

Black Students and Higher Education: Dropping Out Of Community College

Michael Peters,

Graduate Department of Education

University of Toronto

A considerable body of research has been devoted to finding out why students drop out of college and how they can be prevented from doing so. This study explores the reasons why Black students in Toronto drop out of college. The major objectives of this study were to isolate and identify factors related to drop out behavior, to examine the perception that Black students have about dropping out and to develop some preliminary ideas regarding what can be done to minimize attrition behavior, especially among Black students.

The study utilizes an anti-racist education framework that focuses on the lived experiences of minorities in terms of racism and social oppression. Seventeen Black youth volunteered to participate in the study. Using semi-structured interviews, information was elicited that provides insights into how schooling and education function to disengage some students. Findings reveal that many factors impact the decision to drop out. These factors include finances, socio-economic status, parental

involvement, race, teaching, learning, academic preparedness, and administration of education. The students' narratives are presented providing valuable insights into the thinking of those who drop out.

Given the extent of this phenomenon, the drop out problem represents a major failure of the higher educational system, affecting not just the individual or the Black community in particular but the society at large and indeed the country as a whole. Dropping out represents a major loss of financial and personal investment of time and resources for Black students. Also included are recommendations for drop out prevention.

