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Weighing the "Burden of 'Acting White'": Are There Race Differences in Attitudes Toward Education?

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Abstract

Recent reports by ethnographic researchers and media sources suggest that many African American students view academic success as a form of "acting white," and that peer pressure reduces their level of effort and performance. This article analyzes the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 to answer three questions: (1) do blacks experience greater alienation toward school than non-Hispanic whites?; (2) do blacks incur social penalties from their peers for succeeding academically?; and (3) if so, are these "achievement penalties" greater than those for whites? Our analysis suggests the answer to each of the three questions is "apparently not."

INTRODUCTION

Recent ethnographic work suggests that some minority students condemn academic success as a rejection of their ethnic cultural identity. The research on African American students has been particularly influential.¹ The ethnography of Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu [1986] has largely been responsible for making this idea into one of the "chestnut" explanations for black-white differences in educational outcomes [Steele, 1992, p. 70]. Fordham and Ogbu [1986] argue: ". . . One major reason that black students do poorly in school is that they experience inordinate ambivalence and affective dissonance in regard to academic effort and success" (p. 177). Because of the history of racial discrimination in the United States, African Americans "began to doubt their own intellectual ability, began to define academic success as white people's prerogative, and began to discourage their peers, perhaps unconsciously, from emulating white people in academic striving, i.e., from 'acting white'" (p. 177).

Although African Americans have experienced dramatic increases in educational attainment over the past 50 years, there are still grounds for concern.

¹ Similar attitudes have been documented among Chicano students and various other ethnic groups [see Portes and Zhou, 1994].

Between 1970 and 1993, the percentage of blacks aged 25 to 29 who had completed high school increased from 56 to 83 percent, closing most of the historical gap with whites. By other measures of attainment the gap has narrowed but remains troublesomely large. For example, as of 1993, almost twice as high a percentage of whites as blacks aged 25 to 29 had completed a four-year college degree.² African American scores on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) tests continue to lag behind those of whites by 10 to 18 percentage points [Jaynes and Williams, 1989, p. 349]. The “acting white” hypothesis seems to suggest that if African Americans could somehow become as committed as whites to schooling as a means of getting ahead, and if the torments experienced by African American high achievers at the hands of their classmates could be diminished, the educational gap between blacks and whites could be narrowed further.

But is it true that African American youths are generally alienated from school and hostile to academic striving? While ethnographic and anecdotal evidence demonstrate the existence of such perspectives among some groups of minority students, it remains to be shown that this phenomenon is pervasive. The empirical analysis presented here is the first to utilize a nationally representative sample to test the “acting white” hypothesis. We seek to answer three questions using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) survey data: (1) do African American students, on average, experience greater alienation toward school than non-Hispanic whites?; (2) on balance, do blacks incur social penalties from their peers for succeeding academically?; and (3) if so, are these “achievement penalties” greater than those for whites? Our analysis suggests that the answer to each of the three questions is “apparently not.”

The article is organized as follows: The second section discusses the “acting white” hypothesis in greater detail, and reviews the development of the hypothesis from ethnographic finding to recurring mass media story to current wisdom. Next, we review the NELS:88 data to be analyzed. The fourth section examines the NELS:88 sample of 10th graders in 1990 for evidence of greater alienation from school by blacks relative to whites, and the fifth section uses the NELS:88 10th grade data to explore the “achievement penalties” experienced by blacks and whites. The last section discusses the implications of our findings.

MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND

From Research Hypothesis . . .

The notion of socioeconomic upward mobility for blacks as a form of “selling out” has been in existence since at least the time of Frazier [1957], although concerns about the effects of these attitudes on black educational efforts and aspirations appear to have increased recently.³ Fordham and Ogbu [1986] argue that the history of discrimination in the United States has caused African American adolescents to value educational achievement differently from other

² These statistics are calculated from data published by the U.S. Department of Commerce [1973] and U.S. Department of Education [1994a].

³ In an early description of this phenomenon cited by Ogbu [1987, p. 168], Petroni [1970] notes that black school children were afraid of being called an “Uncle Tom” or accused of “acting white” if they exerted themselves too much in their school work.

groups, as blacks have come to associate academic success with “acting white.” Ogbu [1987] has suggested that African Americans have developed a “folk theory of getting ahead that does not necessarily emphasize the strategy of academic pursuit,” in direct contrast to the “folk theories” developed by white middle-class Americans suggesting that education is a key strategy for upward socioeconomic mobility (p. 154).⁴

The “acting white” hypothesis is distinct from previous motivational theories such as those offered in Elliot Liebow’s *Tally’s Corner* [1967] and reviewed in Kane [1987], which suggest that motivation toward “mainstream” activities or roles is conditioned by personal experience. In this view it is past failures that are debilitating. In contrast, the “acting white” hypothesis elevates the importance of socialization and the historical experience of the group, rather than the individual.

Fordham and Ogbu [1986] further formalize the link between racial discrimination, “acting white,” and educational outcomes:

Subordinate minorities like black Americans develop a sense of collective identity or sense of peoplehood in opposition to the social identity of white Americans because of the way white Americans treat them in economic, political, social, and psychological domains, including white exclusion of these groups from true assimilation . . . subordinate minorities also develop an oppositional cultural frame of reference which includes devices for protecting their identity and for maintaining boundaries between them and white Americans. Thus, subordinate minorities regard certain forms of behavior and certain activities or events, symbols, and meanings as *not appropriate* for them because those behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings are characteristic of white Americans . . . To behave in the manner defined as falling within a white cultural frame of reference is to “act white” and is negatively sanctioned. (p. 181, emphasis in original)

An important component to their theory is the notion of “fictive kinship,” the development of a feeling of kin between unrelated people. Fordham and Ogbu suggest that membership in the group for African Americans transcends actual ethnic background and has an important behavioral element: “Since ‘blackness’ is more than a skin color, fictive kinship is the concept used to denote the moral judgment the group makes on its members . . . Essentially, the concept suggests that the mere possession of African features and/or being of African descent does not automatically make one a black person, nor does it suggest that one is a member in good standing of the group” (p. 184). Ogbu [1987] suggests “castelike minorities [such as African Americans] tend to equate . . . learning standard English and academic aspects of the school curriculum . . . with linear acculturation which is threatening to their culture/language, identity, and sense of security” (p. 156).

Fordham and Ogbu [1986] contend that the desire to exhibit behaviors consistent with the criteria for “kinship” conflicts with positive achievement motivations: “Because of the ambivalence, affective dissonance, and social pressures, many black students who are academically able do not put forth the necessary effort and perseverance in their schoolwork and, consequently, do poorly in school. Even black students who do not fail generally perform well

⁴ Note, however, that Ogbu appears to have changed his view somewhat in recent years: “It is true that in spite of the historical experience of blacks in the opportunity structure, black folk theories for getting ahead stress the importance of education, but this verbal endorsement is not to be accepted at face value. It is often not accompanied by appropriate or necessary effort” [1994, p. 289].

below their potential for the same reasons” (p. 177). Fordham and Ogbu, then, are suggesting that “the academic learning and performance problems of black children arise not only from a limited opportunity structure and black people’s response to it, but also from the way black people attempt to cope with the burden of ‘acting white’” (p. 201).

In his recent work, Ogbu [1994] has introduced the term “cultural inversion,” meaning “. . . a process whereby subordinate group members come to define certain forms of behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings as inappropriate for them because these are characteristic of their oppressors . . .” (p. 274). “The target areas in which an oppositional cultural frame of reference is applied appear to be those traditionally defined as prerogatives of white Americans, first defined by whites themselves and then acceded to by blacks . . . Intellectual performance (IQ scores), scholastic performance, and performance in high-status jobs in mainstream economy represent such areas” (p. 275).

Shelby Steele offers many of these same arguments in his 1990 book *The Content of Our Character*: “The middle-class values by which we [middle-class blacks] were raised—the work ethic, the importance of education, the value of property ownership, of respectability, of ‘getting ahead,’ of stable family life, of initiative, of self-reliance, et cetera—are, in themselves, raceless and even assimilationist . . . But the particular pattern of racial identification that emerged in the sixties and still prevails today urges middle-class blacks (and all blacks) in the opposite direction” (pp. 95, 96). Shelby defines “the most damning things one black can say about another black” as charges such as “So-and-so is not really black, so-and-so is an Oreo” (p. 71). Steele suggests that “in the very worst inner-city 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*” (p. 51, emphasis added).

Claude Steele [1992] echoes Ogbu’s view of the cost of success which African American students perceive. Steele suggests that African American students “disidentify” with achievement caused in part by “the basic assimilationist offer that schools make to blacks: You can be valued and rewarded in school (and society), the schools say to these students, but you must first master the culture and ways of the American mainstream, and since that mainstream (as it is represented) is essentially white, this means you must give up many particulars of being black—styles of speech and appearance, value priorities, preferences—at least in mainstream settings. This is asking a lot” (p. 77). Steele cautions that “once disidentification occurs in a school, it can spread like the common cold. Blacks who identify [with school] and try to achieve embarrass the strategy by valuing the very thing [academic success] that the strategy denies the value of. Thus pressure to make it a group norm can evolve quickly and become fierce. Defectors are called ‘oreos’ or ‘incognegroes.’ One’s identity as an authentic black is held hostage, made incompatible with school identification” (p. 75).⁵

⁵ We should note that both Shelby Steele and Claude Steele offer different explanations for this phenomenon, rooted basically in feelings of anxiety caused by previous discrimination. The key issue is, of course, that the predictions these authors offer are strikingly similar to those suggested by Fordham and Ogbu.

The ethnographic study of Fordham and Ogbu [1986] focuses on the experiences of students in an almost all-black high school in Washington, DC. Their analysis indicates that some black students underachieve in order to avoid being seen as “acting white,” while even high-achieving black students are forced to employ various coping strategies to avoid negative peer sanctions.⁶ Fordham and Ogbu suggest their Washington, DC ethnographic analysis illustrates a phenomenon that “exists in other parts of the United States . . . Black students elsewhere . . . in predominantly black schools as well as in integrated schools, appear to face the burden of acting white” (p. 200). Researchers such as Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, and Johnson [1990] have noted that the Washington high school examined by Fordham and Ogbu is unlikely to be representative of high schools nationally, and in later work Fordham [1988] herself acknowledges that findings from this Washington, DC high school are “not necessarily generalizable to all black adolescents” (p. 55).

Collins-Eaglin and Karabenick [1993] examine a sample of approximately 200 African American students from Michigan schools for evidence of the “acting white” hypothesis. Almost three fourths of the sample respondents were drawn from the ranks of an academic summer institute, so many of the students in the sample are likely to be more academically inclined than the average Michigan student. Roughly one fifth of the sample reported some level of agreement with the statement that academic success would be viewed by black schoolmates as “selling out,” and roughly one fourth of the surveyed students reported some agreement with the statement that their black friends viewed success in school as “acting white.”

Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown [1992] explore similar issues in their survey of 15,000 high school students, drawn from nine high schools throughout the West and Midwest regions. Conducted in 1987–1988, their analysis indicates that “among African-American youngsters, the absence of peer support for achievement undermines the positive influence of authoritative parenting” (p. 723), and in fact find in their sample that “African-American students’ school performance was even unrelated to their parents’ level of education . . . a finding that is quite surprising” [p. 725; Dornbusch, Ritter, and Steinberg, 1991]. The Steinberg data reveal that African American students report that they value education as much as white students, but on average spend less time on homework. As Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown [1992] conclude:

Although [African American] parents were supportive of academic success, these [African-American] youngsters, we learned from our interviews, find it much more difficult to join a peer group that encourages the same goal. Our interviews with high-achieving African-American students indicated that peer support for academic success is so limited that many successful African-American students eschew contact with other African-American students and affiliate primarily with students from other ethnic groups. (p. 728)

How generalizable are the Steinberg findings? Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown note that the nine California and Wisconsin high schools from which

⁶ “Because of the ambivalence, affective dissonance, and social pressures, many black students who are academically able do not put forth the necessary effort and perseverance in their schoolwork and, consequently, do poorly in school. Even black students who do not fail generally perform well below their potential for the same reasons” (p. 177).

their large sample of students was drawn were “selected to provide a window on the contrasting ecologies of contemporary American adolescents . . . All told, our sample was approximately one-third non-white, with nearly equal proportions of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American youngsters—much like the adolescent population in the United States today” (p. 724). Although we do not doubt that the high schools selected for participation in the Steinberg study were ethnically diverse, it is not possible to judge how representative the resulting sample is with respect to local value systems and peer group interaction.

. . . To Media Story and “Common Knowledge”

While Fordham and Ogbu in 1986 suggested this was “a very important but as yet widely unrecognized dilemma of black students” (p. 202), in the interim this dilemma has received growing attention within the mainstream press. The *Wall Street Journal's* coverage of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology summer academic program for high-school-aged minorities offers one example: “At a lunch table, over cold cuts on whole wheat, talk turns to the ultimate insult: ‘wanting to be white’ . . .” [Suskind, 1994, p. A6]. One Hispanic student notes the attitudes toward education in many predominantly minority schools: “If you get good grades, you’re ‘white.’ What, so you shouldn’t do that? Thinking that way is a formula for failure” (p. A6). The *Journal* notes that for one African American participant from a low-income area of Washington, DC:

He knows few whites; in his world, whites have always been the unseen oppressors. “The charge of ‘wanting to be white,’ where I’m from,” [he] says, “is like treason” (p. A6).

Additional examples can be found in the editorial pages of *The New York Times*⁷ and the *Wall Street Journal*,⁸ and feature articles in magazines such as *Time*.⁹ Educational initiatives have even been developed in response to this concern.¹⁰

Thus, the conventional wisdom has now incorporated the notion that black youths who strive to excel in school are subject to uniquely powerful peer sanctions, the “burden of ‘acting white’” [Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 186]. As a diagnosis for the relatively poor academic performance of African American youths this offers hope: If some means could be found to “peer proof” education, then many more youths would work up to their intellectual potential. But the evidence in support of this conclusion is not compelling. Although the ethnographers have documented the existence of antiachievement norms and the particularly troubling rhetorical form that they may take, it remains to be shown that these norms are dominant, that youths who are successful academically are especially “burdened” in their relationships with peers, and that the achievement burden for blacks is heavier than for other students.

Our investigation employs a large, nationally representative survey of 10th graders to explore two closely related issues: alienation from school, and penal-

⁷ See Herbert [1995].

⁸ See Pearson [1994].

⁹ See Gregory [1992].

¹⁰ See William Raspberry’s [1995] discussion in the *Washington Post* of Carl T. Rowan’s Project Excellence, founded in 1987.

ties for success. The hypotheses motivated by the preceding discussion can be stated (informally) as follows:

- Black youths and their families are more likely to be alienated from school than white youths and their families. Viewing alienation as a “withdrawal of effort” [Bronfenbrenner, 1973], African American parents and children will devote less interest and energy to educational processes than white families. Given that the rejection of schooling as a means to success is based on the rhetoric of race, this difference will persist even after adjusting for socioeconomic status.
- Doing well in school places black youths at risk of social ostracism and other peer penalties. Hence, on average, high-achieving black students will perceive themselves to be less successful socially than other black students. Although peers may also impose social penalties on high-achieving white students, these penalties will be less common or intense than for blacks.

THE DATA

The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) surveyed a nationally representative sample of eighth grade students and reinterviewed them in 1990 and 1992. The original sample employed a two-stage sampling design, selecting first a sample of schools and then students within these schools. In the first stage the sampling procedure set the probabilities of selection proportional to the estimated enrollment of eighth grade students. Out of a population of roughly 39,000 schools offering eighth grade in the United States in 1988, 1052 schools participated in the survey, of which 815 were public and 237 were private. In the second stage, 26 students were selected from each of these schools, resulting in a 1988 sample of almost 25,000 eighth graders.¹¹ Excluded from the NELS:88 sample were students with mental handicaps, physical or emotional problems, and inadequate command of the English language.

Our calculations make use of the 1990 NELS follow-up survey [NELS:88(90)]. By dint of some sample “refreshing,” NELS created a cross-section of 10th graders with 17,544 respondents. Because this sample is not strictly representative of the relevant population, the NELS file includes weights for each record indicating how many people that respondent “represents.” All of our statistics reported later in the article make use of these weights. The one-hour questionnaires for NELS:88(90) were self-administered and were conducted at both in- and out-of-school locations.

Most of the data we use from the NELS come from the survey participants themselves, raising the possibility that differences in the accuracy of self-reports from black and white students could bias our results. Bauman [1996] finds that both white and black sophomores in the High School and Beyond survey have a slight tendency to inflate their grades in self-reports, with this tendency slightly higher among blacks than among whites (0.25 of a letter

¹¹ In most cases, 24 of these students were randomly sampled and the other two students were selected from among the Hispanic and Asian Islander students [U.S. Department of Education, 1994b].

grade for blacks, 0.20 for whites). At the same time, blacks do *not* appear more likely than whites to overstate time spent on homework.¹²

The NELS offers two opportunities to examine student behavior that do not rely on self-reports: dropping out of school after 10th grade, and student absences. Dropout data are based on an examination of school-enrollment data by NELS surveyors during the second (1990) follow-up [U.S. Department of Education, 1994b, p. 95]. Data on student absences were gathered directly from the students' high school transcripts in 1992.¹³

The NELS data offer both drawbacks and advantages relative to the ethnographic data employed in the studies we reviewed earlier. The NELS data does not include items on students' speech or behavioral patterns, attitudes toward racial identity as it relates to achievement, or details on forms of social interactions. However, NELS does include useful information on the student's background, academic performance, and social standing. Most importantly, NELS is nationally representative, implying that the results of our analysis are generalizable to the larger adolescent population.

EVIDENCE ON ALIENATION FROM SCHOOL

The NELS:88(90) survey includes a number of items concerning the student's school expectations and work habits, as well as parental involvement. The evidence from these data, reported here, does not support the hypothesis that black youths tend to be more alienated from school than white youths.

In what follows we make statistical comparisons between black and non-Hispanic white students with respect to educational expectations, dropout rates, effort devoted to classes, and parental involvement. For each measure we provide two sets of comparisons. The first is based on simple averages, whereas the second is based on averages that have been adjusted for differences between the two racial groups with respect to several characteristics of respondents' families: income; mother's education; and whether or not the respondent lives in the same household with his or her father or other adult male guardian.¹⁴

¹² Bauman [1996] first calculates the black–white difference in reported homework time using all of the students in the High School and Beyond survey. He then restricts his sample to the 70 percent of students that were found to have reported their cumulative grade point average accurately, and finds little effect on the black–white homework gap. “Either there is a different subgroup of blacks who provide inaccurate answers to this question, or black students are more accurate reporters of their hours of homework than of their grades” (p. 15).

¹³ NELS stratified second follow-up participants into four sampling groups on the basis of the number of first follow-up participants attending each school in 1992, and selected 1500 schools from which to gather transcript data. Although students in schools containing a larger number of NELS students were more likely to have transcript information available, NELS provides weights that adjust for the sampling design. Transcript data are available for roughly half of our 1990 sample.

¹⁴ This relatively small subset of explanatory variables was chosen for computational and expositional ease. In Robert Hauser's [1995] review of Herrnstein and Murray [1994], he refers to their choice of explanatory variables (similar to our own, although with the added inclusion of parents' occupations) as a “minimally adequate [SES] specification” [Hauser, 1995, p. 151]. Hauser suggests “no one should expect the addition of a few more background variables to boost explanatory power substantially” (p. 151), and notes “a full specification of social background would add such variables as number of siblings, intact family, rural or metropolitan origin, and regional origin” (p. 151). The point of our analysis is to note that even “minimally adequate” controls for family background are sufficient to eliminate most or all of the observed differences in schooling behavior between African Americans and whites.

Table 1. SES variables: Percentage distributions for NELS 10th grade sample, 1990.

Variables	Total 1990 NELS 10th graders (<i>n</i> = 17,753)	Non-Hispanic whites (<i>n</i> = 12,311)	Blacks (<i>n</i> = 1742)
Male	50.0	50.3	49.1
Race			
White, non-Hispanic	71.4	N/A	N/A
African American	12.5		
Hispanic	10.5		
Asian	4.0		
Other	1.6		
1988 family income (\$)			
0–10,000	9.7	5.6	28.3
10–20,000	14.8	12.5	21.5
20–35,000	29.7	30.2	27.1
35–50,000	21.6	24.2	12.1
50–75,000	16.0	18.1	8.8
75,000+	8.1	9.5	2.3
Mother's education			
Less than high school	14.6	10.5	17.5
High school	38.3	40.1	36.4
Some postsecondary	23.0	23.6	27.3
College degree	14.5	15.8	10.7
Postgraduate	9.5	10.1	8.2
Father or adult male guardian not in home	15.0	11.8	38.4
<i>R</i> 's high school percent black			
10th graders			
0–25	82.2	90.7	27.8
26–50	9.0	6.7	27.7
51–75	4.6	2.1	20.5
76–100	3.3	0.2	24.2

Note: Missing values for the variables were as follows: school demographics (6.6 percent); family income (18.5 percent); and mother's education (15.8 percent).

Our objective is to examine whether race plays a role in determining attitudes toward education which, as Steele suggests, “cannot be entirely explained by the determinism of poverty” [1990, p. 51]. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the population of 10th graders with respect to these socioeconomic variables.¹⁵ Unless noted otherwise, these results use the self-reports from NELS participants.

Educational Expectations and Persistence

The acting-white hypothesis suggests that African American youths perceive a conflict between educational success and black cultural identity. If this perspective governed behavior, we would expect that black students would “aim lower” in school and withdraw earlier than whites.

¹⁵ Exploratory analysis including racial composition of the respondent's school as an explanatory variable did not change the general findings discussed later in this article.

Table 2. Educational expectations of NELS 10th graders, 1990.

Variables	Total (<i>n</i> = 17,753)	Non-Hispanic whites (<i>n</i> = 12,311)	Blacks (<i>n</i> = 1742)
<i>R</i> 's educational expectation			
High school diploma or less	10.2	9.4	11.2
Some college	30.5	29.6	30.5
College degree or more	59.3	61.0	58.3
Years of school expected			
Average	15.9	15.9	16.0
Adjusted average	16.0	15.8	16.4 ^a

Notes: The “years of school expected” variable is reported as a categorical variable in the NELS:88 data. The mapping between these categories and years of school is as follows: less than high school, 11 years; high school, 12 years; some college or postsecondary vocational education, 14; four-year college degree, 16; postgraduate, 18. Educational expectations were missing for 6.6 percent of our sample. The adjusted percentages are calculated from a probit regression analysis, evaluated at the non-Hispanic white population averages for the regressors, which are: gender, race, father in home, mother’s education, and family income.

^a Black–white difference in averages statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

The NELS:88(90) respondents provided information on how far they expected to go in school. As shown in Table 2, the results are similar for the two racial groups, and reflect a remarkable optimism for both. For example, about 60 percent of both black and white respondents expected to at least complete a four-year college degree.¹⁶ The average of respondents’ expectations is virtually identical for the two groups. Adjusting for family characteristics, we find that the black students expect to go a half year farther in school than the whites on the average. These results are generally consistent with those based on a survey of female 10th graders in 1980 [Karraker, 1992] and on the survey results from NELS in 1988, when these students were in eighth grade [Voelkl, 1993].

While in the 1990 survey almost all 10th graders expected to graduate from high school, the follow-up survey in 1992 found that 6.9 percent of the whites and 9.8 percent of the blacks were no longer enrolled in school (Table 3). This difference between the racial groups disappears when we adjust for family characteristics.¹⁷ The adjusted school persistence rates found in Table 3 are produced via a probit regression analysis in which family structure (whether there is an adult male guardian living within the home), family income, and mother’s education are included as explanatory variables. The coefficient estimates from this probit are then used to calculate the marginal effects for the race variable at the white population means. That is, predicted probabilities of enrollment in school in 1992 are calculated for blacks and whites at the mean values for whites for all of the explanatory variables.

¹⁶ The large discrepancy between expected and actual college completion rates may be explained by imperfect information of 10th grade students about the educational obstacles they are likely to face in the future. Note that this problem is not limited to black students: Although 60 percent of both groups expect to graduate from college, realistic completion rates would be more in line with actual rates in recent years, which are 24 percent for whites and 13 percent for blacks [U.S. Department of Education, 1994a].

¹⁷ Similar results have been found for earlier cohorts of students [Jaynes and Williams, 1989].

Table 3. School persistence of NELS 10th graders, 1990.

Variable	Total (<i>n</i> = 17,753)	Non-Hispanic whites (<i>n</i> = 12,311)	Blacks (<i>n</i> = 1742)
Percent 1990 10th graders still enrolled in school in 1992			
Percentage	92.4	93.1	90.2 ^a
Adjusted percentage	93.6	93.7	93.9

Note: The unadjusted percentages are calculated from a probit regression analysis which includes a constant term and a dichotomous variable for respondent gender, and are calculated at the white population average for percent male. The adjusted percentages are calculated from a probit regression analysis, evaluated at the non-Hispanic white population averages for the regressors, which are: gender, race, father in home, mother's education, and family income.

^a Black-white average differences statistically significant at the 5 percent level, as indicated by the standard error for the coefficient estimate for the dichotomous race variable in the probit regressions.

Earlier studies have found that black students tend to persist *longer* in school than whites when family characteristics and other attributes are taken into account [Cook and Moore, 1993; Ludwig, 1994; Haveman and Wolfe, 1994]. Thus, the expectations and dropout data provide no evidence in support of a deficit for blacks in either schooling expectations or actual persistence.

Effort

If there is a relatively strong antiachievement ethos within the African American adolescent community, it may be revealed in more subtle ways than actually dropping out. Black students might respond by skipping class or school more and doing less homework than their white peers. But our evidence suggests otherwise.

Responses on how often the NELS:88 10th graders skipped class are coded in categorical form. The statistics in Table 4 show that about 35 percent of both racial groups admitted skipping class at least once during the fall term.

An important indicator of effort is time spent outside of class studying and doing homework. Our analysis is based on the median response category from the NELS:88(90) homework item. The median student spent two to three hours per week on homework outside of school.¹⁸ Sixty-eight percent of whites and 65 percent of black respondents spent at least this much time, and even this difference is eliminated once we control for family characteristics. (Note the implication that one third of 10th graders of both races spend less than two hours each week on homework!)

¹⁸ By way of comparison, Brown and Steinberg's [1991] survey of 8000 students enrolled in Wisconsin and San Francisco public high schools found that respondents reported spending about four to five hours on homework per week, figures they report to be similar to those of other national surveys. Brown and Steinberg's survey may also include time spent on homework within school, whereas ours focuses on homework time out of school. Bauman [1996], using the data on sophomores in *High School and Beyond* for 1980, finds that black students do less homework than whites on the average—approximately one half hour per week less—but that difference is fully accounted for by sociodemographic differences.

Table 4. School effort of NELS 10th graders, 1990.

Variables	Total (<i>n</i> = 17,753)	Non-Hispanic whites (<i>n</i> = 12,311)	Blacks (<i>n</i> = 1742)
Respondent skipped a class last fall			
Percentage	36.2	34.9	35.5
Adjusted percentage	35.7	34.8	33.4
Respondent spends at least 2–3 hours per week on homework out of school			
Percentage	68.2	68.1	65.2 ^a
Adjusted percentage	69.5	68.4	68.9
Respondent missed more than 10 days of school during fall, 1989 (self-report)			
Percentage	10.5	10.1	9.2
Adjusted percentage	9.5	9.7	6.5 ^a
Respondent missed more than 10 days of school during 1989–1990 school year (transcript data)			
Percentage	28.3	28.5	28.0
Adjusted percentage	27.3	28.4	20.8 ^a

Notes: The unadjusted percentages are calculated from a probit regression analysis which includes a constant term and a dichotomous variable for respondent gender, and are calculated at the white population average for percent male. The adjusted percentages are calculated from a probit regression analysis, evaluated at the non-Hispanic white population averages for the regressors, which are: gender, race, father in home, mother’s education, and family income.

^a Black–white average differences statistically significant at the 5 percent level, as indicated by the standard error for the coefficient estimate for the dichotomous race variable in the probit regressions.

Table 4 also presents the results for how many days of school the respondents missed during the preceding fall: About 10 percent of both groups reported missing more than 10 days. After adjusting for family characteristics, it appears that whites were more likely than blacks to accumulate that many absences.

We are able to replicate these comparisons using school-reported data, but with one change: Instead of a single semester, the school-transcript data are for the entire academic year. The results are presented in the final row of Table 4. As in the case of the self-report data, the fractions of whites and blacks who miss 10 days or more of school are nearly identical. Once we account for socioeconomic background, whites are substantially more likely to have 10 or more days absence than blacks.

Parental Involvement

If there are stronger antiacademic norms among black adults, black parents would be expected to have reduced involvement with their children’s schools

Table 5. Parental involvement for NELS 10th graders, 1990.

Variables	Total (<i>n</i> = 17,753)	Non-Hispanic whites (<i>n</i> = 12,311)	Blacks (<i>n</i> = 1742)
Parent phoned teacher at least once in fall			
Percentage	58.3	57.8	64.5 ^a
Adjusted percentage	58.6	57.8	65.9 ^a
Parent attended school meeting at least once in fall			
Percentage	57.1	56.4	64.7 ^a
Adjusted percentage	59.4	56.8	70.8 ^a
Parent attended school event at least once in fall			
Percentage	61.2	62.3	63.1
Adjusted percentage	62.6	62.6	68.1 ^a
Parent checks homework at least sometimes			
Percentage	53.2	53.1	54.4
Adjusted percentage	53.9	53.1	57.3 ^a

Note: The adjusted percentages are calculated from a probit regression analysis, evaluated at the non-Hispanic white population averages for the regressors, which are: gender, race, father in home, mother's education, and family income.

^a Black-white average differences statistically significant at the 5 percent level, as indicated by the standard error for the dichotomous race variable in the probit regressions.

relative to white parents. Our analysis of the NELS data finds that, on average, African American parents are at least as involved in their children's educations as white parents of similar means.

The NELS 10th graders reported the frequency of different interactions between their parents and school. As seen in Table 5, African American parents are more likely to telephone their child's teacher, a difference that increases once family socioeconomic status is controlled. A greater propensity for African American parents to contact school staff by telephone would, of course, be of limited value if phone calls were a substitute for, rather than a complement to, other forms of involvement in their child's schooling.¹⁹ But analysis of the NELS data suggests that African American parents are at least as involved as white parents in other ways, as well. The results shown in Table 5 indicate that almost 65 percent of African American parents were reported by their children as having attended at least one school meeting in the 1990 fall semester, versus about 56 percent for white parents. Once family SES is controlled,

¹⁹ For example, in a recent *Wall Street Journal* article [see Stecklow, 1995] discussing differences in parental contributions to schools in both time and finances, one volunteer in an elementary school located in a low-income area of Washington, DC, says her involvement in the school makes her the exception. "Other parents are quick to call her or the principal to complain their kids aren't getting enough homework or to talk about a discipline problem," the *Journal* notes, though the volunteer adds, "But they don't want to be involved" (p. B1).

this difference increases to almost a 14 percentage-point advantage in favor of African American parents. Similar results are found in Table 5 for parental attendance at school events.

The final row in Table 5 shows that African American parents appear to be at least as involved as white parents in helping their children with homework. As seen in the Table, 53 percent of white parents and 54 percent of African American parents were reported by their children as checking homework sometimes or often, a finding which is perhaps somewhat surprising in light of the differences in maternal education levels between blacks and whites shown in Table 1. Once differences in family socioeconomic status, including mother's education, are controlled, black parents become more likely than white parents to check homework sometimes or often by four percentage points, a statistically significant difference.

PEER PENALTIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The preceding results offer little support for the claim that African American adolescents are more alienated from school than their white peers. But, although blacks and whites are remarkably similar in their expectations and level of effort, it may still be true that there is a difference in the value placed on doing well in coursework. Does academic success bring peer derision or ostracism?

The analysis presented in this section requires some initial discussion about how high school students organize themselves socially. Many sociological studies of high school cultures have noted that students tend to self-select into different social cliques: "jocks," "populars," "brains," "loners," "nerds," or "average students" [Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown, 1992, p. 727; Brown and Steinberg, 1991, p. 4]. Moreover, the peer-group affiliation of each student seems to be widely known throughout the school, even across lines of race [Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown, 1992]. Not surprisingly, Brown and Steinberg [1991] find that student support for academic achievement differs across social groups: highest among the "brain" crowd, lowest among the oppositional crowd (what Brown and Steinberg refer to in the northern California high schools they surveyed as the "druggies"), and moderate for other groups. Coleman's [1961] ethnographic work suggests that simultaneous membership in multiple social groups is the exception rather than the rule, although it is unclear whether this aspect of teen culture has changed over the past several decades.

In such a balkanized high school social structure, we hypothesize that a particular student's social status is determined by a combination of two factors: the student's within-group standing (how the student ranks socially within the social group the student has either joined or been relegated to), and the student's between-group standing (how the student's peer group is viewed by students in other groups). If each group within a high school is accorded the same social standing by the student population as a whole, a student's social standing is determined exclusively by standing within his or her particular group. The observations of Coleman [1961], however, suggest this is not the case, or at least was not at the time he was doing his research. Coleman reports: "In every school, most students saw a leading crowd, and were willing to say what it took to get in" (p. 36). Coleman notes that, although a few of the

Table 6. Measures of popularity for NELS 10th graders, 1990.

Items	Responses that are coded in the "unpopular" category	Percentage of whites who believe themselves unpopular	Percentage of blacks who believe themselves to be unpopular
Respondent often feels put down by students in class	Strongly agree; agree	19.8	22.3
In the first half of the current (1990) school year, how many times did someone threaten to hurt you at school?	Once or twice; more than twice	24.3	20.9
Other students think of respondent as being popular	Not at all	15.9	15.6
Other students think of respondent as being part of leading crowd	Not at all	33.0	33.4
Respondent is not very popular with the opposite sex	True; mostly true; more true than false	21.0	26.5

students he surveyed objected to the idea of such a social hierarchy, the friend of one such student offered a poignant retort: "You don't see it because you're in it" (p. 34).

There are a number of items in NELS:88(90) that provide information on the students' views of their social standing and the treatment they receive from their peers. We have chosen five of these, and in each case reduced the response scale to a binary outcome that can be interpreted roughly as "popular" or "unpopular." Table 6 provides definitions and preliminary statistics on these five items. The first two items indicate the student's experience with "put-downs" and physical threats from classmates. Both of these measures may be either within- or between-group social indicators, depending on how classes are assigned within a school, how students travel to and from school, and other characteristics of the school's organization. The next two indicators, whether other students think of the respondent as being popular and whether the respondent is popular with the opposite sex, may primarily capture within-group social rankings. The final measure, whether other students think of the respondent as being part of the leading crowd, appears to be an indication of the degree to which the student's particular peer group is held in high or low esteem by the rest of the school.

The NELS:88(90) also provides a number of items that indicate academic success. We present results for two of these: (1) whether the student reports receiving mostly A's in math (20 percent of whites and 13 percent of blacks);²⁰

²⁰ We found qualitatively similar parents (not reported here) using as the criterion "mostly A's in English."

and (2) whether the student is a member of an academic honor society such as the National Honor Society²¹ (7 percent of whites and 8 percent of blacks).

What comparisons are relevant? The ethnographic studies and commentary on “acting white” are concerned with how high-achieving black students are treated by their black classmates. Hence, we expect to find that, on average, black students who get mostly A’s in math or belong to an honor society have lower social standing than their black classmates; that is, high-achieving black students have a more difficult time than other black students in joining supportive social groups, and are relegated to the less desirable social groups. Our operational measure of the peer penalty for high achievement is the AP (achievement penalty) score:

$$\text{AP} = \% \text{ of Black High Achievers who are “unpopular”} \text{ minus} \\ \% \text{ of Other Black Students who are “unpopular”}$$

A second set of comparisons stems from the implicit suggestion that high-achieving white students have an easier time of it. Hence, we compute the AP score for whites and then compare it with that for blacks.

Table 7 reports our first set of results. The AP score is calculated based on each of the five measures of “popularity” and both measures of achievement. Comparisons based on the first measure, “receiving mostly A’s in math,” offer no evidence that there is a peer penalty for black high achievers in comparison with those who receive average grades in math. For example, Table 7 indicates that the proportion of white students with mostly A’s in math who had been threatened at least once during the fall term was three percentage points lower than the proportion of other white students who had been threatened. For black students, the percent of high achievers who had been threatened in the fall of 1990 was two points lower than for other black students. Indeed, four of the five AP scores are actually negative, although none are significantly different from zero. In comparison with the AP scores for whites, there is no systematic pattern. In the two instances in which the difference between white and black AP scores are statistically significant (both involving males) the score is negative for blacks and positive for whites.

The results based on membership in an honor society suggest a more definite conclusion. Both black and white honor society students are less likely than their classmates to perceive themselves as unpopular: The AP scores are negative in 29 out of 30 cases, and a majority of these scores are statistically significant. Where there are differences between black and white AP scores, they tend to favor the blacks.

AP Scores in Black Schools

Much of the relevant ethnographic research was based on observations of predominantly black high schools. That fact, combined with the likely possibility that the racial composition of the school has an effect on peer culture, motivated a replication of these comparisons for subsamples defined by the racial composition of their high schools. As shown in Table 8, the qualitative pattern of results is the same for black students, regardless of whether they are in predomi-

²¹ The question is worded “Which of the following activities have you participated in during this school year,” with one of the choices being “National Honor Society or other academic honor society.”

Table 7. Achievement penalties for NELS 10th graders, 1990.

Achievement	Feels put down by students	Threatened at least once last fall	Viewed as not popular	Not part of leading crowd	Not popular with opposite sex
Social penalty for mostly A's in math					
Whites (<i>n</i> = 10,284)	-1	-3 ^a	3 ^a	2	0
Blacks (<i>n</i> = 1289)	-1	-2	-4	-5	4
White males	0	-4	3	3	0
Black males	-8	-3	-9 ^c	-14 ^b	10
White females	-3	-3	2	1	0
Black females	6	-1	0	3	-3
Social penalty for Participating in honor society					
White (<i>n</i> = 11,586)	-2	-8 ^a	-5 ^a	-11 ^a	-4 ^a
Blacks (<i>n</i> = 1652)	-1	-6	-12 ^a	-21 ^a	-18 ^{a,c}
White males	-2	-8 ^a	-4 ^a	-10 ^a	-5 ^a
Black males	1	1	-10	-19	-13
White females	-2	-7 ^a	-6 ^a	-11 ^a	-3
Black females	-4	-9	-15 ^a	-22 ^a	-22 ^{a,c}

Notes: The numbers reported are equal to the average social cost for high achievers minus the average social cost for other students. For high achievers defined by receiving mostly A's in mathematics, the comparison group is students that receive average math grades (neither mostly A's nor mostly D's), and for high achievement defined by participating in an honor society, the comparison group is all other students. Sample sizes are different for the math grades/honor society comparisons because of our exclusion of "mostly D's" in math from the top row comparisons.

^a Achievement "penalty" statistically significant at the 5 percent.

^b Achievement "penalty" for whites and blacks are different at the 10 percent significance level.

^c Achievement "penalty" for whites and blacks are different at the 5 percent significance level.

nantly white or black schools. (No AP scores are presented for whites in predominantly black schools because the sample sizes are too small.) Interestingly there is some evidence that the black students at predominantly black schools are rewarded by their peers for membership in an honor society, whereas black students at predominantly white schools are neither rewarded nor penalized.

Multivariate Analysis

The evidence that black high achievers are no more likely to be unpopular than their classmates casts doubt on the claim that there is a prevalent social penalty for such achievements. However, this sort of descriptive evidence does not settle the issue. It is possible that the black students who get A's or join an honor society tend to be those who are able to avoid opprobrium as a result of other advantages, such as athletic ability or high socioeconomic status [Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Coleman, 1961]. If those who lack such advantages are penalized for academic success, and hence tend to avoid it, then the descriptive evidence would fail to reveal the true burden of "acting white."

This "selection" hypothesis would be especially plausible if there were proportionately fewer black high achievers than white. That is the case for "mostly A's in math" but not for the honor society students (where a slightly *higher* percentage of black than white students belong). Nonetheless, we explored the

Table 8. Achievement penalties for NELS 10th graders, 1990.

Achievement	Feels put down by students	Threatened at least once last fall	Viewed as not popular	Not part of leading crowd	Not popular with opposite sex
Social penalty for mostly A's in math					
Predominantly white (>59%) schools					
Whites (n = 8715)	-2	-3 ^a	0	0	-2
Blacks (n = 472)	-1	4	6	10	4
Predominantly black (>59%) schools					
Blacks (n = 399)	7	6	-3	0	-15 ^a
Social penalty for participating in honor society					
Predominantly white (>59%) schools					
Whites (n = 9732)	-2	-9 ^a	-4 ^a	-9 ^a	-4 ^a
Blacks (n = 588)	-10	-1	-7	5	-1
Predominantly black (>59%) schools					
Blacks (n = 514)	6	-5	-18 ^a	-32 ^a	-21 ^a

Notes: The numbers reported are equal to the average social cost for high achievers minus the average social cost for other students. For high achievers defined by receiving mostly A's in mathematics, the comparison group is students that receive average math grades (neither mostly A's nor mostly D's), and for high achievement defined by participating in an honor society, the comparison group is all other students. Sample sizes are different for math grades and honor society comparisons because of our exclusion of students receiving "mostly D's" in math from the top row.

^a Achievement "penalty" statistically significant at 5 percent.

possibility of a selection bias by performing a multivariate probit analysis of the five measures of popularity, in which we controlled for nonacademic variables that influence popularity, including family income, and participation in varsity sports or band. The results are reported in Table 9, where our AP scores are calculated from the coefficients of the independent variables indicating academic success. Using the first measure of achievement, "mostly A's in math," all of the estimated AP scores are rather small, and none are significantly different from zero. As before, the other measure of academic success, membership in an honor society, yields evidence that such success is associated with a *reduced* likelihood of unpopularity.

Coefficient estimates for two of the probit equations underlying Table 9 are presented in the Appendix. The results are consistent with Coleman's [1961] ethnographic findings on income's effect on social standing: There may be many things that money cannot buy, but popularity is not one of them.²²

DISCUSSION

Black high school students of the 1990s, like their counterparts from earlier years, are not particularly alienated from school. Blacks are as likely as white

²² The complete set of probit results are available upon request from the authors.

Table 9. Achievement “penalties” from probit regressions for NELS 10th graders, 1990.

Achievement	Feels put down by students	Threatened at least once last fall	Viewed as not popular	Not part of leading crowd	Not popular with opposite sex
Social penalty for mostly A's in math					
Controlling for family income, varsity sports, band					
Whites	-1.2	-3.4 ^a	4.0 ^a	3.1 ^a	1.3
Blacks	-0.9	-2.3	-3.3 ^b	-5.3 ^b	3.8
Social penalty for participating in honor society					
Controlling for family income, varsity sports, band					
Whites	-1.2	-7.5 ^a	-2.7	-7.9 ^a	-3.1
Blacks	-1.0	-4.7	-9.8 ^{a,b}	-17.1 ^{a,b}	-18.4 ^{a,b}

Notes: The numbers reported are equal to the average social cost for high achievers minus the average social cost for other students. See Appendix for additional information on how these figures are estimated. Sample sizes are different for math grades and honor society comparisons because of our exclusion of students receiving “mostly D’s” in math from the top row.

^a Achievement “penalty” statistically significant at 5 percent.

^b Achievement “penalty” for whites and blacks are different at a 10 percent significance level.

students to expect to continue in school through college, and their actual rate of high school completion is about as high as for whites once some account is taken of family circumstances. Further, the effort expended by the students and their parents is not notably different between blacks and whites.

It is also reassuring that 10th graders who excel in school are no more likely to be unpopular than other students. Our results indicate that both black and white students are able to join peer groups that are supportive of high achievement. This finding holds even for black students in predominantly black schools. Indeed, our evidence indicates that membership in an academic honor society is a social advantage in such schools. These results do not contradict the ethnographers’ observation that high-achieving black students are sometimes taunted as “acting white”; it does suggest that, overall, these taunts do not inflict especially grievous social damage, and are compensated by some social advantage associated with high achievement.

Are there other reasonable interpretations to our results? One possibility is that self-report data of the sort we analyzed yield biased results on race because black youths are more likely than white to exaggerate their level of effort. Although Bauman’s [1996] results suggest otherwise,²³ it remains a logically possible explanation for reconciling the results of ethnographic research with some of our survey results. Suppose, for example, that, in line with the ethnog-

²³ Ogbu and Simons [1994] report on the basis of their survey of Oakland minority students, grades 5 through 12, that the blacks were far more likely to exaggerate their grades than the Chinese American students. This survey did not include white students.

raphers' claim, black students tend to be heavily influenced by an oppositional culture that penalizes efforts to do well in school, and suppose, furthermore, that in response to survey questions, black students tend (in effect) to deny this alienation and represent themselves as more engaged in schoolwork than they really are. Then it is possible that the two processes (alienation and misrepresentation) would cancel out, producing the results that we have observed from the NELS survey data. But when we checked against more objective data, this explanation did not hold up; our two "effort" variables that are based on school records rather than self-reports yield results that are generally in line with the self-report findings.

Race differences in survey-response bias are also unlikely to account for our core findings concerning popularity. Those findings are based on comparisons of blacks with blacks, and whites with whites, in measuring the AP scores, so that any unique "race" effect would cancel out.

Another challenge to our interpretation is more complex. Suppose that anti-achievement norms are more powerful among black 10th grade students than white, but that there exists a self-selection process that conceals the effects of the social penalties for striving. Although our results indicate that high-achieving students (black or white) are not paying a social penalty for their success, we do not have any direct measure of how many students with the ability to do well were discouraged from making the effort by the attitudes of their peer group. Consider, for example, the following stylized example:

Suppose students sorted themselves between cliques of two types, the *As* (who tolerate effort) and *Ds* (who impose prohibitive penalties on effort by members, but ignore nonmembers). If black students tend to find the *Ds* more attractive for whatever reason (such as preserving "fictive kinship"), then more of them will elect to join the *Ds*. The result would be that high-achieving students of neither race would suffer a social penalty, but that the antieffort norm would have a greater detrimental effect on blacks than whites, just as the commentators have suggested.

Two things argue against this sort of explanation. First, it requires the unreasonable assumption that the high-effort students are completely insulated from those who belong to oppositional groups. And second, it implies that blacks devote less effort to schoolwork than whites, which does not appear to be correct given our findings from the NELS data.

In sum, our results do not provide support for the belief that group differences in peer attitudes account for much of the black-white gap in educational achievement. On the other hand, disparities in the family backgrounds of blacks and whites do account for the racial group differences in student inputs into the educational process. For policymakers, concern about the oppositional culture may be something of a distraction from addressing the more fundamental education policy issues: improving schools and providing adequate motivation, support, and guidance for students who are weighed down by the burdens of poverty.²⁴

²⁴ That the problem may be more fundamental is suggested by Alex Kotlowitz's [1995] troubling story of Scott Baylark and Telkia Steward, two of the top students in the 1986 graduating class from Chicago's DuSable High School, who took numerous honors classes and were given every encouragement by the faculty. Rather than being ostracized by their peers, they were elected class officers and served as class leaders in a variety of ways. Both matriculated at the University of Illinois, and discovered that they were poorly prepared for the academic demands of freshman year. For that and other reasons, they soon dropped out.

APPENDIX

Probit Regression Results Underlying Table 9

Table A.1. Dependent variable: Other students do not think of *R* as popular at all.

Explanatory variable	(1)	(2)
Constant	-0.871 (0.055) ^a	-0.770 (0.054) ^a
Black	-0.044 (0.049)	-0.060 (0.042)
male	-0.050 (0.027)	-0.058 (0.028) ^a
Math A	0.173 (0.036) ^a	
Math D	0.093 (0.040) ^a	
Black-math A	-0.363 (0.121) ^a	
Black-math D	0.165 (0.103)	
Honor society		-0.131 (0.060)
Black-honor society		-0.606 (0.202) ^a
Family income		
\$10-20,000	0.043 (0.064)	-0.006 (0.064)
\$20-35,000	0.021 (0.058)	-0.009 (0.057)
\$35-50,000	-0.084 (0.060)	-0.114 (0.060)
\$50-75,000	-0.126 (0.063) ^a	-0.160 (0.063) ^a
>\$75,000	-0.294 (0.077) ^a	-0.442 (0.080) ^a
Missing	0.043 (0.061)	-0.008 (0.061)
Varsity sport	-0.511 (0.035) ^a	-0.506 (0.036) ^a
Band	-0.055 (0.033)	-0.031 (0.034)
LRT statistic for significance of African American achievement penalty ^b (chi-square, 1 <i>df</i>)	2.74	18.56 ^a

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. Table 9 was produced by estimating the predicted probabilities for black and white high and average achievers using the coefficient estimates given. Probabilities were fitted at mean white population values, with median white family income (\$20-35,000 per year) and participation rates in varsity sports (0.248) and band (0.209) in the NELS 10th grade sample.

^a Statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

^b The African American achievement penalty is composed of the parameter estimates for "achievement" and "achievement interacted with race." The statistical significance of the African American achievement penalty was thus tested using a likelihood ratio test (LRT) procedure, in which a restricted probit equation was estimated under the restriction of [achievement + (achievement) * (black) = 0].

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