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## Racial Disparities Clearly Illustrated In Youth Survey

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CHICAGO - Decades after the civil rights movement, black youth often see a world rife with discrimination, a new survey says. Yet they remain optimistic about their chances for affecting social change.

Researchers at the University of Chicago, who were releasing the study today, say their findings also show these youth are complex when it comes to such issues as sex education and hip-hop music.

Cathy Cohen, a political science professor at the University of Chicago and the report's lead author, said the aim of the survey was to provide data that go beyond stereotypes.

It found, for instance, that although 58 percent of black youth say they listen to rap music, the majority of them also think its videos are too violent and often portray black women in an offensive way.

"I enjoy rap music - I love hip-hop," says Lauren Guy, a 24-year-old substitute teacher from Oak Park, Ill., who participated in the survey. "What I don't like is how women are degraded in music and how violence is glorified."

The survey, which researchers call the Black Youth Project, details the responses of nearly 1,600 black, Latino and white participants, ages 15 to 25, from Midwestern cities.

More than half of black and Latino respondents said they think government officials care little about them, and 44 percent of white youth said the same. A little more than half of black youth also were the most likely to feel their education was, on average, poorer than that of white youth. About a third of whites agreed. Sixty-one percent of blacks surveyed said they feel held back by discrimination.

"It's a red flag, prompting us to talk about what needs to happen in this country to bring about true equality for young people in general - and especially vulnerable young people," Cohen said.

Although they see many social problems in the world, the survey indicated teens and young adults are optimistic about their chances of changing things for the better.

A majority of youth in the survey said, for instance, that they can make a difference by participating in politics - with 79 percent black and white youth and 77 percent of Latino youth saying they feel that way.

They're also using their spending power through "buycotts" - buying products because they like a company's social or political values. A quarter of black youth said they'd participated in a boycott within the past 12 months, and 23 percent of white youth and 20 percent of Hispanic youth said the same. Cohen said several of the respondents mentioned the Motorola (RED) campaign, aimed at helping fund the fight against AIDS in Africa.

Other survey findings included the following:

- About a third of black and Hispanic youth thought drugs, violence, gangs and crime were problems in their neighborhoods, compared with 10 percent of white youth;
- Fifty-nine percent of white youths report receiving care from a private doctor, but 40 percent of black youth and 39 percent of Hispanic youth say the same;
- Eighty-one percent of white youth, 79 percent of Hispanic youth and 76 percent of black youth disagree with the government funding abstinence-only education;
- Seventy-six percent of black youth, 74 percent of Hispanics and 68 percent of whites said condoms should be provided at high schools.

The study is unusual in that it spotlights a group often overlooked by social scientists.

"We sometimes get a little statistic here and there as a footnote to someone else's research," says Bakari Kitwana, the Cleveland-based author of "The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture."

"This is a study that puts young black kids at the forefront."

Initial interviews for the survey were completed in 2005, with in-depth interviews carried out in 2006. Youth interviewed were from Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Louis and Gary, Ind.

The survey, which was funded by the Ford Foundation, has a margin of error of less than plus-or-minus 2 percentage points.