Complex, Positive Views of Race Help Black Students

By Alex P. Kellogg, BET.com Staff Writer

Posted June 12, 2003 -- Who do you think would do better in high school, the militant Black youth with a head full of conspiracy theories or the Black teenager who feels good doing well in school because it reflects positively on his community?

Perhaps not surprisingly, a study to be released in the December edition of the Social Psychology Quarterly found minority youth benefit significantly from having positive, complex beliefs about their ethnic identities. Meaning the militant who can't engage society won't do as well as the one who feels he's changing social attitudes about his race and performing well.

But some of the study's other findings might be more surprising. Led by Daphna Oyserman, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, the study examined how junior high and high school students' racial identities affected their performance in school. It looked at African-American, Latino, and Native American adolescents in the American Midwest, as well as Arab students in Israel.

What it found is that minority youth, and African American youth in particular, did a lot better if they had what researchers categorized as two quite distinct attitudes toward race. One group could be called the upbeat Black kids. They had an optimistic, assimilationist attitude, while the second group had a skeptical view of America at large but a positive attitude toward the Black community and their place in it. Upbeat Black students had a positive view of both their place in the Black community and society as a whole. Skeptical Black kids were wary of racism, but still felt like they should step outside the Black community.

That meant that:

- the Black kid who felt good about being Black and about being an American did well in school.
- the Black kid who felt good about doing well in school because it reflected positively on the Black community excelled, even if he viewed society as a whole as somewhat racist and against him.

These two types of students performed equally well in science but their counterparts didn't. They fell in two categories: militant Black kids and, perhaps surprisingly, the Black kids didn't think that racial identities are all that important (the kids gave answers like "we're all the same" or "we're all human."). The later group of students were often very
alienated and rejected the idea that getting A's was a gc thing.

That meant that, for example:

- the militant Black kid who hated "Whitey" but still his Black brothers and sisters, did significantly wc students who engaged society at large even if the wary of racial prejudice.
- the kid who said, "everyone is the same and it do matter whose Black or White" couldn't cope with 1. Such students, Oyserman told The Chronicle of Hi Education, can't easily deal "with prejudice or bu themselves from stereotyping. So it rattles them time they encounter it."

The study is the first of its kind to point out that student attitudes toward society as a whole may play a large part their academic performance. Previous studies have show African American youth who report caring a lot about the education can maintain a very positive attitude about themselves even as their grades suffer.

Oyserman says she hopes her work will show educators important it is for Black and other minority youth to feel about being Black and not too radical. She's now focusing intervention programs that help African American studen Detroit have a positive attitude about themselves and the racial identity, and says those programs have helped both students grades.

What do you think about these conclusions? Are y surprised that the militant Black student who refuse give up his conspiracy theories and hates "The Man" badly in school? Or does it seem like scientific evi of the obvious? What about the positive results? w surprised that kids who feel that doing well in school part of being Black do better than kids who don't s identify as Black? Tell us what your experience has by clicking Discuss Now.

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MESSAGE BOARDS

What do you think about this study? Are you surprised by the results or do they seem like scient evidence of the obvious?

Be Proud not Ignorant...  Jun 13 2003 10:23:34AM
posted by: cano17

Look I am very proud of being Puerto Rican and I love to help my people and am very proud whe I see a F Rican succeed but, I do not hate other races nor do I try to keep away from other races I love to have frie from other races and do not mind having a relationship with another race right now my last girl friend was america calls African American and I am looking for another beautiful dark skin woman for a serious relat that is why I say it is ok to be proud but do not be ignorant by hating somene fo rbein ga different race c ok One Love Rodney Marquis Serrano... aka Cano17

corrections  Jun 13 2003 10:26:33AM
posted by: cano17

when I wrote my comment s I hit the space bar ahead of time for example When I wanted to say for hatin someone for being a different race it came out like that hating soemone fo rbein ga different race I apolog
that ok

**Being Aware**  Jun 13 2003 12:18:03PM  
posted by: elizey66

Being aware of who you are and where you came from and embracing everything that surrounds that give the initial advantage to get off of Hate Avenue. Once you thereafter, begin to pursue success for the benel others, your motives line up with God and you end up on Success Boulevard.

It is hard to be militant and not hate. A quote from the late slain civil rights leader, Megar Evers: "When y people, some of them don't know and the others don't care". It appears that you are the one that is left w the negative energy.

We must stay encouraged and continue to pass positive knowledge down to our people no matter what ob we encounter along the way.

**Who gives the grades**  Jun 13 2003 08:40:59PM  
posted by: seekspeakthattruth

I do not think there is any "scientific evidence" as to why the "militant" black students do worse. I do belie attitude reflects in work. But, their performance may deal more with the fact that they refuse to assimilate the consequences are lesser marks. Lesser marks, not because they're smart, but because no one (namel teachers) understand them.

**corrections and additions**  Jun 13 2003 08:44:33PM  
posted by: seekspeakthattruth

I meant to say, "because they're not smart." And, you can be militant and not hate. Militant has such a ne connotation, but it is just very principled, very strong beliefs. Just because you're PRO does not automatic make you ANTI- though it often happens like that.

**Self esteem and education**  Jun 13 2003 11:20:00PM  
posted by: Naynay55

The evidence is quite obvious. I teach in Title I inner city public school district in the Houston area. The demographics of the district are 54% Hispanic, 38% African American and 8% Anglo. Almost every day I f downs mainly amongst African American students. I do not hear that from the white or Hispanic students. not saying that these groups do not put each other down but not to the extent that the African American s do. The put downs from the African- American students often refer to clothes, "nappy" hair or skin color. An African American teacher and parent, it breaks my heart to hear children putting each other down. Actuall are practicing self hatred. African-American students get an 'A' in that area. I try to be as positive as poss exposing all of my student to positive remarks. I purposely show pictures of dark skinned people with ?? b black-brown coffee colored skin?? and tell them that all hair is 'good' hair. I put an immediate end to the downs, but the hatred continues. I have seen that inferiority complex acted out in all of my 11 years of te believe that part of the reason our children may not reach their potential in school is due to low self-esteem know as a teacher my influence is felt but positive self-esteem begins at home but unfortunately that self- is also practiced by African- American adults, sometimes without them even realizing what they or doing c they are impacting their children. African Americans are bombarded with subtle reminders of how racist th country still is through the media and through daily contact within that Eurocentric society.

**Color**  Jun 14 2003 12:29:11AM  
posted by: cherrykakes24

Color is still a big issue today, but we tend to ignore. Eventhough today millions of afro-americans do extn well we still criticize. When a black person is broke they are considered "REAL". When a black person is we they are considered A "SELL OUT". E

**Realize**  Jun 14 2003 12:42:50AM  
posted by: cherrykakes24

Realize that the more a person reads learns, and research a topic it becomes more important to them. Wh black person learns more about the things their ancestors have been through, the more things they start t about the people who were in charge at that period in time. Some of us(Afro-Americans) can't control sor when we learn more about it and that usually turns into hate which is the wrong way to go. Afro-American just don't have the support from family like they should to make grades and go far in life; were getting th not quite there yet.

**Minority Power**  Jun 14 2003 11:56:46AM  
posted by: bajachica

As a black student in a predominantly white high school, sometimes I feel like I have to prove myself. I st make good grades, because when you are in an honor class and you you might make a bad grade, the ex would be because you are a black student. I feel that a person should be proud of their race in everything just like in ones religion. Also you are making a difference even though it might not feel like a big one. So just don't feel race is important because of where and who you are growing up around. But it is important shouldn't be forgotten. I know some "militants" who do really well so it's not really what your classified as, think it is your family background. If all you live for is to get on top, so you can look better than everyone you won't get far. But if you strive to succeed to make it better on yourself, that is what will take you far.

**Certain blacks represent the whole black communiy**  Jun 14 2003 03:19:43PM  
posted by: impactplayer419

I think I would have to be in the category of "the Black kid who felt good about doing well in school becau reflected positively on the Black community, excelled, even if he viewed society as a whole as somewhat r and against him."

I think it is very important to represent our community in the highest manner. I all to often am the only bl
the particular University I go to. And unfortunately I have to represent to whole black race on some occasion

I am also a strong believer in W.E.B Dubios talented tenth. 10% of black people will be crafty enough to march into high positions and its up to them to determine the fate of the other 90% of the black population. So I think it's essential that we be competent and able to do our occupations with the upmost ability.

i agree with the article  Jun 14 2003 10:44:46PM
posted by: whatup2003
Well i'm not sure how to address my answer but, when I was in high school alot of my black peers used ( t blackness as an excuse to misbehave ex. Say u have a group of black students cutting up in class and the was white, when the teacher got on to the students was cutting up more then likely they would always an excuse like ( oh they just got on to me cause my azz black they don't say nothing to them white folks o ) And from my experience the students that surrounded themselves with theories on how the white folks t keep a brothas down did poorer then the black students who only wanted to learn and better themselves of worrying about white folks and conspiracies etc so in a way i guess i agree with the article. Im not down forgetting where i came from or anything but i think we as black people need to focuss more on bettering ourselves then pondering on theories and conspiracies.

Being Black does not mean that one is ignorant...........  Jun 15 2003 09:59:54AM
posted by: kalanchoe
Black parents who nuture, spend quality time, make their children a priority, educate their children about culture, community responsibilities, self-respect, self-worth, encourage and expose their children properly, produce healthy educated children.

That is an ongoing prepearedness for the real world. Black children have to given the strength, through the and even in the Church, for the pit-falls of racism and be encouraged to rise above it.

That does not mean that racism still does not exist. It certainly does, especially when a young black person comes out into the real world and realize that they have stepped into a totally different world where the affirmative action is also within the White structure.

One love,
Kalanchoe

"Education, the Key to Prosperity."  Jun 15 2003 03:37:39PM
posted by: jvb123
When are, we, as a people, going to start working with our youth to eliminate the lies that are fed to them media that prevent them from achieving to their fullest potential? When are we, going to stand up and figl idea, pervasive in our youth, that if you are excelling in school, in advanced classes and dominating (acad you classmatess, you are ?acting white?: That idea is absurd! Throughout history, we have pushed educatic it was forbidden upon pain of death! Even during Jim Crow, we created over 150 colleges to serves our chi when the mainstream ones refused to let us in. When mainstream businesses refused our money, we becc entrepreneurs and set up thriving districts such as Little Hayti in Durham, North Carolina and Black Wall S Tulsa, Oklahoma. That all happened, because we educated ourselves, either formally or informally! Now, people fought to open doors to the mainstream of American intellectual life, a chief come in the night to st victory and perseverance from our kids; the idea that academic excellence is ?acting white?, our ridicule o brothers and sisters who strive for educational and professional excellence. As they go forward in their acc accomplishments, we have Black idiots taunting them with the label ?acting white.? Do not confuse professionalism or academic excellence with ?acting white.? One has nothing in the world to do with the ol fact, those Black folks who do not encourage nor support their fellow Black students or Black businesses a actually the ones ?acting white.? They also act white when they do not sound their objections or defend a other races that denigrate their Black brothers and sisters, or when they mistreat their own Black people v same lines, injustice and incorrectness as white supremacist do. Those who are accusing other of ?Acting w are simply being niggerish, or, put a better way ?stupid?, themselves! I issue a challenge to everyone! Ch state?5, your individual district5, your child5 school5 status on proficiency tests. You will see a great ga performance of black and white students. Check the ACT, SAT, AP, and other tests. With affirmative actio to go off into history and the standards rising, we must reaffirm our intellectual tradition. Start reading (newspaper, books, magazines, etc., use the public library, etc.). As a special treat, give your kids gifts ce for bookstores. Take your children to museums, galleries, parks, etc. We must challenge the idea promulg through BET and throughout history that all we do is play sports and rap!! That will prove we do not need affirmative action to succeed as well as make the proficiency test as nonexistent. View my sites at: http://www.geocities.com/jvbook, http://groups.msn.com/BlackIntelligence or http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Afro-American_Intell ectual_Association/, . Or, you can email me at Jeffrey_V_Brown@hotmail.com.

"Education, the Key to Prosperity."  Jun 15 2003 03:39:13PM
posted by: jvb123
When are, we, as a people, going to start working with our youth to eliminate the lies that are fed to their media that prevent them from achieving to their fullest potential? When are we, going to stand up and figl idea, pervasive in our youth, that if you are excelling in school, in advanced classes and dominating (acad you classmatess, you are ?acting white?: That idea is absurd! Throughout history, we have pushed educatic it was forbidden upon pain of death! Even during Jim Crow, we created over 150 colleges to serves our chi when the mainstream ones refused to let us in. When mainstream businesses refused our money, we becc entrepreneurs and set up thriving districts such as Little Hayti in Durham, North Carolina and Black Wall S Tulsa, Oklahoma. That all happened, because we educated ourselves, either formally or informally!!
Now, after our people fought to open doors to the mainstream of American intellectual life, a thief come in night to steal the victory and perseverance from our kids; the idea that academic excellence is action whirling of our brothers and sisters who strive for educational and professional excellence. As they go forw. their academic accomplishments, we have Black idiots taunting them with the label ?acting white.? Do not professionalism or academic excellence with ?acting white.? One has nothing in the world to do with the of fact, those Black folks who do not encourage nor support their fellow Black students or Black businesses a actually the ones ?acting white.? They also act white when they do not sound their objections or defend ä other races that denigrate their Black brothers and sisters, or when they mistreat their own Black people v same lies, injustice and incorrectness as white supremacist do. Those who are accusing other of ?Acting w are simply being niggerish, or, put a better way ?stupid?, themselves!

I issue a challenge to everyone! Check you state?s, your individual district?s, your child?s school?s status proficiency tests. You will see a great gap in the performance of black and white students. Check the ACT, AP, and other tests. With affirmative action about to go off into history and the standards rising, we must our intellectual tradition. Start reading (newspaper, books, magazines, etc., use the public library, etc.). A special treat, give your kids gifts certificates for bookstores. Take your children to museums, galleries, par We must challenge the idea promulgated through BET and throughout history that all we do is play sports rap!! That will prove we do not need affirmative action to succeed as well as make the proficiency test gap nonexistent.


**Educate Instead of Encouraging Ignorance!** Jun 15 2003 05:42:16PM posted by: misstammym80
I fully agree with that article! It is important that we educate our children about their racial past but we as do not need to constantly talk negatively about other races, particular "whites", just to stress Blacks' str the past. It only burdens children with issues that they can not resolve. That in turn leaves kids feeling h angry, and always suspecting to be discriminated against!

**To :jvb123** Jun 15 2003 05:44:12PM posted by: misstammym80
AMEN!

**A difference of opinion** Jun 15 2003 10:11:13PM posted by: Goddessoftheuniverse
I guess I would be considered the "militant" black student in that particular case. I would have to disagree the study and point out that there are other reasons why those children might not do well in school. The b issue is that the so-called "militant" students are conscious and culturally aware students. In being cultura aware you are going to have a different opinion from those who are seeking to play it safe and want to co1 everyone equal. Meaning those students who have a different and/or challenging opinion will oft times clas the teacher who is teaching His-Story and a number of other subjective subjects. These clashes also affect attitude of the teacher toward the student, thus affecting their grade.

Now I will agree that every child must learn people skills and how to survive living in a culturally diverse cmy. However I don?t feel that it should be at the expense of blacks having to blend in and act as if th problems of the past and present is just water under the bridge.

**I agree with the article in part** Jun 16 2003 01:15:32AM posted by: CrackersGoldilock
I really agree with the article. Before I commence, let me just call on the hypocrisy of the comments mad Cano17. He said he is proud of his race and with a concluding remark that he is looking forward for another relationship with an african american. If I may ask what makes him a Puerto Rican? Is it because his pare of different races or because they are of the same race? If that person thinks he loves his race, then he w ensure that his race is preserved. Your race cannot be preserved by interracial marriage ok!

Back on the subject. I'm glad to see that study is now vindicating the struggles of your parents who toiled night under slavery. They were proud of their heritage and avoided interracial marriage. While those on the extreme fail to do better is not far fetched. Too much of everything is bad so goes the But one thing I know about conducting a survey is that a 1% flaw in the outcome rubbish the whole find essence what I'm saying is that all the three groups the study fall into have their flaws. What is missing fro study is that individual performance were not considered. If some of those on the extreme performs bette those in the other groups then the objective of the study is defeated. However the report or finding excelled in its concluding remarks. It's time to teach african children to be p who and what they are. While they should be taught to have a positive outlook of the society they live in, should be a limit. The children should be taught to be proud of their identity. They should not follow those bandwagons of africa american achievers who continue to belittle their race. One's race is a lasing thing. P come and go but the race still remains.

Parents of African American please endeavour to teach your children their heritage. Teach them to pro themselves and to have a positive look of the society they live in. It's good having friends cut across the d races but let your borderline should be interracial relationship. 'Africans keep you culture and don't be afr world order'.

**Teaching the Youth** Jun 16 2003 03:14:55PM posted by: bdg2090
I'm not suprised by the findings. I think it is very important that black parents(especially black men) like r teach our children at home. The one topic that I say we should teach our kids is History. I remember grow
in Kansas and the only time the teacher talked about blacks was during Black History Month and the only
covered were about slavery and Martin Luther King. The school system both consciously and subconsciously
teaches our kids they are no more than slaves that were brought to the Western Hemisphere and that Abe
was 1/4 black and he freed slaves because he felt slavery was wrong. Now imagine being a black child anr
all you hear throughout your whole schooling...Pretty soon you will buy into the propaganda that the school
system pushes on our kids. Don't leave the teaching of our future just to teachers, it isn't fair to our future
generations.

**Not surprised at all**  Jun 16 2003 04:56:35PM

*posted by: forensicfox*

I'm not surprised by the results because if you think about it, it makes perfect sense: the militant student
hates "Whitey" will reject everything put forth by "The Man" and the system. That means not only missing
the bad things, but all of the aspects of education. They see no need to succeed in that world and refuse to
assimilate because it may be seen as "selling out," so they go in the opposite direction. What they don't re-
that their militancy may be keeping them from absorbing what is good and they only hurt themselves. As
those who believe we are all the same and that color doesn't matter, it makes sense that an incident where
made an issue would rattle them; they're not used to it, so they may be distracted by it and thrown off co
see the student with elements of both: aware of racism, but not distracted by it, as the most successful. N
sense to me.

**I agree with article**  Jun 16 2003 11:20:50PM

*posted by: darrius3365*

I am a 19 year old black male college student. I have always believed that blacks who blame all of their pr
on the "white man" where only hurting themselves, and that article and the study itself will help me treme
in future debates that I have with others.

I know that racism exists, and I know that I am a victim of profiling and stuff, but I cannot let those thing-
the injustices of the past prevent me from doing what I have to do to have a decent life. When someone s
and blames all of their problems on someone else (and that applies to so many things other than race as w
doesn't give them any accountability for their actions. The "white man" might have introduced drugs into t
community, but that doesn't give me an excuse to use them. There could have been an AIDS conspiracy, I
not being forced to have sex (or in the case of the sexually active, unprotected sex).

Yes, it is important to be aware of the past. But that cannot be used as an excuse for you to live inappropri
The whole conspiracy theory complex just causes people to live a life full of fear and insecurities, which on
them.

**Another Post**  Jun 16 2003 11:30:12PM

*posted by: darrius3365*

Hey. It's me again. That is something that I have been thinking about lately.

Blacks in the slave days were not allowed to receive formal education. That was to prevent them from bei
functional members of society. (Notice that most of the old civil rights leaders where highly educated: Do!
Martin L. King, Tuskegee, Booker T. Washington, etc.)

For the blacks that think that it isn't cool to do well in school (and I got made fun of my some of them), th
only fulfilling the white racists' desires.