the following paragraph, which is part of my discussion on how future research can contribute to the resistance model literature (page 31, 2nd paragraph):

> Fourth, more research should focus on the role of schools in creating a culture of resentment/resistance among some African Americans and exacerbating the racial achievement gap.\(^7\) There is an abundance of recent research suggesting that school officials inadvertently undermine the school achievement of many African Americans (e.g., Ferguson 2000, Tyson 2003; Lewis 2003, Noguera 2003; Lareau and Horvat 1999). Lareau and Horvat (1999) find that the possession and activation of capital—both social and cultural—in school settings vary by race.
and class, which leads to variations between groups in the extent to which they are socially included (e.g., behaviors are recognized and legitimated) and excluded (e.g., marginalized and rebuffed) from the academic institutional setting. However, whereas numerous qualitative studies document the existence and effects of cultural discontinuity between school officials and African American children (e.g., Delpit 1995; Lewis 2003; Ferguson 2000; Tyson 2002, 2003; Morris 2005), there is a dearth of quantitative studies that do so. Quantitative studies would be useful in assessing the relative effect that different aspects of the culture African Americans bring from home have on the responses of school officials, and the effect these responses have on African Americans’ resentment/resistance of the dominant group.

c) I was very disappointed by the discussion and conclusion sections. While the critique of Ogbu’s theory is astute, there is a noticeable absence of other explanations for school outcomes. For instance, on page 28 authors state “findings from this and other studies suggest that the success of these schools may be due to other factors.” Okay, like what?

These sections have been rewritten. Also see comments #7, 11, and 12 from Reviewer 2.

d) Is there a missing word on page 27 which you suggest that the achievement gap can logically be attributed to Black students’ lack of desire? This seems contradictory to much of what came before.

This sentence was referring to the view/argument made by proponents of the theory. However, it is no longer in the text since the discussion/conclusion has been rewritten.

COMMENTS FROM REVIEWER 2:

Background/Literature Review

1. The first time NAEP is mentioned (2/1/7), I’d first spell it out and then use the abbreviation. Further, I’d, in a sentence or two at most, briefly describe the dataset.

I wrote out the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) the first time it is mentioned and added a sentence briefly describing the dataset (see first paragraph of the manuscript)

2. In the purpose of the study (page5), the author mentions comparing Whites and Blacks, however s/he offers no justification for this comparison as compared to, say, Whites to Blacks and Hispanics.

(Note: Because some of Reviewer 2’s later comments correspond to earlier portions of the manuscript, my response to this comment makes better sense if it is read after comment #14 from Reviewer 2). In the “purpose of the study” I inserted the following sentence (see page 8/1/9-11):

“Since my goal is to determine the extent to which an oppositional culture exists among involuntary minorities relative to Whites, immigrant Blacks and Latino/as are excluded from this study.”

This follows an earlier footnote (3/2/11), which states:

“Although Ogbu (1978) extends the resistance theory to Latino/as, they are excluded from this study. Ogbu claims that Mexican Americans—who comprise nearly two-thirds of the Hispanics living in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau 2000) — also feel alienated from American society because of the bitter memories of their incorporation into the U.S. via American imperialistic expansion in the 1840s. However, roughly 50,000 Mexican nationals remained within the newly acquired U.S. territory, a small fraction of the more than 20 million people of Mexican Ancestry currently living in the U.S.; most Mexican Americans are immigrants or descendants of
immigrants who arrived after the Mexican revolution of 1910 (see Jaffe, Cullen, and Boswell 1980). Thus, despite often being regarded as the largest oppressed minority group other than African Americans within the U.S., almost all Latino/a children in American schools derive from voluntary immigration. As such, Ogbu’s classification of this group as involuntary minorities is highly implausible (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 2003)."

Data & Analytic Plan
3. When describing the methods section, the author should keep two things in mind – specify and justify. The author should specify exactly what s/he is doing and what s/he is doing it on/with. And while doing so, justify exactly why that sample and methodology was used. In short, this needs to be done better throughout this section (see especially #4 below).

See Reviewer 2/comment #5 below.

4. Data from Maryland was chosen for this analysis? Why that state? How generalizable is the data to other states? Would similar results come from using other states or even federal data? Further, we are told that the sample is drawn from a county on the Eastern seaboard (8/3/1). Again, why that location? Would the results be different if a different county was chosen? If the location was chosen because of convenience (which is true for most research conducted), the author still needs to make the argument for why that particular location is the best (or at least an appropriate) location given the population there and the research question under investigation in this paper/research. Simply telling the reader “that” it was chosen is not sufficient; the readers need to also know “why” it was chosen. Therefore, the author needs to address these questions before a reader can depend on the validity/reliability of this data to their larger argument.

See Reviewer 2/comment #5 below.

5. The author notes that this sample is clearly wealthier than the larger population (see page 9). The justifications for why that doesn’t matter aren’t very strong to me. The author might want to think this through a little more.

I address comments #3-5 from Reviewer 2 in the “METHODS: Data” section. After describing the dataset/sample selection/attrition issue, I added the following paragraphs as part of the regular text on page 9-10):

Although the MADICS is primarily used by psychologists and was collected for the purposes of understanding the processes behind the psychological determinants of behavioral choices and developmental trajectories during adolescence, it is well suited to the goals of the current study. Its richness of measures and longitudinal design provide a good opportunity to determine whether the development from middle school to high school leads to greater opposition toward schooling among African Americans than Whites using a wide range of measures. Thus, in addition to having the necessary quality, the MADICS has greater breadth than previous datasets used to assess the resistance model.

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

6. The author claims to test oppositional cultural theory “in numerous ways that other researchers have been unable to examine” (26/2/4-5). I would agree that s/he has tested the theory in numerous ways, however, clearly, others have tested … s/he even cites appropriate studies doing so. I might suggest the language to change to unable to *simultaneously* examine “on the same population” or something like that.

See Reviewer 2/comment #7 below.

7. The author concludes that “the oppositional culture theory does not appear to be a plausible explanation of racial differences in achievement” (27/1/1). Here the researcher needs to employ more caution. I don’t think the theory ever intended to explain ALL racial differences in achievement. However, to the degree it is effective in explaining the experiences of even a few students (note, even the author found this phenomena in 17% of his/her sample), then the theory has some merit. For purposes of full disclosure, I’m not a complete fan of the theory. However, one has to admit that it has at least *some* explanatory power.

I address comments #6-7 from Reviewer 2 in the first paragraph of the “Discussion” section, which has been rewritten. I now bring these points across differently. Now on 27/2nd paragraph (the first paragraph of the discussion section), the following sentences have been re-worded from:

Second, the richness of the MADICS dataset allowed for the oppositional culture theory to be tested in numerous ways that other researchers have been unable to examine (addressing comment 6).

And

As such, the oppositional culture theory does not appear to be a plausible explanation of racial differences in achievement (addressing current comment).

To

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to provide an extensive quantitative test of Ogbu’s oppositional culture model. I use a rich longitudinal dataset well suited for testing numerous components of the theory simultaneously within the same sample. There are two major findings from this study that contribute to the racial achievement gap literature. First, the major tenets of the oppositional culture explanation are not supported. Second, the patterns in African American-White attitudes appear to remain consistent over time. That is, maturation after grade 7 appears to have little impact on the relative differences in schooling attitudes between African Americans and Whites. While Ogbu’s theory may hold true for some subgroups of the population, these findings suggest that the extent to which the oppositional culture theory explains racial differences in achievement is limited.

8. When discussing the literature describing the need for cultural change, the author might want to incorporate Shelby Steele’s The Content of Our Character. Though dated, that book made a large splash in this arena.

I incorporate Shelby Steele in the second paragraph of the conclusion section on page 32-33 (see comment 12 below for exact wording).

9. When discussing educational efforts of the Black community as a cultural practice (28/1/4), the author might consider the work of Valerie Lee. I believe she developed a concept called academic press in her work on Catholic schools.

In rewriting the discussion and conclusion sections, the text to which this comment is referring to is no longer part of the paper.
10. The author presents an argument and then concludes that “Clearly then, Black students did not overestimates their educational expectations” (28/last/last). Is s/he comfortable stating that for all 3,200 students in her/his sample? That statement is fairly broad and is not necessarily supported by her/his data. Again, I’d exercise caution.

I concur with the reviewer that the sentences in this area of the paper were too strong. They are no longer part of the manuscript.

11. In the end, the authors seem to feel that it’s poverty and not oppositional culture. However, s/he chose not to test that theory. Doing so, would make the paper much stronger. Miscellaneous

Though I agree with this comment, testing the extent to which poverty explains racial differences in school performance rather than oppositional culture is beyond the scope of this paper. After considering the reviews, I realize that I was over-interpreting the current findings by suggesting that the problem is a function of poverty. As such, now in the final paragraph of the manuscript (in the CONCLUSION section on page 33), the following has been reworded from:

“The current findings should allow researchers and policy makers to move away from explanations that attribute the lower school achievement of Blacks to their lower levels of effort and desire for success. These assumptions make the racial achievement gap appear intractable. Perhaps more merit should be given to Cook and Ludwig’s (1998:392) suggestion that policymakers “should not allow concern about the so-called oppositional culture to distract them from more fundamental issues, such as improving schools and providing adequate motivation, support, and guidance for students weighed down by the burdens of poverty.”

To

“The current study’s lack of support for many of the theory’s major tenets suggests that African Americans’ lower school performance should be open to alternative explanations. Given the current findings (and those reported by O’Connor 1997; Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998; Akom 2003; Tyson 2002; Tyson, Darity, and Castellino 2005; Carter 1999, 2005), researchers and policy makers should reconsider the extent to which they employ explanations that attribute the lower school achievement of African Americans to their lower levels of effort and desire for success. Evidence suggests that African American youths want to learn; they simply are not acquiring the skills necessary for success.”

12. Are there any policy implications from the research presented here? If so, what are they? The author might consider including some.

Since this study did not directly test the role of oppositional culture in the racial achievement gap, the findings might not yield concrete policy recommendations for achieving gap convergence. However, since the goal was to assess racial differences in school resistance (widely employed to explain the gap), this study has relevance for how people think about the problem, which is inextricably commingled with the scope/breadth with which the causes of the problem are viewed and the solutions proposed to address it. Thus, the final section of the paper (Conclusion on page 32-3) has been rewritten to reflect this and is attached below:

CONCLUSION

Theories address the questions of why and how things occur and guide social science literature and policy-making. The manner in which problems and their causes are perceived is equally important as (if not more important than) the policies proposed to address them. The implications of policy based on theories lacking widespread empirical support can be staggering. For instance, in the late 1960s and 70s Jensen put forward a series of proposals for improving Black achievement that directly followed from his theory of Black genetic inferiority. He suggested that since the basis for the gap was genetic, nothing could be done to close the gap in
inherent intelligence. Instead, Jensen (1969: 112-17) proposed that Black children should be educated through special forms of classroom instructional techniques that emphasize associative learning (e.g., memorization or rote learning, trial-and-error learning). A more recent example of theory with dangerous policy implications comes from Hanushek (1989, 1999), who suggests that the “common surrogates for teacher and school quality (class size, teachers’ education, and teachers’ experience, among the most important) are not systematically related to performance” (1989: 49), which has the potential to lead policymakers to believe that school resources are not important.

Despite the work by numerous scholars that challenge the notion that an oppositional culture is prevalent among African Americans relative to Whites (e.g., O’Connor 1997; Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998; Akom 2003; Tyson 2002; Tyson, Darity, and Castellino 2005; Carter 1999, 2005), the theory remains popular among researchers, educational practitioners, and the general public. Periodically, well-known scholars propagate the theory in books that sell quite well outside of the academy. For instance, in The Content of our Character (1990:51) Shelby Steele sternly asserts that even in the very worst schools “there are accredited teachers who teach the basics, but too often to students who shun those among them who do well, who see studying as a sucker’s game and school itself as a waste of time. One sees in many of these children almost a determination not to learn, a suppression of the natural impulse to understand, which cannot be entirely explained by the determinism of poverty.” More recently, Berkeley linguist John McWhorter (2000:28) argues that African Americans suffer from a culture of “self sabotage” that “condones weakness and failure.” However, treating the theory as an overriding explanation for racial differences in achievement might lead policymakers to narrowly conceive of the causes of the gap and assume that gap convergence is unlikely because African Americans do not want to learn.

The current study’s lack of support for many of the theory’s major tenets suggests that African Americans’ lower school performance should be open to alternative explanations. Given the current findings (and those reported by O’Connor 1997; Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998; Akom 2003; Tyson 2002; Tyson, Darity, and Castellino 2005; Carter 1999, 2005), researchers and policy makers should reconsider the extent to which they employ explanations that attribute the lower school achievement of African Americans to their lower levels of effort and desire for success. Evidence suggests that African American youths want to learn; they simply are not acquiring the skills necessary for success.

13. Though I would not suggest ending the paper with it, the authors need a section – a paragraph or two – that explicates the study’s limitations. Otherwise, a reader may feel the author thinks the paper cannot be built upon . . . that it has reached some level of perfection. I might suggest presenting those paragraphs, then including a paragraph describing areas for future research or policy suggestions, and end with a concluding paragraph that reminds us why what s/he found in this study is so important.

The discussion section now contains a discussion on how future research can add to the existing literature on the resistance model. Each of the factors discussed are things that could not be addressed in this study. Also, see comment 16 below (See comment 12 above for discussion on policy implications).

14. Throughout this paper, I would use racial and ethnic terms more purposefully. Consider the example of African American versus Black. At times, the terms seem to be used interchangeably; while at other times, they are used more purposefully. This point is particularly important when thinking about generalizability. Think about a location like New York City where about 55% of the Black population are first or second generation immigrants and may not therefore identify as African American, but do identify as Black. Further, I understand that Maryland Eastern Shore has a large African immigrant population. Given that, would the author want to use vocabulary that includes all of this population or excludes some of them? However the term is used, I would offer a criterion (as a footnote) at the beginning of the paper and employ it throughout. Consider a footnote that might read something like:

“Throughout this text, we will use the term Black to refer to people of African Diaspora, and to such populations that reside within the United States. To some, African Americans are a subgroup within the larger Black community. Since our discussion purposely includes those who may be first-generation
immigrants or who, for whatever reason, do not identify as African American, we employ the term “Black.” Furthermore, we capitalize it to distinguish the racial category and related identity from the color. Similarly, we capitalize the word White when referring to race.”

Once the author has thought this through, a similar strategy needs to be employed for any other racial groups mentioned in the paper.

(Note: Simultaneously addressing comment #1 from the editor). In the MADICS, 936 of the 938 Blacks identified themselves as non-immigrant Blacks; they responded that they were African Americans. Two responded “other” and noted that they were Caribbean immigrants.

I inserted the following footnote after the term “Black” is used for the first time in the first paragraph of the manuscript:

“I use the term Black to refer to people of African Diaspora, and to such populations that reside within the United States. When the term “Black” is used, it is capitalized to distinguish the racial category and related identity from the color. Similarly, I capitalize the word White when referring to race.”

Here, I am referring to the total Black population within the U.S. However, comment #14 from Reviewer 2 is important because African Americans and immigrant Blacks occupy different minority statuses within Ogbu’s framework. As such, as suggested by Reviewer 2, I use racial and ethnic terms more purposefully. I include the following footnote on page 3/2nd paragraph, when African Americans are first discussed:

“It is important to note the distinction between “Black” and “African American.” To some, African Americans are a subgroup within a larger Black community that includes those who may be first-generation immigrants or who, for whatever reason, do not identify as African American. Some previous studies employ the term “Black” when racial comparisons are made on academic outcomes within the U.S. population (e.g., Black-White achievement gap). However, not all Blacks have the same minority status within Ogbu’s minority classification scheme (Ogbu and Simons 1998). According to Ogbu (1990), whereas African Americans are involuntary minorities, immigrant Blacks (e.g., Caribbean Americans) are voluntary (immigrant) minorities—groups who willingly move to the United States because they seek better opportunities (e.g., employment, greater political or religious freedom). Unlike involuntary minorities, voluntary minorities do not have a history of being oppressed by White Americans and are therefore more trusting of them and their institutions for upward mobility. They view education as the primary mechanism through which the opportunities that led them to the U.S. can be realized. As a result, they fail to develop identities in opposition to the dominant group or to adopt counterproductive schooling behaviors/attitudes and often overcome experiences of discrimination and difficulties in school to do well academically. Thus, the different minority status held by these groups’ results from different histories and relationships with the dominant group (i.e., White Americans), which leads them to have different beliefs about the barriers they encounter. All Blacks used in this study identified themselves as African Americans (the dataset used in this study contained only two Black immigrants). As such, throughout the text I employ the term “African American” when referring to Blacks within this study (I suspend this rule in the quotation of texts written by others, which I leave unaltered, or when describing the work of other researchers who themselves use the term Black). For further discussion on characteristics of Black immigrants, see Waters (1999), who documents differences between Black Americans (i.e., African Americans) and immigrant Blacks from the West Indies.”

15. Consider avoiding the use of the term “I” in the paper. Most research, hypotheses, for example, are presented or thought about in such a way that they could be proven false. If not it brings into question if the researcher is looking to research a topic or confirm a pre-existing position? This distinction, to me at least, connotes the difference
between research and investigative journalism. In journalism, the point is to confirm an already preconceived notion. Journalists tend to ignore information that doesn’t support their theory; researchers attempt to avoid this trap. Therefore writing the paper/article as though the information/research stands on its own highlights its legitimacy beyond the lived-course experience of the authors or researchers.

Point taken.

16. My final point, I think, is most important. Ogbu’s work tended to involved qualitative methods. One of the many beauties of qualitative work is its ability to pick up on nuances and dynamics that quantitative work doesn’t always afford. Is it therefore possible that Ogbu (and his various colleagues over the years) were able to solicit experiences and processes that quantitative data is unable to? In other words, just because this paper does not (necessarily) find support for Ogbu’s theory quantitatively, is it still possible that the theory has some merit and explanatory power; and that this explanatory contribution can be found only through qualitative work or more dynamic quantitative techniques? The authors seem to dismiss, or at best, ignore, this possibility.

In my discussion on how future research can add to the existing literature on the resistance model, I have a discussion about the need to improve cultural measures within quantitative studies (on page 30):

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

Even with all of my comments (which might seem very critical here), I really enjoyed this paper and feel the information presented is important and merits being read by a larger audience. To that end, my comments are as detailed as they are. I wish the researcher well in addressing these comments and encourage them to see this project through to publication.