Trade School or Menial Jobs: The Messages African American and Latino Boys are receiving about their Futures

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RESEARCH QUESTION

What types of messages are African American and Latino boys receiving in school about their futures?
Percentage of public school students in kindergarten through 12th grade who were suspended, by race/ethnicity and sex: 2000

Prior research has confirmed the common perception that students who have been suspended from school are at higher risk for other poor school outcomes, including dropping out of school (Wehlage et al. 1989).
Background & Significance

- In 2004 35.7% African American and 41.4% Latino men were enrolled in an undergraduate institution compared to 44.1% of white men.*

- In 2006 there were 3,042 black male sentenced to prison inmates per 100,000 black males in the United States, compared to 1,261 Hispanic male inmates per 100,000 Hispanic males and 487 white male inmates per 100,000 white males.*

*http://www.ojp.gov/bjs/prisons.htm

Background and Significance (cont’d)

- Stereotype Threat (Steel, 1986)
- “Cool Pose” Theory (Majors and Billson, 1992).
- Negative dual frame of reference (Ogbu, 1986)
Literature Review


- Ferguson, Ann Arnett (2000) *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*

- Bourgois, Philippe (2002), Chapter 5, *School Days: Learning to be a Better Criminal In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*
Methodology

- Participant Observation in 3 classrooms with extensive field notes
- Tape recorded in-depth interviews
Hood Academy

Transitional school for students that have been expelled or suspended multiple times from district schools.

“The mission of Hood Academy is to develop in each student the necessary skills to succeed in district school, the larger community and society. Hood Academy provides a therapeutic approach within a safe environment with mutual respect, and family support, with consistent, individualized programming to meet the behavioral, academic, social and life skill needs of each student.”
I argue that these students are receiving messages about their futures that will lead them to work menial jobs rather than attend college. In addition, the interviews reveal that they are aware of the educational inequalities present at their school.
Findings

Student 4: “Umm no, I’m thinking about trade school.”

Student 6: “Naw, hell no”

Student 7-: “No that’s more school.”

Student 8: “Yeah” [I asked, where do you want to go?] “I don’t know mechanic.” [I asked so trade school?] Student answered “yeah”
Finding (cont’d)

Student 2: “Naw they don’t teach, its aight but the work is easy over here. Its not on my grade level, I’m ahead of everybody.”

Student 6: “Cause it’s different you aint getting the same type of work as other high schools are getting” [I asked yeah, different like?] “They get more education, a lot more.”

Student 8: “Yeah a lil bit” [I asked Why, why only a lil bit?] “Cause they don’t really teach us things that they’re suppose to teach us right now.”
Conclusion

- Male students of color in this transitional school are receiving messages that trade school or menial labor are their only options for their future.

- These students are receiving an unequal education compared to their peers and they are well aware of it.