

ELLINGTON, TAMEKA NICOLE, Ph.D., August 2011 TEACHING, LEADERSHIP,
AND CURRICULUM STUDIES

DRESS AND SELF-EFFICACY AS THEY RELATE TO THE ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT AND FUTURE GOALS OF INNER-CITY, AFRICAN AMERICAN
HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS (295 pp.)

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the association between dress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement for inner-city, African American high school girls. Three research questions informed this study: (1) How do inner-city, African American adolescent females obtain their level of self-efficacy? To what extent, if at all, does their self-efficacy level relate to their way of dress, academic achievement, and future goals? (2) To what extent, if at all, do inner-city, African American adolescent females think that their way of dress relates to the way that peers, the community, the society, and their teachers perceive them? (3) To what extent, if at all, does being a member in the Upward Bound Program relate to the participants' self-efficacy level, way of dress, current academics, and future goals?

The sample involved seven focus group participants; three of which were chosen for further study and analysis in multiple-case study research. The data collection process consisted of a triangulation approach including: (a) the *Dress, Self-Efficacy, and Academic Achievement* (DSA) questionnaire; (b) focus groups; and (c) a multiple-case study with in-depth individual interviews.

The analysis of the data revealed that all multiple-case study participants demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy regarding their academic endeavors. One

participant appeared to have the highest level of self-efficacy because she was physically working toward her goal. Level of support systems was a main factor in acquiring self-efficacy. Two of the three participants reported that dressing in a “professional” manner made them feel more important; therefore their way of dress enhanced their self-efficacy levels. “Comfortable” dress also raised the self-efficacy levels; it made the participants feel more capable of doing school work. All participants felt that their family approved of their way of dress; however, they felt that society—teachers and peers included—misjudged them and assumed that inner-city, African American girls dress provocatively like the girls seen on music videos. Additionally, the data revealed that the Upward Bound (UB) program—a form of support for many—raised two of the three participants’ levels of self-efficacy regarding going to college.