



# African-American Teens Discuss Their Schooling Experiences

*Gail L. Thompson*

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For decades, researchers and policymakers have grappled with the issue of the underachievement of African American students. An age-old problem has been that these students on average lag behind their peers of other racial/ethnic groups in math, science, and reading. Recently, California, like some other states, has implemented a high-stakes standardized testing program that has revealed that when test scores are disaggregated along racial/ethnic lines, the scores of African American students continue to trail those of their peers.

The study described in this book was undertaken in an effort to uncover schooling practices that are advantageous or detrimental to the achievement of African American students. The study was based on interviews and questionnaire results from nearly 300 African American high school seniors. Most of these students resided in a region that had a low college attendance rate and a high child poverty rate. The students were given an opportunity to discuss numerous issues pertaining to their schooling experiences, including teacher attitudes and expectations, the curriculum, homework practices, the quality of services provided by their high school counselors, racism at school, school safety, parental involvement, and their early reading habits and attitudes about reading. In addition to quantitative results, most chapters include detailed narratives describing the elementary and secondary schooling experiences of the interviewees.

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