Selling Out or Fitting In: A Study of African-American Male Middle School Students Within an Urban School District.

Abstract

The current organization and practices of public institutions of learning are failing the African-American male student (Ascher, 1991; Fashola, 2005; Hale, 2001; Irvine, 1991; Lynch, 2006). Unfortunately, when these young men transition from elementary to middle school, a great number of them experience minuscule academic achievement and increased disciplinary issues. Moreover, they begin focusing their efforts on securing a sense of achievement and support from members of their peer group whose influences typically are contrary to academic success (Brown, 2005; Kunjufu, 1988; McWhorter, 2001). The primary purpose of this study is to determine how the perceptions of high-achieving African-American male middle school students and low-achieving African-American male middle school students differ relative to factors that influence their academic achievement. School-related factors that will be discussed within this study relative to African-American male students and their levels of academic achievement include teacher expectations, teacher quality, curriculum, pedagogy, teacher-student relations, availability of role models in the form of African-American male teachers, cultural synchronization, style of discourse, tracking practices, and disciplinary practices. Furthermore, the nonschool factors that will be discussed within this study relative to African-American male students and their levels of academic achievement include peer pressure, the “acting White” phenomenon, the “cool pose” phenomenon, hip-hop culture, parental support and involvement, and community support and involvement. The
aforementioned factors will be statistically examined and qualitatively analyzed within this study to ascertain differences in perceptions among the two groups of students.