UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF HIGH-ACHIEVING BLACK-AMERICAN STUDENTS WHO MIGRATED FROM DISADVANTAGED INNER-CITY AREAS TO AN AFFLUENT SUBURB

A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University College of Education, Health, and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Minority suburbanization has been a fast growing demographic shift in the United States during the first decade of the 21st century. The increasing influx of Black students to the suburbs presents new challenges to the schools in improving the academic performance of Black students. Considering the deep inequalities in institutions, family circumstances, and societal conditions between the inner city areas and affluent suburbs, an urban to suburban transition imposes serious challenges to Black students and their academic performance specifically. Departing from the more common, deficit orientation in studying Black academic performance, this study takes an anti-deficit approach using an interpretive qualitative methodology to examine the tapestry of the cultural and socio-economic translocation experience and its impact on high-achieving Black students. Using a combination of socio-cognitive acculturation theory, critical race theory (CRT), and ecological framework as the theoretical grounding, this study recognized Black students as experts on their experiential realities and capable to offer counter narratives concerning their translocation experience and success. The findings
revealed contextual details of conditions and adjustments involved in these high-achieving Black students’ journey to achievement, and thereby contribute meaningfully to the enduring discourse on Black academic achievement. Explicitly, the combined importance of cultural competence and awareness, individual agency and accountability, parental support and discipline, caring teachers and engaging instructions appeared to offset the challenges induced by social location and social location change.

**Keywords:** urban-to-suburban translocation, high-achieving Black students, academic achievement, anti-deficit
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the U.S., the demographic phenomenon what pop culture calls “chocolate city, vanilla suburb” (Farley, Schuman, Bianchi, Colasanto, & Hatchett, 1978) is changing its look. Suburbanization\(^1\) marks the most significant demographic movement in the U.S. for the past two decades (Frey, 2010). In 2000, only 43% of Black-Americans in metro areas lived in suburbs, but that number increased more than 7% by 2008 (Frey, 2010, p. 61). Suburban public schools are facing an influx of diverse populations from different socio-cultural backgrounds including a large portion of Black-American students who have migrated from disadvantaged inner-city areas. I use the term translocation to indicate a change of an individual’s particular place or position in society. In my study the term translocation means a change of social location from disadvantaged inner city areas to an affluent suburb, Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Many suburban teachers and school administrators find themselves unprepared to teach these students effectively (K. D. Hill, 2009). Due to the cultural mismatch between ethnically diverse students and overwhelmingly female European American teachers, instruction often lacks cultural relevance (Gay, 1993; Ivine & York, 2001; Seeberg, Swadener, Vanden-Wyngaard, & Rickel, 1998). Furthermore, due to inadequate research exploring these students’ translocation experiences, we do not have insights into how such translocation experiences impact their academic performances (Chun & Akutsu, 2003). Thus, an urban-to-suburban translocation imposes unique challenges to improve academic performance for many ethnically diverse students and for Black-American students specifically.

In addition to the shortage of above-mentioned research, more troublesome is the deficit orientation of studies on Black academic performance. Many studies have targeted Black students as a monolithic group at-risk in urban areas (e.g., Moynihan, 1965). Not until Ogbu (2003) was the academic achievement of Black students in affluent suburbs brought great attention to Black youth in suburbs and even then with a deficit lens. The deficit-oriented master narratives of Black relative academic underachievement are problematic because they distort and silence the different experiences of Black Americans. Generated from a legacy of racial privilege, master
narratives use White students’ academic performance as a benchmark, to which Black students must measure up (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). In doing so, White performance is assumed acceptable and that Whiteness is the standard (Lundy, 2003). However, rather than imposing racial standards for academic achievement, meaning Black students’ academic performance should measure up to that of their White and Asian counterparts, academic excellence should be the standards for all students.

Although it is critical to understand the experiences of Black students who struggle academically, we can learn many valuable lessons from Black students who achieved academic and post-school success against all odds. There is a growing body of studies on high-achieving Black students (Codjoe, 2006; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Wiggan, 2007); however many of these studies have been conducted in urban school environments (e.g., Conchas, 2006; Hemmings, 1996; Sanders, 1997); others focus on high-achieving Black students in predominantly White high school or postsecondary environments (e.g., Andrews, 2009; Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Foster, 2005; Harper, 2012). I have not found research concerning how Black students from a lower socio-economic background adjust and adapt to what is viewed as the more promising site for high academic performance—integrated, affluent suburban school environments.
What we do know is that academic underachievement has large and long-ranging social and economic consequences for people in general, because those who are not prepared academically may not be able to participate as effective citizens or as economically self-sufficient adults, especially in today’s competitive society, where 85% of jobs in the developed countries require specialized skill or professional training (Price, 2002). Academic underachievement jeopardizes an individual’s life chances, especially for racial and ethnic minority students as social and structural inequality persists in the U.S. society (Cullen, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Wilson, 2011). The difference in average academic performance between Black American students and their White and Asian American counterparts inevitably raises the critical issue of equity of access to quality education. Thus former Secretary of the State Rod Paige called the presence of the achievement gap the most formidable obstacle to Black American advancement (Paige & Witty, 2009). The need for a solution to improve Black academic performance has new urgency in the 21st century. Evidently we have known much about Black academic underachievement (Ferguson, 2001; Ogbru, 2003; Wiggan, 2007), yet the gap remains and is getting wider (Heckman, 2008; Paige & Witty, 2009). We seem to know relatively little about high-achieving Black students, and, as educational inequalities in American society have not diminished, I argue we can learn valuable lessons by focusing on those
Black students who have won the battle, resisted negative stereotypes, coped with identity conflicts, and eventually excelled in school.

My interest in focusing on high-achieving Black students and their families who migrated from disadvantaged inner city areas to affluent Shaker Heights stemmed from my own international (China-to-the-U.S.) translocation experience and my participation with a larger research project as a Cultural Foundations graduate assistant. The present study is taken from this larger project titled “Black-American students’ academic engagement and success in an affluent suburban community” (Shaker Project) which collected counter narratives of schooling and social experience as told by successful Black American students and their families in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Directed by Dr. Vilma Seeberg, the Shaker Project proceeded from an anti-deficit perspective and sought family and alumni’s perceptions of societal, family, educational, and community sources, which they related to school success. The Shaker Project attempts to deconstruct and understand the complex web of negotiation between family, school, and community, which resulted in high academic achievement of Black students over a 20-year period (Seeberg, 2007). As part of the Shaker Project, using an interpretative qualitative research design, I conducted a distinct inquiry with the same data set in which I investigated the significant actors, attitudes, and practical strategies of a small group of
high-achieving Black students and their families who had moved from nearby
“inner-city” urban areas to suburban Shaker. Their stories gave evidence of striking, rich,
complex counter narratives to the mountain of master narratives portraying a monolithic,
negative picture of Black American students’ academic performance.

In the following sections, the problem, purpose, and need for this study are further
elucidated. Following that, the design and its theoretical grounding are introduced. A
brief overview of the research questions and definitions of terms close out this chapter.
Although the term African-American is often used in recent research to refer to American
students of African and Afro-Caribbean descent, throughout this dissertation, I chose to
use terms such as Black American/Black students/Black families instead of
“African-American/African-American students/African-American families” in order to (a)
honor the study participants’ voice as “Black/Black student/Black family” were the terms
used frequently by study participants themselves for their racial identities in the Shaker
Project initial interviews as well as in my follow-up interviews; (b) keep the consistency
of the terms used in the Shaker Project in Ogbu’s (2003) *Black American Students in an
Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* conducted in Shaker Heights,
which served as the proximate trigger for the Shaker Project.
**Problem Statement**

We know little about high-achieving Black students (Noguera, 2003). Even the explanations in the existing research of why some Black American students succeed inevitably involve a frame of references found in the master narratives in which the stories of why some Black students fail are told. For example, to explain Black academic underachievement, some researchers, famously in the Moynihan Report (1965),\(^2\) have argued that dysfunctions within Black communities and families account for Black academic underperformance (McLanahan, 2004). More recently, lively debate has been surrounding oppositional cultural theory (Foley, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2003; Wiggan, 2008), which suggests that Black students, as members of an involuntary minority brought to the U.S., developed an oppositional identity to schools and to academic achievement because these were viewed as institutions and values of the dominant group. The underlying message is that academic achievement of Black students depends upon their conforming to the dominant norms. However, these master narratives wipe out the complexities and richness of a group’s cultural life (Montecinos, 1995; Tatum, 1997).

\(^2\) “At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time” (Moynihan, 1965, 5).
We know almost nothing about the translocation experience of high-achieving Black Americans who have migrated from disadvantaged inner-city areas to affluent suburbs. Although the Black American population is growing rapidly in suburbs across the U.S., how Black students and their families adjusted and adapted to challenging social and school conditions and managed to achieve academic and post-school success is not fully understood due to insufficient research (Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Orfield, 2001).

The unique challenges caused by an urban-to-suburban translocation are imaginable based on the socio-cultural and racial realities in the U.S. society. Even within seemingly integrated suburbs, Black and White students navigate a racialized educational environment that provides cumulative advantages for White students and disadvantages for Black students (Diamond, 2006). Inner-city areas are characterized as economically depressed, racially isolated areas (Wilson, 2011). The poverty rate for Blacks reached 25.8% in 2009, a majority of whom live in urban areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Taking into account that about 35% of Black children are raised in poor households in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), it is reasonable to assume that one out of three Black children may be raised in an inner-city environment. Thus one of the most obvious challenges created by the urban-to-suburban translocation perhaps is a sense of alienation caused by physical separation from their peers, people, and the community that
the Black students left behind. Translocated Black students may find themselves surrounded by peers and teachers that do not understand their language patterns and cultural norms.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Education (2010), 83.1% of K–12 public school teachers in 2008 were White, more than three-fourths of whom were women. More than likely, translocated Black students are facing their new suburban teachers who were prepared to work with White, middle class students rather than culturally diverse ones (K. D. Hill, 2009). These Black students are more likely to become the victims of schools’ sorting practice as their suburban teachers and counselors may associate their social location origin and their cultural patterns with minimal skills and ability (Ferguson, 2003; K. D. Hill, 2009), not to mention new sets of low expectations reinforced by deficit-oriented research and media images (Harper, 2010; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Lynn & Vanhanen, 2002).

Given the dearth of empirical research into the urban-suburban translocation, we can only conjecture about some of the challenges experienced by Black students and their families. Going further, we can say very little about the challenges and strategies of high-achieving Black students who underwent this experience.
Purpose of the Study

I argue that those who wish to improve Black students’ academic performance would learn much by inviting those who have been successful to offer explanatory insights into their journey to success instead of relying on deficit-oriented master narratives.

Hence, the purposes of this study are: (a) to explore the experience of high-achieving Black-American students and their families who migrated from impoverished inner city areas to an affluent suburb, Shaker Heights, and (b) to discover the processes and conditions students and their families believed helped them achieve and cope with the challenges induced by urban-to-suburban translocation.

As stated earlier, this study’s participants were taken from the larger data set of the Shaker Project. During my work for the Shaker Project, it caught my attention that nearly half of the participating Black students were neither second generation nor first generation Shaker residents; they were “migrants” who had not lived in Shaker “all their lives.” Instead, they entered Shaker Schools at various grades when their families relocated to Shaker Heights from surrounding lower socio-economic inner city areas of Cleveland, Ohio. The success of students who were urban-suburban migrants seemed more astounding than well-integrated Black American students who had lived most of
their life in the suburbs. This study focused on these migrant participants’ experiences, perceptions of contextual details that were meaningful to them in their pursuit of academic and post-school success as they were confronted with the unique challenges that an urban-to-suburban translocation poses.

**Need for the Study**

The increasing influx of Black Americans to the suburbs presents new challenges as well as opportunities in improving the overall academic performance of Black students who are facing challenges or may be underperforming. High achieving Black students in the suburbs have not received sufficient attention (Orfield, 2001).

This study adds to the emerging but limited literature on high-achieving Black students (e.g., D. J. Carter, 2008; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Wiggan, 2008) by filling the gap in literature in understanding urban-to-suburban translocation.

**Significance**

First, the findings of this study can contribute to a better understanding of the urban-to-suburban translocation experience of some high-achieving Black students, which can benefit other migrating students and parents seeking practical strategies to find their way.
Further, the ideas offered by the study participants may facilitate future program-building inside and outside schools to accommodate incoming new students and their families. Implications can be drawn on this study that may transform suburban school environment to foster academic success for all ethnic minority and culturally diverse students.

Lastly, in the context of migration, the urban-suburban shift is not unique to the U.S., but is taking place in metropolitan areas across the world. This study can contribute to a cross-cultural comparison of this translocation experience and its impact on academic outcome.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

As stated previously, this study is part of the Shaker Project; therefore in this section, the general theoretical framework used in the Shaker Project is outlined, leading to the development of the particular theoretical frameworks that explain the data in my study.

The birth of the Shaker Project was in response to the two well-known studies published about Black students’ academic underachievement in Shaker Heights; one by the late distinguished scholar John Ogbu in 2003, *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement*, and the other by Ron Ferguson of Harvard

Neither of these prominent studies sufficiently addressed the important role Black families played in Black students’ academic experience within the Shaker community. In order to reframe the narrow stereotyping of Black academic engagement, the Shaker Project used the ecological model articulated by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which incorporates macro, mezzo, and micro dimensions. The Shaker Project posited that a dynamic triad of family, school, and community engagement contributes to academic engagement of students. The societal environment, parental involvement, cultural forces, micro-level cultural realities of everyday life, particularly the context of academic institutions’, families’, and individuals’ attitudes toward education, had been found to play important roles in the academic engagement and success of Black students (Hemmings, 1996, 1998; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Trueba, 1988).

The ecological framework partially explained that family interactions with children are influenced by the social context in which the family is located, therefore, when the social context changes, so should the interactions between family and the children. However, in the case of my study, this framework does not specifically address dynamics of a translocation experience across cultural and socio-economic differences between inner city areas and suburbs. The acculturation theory developed by Padilla and
Perez (2003) informed by socio-cognition theory came closer to explain the evidence of socio-cognitive acculturation I found in early visits with the data subset.

Social cognition theory itself theorizes that the psychological process of living is socially based and that social institutions such as schools, places of worship, politics, as well as daily interactions shape human cognition (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Fiske & Taylor, 1991), which ultimately guides human behaviors. This means that a person’s behaviors can be modified when a person’s social location changes. What people know and believe to be true about the world is constructed as people interact with one another over time in specific social settings (LeCompte, Schensul, & Schensul, 1999). The social cognitive view brings into play the institutional and structural conditions that influence the study participants’ academic outcomes and beliefs. In other words, a new social location influences social cognition that in turn influences the study participants’ adaptive behaviors such as “the clothes they wear, the foods they eat, the people with whom they associate, the values to which they adhere, and the strategies used to accommodate to the new culture and its people” (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 50).

Socio-cognitive acculturation refers to changes an individual experiences as a result of being in contact with other cultures, or from participating in the acculturation that one’s cultural or ethnic group is undergoing (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Socio-cognitive
acculturation stems from individuals’ practical goals. According to Padilla and Perez, the way in which people are acculturated is determined by a variety of factors, such as family structure and function, religious belief and practices, power relationship between the majority and minority group, and personalities (p. 39). Additionally, Marin (1993) pointed out that certain newcomers may be more inclined to undergo cultural changes not due to personal interest but because of political, social, and/or economic circumstances that may make certain types of cultural adaptation preferable or beneficial. Thus, it can be said that the strategies individuals use in the process of acculturation emerge from their interpretations of the social contexts. How socio-cognitive acculturation theory can help understanding Black academic achievement is further discussed in Chapter 2.

As I further immersed myself into the follow-up data collection for this study, some of the data could not be fully explained through socio-cognitive acculturation theory; the prevalence of race as a socio-political force called for further explanatory power. Critical race theory (CRT) has been emerging as a framework well-suited to analyze and provide perspective to the issues of race in a number of studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997), in the data of the Shaker Project and my particular subset of data as well. Central to CRT is the assumption that individuals and social groups construct their own reality regardless of the oppressive
elite-dominated social hierarchy in which they exist and thereby have the capacity to resist and reconstruct their relation to it (D. J. Carter, 2008). This means race, as well as the meaning attached to race, is socially constructed and it is a powerful aspect of human life that cannot be ignored (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Frequently CRT is used by scholars to analyze racial injustice in schools as it is endorsed through educational issues and policies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It is described as “challenging the mainstream achievement ideology, which dismisses any presence of social inequality in the United States and any structural conditions that might interact with people’s exertion of individual agency to achieve upward mobility” (D. J. Carter, 2008, p. 471).

CRT acknowledges the significant role of various forms of discrimination that hinder the achievement of Black students and other members of subordinated racial and ethnic groups. At the same time, the CRT approach focuses on the significance of experiential knowledge and the use of counter storytelling to “analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render Blacks and other minorities one-down” (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv). Counter storytelling, as a main tenet of CRT, allows for the study participants’ experience, opinion, attitude, and beliefs of a particular phenomenon to be shared (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Though the experience of each participant is unique, the
process of counter storytelling commonalities often emerge and collective experiences can be extrapolated. This collective experience therefore creates a deeper understanding of the experience of high achieving Black students in a particular situation within the CRT framework.

To summarize this section, for the purpose of my study, I used a combination of the ecological model, socio-cognitive acculturation theory, and critical race theory (CRT) as the theoretical frameworks for my study. These theories acknowledge not only that an individual’s experience is informed by larger socio-cultural conditions, but individuals are also seen as actors in the decision making process, as knowers who are capable of reflecting on their experiences (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The intersection of the above theories allowed me to carry out a contextualized interpretation of the meanings constructed by the study participants through their interactions with their parents, school, and peers in their translocated socio-cultural context.

**Research Questions**

Acknowledging individuals are experts of their experiences who are capable of offering counter narratives, the following were the research questions used to guide this study;
1. What is the experience of the study participants’ urban-to-suburban translocation? Specifically,
   a. How do the study participants interpret and internalize a new set of cultural codes and values of an affluent, racially integrated suburb and achieve academically?
   b. How do the study participants perceive their social status in the new social location?

2. What strategies and academic achievement orientation do the study participants attribute as constructive of their academic and post-school success?
   a. What strategies do the study participants employ to navigate the new social location?
   b. What academic achievement orientations do Black students hold and do they change with the translocation?

From an anti-deficit approach, this study focuses on understanding high achieving Black students’ translocation experience and the role of their parents, peers, and significant others in their journey to academic and post-school success. Instead of focusing on the lack of relevant resources and educational privilege due to their relocation, I dedicated efforts to grasp how they managed to cope with as well as acquire
various new forms of resources and information. The interview questions (See Appendix C) were designed to capture what my study participants experienced in terms of what perceptions, interpretations, strategies and orientations altered or enhanced their schooling and enabled them to succeed.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

The remainder of this dissertation is organized into four chapters. In Chapter 2, first the theoretical perspectives in connection with empirical studies in understanding Black American academic performance is reviewed, followed by an exploration of relationship between socio-cognitive acculturation and academic achievement. Chapter 2 is concluded with the specific context of this study and a discussion of challenge maybe unique to an urban-to-suburban translocation. In Chapter 3, the methodology used to conduct this study and the procedures in data collection and data analysis are detailed. The research questions structure the analysis of findings in Chapter 4. Discussions of findings and interpretation of their meaning in relation to existing literature takes place in Chapter 5. This dissertation ends with a conclusion, appendixes, and references.
Definition of Terms

Acculturation. A social process that occurs in a context in which newcomers and members of the host culture are in dynamic contact with each other (J. W. Berry, 1980; Landrine & Klonoff, 1994; Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Acculturation stress. A kind of stress most pronounced during periods of transition, especially during and after significant migrations and the exposure and necessary adjustment to a new culture (Padilla, 1987).

Academic engagement. Refers to the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, and participate in academic and non-academic school activities. This definition usually involves a psychological component that emphasizes students’ sense of belonging or attachment to school, which has to do with feelings of being accepted and valued by their peers, and by others at their school (Willms, 2003).

Achievement ideology. A general belief that doing well in school will improve one’s life chances and one’s social upward mobility.

Agency. Broadly defined as the participants’ ability to negotiate—that is, to accommodate, reconfigure, or resist—the available socio-cultural context, in this study, it is also an affirmative term, to take action toward achievement.
**Cultural competence.** “A learned ability to function in a culture in a manner that is congruent with the value, beliefs, customs, mannerisms, and language of the majority of members of the culture” (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 42).

**Discourse.** Languages and structures as well as the complex intersections of signs and practices that order and sustain socio-culturally constructed forms of social existence (Leistyna, Woodrum, & Sherblom, 1996). That is to say, “discourses do not merely reflect or represent social entities and relationships; they actively construct or constitute them” (Walshaw, 2007, p. 19).

**Ethnic identity.** Represents allegiance to a set of customs, practices, behaviors, and beliefs that define a group of people, often with a shared ancestry or location (Phinney, 1992).

**Social cognition.** Refers to cognition of social objects—people (including ourselves), the social situations in which we encounter them, and the interpersonal behaviors that transpire in those situations (Kihlstrom & Park, 2002; Padilla & Perez, 2003).

**Racial identity.** Reflects endorsement of membership in a group defined by physically identifiable characteristics (Helms, 1994; Marks, Settles, Cooke, Morgan, & Sellers, 2004).
Resilience. The ability to handle the challenges of life and to retain openness to the world in the face of adversity (Dass-Brailsford, 2005, p. 575)

Social identity theory. Individuals’ identification with collective units and overarching societal structures such as groups, organizations, and cultures guide internal structures and processes (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 42).

Social stigma. “A function of having an attribute that conveys a devalued social identity in a particular context. Possession of a particular attribute might lead individuals to be stigmatized in the society. Attributes that may cause negative stigmatization include skin color, accented speech, certain religious apparel, gender, mental illness, and so forth” (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 45).

White student. The term White student refers to an American student of European heritage.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Common Theoretical Perspectives in Understanding Black Academic Performance

Public discourse continues to echo the master narrative that Black students in general perform poorly at all levels of education in comparison to their White and Asian counterparts, rather than refocusing on academic excellence as the standard for all students, including White students. What is more troubling than the issue of Black academic underachievement itself is the deficit orientation that is constantly reinforced in the media, academic research journals, and educational practices that enlarge the troubled status of Black students. In the view of D. J. Carter (2008) and Harper (2012), the deficit orientation contributes to the continuing underperformance of Black students at all levels of education rather than providing solutions. What requires further elaboration are the contextual particulars and individual characteristics that empower Black students to succeed against odds and against master narratives of Black American educational dysfunction.

As I have stated in the previous chapter, rather than relying on deficit-oriented research on Black American academic underachievement, we can learn many valuable lessons from those Black students who have achieved academic and post-school success
against all odds to counter the master narratives that portray Black students as a homogenous group. The purpose of this study therefore was to collect the stories of a small group of high-achieving Black students and their families who have experienced urban-to-suburban translocation and to uncover processes and conditions perceived by them as contributing to their academic and post-school success.

Studying Black academic achievement necessarily involves considering the complex dynamics between race, culture, and learning in the U.S. An anti-deficit approach was built upon the understanding of a wide range of theoretical perspectives on academic performance and minority students and how these perspectives can be contested. The pressures exerted upon Black students due to urban-to-suburban translocation can be understood through empirical literatures from common cultural and structural theoretical perspectives in understanding Black students and other ethnic minority students’ academic performance.

We have no shortage of studies on Black academic underachievement and the achievement gap because for the past four decades social scientists have been maintaining a lively debate surrounding these issues (e.g., Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Ferguson, 2001; Ogbu, 2003; Paige & Witty, 2009; Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). Unfortunately, the common one-sided emphasis on failure
and underachievement of Black students has not yielded satisfying solutions to improve
Black educational attainment because the gap persists and appears to have widened
recently (Ferguson, 2002, 2003; Harper, 2012). The list of explanations is almost endless,
yet several are more consistently identified than others, including family composition,
socioeconomic status (SES), teacher expectations, values, parental involvement and
expectations, and self-concept (Ferguson, 2001; Ogbu, 2003; Parham & Parham, 1989;
Powell, 1989). These explanations can generally be subsumed under four main
categories: (a) social and cultural origin, (b) structural inequalities, (c) racial and ethnic
identity, and (d) the interactions between the three (Ogbu, 1989; Oakes, 1990; Rist, 2000;
Wilson, 2011). These studies suggest that the underachievement of Black students in
school was a product of both the micro-processes of cultural interaction in school settings
and the macrostructure of societal and racial politics.

There is no question that common theoretical perspectives in understanding
minority students’ academic performances were formed in response to the structural and
cultural realities of their historical time and hinged on previous studies. These
perspectives have also shown us that to understand Black academic performance, we
must, on the one hand, examine the local environment where learning takes place and
know how cultural context plays out in these settings. On the other hand, we cannot ignore how such settings are intertwined in broader socio-structural forces.

In the following paragraphs, I first outline these common perspectives and describe some of the findings from research and theories that attempt to explain and offer solutions for the crisis in Black academic performances. Then, I explore the relationship between socio-cognitive acculturation theory and academic achievement. Last, I describe the context of the empirical study for this study and the unique challenges an urban-to-suburban translocation creates. The literature review is selective rather than exhaustive.

**Cultural Deficits and Cultural Difference Theory**

Early approaches to understanding racial differences in academic performance between minority and White students were rooted in the discriminatory social philosophies of their time (Erickson, 1987). These approaches range from biological deficiency, the inadequacy of Black parents or to the inability of the broader community to safeguard the Black children from the destructive forces embedded deep within what has often been framed as a pathological ghetto culture (McWhorter, 2000). The earlier biological models of deficiency were soon replaced by cultural deficit theories, which blamed the Black child’s social, cultural or economic environment as being “depraved
and deprived” of the elements necessary to “achieve the behavior rules” needed to academically succeed (Hess & Shipman, 1965). Implicit in cultural deficit perspective has been the assumption that the standards of the dominant White middle-class culture represent norms by which all other cultures may be appropriately measured (Banks, 2006). Ultimately, the cultural deficit theorists viewed cultures and environments outside of the mainstream White American culture as inferior. More often than not, Black Americans have been viewed as a homogenous group (Dance, 2002) suffering from a deficit home culture and a “pathological” family life style needing to be assimilated to the “norms” in order to achieve in schools (Moynihan, 1965). Some sociologists have promulgated the notion that the pervasive culture of hopelessness found in poor Black communities induces self-regenerating “pathologies” that, along with residential segregation and lack of employment opportunities, contribute to the further marginalization of poor Black Americans (Massey, 1993; Wilson, 1996). This leads to the tendency of “blaming the victims” (Ryan, 1976) for Black students’ academic underperformance rather than examining racial and social inequality in schools and schools’ failure in educating them with their different culturally based learning strengths in mind (Banks, 2006).
The changing social tide in the 1970s gave rise to many scholars who began to challenge the basic tenets of the cultural deficit theories (e.g., Au, 1980; Erickson, 1987; Nieto, 1996). They argued that ethnic minority children were definitely not “deficient” in their cognitive and social orientations, but “culturally different” from White American children (Cole & Bruner, 1971; Valentine, 1968). Research from a cultural difference perspective has often been referred to as micro-ethnography, which focuses on ethnographic, process-based descriptions of the teaching and learning of minority students (Erickson, 1987). This line of research has been fundamentally concerned with gaining a better understanding of how culture plays out in school environments, exploring what it means for children’s daily schooling experiences to be African American, Latino, Asian, Native American, or White (Foley, 1991; Rist, 1973). From a cultural difference perspective, many scholars pressed the research community to develop conceptual models to better understand the nature of differences and to explore ways to design curriculum and class room environments that supported culturally diverse children (Banks, 2006). For example, pedagogical strategies such as multicultural education (e.g., Banks, 2006; Gay, 2010; Nieto, 1996), cultural responsiveness (Gibson, 1976), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) have emerged.
I briefly outlined cultural deficit and cultural differences theories in the above sections; in the following paragraphs I discuss a few studies informed by these two theoretical perspectives and describe challenges Black Americans face in their schooling as well as some of the solutions offered by some of the studies.

**Racially-Biased Teacher Expectations**

From a cultural deficit perspective, the role of school in the transmission of educational advantage and disadvantage is relatively small compared to the critical role of family (R. T. Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Coleman et al., 1966). Informed by this perspective, many researchers focus on explaining Black academic underachievement through the disadvantaged circumstances of some Black students, such as disorganized families, lack of parental involvement, poverty and inadequate mental stimulation experienced during Black children’s early years which resulted in several psychological deficits that negatively affect their academic performance (Kauchak & Eggen, 2005; Keddie, 1973; McLanahan, 2004).

This is consistent with research that emphasizes how low teacher expectation marks one of the biggest challenges to students different from the mainstream culture. Ferguson (2003) argued that Black underachievement in Shaker is not only caused by the lower expectations many teachers hold but also is maintained through the sorting
practices informed by these lower expectations. Researchers have reported that Black students in public schools are three times as likely to be referred to remedial classes and have a lower probability of being referred to gifted education compared to Whites, making them subject to less demanding schoolwork, more restrictive classrooms, and isolation from their peers (Ferguson, 2003; Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 2005). The literature also reveals that the interactions teachers have with students in lower tracks have been shown to be less motivating, less supportive, less demanding, and more oriented towards behavioral criticism—especially for students of ethnic minority groups (Ferguson, 2003; Hallinan, 1996; Oakes, 1985). What is more alarming is that as Black and Latino students are overrepresented in remedial classes, special education programs, and on the lists for suspension, the idea that these children are not as smart or as well behaved is again reinforced (Ferguson, 2001).

Noguera (2003) stressed that the structure and culture of schools play a vital role in reinforcing and maintaining racial categories, and stereotypes associated with them. “As schools sort children by perceived measures of their ability and as they single out certain children for discipline, implicit and explicit messages about racial and gender identities are conveyed” (p. 444). Ogbu (1986, 2003) argued that Black students in lower tracks may develop oppositional attitudes towards school and their teachers. The
combination of deficit oriented dispositions and exposure to negative images of Blacks in the media contributes to the creation of reified sets of low expectation towards Black students (hooks, 2004).

Given such contextual realities, it is highly likely that Black students who have migrated from inner city areas to an affluent suburb may have face considerable pressure because the suburban teachers and guidance counselors, predominantly of middle-class backgrounds, were likely to have already had lower expectations for them simply because of their race, which may have been intensified by their previous urban social location.

**Student Teacher Mismatch**

Informed by the cultural difference perspective, minority students’ academic underperformance is often explained by the mismatch between students’ home cultures and communication styles with those of the schools’ and their teachers’.

Historically, teacher education has prepared teachers for work in White, middle class settings (Cochran-Smith, 2000) and only 12% of the teaching force has been from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) background in the U.S. (Olson, 2000).

Hale-Benson (1982) and Rist (1970) pointed out that teachers of color are products of the same education system as White teachers, and those who have made it into teaching have not only survived the system but have succeeded in it. Further, most of these teachers of
color are middle class and have come from families removed from the reality of inner cities (Grant, 1989). Therefore, many teachers are prepared in teacher education programs representing a mono-cultural approach, which fails to take into consideration the influence of race and culture on student performance and consequently provide poor instruction (Goodlad, 1990) especially noticeable in the “achievement gap.”

With the increasing arrival of students from culturally and linguistically diverse background to the suburbs, it can be understood that many teachers at suburban schools found themselves overwhelmed because they were not prepared for students with values and cultures different from their own (K. D. Hill, 2009). Black students who moved to the suburbs might be forced to leave their inner-city friends and formal community behind. Instead of being surrounded by peers and teachers who likely understand their speech patterns and cultural norms, they are more likely to be misunderstood and mislabeled.

Culturally Relevant Instructions

The student teacher mismatch has led many researchers to extend cultural difference theory to create culturally relevant instruction and classroom interventions to support the learning of ethnically and culturally diverse students.
Such strategies promote the inclusion of minority ways of doing and knowing into classroom processes (Au, 1980), increase minority representation in curriculum materials (Dhand, 1988), increase participation in school by minority families (Clark, 1983; Moll & Diaz, 1987), and press for an ongoing critical perspective that helps students reflect on the implications of minority status in terms of power and social structure in broader society (Banks, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995). For example, in the view of Delpit (1988, 1995), schools perpetuate a culture of power, which is embedded in the rules of the culture, communicative styles, strategies, and language of the dominant group. Delpit stressed how teachers can encourage a critical understanding in students by making explicit the way that language and communication styles signal cultural capital. By doing so, she contended that teachers can offer students the tools upon which they can draw to be successful without disparaging students’ home cultures.

To offer solutions for educating Black students in urban schools, Richardson (2002) and Murrell (2002) used “African American” culture as a resource from which to draw invaluable constructs for rethinking pedagogy and practice for educating African Americans. Seeking to change current school processes, Murrell (2002) articulated an African-centered pedagogy that draws primarily from the lived realities of African American learners. He argued that learning is an active and interactive process that
occurs within a social context. Thus teaching “takes full account of the cultural and social dimensions of the developmental issues of African American learners” in terms of “the intrapersonal,” interpersonal, and “cultural symbolic” aspects of their experience (Murrell, 2002, p. xxvii). In contrast, Richardson (2002) focused entirely on the development of a culturally relevant literacy model for African American high school students. She traced the history of Black literacy and linked them to current conceptions of “good teaching” for minority students. Further she examined her own practice as a culturally responsive literacy teacher and used it as the foundation for a theory of culturally relevant literacy instruction that incorporates elements of popular and youth culture and honors the students’ linguistic heritage.

In short, the cultural difference perspective contributed greatly to our knowledge of the processes underlying racial minority students’ academic underachievement and it has begun to clarify the local production of culture and learning in the school setting. However, this perspective has been mainly specific to particular racial groups, sometimes neglecting the macro-dynamics behind the micro-processes and power and social structure in these interactions. Additionally, a focus on individual groups and classrooms can obscure both the role and responsibly of broader society in addressing inequity.
Whereas cultural difference theorists explain minority students’ academic performance through the cultural mismatch between students’ home cultures and communication styles and that of the schools, scholars from structural and critical perspectives bring the unequal power of social, economic, and political structures and their interplay with race, gender, and class to the debate (e.g., Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1990, 2005). This helps to explain how the methodological assumptions in deficit and cultural difference theory can and have reinforced existing power relations to the extent that they reinforce the achievement gap and status quo power relations.

**Structural and Critical Perspective**

From a structural perspective, Black academic underachievement and achievement gaps inevitably endorse status quo racial relations in the United States (Horvat & O’Connor, 2006). The structural perspective generally focuses on social class, political economy, and social geography (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Johnson, 2006; Massey & Denton, 1989; Rist, 2000). Since the 1960s, the combination of Black poverty, racial segregation, as well as inadequate funding of Black schools has been identified by structuralists as causing Black underachievement (Keddie, 1973; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Thomas and Sillen (1972) argued that society in this context shoulders the responsibility for school failure of poor Black children and other minorities. Orr (2003, p. 295)
highlighted racial disparities in wealth and measured its impact on Black students’ academic achievement. More recently Johnson (2006) in *The American Dream and the Power of Wealth* argued that educational inequality is caused by a wealth gap between different racial and class groups in the United States.

Social class is manifested in the discourse of inequality in American schooling. From a structural perspective, education is seen as a system that perpetuates the existing class structure. The systematic and institutional stratification confirms that the accessibility to quality education only belongs to those who are in the upper reaches of the social hierarchy (Brantlinger, 2003; Johnson, 2006). Therefore, social class inequalities and institutional racism limit, constrain, and shape individuals’ access to opportunities and actions in the process of schooling.

According to the structural explanation, academic underachievement is understood as a social consequence of inequality. Therefore, school success and failure are locally constituted and unequally distributed on the basis of race and class (Kozol, 1991). The different educational opportunities in this context explain different academic performance between children of different social classes.

Although the structural perspective is compelling in its attention to the role of broader societal constrains and in the potential for transformation, the extent to which
structural theorists incorporate individual agency within these largely determinant societal structures is in question. The structural perspective is often criticized for regarding individuals as passive objects of larger forces. Structural theorists such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) were criticized for only emphasizing “structural constraints while virtually ignoring the social organization of school practices and individual actions” (Mehan, Hubbard, & Villaneuva, 1994, p. 93). Arguably, social structure needs to be considered within a treatment of local practices, for it is in these local contexts that broader forces, such as social structure and power distribution take place. Therefore, other scholars have argued that minority academic performance is a product of both the micro-processes of cultural interaction in schooling and the macro-structure of societal and racial politics.

It was not until the late 1980s that more researchers started to place academic achievement within a framework of the strengths of Black learners and the uniqueness of the systemic psychosocial and psycho-educational cultural experiences in which they developed (Berry & Asamen, 1989; Trueba, 1988). From this perspective, the impact of relational, organizational, and collective processes that embody the social structure of inequality is addressed. Moreover, these perspectives emphasize the significance of structure and culture while acknowledging that individuals have the capacity to act and
make informed choices (Morrow & Torres, 1995, pp. 112-134). The choices made by an individual may be shaped by both the available opportunities and the norms present within the cultural environment where they are located but never entirely as individuals are not simply the victims of their environment.

**Critical Race Theory**

Similar to structural perspective, critical perspectives on race help researchers situate their research within broader social and political systems. But critical perspectives on race further raise awareness about the position of their frameworks and methods with respect to people of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). When critical race theory (CRT) rose to prominence in the 1990s, education scholars began to use it as a tool to explain existing inequalities in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT has its roots in legal scholarship as well as diverse traditions in education such as critical pedagogy, multicultural education, and multiculturalism (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas (1995) defined CRT as a way of interpreting, analyzing, and calling attention to the existence of race and racism in society. According to Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso (2002), CRT in education is an approach to understanding the problems in education through the lens of communities of color. CRT does not offer a finished set of propositions that claim or explain current situations and
predict what will occur under a certain set of conditions; rather it is a set of interrelated perspectives, propositions, and questions that extend from the discourses of ethnic studies and critical pedagogy. What is most important is that these various “insights” are brought together in a new and challenging way (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Tate, 1997).

Frustration with the silence of race and racism in research and how they operate in the U.S. have prompted CRT scholars to foreground race and to challenge not only the existing analysis, but also the methods and forms of argumentation that were considered legitimate (e.g., Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado, 1989). Although compared to other traditions in educational research CRT is still in its infancy, it has the tradition of addressing issues of race, power, language, gender, identity, class, and social structure in relation to the opportunities and legal rights of individuals and groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 1998). Over the past decade, critical race scholars have explored the theoretical and methodological significance of CRT and its role in educational theory and practices (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). For example, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) put forth a set of propositions connecting “race and property as a central construct” toward understanding the “property functions of Whiteness” in relation to schooling (pp. 58-59). Their critical race analysis “moved beyond the boundaries of the educational research literature to include arguments and new perspectives from law and social
sciences” (p. 48) and demonstrated the centrality of racial inequalities in U.S. schools.

Through their analysis they illustrated how racism was a persistent historical and ideological construct that could account for inequalities such as dropout rates and school suspension rates for Black and Latino students. They illustrated how poverty and low social status is racialized with Black Americans and other ethnic minorities routinely having access to property with low value. This, in turns, affects the inherent value of the schools attended by those students.

Other scholars explored how CRT could influence and shape qualitative research. For example, Parker (1998) examined the ways in which qualitative studies examined race in educational research and further discussed the utility of using CRT as a tool not only to transform research practices but also to provide alternatives to inherently racist research practices that further marginalize communities of color. Of particular relevance was the development of a critical race methodology for conducting qualitative research that was articulated by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) which focuses on the use of storytelling and counter-story telling to challenging dominate myths and assumptions and to reveal the perspectives and experiences of multiple actors in different social locations that are often considered as marginalized population.
In sum, in distinction from structural and cultural difference perspectives, CRT broadens awareness within educational research about whose stories are being told and how these stories are embedded in a system of power that treats dominant structures and practices as normative can help make race and racialized experience explicit in educational context (Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Further, analyses on educational opportunities and identities within the critical perspective pay attention to how opportunities and identities are negotiated, adapted, and contested by individuals as they are positioned and position themselves with respect to histories of engagement in different communities, bringing subtle processes of power and privilege to the forefront (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In this regard, while schools are often places where minority students are subjected to practices and attitudes that can reinforce their second-class status, schools are also places where resistance to such hegemony can be collectively harnessed and made transformative.

**Oppositional Cultural Model**

The above outlined perspectives have proposed that the underachievement of minority children in school is a product of both the micro-processes of socio-cultural interactions in school settings and the macrostructure of societal and racial politics. Ogbu
threaded a middle ground by employing a macro-analytic perspective of the social and political forces that have impacted the relation between minority group and mainstream American culture as well as a micro-level concern with the psychological and behavioral adaptation of minority groups to that oppression. Without dismissing the importance of cultural differences and macro-social structure, Ogbu’s cultural ecological perspective leads us to the oppositional cultural model to explain some Black students’ academic underachievement. I further discuss this model in the subsequent section.

The well-known “oppositional cultural model” has assumed center stage in both academic and popular discourse regarding academic achievement of Black students (Foley, 2004; Horvat & O’Connor, 2006). It also has stimulated lively debate over its legitimacy and empirical reliability. In this model, both a macro-analytic perspective of the social and political forces that have impacted the relation between minority groups and dominant American culture and a micro-level concern with the psychological and behavioral adaptation of the minority to that oppression are incorporated.

This model focuses on the contributions of racial and ethnic identity and group association to school outcomes via the cultural frame of reference youth learn during adolescence (Ogbo, 1987a, 1987b). This model also informs Ogbo’s study of Black
students’ academic underachievement in Shaker Heights (Ogbu, 2003). Ogbu argued that Black youth in Shaker Heights developed dispositions toward achievement, primarily through family life that did not support academic behavior and striving for excellence relative to Whites, contributing to a substantial Black-White test score gap. In this context Black underachievement is attributed to Black students defining their identities in opposition to Whites and to their fear of being shunned by their peers’ accusations of acting White (Fisher, 2005; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Mehan et al., 1994; Wiggan, 2008). Briefly, Ogbu (2003) recommended that while schools must recognize the challenges brought about by diversity, parents and students must change their attitudes and beliefs about school. Although Ogbu acknowledged that teachers or school structures or larger climate play a role in shaping the educational experiences of middle-class Black Americans, he downplayed their significance in contributing to the academic disengagement of Black students in White institutions (Gibson, 2005, p. 585). Rather, Ogbu (2003) called for greater community acceptance of dominant social norms by Black students. In this regard, he urged Black students to re-envision schooling, not as a machination through which the will of the dominant class is transmitted, but as a tool for achieving their own social and economic goals.
It is perhaps easy to see how Ogbu’s suggestion can be regarded as assuming a cultural deficit perspective. Critique of the oppositional cultural model centers on its implied homogeneity of Black students (e.g., Foley, 2004; Horvat & O’Connor, 2006; Stinson, 2011). Whereas a cultural deficit perspective explains failings presumed to exist in the character of the “lower” classes, the oppositional cultural model can be interpreted as similar to the cultural deficit perspective suggesting that education is not a Black American cultural value and Black American families do not invest in their children. By doing so, Black Americans, regardless of class background, were portrayed as having developed a self-defeating and detrimental culture of resistance to education. What complicated an acceptance of the oppositional cultural model in the Shaker’s Black students’ case is that the average academic performance of Black students in Shaker Heights exceeded that of average White students in the State of Ohio (CNN, 2004).

Tyson, Darity, and Castellino (2005) criticized the portrait of Black students’ monolithically opposing to education by arguing that school conditions such as course availability and teacher quality may have a greater influence on students’ attitudes towards school than peer or family influences. However, in hook’s view (2004), although White teachers, school administrators, and educational structures that maintain White supremacy are largely responsible for Black male underachievement, equally
troublesome is the internalization and validation of these messages that devalue education within Black communities. hooks (2004) suggested the detrimental effects of mass media images and within-race disempowerment (p. 94). She claimed that young Black Americans, especially Black males, are groomed to devalue educational achievement due to societal messages that are internalized and reinforced by Black families and peers. In her book, *We Real Cool; Black Men and Masculinity* (2004), she noted that in some Black households the boy who likes to read is suspected of being at risk for developing feminine or “sissy” characteristics. The same perceptions held among Black male peer groups in schools are often coupled with low teacher expectations for Black academic success. Consequently, few receive the support needed to overcome longstanding educational inequalities and social disadvantages.

From a structural perspective, Black students are also more likely to be channeled into marginal roles and to be discouraged from challenging themselves by institutions and persons who are supposed to help them (Ferguson, 2000, 2003; Oakes, 2005; Tyson, 2006), although some Black students may engage in behaviors that are detrimental to their academic success and contribute to their marginality (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 1987a, 1987b). Ferguson (2000, 2003) argued that Black students’ marginality and oppositional identity are perpetuated by schools’ sorting practices. Discrimination in this context is
built into institutions and social roles. Similarly, Noguera (2003) stressed that the structure and culture of schools play a vital role in reinforcing and maintaining racial categories and stereotypes associated with them. “As schools sort children by perceived measures of their ability and as they single out certain children for discipline, implicit and explicit messages about racial and gender identities are conveyed” (p. 444).

From a critical perspective, the weakness of the oppositional cultural model is its relative disregard of the micro-dynamics that occur among Black students and the culture that is operative within schools (Foley, 2004; Perry, 2003). It is problematic to suggest that Black-American students equate academic success with “acting White.” For example, Akom (2003) illustrated that Black students can be oppositional toward restrictive and unfair school policies and practices while still possessing a “Black achievement ideology” that leads them toward academic achievement. Solórzano and Bernal (2001) used the example of Mexican American students walking out of a school that failed to meet their needs to suggest that some resistance is necessary and even desirable to get the kind of support students need in order to be successful. Solórzano and Bernal maintained that the oppositional cultural model simply fails to consider this perspective.
To conclude, research on minority students’ academic performance including Black students’ academic performance spans a wide range of common theoretical perspectives. Whereas cultural deficit perspectives “blame the victims” for their academic underachievement (Ryan, 1976), cultural difference perspectives denote that the schools and teachers failure to legitimize minority children’s home culture causes their academic struggles (Banks, 2006). While cultural difference perspectives explain minority students’ performance through understanding the micro-level interactions between students and teacher in school contexts (Erickson, 1987), structural and critical perspectives bring macro-level and micro-level critiques of social and opportunity structures into an understanding of minority students’ academic performance. Cultural and structural forces influence individuals’ actions and choices; however neither alone determines academic performance of Black students. They do not provide the necessary elements for a comprehensive analysis of performance including the ways in which race and racism functions at both the school and the societal level. Some researchers incorporate important elements from both perspectives while simultaneously paying greater attention to the importance of individual choice and agency (McLeod, 1987). I share Levinson and Holland’s (1996) perspective that individuals have the ability to produce cultural forms that can counter these pressures.
Of course culture is not static (J. W. Berry 1980, 2003) and an individual’s response to his or her social location cannot be easily predicted. It would be naive to conclude that because individuals have the capacity to counter environmental and social forces, many will choose or be able to do so. Hundreds of studies on the effects of being raised in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty (at least 20% poverty rate) have been conducted since the 1980s (Wilson, 2009), and “they suggest that concentrated poverty increases the likelihood of social isolation (from mainstream institutions), joblessness, dropping out of school, lower educational achievement, involvement in crime, unsuccessful behavioral development and delinquency among adolescents, non-marital childbirth, and unsuccessful family management” (p. 46). Such isolation in turn intensifies the conflict between attitude (achievement ideology) and behavior (study hard) because of the limited opportunities perceived by many in isolated circumstances.

The good news is that not all Blacks are discouraged by structural barriers or less than affluent social origin (D. J. Carter, 2008; Wiggan, 2007) including this study’s participants. Given the importance of individual choice, it is important to understand the process by which the choices are informed. Cultural and structural forces combine in a complex way to influence how Black students perceive academic achievement and negotiate their identities within the social-cultural contexts. From an anti-deficit
perspective, what requires further elaboration is the contextual details and individual characteristics that empower Black students to succeed against odds. In the case of this study’s participants, it involved overcoming both socio-cultural and psychological challenges induced by urban-to-suburban translocation. In the following sections, I explore the relationship between Black academic achievement and socio-cognitive acculturation theory as it provides a different approach to understand Black students’ academic achievement in the context of social location change.

**Black Academic Achievement and Socio-Cognitive Acculturation Theory**

From an anti-deficit approach, there are multiple ways to understand the relationship between urban-to-suburban translocation and Black academic achievement. In the view of an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the relationship between urban-to-suburban translocation and Black academic achievement could be understood as a result of a dynamic triad of family, school, and community engagement in the local context. From the perspective of socio-cognitive acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003), Black students who migrated from disadvantaged inner-city areas to an affluent suburb employed adaptive strategies informed by their perception of the rules and codes of the new social location, which resulted in behaviors that promoted school success. Embedded in CRT, Black students’ academic achievement could be explained as an
integration of affirmed Black racial identity and a desire to achieve as a form of resistance to the perceived structural racism at school and in the U.S. society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

In this section, the relationship between academic achievement and socio-cognitive acculturation is discussed. As stated previously from cultural difference perspective, school is a micro-culture in which the cultures of students and teachers meet (Erickson, 1987). Assimilation and acculturation are different in important ways. Assimilation involves the elimination of cultural differences and differentiating group identifications. Acculturation on the other hand stipulates that a culture is modified through contact with one or more other cultures but maintains its essence (Banks, 2006).

Acculturation is found to be multi-dimensional and intricately related to the psychological adjustment of adults and children (Berry, 2003; Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986). Padilla and Perez (2003) offered an acculturation model built upon four constructs: social cognition, cultural competence, social identity, and social stigma. Each of these perspectives is relevant to the acculturation processes operating in immigrants. For the purpose of this study, socio-cognitive aspect of this acculturation model, which I refer to as socio-cognitive acculturation, was used to understand the experience of the study participants. Socio-cognitive acculturation follows “the tradition of pragmatism in
social cognition research (e.g., Fiske, 1993; Fiske & Taylor, 1991) that emphasizes the motivational and intentional bases of perception and cognition” (p. 41) and theorizes acculturation stemming from people’s goals, which vary according to their social locations and people’s cultural competence level.

Padilla and Perez (2003) pointed out that “newcomers, regardless of their heritage and culture, and whether they are refugees, or voluntary immigrants, must in one form or another adapt to their new cultural environment” (p. 50). Likewise, Ogbu (1987) claimed that “all minority children encounter social adjustment and academic learning problems, at least initially” (p. 317). Thus it is perhaps safe to assert that in order to satisfy the practical goal such as succeeding academically, adjustments have to be made by the translocated students in their new social location.

In general, acculturation constitutes one of the most important individual difference variables in the study of ethnic minority populations. More recently it emerged as a promising, non-racist model (Landrine & Klonoff, 1994) of the creation of more diverse multicultural societies due to international migration, economic globalization, and political conflicts. Acculturation attempts to explain the varied experiences of ethnic and cultural minorities. Many ethnic differences can be understood as a manifestation of a degree of acculturation without recourse to deficit model explanations. Therefore, the
concept of acculturation “has the potential to decrease racist, ethnocentric beliefs about ethnic differences facilitating an understanding of all people as cultural products” (Landrine & Klonoff, 1994, p. 105). As a construct, acculturation includes changes not only at the individual or psychological level but also at the socio-cultural level (Berry, 1980, 2003).

In the social cognition framework, living is socially based; the environment, social institutions (such as schools) and daily interactions with people help shape human cognition (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), which guides human behaviors (including school behavior). This means that human behavior and experience is related to social location. Since the study participants have experienced social location change, socio-cognition cognitive acculturation theory (Padilla & Perez, 2003) promises to facilitate exploration of the study participants’ behavioral adjustment.

The literature on acculturation and schooling in contemporary America inevitably involves, but is not limited to, issues of immigration (e.g., Zhou, 1997), bilingual education (e.g., Fillmore, 2005), academic outcomes (e.g., Portes, 1999), and educating “others’” children (e.g., Delpit, 1988; Glenn, 1992). Research indicates that ethnic minorities encounter great social, economic, and political pressure to adjust to the traditions and lifestyle norms of White American culture. Consequently, it is not
surprising that acculturation is often related to the studies of mental health of ethnic minorities (Berry & Kim, 1988; Yeh, 2003). Individual and group differences in acculturation have been associated with educational achievement of immigrants’ children (Kao & Tienda, 2005; Padilla, 1980). Acculturation has also been correlated to ethnic identity and changes in cultural values (Fuligni, 2001; Phinney, 2003; Marin & Gamba, 2003).

Despite the vast research interest on international immigrants’ acculturation and schooling in the U.S., after an extensive search, I have not found literature that addresses the relationship between acculturation and Black academic behavior. It is perhaps safe to claim that acculturation rarely has been applied to study Black Americans’ academic behavior within the U.S. (Landrine & Klonoff, 1994). Berry’s acculturation model (1980) is perhaps the most well-known. Berry identified the following four acculturation styles: assimilation, integration, accommodation, and marginalization/separation. The importance of Berry’s model was that it recognized the importance of multicultural societies, minority individuals and groups, and the fact that individuals have some choices in terms of how far they are willing to go in the acculturation process. However, this model does not explain why individuals choose one culture over the other in the acculturation process (Padilla, 1987). Padilla and Perez (2003) hypothesized that
“acculturation is more difficult for those who must cope with the stigma of being different because of skin color, language, ethnicity, and so forth” (p. 317). According to Padilla and Perez, in addition to other acculturation stresses racial identity difference adds extra challenges in the acquisition and operation of “dominant cultural capital” in a new social location (i.e., standard English, high status cultural attributes, dress codes, etc.).

Some studies explored the connection between affirmed Black identity and positive educational outcome, focusing on the subjective and objective dimensions of identity and how these influence academic performance (Codjoe, 2006; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Mehan et al., 1994). Based on the view of socio-cognitive acculturation, the social identities individuals bring with them and the identities they may develop in the new social location influence their social cognition that in turn guide their school behavior. At the same time, schools also play a critical role in shaping social identities. If school policies and practices are responsive and culturally sensitive, they will help Black students to cultivate a positive social identity, which also contributes to their academic achievement (Irving & Hudley, 2008).

Padilla (1987) also used cultural awareness to predict immigrants’ acculturation level. Cultural awareness refers to the implicit knowledge that individuals have of their
culture of origin and of their host cultures. The knowledge also includes an understanding of the standards and values that have shaped the person’s social conduct. If the individual possesses more knowledge of the host culture, the individual is more acculturated. Similarly, other studies suggest culture is crucially important at the collective and individual levels for academic achievement and overall psychological adjustment of immigrant, refugees, and other minority children (Spindler & Spindler, 1987; Trueba, 1988). In this view, cultural values, assumptions, knowledge, and commitments are at the heart of successful adjustment to the new culture of the school and to academic achievement. However, acculturation is not just how much minorities want to adjust to the host environment, such as schools, since acculturation is hypothesized to be more difficult for those people who must cope with a social stigma of skin color, language, and ethnicity (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 35). Further, the pressure to acculturate does not distribute evenly among people and in turn the response of the host environment to Black students also determines what strategies are available for them to acculturate.

Due to lack of literature on Black American socio-cognitive acculturation and its impact on Black academic performances, I briefly discuss some of the studies on achievement ideology and racial identity of some high-achieving Black students in
predominately White school settings to illustrate the influence of social-cognition on academic achievement.

**High-Achieving Black Students and Achievement Ideology**

I use the term “achievement ideology” to mean that a general belief that doing well in school will improve one’s life chances and one’s social upward mobility. As stated earlier, recent research contests the applicability of the oppositional cultural model, revealing that Black students of all socio-economic backgrounds strongly adhere to the dominant achievement ideology (Ainsworth-Darnell, 2002; Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; D. J. Carter, 2008; P. L. Carter, 2003; Ferguson, 2001; Tyson, 2002). Researchers such as Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) and D. J. Carter (2008) argued that Black oppositional peer culture is not particularly related to academic achievement, but rather the cultural default—namely, White, middle-class standards of speech, dress, musical tastes and interaction styles. Likewise, Ogbu (2004) also acknowledged that relatively few Black students reject good grades because it is “White.” “What the students reject that hurts their academic performance are White attitudes and behaviors conductive to making good grades” (p. 28).

There is no consistent evidence that Black students reject doing well at school, although high-achievers often encounter difficulty integrating their social, racial, and
Using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS), Kao and Tienda (1998) find that Black students have a similar level of educational aspiration to that of their White counterparts. Likewise, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downy (1998) also used the NELS and found that Black students are more likely to agree than White students to the connection between an education and getting a job in the future.

Graham and Anderson (2008) found a strong connection between Black ethnic identity and academic achievement in their study with gifted Black students. Perry (2003) and Lundy (2003) found that many Black students engage in school and use it as a form of self and group agency. Likewise, D. J. Carter (2008) discovered that her study samples, nine high-achieving Black students at an upper-class, predominately White public high school, firmly believe in the mainstream achievement ideology and that their racial identity further strengthens their desire to achieve in order to prove the negative stereotypes about Black students wrong. This “prove-them-wrong” attitude thus facilitates high achieving Black students’ academic performance as it is informed by their salient racial identity and affirmed self-concept.
High-Achieving Black Students and Racial Identity

Schools and peer groups are powerful in the socialization process of individuals, but they are by no means the only force that shapes the social construction of Black identity (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 1987a, 1987b; Steinberg, 1996). Black students are not simply the victims of their environment. Interaction between structural conditions and individual agency can affect academic achievement (Mickelson, 1990). Several researchers have found that high-achieving Black students “camouflage” their academic talent in order to fit in with their Black peers (Floyd, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Horvat & Lewis, 2003). Others suggest that some high-achieving Black students can successfully negotiate dominant cultural codes in school in order to acquire academic success while also affirming and maintaining strong racial and ethnic identity (Andrews, 2009). This is what Gibson (1988) called “accommodation without assimilation.”

Similarly, Frit-Britt and Turner (2002) asserted that some Black students intentionally assimilate into White culture, which does not necessarily mean that they know less about Black culture or have weaker racial identities. Instead, they have “learned to become bicultural, developing a repertoire of expressions and behaviors from both the White and Black community and switching between them as appropriate” (p. 320). P. L. Carter (2005a) referred to these students as “cultural straddlers” and
described them as “having bicultural perspectives; they are strategic movers across the cultural spheres” (p. 30). Different from other Black students, these high-achieving Black students in Carter’s study develop strategies to obtain academic success because they embrace academic achievement as a raceless goal that can be pursued by individuals of any racial and ethnic group. Thus, they are not constrained with the burden of “acting White” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) or feel the need to hide their academic success or to demonstrate their “racelessness” (Fordham, 1988).

The above studies discuss how some high-achieving Black students navigate the school process in culturally affirming ways and in predominantly White school settings. Yet, they do not focus on understanding the resultant adaptive strategies of high-achieving Black students who have experienced urban-to-suburban translocation. How these Black students maximize their schooling experience in a diverse school setting will offer additional insights to the relationship between racial identity and Black academic achievement. Although for some Black students racialized achievement ideology plays a

critical role in their academic and post-school success, the significance of Black families and extended families must not be ignored as they are part of the Black students’ ecological context. The subsequent paragraphs illustrate the relationship between family dynamics and academic achievement and inconsistencies in research on family dynamics and Black academic achievement.

**Black Academic Achievement and Family Dynamics**

In the view of an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986), the relationship between urban-to-suburban translocation and Black academic achievement could be understood as a result of a dynamic triad of family, school, and community engagement in the local context. Family dynamics here refer to parental involvement, parenting style, and aspects of family demographics (e.g., parental education level and family structure). Particularly, parenting style and parental practices constitute characteristics of students’ cultural environment. For children, school-related skills learned at home are found to enhance their potential for doing well in school (Huang & Mason, 2008; Scott-Jones, 1987). There is no question that family plays a critical role in many Black students’ journey to success. In this section, some of the impact of family dynamics on Black Academic achievement is reviewed.
Accumulated research shows that children benefit when their parents support and are actively involved in their education (Barnard, 2004; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Jeynes, 2005; Park, 2006). Parental involvement is often understood to consist of two dimensions: school- and home-based involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). School-based involvement includes parents’ participation in school activities, attendance at parent-teacher conferences or school events, and interaction with other parents as well as teachers and school administrators. Home-based involvement includes parent-child discussion about the child’s schooling, parental assistance with homework, and monitoring the child’s behavior and discipline (Park, 2006). Cross-cultural studies suggest that home-based parental involvement, such as helping with homework, reviewing for a test, monitoring the child’s progress, and investigating additional educational resources positively influences academic performance (Green et al., 2007; Huang & Mason, 2008; Park, 2006).

It is explicit in Ogbu’s (2003) conclusion on Black students’ academic disengagement in Shaker Heights that the absence of both school- and home-based parental involvement and sense of responsibility partially result in the comparatively dismal academic performance of many Black students. However, not all Black families
are the same and parents participate in their children’s education in a variety of ways.

This is another reason why counter narratives are desperately needed.

Parenting styles here refer to the four parenting typologies developed by Maccoby and Martin (1983): authoritarian, authoritative, permissive/indulgent, and neglectful/uninvolved. Each of these parenting styles reflects different patterns of parental values, practices, and behaviors, along with a distinct balance of responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind, 1971, 1991a). In general, parental responsiveness predicts social competence and psychosocial functioning, whereas parental demandingness is associated with instrumental competence and behavioral control (Spera, 2005). However, the mixture of demandingness and responsiveness is not identical across all societies and ethnic groups. Researchers have found that Black and Hispanic parents are slightly less likely than European American and Asian American parents to be authoritative and slightly more likely than European American and Asian American parents to be authoritarian (Mandara, 2006).

Although research and theory suggest that parenting is an important determinant of behavior among adolescents in general (Spera, 2005), the relationship between family dynamics and Black academic achievement is complicated. The findings on family dynamics and their link to Black academic achievement has been inconsistent. Studies of
ethnically diverse samples have revealed that family dynamics that are consistently predictive of achievement for White American students are in contrast not very predictive of achievement among Black American students (Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Hines & Holcomb-Mccoy, 2013; Mandara, 2006; Park & Bauer, 2002). For example, Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987) studied the relationship between parenting style and achievement in a large, diverse sample of San Francisco Bay area high school students. They found a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and academic achievement, and a negative relationship between academic achievement and permissive parenting and authoritarian parenting among their 4,553 White students sampled. But, there was no relationship between any of these parenting styles and academic achievement among their 426 Black students sampled. Additionally, parental education and parental marital status were not related to the Black student sample’s grades while they are predictors for the White student sample’s grades.

In studies of Black students, some researchers have found positive relationships between parental academic involvement, parental style, and academic achievement, whereas others have found no relationship. For example, Clark’s (1983) qualitative study of families of high achieving and underachieving Black children living in an inner-city Chicago housing project suggest that high achieving Black families have high levels of
parental involvement and use a firm but supportive parenting style. On the contrary, Dornbusch et al. (1987) claimed that parenting style is not related to Black students’ high school GPA. Similarly, in 1994, Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, and Dornbusch found that Black children living in authoritative homes did much better on all well-being variables except for academic achievement. However, C. T. Taylor, Hinton, and Wilson (1995) using the National Survey of Family and Household data set found that Black children from households with authoritative parents had better grades than those whose parents used authoritarian or permissive parenting styles.

Among diverse population samples, parental support is higher in “intact families” (2-parent household) than in step or divorced families (Mandara, 2006). However, within Black samples, family structure does not exert an impact on academic performance (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Some scholars (Kauchak & Eggen, 2005; Ogbu, 2003) conclude that lack of parental support and monitoring are translated into Black underachievement. The only consistent finding has been the critical role of Black mothers in their children’s academic success. For example, Gonzales et al. (1996) found that maternal support was prospectively and positively related to adolescents’ grades and independent of neighborhood risk. Likewise, Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) also
confirmed that Black mothers’ persistent involvement and support contributed to academic achievement in their sample of 60 Black male high school graduates.

Given the inconsistency in the research on the effect of family dynamics on Black academic achievement, this study sets out with a fresh set of eyes to attempt to interpret the perceptions of how family dynamics contribute to the achievement of the student participants. The ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) suggests that family/parental dynamics moderate negative influences of peers and environment. As discussed in the previous section, since urban-to-suburban translocation poses challenges in structural and cultural dimensions, the role of family dynamics thus are of particular importance to the schooling experience of study participants as they are translocated in a new ecological context. Below I detail the context of my study and discuss further the unique challenge caused by urban-to-suburban translocation as following.

Urban-to-Suburban Translocation and its Challenges

Common theoretical perspectives have indicated that the macrostructure of the society, micro-process of cultural interactions in the school setting, and students’ individual psyches towards education all play important roles in shaping Black students’ academic performances. However, literature concerning academic achievement and
Black students’ urban-to-suburban translocation experience is lacking (e.g., Wells & Crain, 1999).

If Black academic underachievement is explained through the sociopolitical barriers faced by Black students and the cultural dispositions represented by residents of inner city areas and suburbs, counter narratives must be anchored in these structural and cultural realities which were intensified by translocation in this study. In the following paragraphs, the context of my study is presented and challenges which may be unique to Black students who have experienced urban-to-suburban translocation are discussed in addition to those already stressed common challenges such as “student teacher mismatch” and “racially biased teacher expectations.”

Inner city areas and suburbs represent two distinct social locations. The notion of social location is drawn from sociology. Defined as an individual’s position in an informal social network relative to the positions of others, its effects on behavior have long been of interest to social scientists (Berger, 1963; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Silverman, 1993). Social location consists of components such as geographic residence, ethnicity, race, gender, social status, parental socioeconomic status (SES), cultural assets, social networks, school and the community environment. All these components have
relevance to academic achievement, especially in a society with profound race, class, and wealth stratifications, such as the U.S.

Wells and Crain (1999) stated that many Black Americans perceive that suburbs offer better educational opportunities than their urban neighborhood schools because resources follow suburbs. This stance is consistent with the structural and critical perspective of the impact of racial and wealth stratifications in contemporary American schooling. Black academic achievement is often framed in the social-demographic characteristics of the youth and the family (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For instance, Johnson (2006) and Massey (2001) suggested that the most influential neighborhood characteristics in empirical research are the presence of individuals from a middle class or affluent social standing. Likewise, an empirical synthesis of neighborhood effects finds neighborhood affluence to be more influential in determining education outcomes than any other neighborhood factors (Crane, 1991). This construct is common in modern cultural lore worldwide. Then, the question becomes, would moving to integrated, well-funded, and well-staffed Shaker Heights schools guarantee academic achievement?

Social location tells an individual what to do and what to expect of life, including “norms” and “common sense.” In other words, parents, family, and schools are major sites of socialization and cultural transmission (Spring, 1994, p. 34). Especially during
early adolescent years, as youth become more active in their schools, neighborhoods, and peer groups, the external influences likely become increasingly important in affecting their academic performances (Eccles et al., 1993). From family, schools, and interaction with peers, children learn how to follow instructions and obey rules, how to interact with others, and how to deal with authority. Children also learn who they are by locating themselves in relation to others. Location in the society also resolves how a person perceives his or her relations with others in various social settings. Because schools are often sites where children are more likely to encounter members of another race or ethnic group, they are special places for children to formulate views about race.

The challenges faced by Black students and families because of urban-to-suburban translocation can be conceptualized within the U.S. cultural-structural context. Within such context, it is safe to assert that social location is determined by the type of school he or she attends, is determined by the quality of education an individual receives, describes a certain social community, and may predict the outcomes of an individual’s schooling and post-school success. Many Black Americans are “hyper segregated,” clustered in

\[ \text{See details in Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1989). Hypersegregation in U.S. metropolitan Areas: Black and Hispanic segregation along Five Dimensions, Demography, 26(3), 373-391. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton (1989) concluded that “segregation is a global construct that subsumes five distinct dimensions of spatial variation. These five dimensions are evenness, exposure, clustering, centralization, and concentration . . . Compared with Hispanics, not only are Blacks more segregated on any single} \]
contiguous areas, concentrated in small areas, and centralized within urban areas (Massey & Denton, 1989). Given the high concentration of Black Americans in inner city areas, the public school system in these areas now transmits mostly the Black experience that is not fully accepted in the mainstream world (Williams, 1990). Urban-to-suburban translocation thus can be extremely difficult for many Black Americans who have lived and grown up in the Black cultural milieu of inner city areas.

**Black Students’ Academic Underachievement in Affluent Suburbs**

The combination of an increasing minority population in the suburbs and the national impact of the book *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb—A Study of Academic Disengagement* by late scholar John Ogbu (2003) and subsequent lively debates surrounding “oppositional identity” theory (e.g., Foley, 2004; Horvat & O’Connor, 2006; Lundy, 2003) have drawn attention to studying Black students’ academic performance in affluent suburbs. This section provides a brief context of this focus shift.

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dimension of residential segregation, they are also likely to be segregated on all five dimensions simultaneously, which never occurs for Hispanics. Moreover, in a significant subset of large urban areas, Blacks experience extreme segregation on all dimensions,” a pattern they call hypersegregation (p. 373).
In the U.S., the suburban population has become more and more heterogeneous. At the national level, studies on population diversity indicate a rapid change in demographics in suburbs across the United States. According to Frey\(^5\) (2010), racial and ethnic diversity in suburban areas rose substantially in the first decade of the 21\(^{\text{st}}\) century. In 2000, racial and ethnic minorities made up 27\% of suburban populations, up from 19\% in 1990 (Fray, 2001). In 2008, “more than half of all racial and ethnic groups residing in large metro areas live in the suburbs” (Frey, 2010, p. 61). In terms of Black American population, Black suburbanization accelerated during the 1970s. The number of Black suburbanites grew rapidly and the propensity of Black Americans to move to suburban destinations increased sharply (Frey, 1978, 1985; Nelson, 1980). Between 1970 and 1980, the percentage of all Black Americans living in suburbs rose from 16\% to 21\% (Massey & Denton, 1988). In 2000, only 43\% of Black Americans in major metro areas lived in the suburbs, but that share increased rapidly to more than 50\% by 2008 (Frey, 2010, p. 61).

Historically, working-class Black Americans in inner cities and poor urban schools frequently appear in the discourse of Black underachievement and the achievement gap (Ferguson, 2001; Paige & Witty, 2009). However, recent statistics indicate that Black Americans in suburbs, including middle and upper-middle class Black students, are also not doing well in schools (Ogbu, 2003). There is an even greater achievement gap in suburban middle-class income communities than in the inner cities, particularly at the higher achievement levels (The College Board, 1999; Ferguson, 2001; Whittington, 2012b). In 1999, 15 middle- and upper-middle income school districts in Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, California, and Virginia formed the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN). Together, they acknowledged the racial and ethnic disparities in their primary and secondary schools. School leaders acknowledged that even in affluent suburbs, “students of color are underrepresented among higher achievers and overrepresented among students who get low grades and score poorly on standardized exams” (Ferguson, 2001, p. 347).

In sum, the trend of minority suburbanization has exposed the challenges of Black American students in seemingly affluent suburbs, which might help to explain the shifts in academic interest in investigating the educational experiences of Black students from
inner cities to elite suburban public schools since late 1990s (Ferguson, 2001; Ogbu, 2003).

**Acculturation Stress**

Besides the potential encounter with “racially biased teacher expectations” and “student teacher mismatching” described previously, Black students who translocated from disadvantaged inner city areas to affluent suburb may also experience acculturation stress.

Cultural and linguistic differences between the inner city areas and an affluent suburb create considerable acculturation stress for Black students. Schools display a way of thinking, behaving, and communicating that is shaped by social class. Students walking through a classroom door are entering a well-established culture complete with linguistic codes, behavioral expectations, and assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning. Most of these communicative and behavioral codes reflect the values power dynamics, and knowledge base of mainstream middle or upper-middle class cultures (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Delpit, 1988).

Some researchers have argued that in the latter part of the 20th century inner city areas and their public school systems have been abandoned for the suburbs by middle class Blacks and Whites (Noguera, 2003; Williams, 1990). The resulting high poverty
isolation has created a breeding ground for violence and destruction within inner cities (Wilson, 2009). Inner-city poverty isolation also intensifies “oppositional identity” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), which characterizes some Black students’ negative attitude towards mainstream achievement ideology (Foley, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Wiggan, 2008). Some Black students’ underachievement thus can be seen as a reflection of Black Americans’ caste status and of educational practices that operate to ensure maintenance of the caste system in American society (R. T. Carter & Goodwin, 1994).

As stated earlier the oppositional cultural model has been criticized for overgeneralization and deficient empirical evidence (Erickson, 1987; Fisher, 2005; Trueba, 1988); nonetheless it sheds light on the intersection of historical struggle with aspects of economic, social and cultural realities felt by some Black Americans.

From the socio-cognitive perspective (Berger, 1963; Berger & Luckmann, 1967) social location accounts for the behaviors and interactions of individuals because psychological processes are socially based and social institutions, such as families and schools, shape human cognition. Therefore, the rules or what Berger (1963) called the “common sense view of society” (p. 68) which individuals have to obey and live by can also be reshaped. The change of social location comes with a new set of cultural and
behavioral codes that individuals must learn in order to function successfully in the new social location.

To conclude this section, given the importance of theoretical assumptions that an individual’s cognition is socially based (Berger, 1963; Berger & Luckmann, 1967), urban-to-suburban translocation imposes specific psycho-social pressures for Black students to acculturate. Conversely, the perceptions about place, people, and relations are not static but rather dynamic and as social location changes, so do behaviors in the schooling experience. In order to succeed at school, translocated Black students have to employ strategies in order to maintain their racial identity and achieve academically under intense pressures without being ostracized by their peers (Cross, Strauss, & Fhagen-Smith, 1999).

To conclude this chapter, common theoretical perspectives in understanding Black academic performance have shown us that social and cultural context (e.g., family, community, school, peer) and Black students’ socio-cognition (e.g., racial identity, self-concept, achievement ideology) towards schooling profoundly impact their academic achievement. Growing but limited literature on high-achieving Black students suggests that an engaging learning environment (e.g., Henderson & Mapp, 2002), active parental involvement (e.g., Clark, 1983; Gonzales et al., 1996), caring teachers and culturally
responsive instruction (e.g., Howard, 2002; Wiggan, 2008), and affirmed racial identity (e.g., Sanders, 1997; D. Carter, 2008) play important roles in shaping the academic performance for high achieving Black students. However, what is less understood is how Black students perceive, respond, and acculturate to a new socio-cultural context. Further, we are not clear how institutional and family conditions work together to influence the way Black students perceive their socio-cultural context and achieve academic and post-school success.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

We cannot fully understand a group of high achieving Black students’ urban-to-suburban translocation experiences in the absence of their voices and sense making process. For the purpose of my study, an interpretive qualitative research approach was used to gather rich descriptive data from the study participants to reveal the significant actors, processes, and events that were meaningful to them in all of their complexity (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2002).

Statistical significance and effect sizes have been used to justify the exclusive use of quantitative approaches in some studies that explore how environments, conditions, and experiences affect students (e.g., Boyce-Rodgers & Rose, 2001; Stewart, 2007). Although in many ways quantitative approaches can reveal what works, they are less successful at explaining how it works, who and what made it work, the facilitators and obstacles that were encountered along the way, and the meanings students ascribe to their experience. Therefore, an interpretive qualitative approach makes it possible for study participants to describe what they have gained and recall how various outcomes were directly affected by conditions and in turn how or why they were compelled to react, perform, or behave in a certain way (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, within the CRT
framework (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), the study participants were recognized as informants who were able to reflect on what they learned and the ways that people and processes added value to their urban-to-suburban translocation and schooling experiences.

**Research Context**

As stated previously, this study is part of the Shaker Project. I illustrate the context in which Shaker Project was anchored in the following sections. The Census data indicated that the Shaker Heights’ demographics mirror the national trend of suburbs being more diversified, yet it is not your typical “vanilla suburb” (Farley et al., 1978) where the main population is White. Shaker Project participants unanimously described Shaker as a “very diverse” and “racially friendly” community and some of the study participants further described its diversity as “shocking.” Such diversity is evident in the district’s student demographics. According to Shaker Heights City Schools District (SHCS) data, Black students made up 50% of Shaker’s student body in 2011–2012 compared to 16% of in the State of Ohio; White students comprised only 38% of the district’s student population whereas 74% of Ohio’s student body consists of White students. The representation of students from other groups (i.e., Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and Multi-Racial) in SHCS is also 2% higher than that of the State.
Besides being the standard bearer for a successfully integrated suburb in Ohio, SHCS is nationally recognized for its academic rigor, plentiful extracurricular activities, and a plethora of course offerings. Shaker High School is among the top 2% of U.S. high schools in *Newsweek*’s annual rating (Fast Facts, 2014). Shaker students are “overwhelmingly college-bound.” In 2010, over 89% of Shaker Heights High School graduates went to universities and colleges, including Ivy League Schools, public institutions, and private colleges. In 2013 Shaker was named a “Best Community for Music Education” by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation for a fourth year in a row. Despite the reputation of Shaker Heights, this integrated, well-funded and well-staffed school district has not been immune to “achievement gaps.”

In 1997, the Shaker Heights City School District Task Force’s Achievement Subcommittee publicized an in-house strategic planning report that outlined the devastating reality that Black students lagged far behind their White counterparts on every academic performance measure, even with a low poverty rate city wide of less than 6%

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10%. Their preliminary explanations of Black students’ underachievement in Shaker were divided into four broad categories: the school system, the community, Black parents, and Black students. The report summarized that the underachievement in Shaker Heights School District was an “unusually complex subject, involving the internal and external synergistic dynamics not only of the school system, but also of the parents and of students, collectively and individually, as well as our community as a whole” (Achievement Subcommittee, 1997, p. 1). The effort to tackle this “complex subject” generated two well-known studies on underachievement of Black students in suburbs. One study was written by Ron Ferguson of Harvard (2002), titled What Doesn’t Meet the Eye: Understanding and Addressing Racial Disparities in High-Achieving Suburban Schools, and the other was written by John Ogbu of the University of California at Berkeley (2003), titled Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb; A Study of Academic Disengagement.

Unfortunately, after a decade and numerous debates, the devastation is still a bitter reality for Shaker residents. In 2011-2012, Black students, regardless of grade level, continue to lag behind their White and Asian counterparts in every academic achievement measure and indicator according to the district’s own achievement report (SHCS Fact Book, Whittington, 2012a). Taking graduation rates, for example, in 2010–2011, 74.6%
of Black students graduated high school, which is 2.2% lower than it was in 2009–2010. In contrast, more than 95% of White students graduated for both years (SHCS Fact Book, 2012, p. IV-53). However, the graduation rate of Black students in Shaker exceeds their Black peers in Ohio by almost 16%, which partially reflects the academic excellence of Shaker City School District as a whole.

Given the context of Shaker Heights, both Ferguson and Ogbu were trying to understand why there were academic performance differences when the socioeconomic playing field was comparably leveled. How could you explain the achievement discrepancies when they could not be dismissed with the traditional explanations of inadequate teachers or disparities in school funding? Ogbu (2003) concluded that though socioeconomics, school funding, and racism played a role in students’ poor academic performance, more important influences were their own attitude and those of their parents that caused them to put forth minimum effort in schoolwork and a negative peer culture that equated getting good grade to “acting White.” In contrast, Ferguson (2002) concluded that the denial of equal educational and socioeconomic opportunities was at the root of the gap. For Ferguson, schools and teachers needed to change their classroom practices to improve minority students’ academic achievement through academic encouragement, implying that their academic success will change their self-concept and
identity. Ogbu (2003), on the other hand, argued that the part of Black students’ collective oppositional identity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) that rejects school success may be modified through joint effort between individuals and institutions. For him, schools must actively alter these students’ identity as outsiders, through caring and collaboration with community and students’ families.

Although both studies offered practice and policy suggestions based on deficit-oriented research, they failed to tell the stories of those Black students who did achieve academic and post-school success. Black parents and the wider community expressed outrage at Ogbu and little support for Ferguson’s suggested remedy of school personnel change. Under this circumstance, the Shaker Project was born, collecting stories of these high-achieving Black students and their families in Shaker Heights who have achieved academic and post-school success.

**The Researcher**

I am a Chinese woman in my early 30s who attended graduate school in the U.S. and is married to a Black American man. My interest in this research stems from my personal international translocation experience and participation in the Shaker Project.

I recognize that I bring specific theories, preconceptions, and values to this research based on my social location and schooling experiences. These preconceptions
and values are specific to my attitudes and beliefs about the importance of positive self-concept and racial identity and not having to compromise that for academic success. I am aware of my assumptions regarding the strategies that some Black students could use to be successful in school based on what I have read about studies on Black academic achievement, for example, “raceless persona” (Fordham, 1988), cultural and social code shifting without conforming completely to mainstream cultural patterns, accommodation without assimilation (Gibson, 1988). I acknowledge that I cannot completely discard these assumptions in my relationships with the study participants and in my data analysis. I made efforts to guard against these assumptions by keeping field notes that allowed me to reflect on my initial interpretations.

According to Becker (1967), researchers should let the study participants get to know them gradually so that the participants realize the non-threatening nature of their researcher intentions and their overall interest and sincerity. My involvement with the Shaker Project gave me the advantage of establishing a trusting relationship with the study participants rather quickly as I have encountered some of them once during the data collection process for Shaker Project. The study participants were already familiar with me as a researcher. I described why this study was important to me personally and professionally, thus, before engaging in any follow-up interviews, the study participants
also learned about me as an individual and understood what it was that I hoped to learn from them—that is, what their urban-to-suburban translocation experience was like and what process and conditions contributed to their success.

I understand that the conduct of research and success in the field can be affected by myriad factors, such as age, gender, status, and/or ethnic background (Punch, 2004). I believe that my role as a non-White researcher made it easier for me to develop trusting relationships with my study participants, because they saw me as a fellow minority. As a result, the study participants seemed very willing to discuss topics such as race relationship at Shaker Schools and community. My disclosure of my marriage to a Black man also became an asset that contributed to building a trusting relationship with the study participants. They appear to have granted me a partial “insider status” on the base of knowing my husband is Black even though I do not share their historical and social struggles. The study participants seemed very comfortable sharing their stories with me about the social location differences. For example, during interviews several participants used wording such as “you know how us Black folks are.”

In addition to conducting the formal face-to-face interviews, I engaged in several phone conversations with some study participants about topics outside the scope of the study. For example, some were interested in how and why I decided to come to the U.S.,
how I decided on participating in the Shaker Project, and my general experiences in the U.S. My outsider-insider status was an asset of which I was aware during the data collection and data analysis process (Horowitz, 1996; Punch, 2004).

**Study Site**

The site of the study is Shaker Heights City School District (SHCS), Ohio. It includes the city of Shaker Heights and a small portion of Cleveland surrounding the district on four sides, encompassing about 7.5 square miles. Shaker Heights is an inner-ring suburb on the east side of Cleveland and widely regarded as an economically affluent community with the attendant assumption and history that it is an educational model. In 2011, Shaker’s median property value was three times that of Cleveland and Cleveland’s median household income was $50,000 lower than that of Shaker’s (City Data, 2013).

In 2013, the Shaker Schools served about 5,600 students in eight buildings: five K-4 elementary schools (Boulevard, Fernway, Lomond, Mercer, and Onaway); Woodbury Elementary School (grades 5 and 6); Shaker Heights Middle School (grades 7 and 8); and Shaker Heights High School (grades 9-12; *SHCS Factbook*, 2013).

Residents have worked over several decades to maintain a relatively stable mix of White and Black-American residents as well as a school system that is reputedly among
the top 2% in the nation (Fast Facts, 2014). The community drew middle class and professional Black Americans in the late 1950s from the Cleveland area, when fair housing programs and laws made it possible for middle-class Blacks to have greater choice of residency. By the 1970s, Shaker Heights had absorbed a large number of Black residents, including those who moved from surrounding inner cities (Galster, 1990).

Being a renowned integrated suburb that has a national reputation for excellence in city services and architecture, natural beauty and superior public education, Shaker Heights continuously attracts not only increasing numbers of Black families but also international families from Brazil, China, Egypt, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Thailand, India, Ghana, Pakistan and France, just to name a few (Smith, 2012).

Compared to the State of Ohio, the student population of the Shaker Heights City School District is more diverse. In the academic year 2011–2012, Blacks made up 50% of the District’s student body whereas White students comprised 38%. Students from “other” groups (i.e., Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and Multi-Racial) made up 12% of the District’s student population (SHCS Factbook, 2013). From elementary school through high school, Black students have long considered Shaker Heights schools to be exceptionally good (Ferguson, 2001; Ogbu, 2003). SHCS has received numerous awards and honors. For instance, it was the first district in Ohio to
have each of its schools cited by the United States Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School. Shaker Heights High School is consistently ranked among Ohio’s top schools in the number of National Merit, National Achievement, and Advanced Placement Scholars (State of the Schools Report, 2013).

Despite the fact that the Shaker Heights City School District has often been regarded as one of the finest public school systems in the country, within Shaker Schools a wide disparity exists between Black students and their White and Asian counterparts on academic achievement measures (SHCS Factbook 2011–2012). It should be noted that academic performance of Shaker’s Black students on average still exceeds that of other Black students in Ohio and in the nation in many categories. For instance, between 2009 and 2012, the mean SAT I score of Black Students in Shaker was higher than the Ohio and national mean score for Black students (SHCS Factbook 2011–2012, p. IV-54). In 2010–2011, nearly 75% of Shaker’s Black students graduated high school, which is 16% higher than the graduation rates of Black students in Ohio (SHCS Factbook, IV-53).

The combination of Shaker’s reputation as a racially diverse community with academic excellence makes it a magnet relocation site for people of various social classes in general. Additionally, government housing assistance programs make living in Shaker and attending Shaker Schools feasible for disadvantaged families from surrounding inner
city areas. This makes Shaker Heights a suitable study site for my study because (a) its demographic characteristics involve larger number of Blacks of various socio-economic status, many of whom have experienced urban-to-suburban transition, and (b) there is a bigger than usual pool of high-achieving Black American students, many of whom relocated from surrounding disadvantaged inner city areas.

**Data Collection Criteria and Participants**

The data included in this dissertation were collected as part of the Shaker Project. Through snowball sampling, Shaker Project purposefully selected Black American families who had children who graduated from SHCS who were regarded as “successful” by SHCS alumni and their families, school district personnel, board members, and community activists. “Successful” was defined by graduation from Shaker Heights High School (SHHS) and attendance at a 4-year higher educational institution or in some cases a more general excellence in post-school life. The Shaker Project included male and female alumni from diverse backgrounds based on socio-economic status, family composition, and religious orientation, who graduated from Shaker High School between 1984 and 2004. The data collection for “Shaker Project” started in 2005. I started my participation in the project in the 2006–2007 academic year. By May 2009 the Shaker Project had collected a data set of a total of 25 families.
The demographic information in the Shaker Project’s data set indicated that not all the alumni were in the Shaker school system from kindergarten to 12th grade. The participants of my study were selected from the data set of “Shaker Project” using the following criteria:

1. Black-American families who migrated to Shaker Heights from lower socio-economic inner city areas\(^8\) whose children did not enter SHCS from kindergarten. Lower socio-economic inner city areas here are defined as communities that have substantially lower median household income and median property value in comparison to that of Shaker Heights.

2. “High achieving” Black students were defined as *successful* Shaker High School alumni. Though the term “Black high-achievers” in the limited literature on high-achieving Black students has almost exclusive referred to

8 I choose to use median household income and median property value as criteria to define socio-economic status (SES) of the communities. Although income levels in Shaker Heights city range from the poor (about 10% below the poverty level) to millionaires, the median income of Shaker Heights City in 2011 was $72,522; estimated median property value in 2011 was $ 213,787 (City-Data (2013). Retrieved from http://www.city-data.com/city/Shaker-Heights-Ohio.html). The image of Shaker Heights remains a primarily middle- and upper-middle-class community. In comparison, taking Cleveland city for example, its median household income in 2011 was $50,000 lower than that of Shaker Heights and its median property value in 2011 was three times less than that of Shaker Heights. City-data (2013). Cleveland, Ohio. Retrieved from http://www.city-data.com/city/Cleveland-Ohio.html
those with high GPAs who attended college programs for gifted racial and ethnic minority students, I took a wider approach; high-achieving Black students in my study also included those who did not enter 4-year higher education institutions but have obtained financial stability beyond high school and achieved specific career aspirations and goals.

Using the above criteria, 44% (or 11 families) of the Shaker Project’s 25-family data set were selected for my study, which includes high achieving Black students \( n = 12 \) and their parents \( n = 9 \). Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of my study participants. To keep confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for these Black students (Shaker alumni) and their graduation year, specific achievements, and their parent’s occupation were excluded. Their parents were referred to as student’s mother or father. For example, Kyle was the pseudonym for one of the participating male Shaker alumni; his parents were referred to as Kyle’s mother and Kyle’s father in this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant name// High school GPA &amp; achievement// Years in Shaker Schools</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Post SHCS academic and personal achievement</th>
<th>Family structure/ neighborhood while attending Shaker Schools</th>
<th>Participating Parents’ education level</th>
<th>Previous neighborhood(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melvin // 3.1 GPA // 4\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Shaker Heights Hall of Famer; 3.8 GPA B.A.;</td>
<td>Single mother// Moreland</td>
<td>Mother: B.A.</td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen // 3.5 GPA, SGORR// 4\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ph.D.; sociology</td>
<td>2-parent// Moreland</td>
<td>Mother: B.A.</td>
<td>Cleveland (Kinsman area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolanda// 2.5 GPA// 7\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4.0 GPA, B.A.; CME coordinator, studying for M.A.</td>
<td>single mother// Lomond</td>
<td>Mother: Associates</td>
<td>Cleveland, Warrensville Heights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghan// 3.3 GPA// 9\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B.A.; teacher</td>
<td>Single mother// Lomond</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleveland (Kinsman area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard// 9\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B.A.; entrepreneur</td>
<td>Single mother// Ludlow</td>
<td>Mother: B.A.</td>
<td>Catholic schools in Cleveland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle// 2.9 GPA, athlete// 8\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Associates Degree; entrepreneur;</td>
<td>2-parent// Fernway</td>
<td>Father: high school; Mother: high school</td>
<td>Cleveland Heights, East Cleveland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton// 2.8 GPA, athlete// 6\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B.A.; College</td>
<td>Single mother// Lomond</td>
<td>Mother: B.A.</td>
<td>Cleveland (E.114\textsuperscript{th} and Miles area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa// 3.75 GPA, choir, Honor Roll// 3\textsuperscript{rd}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M.S.; full college scholarship; teacher</td>
<td>Single mother// Moreland</td>
<td>Mother: Ph.D.</td>
<td>Cleveland (Kinsman area)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
### Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant name//High school GPA &amp; achievement//Years in Shaker Schools</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Post SHCS academic and personal achievement</th>
<th>Family structure/neighborhood while attending Shaker Schools</th>
<th>Participating Parents’ education level</th>
<th>Previous neighborhood(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monica//3.75 GPA, orchestra concert master, Honor Roll//2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;-12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B.A.; national achievement scholarship;</td>
<td>Single mother//Moreland</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleveland (Kinsman area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia// 3.0 GPA, chess and tennis club//7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B.A. and B.S.; Computer systems</td>
<td>2-parent//Onaway</td>
<td>Father: Ph.D.</td>
<td>Parochial schools in Cleveland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex// 3.3 GPA//2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;-12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B.A.;8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade humanities teacher</td>
<td>2-parent//Sussex</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina//3.5 GPA, Honor roll, Merit Scholar, MAC Sisters, SGORR//3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;-12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>2-parent//Boulevard</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parochial school in Cleveland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. SGORR: The Student Group on Race Relations<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> The Student Group on Race Relations (SGORR) is an organization of diverse high school students in the Shaker Heights Schools that promotes positive social relations across all boundaries of difference. SGORR students are trained to facilitate discussions of diversity with Shaker’s fourth and sixth grade students, and they teach intervention activities that lead to investigations of stereotyping, discrimination, social polarization, and bullying. See more details at http://www.shaker.org/sgorr.aspx
Data Collection Procedures

Hereunder I first describe the procedures that the Shaker Project used to collect the data since the data for my study was taken from its data set. I then explain how additional data was collected for the purpose of my study.

The Shaker Project utilized in-depth, semi structured interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) protocols (Appendix B) to collect narratives of schooling and social experiences as told by successful Black American students and their families to discover how school success can be created in the complex web of negotiation between family, school, and community. The Shaker Project research team consists of a group of racially diverse researchers. In order to establish a comfortable relationship, multi-racial teams of two persons, one of whom identifies as Black American, went to each interview. Core research questions based on an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) were asked to discover what beliefs and practices these Black American families attribute to academic success, and how historical and present day experiences influenced the families’ educational perspective and engagement. The alumni of Shaker Heights High School (SHHS) and their parents were interviewed separately. The more extensive interviews were conducted first. In this stage, the interviewers first explained the consent form to the project participants to obtain their signatures and permission for tape
recording the interviews. They also were asked whether they would be willing to be contacted in the future for follow-up interviews. Prior to asking the interview questions, demographic information was collected on each project participant’s educational and occupational background, residential area, as well as school and post-school successes (See Appendix A: Demographic Form used in Shaker Project). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed anonymously. Notes were logged, and debriefings with the entire research team occurred on a monthly basis.

To answer my research questions, I conducted face-to-face follow-up interviews with 8 members of 5 different family units; this included 3 parents as well as 5 alumni. I had previously contacted the selected 11 families by sending them introductory letters of my study via emails and postal mail, followed by a telephone call to explain my study and further answer any questions they had. Although I was unable to conduct follow-up interviews with members of all 11 families, the initial interviews with members during the Shaker Project data collection yielded valuable insights and information regarding their translocation experience and strategies used to ensure their academic and post-school success.

Study participants were given consent forms to sign prior to each interview. Open-ended questions were asked to gather detailed descriptions of the urban to suburban
socio-economic and cultural translocation experiences, followed by a series of guiding questions to prompt conversation with the participants for the purpose of encouraging them to narrate their experience in rich details (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Instead of focusing on the resources and educational privilege that some participants lacked, efforts were devoted to understand how they managed to adjust to Shaker Schools. To do this I asked about who maximized their school experiences and moved beyond the deficit perspective by highlighting actors and processes that impacted participants’ success. Some interview questions of the Shaker Project (Appendix B) related to my research questions were asked again. Although specific follow-up interview questions (see Appendix C) were used, the discussions often became conversational, thus allowing the participants to reflect upon the experiences, perceptions, and observations they believed were most meaningful to them.

Data Analysis

To understand both the participants’ urban-to-suburban translocation experience and how their perceptions of self and attitude towards achievement resulted into adaptive strategies for school success in a new social location, I moved from transcripts to initial code categories (e.g., parental involvement; parental discipline; high expectations; achievement beliefs; transition difficulties) back to texts and ultimately to final code
categories (Charmaz, 2004). Memos of the interviews were created to assist me in identifying gaps in the theme as well as documenting my ideas regarding the data and code categories.

Categorizing (coding and thematic analysis) and contextualizing were used as analytic strategies to identify salient themes such as affirmed racial identity and belief in self. The interviews generated perceptions about socio-cultural differences, racial identity, self-esteem, personal academic expectations and achievements, home-cultural expectations, racism, stereotypes, parental influence, school experiences, peer groups, extracurricular activities, and more.

The transcripts were first coded and key phrases were linearly arranged under tentative headings in a matrix table in Word format. While the concepts from the existing literature were considered in my initial analysis of the data (e.g., Ecology: community context, parenting styles; socio-cognitive acculturation: cultural competence, cultural awareness), I used both open and focused coding to analyze my data. This allowed codes and larger themes to emerge from the data regarding the interrelatedness of parenting dynamics, cultural competence, and school behaviors (such as persistent parental discipline, adaptive behaviors to socially fit in). I also created participants’ profiles to further examine my data, followed by narrative summaries of the participant profiles.
These narrative summaries and participant profiles were helpful in comparing participants’ experiences based on emerging themes that encompassing all available interviews (son, daughter, mother, and father). The participant profiles included contextual challenges, and aspects leading to academic success and these summaries facilitated the examination of the similarities and differences across the participants in the specific pathways to academic success. I then read all the transcripts again to determine if the findings, main themes, and patterns were consistent with the data.

As I was familiarizing myself with the data, reoccurring themes emerged specifically related to the participants’ conceptualizing achievement as embedded within one’s sense of self as a Black person. Thus, I realized that socio-cognitive acculturation theory is not sufficient to explain the study sample’s schooling experiences and behaviors. CRT as an analytical framework furthers the understanding of how race and racism inform the study participants’ achievement beliefs and school behavior. By using CRT to examine students’ responses related to my research questions, race and racism can be seen as being central to the participants’ lives as they claimed. Thus CRT together with socio-cognitive acculturation theory helps deconstruct Black students’ schooling experiences in a learning environment that was perceived as predominantly White. Their lived experiences become counter narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to the master
narratives and forefront the role of race in shaping some Black students’ achievement ideologies and school behaviors.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) theorized three types of CRT counter-narratives: personal stories, other people’s stories, and composite stories. This study tells the second type, other people’s stories, those of high-achieving Black students and their families’ translocated schooling experience with the intention to counter common deficit oriented master narratives concerning Black academic performances.

Socio-cognitive acculturation theory stipulates that adaptive behaviors follow from people’s pragmatic goals and perceptions of their social location, as well as their available resources to acculturate (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Therefore, to answer my research question of what are my study participants’ urban-to-suburban translocation experiences, I started by analyzing how my study participants positioned themselves within their new social location.

Hence, in Chapter 4, the findings are organized by using the socio-cognitive acculturation, CRT, and ecology framework and how each finding relates to the theoretical framework is explained.
Ethics

This study was approved by IRB from Kent State University, which covered the way in which data collection was conducted, giving an assurance of confidentiality. Being one of the Shaker Project research members, I had also signed Claim of Confidentiality to protect the identity of the study participants as well as the information they shared during interviews. Prior to conducting each follow-up interview, every study participant was given a consent form describing the purpose of the study and the intent to audio record and the request for their permission to do so. Each consent form was signed by study participant indicating that he or she understood all parts of the study and that the study was completely voluntary in nature. In addition, each study participant was made fully aware that he or she could opt out of the interview at anytime and he or she could have a copy of the interview tape record or review the transcript if he or she chose.

Each follow-up interview was recorded and later transcribed into Word document format. For the Shaker Project, each family unit was filed in one document folder with a label indicating only the family unit sequence number, interview date, and related sound file names. All the folders were stored in one document box at a central location, research team leader Dr. Vilma Seeberg’s office. Each folder included signed consent forms, notes of the researchers, and a copy of interview transcripts from interview sound
files. Copies of the transcripts used a naming system to indicate the family unit number and the role of the participant, a process that obscured the identity of the participant. Each interview participant was also given a pseudonym in the transcripts. I kept the documents and files of this study anonymous in the same fashion.

**Trustworthiness**

I strove for trustworthiness in my study by including thick, rich descriptions gained through transcripts, detailed notes, and in-depth interviews, and lengthy involvement in the research process. The inclusion of verbatim thick, rich description within the analysis section not only illustrates and supports the findings, but also allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability (Creswell, 1998). Several steps were taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. First, I ensured that the study participants had a positive, trusting relationship with me so that they felt comfortable and would respond honestly and comprehensively to my interview questions (Moustakas, 1994). Some of the study participants had met me once when I conducted initial interviews for Shaker Project with other research team members. Thus, the study participants seemed to welcome the opportunity to further share their translocation experiences with me during follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews were conducted at a quiet location with minimal distractions chosen by the study participants.
such as the study participants’ residence, office, and meeting room at library.

Trustworthiness was also enhanced by interviewing multiple family members whenever possible. The convergence of findings across sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers provides some assurance of consistency and allows a more valid construction of meanings of events.

Because this study was part of the Shaker Project, internal peer reviews were periodically conducted among the research team members. This allowed peer debriefing with other researchers reviewing my interpretation of coding and analysis, to assure focus and clear interpretations of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, member checking was made optional to all study participants, allowing them to have access to the audio recording and transcripts so that they could give feedback on whether their thoughts were properly portrayed and represented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All of the above steps helped to establish and support the trustworthiness of the findings.

**Limitations**

The first limitation of this study is its retrospective nature. “Looking back” at one’s experiences can provide perspective; however, as time passes and events are reframed, memory can distort the recall of events. The second limitation is the relatively small sample size.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

My aim was to understand the experiences of a group of high-achieving Black students’ urban-to-suburban translocation and to discover the conditions and processes perceived by them as contributing to their academic and post-school success. The narratives revealed the study participants’ perceptions of the social location differences, their interpretations and assessment of the social and cultural codes, their multifaceted adaptive strategies, and their achievement ideologies. The following sections first present the findings of social location differences and challenges perceived by the participants, followed by their acculturation experience and adaptive strategies. Then actors and conditions that were perceived as contributing to academic and personal success in the context of urban-to-suburban translocation are presented. Lastly, suggestions from the study participants for upcoming Black families entering Shaker and Shaker Schools are summarized.

Perceptions of the Social Location Differences

In the view of socio-cognitive acculturation theory, intentional migration affects many aspects of the self, requiring significant redefinition and reconstruction of both personal and social identities (Padilla & Perez, 2003). The redefinition and
reconstruction depend upon individuals’ cultural awareness (Padilla, 1987) and in other words, the knowledge individuals have of their home culture and of their host cultures. In the case of my study, the narratives of this group of high-achieving Black students and their parents revealed their perception of the differences between their previous neighborhoods and Shaker Heights. Shaker Heights was unanimously perceived as a better place to live in comparison with where they came. For most of the study, participants, values, beliefs, expectations, and normative ways of behaving are, for the most part, different, thereby requiring adjustment and reorientation as movement between social locations occurred. The perceptions of the social location differences are divided into two categories “community and school,” and “cultural differences.” The following sections capture the major socio-cultural differences between their previous neighborhoods and schools, and the Shaker community and schools as the study participants perceived them.

**Community and School**

This category of social location differences includes school quality, population demographic, and neighborhood safety existing between the study participants’ previous communities and schools and Shaker community and school as the study participants described them. Shaker Heights is perceived as a safe environment with a high quality of
life. Based on the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), community and school contexts, where students experience micro-level cultural realities of everyday life, play an important role in the academic success of students (Hemmings, 1996, 1998). Therefore, we cannot start to understand the study participants’ urban-to-suburban translocation experience without first gathering their description of how community and schools are different between inner city areas and Shaker Heights.

Millions of people have escaped city problems by crossing the boundary between city and suburb . . . segregating many of America’s metropolitan areas into ‘two nations’: rich and poor, White and Black, expanding and contracting. (Frug, 1999, pp. 106-109)

In East Cleveland, I will probably see a different race maybe once or twice a day, but when I came to Shaker . . . man, at first I don’t know how to handle it, ’cause I have never seen so many different races in one building. (Kyle)

The kids in Cleveland and Warrensville are similar socio-economic status, mostly Black. In Shaker, you have multi-millionaire’s kids and Section 8 kids going to the same school. (Yolanda)

Shaker Schools were said to be better because of their diverse students, diverse curriculum with many artistic offerings, and educational rigor. The majority of the
parents’ narratives indicated that Shaker Heights’ reputable school system and its diverse environment and implicitly racially open-minded were the primary reasons that motivated these Black families to leave their previous neighborhoods for Shaker.

Kyle’s father described the reason why he moved to Shaker from East Cleveland: Shaker ALWAYS\textsuperscript{10} had a good reputation for minorities living in Shaker with no problems. I told Kyle that Shaker Schools represent the real world because you have the mixture of people there. I’d rather my kids be in that atmosphere where if you can deal with people of all ethnic backgrounds while you are a kid, when you get old, it shouldn’t be a problem, because you are accustomed to it.

Similarly, dissatisfied with the educational quality of Cleveland schools, Melissa and Monica’s mom was determined to move to Shaker.

Melissa was an early reader, but it was obvious to me that she was not challenged in Cleveland and it really bothered me. For Monica, for her first semester in Cleveland, she had a substitute for the whole semester, how can you get a sub for the whole semester? It was no brainer that we are going to leave Cleveland.

\textsuperscript{10} I capitalized certain words and sentences in the study participants’ quotes to convey the emphasis and passion they placed on these words as I heard them during the interviews with them.
For Yolanda’s mom, however, the feel of the Shaker Heights was the primary reason that attracted her and her two children.

It was a dream come true for me to coming to Shaker . . . When I was young, on Sundays, my mom would take me on to drive to Shaker . . . I would make sure to sit by the window so I could look at the houses and I was like “Man!” I mean they got curtains open, they were not all shut in. I said, “This was the place to be.”

The students also described Shaker Heights and Shaker Schools’ racial and economic diversity compared to their previous neighborhoods and schools. In the view of the students, the curriculum and the vast number of extra-curricula activities available set Shaker Schools apart.

“It’s like a cliché talking about diversity in Shaker, but it’s really, really true!” Melissa said. Yolanda did not come to the Shaker Schools until seventh grade. She went to an elementary school in the heart of Cleveland, and to middle school in another working class inner-ring suburb, Warrensville Heights. In her view, the Shaker Schools’ student population was significantly more diverse than Warrensville schools and “full of resources.”
There is an artistic bent in Shaker, there were so much more books, it’s more universal than a little limited . . . you can do anything that’s what I felt like.

When I came to Shaker, YOU CAN DO ANYTHING. It’s a totally different world.

Richard and Alicia had attended Catholic schools in Cleveland before entering Shaker Schools. They commented on the diverse curricula Shaker offered compared to their previous experience. Alicia said,

Shaker’s curriculum is so diverse. We concentrated more on religious aspects instead of being introduced to the instruments and second language . . . You know the majority of our time outside of our normal curriculum was for our religious activities.

According to Richard, he experienced the differences in the campus setting and culture of school as a cultural shock.

I was blown away when I first got there. To me it was like college, so open and so free. Shaker gave you more autonomy to learn about different train of thoughts, different religion, different people, and different mixture of some of everything. You were expected to rise to the occasion and to use all the available resources to study on your own.
For some students, Shaker Schools were more exciting schools with a diverse population and curriculum and wide range of extra-curricula activities. But for Meghan, it was a safe haven away from the violence in her previous neighborhood in the Kinsman, Cleveland area, a low-income neighborhood with the reputation of being crime-infested. During the interview the recollection of her experiences in the previous neighborhood reduced her to tears.

We were encapsulated in the inner-city. The neighborhood had gotten so bad . . . I had fear walking home from school. In Cleveland, you had, you FOUGHT all the time . . . so Shaker was a safer environment and more relaxed environment so you can concentrate on your grades you know.

Besides the curriculum, students also reported greater rigor in their Shaker Schools compared to their previous schools. Milton claimed that:

I didn’t start writing until I went to Shaker. In Cleveland, you just basically bring your homework home, but Shaker was more demanding. They expose your weaknesses and point out what you had to work on. I thought they did a good job saying just helping you out and figuring out the best way to get you to grasp on what’s really going on.
Melissa said that “in Shaker, say you come in at second grade; they expect you to read at third grade level,” whereas Alicia recalled the differences in the quality of education; “although eventually I did adjust, I was not prepared for Shaker Schools . . . I was so far behind on my study, I struggled. I didn’t have the academic or extracurricular background I needed.”

In sum, the study participants described what they perceived as the major environmental differences in schools and communities between their old neighborhoods and Shaker Heights. These differences have to do with population diversity: Shaker was described as much more diverse, academic quality as being much higher in Shaker, and its neighborhoods as much safer. Perceived major cultural differences between the two social locations are described in the next section.

Cultural Differences

According to the socio-cognitive acculturation theory (Padilla & Perez, 2003), successful acculturation is driven by individual’s cognitive motive to satisfy his or her pragmatic goals and the more cultural awareness one has of his or her host culture, the easier the acculturation (p. 38). In the case of my study participants, their motivation can be interpreted as thriving to be successful in Shaker Heights to which they had migrated.
The study participants’ narratives evidence their awareness of the differences between their previous cultural context and that of Shaker Heights.

First and foremost, the study participants viewed “Shaker Blacks” as distinctly different from “Blacks in Cleveland” in economic status, lifestyle, values, and behavior. Upon entering Shaker, male students in the sample reported being teased by their peers and relatives in their previous neighborhood especially. Some of them were accused of being “not Black enough” in terms of speech patterns and fashion sense, but none of the study participants reported being teased about getting a better educational opportunity in Shaker.

Yolanda’s mom vividly described the difference between “Shaker Blacks”11 and “other Blacks” in terms of “style;”

It’s the way they talk, the way they acted; the way they looked, they had different style. You could tell the ones live off Harvard, because they dress better, off St. Clair are, they dress more... if you will, inner city, ghetto. And then, Oh don’t have a Shaker Black coming to the mix, you can tell. They dress like Ivy League, you know, they wear sweaters... they from Shaker, you can tell.

11 “Shaker Blacks” and “other Blacks” were the words used by the study participant. They also use “Black” as an adjective, though occasionally during the interviews, the term “African American” was also used.
Yolanda’s mom continued to elaborate her cultural shock going to Black parties in Shaker.

Blacks in Cleveland say Shaker Blacks are “boozhee.”\(^\text{12}\) They think they are too White, not Black enough. They think they are better than everybody . . . seem like they are White . . . It’s their speech pattern, the way they dress, the way they act. For example, before we moved to Shaker, I have never gone to a Black party where they stand around and socialize. I had never seen that until I came here. It was unheard of and it was almost . . . to me I was insulted. Black party in Cleveland, you got card games going on over there, every body got something to drink. They stand around in the kitchen or whatever talking smack, I mean TALKING SMACK . . . you got music blasting, people sitting around and they moving [she was snapping her fingers, demonstrating dancing while seated], you’re not just sitting there. But I came to Shaker . . . they were standing around with a drink in their hands, and I was like what kind party is that . . . . . I had to

\(^{12}\) According to the urban dictionary *booZhee* is a lifestyle of someone who is hip and savvy, with educated and discerning tastes, and interested in enjoying the finer things in life. It is definitely not high-class, aristocratic, snooty, or snobbish. *booZhee* is as much an idea, and a state of mind of a person's unique life experiences and likes, as it is an attitude towards enjoying good food, friends, and conversation, everyday. *booZhee* evokes a mood of simple elegance, casual yet sophisticated modern. See more details at http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=boozhee
get used to it. So yeah, very distinct . . . Black people in Shaker are like White people . . . when you go to a White person’s house for a get together that’s all they do. They stand around, they socialize, they have a drink in their hands, and they talk about politics . . . there may be some soft music playing. That’s TOTALLY a cultural difference than what I am used to.

Although Yolanda’s mom perceived Shaker culture as similar to that of the White middle-class, other participants conceptualized it as a culture that demands great participation from its residents and emphasizes interconnectedness. Melissa and Monica are sisters who were raised by their mother who holds a Ph.D. and works at a university. Melissa herself is now an eighth-grade math teacher at Shaker Middle School. Melissa and Monica’s mom talked about her perception of Shaker culture:

Growing up, my perception was that: That’s Shaker, that’s a different world that I can’t be in the middle of. After I moved here, I still felt that way . . . I never felt like there was an unwelcoming barrier, but people seem like they knew each other and that was REAL. And if you are in that network you can get to know this, that, and the other person. I think lots of Black families are intimidated by this culture, because they don’t know anybody so they don’t come to school.
Melissa echoed her mother by saying, “It is a culture! I know a lot of people grew up in Shaker, and their children grew up in Shaker . . . or maybe the next generation of children.”

Richard had been in five different Catholic schools in the Cleveland area before entering Shaker Schools at ninth grade. Because his mother taught at one of the Shaker’s elementary schools, he thought he had “a leg up,” but he still experienced cultural shock when he entered Shaker Schools. The value differences between Black people in Shaker and Black people in Cleveland were the most memorable cultural difference for him.

Kids from Shaker they didn’t wear Jordan’s. You would think that the kids in Shaker could afford Jordan’s, but their parents won’t frivolously spend on stuff that didn’t make sense like that. The kids from Cleveland had to have Jordan’s because that’s all you had. The Black kids in Shaker had more experiences because their parents may have a little bit more money for them to do different things.

Similar to the “Shaker Blacks are White” idea, the study participants also reported being teased by peers and relatives in their previous neighborhoods upon knowing they were leaving for Shaker. Yet the teasing is focused on the perception of differences Black people in Shaker have in lifestyle and social behavior, rather than their better
access to a better education. Richard recollected the reaction from his peers that he went
to school within Cleveland when he moved to Shaker;

They called me “uppity Shaker boy,” they think you got money so you acted like
you got money, you got your nose in the air, ’cause you think you are better than
them. They teased me about moving to Shaker, leaving the hood . . . sell-out stuff
like that . . . like “you are a sell-out.”

Similarly, Kyle was also being teased as “proper boy, you rich boy.” He said,

I would come back to East Cleveland, and “you are not one of us no more,” you
know things like that. Everybody just interprets that everybody that went to
Shaker is being rich and proper, and uppity and stuck-up. It was nothing like that,
but that’s how other Blacks think of Shaker. All my family members always
know that Shaker school is one of the top schools in the country . . . but you know,
you’d be around family members at family reunion they would say little thing like
“yeah, you are in Shaker now, proper boy, preppy boy” things like that. I think
they are just jealous, envious, wanting to be . . . wishing that they were in the
same particular situation where I was in.

The narratives in the above paragraphs illustrate that although the study
participants acknowledged Shaker Heights is an integrated suburb with diversity, in the
view of the participants, its culture is perceived as mainstream White culture as compared to their old neighborhoods that were predominately Black. Guided by the study participants’ perceptions of the social location differences between Shaker Heights and their old neighborhoods, new social identities were formed which resulted in adaptive behaviors, through which students were able to socially and culturally fit in to achieve their academic and social goals. The findings of the study participants’ acculturation experiences and adaptive behaviors are discussed in the following section.

Acculturation Experience and Adaptive Strategies

I always kept a chip on my shoulder about that too . . . I knew that I wasn’t raised in the community. I knew I didn’t have the wealth, didn’t have the social networks . . . I knew I wasn’t Shaker Shaker. I did know that. And all my friends, we all knew that. We knew what we were. So anytime if it’s better for me to say that I am from Shaker “I am from Shaker.” But while I am at Shaker, “No, I am from Cleveland.” (Richard)

I kept contact with a few friends [back in my old neighborhood], but not many. I don’t want to deal with people who are not doing anything or they are not going anywhere. (Kyle)
According to the socio-cultural acculturation framework, cultural competence is a learned skill to function in a culture in a manner that is congruent with the values, beliefs, customs, mannerisms, and language of the majority members of the culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). The study participants demonstrated different levels of cultural competence. They learned to adjust and behave within the acceptable cultural band of Shaker’s normative behaviors as they perceived them. Although social and academic adjustment were relatively easy for five out of the 12 study participants, due to their particular family background, life experiences, and academic preparation, these five study participants did not find huge differences between their old and new social locations despite the distinct differences in neighborhood characteristics. Families’ and teachers’ expectations of them were similar as well as their own expectations of themselves. Though entering Shaker Schools from relatively lower socio-economic inner city areas, they described their previous academic life as enriched, thus they were able to ease into Shaker Schools. Two of these five students did, however, describe their initial difficulty in finding the right “clique.”

For another six study participants, they identified the social location differences, mainly the school culture, educational quality, and resources between the two social locations made the translocation challenging at the beginning. However, the academic
rigor and enriched curriculums in Shaker inspired them to work harder to catch up. One of the girls among the six participants reported negative treatment from the students and school administrators causing adjustment to Shaker Schools to be more difficult. Despite the fact that negative stereotypes associated with Black students were placed on her automatically by some Shaker students and school administrators simply because of her background, she was not discouraged by such roadblocks and eventually managed her studies and life in Shaker.

It is perhaps not surprising that one of the boys described his translocation experience as “very rough for a while.” He also reported himself purposefully defying Shaker’s norms as his means to protest his parents’ decision to move to Shaker. Not until his parents’ intervention was his focus channeled to academic pursuit for better future. I further discuss some examples to illustrate the above mentioned acculturation experiences and strategies the study participants employed to manage the acculturation stress as follows.

Monica and Melissa are sisters who graduated from Shaker with a long list of accomplishments. Before entering Shaker Schools, they had attended schools in California; Columbus, Ohio; and Cleveland. For them translocation was familiar, but they said they were happy to be finally “settled down.” Moving to Shaker from
Cleveland was a smooth translocation for them. Their values, their mother’s academic expectation for them, and their behavioral norms remained unchanged regardless where they were. Although the circumstances of daily school context changed, Monica and Melissa barely perceived translocation difficulties or experienced acculturation stresses. Melissa recalled,

Because my experience prior to Cleveland was very enriched, so we were not challenged in Cleveland. I don’t remember the transition (to Shaker) being a shock at all, you just slid right in. Socially, I felt it was tough for me to get used to the kids there. I just kinda felt odd for a while until I got older; then I started really connecting with the kids, having more friendships and stuff.

Similarly, Gina and Carmen were both exceptional high-achieving Black female students and active members in Student Group on Race Relations (SGORR). They hardly perceived adaptation as an issue. Though entering Shaker Schools from Cleveland, they had been well prepared by their school’s special program. Further, their parents and their expectations of them were unchanged. Before coming to Shaker Schools, Gina and Carmen had already set specific plans for the future, which included definitive college goals well in line with culturally acceptable expectations of students in Shaker. Thus they did not experience dissonance between the two social locations.
Different from the above described study participants, Meghan grew up with only her mother and her two siblings in the poverty and crime-infested Cleveland-Kinsman neighborhood, adjacent to Shaker Heights. To escape the violence of the neighborhood, they moved immediately once Meghan’s mother saved enough for a down payment on a house in Shaker Heights. Meghan defined the two social locations as starkly different; however she understood that she had to adjust and reorient in the new social location. Even with this positive attitude toward adaptation, her translocation experience was rough at the beginning because of Shaker students’ and administrators’ negative perception of her background. She said that her siblings and she were stereotyped as “tough kids from Cleveland” and troublemakers. Knowing that the students and teachers had this negative stereotype of her, however, did not prevent Meghan from managing her acculturation stress by ignoring those “ignorant kids” and by struggling to make good grades to prove the school administrators wrong. For her, coming to Shaker meant better life chances, and “you don’t just quit when other people start saying crazy things to you,” explained Meghan.

The transition was difficult because we had to overcome perception that was automatically placed on us. Just because we moved from ghetto, people thought we were going to be a certain way. That’s my biggest challenge to overcome . . .
not just with students but with school administrators too. It was laughable some of these kids were saying to us . . . it almost like they looking for a fight or something . . . they think they were tough, they were nothing compared to what I was used to in Kinsman.

Richard eventually managed to adapt to “Shaker’s ways.” This does not mean, however, that adapting was always easy, or that adjustments were made without personal and psychic costs. The students’ awareness of the socio-economic disparities made him uneasy. In the interview, he revealed that he never felt that he was or would ever be truly a part of Shaker. Having a mother who was a teacher at Shaker Schools did not help Richard’s anxiety when he entered Shaker Schools. He was “SCARED” before going to Shaker Schools. He was very conscious of the difference in socio-economic status between “kids from Cleveland” and other “Shaker kids13.” His strategy to buffer his acculturation stress was to find attachment to those students who also translocated to Shaker.

Shaker kids definitely have more exposure . . . the hardest thing for me was seeing wealth and all the stuff around me but not knowing how to get it . . . I missed out

13 The study participants used this term often to describe the kids who have been born and raised in Shaker and have been in Shaker Schools since kindergarten.
on the arts and music, so for me not to be involved in that was a bit weird for me.

So I connected with other kids new to Shaker.

Aisha was intimidated and impressed by Shaker’s curriculum such as foreign languages, drama, orchestra, theatre compared to what she was exposed to in her previous religious school. Besides studying hard to catch up, her acculturation stress was managed through active participation in sports clubs. She said,

I played organized tennis and chess throughout my years of attending Shaker Schools . . . and made friends with those kids on the team and some of us were in the same classes and that made me feel more comfortable.

Kyle credited his post-school success as an entrepreneur and local TV sports show host to Shaker Schools. Though he was the only one among the study participants who did not attend a higher educational institution, he described that Shaker prepared him well for dealing with the diverse population in the “real” world. Kyle had spent his entire life in East Cleveland before entering Shaker in seventh grade. Among all the study participants, he experienced the highest level of acculturation stress. At the beginning, he viewed the two places as distinctly different and he actively resisted adapting. He purposefully rejected the behavioral norms expected in Shaker Schools as a means to be rebellious toward his parents and to protect himself against further distress caused by
leaving all that he knew behind in his old neighborhood. He did not adopt a positive attitude toward adapting until after a “man to man talk” in the basement with his father. About this significant basement moment, Kyle said,

I was born and raised out there. I didn’t want to move to Shaker. The diversity shocked me when I first came. They knew I wasn’t from Shaker immediately, because I would wear my graffiti jacket EVERY DAY . . . I was rapping . . . “I’m from the hood, you know.” My teacher would be like “take it off,” “I am not taking it off, man” . . . until one day my parents went to a PTO meeting, they came back home and I got the beating of my life from my father . . . so that changed everything, I never wore the graffiti jacket again.

In terms of adaptive strategies, Kyle and Richard changed the way they dressed and the way they interacted in Shaker. It did not take long for them to find a social group in which to fit. Richard “found a group of guys who were in similar situation like mine. Most of the people I hang out with had been people who came into the system.” Kyle even established his own social club dubbed P.C., a.k.a., Players Club, to “hang out with my boys.” When I asked him what he meant by “player,” Kyle smirked and explained that, “not that we compare who’s got more girlfriends or anything like that, but you know it’s like we are cool Black guys in Shaker, not nerds.”
Similar to Aisha’s adaptive strategy to join sports to meet more people, Richard was running track and Kyle was playing football and participating in the Interactive and Spanish Clubs. Similarly, Milton was on the basketball team to compensate for his natural shyness. Regardless of whether the study participants’ friends were from classes or from sports teams, the study participants were selective with whom they socialized. Though Kyle and Richard still kept contact with some of the friends in their old neighborhood, they had to be “doing something.” Both Kyle and Richard emphasized that they “don’t hang out with people who are not doing nothing.” When asked for further explanation, they said that “doing something” means having a goal of where you wanna be at, whether it’s going to college, or having a decent job, or doing your little hustle . . . it don’t matter, you know what I mean, you have to be doing something otherwise no point hanging out with you.

Kyle in particular further explained that his active involvement in clubs was not only a means to meet new friends, but also a strategic move to compensate for his less than satisfactory grades in exams when he first entered Shaker Schools.

If one of the teachers that I had, I might have not been doing great in that class, they are in charge of that club ‘cause they would see that I was making extra effort . . . so if they were gonna give me a C, maybe they would give me a B. I
definitely try to impress the teachers. I was failing Spanish, but I did a rap in Spanish in a talent show, I actually got a B in the class. I was always good, interactive, inside the classroom.

In sum, depending on their cultural competence level and life experiences prior to moving to Shaker, the study participants expressed various degrees of acculturation stress. The acculturation experiences differed. For some students, the translocation was smooth; for others the translocation was not free from conflicts and frictions. Some study participants possessed an affirmed achievement ideology that enabled them to manage the acculturation stress while one study participant’s life trajectory was completely altered through parental intervention. Strategies employed to adapt to Shaker and Shaker Schools also varied among the study participants, as they perceived the social location differences from their own perspective. Adaptive behaviors were formed to fit in socially such as changing the way they dress, participating in social organizations, and attracting attention from teachers for “extra brownie points.” For all the study participants, although neighborhood characteristics, peer groups were seen as different between the two social locations, the expectations from their parents of their academic performances and behavioral standards were persistent with the expectations of the Shaker Schools. In
the next sections I detail actors, conditions, and processes attributed by the study participants as constructive to their schooling experiences.

**Individual Agency and Accountability**

Though not all the study participants identified themselves as the main actors in contributing to their own success, I found being culturally competent alone could not fully explain the study participants’ successful adjustment in Shaker. Within the CRT framework, academic achievement was perceived as a form of resistance towards restrictive and unfair school policies (e.g., Akom, 2003; Coley, 2003; Horvat & Lewis, 2003). It was particularly true for Meghan who was determined to do well in Shaker to defend herself against the biased comments from other Shaker kids and the school administrators. She vividly remembered how the school administrators always kept their eyes on her as if she might cause disruptions because she was “a tough kid from the hood.” For other study participants, their achievement ideology was constructed within the context of being Black, and with an awareness of the importance of being Black and successful in U.S. society where racism is still part of their daily reality.

The study participants considered performing well academically as an act of resistance against the notion that academic success is exclusive to White and Asian students, therefore they did not experience the burden of “acting White.” The analysis of
the participants’ narratives indicated themes such as a firm belief in the value of education, affirmed racial identity, and high personal life expectations. The study participants’ narratives explicitly demonstrated their confidence in self and individual effort, goals setting, and achievement. Their narratives supported the power of their own agency; their statements also displayed an awareness of structural inequality in U.S. society. I use the term individual agency to broadly define the participants’ ability to negotiate, reconfigure, and resist available socio-cultural discourses that surrounded them in their pursuits of success.

The study participants viewed achievement as a human desire embedded in their sense of self as a Black American. Carmen and Melvin both were exceptionally high achievers with long lists of academic and professional achievement. They expressed their love for learning and their strong will to get good grades because of their vision for the future. The transition from Cleveland to Shaker was easy for them because they were in advanced education programs in their previous schools, which prepared them for the academic rigor of Shaker. The expectations they had for themselves as well as their parents’ and teachers’ expectations of them did not change despite the translocation. For Melvin specifically, early and frequent involvement with church choir, music programs, and theatrical performances was further nurtured in Shaker’s artistically enriched
environment. Such enrichment eventually helped his pursuit as a professional musical theater actor, which he described as “blessed to have a successful career.” For Melvin and Carmen, education was a means to an end, and both Carmen and Melvin “don’t mind working hard” to get what they want.

Success is this world. When I started in Shaker things came easy to me. I wanted to achieve, to do well. I was not going to use trigonometry for anything and I hated math, but I knew that I had to get that grade to have a good GPA to get into a good school and it teaches you that things are not always made up of the things that you want to do. I ALWAYS knew that it was about a means to an end.

(Melvin)

I was super, super conscientious; it would kill me if I had to miss a day of school. I knew I had to do well, I had to excel. I definitely knew I needed to go to college and that was important for me to be successful, not only for myself but also for my family. I had to make something out of myself, it was just never an option that I would do anything else. (Carmen)

For some students, going to college was the minimum they expected for themselves. Yolanda, Melissa, and Monica could not understand why students did not want to take advantage of Shaker Schools to achieve this goal.
Melissa said,

Shaker is college-bound, we don’t talk about it, but everybody knows going to college is just the next step. But some students, “hey, where are you going?”

“oh . . . I don’t know” . . . what do you mean you don’t know? What are you talking about? It’s RIDICIULOUS that they think they can make it without a good education.

Yolanda shared a similar sentiment,

I love learning, I like to live life like you can do anything in the world if you care, that’s why education is important. I don’t care what other people expected . . . I was going to college like I WAS GOING. I am self-motivated.

Meghan responded,

By the time I got to high school (in Shaker) I had been SO unsuccessful in elementary and junior high school. I WANTED to do well. I WANTED to get grades, go to college, and kind of make my mom happy.

Reflecting on “playing the game” and success, Melvin, with a clear awareness of stereotypes associated with Black Americans, did not hesitate to advocate taking adaptive measures to achieve goals in life.
If you want to achieve something you have to figure out how to do it. If that means I have to come in and talk a certain way so that you’re not threatened by my existence, well that’s what life is all about. I think that growing up in Shaker prepared me for the world because I was exposed to all different kinds of people and I understood that I had to play the game to be a . . . to achieve the kinds of things I want to achieve. You have to play the game within the game . . . and in it means getting your education, getting good grades.

In sum, the study participants did not express a dilemma at being Black and doing well in school. Belief in their abilities and an ethic of hard work, combined with a commitment to hold oneself accountable for academic outcomes, was salient in study participants’ narratives as a form of resistance against negative stereotypes so often associated with Black students. When reflecting on their schooling experiences and academic performance, several students who have achieved academic and post-school success as adults expressed that they could have applied themselves more by focusing on studying more than socializing, studying with friends more, hanging out less, and so forth. This further illustrates that instead of blaming the contextual and external challenges of being new to Shaker, the study participants all held themselves accountable for their academic performance. While individual agency and accountability were essential to the
study participants’ academic and post-school success, the critical role parents and extended families played were equally substantial, as illustrated in the subsequent sections.

**Persistent Parental Academic Expectation and Involvement**

Shaker offers boundless opportunity and that’s really what I wanted. I will do the rest, you know. I WILL DO THE REST as a parent. Just want them be somewhere that offers them diversity of opportunities. (Monica and Melissa’s mother)

It is not a secret that the collaboration between family, extended family, community, and school all play a critical role in students’ academic success within the ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). Parenting style specifically is a feature of a child’s social environment, and a warm, affective parent-child relationship is an important influence on all positive child developmental outcomes, including academic achievement (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Paulson, 1994; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). Further, it is increasingly clear that the influence of authoritativeness in parenting style—a constellation of parenting attributes that includes emotional support, high standards, appropriate autonomy granting, and clear, bidirectional communication—has been shown to help children and adolescents develop an instrumental competence
characterized by the balancing of societal and individual needs and responsibilities (Baumrind, 1971, 1991a). It is explicit in the narratives that the parents of this small group of high-achieving Black students clearly articulated their expectations to their children and demanded that their children put forth their best effort in academic pursuits and everything else they did, against the societal odds. Their authoritativeness was manifest in an active and persistent engagement in diverse facets of the educational endeavor, including overarching themes emphasizing the importance of education, a consistent focus on high levels of performance, high expectations, engagement in preschool educational activities, involvement with teachers and parent organizations, providing structure and help with homework (e.g., hiring tutors whenever the need arose).

This theme of effort emerged in the interviews with mothers and fathers, as well as with the students. Regardless of socio-economic and educational background, the parents of these high-achieving Black students detailed specific efforts to ensure their preschool academic readiness, so their children would get off to a good start. In turn, the students emphasized significant actors in their educational success, their mother’s (and in Kyle’s case, his father’s) active parental involvement and support.

Kyle’s father, a steel mill worker said,
I used to work 88 to 100 hours a week, I told him . . . get the right education, so he don’t have to work like that . . . I always pushed my kids to do better . . . with Kyle, I told him that you can’t make money without an education. You have to put yourself in the right position to be able to take care of a family you know . . . When that report card came it better show that, otherwise you gonna be in trouble.

Melissa and Monica’s mom, a Ph.D. in history, said,

If I am not going to be the advocate for my children, who’s going to be? So people were like “I’m working.” I said, “So do I.” I’m single. I had these reasons not to be at PTA meetings, if that’s a reason. But I couldn’t imagine not to, because I just wanted to be at the table to hear, because the principal will come to the meetings too. What’s a better way to know really what’s going on?

Many of the study participants emphasized the love and support they received from their parents. Mothers in particular were viewed as providing love, nurturing, comfort, guidance, and understanding. Most parents were seen as being there when needed, and as having strong faith in their children. The students generally felt that they had strong and open lines of communication with their parents. The love and encouragement received appeared to foster in many a belief in self and in their power to achieve important personal goals, even in the face of great challenges. Not all of the
students had a father figure in their lives, but those who did talked explicitly of their fathers as primary role models. Kyle described how hardworking his father was and how he and his sisters often learned from their fathers’ experiences—at work and out in the world. Kyle heard important messages about being a man:

My dad taught me about responsibility and putting in the best effort. I saw him going to work every day . . . he worked very hard to provide for us. When he does spend time with us, we do things . . . he took us on terrific trips, trying to give us more exposure of things.

Alicia described her father as being a positive role model and her educational inspiration. “My father is a psychology professor at ASU, I know I want to go to college and get my own Ph.D. someday.”

Melissa spoke passionately about her mother’s positive impact on her success. “I used to tell my mom that ‘anyone will succeed with you ma, whether it’s a boy or girl.’” Melvin appreciated how his mother insisted on him going to Germany for a semester despite the financial challenges. He appreciated the fact that his mother never missed one play or one musical he was in. His mother described her support for Melvin. “Everything he was in whether it’s a play or a musical at Shaker, I was there. When he went to Carnegie-Mellon, I burned up that road going to Pennsylvania.”
It is impossible to list all the great conversations the parents had with their children about college, educational inspirations, and the activities they have done to ensure the success of their children. What emerged in most cases, however, were the high levels of persistent academic expectation and parental involvement. Accompanying such persistent academic expectation and parental involvement was parental discipline and strict rule setting revealed by some of the study participants. The next section presents how “a healthy dose of fear” of parents was essential in the study participants’ road to academic achievement and post-school success.

**Persistent Parental Discipline**

Persistent parental discipline emerged as a consistent theme in the interviews. I use this term to broadly describe the strictness, use of physical punishment, and consistency of punishment, use of explanations, and so forth, in parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966, 1991a). The students repeatedly emphasized that their parents instilled in them a well-defined sense of right and wrong. They believed that this positively guided their development, and protected them from problems that beset many of their peers. In Kyle’s case, tough love really changed the trajectory of his life. Kyle’s father also recalled how his parents used physical punishment as a means of enforcing rules during childhood. Melvin remembered how much he was scared of his mother’s no
tolerance policy, and so did Yolanda and Meghan. They also indicated their awareness that the punishments they received were not random, but had been directed at teaching them to conform and to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable behavior. As both students and parents emphasized, these were viewed as especially important lessons for Black kids in a sometimes racist and dangerous world where juvenile pranks can be misperceived or misattributed as criminal behavior. “Police are ON the Black kids,” as Melvin’s mother put it.

Both Kyle and Kyle’s father described a significant incident. The following excerpt of how Kyle’s father detailed a father-son talk demonstrates the purpose of tough love and discipline\textsuperscript{14}.

We went to the teacher parents’ conference and his teacher was telling me that he was hanging out, being disrespectful . . . he is not doing anything and he can do it. So when I got home we had a talk. I said, “get down to the basement we need to talk . . . what is this about that you going to school? You wanna be a fool? If you are gonna be a clown, don’t waste my time working all these hours, don’t waste your time going to school, just drop out now.” Then he got smart, so I did

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} These quotes are left in their entirety to convey the characteristic and colorful meaning of the exchange.
\end{flushright}
discipline him [laugh, grinned] then he said, “I don’t want to live here no more.”

I said, “Fine, I said here is 300 dollars I put on the bar . . . so when I get up in the morning, the money is gone, you should be gone with it. Take all the clothes you want, but don’t take no furniture, I own that, but you can go.” So I got up, he had wrote me a 3-page letter apologizing for mouthing off and he’s going to school and do better. And he did, ever since that day. Never had a problem . . . Went back up to that school and they said, “I don’t know what you said to him, Mr. J, but he’s been a perfect gentleman ever since.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, when parents discussed their own childhoods they often indicated that this is how they were brought up. The following excerpt demonstrates that strict limit setting and discipline are necessary for students learning to distinguish “right from wrong.” Kyle’s dad went into detail about his upbringing:

See when I was a kid, I knew I was typical kid I did things in schools wrong. The school says, “Alright, two swats” . . . a piece of wood with holes in it. If I take 2 swats, they’re not going to call my house. “Let’s do it.” Because the 2 swats was nothing compared to what I was gonna get at home. So, I’d rather take the 2 swats. Every time that telephone ring, I’d be shaking in my boots you know.

Kyle’s dad became philosophical:
I really think HOME . . . that’s where I’ll start at. YOUR HOME. If your home is intact, and the two people there which is your mom and dad are behind you 100%, once you get out there, it don’t matter. . . . Today the kids, it says, “It is wrong to hit a kid”, yes it is. But you don’t want your kids to be afraid of you, . . . I don’t believe in just beating a kid, just be beating him, but they still gotta have respect. The child gotta know that if you disrespect another person, an older person, and disrespect me, we got issues. If you don’t respect the people that take care of you, who do you respect? NOBODY. That’s what’s wrong with lots of these kids out here you know.

Similarly Melvin’s mom talked about her parents’ influence:

Being respectful is very important. I used to tell other parents, you’re doing all these things for your children and you going to let them have behavior that is not conducive to being respectful. NO. You can’t start raising your children when they’re grown, so I started young.

Melvin agreed with his mother on the necessity of having a healthy dose of fear:

My mother was in no way abusive, but I was afraid of her. People don’t believe in fear now, they want to talk to kids . . . no, no, no, NO. I firmly believe that when kids are acting up, they need to know that some things are not up for
discussions. I knew that if my Mom said be home at 11, I could not come in there at 12; I would expect that I may get knocked down the steps.

While parental discipline or tough love was significant to many of the study participants growing up and was perceived as crucial in keeping them on the right track in Shaker Heights, some study participants also reported the importance of support from extended family members and involvement with the community and church.

**Support From Extended Families and Community**

My mom . . . we didn’t have lectures, whatever we learn, we learn by her example, consistent daily dialogues about learning. I had regular dialogues with my mom, my grandmother, my aunt, my uncles who had the same mind. (Yolanda).

Baumrind (1991b) stated that the influence of authoritativeness, as well as other styles of parenting, varies depending on the social environment in which the family is embedded. This finding suggested that for this small group of high-achieving Black students, the positive influence of their parents was enhanced by the support from their extended family members and the community. Both parents and students emphasized the influence of extended family members, church, extracurricular activities, and peers. As an example, both Carmen’s father and Melissa and Monica’s mom were members of “Moreland on the Move,” a community association. “At one point ‘One Shaker’ and
‘Moreland on the Move’ collaborated and we walked every street in this community and knocked on every door.” Melissa and Monica’s mom talked about her involvement with the community associations. In terms of extended family, grandmothers and aunts were seen as especially influential in the students’ upbringing, and as contributing to their academic focus. Yolanda and her mother shared a story about how the grandmother emphasized “speaking proper English.” “We used to ask her ‘where so and so at?’ She would respond and say ‘behind the at.’ Then she would tell you that you couldn’t end a sentence with proposition!” For some families, church attendance was a regular, shared family activity. For others, the church was described as a crucial structure and source of support where they met peers with the same achievement orientation and life inspirations. In Melvin’s case, his church and his extended family significantly contributed to his sense of self and purpose in life.

My grandmother, my mom and my aunt were the three central figures of my life who laid down the law. They pretty much raised us five boys in the church. Church gave me my moral center and it also gave me my faith to accomplish all the things I want to accomplish in my life. I’m not talking about organized religion but about things that I believe in, believing that there was a path and a
chosen path of existence for my life, as long as I prepared and did the things I was supposed to do and it would lead me here I was supposed to go.

A number of students emphasized the importance of positive peer influence. The students were involved in a diversity of activities, ranging from sports to theatre, from chamber orchestra to chess. For some, bonds with other high-achieving Blacks were forged; for others, friendships with kids of other ethnicities were formed. However, transcending the racial dichotomy, Melvin’s mom said that “Melvin never hang out with people who are not going anywhere,” which was reflected in Melvin’s own narratives;

My friends have always been a mixture of people, I have my church group and we were all in the youth choir, we rehearsed and put on shows. Then I have my school group. When I was a Shaker I think it was at the height of when things were really good in terms of you could interact and interrelate with people in the AP class. At the end of the school, almost everybody was going somewhere at that time.

Overall, the connectedness of parents and their children, and the reinforcement of academic focus and achievement from multiple sources outside the family, including peers and church and community involvement, emerged as an essential component of success in some of the Black students’ experiences.
Generated from the study participants’ narratives, the above sections focused on conditions and processes that were perceived as contributing to the study participants’ academic and post-school success found in students themselves, families, and extended families, including church and community organizations. The subsequent paragraphs describe the contributing conditions found in Shaker Schools even though orientation programs designed for translocated Black students were absent at the time.

**Caring Teachers and Engaging Instructions**

As stated previously, within the ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), school is an inseparable part in a student’s academic success. This finding extracted from the study participants’ narratives described that caring teachers and engaging instruction were perceived to be contributing to the academic achievement of this group of Black students. Caring meant that these teachers were committed to teaching and genuinely concerned about the students’ growth. The students found that caring teachers were supportive and held high expectations of them. The students felt that they could connect with caring teachers and receive encouragement inside and outside the classroom. Caring teachers looked out for the students and communicated with parents to monitor students’ educational progress and offer solutions to problems that emerge. The parents in this study’s sample had experiences of both excellent teachers and mediocre ones.
As previously described, Kyle’s adaptive attitude did not come until the “basement man-to-man talk.” Kyle’s father still credited Kyle’s current career success to Kyle’s teachers who “changed his life.” Kyle’s father talked about how teachers in Shaker gave Kyle a second chance when he was failing in seventh grade when they just moved in.

Even after our little man-to-man talk, he went back on the right track but he was so far behind. So the one teacher said that what we gonna do is have him do a special assignment and this assignment, if it is up to par it should bring his grade up. They had him write a composition about dandelions, some functions of dandelions and he did a good job on it and that’s what helped him through that seventh grade. I don’t think the teachers here [in Cleveland] would have went to that extent to help a failing student.

Kyle talked about how his teachers never tried to scare him away and encouraged him to try different things.

I had a lot of excellent teachers at Shaker, so you learned a lot and they gave you the option, you know, to speak your mind and explain things. One thing about Shaker is that if you don’t understand something, there is always tutoring
available for you. You know there is something always . . . I would stay at school sometimes.

Regarding the “basement man-to-man talk,” Kyle also attributed his “turn himself around” to his teacher Mr. Woods.

I had lack of respect for the teachers in Shaker because coming from East Cleveland, I was like, “man, I am from the HOOD,” “I ain’t listening to ya’ll.” That’s how I looked at things when I first came to Shaker. It was Mr. Woods who rattled me out to my parents that changed my life. He’s African American and he really want all kids to achieve, but he really looked out for us and tell us that we gotta do extra to succeed.

Alicia described her tennis coach who took a special interest in her by asking her whether there were any adjustment difficulties, knowing she had just come to Shaker. Melvin remembered every single music teacher that had left a mark on him while he was in Shaker. Milton noted that his teacher periodically reported his progress in French class to his mother, which motivated him not to flunk the class. Although Gina thinks teachers in Shaker had low expectations for Black students, her personal experience was positive. She described vividly that “My Spanish teachers told me you need to pursue this. My
writing teachers told me you need to pursue this, and I go get a degree in business management.”

Engaged instruction means the instruction is student-centered, and encourages students’ participation. Some students complained about the curriculum in previous schools, noting its lack of cultural relevance. The students remembered the teachers in Shaker that were able to incorporate the students’ cultural background into their instruction, which positively encouraged their participation in classes. Richard, for instance, hated history classes in his previous Catholic schools but loved it in Shaker because of the culturally relevant instruction. A guest speaker in his history class also motivated him to attend KSU. Richard said,

In Catholic schools, they talked about Greeks, the Romans, and about everybody else, but there is nothing about my people and the history of my people, but I got excellent, excellent African American history in Shaker from Mr. Hinderson. He also invited a professor in Pan-African studies from Kent to speak with us and I learned a lot of information from them.

In short, the study participants described that there were no specific programs that oriented translocated Black students and families into Shaker Schools; however their
interactions with their teachers had been positive and in some specific cases it was the teacher’s action that altered some students’ life trajectory and academic pursuit.

**Summary of Findings**

The above findings were organized by their relationship to the theoretical framework of this study (see Table 2 Summary of Findings). The study participants reflected on their urban-to-suburban translocation experiences; socio-cultural differences between Shaker Heights and the study participants’ old neighborhoods were described; strategies used by the study participants to acculturate to Shaker and Shaker Schools based on their perception of their new social location were illustrated; then conditions, processes and actors attributed by the participants as constructive to their academic and post-school success were summarized.

The subsequent section details the study participants’ take on so called “Black students’ academic disengagement” in Shaker Heights. Further, to illuminate the way in which incoming families, especially Black families, can successfully acculturate to Shaker, the study participants also offered a few practical suggestions.
Table 2

Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Frameworks</th>
<th>Main Concepts</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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| Socio-cognitive acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003)       | Adaptive strategies guided by perceptions of the new socio-cultural context    | Perceptions of the social location differences  

(community and school; cultural differences)  

Acculturation experience and adaptive strategies |
|                                               | to satisfy individual’s practical goals in a new social location              |                                                                                           |
|                                               | Cultural awareness and cultural competence influence acculturation             |                                                                                           |
| Critical Race Theory (e.g., Delgado, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) | Acknowledging that race and racism is part of the social fabric (especially in the U.S. context)  

Counter-story telling to challenging dominate myths and assumptions and to share the perspectives of people of color  

Academic achievement as resistance to the perceived structural racism at school and in the U.S. society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) |
| Ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) | Dynamic triad of family, school, and community engagement contributes to academic success of students  

Parenting style is a feature of a child’s social environment and family interactions with children are influenced by the social context in which the family is located |
|                                               | Persistent parental academic expectation and involvement  

Persistent parental discipline  

Support from extended family and community  

Caring teachers and engaging instruction |

Suggestions to Shaker Schools and Incoming Families

Given the particular context of urban-to-suburban translocation and their own experiences, the study participants offered their explanation on why Black parents are less involved than White parents with school. Some think it is a matter of social class. “Middle class are not all created the same you know,” Monica’s mom said. Richard and
Kyle believed that Black parents are simply “working their behind off” to afford living in Shaker.

If you lived in Cleveland and then you moved to Shaker, you got a lot of new bills and you gotta keep up. Just try to keep up and I think that takes most of their time.

(Richard)

Monica and Yolanda believed that Black parents from elsewhere just have different values from Shaker values. Yolanda shared her assumption,

I think it may be whatever is valuable to them. For Shaker parents, maybe their value isn’t giving them tennis shoes, video games, or giving them money. For some Black parents maybe going to school isn’t seen as something valuable. We also have the tendency to let other people baby sit our kids, “oh, they go to Shaker, they are fine.” That’s a huge assumption.

On school, almost unanimously the study participants suggested creating an orientation program at school for new families, especially the parents, “because they just need to understand what’s expected of them to help their child to succeed.” Other suggestions included “creating a program to help new kids find out where the weaknesses are academically; socially it would help explain to the children they gotta choose what group of kids they hang out with.” Alicia suggested Shaker Schools:

On teachers, the study participants emphasized that the dispositions of good teachers were those who were aware of students’ different learning styles and strengths. Kyle suggested that teachers must pay individual attention to individual students and adjust method of instruction according to the individual’s learning style.

Teachers have to care about students and you can’t teach all the kids the same way. They should have a grasp of who’s getting it and who’s not in a couple of weeks when the school starts. Don’t have the same curriculum everyday for every class.

Regarding advice to future families coming to Shaker, three common themes emerged which are a reflection of the importance of parental dynamics in the transitional process and academic achievement: (a) Do your job! (b) Make yourself seen, make yourself heard at school; (c) Over-communicate with your kids about education.

Students and parents, but especially parents, strongly suggested future parents to be an
“advocate of their children,” “actively involved in what your child is doing at school” and “educate your children about the challenges and methods that can counter these challenges.” The importance of “working closely with the teachers” is expressed. For some parents, it is vital to have “the thick skin, coming to school, asking questions.”

In offering suggestions to incoming Black families, Yolanda thought the most critical in the process of getting the most out of a Shaker experience was

Examining the reason why you move to Shaker, have courage and some backbone and don’t be afraid if you want something different and something better for your family. Making a plan and having a goal. There are opportunities and people who are willing to help, but you have to be willing to take it yourself. Even if you are not the best student, you need to give your best shot. You need to answer questions even if you don’t know. Because that tells them you don’t know that and that’s where you need help. Putting in more efforts because that’s all you have. That’s all you have at school is what you put into it.

To conclude this chapter, the study participants first shared their perceptions of the social location differences and the purposeful actions they undertook to acculturate to Shaker Schools and life in Shaker Heights based on their observation and perception of the “Shaker’s culture.” Perceiving academic success within the context of being Black
American gave the study participants strength and motivation to achieve their goals despite the acculturation stresses they encountered. Code-switching and active participation in extra-curricula activities emerged as major acculturation strategies that allowed study participants to be engaged both inside and outside school. Then, significant moments, actors, and processes that the study participants believed to have contributed to their academic and post-school success were presented. Lastly, this study’s participants offered suggestions and changes that they believed were needed in school and community to foster academic achievement for upcoming families to Shaker Heights. The following chapter further interprets the meanings of the findings in relation to existing literatures.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

I aimed to understand the experience of high-achieving Black American students who migrated from disadvantaged inner-city areas to an affluent suburb—Shaker Heights. From an anti-deficit approach, the findings revealed the urban to suburban translocation experience of the study participants and the conditions, actors, and processes they perceived as having contributed to their success. From the perspective of socio-cognitive acculturation, the study participants’ perception of the socio-cultural differences between their old neighborhoods and Shaker Heights guided their adaptive behavior to acculturate to Shaker and Shaker Schools in order to socially fit in and achieve academically. From CRT perspective, the study participants’ academic and post-school success was attributed to viewing achievement as a human value not conflicting with their racial identity. Simultaneously, with an awareness of racism and racial inequity in the society, the study participants acknowledged the necessity to get a good education as of particular importance to them as Black Americans as a form of resistance against the negative stereotypes so often associated with “Black people.” From an ecological perspective, the study participants’ academic and post-school success was attributed to the collaborative effort of students, parents, extended family and community, and caring teachers (See
Table 2 Summary of Findings). Altogether, the participants’ goal to succeed as Black Americans in a perceived predominantly White socio-cultural context guided their adaptive behaviors such as shifting cultural and social codes in Shaker Heights without culturally assimilating (Gibson, 1988). In the process of acculturation, the parents of this small group of high-achieving Black students played a vital role in shaping the study participants’ racial identity and achievement ideology via consistent parental control (e.g., authoritative parenting (Baumrind, 1967, 1971).

The findings are not intended to be applied to all Black students in similar situations across the U.S.; rather they bring some clarity into the rarely documented Black urban-to-suburban acculturation experience as well as insights into how these Black students achieved academic and personal success despite the challenges caused by urban-to-suburban translocation. From an anti-deficit perspective, elaboration of the contextual particulars and individual characteristics that empower Black students to succeed against odds and against master narratives of Black American educational dysfunction were of particular importance. Dance (2002) asserted that in much social science research Black Americans have been characterized as “pathological,” their intellectual capacity has been questioned (e.g., Jensen, 1969), and their cultural styles devalued both within schools and in the broader social discourse (e.g., Moynihan, 1965).
Even in the post-Civil Rights era, the mechanisms that support educational inequalities have increasingly become subtle and race continues to provide structural, institutional, and symbolic disadvantages to Black students regardless of the racial composition of schools (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Therefore, I argue that instead of focusing on how Black students lack access to valued resources or being systematically placed in the least advanced academic placement within school which contributed to their academic underachievement, we can learn more valuable lessons from those Black students who have successfully navigated the school system against all the odds.

The findings of this qualitative study revealed these much needed contextual details of how a small group of high-achieving Black students and their families achieved academic and post-school success despite the challenges caused by an urban-to-suburban translocation. The intentional data gathering of counter narratives from the study participants gave them opportunities to reflect on their actions and the ways people and processes added value to their life and schooling experiences.

The subsequent discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks follow the same order as the findings were presented in Chapter 4.
Acculturation Experience and Adaptive Strategies

To answer my first main research question (What is the experience of the study participants’ urban to suburban translocation?), I started with understanding the study participants’ perception of the social location differences between their previous neighborhoods and Shaker Heights. In view of socio-cognitive acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003), newcomers must make sense of their new socio-cultural environment and decide how and/or whether they are going to acculturate. Gibson (1987) stated that to understand the variations in the academic performance of immigrant minorities, we need to look not only at the social structure of the host society and the cultural background of the minority group, but also at the minority group’s situation in the host society, including its perceptions of the opportunities available and the historical context of its relationship to the dominant group (p. 272). The same principle can be applied to understanding the academic performances of my study participants. Thus, their perceptions of the social location differences gave us some context in which acculturation took place.

All the study participants described the differences they observed between their old neighborhoods and Shaker Heights and Shaker Schools, both environmentally and culturally. However, the reaction and adjustment to these differences varied. For one
particular study participant (Kyle), acculturation was only possible under the condition of
his father’s intervention by physically punishing Kyle for his misbehavior at school.
Overall, I found an affirmative commitment towards maximizing the schooling
experiences once the study participants realized the opportunities and resources Shaker
offered which had been unavailable to them in their previous social locations. This
finding was consistent with conclusions drawn by Padilla and Perez (2003), Phinney
(2003), and Marin and Gamba, (2003) that socio-cognitive acculturation originates from
individual’s practical goals. Marin (1993) pointed out that because members of some
newcomer groups are likely to be targeted for more discrimination than others; therefore
some newcomers are more inclined to undergo cultural changes due to social and/or
economic circumstances that may make certain type of cultural adaptation preferable or
beneficial. For instance, a suburban teacher’s expectation may be higher towards a Black
student who speaks Standard English and wearing dress shirt and sweater vest than to a
Black student who speaks slang and wearing graffiti jacket and hip-hop jewelry. Then a
Black student new to the suburb may have to change his or her language pattern and dress
style because doing so benefits his or her goal to have a positive interaction with the
teacher. For some study participants (e.g., Kyle, Richard), their goal to maximize their
educational experiences in Shaker High school motivated them to change their behavior.
They changed how they dressed and how they talked for the purpose of socially and culturally fitting in with what they perceived as Shaker’s culture because they believed these changes could benefit their access to information and resources from teachers and their peers.

Despite the friction and unease several study participants experienced, their values, beliefs, expectations, and normative ways of behaving were consistent across their families and Shaker Schools. The study participants are similar to Fiske’s (1993) description of social perceivers whose significant cognitive activity results from motivation. The study participants understand that they must cope with their new socio-cultural pressures and standards. They must make sense of their new social location and decide how and whether they want to adjust into the Shaker culture. Since their goal was to be successful in Shaker Schools, adjustments were made to satisfy this goal.

Furthermore, not surprisingly, the study participants’ acculturation stress caused by the urban-to-suburban translocation was moderated by their schooling experience and family life prior to entering Shaker. This is consistent with Padilla’s view (1987) on the level of acculturation being determined by the cultural awareness—in other words knowledge individuals have of their home culture (inner-city areas) and of their host
cultures (perceived as predominately White suburb). From this point of view, some study participants who had grown up in the inner city areas had more knowledge of the behavioral standards and values of their home culture than they do the Shaker Heights’ culture. Thus, Shaker’s neighborhoods, social-cultural behavioral norms were experienced as culture shock initially. These students who grew up in inner city areas, a higher level of acculturation stress was experienced partially due to the social location differences but also from how students and teachers in Shaker reacted to them (e.g., Meghan’s case). As Markus, Kitayama, and Heiman (1996) stressed, pragmatism and cultural competence lies at the heart of successful acculturation for immigrants. Likewise, it is applicable to the study participants who had to cope with their new cultural and social pressures and standards. They had to make sense of Shaker, their new social environment and decide how and whether they were going to comply with Shaker’s culture (e.g., Kyle’s case). It is evident in the findings that the consistent behavior and academic expectations of the study participants fortified their management of acculturation stress.

The study participants’ perceptions of their social location offered us an understanding of the socio-cultural context and available resources that were involved in their acculturation process. Adaptive strategies were informed by such perceptions.
They were formed to socially and academically fit in what the study participants identified as Shaker’s “inbred” culture. This study found that the prevailing adaptive strategies to cope with social challenges were participation in social clubs, extra-curricula activities, and “playing the game.” The strategy of participating in social clubs and extracurricular activities is consistent with existing literatures on the positive influence of participation in social organizations on academic achievement. Mitchell (2010) stated that Black social clubs are cultural societies upon which to draw strength, friendship and fun (p. 34). The study participants not only use these social clubs to have fun but most importantly through participation in these social clubs, they were able to find that commonality with other newcomer students. Through such connection and friendship, support and encouragement were found in a “new different world.”

From CRT perspective, for the study participants, race is highly central to their self-definition and they are comfortable with what makes them Black Americans. At the same time, they also valued what could be learned from interacting with people in Shaker Schools who share a range of different cultural backgrounds and experiences. This finding confirms that acculturation may be an additive process, or one in which old and new traits are blended. Unlike assimilation—the process whereby individuals of one society or ethnic group are incorporated or absorbed culturally into another—
acculturation need not result in the rejection or replacement of old traits, or the loss of identification with one’s former group (Gibson, 1988).

The findings of my study indicated that the study participants developed high levels of cultural competence. They were astute observers of the actions and behaviors of others or so-called “Shaker kids,” thereby enabling them to adopt styles and to practice interaction patterns similar to those of the students with whom they were attempting to connect. This is consistent with the code-switching behaviors described by Cross et al. (1999) which allows Black students to act, think, dress, and express themselves in ways that maximize the comfort level of the person, group, or organization with whom they are communicating.

Although the acculturation experience was smooth for some study participants, manageable for others, altogether the study participants expressed deep appreciation for the social and cultural resources Shaker offered as manifested in a curriculum enriched with arts, music, and foreign language, as well as various sports and students social clubs. After overcoming the initial apprehension regarding being not well prepared for Shaker’s academic rigor, the study participants sought assistance from their teachers, actively engaged in social clubs to meet other Shaker students, and utilized tutoring services to strengthen their skills.
The study participants still perceived Shaker as a White middle and upper-middle class suburb regardless of its diverse students’ composition. However, they did not see change in the way they dressed and the way they talked as compromising their racial identity even when they were teased by their peers and relatives from their previous neighborhood as being “preppy.” Rather, they considered these changes as necessary to socially fitting in and gaining access to goals they wanted to achieve. The study participants valued achievement and were able to shift cultural and social codes in their new social location without culturally assimilating (see also Gibson, 1988). This ability, or cultural competence, to enact various cultural styles for various cultural contexts enabled my study participants to maintain success in a diverse school setting within the context of also maintaining a Black identity. They were able to speak, act, think, and interact in ways that are appropriate within Shaker Schools to acquire necessary information, skills, and knowledge to achieve academic and post-school success. The social and cultural resources that were not available to them in their previous neighborhoods were perceived as attainable as long as individuals were willing to work hard to get it.

My second research question (What processes and conditions do the study participants attribute as constructive of their academic and post-school success?) was
answered through the participants attributing their success to the significant actors (e.g., student self, parents, extended family members, teachers), events (e.g., interventions, teacher parent conferences), and processes (e.g., class instruction, parent-child interactions), which I discuss next.

**Individual Agency and Accountability**

Extracted from the findings, the study participants did not experience a tension between being Black and doing well in their school context. Their affirmed racial identity fortified them to acquire and enact achievement-oriented behaviors in Shaker Schools. Although the study participants regarded achievement as a common human pursuit, the task of achieving was constructed within the context of being Black. This finding supports and expands what we have learned in existing studies of high-achieving Black students and other ethnically minority students. Students’ identities were constructed in relation to the socio-cultural context in which students learn; therefore there is no monolithic profile for the high-achieving Black students. Perceptions of how race is operated in the school context and in society informed the study participants’ construction of racial and achievement ideology. The study participants’ achievement ideology integrated a sense of individual agency because they understood that racism is a structural condition designed to impede their upward mobility.
Garcia, Wilkinson, and Ortiz (1995) stressed that minority students’ academic success is embedded in a series of interactions between classroom, school, home, and students, all of which operate within the broader societal context (Garcia et al., 1995). Discussions of Black academic achievement, in addition to examining macro-social variables, have centered around extra-cognitive, social, and emotional competences that Black students possess that enable them to succeed in schools (e.g., D. J. Carter, 2008; Harper, 2012; Irving & Hudley, 2008). Therefore, an understanding of Black academic engagement depends upon interwoven macro-social and micro-psychological dynamics. The CRT framework (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) explains that the study participant were able to maintain high academic expectations for themselves as a form of resistance against master narratives that often associated Black Americans with intellectual inferiority. In addition to a critical awareness of racial hierarchy and how race can serve as a barrier to their success in the society, these high-achieving Black students in this study simultaneously indicated a variety of psychological dynamics which appeared essential to them: belief in self, perseverance, self-discipline, sense of leadership, concern for parent’s approval, aspiration for future, ethnic identity, isolation from deviant peers, etc. These dynamics made the difference in maintaining their focus on maximizing the given educational opportunity when challenges were present.
The findings regarding the psychological dynamics can be understood through the concept of agency which is broadly defined as the participants’ ability to negotiate—that is, to accommodate, reconfigure, or resist—the available socio-cultural context (Clark, 1983). The participants expressed a belief in their own agency and a belief in the power of schooling to improve their lives and the lives of others. This individual agency and accountability were embedded in their awareness of the barriers awaiting them in the society motivating them to work even harder. This study’s participants had different personalities and temperaments, school experiences, parenting, and attachment to the community. What was common was they translated their beliefs into action by embracing a high level of academic performance. Their narrative supported the power of their own agency; their statements also displayed a critical awareness of structure of inequality and strategies for overcoming discrimination in society.

Black students’ individual agency and positive socio-cultural identity informed their achievement ideology and resulted in successful adaptive behaviors in an affluent and racially diverse suburban school. Through CRT framework, the participants’ counter-stories of success were told and fore fronted the importance of race in the findings. The narratives of the study participants indicated that they neither took on a “raceless persona” (Fordham, 1988), nor conformed entirely to mainstream cultural
patterns (Gibson, 1988) in order to succeed at school. Instead, being Black was central to their self-definition and doing well at school perceived as a universal value that is not unique to White students only. These Black students were aware of stereotypes and limitations to their present and future social and economic outcomes in American society. It was often expressed by my study participants that because they were Black, they needed to work even harder to get ahead. Therefore, being from disadvantaged and racially homogenous inner city areas compared to Shaker Heights, these Black students and their families perceived Shaker’s challenging curriculum, extracurricular activities, and diversity as valuable assets that would ensure them a competitive edge in the job market and contribute to their overall life quality satisfaction. Thus the motivation to succeed in Shaker Schools also becomes a racialized one.

This finding showed that an ethic of hard work, combined with a commitment to hold oneself accountable for academic performance, as well as understanding one’s socio-cultural context were necessary for achieving academic and post-school success for these students. The findings were consistent with the conclusion of Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) as well as Cook and Ludwig (1998) that Black high-achievers have positive self-esteem, high goal orientations, and strong Black identities. More importantly the findings confirmed Oyserman, Gant, and Ager’s (1995) assertion that
conceptualizing achievement as embedded within one’s sense of self as a Black person can eliminate the experience of contradiction and tension between achievement and Black identity felt by some Black adolescents.

The findings also support existing studies of high-achieving Black students. From a socio-cognitive perspective, where student identities are constructed in relation to the socio-cultural context in which students learn, no monolithic profile for the Black high achiever can be drawn (Harper, 2006; Wiggan, 2008). In the view of socio-cognition and CRT, perceptions of how race operates in the learning context and in society inform students’ construction of racial and achievement self-conceptions (Oyserman et al., 1995; Perry, 2003).

In short, consistent with CRT, the study participants expressed a critical awareness of racial hierarchy and how race can serve as a barrier to their success. They acknowledged that access to opportunities is inherently unequal based on racial power dynamics in the United States. However, this understanding of structural barriers did not prevent the study participants from studying hard, rather it motivated them to “play the game” and work even harder to reach their goals to become productive members of society.
From the viewpoint of socio-cognitive acculturation, the study participants’ goal to achieve motivated them to acculturate to Shaker and Shaker Schools with adaptive behaviors informed by the perceptions of the socio-cultural differences between their old neighborhoods and Shaker Heights. From CRT standpoint, the study participants perceived achieving academic and post-school success as not conflicting with their racial identity. They did not embrace “racelessness” as Fordham (1988) suggested, nor did they assimilate into White culture as Fries-Britt (2002) stated many high-achieving Black students do.

The next few paragraphs discuss the other actors (e.g., parents) and conditions (e.g., parental involvement, parental discipline) attributed by the study participants as adding value to their academic and post-school success using the broader ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and its intersection with socio-cognitive acculturation theory and CRT.

**Family Dynamics**

From CRT framework, whereas these high achieving Black students’ positive racial identity and self agency explained their intrinsic motivation to achieve, the ecological model stressed the positive interactions and relationships with their parents
provided emotional warmth, encouragement, and support which were also essential in their acculturation and academic achievement.

The findings suggested that the high-achieving Black students in this study had parents whose parenting styles were more inclined to the authoritative parenting style (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parents of the high achieving Black students in this study provided a lot of both demandingness and warmth, in line with an authoritative style (Spera, 2005). In addition to having no problem displaying tough love whenever needed, they were neither reluctant to offer academic assistance nor sparing in letting their children know they were proud of them. The parenting style of the Black parents in this study confirmed Mandera’s (2006) formulation that students have higher academic achievement regardless of race when the parenting style is demandingness combined with warmth. Lewis (1981) suggested that it is not the high control feature of authoritative families that helps children develop an independent and autonomous sense of self while conforming to rules, but rather the reciprocal communication feature of authoritative families and the experience children in these families. The narratives of the study participants drastically contradicted the “dysfunctional family” and “uninvolved parents” image of Black families in Shaker portrayed by Ogbu (2003). In conjunction with CRT,
these counter narratives again evidence the heterogeneity of Black Americans and Black family lives.

Ogbu (1987, 2003) saw a tight link between students’ perception of opportunity and their educational aspirations and academic engagement. He argued that by witnessing their parents’ struggle with discrimination, Black students are discouraged from striving academically. They do not see a fair return for their educational efforts, thus they put forth less effort than their White peers. Contrary to Ogbu’s analysis, the Black students in this study embraced mainstream achievement ideology partially because their parents often explicitly expressed that high level of achievement equated a better quality of life.

Dornbusch et al. (1987) argued that the values parents hold and the goals toward which they socialize their children are critical determinants of parenting behaviors. It is perhaps not surprising that the Black parents revealed that their parenting style and practices were somewhat similar to their own parents. The findings suggest these high achieving Black students were raised in families with an achievement ideology consistent with that of the mainstream, yet it was also racialized. While conscious of racism and social injustice in U.S. society, these families stressed to their children the importance of “studying extra hard” in order to compete on a more equal basis with others in a limited
opportunity structure. These high-achieving Black students consistently reported that their parents emphasized “no pain, no gain.” This echoes two of the strengths of Black families identified by R. B. Hill (1972), which are strong work orientation and high academic orientation. The Black families in this study committed to academic engagement through home and school based involvement, and strict rule setting for academic and social behaviors. Taken together, the persistent parental academic high expectations, support, and discipline counteracted the contextual challenges induced by social location change.

Clark (1983) focused on the role of family support in fostering the agency of Black students in school, demonstrating that those students who had families who stayed actively involved in their schooling, who maintained control of their social networks, and who had a close, supportive authoritative relationship with their children attained higher level of achievement. The importance of dynamics such as parental supervision and maternal support that are reflected in the current findings were consistent with existing literature on academic achievement of urban Black adolescents (e.g., Clark, 1983; Hemmings, 1996, 1998). On the other hand, the current findings contradicted literature on family dynamics, which Gonzales et al. (1996) and Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) concluded are relatively weak in predicting Black students’ academic
achievement when compared to contextual influences such as peer group, society, and neighborhood. The findings indicated the tremendous influence parents had on the academic performance of their children. All the study participants attributed their success to their parents’ persistent and articulated academic expectations and support. For some Black students in the sample, the knowledge of the sacrifice their working-class parents made to afford them their educational opportunity in Shaker also compelled them to do well at school.

**Extended Family and Community**

Community and extended family are part of students’ ecological context. Consistent support and expectations of the study participants from their extended family members and the community were also identified as important conditions enabled by their academic and post-school success. Consistent with the opinion of Massey, Gross, and Eggers (1991), “neighborhoods have a profound effect on the values, beliefs, and knowledge of the people who grow up and live within them” (p. 398). Massey et al. argued that the pursuit of “the better” or “the upward” can be conceptualized in economic and social class terms, such as moving to a better neighborhood. The tendency to desire and seek association with individuals who are relatively prosperous is likewise universally expressed by financially advantaged and poor populations alike, and within
racial and ethnic groups (Byrd & Chavous, 2009). The study participants reported consistently that their friends and other family members viewed them going to Shaker as “moving up” and “made it.” Several parents had purposefully chosen Shaker for their kids to be in a “better environment” and “seeing nice stuff.”

Gibson (1987) argued that objective chances for upward mobility clearly influence minorities’ expectations about the value of formal education, but so too do their subjective views regarding their chances to get ahead in society. The study participants “played the game” by the rules of the dominant group (Shaker and Shaker Schools) because, from their perspective, there will be return from their hard work. Regardless of social-economic background, the study participants recognized the favorable economic standing reflected in one’s residency in the Shaker communities and access to a middle class, suburban school instead of disadvantaged schools. The motivation behind their decision to relocate to Shaker Heights from where they were was consistent with Massey et al.’s view of social behavior (1991) as well as Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model. The findings suggested that Black families relocate from disadvantaged inner city areas to Shaker Heights based on their aspirations for their children and other cultural dispositions consistent with social mobility and the acquisition of various economic and cultural resources (Wilson, 1996) through ensuring access to a good education. The
motivation behind going to Shaker and the appreciation of available educational resources and opportunities in Shaker fortified the families’ determination to maximize their children’s schooling experience.

Further, from the viewpoint of CRT, even when there was racial consciousness about structural inequalities and institutional racism within the school, and when some of the study participants experienced low expectations from teachers and guidance counselors, they did not blame the schools for creating the barriers; rather they took full responsibility for their own actions in their education experience. As Kyle put it, “What you put in is what you’re gonna get out . . . put in nothing, then you get nothing, simple as that . . . you can’t blame on nobody when yourself didn’t do the work.” This result was consistent with findings of other studies showing that Black Americans are generally achievement oriented (Tyson et al., 2005) and studies that showed that initial uncertainty regarding the academic environment pushes Black students to be aware of their limitations, but does not prevent them from trying to do well at school (Diamond, Lewis, & Gordon, 2007).

**School Teachers and Instructions**

The findings revealed that for this small group of high achieving Black students, they flourished because their teachers knew them well, were attuned to their needs or
gave them extra attention, and showed personal concerns for their lives. The study participants praised the Shaker School system and reported overall positive interaction with the teachers and school administrators (except Meghan’s case). According to the students, some teachers stood out from the rest because they cared about their academic progress and incorporated various pedagogical methods. The study participants reported how the curricula and instructions in their previous schools were culturally irrelevant to Black history and Black culture. This echoed both Richardson’s (2002) and Murrell’s (2002) argument that Black academic underperformance is due to the preponderance of “banking education” (Freire, 1972) methods used in schools, whereby students are forced to learn skills without connecting them to broader social, political, and economic processes in society. Under such an approach, teaching and learning become decontextualized to the point where they are no longer relevant as historically situated and culturally specific processes.

In contrast, the majority of the study participants viewed teachers in Shaker as “good.” Caring teachers and engaging instructions were extracted from the study participants’ narratives. Vogt (2002) argued that caring is an integral part of teaching. From CRT perspective, effective teaching practice demands consciousness of the contexts that either suppress or enable engagement among racially diverse students
Although in general study participants enjoyed the relatively artistically enriched curricula in Shaker, one participant critiqued overall Eurocentric curricula that paid insufficient attention to Black history and cultural heritages. This is consistent with Banks’ argument (2006) on the realities of cultural mismatch between school and minority students. Banks argued that that

The school should be a cultural environment in which acculturation takes place;
both teachers and students should assimilate some of each other’s views,
perceptions, and ethos as they interact. Both teachers and students will be
enriched by this process, and the academic achievement of students from diverse
cultures will be enhanced because their cosmos and ethos will be reflected and
legitimized in the school. (p. 106)

However, Banks continued,

Historically, schools in Western societies have had assimilation rather than
acculturation as their major goal . . . The students were expected to acquire the
dominant culture of the school and society, but the school neither legitimized nor
assimilated parts of the students’ cultures. (p. 106)

It is therefore not surprising that the study participants felt they could connect
with caring teachers and receive support from them whenever they encounter difficulties.
These were interactive teachers that encouraged student involvement and emphasized critical thinking and problem solving that was different from teacher-centered instructions study participants experienced in previous neighborhoods. These teachers also took initiative and monitor students’ academic progress with the parents.

The findings suggested suburban teachers and school administrators must realize the struggles that diverse students endure in order to succeed in school and to adjust their instructions accordingly. Students responded positively to culturally relevant pedagogy (Delpit, 1997) and curriculum (Howard, 2001). Thus to improve students’ academic performance, teacher education programs should foster caring and multicultural awareness as educational aims for prospective teachers (Banks, 2006). In an increasingly diverse society, in order to engage all the students, teachers must see concrete connections of subject matter and method relevant to the knowledge and culture of their diverse students. When students respond positively to culturally relevant materials, they are more likely to engage in learning. These suggestions advocate prospective teachers to enhance students’ learning experiences by creating learning environments that promote achievement.
Suggestions From the Study Participants

Reflecting on their own experiences, the study participants offered suggestions to Shaker Schools in improving their future communication with upcoming parents and students.

Both students’ and parents’ narratives indicated an absence of orientation programs at school and in the Shaker community for families who are new to Shaker. Hence students and parents suggested besides just sending information packets regarding Shaker Schools and behavior expectations, the school must find ways to draw parents to school and create a comfortable atmosphere for new Shaker parents to ask questions.

The parents of this small group of high achieving Black students agreed to some extent with what Ogbu (2003) described as less parental school involvement of Black students compared to that of White parents in Shaker; it frustrated them because they often found themselves as the only few Black parents present at the PTO meetings despite the fact that Black students outnumbered White students in Shaker Schools. Thus, they urged Shaker Schools to design orientation programs specifically for parents new to Shaker through which the expectation of the school towards parents as well as students must be articulated.
According to the narratives, students also revealed a lack of informational resources on financing and scholarship regarding colleges and universities. They expressed the unspoken yet conventionally expected “next step” in academic pursuit among Shaker students—going to college. Yet, their narratives suggested that if they were better informed about scholarship selection criteria of universities, available grants, and how to afford high education, they would have gone to better universities or to universities for free. Therefore they also suggested Shaker Schools provide families with education on financing a college education. Given that every family’s background differs and not all the Black families in Shaker are middle class or upper-middle class with sufficient financial assets, the information and education on how to afford higher education will ease some level of uncertainty and provide an outlook for those Black students that struggle between “getting an education” and “getting a job.”

Conclusion

Increased suburbanization of ethnic minority students including a large portion of Black American students presents challenges as well as opportunities for suburban schools and teachers to improve the academic performances for these students whose home culture and learning styles might be different from that of the schools. The findings of this study give a glimpse into the urban-to-suburban translocation experience of a small group of
high-achieving Black students and their families, who migrated to the affluent integrated suburb Shaker Heights, Ohio, from its surrounding lower socio-economic inner city areas. The findings reveal how adaptive strategies were formed by the study participants’ perceptions and interpretations of their new social location. The findings also shed light on the context that informed these Black students’ positive development of racial and achievement self-conceptions. These students’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors were not shaped in a vacuum. Their interactions within the ecological context across school, family, extended family members and community, and the larger society informed the ways in which they thought about race, achievement, and upward social mobility.

This study helps us understand how some high-achieving Black students of various socio-economic backgrounds moderate acculturation stress by conceptualizing school achievement as a common human trait and strongly adhere to the mainstream achievement ideology. Hence, these Black students did not end up equating doing well in school with “acting White.” Findings indirectly indicate ways to help Black students maintain school success without rejecting their racial or ethnic identities. Affiliation with like-minded peers, authoritative parenting, and supportive adults in extended family and community were all critical to positive identity construction. This study reveals the significance of individual agency in the schooling experience for this small group of high
achieving Black students. They responded to distinct sources of cultural norms; these individuals negotiated between cultural contexts and emerged with their own interpretations of appropriate behaviors.

My first main research question (What is the experience of the study participants’ urban-to-suburban translocation?) was answered by the vivid details of their perception and assessment of the social location differences and their response to these differences. The study participants’ urban-to-suburban translocation experience ranged from smooth to stressful, but eventually all the study participants managed to adapt to Shaker Schools by employing various strategies such as changing language patterns and dress style; actively participating in classes and student’s social groups; initiating conversations with the teachers, and so forth. My second main research question (What processes and conditions do the study participants attribute as constructive of their academic and post-school success?) was answered by the study participants’ narratives of significant actors, conditions and processes in their journey that helped them overcome the acculturation stress and contributed to their academic and post-school success. Further, the study participants generated suggestions for incoming Black families to Shaker and how they can foster their children’s academic achievement. They suggested that future parents first reflect on the reason they moved to Shaker and then get actively involved in
the children’s schooling experience. Second, they advocated that new Black families take full advantage of what Shaker offers and be brave enough to step out of comfort zones to participate in community and school events where they can meet people and get information on useful programs and resources. Third, they urged parents to communicate and over-communicate with their children about their education, future prospects, and daily activities at school, because when parents show interest in the children’s schooling experience, it sets a positive tone for the children to be interested too.

**Theoretical Contribution of the Study**

From an anti-deficit approach, this study contributes multiple ways to understand the relationship between urban-to-suburban translocation and Black academic achievement. In the view of an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the relationship between urban-to-suburban translocation and Black academic achievement was understood as a result of a dynamic triad of family, school, and community engagement in the local context. From the perspective of socio-cognitive acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003), Black students who migrated from disadvantaged inner-city areas to an affluent suburb employed adaptive strategies informed by their perception of the rules and codes of the new social location which resulted in behaviors that satisfied their goal of succeeding in school. From the perspective of CRT, Black students’
academic achievement was explained as an integration of affirmed Black racial identity and a desire to achieve as a form of resistance to the perceived structural racism at school and in U.S. society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) as well as negative stereotypes associated with Black Americans.

**Implications**

Schools in the suburbs and schools in the U.S. in general could benefit from knowing how to improve their teaching practices and programs to cater to an increasingly diverse student body. A better partnership between school, family, and the community may well be a part of the solution to help Black students succeed in school as well as enrich learning experiences for all. However, school-based solutions that do not recognize a fundamental need for social and economic racial reform in the larger society may also provide false sense of hope about the impact that small incremental changes can have on the larger society. Incorporating the critical and structural perspectives in understanding Black academic performances, the findings of this study also implied that it is not enough for teachers to just realize there is a cultural difference between inner city areas and suburbs. In order to create environments where students are able to work together in classrooms, to solve problems jointly, and to have equal investment in schools and learning, we need to identify institutional structures that operate to facilitate
boundary crossing strategies and that do not require students to give up or hide important features of their lives. This requires more than understanding the students’ home cultures. It means that translocated Black students (and other minority students) must acquire skills and strategies to work comfortably and successfully with different people in divergent social settings. Teachers and administrators in all of our schools must talk about the importance of fostering school environment where differences are valued rather than feared.

Nonetheless, I hope the findings of this study bring some clarification of the acculturation experience of some Black American families that were often ignored in research. These students’ counter narratives contributed valuable insights to the discourse on the partnership between school, community, and family. We could see Black students as resilient and resourceful individuals who employ various strategies, negotiating between their community, family, peer, and school space to achieve academic and post-school success. This multi-faceted partnership may be crucial in improving academic performance for all students. Future research should further explore the dynamics of this partnership among a larger group of participants in a variety of public schools to draw implications with greater confidence of how the cultivation of such a partnership fosters positive schooling experience in a multicultural society.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORMS OF THE PROJECT “BLACK-AMERICAN STUDENTS’ ENGAGEMENT AND SUCCESS IN SHAKER HEIGHTS”
Appendix A

Demographic Data Forms of the Project “Black-American Students’ Engagement and Success in Shaker Heights”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:____________</th>
<th>Understanding the Experience of High-Achieving Black American Students Migrated from Inner cities to an Affluent Suburb.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee(s):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic data on parent(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current relationship with alumnus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational background, include name of institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/employment status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency, Neighborhood before moving to Shaker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long did you live in Shaker- when your child(ren) was(were) in Shaker Schools?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At that time, did you live/spend time in a largely socio-economically isolated environment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... Racially isolated environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you, the parent, a member in community institutions or participate in community activities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name the type of institution or activity most prevalent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: ____________________________</td>
<td>Understanding the Experience of High-Achieving Black American Students Migrated from Inner cities to an Affluent Suburb.</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee(s): __________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Demographic data on student**

- Current professional/educational status
- HS grade point average
- Type of coursework (levels and concentrations)
- dropped or failed courses, numbers of
- Chose easier courses/programs, how often
- What were your achievements, academic, social or artistic, in SHHS?
- What are the honors received?
- How many years were you in the Shaker Schools?
- How many years were you in lower-quality schools as compared to Shaker?
- What did you do in preparation for your academic success? Any kind of preparation, informal, non-formal, formal training or schooling?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT “BLACK-AMERICAN STUDENTS’ ENGAGEMENT AND SUCCESS IN SHAKER HEIGHTS”
Appendix B

Interview Questions of the Project “Black-American Students’ Engagement and Success in Shaker Heights”

Person(s) in Parental Role and Alumnus* Interview

A. List family members by approximate age/role, gender, mark present (P) or not (N) – (put details in notes)

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

B. Demographic Data (separate sheet)

1. How do you define success?
2. How important is education for today’s youth? (Both)
3. What is your experience moving from X to Shaker Heights? Please describe the reasons that motivate you to move to Shaker.
4a. What motivated or challenged you in school?
4b. What motivated or challenged your child in school?
5a. How did your parents convey the importance of education to you?
5b. How did you convey the importance of education to your son/daughter? How did your parents convey that to you?
6. Prior to entering school, how did you prepare your daughter/son for school entry? Prompt: reading time with son/daughter and availability of books?
7. What did you do to ensure your daughter’s/son’s academic success? [both] Prompt:
   a. School, community and home related activities, other resources?
   b. Preschool?
8. What are the expectations you had for your son/daughter in respect to education? Prompt:
   a. His/her involvement in extra-curricular activities?
   b. His/her behavior in school?
   c. After school and at home in respect to his/her education?
9. What are your perceptions of your role regarding your daughter’s/son’s education?
10a. How did your parents speak with you about college? What was your perception? (of that conversation about college)
10b. How did you speak with your son/daughter about college?
11a. How did you study? What was your study routine while in high school?
11b. How do you think your daughter/son studied? What was her/his study routine while in high school?
12a. How did your parents assist you in school-related activities, such as studying and homework?
12b. What was your perception of that?
13. How often did you read with your child or in front of your child? Prompt: books, magazines, newspapers
14a. What factors do you attribute to your success? Prompt:
   a. Individual
   b. Home
   c. Peer, community
   d. School factors
14b. What factors do you attribute to your son’s/daughter’s success? Prompt:
   a. Individual
   b. Home
   c. Peer, community
   d. School factors
15. What influenced your decision to put your daughter/son in the Shaker Schools?
16a. What hurdles or obstacles did you encounter and how did you navigate through them?
16b. What hurdles or obstacles did your family encounter in regard to schooling your child and how did you navigate through them?
17a. What are your perceptions of and your overall experiences with the faculty, staff, and administrators at Shaker Heights schools, particularly the high school?
17b. What are your perceptions of and your overall experiences with the faculty, staff, and administrators at Shaker Heights schools, particularly the high school?
18a. Describe your interactions with your teachers.
18b. Describe your interactions with your son’s/daughter’s teachers.
19. Could you talk about your understanding/views of the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites? [both]
   a. In terms of your daughter’s/son’s experience in Shaker Heights system
   b. In terms of how you feel the system has helped to reduce the gap
   c. In terms of how you feel the system has reinforced or increased the gap
20. Do you believe the education system is set up to continue the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites? Why?

21. What has been your experience of the various enrichment, remedial, and special education programs in the system?
   a. Specifically in terms of your son/daughter?
   b. Was your child tested and/or tracked as gifted or disabled?

22. In what ways did you use tutors, teachers, conferences, etc.?

23. If you reached a point when you felt you were unable to assist with homework, what did you do?

24a. How much time did you spend studying and doing homework when in high school?

24b. How much time did your daughter/son spend studying and doing homework when in high school?

25a. How much time did you spend watching television, listening to music, and playing interactive games when in high school?

25b. How much time did your son/daughter spend watching television, listening to music, and playing interactive games when in high school?

26a. How important was your social life in the educational process?

26b. How important was your daughter’s/son’s social life in the educational process?

27a. Were you part of a tight social group in high school and how important was that to your educational process?

27b. Was your son/daughter part of a tight social group in high school and how important was that to her/his educational process?

28a. With what kind of informal or formal group (socio-economics, interests, known groups, e.g., jocks) did you mostly associate with as friends? Prompt: socio-economics, interests, known groups, e.g., jocks

28b. With what kind of informal or formal groups did your daughter/son mostly associate with as friends? Prompt:
   a. Socio-economics
   b. Interests
   c. Known groups, e.g., jocks

29a. What kind of informal or formal groups did you study with a majority of the time?

29b. What kind of informal or formal groups did your son/daughter study with a majority of the time?

30a. How did you see yourself in terms of groups?

30b. How did your student see her/himself in terms of groups?

31a. How important was your sense of ethnic identity to your self-concept. Prompt: ranging from in-group identification to racelessness?

31b. How important was a sense of ethnic identity to your son’s/daughter’s self-concept? Prompt: ranging from in-group identification to racelessness?
32. Do you believe your daughter/son and your family experienced a value-difference with the mainstream at Shaker Heights High School? [both]
   a. If so, how did you respond to your child/you experiencing a value-difference with the mainstream at SHHS? [both] Prompt:
      i. Sought association and legitimacy elsewhere?
      ii. Was negatively impacted such as intimidated or rejected?
   b. If so, how do you remember that your family responded to your experiencing a value-difference with the mainstream at SHHS?
   c. If so or if your child/you did not experience a value-difference with the mainstream at SHHS, how important was that in the educational process? [both]
33. Can you name or describe some of the various values and ideals your family held [at the time]? [both if appropriate] Specifically:
   a. Who were the heroes you spoke of?
   b. Were religious values important and how so?
   c. What were some of the values your family held about family life?
   d. Can you compare your values to what you think are mainstream American values?
34a. How did your friendships and/or social interactions influence your schoolwork?
34b. How did your son’s/daughter’s friendships and/or social interactions/experiences influence his/her schoolwork?
35a. Do you think your teachers had high enough expectations?
35b. Do you think your daughter’s/son’s teachers had high enough expectations?
36a. What does it mean to be “authentically Black”? How has it impacted you?
36b. Was your son/daughter concerned about what it means to be “authentically Black”?
37a. How did other African American students see you, and how did that affect your participation in school?
37b. How do you think other African American students saw your daughter/son, and how did that affect her/his participation in school?
38a. How did you think White students saw you, and how did that affect your participation in school?
38b. How do you think White students saw your son/daughter, and how did that affect his/her participation in school?
39a. Do you feel the community played a role in your success? In what way?
39b. Do you feel the community played a role in your son’s/daughter’s success? In what way?
40. Did you have a sense of community while at Shaker Heights High? How do you describe that community?
41. Did you feel like you were part of the Shaker Heights community? How do you describe that community? [both]
42. Which aspect of school had the greatest influence on your daughter/son: academic or social? 
43. Do you think that teachers in the Shaker Schools, regardless of race, had lower expectations of Black students? [both] 
44. Do you feel comfortable/confident when you are in predominantly White environment (classroom or part of town)? [both] 
45. Do you feel comfortable/confident when you are in a predominantly Black environment (classroom or part of town)? [both] 
46. Are your expectations and parenting style the same as your parents (for parents and for child), or totally different? [both] 
47a. What did your parents do to show you they are proud of or disappointed in your school performance? 
47b. What did you do to show your son/daughter you are proud or disappointed in his/her school performance? 
48a. Was there ever a time you felt the school system was discouraging you from taking higher-level courses? 
48b. Do you feel there was a time when the school system discouraged your daughter/son from taking higher-level courses? 
49. What is your view of the distinction if any between middle class and working class? [both] 
Prompt: income vs. education 
50. What kind of impact do you think social class has on schooling in Shaker? [both] 
51a. Did you experience a “fear of living up to negative stereotypes of minority intellectual inferiority”? 
51b. Did your son/daughter exhibit to you or speak about a “fear of living up to negative stereotypes of “African American intellectual inferiority”? 
52a. Were you ever anxious about teacher perceptions? 
52b. Was your daughter/son anxious about teacher perceptions? 
53a. Did you view yourself and/or your friends as “not a good student”? Prompt: How did you feel about yourself in relation to that stereotype of “African American intellectual inferiority”? 
53b. Did your son/daughter view him/herself and/or friends as “not a good student”? Prompt: How did you feel about your child in relation to that stereotype of “African American intellectual inferiority”? 
54. If you could put into a couple of sentences your recommendations for academic success, what would they be? [both]
APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Appendix C

Follow-Up Interview Questions

The follow-up interview questions focus on students’ social-cultural transiting experience from lower socio-economic inner city areas to Shaker Heights. They address school experiences, challenges, and strategies to cope with challenges, as well as suggestions.

**School Experiences**
1. Which school(s) did you attend before you came to Shaker?
2. What was it like going to school there?
   (If student attended more than one school prior to attending Shaker Schools, the questions will focus on the one he or she graduated from)
3. What was it like going to school in Shaker?
   Probes:
   - What were the things you liked or disliked about the school (s) you attended before coming to Shaker? Why? (both alumni and parents)
   - What were things you liked or disliked about Shaker Schools that you have attended? Why? (both alumni and parents)
   - Were there any major concerns before you came to Shaker Schools that might have affect your learning? Explain?
   - Did you find your were prepared for transition to Shaker Schools? (alumni)
   - How you prepare your child for transitioning to Shaker Schools? (parents)
   - How did Shaker Schools prepare you for study and living in Shaker? Do you think it helped your transition?

**Challenges & Strategies to Cope with Challenges**
1. What were the challenges moving to Shaker Heights?
2. What strategies did you use to cope with the challenges?
   Probes:
   - What was the most difficult for you to move from your old neighborhood/community to Shaker Heights? (both alumni and parents)
   - What did your friends and family say about Shaker Heights and Shaker Schools? (alumni)
     What was your perception about Shaker Heights and Shaker Schools before your move? (both alumni and parents)
   - Describe the reaction of your friends after knowing you are moving to Shaker. (alumni)
   - What was your approach to Shaker Schools? (both alumni and parents)
• What do you believe in the transition process were the barriers for your achievement? (alumni)
• How “the barriers” were removed? Describe what you and your parents did. (alumni)

Suggestions

  Probes:
• How can students help themselves in a new socio-cultural environment? (alumni)
• What can school do to help transitioning students? (both alumni and parents)
• What advice might you offer to students and parents in similar situation? (both alumni and parents)
• What advice might you offer to teachers, principles, and administrators in fostering the achievement of transiting students? (both alumni and parents)
REFERENCES


environment fit on young adolescents' experiences in schools and in families.

*American Psychologist, 48*(2), 90.


