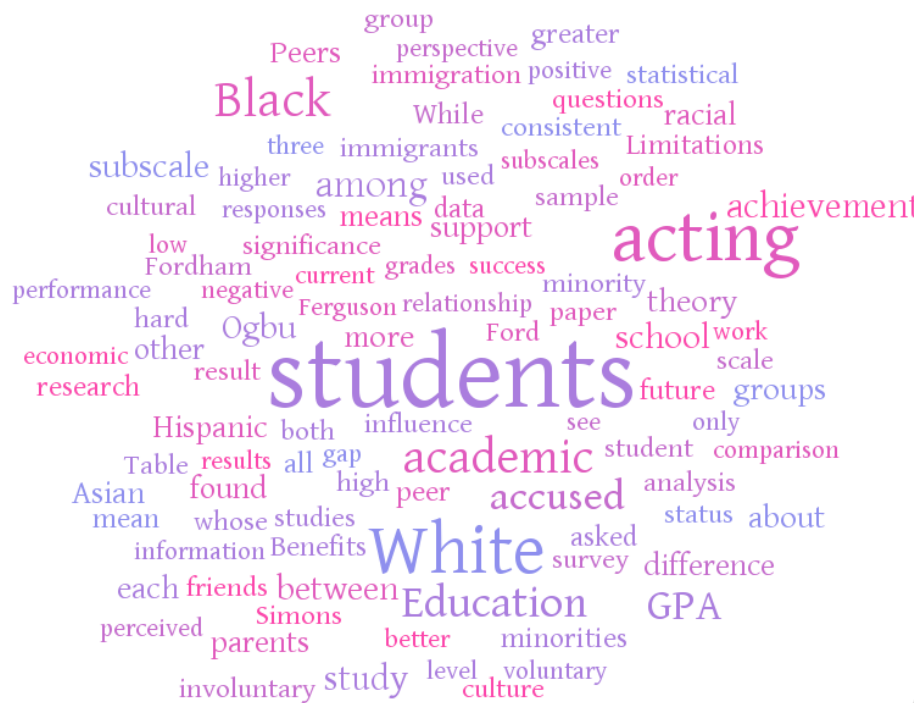


# The Acting White Accusation: an examination of academic achievement, perceived educational benefits, and peer influence among high school students.

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## Introduction

The economical, social, and cultural issues Blacks face as a marginalized group in America has a rippling effect on students and helps to explain why the achievement gap has been proven for years to exist between Black and white students. The Acting white theory, founded by John Ogbu, describes the relationship and attitudes Black students have toward school, and provides a cultural perspective for teachers and educators to understand the struggles black students face. The theory attributes the traits of studying, caring about your grades and working hard to receive good grade as acting White, meaning that Black students who have these academic traits are not being Black and therefore betraying their culture (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). While the acting White theory has its merits and truths in the black community, little research exists to examine at the theory outside of the black community. What about other minority groups? Do they view academic excellence as something only white students can obtain? The prevalence of the implications made by the acting White theory about education about minority group is the prime reason and focus of this paper: What is the relationship between the acting White theory, academic achievement, and perceived academic value among high school minority students?

## Literature Review

Black students are often known to value education but have low test scores. This probes researchers to ask the question: Why? The academic split between Black and White students, known as the achievement gap, has been extensively researched (Steele, 1997). Conclusions on what influences the drastic difference in academic performance include, the level of opportunity each racial group has access to—teachers, computers, resources—and alienation faced by minority students when interacting with White teachers that devalue their ideas, etc (Flores, 2007). While these reasons are valid and have circulated the academic world, the achievement gap still exists today. The present study does not specifically look at the achievement but hopes to add useful information that can help students and educators moving forward. This paper is more foundationally rooted in the works of John U. Ogbu, the late University of California, Berkeley professor at the Department of Anthropology.

## **Acting White**

Due to the lack of equity between White and Black students, many black students internalized the concept they have to work twice as hard to get even half the things a White man has (Flores, 2007; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). Behaviors that constitute acting White include, speaking proper English, studying in the library for a long period of time, working hard to receive good grades, having good grades, listening to white music or classical music, and being on time (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). Fordham and Ogbu state that Blacks have processed these ideas and concluded that it has yielded in the fear of acting White—the fear of academically succeeding since it is a trait attributed to white Americans (1986). Black students want to maintain their culture and a sense of home in their community because it is a way to stand in solidarity against “the Other”—the system of white superiority that continues to perpetuate the notion of black inferiority (Fordham, 1996; Ferguson, 2001). As a result, students who appear to want to join “the Other” by behaving in a manner contrary to their own culture opened themselves up to be seen as betraying their culture/‘acting White’ (Ferguson, 2001, pg. 378). This left black students with the “burden of acting White”—they are forced to either maintain their cultural identity or obtain academic success (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986).

While Ogbu’s work has been widely accepted, there are papers that disagree with aspects of the acting White phenomenon, often times referred to as oppositional culture (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey, 1998; Cook and Ludwig, 1998; Ferguson, 2001; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig’s study on 10th graders looked at three main questions: Do African-American adolescents report greater alienation from school than non-Hispanic whites?, Does academic success lead to social ostracism among black adolescents?, and Do the social costs or benefits of academic success differ by race? (Cook and Ludwig, 1998). Their analysis yielded an answer of “apparently not” to all the questions (Cook and Ludwig, 1998). This presented a contradiction to the assertions about alienation made by Fordham and Ogbu. Sociologists Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey evaluated key points of the oppositional culture and found inconsistency in the theory. Similar to Cook and Ludwig (1998), Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) did not find evidence to support the claim that black students are more resistant. Similarly, economist Ronald Ferguson found Black students in Shaker

Heights, Ohio, did not display less interest in academics than White students (Ferguson, Ludwig, & Rich, 2001). Ferguson further states, “skills and learning techniques, not oppositional culture, should be the focus of efforts to close the achievement gap” (Ferguson, Ludwig, & Rich, 2001, p. 387). All three studies all dispose the claim that black students show less care for their academics as a result of the oppositional culture.

Donna Ford’s qualitative method of gathering information on acting White helped her find information in support of the theory’s assertions. Ford specifically identified the opposite of acting White as acting Black (not caring about school, earning bad grades, etc). She surveyed only Black students identified as ‘Gifted’ and asked for their perspective on acting White and acting Black. When students’ qualitative responses were examined, Ford found that acting White was characterized by four things: i. Language, how students speak, ii. Behavior, the way they act (ex: mean, perfect, good, etc), iii. Intelligence, how smart/educated the student is, and iv. Attitude, (ex: “arrogant”, “stuck-up”). Ultimately, Ford found that black students who perceive other black students that act White as acting like they are “superior to others” (Ford, 2008, p. 230). Despite viewing students perceived as acting White as acting like they are better, black students still had an overall more positive perspective of acting White while they had a more negative viewpoint of acting Black, all consistent with the acting White theory (Ford, 2008, p. 231).

Ms. Ford’s paper is an influential source in this paper because her implementation of the acting White theory into her methodology influenced the direction of this study. Additionally, the aspects of the current methodology, specifically questions about acting White and acting Black, align with parts of her methodology.

### **Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities**

The disparities in performance among minorities are often attributed to culture or genetics (Ogbu, 2004). Ogbu (1998) groups minorities into three groups but, for the purpose of this study, we will focus on the two most prevalent groupings—voluntary and involuntary minorities.

Voluntary minorities are known as immigrants that voluntarily moved to the U.S. in hopes of a better future (Ogbu and Simons, 1998; Ford, 2008). They do not feel that their existence in the United States was forced upon them by the U.S. government (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). While they may face problems in schools, assimilation, discrimination, cultural differences, etc, they had

motivated to achieve academic and economic success in order to obtain the American Dream (Ford, 2008). Involuntary minorities are non-immigrants who were forced into the United States against their will. Black Americans who were brought to the United States as slaves are involuntary minorities (Ogbu and Simons, 1998; Ford, 2008). In comparison to voluntary minorities, they tend to have lower academic performance, are less economically successful, and face more cultural and language problems (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). This theory adds a perspective that is useful when analyzing data on Black Americans. Often times, the divide within the black community—immigrants and non-immigrants— is not taken into perspective in research when this difference can yield important differences. The current study will apply this theory to other minority groups in order to see if there a difference among their academic performance in relation to their immigration status.

### **Peer Influence**

The current study looks at peer influence among high school students in the context of academic achievement. Both theories of Ogbu imply the significance of peer relationships hence why it is included the study. Black students fear succeeding in academics will result in ridicule from their peers (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). This great amount of power embedded in the social relationships students have with each other magnifies the influence peers can have on each other's education, especially in high school, a transitional stage where many students are still finding themselves and forming their identities. This impact peers have on each other can be positive or negative, hence why it is important to examine. While there are studies on the academic achievement of African Americans (ex: Curtis, Grinnell-Davis, & Alleyne-Green, 2017; Darensbourg and Blake, 2014; Ford, Grantham, and Whiting, 2008; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008; Perrakis, 2008; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008) they are still a group that is underserved in educational research along with other minority groups.

Findings from the 2014 study by Alicia Darensbourg and Jamila Blake, showed that the more academic support students felt from their friends, the more likely they were to have values and beliefs that school is important for their future. This paper, like Ms. Ford's paper, is influential in this paper, specifically in the methodology. A large part of my methodology aligns with

Darensbourg and Blake's because they used quantitative scales to measure perceived academic value along with peer influence.

### **Current Study**

The present study will incorporate the theory of acting White but unlike previous studies, no Black students will be included in the analysis of the present study. Other minority groups, Latinos and Asian, will be asked on their perception of the phenomenon to see if this oppositional culture is solely found in Black students. Unlike acting White, acting Black—the opposite of acting White, identified with traits such as aggressiveness, low intelligence, anti-social, anti-authority, etc— has very little research and will also be explored in the current study.

Participants will be asked for their parent's immigration status as a means of looking at the voluntary and involuntary minorities theory. Voluntary minorities are motivated by the educational opportunities available in the United States because they are better than the options they had back home (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). They believe that success results from hard work and good education (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). This results in children of immigrants typically having high academic performance because they are aware of the struggles their parents underwent to come to America (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). On the other hand, involuntary minorities do not fully see the U.S. as a country full with opportunities for *anyone* to become successful as long as they work hard and have a good education (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). They believe they are not fully rewarded for their hard work while White Americans still have access to more opportunities. These mindsets will be used in the analysis of the present study in order to see the influence of parental immigration status on the academic achievement.

Incorporating both theories by Ogbu— acting White, and voluntary and involuntary minorities, a goal of the study is to analyze the relevance of these theories two decades after they were published. Using immigration status, peer influence, academic achievement as differentiating variables along with the acting White theory will yield insightful information about the present-day education system and its impacts on minority group students.

# Methods

## **Participants and Data Collection**

Data was collected from a large co-ed public high school, grades 9-12, in Southern California with a population of approximately 4,800 students. The student body is economically and ethnically diverse with 52% socioeconomically advantaged students, 39% Hispanic, 28% Asian, 26% White, and 4% African American. Data was collected through each of the school's seven gate entrances. In the morning, while students entered campus, every other student was asked if they were interested in taking a survey. Their student ID number along with the first letter of their first name was collected so that the survey could be emailed to them (student email comprises of the student ID number and the first letter of their first name). The survey was emailed to students 2-48 hours after their names were taken down. Students completed the survey on google forms using their school issued chromebook and their responses were automatically collected on a Google Sheet.

To ensure that the sample was representative of the school, the data was separated into 7 different stratas, each strata representing a gate entrance. In each strata, only a specific amount of data was selected through randomization to ensure the percentage of students from each gate in our sample mirrored as the percentage of students who enter the school. The names of students who said “yes” and “no” was recorded in order to calculate non-response rate, 60%. At the end of the survey, a link was provided for participants to enter into a raffle for a \$20 gift card. Due to the nature of the data, aiming to look at several minority groups, many students were asked to fill out the study, hence the high non-response rate.

## **Measures**

All questions used in the survey of the present study, were previously used in the studies by Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) and Darensbourg and Blake (2014). Both studies are the key foundational sources for this paper, therefore the current survey aligns with the survey in both studies.

The survey consisted of five sections: demographics, academic achievement, achievement values, peer influence, and acting White and Black. All questionnaires in this study came from Murdock's 1999 paper as was used in Darenbourg and Blake's 2014 study.

#### *Demographics.*

Students were asked which gate they came from for data stratification. Grade level, self-identified gender, and race/ethnicity were collected. In addition, students were asked to identify if they were an immigrant in the U.S. ("Yes" or "No" response). The same question was asked regarding their parent(s).

#### *Academic Achievement.*

Participants self-reported their grades. They were asked "What are your grades from the six week report card?" The responses were on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Mostly As) to 4 (Mostly Ds). They were asked to put down their weighted cumulative GPA (9th graders were asked to put the GPA from their most recent academic progress report). Students were asked to select how many Honors, AP, and IB classes they have taken along with how many AP exams they received a score of a three or better on.

#### *Achievement Values.*

The Economic Value of Education Scale (Murdock, 1999) was used to examine students' convictions on education and its impact on their future. The assessment contained 15-questions with answers on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Really disagree) to 4 (Really agree). Questions on here included "If I work hard in school, I will get a better job than the kids that don't try hard"; "I don't think an education will guarantee that I will get paid well". Two subscales are included in the scale, Limitations to Education, measuring the economic limitations of education with regards to acquiring financial success; and Benefits to Education, measuring to which extent students believe that an education will pay off economically.

#### *Peer Influence.*

The Peers' Academic Support and Aspirations scale (Murdock, 1999) was used to assess students' perceptions of their peers behaviors and beliefs about school. The assessment



contained 15 questions with answers on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Really disagree) to 4 (Really agree). Questions consist of “Most of my friends will quit high school when they are old enough.”; “I don't think many of my friends will graduate from high school.”; and “My friends work pretty hard in school”. This scale comprised of three subscales. The Peer Academic Aspiration subscale inspects student's viewpoint of their friends' future long-term goals; the Peers' Resistance to School norms subscale assesses the level at which students discourage their peers conform to behaviors related to academic success; and the Peer Academic Support subscale examines perceived peer support for academic-related tasks.

### *Acting White and Acting Black.*

The seven-question section aimed to see student perception and knowledge of acting White and acting Black. Participants were asked if they had heard of acting White and if they have ever been accused of acting White. Both questions were a “Yes” or “No” response. Students who answered yes to being accused of acting White were given an opportunity to explain at greater length by whom. The same questions were asked for acting Black as well. The last question in this section gave students the opportunity to give their input on why “Some capable (smart) students do not do well in school.”

### **Data Analysis**

Responses were downloaded from google form onto Microsoft Excel for data processing and analysis. The data analysis toolpak was used for descriptive statistics, two-sample t-tests and correlations. Descriptive statistics was used at the preliminary stages of data analysis to see the patterns among questions in each subscale. Two-sample t-tests were used to test statistical significance between two group for a given subscale. Correlations were run to see the association between each subscale among each subgroup.

## **Expectations**

There are various expectations going into the data analysis for this study.

1. Students who have been accused of acting White will have a higher GPA than students who have not been accused of acting White.

2. Students who have been accused of acting Black will have a lower GPA than students who have not been accused of acting Black.
3. Students whose parents are immigrants will have a higher GPA than those whose parents are not immigrants.

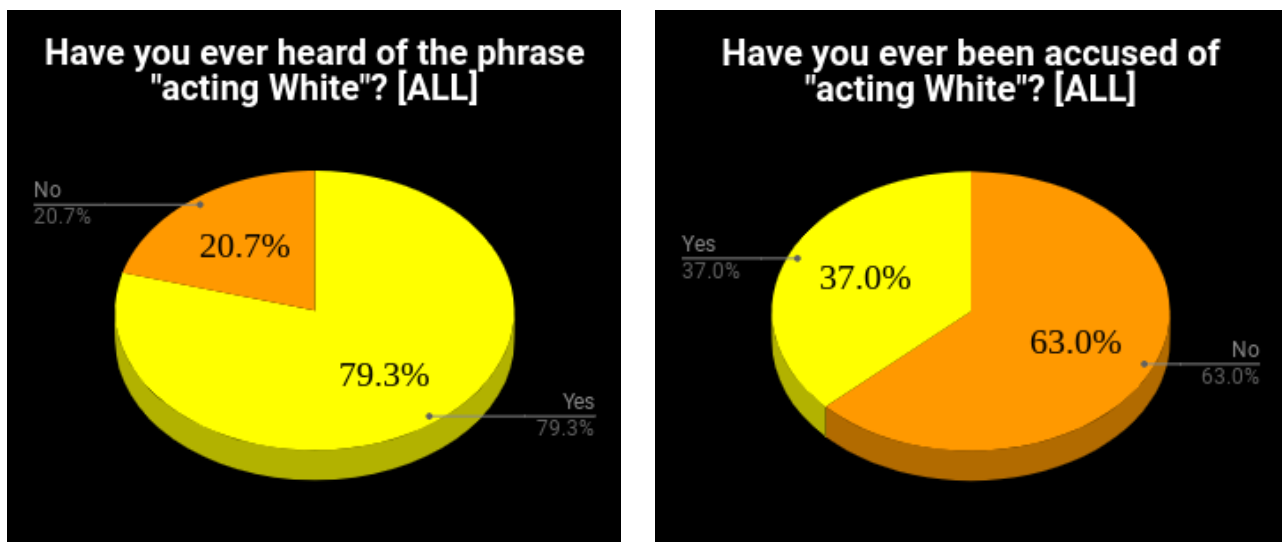
## Findings and Analysis

### Acting White and Acting Black

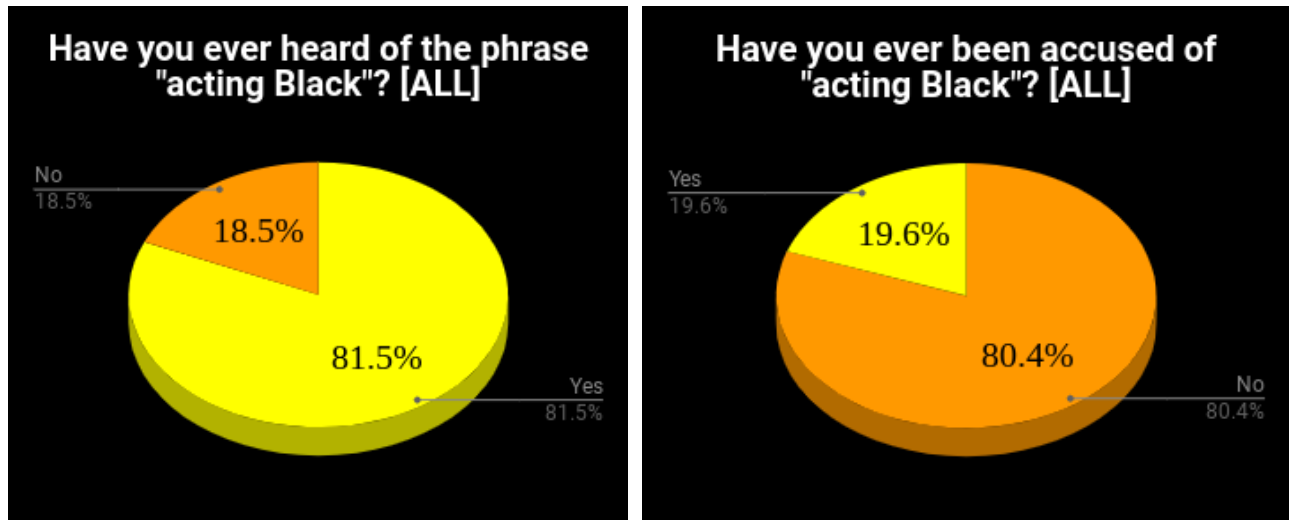
As expected, more students had heard of “acting White” however, only 36.96% of the sample had been accused of acting White. Similarly, 81.52% had heard of “acting Black” but only 19.57% have been accused of acting Black. Table 2a and 2b contain the percentages for the entire sample.

Among racial groups, more White students had been accused of acting White than Hispanic and Asian students (63.64% vs. 21.88%, 28.57% respectively). On the other hand, more Hispanic and Asian students had been accused of acting Black than White students (21.88%, 20% vs. 0%). Given the high percentage of White students who had been accused of acting White, it is not consistent that 0% of White students reported not being accused of acting Black. Zero students who identified as white reported being accused of “acting Black”. All the percentages for each racial group are present in the appendix (Figure 3).

**Figure 1.** “Acting White” Percentages.



**Figure 2.** “Acting Black” Percentages.



For comparative purposes, two separate groups were each created for acting White and acting Black: students accused of acting White/Black and students who were not accused. Two-sample t-tests were run to compare the groups among each subscale to look for statistical significance. Table 1 reports all the means for each subscale and GPA among students accused/not accused of acting white/black. All the means for the subscales are on a scale from 1 - 4 while the GPA is on a 4.0 weighted scale.

<b>Table 1.</b> Means among students accused of acting White / acting Black				
	<b>Accused of Acting White (AoAW)</b>	<b>Not accused of Acting White (NAoAW)</b>	<b>Accused of Acting Black (AoAB)</b>	<b>Not accused of Acting Black (NAoAB)</b>
<b>Limitations of Education (LoE)</b>	2.25 <sub>A</sub>	2.00 <sub>A</sub>	2.29	2.04
<b>Benefits of Education (BoE)</b>	3.32	3.37	3.53 <sub>B</sub>	3.30 <sub>B</sub>
<b>Peers' Academic Aspirations (PAA)</b>	2.51	2.52	2.52	2.51
<b>Peers' Resistance to School Norms (PRtSN)</b>	1.34	1.23	1.35	1.25
<b>Peers' Academic Support (PAS)</b>	3.25	3.24	3.3	3.24
<b>GPA</b>	3.70	3.52	3.55	3.57

$p_A = .0155$ ;  $p_B = .0226$

Acting White

There was a statistical significance among students accused of acting white (AoAW) and students not accused of acting White (NAoAW) for the mean of the Limitations of Education subscale. Students AoAW had a greater mean of 2.25 compared to students NAoAW, 2.00. Contrary to expectations, students accused of acting White held greater reservations about the positive economic result education could provide them than students not accused of acting White. It was predicted students who had traits attributed to caring about school and their grade would have a more positive view about the benefits of education and as a result, fewer thoughts that education could possibly limit them financially. However, the result did not support this hypothesis.

It was expected that students accused of acting White would have a significantly higher GPA than students not accused of acting White. Students accused of acting White had a mean GPA of 3.70 compared to the 3.52 GPA of students not accused of acting White. Despite the .18 difference, the p-value of .0659 was not statistically significant at the alpha level of .05. Given the large difference in the GPA, more research needs to be conducted in order for this result to be conclusive and validated.

### Acting Black

The means for the Benefits of Education subscale had a statistical difference among the means of students accused of acting black and students not accused of acting Black. Students AoAB had a higher mean of 3.35 compared to students NAoAB with 3.30. Unexpectedly, students accused of acting Black had greater positive beliefs about the economic benefits education will provide them in the future than students not accused of acting black. Students accused of acting White were expected to have the greatest outlook on the financial benefit education provides for their future. However, no statistical significance was found among the Benefits of Education subscale and there was only a difference of .05 among the mean of students AoAW/NAoAW.

### **Racial Groups**

The means for each subscale and GPA among each racial group are presented in Table 2. A few students did not properly report their GPA (n=4) so their GPA were not included in any calculations. As expected, there was an insufficient amount of Black respondents to yield any statistical information from (n=3). Murdock (1999) grouped students in her sample by race and income level. This study did not ask for the income level of students. As a result, there are only

three main racial groups, Asian, White, and Hispanic. Students were allowed to select more than one ethnicity/race they identify with.

<b>Table 2.</b> Means among racial groups.						
	<b>Limitations of education (LoE)</b>	<b>Benefits of education (BoE)</b>	<b>Peer's academic aspirations (PAA)</b>	<b>Peer's resistance to school norms (PRtSN)</b>	<b>Peer's academic support (PAS)</b>	<b>GPA</b>
<b>ALL</b>	2.09	3.35	2.51	1.27	3.25	3.58
<b>Asian</b>	2.00	3.22 <sub>b</sub>	2.56 <sub>c</sub>	1.39 <sub>d</sub>	3.39 <sub>e</sub>	3.76 *
<b>Hispanic / Latino</b>	1.92	3.51 <sub>b</sub>	2.52	1.16 <sub>d</sub>	3.12 <sub>e</sub>	3.36 <sub>a</sub> *
<b>White</b>	1.97	3.30	2.41 <sub>c</sub>	1.27	3.36	3.67 <sub>a</sub>

$p_*= .0034$ ;  $p_a=.0354$ ;  $p_b= .0122$ ;  $p_c= .0227$ ;  $p_d= .0106$ ;  $p_e= .0207$ ;

### **GPA**

Asian students had the highest GPA of 3.76 among all three racial groups. When compared to the mean GPA of the sample of 3.58, Asians still had a significantly larger GPA ( $p < .05$ ). White students had a high GPA of 3.67. Both the GPAs of Asian and White students were significantly higher than the 3.36 mean GPA of Hispanic students ( $p < .01$ ;  $p < .05$ ). In comparison to the sample mean GPA, Hispanic students had a significantly smaller GPA ( $p < .05$ ).

### **Asian and Hispanic**

There was a great difference between the means of Latino students and those of Asian students. No big difference was found in the means for the Limitations of Education subscale. Students, regardless of their racial group, had similar reservations about and skepticism about the financial benefit education will provide them in their future. The Benefits of Education, Peers' Resistance to school norms (PRtSN), and Peers' academic support subscales all had a statistical difference between the means of Hispanic and Asian students responses ( $p < .05$ ).

Asians had a higher mean of 1.39 for the PRtSN subscale in comparison to the 1.19 mean of Hispanic students. While a 1.39 is relatively low, in comparison to Hispanic students, Asians were more likely to discourage their friends from engaging in behaviors attributed to acting White. Asians had the highest GPA among the three racial groups. This finding is contrasting to their

academic behavior. The mean for Asian student was 1.39 which is low on the 1 - 4 scale so this low mean does not show that they discourage their friends from acting White, rather, in comparison to Hispanic, there are *more likely* to do so.

**Asian and White**

Contrary to the trend between Asian and Latino students, the Peer’s academic aspirations subscale showed a difference between Asian and White students with Asians having a higher mean. Asians significantly had greater convictions about their friends’ long-term goals than their other peers.

**Parental Immigration Status**

Students were asked about their parents immigration status in hopes of shedding light on the involuntary and voluntary minorities theory however no statically significant information was found. Table 3 shows the means for students based on their parents immigrant status.

<b>Table 3. Means dependent on student's parents immigration status</b>		
	<b>Parents are immigrants (PAI)</b>	<b>Parents are not immigrants (PANI)</b>
<b>Limitations of Education</b>	2.16	1.98
<b>Benefits of Education</b>	3.36	3.33
<b>Peers’ Academic Aspirations</b>	2.53	2.50
<b>Peers’ Resistance to School Norms</b>	1.27	1.27
<b>Peers’ Academic Support</b>	3.21	3.31
<b>GPA</b>	3.59	3.62

The closest to a statistical difference among students whose parents are immigrant (PAI) and parents who are not immigrants (PANI) was with the Limitations of Education subscale (p=0.0647 > .05).

**Correlations**

Correlations among each subscale and GPA were taken. Table 5 depicts the correlation for the entire sample. Correlations for each subgroup will be available in the appendix.

**Table 5a.**

<b>ALL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.04	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	-0.03	-0.46	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	-0.06	0.10	-0.02	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	0.02	0.33	-0.25	0.10	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	-0.03	-0.08	0.12	0.19	-0.27	1.00

There is a moderate negative correlation between the Limitations of Education and Benefits of Education subscales. This is consistent among all subgroups, with students whose PANI having the greatest association with  $r = -.68$ . No strong correlations were found with GPA and any subscales, however among subgroups this changes.

The strongest relationship with a subscale and GPA was between GPA and Peers' academic support subscale among Male respondents (.48). White students also showed greater perceived peer support was associated with their academic achievement; however, Hispanic and Asian students showed no correlation between the two variables.

Students who were NAOAW had a greater negative correlation (-.56) in their response to the Limitations of Education (LoE) subscale and the Benefits of Education (BoE) subscale in comparison to students AoAW (-.33). This is consistent with the difference seen in the means for the LoE subscale among students AoAW/NAOAW. Students NAOAB had a greater moderate negative correlation between the LoE and BoE subscales (-.55) in comparison to students AoAB (-.39). Similarly, this is consistent with the statistical significance found in the means of the BoE subscale among student AoAB/NAOAB. Among students accused of acting White and those accused of acting Black, a positive moderate relationship was seen between Peers' academic support subscale and GPA (.31).

While no statistical difference was found among students whose PAI/PANI, students whose parents were not immigrants had a greater negative moderate correlation with the LoE and BoE (-.68) than students whose parents are immigrants (-.33).

## Discussion

The statistical difference between the GPAs of White and Hispanic students, the high percentage of White students AoAW, and the low percentage of White students AoAB are all supportive of the idea academic excellence is something attained by White students. Hispanic students had the lowest GPA and the highest percentage of students who were accused of acting Black. This is all consistent with the basis of the acting White theory: acting White is associated with a strong academic student while acting Black is associated with a low academic standing student (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Neal-Barnett, 2010).

The GPA gap between Hispanic and White students is consistent with previous conclusions about the achievement gap. On the other hand, because both Asian and Hispanic are minority groups, the gap between the students implies that there is another factor, perhaps parental involvement, that influenced academic performance between both groups since they are both minority groups.

There was a close significance between the GPA means of students AoAW/NAoAW, therefore, more research that looks at the relationship between these variables is needed. Despite contradicting expectations, the high mean for the Benefits of Education subscale among students accused of acting Black supports the notion education is respected and valued among black students. This then brings up the question: why does the academic performance not match the level of respect students have for education? The current paper does not have conclusive results to respond to this question. However, future research needs to address this.

Unexpectedly, Asian students are more likely to discourage their friends from acting White than Latino students despite having a higher GPA than Latino students. Consistent with the findings of Darenbourg and Blake (2014), this study also found a positive relationship between students' perceived support for their friends for regarding their academics and GPA. This implies greater peer support can lead to better academic achievement. Given Hispanic students had a significantly lower GPA than White and Asian students, increasing peer support could help yield in greater academic achievement.



No statistically significant information was found regarding parental immigration status so this study does not support nor refute the involuntary and voluntary minorities theory. While cultural differences among students can contribute to a student's academic achievement, no results in the study were consistent with the hypothesis that students whose parents immigrated to America would have better grades. A fairly strong negative relationship was found between students whose parents are not immigrants perceived economic limitations of education and the perceived financial benefit of education for their future. Students whose parents are not immigrants have greater positive beliefs about the economic yield of an education. This is surprising since it is expected students who have immigrant parents would hold greater beliefs about the great fruits an education bears for their future (the American Dream; Ogbu and Simons, 1998). Future research should be done to investigate the impact parental immigration status has on a student's educational outlook and academic achievement.

## Limitations and Implications

There were various limitations presented in this study. There was an insignificant amount of Black students in the sample so their responses were not able to be examined and compared to the results of students from other racial groups. Future research should aim to get a diverse sample of students from different racial backgrounds in order to compare their responses. Future studies should also use a quantitative way, like a questionnaire with questions on a likert scale, to measure acting White in order to increase the statistical analysis that can be done and delve deeper into the complexities between academic achievement and the acting White theory. The sample of this study is from a suburban area in Southern California which can attribute to the differences in result among this study and other studies. The significance of the type of area: rural, urban, and suburban, should be noted and considered for future studies since community and environment inherently impact students. Students self-reported their GPA which means it can be subject to inflation. As mentioned earlier, a few students did not report their GPA; subsequently, their GPA was not considered.

While no difference was found between the GPA means of students accused of acting White and those who are not, more research among different populations should be done to validate the results found in this study.

## Conclusion

Overall, this study presents a unique perspective on the existing research about academic achievement, more specifically, the acting White theory. This paper took a topic typically looked at from the perspective of a black student and rather presented it to students from different racial groups. Ultimately, the results from this study showed acting White impacts other racial groups especially Hispanic students. This study also examines the significance of racial and cultural background in a school setting. Race influences academic achievement whether it be a student's cultural background or the tenets engraved in the culture about education, cultural differences have to be attributed to the changes in academic achievement among different racial groups. While there is extensive research on academic achievement, none have evaluated academic achievement in the context of parental immigration status, peer influence, and the acting White theory. More research that evaluates these variables closely will provide helpful information going forward—information that will help educators, students, and parents when it comes to maximizing academic success for students.

## Suggestions

School is a large growing period for students; therefore, it is important educators are aware of the possible cultural/racial issues students can be exposed to. This allows educators to be better equipped to foster a supportive environment where students *feel and know they are* supported academically despite the challenges they face. This can help increase the academic performance of students.

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# Appendix

Figure 3.

Have you ever heard of the phrase "acting White"? [White]			Have you ever been accused of "acting White"? [White]		
Yes	19	86.36%	Yes	14	63.64%
No	3	13.64%	No	8	36.36%
Total	22	100%	Total	22	100.00%
Have you ever heard of the phrase "acting White"? [Hispanic]			Have you ever been accused of "acting White"? [Hispanic]		
Yes	24	75.00%	Yes	7	21.88%
No	8	25.00%	No	25	78.13%
Total	32	100%	Total	32	100.00%
Have you ever heard of the phrase "acting White"? [Asian]			Have you ever been accused of "acting White"? [Asian]		
Yes	26	74.29%	Yes	10	28.57%
No	9	25.71%	No	25	71.43%
Total	35	100.00%	Total	35	100.00%

Figure 3.

<b>Have you ever heard of the phrase "acting Black"? [White]</b>			<b>Have you ever been accused of "acting Black"? [White]</b>		
Yes	18	81.82%	Yes	0	0.00%
No	4	18.18%	No	22	100.00%
Total	22	100.00%	Total	22	100.00%
<b>Have you ever heard of the phrase "acting Black"? [Hispanic]</b>			<b>Have you ever been accused of "acting Black"? [Hispanic]</b>		
Yes	26	81.25%	Yes	7	21.88%
No	6	18.75%	No	25	78.13%
Total	32	100.00%	Total	32	100.00%
<b>Have you ever heard of the phrase "acting Black"? [Asian]</b>			<b>Have you ever been accused of "acting Black"? [Asian]</b>		
Yes	27	77.14%	Yes	7	20.00%
No	8	22.86%	No	28	80.00%
Total	35	100.00%	Total	35	100.00%

Table 5b.

<b>White</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.05	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	0.09	-0.40	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	0.04	0.08	0.19	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	-0.07	0.31	-0.20	-0.08	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.26	-0.04	0.34	0.33	-0.53	1.00

**Table 5c.**

<b>Hispanic</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.25	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	0.16	-0.58	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	0.17	0.13	0.18	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	0.22	0.53	-0.20	0.42	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	-0.05	-0.22	0.07	0.03	-0.20	1.00

**Table 5d.**

<b>Asian</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.24	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	-0.07	-0.33	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	0.09	0.11	-0.34	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	-0.32	0.37	-0.23	0.07	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.06	-0.23	0.08	0.11	-0.46	1.00



**Table 5e.**

<b>Accused of Acting White</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	0.00	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	0.12	-0.33	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	-0.12	-0.07	0.23	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	0.19	0.21	-0.08	-0.17	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.31	-0.10	0.08	0.32	-0.39	1.00
<hr/>						
<b>Not accused of acting White</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.03	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	-0.12	-0.56	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	-0.08	0.25	-0.23	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	-0.03	0.39	-0.37	0.35	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.15	-0.07	0.15	0.08	-0.18	1.00

**Table 5f.**

<b>Accused of acting Black</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	0.10	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	0.24	-0.39	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	0.30	0.03	-0.13	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	0.21	0.20	-0.32	0.45	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.31	-0.15	-0.07	0.27	-0.28	1.00
<b>Not accused of acting Black</b>						
<b>Not accused of acting Black</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.08	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	-0.01	-0.55	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	-0.20	0.11	-0.01	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	0.02	0.35	-0.27	0.03	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.09	-0.07	0.14	0.18	-0.28	1.00

**Table 5g.**

<b>Parents are Immigrants</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.06	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	-0.13	-0.33	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	0.11	0.06	-0.05	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	0.08	0.33	-0.28	0.14	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.20	-0.07	0.03	0.13	-0.22	1.00

<b>Parents are not Immigrants</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	0.15	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	-0.15	-0.68	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	0.19	0.12	0.00	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	0.34	0.33	-0.20	0.06	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	-0.32	-0.05	0.24	0.27	-0.36	1.00

**Table 5h.**

<b>Female</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.01	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	-0.17	-0.46	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	-0.04	0.09	0.01	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	-0.22	0.35	-0.16	0.04	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.17	-0.08	0.04	0.21	-0.26	1.00

<b>Male</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GPA	1.00					
2. Limitations of education	-0.14	1.00				
3. Benefits of education	0.17	-0.48	1.00			
4. Peers' academic aspirations	0.06	0.11	-0.10	1.00		
5. Peers' resistance to school norms	-0.10	0.26	-0.47	0.20	1.00	
6. Peers' academic support	0.48	-0.05	0.41	0.15	-0.33	1.00