ROLE MODELS AND RACIAL IDENTITY FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AT

HISTORICALLY BLACK AND PREDOMINANTLY WHITE COLLEGES AND

UNIVERSITIES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

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Abstract

Researchers suggest that positive role models are difficult for African Americans to attain and argue that racially-matched role models are the most beneficial for African Americans. When individuals can identify role models, both research and theory suggest that they tend to identify those who are racially-similar. The self-defining comparisons hypothesis under social comparison theory further suggests that this occurs because individuals have identified an element of comparison that is central to their self-definition, which in this case is race. However, role model research has not integrated the role of racial centrality in the discussion of racial-matching in role model selection.

The purpose of the current study was to investigate role model selection and racial identity for African American male college students attending historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). One-hundred and four African American male college students attending HBCUs (n = 16), PWIs (n = 82), and ethnically-mixed universities (n = 6) completed a demographic questionnaire, a role model measure, and a racial identity measure. Data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively and findings revealed that 82% of participants identified role models with 92% identifying racially-similar role models. These role models tended to be male (81.2%), educated at or above the Bachelor's level (62.4%), and personally known by the participant (84.7%) with the most commonly occurring relationships being parents (37.6%), peers/friends (23.5%), and clergy (18.8%).

Data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively and findings revealed that 82% of participants identified role models with 92% identifying racially-similar role models. Qualitative analysis using open and axial coding methods yielded 11 themes that

allowed for a closer look into the characteristics African American male college students identified as important in role models: Personality Attributes, Community, Success, Spirituality, Providing Inspiration or Challenge, Mentorship, Education, Family, Emotional Support, Shared Career Interest, and Proximity. Findings revealed research and applied implications. Additional research is needed to reconcile the gaps that remain in understanding the relationship between racial identity and role model selection. Findings also shed light on the need to place more research attention on African American males who are without role models. Implications for research also emerged for other ethnic groups and age groups on the topics of role model selection and racially-matched role models. Applied implications emerged for community leaders, parents, and Black university officials who all appeared to have a significant influence on the individuals in the current sample. Equally important, the findings suggest implications for African American males who are not yet attending college since most of the participants in the current study knew their role models prior to college.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The current predicament of the African American male has been described as a state of crisis (Reglin, 1994). Given social and economic factors such as limited access to public and institutional resources and often invisible forces such as racism and discrimination (Pierre & Mahalik, 2005), African Americans as a historically oppressed group face unique challenges. The plot thickens when taking into special consideration African American males who have been considered one of the most stigmatized sub-populations in the United States (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010). Much of the present research available on African American males paints a disheartening portrait of their plight. Research has focused on and produced findings surrounding issues of academic underachievement, father absence, juvenile delinquency, behavior problems, the ill effects of racism, aggression, limited career aspirations, inadequate or unavailable role models, and multiple other debilitating conditions experienced by African American males (Assibey-Mensah,1997; Bynum, Best, Barnes, & Burton, 2008; Hays & Mindel, 1973; Rubin & Billingsley, 1994; White & Rayle, 2007).

Because of the great amount of attention given to the negative aspects of the African American male experience, there has been a call for researchers to focus on positive outcomes for this population (Assibey- Mensah, 1997). Thus, some researchers

have shifted attention to the factors that may strengthen the potential for positive outcomes for this population, with one such body of research centering on role models in the lives of African American males. The presence of role models (distinguished from mentors) for African American males has the potential to positively influence their life experience, especially since and research shows that role model identification proves to be impactful in influencing wellbeing (Assibey-Mensah, 1997).

African American Males and Role Models

African Americans in general have been found to be less likely to identify a role model than Caucasian Americans (Taylor, 1989; Yancey, Siegel, & McDaniel, 2002). When they do identify role models, African Americans are more likely than Caucasian Americans to identify public media figures such as entertainers, political figures, religious figures, or professional athletes as their models (Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Thompson & Lewis, 2005; Yancey et al., 2002). However, the high successes attained by such accomplished models, unfortunately, may cause emulators to feel demoralized at their own inability to attain the same successes (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). On the other hand, role models who are personally known by the emulator offer a more realistic option for success and may better serve in a capacity to inspire hope (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). The presence of these types of role models for African American males has been found to produce positive psychosocial outcomes and to minimize the likelihood of involvement in delinquent behaviors (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009).

When a role model can be identified other important issues arise, such as the direction and strength of the influence exerted by the role model. For instance, some role models are considered more influential than others, but unfortunately that influence is not

necessarily positive. Thus, when role models are present, a discussion about role model characteristics that prove to be most influential for African American males becomes relevant. Some research supports the idea that African American males can benefit most from role models who are also African American and male (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Reglin, 1994; Taylor, 1989; Zirkel, 2002). The strength of African American males as role models is that their very presence has the tendency to produce hopefulness and sends positive messages to other African American males about their future possibilities and what they can aspire to become (Zirkel, 2002). Thus, even without interaction, African American male role models are still helpful for the success and well-being of other African American males (Thompson & Lewis, 2005).

A vast array of characteristics describes the role models of African American males. These role models include parental and non-parental adults, siblings, immediate and extended family, peers, males and females, African Americans, non-African Americans, teachers and other academic advisors, public figures, media personalities, and historical figures as well (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Hamann & Walker, 1993; Hays & Mindel, 1973; Hurd et al., 2009; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Shade, 1983; Shreffler, 1998; Taylor, 1989; Yancey et al., 2002). Thus, there is evidence that role model characteristics vary greatly and that characteristics other than race are beneficial in fostering success or positive outcomes for African Americans. It seems likely, though, that the race of the model is one of the most significant characteristics (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009). The significance of racial similarity in role model identification evolves from the strong theoretical foundations of social comparison

theory, and a concerted investigation of the prevalence of racial match in role model identification provides an opportunity to support or refute theory.

Social Comparison Theory

The underlying idea of role model relationships is that there exists a tendency for one person to identify to some extent with another individual and to work to imitate certain aspects of this person (Bell, 1970). Relevant to Bandura's (1969) notion of modeling as a form of learning, a role model serves the socializing function of providing an example of how to achieve a specific outcome (e.g., role, state, trait, etc.). Furthermore, role models have been commonly described as any person to which one claims similarity, aspires to imitate, or to which one assimilates (Bell, 1970). Conceptualized in a simpler form, role modeling is a form of social comparison. Underlying social comparison theory is the idea that individuals compare their selves by drawing an analogy between themselves and another or by mapping themselves onto another (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Furthermore, individuals are more likely to draw such an analogy when the self and the other resemble each other to some extent (Lockwood & Kunda) or when the situation of the other is perceived as relevant to one's own situation (Buunk, Peiró, & Griffioen, 2007).

According to Festinger (1954), people are less likely to compare themselves with another if differences between the two are too abundant. Therefore, the theory of social comparison exerts that people are more likely to compare themselves when they perceive similarity (Lockwood & Kunda; Wood, 1989). When applying this concept to the empirical evidence that African Americans tend to identify and/or prefer other African Americans as role models (Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer, 2005;

White & Rayle, 2007; Yancey et al., 2002), it appears that theory and research align.

Whether or not African Americans are able to *attain* racially similar role models, there is

still support that African Americans *prefer* racially similar role models (Hamann &

Walker, 1993; Parasnis et al., 2005; Somers & Piliawsky, 2004; Yancey et al., 2002).

Still, the primary assertion of social comparison theory that individuals will compare

themselves to similar others does not consider a construct that is extremely relevant for

racial minorities, and that is racial identity.

Racial Identity

Along with role models, racial identity has been identified as a variable on which

African Americans consistently differ from Caucasian Americans (Harper, 2007). This is

likely because racial identity development for members of minority groups is a different

process than that of Caucasians. Unlike majority group members, racial minorities must

construct an identity that incorporates not only individual factors but also group factors

from the ethnic or racial groups to which they belong (Harper, 2007). Furthermore, the

successful development of racial identity for African Americans has been consistently

and strongly correlated with positive outcomes (Cokley, 2005; Harper, 2007; Harper &

Quaye, 2007). For African American males, in particular, racial identity development is

especially predictive of psychological wellbeing (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010). Thus, in role

model selection for African Americans, race may be a variable of particular relevance (as

would be supported by social comparison theory). The extent to which individuals

perceive their race as significant and the extent to which they perceive themselves as

belonging to their racial group may dictate who they decide to compare themselves to.

The assertion that African Americans will want to positively compare themselves to other

African Americans assumes that these individuals have a positive perception of their race—a positive racial identity. Furthermore, the research that declares such a preference exists for racially-similar role models has not investigated racial identity as a relevant variable. For this reason, the current study will consider the role of racial identity, particularly as theorized by *psychological nigrescence*, in relation to role model identification.

Psychological Nigrescence

William Cross's model of psychological nigrescence was originally proposed in 1970, but has since been revised. The expanded nigrescence theory (NT-E) evolved from a developmental-stage theory to one that focuses on racial attitudes (Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2006). The Pre-Encounter attitudes describe the mainstream attitudes of Black individuals prior to having some encounter or series of encounters that challenge their original attitudes (Vandiver, 2001). The Pre-Encounter attitudes are Pre-Encounter Assimilation (a tendency to gravitate toward mainstream Caucasian American ideals), Pre-Encounter Miseducation (misconceptions and beliefs about stereotypical beliefs about Blacks), and Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (inherent negative views about being Black; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002).

Next, the Immersion-Emersion attitudes portray a state of limbo between the individual's emersion from the original thinking to an immersion into knowledge of Black ideas. These attitudes consist of Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, the attitude wherein the individual is strongly repulsed by anything White; and Immersion-Emersion Intense Black Involvement, the attitude subscribed to by individuals who have an intense immersion into the Black experience (Vandiver et al., 2002). Finally, NT-E includes the

Internalization attitudes, which describe individuals who have reconciled being Black in a multicultural world and have a strong view of being Black and/or embrace multiple multicultural aspects of identity (e.g., sexual orientation, gender, nationality; Vandiver et al., 2002; Worrell et al., 2006). The Internalization attitudes include Internalization Afrocentric attitude (an effort at improving the Black community), the Internalization Bicultural attitude (portrayal of Black acceptance as well as some other cultural orientation), and the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive attitude (portrayal of two or more active cultural orientations; Vandiver et al., 2002).

The racial identity attitudes described under nigrescence theory serve as indications of the significance of race to one's self-identity and the extent to which one feels belongingness to the Black race. Research on Black racial identity, although heavily pursued by researchers (Ford & Harris, 1997; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Tatum, 2004; Whittaker & Neville, 2010), has hardly integrated research on role model relationships and the potential relationship between racial significance in self-identity and role model selection. The importance of racial identity development for African Americans is strongly empirically supported and such integration with theoretical conceptions of social comparison through role model identification is needed to satisfy the missing links in existing research.

African American College Students

Inherent in the discussion of role models and racial identity is the idea of psychosocial development in that both role modeling and racial identity can be considered important developmental phenomena that commence and/or intensify during adolescence. According to Erikson (1968), during psychosocial development the

adolescent struggles to balance role confusion with producing a solid identity and this task includes differentiating self from the previously held identity that has been influenced by the parent(s). In this identity development process, adolescents rely on others in the social environment as models for what they can be (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). Thus, adolescents are in a position to mirror the characteristics of their parents and significant others for the purpose of coming to terms with their own identity. It is likely that these developmental considerations contribute to the sampling procedures that are used in extant research on role models for African American males. Current research in this area heavily samples from the African American school-aged/adolescent population. However, information about role models also can be valuable for those who are beyond adolescence; although identity development becomes most problematic during adolescence, it progresses through all of Erikson's stages (Hauser, 1971). Thus, further research on role models for African American males should focus on non-adolescents as well.

An alternative to the adolescent population that is currently used in role model research for African American males is a college population. By virtue of their ability to achieve a high level of educational success through college acceptance and attendance, African American male college students can be considered a model group that has achieved positive outcomes. Thus, an investigation of role model presence among this population may shed light into preferential characteristics of role models as well as the individuals who serve as positive role models for this population. In addition, a college population is ideal for investigating racial identity development. Having surpassed adolescence, the developmental period in which racial identity development is suggested

to occur (Worrell, 2008), college-level individuals may be more stable in their racial identity status than adolescents. Furthermore, racial identity development is particularly relevant to African American male college students since much of the struggle associated with higher education for African American males surrounds racial identity, according to some researchers (c.f., Harper & Quaye, 2007).

Literature on role models for African American male college students, on the other hand, is scarce. Much of the existing research only briefly mentions role models in passing, as opposed to investigating role models as a primary variable. Thus, using a college population creates potential to further develop the body of literature on role model identification with this population.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities vs. Predominantly White Institutions

In considering the use of an African American college student sample, homogeneity cannot be assumed. The cultural climate of historically Black universities (HBCUs) differs from that of predominantly White institutions (PWIs). HBCUs were historically created to provide African Americans educational opportunities when other institutions would not (Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Thus, the historical function of HBCUs has been to advance the educational opportunities of African Americans through institutional environments that foster success and advancement through nurturance, academic advisement, and cultural and social capital that is specific to African American students (Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). PWIs do not necessarily operate with the same intentions and often contain a climate and curricula that are not always conducive for growth for African American students (Adams, 2005). Although African Americans successfully matriculate through PWIs, the experience

encountered when attending an HBCU often provides unique opportunities and its own benefits that lead to markedly different experiences for its African American attendees.

   With differences in campus cultures come potential differences in development for African American students (Cheatham, Slaney, & Coleman, 1990), and researchers have consistently identified such differences showing great support for the idea that African Americans attending HBCUs have better psychosocial outcomes, are more psychosocially developed, and are more psychologically adjusted than those attending PWIs (Cheatham et al., 1990; Love, Tyler, Thomas, Garriott, Brown, & Roan-Bell, 2009; Palmer et al., 2010; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Spurgeon & Myers, 2010; Stewart, Wright, Perry, & Rankin, 2008). For instance, African Americans who attend HBCUs have been found to be more culturally aware, experience more academic gains, be more advanced in their racial identity development, and have more social satisfaction than their counterparts at PWIs (Cheatham et al., 1990; Palmer et al., 2010; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Stewart et al., 2008). On the other hand, African American students attending PWIs may experience barriers to academic success and social development for reasons such as isolation, lack of support from faculty, and deficits in social capital and cultural involvement (Cheatham et al., 1990; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Love et al., 2009; Spurgeon & Myers, 2010; Stewart et al., 2008).

   Still, research continues to unfold both confirming and disconfirming proposed differences between these institutional cultures, with some research findings revealing that African Americans at PWIs display healthier psychosocial development in racial identity levels, cultural involvement, and emotional autonomy than those at HBCUs (Cheatham et al., 1990; Spurgeon & Myers, 2010). It appears, then, that African

American male college students should not be viewed as a homogenous group while being investigated on the discussed variables. Any potential differences between African Americans attending HBCUs and those attending PWIs need to be considered since these differences may affect and/or shape both racial identity development and role model selection. Furthermore, an integration of role model identification and racial identity development with consideration for institution type has not yet been investigated with African American college males. An investigation of these variables may shed light on group similarities or differences for this population.

Summary and Purpose of the Study

Role model selection for African Americans, at times, has proven to be problematic; African Americans are less likely to identify a personal role model than Caucasian Americans, often identify role models who are a negative influence, or identify role models who have achieved nearly unattainable levels of success. When they are able to identify role models, role model characteristics vary, with much support pointing to race as the most important characteristic in role model selection for African Americans. Social comparison theory describes the process that occurs in role model identification and speaks to the importance of match on characteristics such as race through perceived similarity with another. However, what is missing in the discussion of racial preference in selecting a role model is racial identity development. Racial identity as a measure of the importance of race to self-identity and perception of belongingness to the racial group must be considered when attempting to determine if individuals prefer racial similarity with role models. Black racial identity, as conceptualized under nigrescence theory, proposes racial identity attitudes that range from less to more sophistication. These

attitudes can be used to determine the significance of race to one's self identity. An integration of role model relationships and racial identity for African American males can be particularly useful if pursued for a college student population with particular attention to those at both HBCUs and PWIs. The experiences of African American males at each of these institutions differ and consideration for such heterogeneity must be taken when investigating the discussed variables.

The purpose of the proposed study is to investigate the trends of role model selection for African American male college students. The specific purpose is threefold: 1) to determine who African American male college students identify as role models and if there is a preference for racial similarity in role model selection, 2) to determine if differences in role model identification exist between students based on the type of institution they attend, and 3) to determine the relationship between African American male college students' role model preference and students' level of racial identity development. As such, the variables of interest in the proposed study are (a) role model race, (b) type of institution attended, and (c) racial identity level identified by African American male college students.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Who are the role models for African American male college students? Are these role models racially similar to the students?

Research Question 2: Are there racial differences between the role models identified by African American males who attend HBCUs and those who attend PWIs?

Research Question 3: How predictive of role model race are the following racial identity

attitudes: Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter

Miseducation, Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, Immersion-Emersion

Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, and Internalization

Multiculturalist Inclusive?

Research Question 4: What characteristics of a role model (if any) do African American

male college students perceive as important?

Significance of the Study

According to Gibbs (1984), African American males can be considered "an

endangered species," and thus any research that emphasizes positive aspects of their

experience is important. A focus on who African American males identify as role models

presents a unique and distinctive perspective on factors that are specific to their well-

being. The presence of gender-differences in the experiences of African Americans is not

a new concept; the acknowledgement of these differences in order to advance a particular

gender is responsible and productive. Application of research on role models for African

American males sheds light that will likely advance their wellbeing. Not only are role

models for African American males under-identified, but when they are present they

sometimes exert influence in the negative direction. It may very well be the presence of

negative role models that has contributed to the described "endangered" nature of the

African American male "species." If there are not positive and similar others to which he

can compare his self identity, the African American male may be forced to rely on

messages from whoever is present. Investigating those positive others who are present for

African American males—specifically educationally successful African American

males—provides knowledge and insight into factors that have potentially been relevant to that success and that can be translated for other African American males.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: African American male college students will identify role models who are

African American more often than role models of another race.

Hypothesis 2: African American male college students who attend HBCUs will identify

African Americans as role models more than will African American male

college students who attend PWIs.

Hypothesis 3: For African American male college students, more sophisticated racial

identity attitudes as measured by the Cross Racial Identity Scale

(Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, and

Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive attitudes) will accurately predict

the race of primary role model (i.e., the higher the scores on each of these

scales the more likely the primary role model will be African American).

Hypothesis 4: African American male college students will list a variety of characteristics

that influence their selection of role models (e. g., relationship status,

gender, professional background, etc).

Definition of Terms

Role model - A role model is defined as an individual who is aspired after by another

person through acknowledgment, desire, or adoption of some similar

characteristic or an individual who one looks up to (Bell, 1970; Bryant &

Zimmerman, 2003; Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Studies that use terms other than

"role model" (e. g. mentor or significant other) whose definition is similar to the one presented here will be included in the literature review as relevant.

Mentor – A mentor is defined as a more experienced individual who has intentional interaction with a less experienced individual (mentee) and attempts to actively manipulate the social world of the mentee (Spencer, 2007; Thompson & Lewis, 2005; Yancey et al., 2002). Mentors are distinguished from role models because they take on an active socializing function, while role models' socializing function is passive (Thompson & Lewis, 2005).

Race – Race is a socially constructed concept describing the categorization of people based on their sharing of assumed innate, physical characteristics and hereditary traits. (Cokley, 2007; Vacc, DeVaney, & Brendel, 2003).

Ethnicity – Ethnicity describes the categorization of people based on a shared culture, history, and tradition, and a common ancestry (Cokley, 2007; Vacc et al., 2003). Race is distinguished from ethnicity because group membership based on race disregards culture and members of racial groups may not share cultural characteristics, whereas group membership based on ethnicity necessitates shared culture.

Racial identity – Racial identity refers to the extent to which importance is ascribed to shared racial heritage and the qualitative meaning attributed to membership within the racial group (Bynum, Best, Barnes, & Burton, 2008; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000; Townes, Chavez-Korrell, & Cunningham, 2009; Worrell & Gardner-Witt, 2006).

Psychological nigrescence – Psychological nigrescence is defined as the process of

becoming Black, whereby African Americans progress from negative to positive

self-perceptions of Blackness and ultimately achieve a psychologically healthy

Black racial identity status (Cokley, 2002; Vandiver, 2001).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Role models are greatly influential in people's lives and being able to identify a role model is associated with success and positive outcomes (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). For African American males, a subpopulation that has faced historical oppression and in some cases continued societal hardship, role model presence is particularly important in promoting success and positive life experiences (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009). Theory suggests that selecting a role model is a dynamic social comparison, and social comparison occurs with perceived similarity (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). A perception of similarity through group belongingness, conceptualized as racial identity for African Americans, is another area of importance associated with positive experiences for African Americans. A side-by-side examination of these two areas of importance for African American males—role model presence and group belonging—is unavailable in extant research and such a review and integration may lead to important implications for role model selection and subsequent outcomes.

Role Model versus Mentor

Present in Bell's (1970) discussion of role modeling is whether or not interaction is equivalent to identification. Bell's concern raises an important discussion surrounding use of the term 'role model' because this term is often used interchangeably with

The underlying question in distinguishing role models from mentors is whether or not a person's significance to another requires quality interaction. Bell's discussion on interaction versus identification is relevant because this is essentially what determines the difference between role models and mentors. Role model relationships are particularly distinctive from mentorships due to the extent of interaction or involvement on behalf of the role model. Thompson and Lewis (2005) explain this difference in terms of passive versus active socializers, wherein role models are passive with limited interaction and mentors are active with intentional interaction through the "manipulation" of the mentee's social world. Furthermore, the interaction that exists between a role model and person being role modeled does not always include one who is less experienced than another as with a mentor-mentee relationship (Yancey, Siegel, & McDaniel, 2002). Mentors have the intention of influencing mentees, which is not necessarily the case for role models and those for which they provide an example. It should be noted, though, that role models and mentors can be one in the same individual and often are (Spencer, 2007).

<div align="center">**Defining 'Role Model'**</div>

The concept of 'role model' has been researched in varying contexts but the construct has not been defined consistently (Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Many researchers have applied the term 'role model' to a variety of people who have varying levels of interaction and meaning in the lives of others (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer, 2005; Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Often these researchers use the term 'role model' without presenting an adequate definition, if one is provided at all. It is usually left up to the study's participants to determine how the term 'role model' applies. However, it

should not be assumed that individuals will understand and explain the term in the same way that it is asked of them. Thus, the goal of what follows is to derive a specific definition of 'role model' from theory and research that is adequate for use with research samples, including the sample in the current study.

Theoretical Derivation of 'Role Model'

Albert Bandura's (1969) concept of modeling as a vehicle for observational learning is the foundation for the concept of role modeling. Under Bandura's idea of modeling, people learn through observation of others' behaviors, attitudes, and behavioral outcomes. Rosenthal and Bandura (1978) define a 'model' as "any stimulus array so organized that an observer can extract and act on the main information conveyed by environmental events without needing to first perform overtly" (p. 622). In this sense, learning could occur through observation with little or no interaction or reinforcement needed. For this reason, modeling has become a useful mechanism for learning. There can be problems, however, with relying on modeling processes to determine what and how learning has occurred. Because individuals are exposed to multiple models, it is often difficult to identify the source of emulated behavior. However, being able to identify and utilize a specific model makes it possible to influence specific outcomes. A 'role model' is an example of a specific model from which information can be extracted and conveyed for a specific role. Whereas modeling is a general socializing process, role modeling is a more specific socialization to a 'role', 'state', 'trait', 'activity', or some 'characteristic.'

Conceptual Definitions of 'Role Model'

Role models have been described under the category of 'reference group,' which has been defined by Kemper (1968) as a group (or person in the case of a role model) that an individual considers when taking some course of action or actions. This conception describes role models in a more vague and general sense. Under this idea, role models can be fictional, historical, imagined, concrete, known or unknown. This person possesses some skill or capability that the observer may believe him or herself to lack. Furthermore, the role model is *demonstrative*—whether directly or indirectly—for the observer or person being role modeled. In this sense, the role model acts as an example of how something is done. Kemper's definition of role modeling necessitates that the observer learns from the role model through observation, but most importantly, compares his or her own performance with that of the role model.

Another description of 'role model' is the explanation given by Bell (1970). Bell combined the Freudian emphasis on assimilation to others with the behaviorist emphasis on imitation through modeling and other ideas about perceived similarity in defining 'role model.' Bell described a role model as one who is perceived by another as similar, whose behavior is imitated by another, or whose attitudes and values are assimilated by another. This is a rich definition of role model as it draws on multiple perspectives within traditional psychological theory. The difference between Bell's description and Kemper's is that Kemper's discussion of role models is more general and places much of the emphasis on the possessive qualities of the role model, whereas Bell's discussion describes the more specific perceptions of the individual who is identifying the role

model. These perspectives collaboratively draw on essential elements in the description of role modeling and thus both add value to the definition of 'role model.'

Use and Definition of 'Role Model' in Empirical Research

The term 'role model' has been used descriptively in comparison and interchangeably with "mentor" and "hero/heroine" and also has been used to describe a range of figures in between (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). Definitions in empirical research have been inconsistent as well. Assibey-Mensah (1997) defined a role model in the literature review of his study as an individual who is capable of being looked up to or emulated, but essentially left it up to participants to ascertain their own definition when simply asking them "who is your role model" (p. 244). Bryant and Zimmerman (2003) defined 'role model' through Bell's (1970) perspective with attention to the elements of imitation, assimilation, and perceived similarity. Still, in their methodology, Bryant and Zimmerman simplified this tri-part perspective into one statement of 'role model' as a male or female who participants "look up to." In qualitative interviews, Hurd, Zimmerman, and Xue (2009) also described role models as a male or female who participants "look up to" and they used "role model" as a prompt in case participants did not understand. However, the authors did not provide a definition of what they meant by the term 'role model' to the audience in their introduction and literature review. Yancey et al. (2002) appear to have done the same thing in their study when the authors distinguished between 'role model' and 'mentor' in their literary discussion but did not directly define their own conception of 'role model.' They did, however, operationalize 'role model' in their methodology by asking participants about people they may admire, "look up to," or "want to be like." Hamann and Walker (1993) conducted a study on the

effects of African American teachers as role models and used the term 'role model' throughout their literature review and methodology with no discussion in either section of a definition.

The primary finding in the reviewed research (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Hurd et al., 2009; Yancey et al., 2002) is that there is inconsistency with regard to how researchers define 'role model,' if they provide a definition at all. Additionally, there is often a difference between how researchers discuss 'role model' in their introductory remarks and review of literature and how they operationalize it to participants. Whether or not this inconsistency between definition and operationalization is an important one is unclear. However, what is clear is that there appears to be a latent assumption that the researchers, study participants, and readers will all have the same (or at least a clear) understanding of what is meant by 'role model.' On the other hand, when role models have been investigated as a variable in research, there has been some consistency in terms of how researchers have presented the term to participants. In the previously mentioned studies, when 'role model' was operationalized methodologically a simplified definition was usually provided (i.e., role model as one who participants "look up to"). Thus, it appears that researchers agree to some extent about how to present the term to study participants.

Role Model Defined

Role models, unlike mentors, may not necessarily have any interaction with the person claiming them as a role model and may not have an active or planned involvement in guiding that person to his or her aspirations. Role models can be fictional, historical, or public figures with which the person claiming the model has never had physical contact

or relationship (Kemper, 1968; Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). Likewise, role models can be people who exist in the real lives of the person claiming the role model. Referred to in the general category of "socializers" by Thompson and Lewis (2005) and "significant others" by Bell (1970), role models have been commonly described as any person to which one claims similarity, aspires to imitate, or to which one assimilates (Bell, 1970). In other words, a role model is an individual who has elicited from another individual an acknowledgement of similarity on some characteristic, an expressed desire to be similar on some characteristic, or an adoption of some characteristic. Thus, even though role models may or may not directly interact with the person who is identifying with them, they have at least sparked a desire to the extent that the person has aspirations to be similar to the role model in attitude, thought, or behavior (Ringness, 1967). In empirical research, this conceptualization of role models is not usually adopted; however, researchers do tend to be careful and intentional in their presentation of the term to participants as one whom they can 'look up to.' Sensitivity to all of these aspects of 'role model' is important to its definition and operationalization and will be applied in the definition of 'role model' used for the current study.

Thompson and Lewis (2005) and Bell (1970) offer conceptions of role model that best capture the qualities viewed as relevant to the current study. Thompson and Lewis are clear in distinguishing role models from mentors, considering role models as passive (as opposed to active) in their socializing role. Bell's definition of 'role model' takes special consideration for the role model as perceived by the observer. Still, the simplified definition of 'role model' as someone who is 'looked up to' most frequently presented to participants in empirical research appears to be effective in soliciting responses from

participants. Thus, a two-part definition integrating conceptual understandings and empirical use of 'role model' is adopted for the current study. Role model is defined as *an individual who is aspired after by another individual through acknowledgment, desire, or adoption of some similar characteristic or an individual who one looks up to*.

Theoretical Conceptions of Role Model Match: Social Comparison Theory

The concept of role models draws from Festinger's theory of social comparison, which suggests that social comparison occurs when an individual perceives an analogy between him or herself and another and then "maps the self onto the other" (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997, p. 92). In this sense, the individual perceives the other as a potential model or someone against which he or she can judge his or her own abilities, which is what occurs in role model relationships. However, it should be noted that for role model relationships the standard of comparison may go beyond abilities and opinions—which tend to be the focus of Festinger's original theory—to include personal attributes and characteristics such as attitudes and values (Bell, 1970). Among other things, the theory of social comparison suggests that one's tendency to compare self with another specific person decreases as differences in abilities or opinions between the two people increase (Festinger, 1954). In other words, people are more likely to compare themselves to others when they perceive similarity. Furthermore, if differences are too abundant it is not possible to make an accurate comparison and instead, no comparison is made. The end result of attempting to make such a comparison may result in a "self imposed restriction" (Festinger, 1954, p. 121).

This idea that the potential for comparing oneself to another person decreases as differences between the self and the other person increase, is referred to under Festinger's

theory as the similarity hypothesis (Festinger, 1954; Wood, 1989). In this sense, the more

similarity perceived between two individuals the greater the likelihood that comparison

will take place. Wood (1989) reveals about the similarity hypothesis that not only do

people make comparisons on domains they perceive as similar but these comparisons

often occur even when the similar characteristic is unrelated to other domains.

Comparing oneself to a similar other is influential even when the comparison being made

is not related to the similar characteristic (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Wood, 1989). For

instance, Wood (1989) describes research wherein race and gender were perceived by

persons to be an important standard of social comparison when evaluating their own

school performance. This was the case even though the dimensions of race and gender

were unrelated to the dimension of school performance. Similarly, in the case of role

models, the similarity hypothesis would predict that even though certain characteristics

(i.e., race or gender) are unrelated to certain other domains (e.g., academic success or

career aspiration) individuals still elect role models on the basis of racial or gender

similarity (Wood, 1989). The suggestion, then, is that comparison based on similar

characteristics occurs despite dissimilarity in abilities.

Lockwood and Kunda (1997) extend the similarity hypothesis by suggesting that

"outstanding others," or in this case role models, are not only likely to have influence

when perceived as similar but are more likely to have influence when they are perceived

as relevant. They suggest, however, that relevance of a domain is not an essential element

for comparison to take place; similarity, on the other hand often is. Still, much of the

research on role models for African American males fails to examine the reasons they

select role models and if in fact role models are selected on the basis of perceived racial

or other similarity. Research has established that African Americans identify other African Americans as role models (Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer, 2005; Yancey et al. 2002), but an in depth investigation of other characteristics that may have influenced role model selection is needed in establishing the importance of role model similarity and relevance.

Other ideas have been proposed to explain why people compare themselves to similar others even when the point of comparison is not relevant to other domains. One idea is the competitor attributes hypothesis, which suggests that people make such domain-irrelevant comparisons because others are perceived as competitors (Wood, 1989). Under this hypothesis, an individual compares his or her self to a similar other even when the similar aspect seems irrelevant because there is the perception of competition. In this sense, the individual making the social comparison feels good when the competitor does badly in a situation and feels bad when the competitor does well in the situation (Buunk, Peiró, & Griffioen, 2007). However, empirical research on social comparison and role model selection challenges the ideas of the competitor attributes hypothesis. Buunk and colleagues' (2007) research on social comparisons in career-oriented behavior refutes the claims of the competitors hypothesis by showing that comparison to successful similar others results in inspiration as opposed to competition. Buunk et al. suggest that inspiration is drawn regarding what one can achieve for his or her self and as a result, he or she becomes motivated toward achievement. Similarly, Brewer and Weber (1994) suggest that the outcome of comparison with similar others would be assimilation as opposed to contrast, or competition.

Research on social comparison among African Americans also refutes the suggestion that comparison to similar others promotes competition. For instance, a study conducted by Palmer, Davis, and Maramba (2010) on the effect of racial homogeneity on academic success found that African American college students preferred to be around other African American students who were motivated to succeed academically. Students suggested that being similar to classmates increased their desire to be perform well academically, especially when their classmates were academically successful (Palmer et al., 2010). In addition, findings suggested that when an academically successful student showed encouragement toward an unsuccessful student, the encouragement increased the student's desire to be like other successful African Americans. These students' social comparison to successful similar classmates suggested collaboration and not competition. Thus, comparison with others on the domain of race even when race is unrelated to anything else appears not to be a result of the ideas suggested by the competitor attributes hypotheses. Instead it is suggested by researchers (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Reglin, 1994; Shade, 1983; Somers & Piliawasky, 2004) that African Americans identify other African Americans as role models for very different reasons. A look into research on the commonly identified role models of African Americans suggests that racially similar others are usually used as a basis of comparison for reasons such as presence and proximity (i.e., access to family members as role models) (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Shade, 1983), perceived success (Reglin, 1994), visibility and popularity (Assibey-Mensah, 1997), and/or because an inspiration is drawn toward future possibilities as with occupational role models (Shade, 1983; Somers & Piliawsky, 2004), not because role models are perceived as competition.

Perhaps a better explanation for why individuals self-compare with similar others even when the similar characteristic seems irrelevant is the 'self-defining comparisons' hypothesis. This hypothesis claims that individuals prefer comparisons with similar others on unrelated dimensions because the dimensions are central to their self-definition (Wood, 1989). In this sense, the preference for a role model who is similar on the basis of race would occur because the person making the comparison has perceived race, the similar characteristic, as central to his or her self-identity. Brewer and Weber (1994) explain that when an individual's personal identity is salient social comparison occurs to similar individuals, and when social identity is salient intergroup comparison occurs— that is comparison to those within the person's in-group. Findings from research conducted by Lee (1993) revealed that for African Americans, not only did social comparison occur with the in-group over the out-group but that participants tended to evaluate themselves more favorably when their ethnic identity was made salient. Thus, social comparisons are shown to occur when social identity is salient; however, researchers did not investigate whether these comparisons took place because social identity was perceived by participants as relevant or important.

Role model research barely scratches the surface on identity as relevant with few studies investigating identity in the context of role model selection. This deficit introduces a need to further examine the relevance of identity, especially when the domain of comparison is race. This lack of consideration for race and identity beckons for the integration of racial identity theory and social comparisons through role model selection.

Summary

Social comparison theory provides the strongest theoretical basis for explaining the dynamics of role model identification. According to the similarity hypothesis, comparisons occur based on perceived similarity with another. Furthermore, similarity supersedes relevance in social comparisons and role model selection. Comparison based on similarity often occurs even when the identified role model is dissimilar on other characteristics. Hypotheses have been proposed about why such comparisons are made even when the characteristic on which an individual perceives similarity is unrelated to anything else. One such hypothesis, the self-defining comparisons hypothesis, suggests that comparisons on a similar characteristic, such as race, occur because the similar characteristic is central to the identity of the person making the comparison. Research on social comparisons through role model relationships has not been indicative that integration with the discussed concepts in social comparison theory. Thus, an investigation of the self-defining comparisons hypothesis is warranted for role model research, especially as pertains to comparisons based on racial similarity.

Black Racial Identity Development: Theory and Research

Racial identity is defined as the extent to which importance is ascribed to shared racial heritage and the qualitative meaning attributed to membership within the racial group (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Bynum, Best, Barnes, & Burton, 2008; Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000; Townes, Chavous-Korrell, & Cunningham, 2009; Worrell & Gardner-Witt, 2006). Racial identity has been found to be significantly and consistently correlated with a host of outcomes related to psychological well-being, social functioning, and self-esteem for African Americans (see Caldwell, Kohn-Wood,

Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004; Cokley, 2005; Ford & Harris, 1997; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009; Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Resnicow, Soler, Braithwaite, Selassie, & Smith, 1999; Tatum, 2004; Thompson et al., 2000; Whatley, Allen, & Dana, 2003). A developed sense of one's race has been shown to be protective against the effects of oppression, discrimination, and racism (Hyers, 2001), which is one reason why racial identity development appears to hold more significance for people of color than for Caucasian Americans. Racial identity development is also important for people of color because it is related to a need to embrace an individual or self identity as well as a group identity that speaks to membership in a minority group (Cokley, 2005). In fact, it is because of this experience as a minority that the development of a racial identity even occurs (Cokley, 2005). As such, racial identity is characteristic of a broader social identity that comes through bonding with others within the racial group and feeling a strong sense of group belonging (Ford & Harris, 1997; Rotheram-Borus, 1990). Cross's model of psychological nigrescence theorizes how this process unfolds for African Americans.

Psychological Nigrescence: The Process of Becoming Black

The model of psychological nigrescence was proposed in 1971 by William Cross during a time of strong promotion for Black civil rights (Cokley, 2005; Vandiver, 2001). Cross's model of psychological nigrescence has been one of the most used in racial identity research (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Ford & Harris, 1997). The original model describes a process of becoming Black, whereby the development of a Black identity occurs through a series of stages, beginning with a negative conception of Blackness

wrought with self-hatred and ending with a healthier Black identity and experience of self-acceptance (Vandiver, 2001). Cross asserted that this process initiates during the period of late adolescence and early adulthood; empirical research has supported this assertion (Worrell, 2008). The original model posits that racial identity development occurs in stages that are associated with various behaviors or schemas pertaining to Blackness (Thompson et al., 2000). The stages are presented, not as sequential, but rather susceptible to regression through previous stages and recycling through stages multiple times (Hyers, 2001).

In the first stage, the Pre-Encounter stage, individuals are described to be oblivious to race or embracing an overall negative perspective of Blackness. Described as a less sophisticated identity status (Nghe & Mahalik, 2001), this stage is characterized by a subscription to the values of Caucasian American culture and denigration of African American cultural values (Pierre & Mahalik, 2005). Furthermore, there may be denial or minimization of racial discrimination (Hyers, 2001). In the next stage, the Encounter stage, the individual experiences an event, such as an experience with racism, that challenges his or her initial conceptions of Blackness. An experience of cognitive dissonance combined with feelings of anger and confusion lead the individual to question his or her original beliefs about being Black in America (Ford & Harris, 1997; Tatum, 2004; Vandiver, 2001). The result is a view of the old identity as inappropriate and a search for a new identity (Thompson et al., 2000).

From the Encounter stage, the individual is thrust into the Immersion-Emersion stage wherein he or she becomes immersed into Black culture and rebels against majority culture (Worrell, Vandiver, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2004). It is during this period that

the individual experiences anger and hostility toward the White race and culture, and

begins to develop a strong sense of Black pride. The individual in this stage will actively

seek out opportunities to explore Black culture in an effort to expand the original

definition of what it means to be Black (Tatum, 2004). However, this pro-Black identity

that forms is more of a reactionary position against Whiteness than a healthy and genuine

sense of Blackness (Pierre & Mahalik, 2005). The intense feelings for Black culture and

against White culture gradually subside with movement toward the Internalization stage

(Vandiver, 2001; Whatley, Allen, & Dana, 2003). In the Internalization stage, the

individual becomes calm, secure, and stable in his or her Black identity (Whatley et al.,

2003). This stage is characterized by a high salience of Blackness but also a healthy

integration of additional aspects as important to identity (Ford & Harris, 1997; Vandiver,

2001). This stage is viewed as a more sophisticated identity status likely because of the

formation of a new objectivity and willingness to establish meaningful interactions

beyond the African American race (Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Tatum, 2004). Finally, in the

Internalization-Commitment stage the individual expands his or her self-acceptance to an

acceptance of other cultures with a commitment to social change through activism

(Vandiver, 2001).

Expanded Nigrescence Theory

Since its inception in the field of psychology, the model of psychological

nigrescence has been updated and expanded. Rather than a description of a progression

through stages, the newer model, termed nigrescence theory-expanded (NT-E) describes

racial identity *attitudes* (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross, &

Fhagen-Smith, 2006). Furthermore, NT-E describes racial identity as fluid and

susceptible to influence from experiences across the lifespan as opposed to a stagnant

categorization of racial identity. As such, individuals may experience some

characteristics of all attitudes and not just a single attitude (Worrell, 2008). An additional

distinction from the original theory is NT-E's recognition that there is a need to

differentiate personal identity from group identity (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-

Smith, 2002). The role of personal identity viewed as an individual's personal wellbeing,

is viewed separately and recognized as contributing only a minor role to racial identity

development (Worrell, 2008). Blackness and one's perception of being Black speaks to a

group identity, and thus is the focus of NT-E. Each updated racial identity attitude

provides a variation of a Black group identity, with implications for group identity

development and not necessarily personal identity development (Vandiver et al., 2002).

The original nigrescence stages become thematic categories for more specific

identity attitudes clustered under the statuses of Pre-Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and

Internalization. There are three Pre-Encounter attitudes: Pre-Encounter Assimilation

(PA), Pre-Encounter Miseducation (PM), and Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (PSH)

(Simmons, Worrell, & Berry, 2008; Worrell et al., 2006). The general theme of the Pre-

Encounter attitude remains the same; however, NT-E recognizes that there may be

different reasons why an individual has a low racial salience or negative attitude toward

Blacks. The person with a PA racial identity attitude assimilates to majority culture and

in effect, dismisses Blackness. The PM attitude describes the individual who is not

properly educated about the realities of the Black race, and instead, adopts stereotypical

views about African Americans. The PSH attitude describes the individual who has

adopted a self-hatred about their race and is unhappy about being Black. All-in-all, the

racial salience within the Pre-Encounter attitudes is shaped by negative associations with

Blackness (Simmons et al., 2008).

Next, under NT-E there are two Immersion-Emersion racial identity attitudes:

Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) and Immersion-Emersion Intense Black

Involvement (IEIBI). The Immersion-Emersion attitudes develop in response to

experiencing the social barriers such as discrimination and racism that result from living

as an African American within American society (Simmons et al., 2008). The IEAW

attitude describes the individual who has developed a strong hostility toward European

Americans and the culture thereof and as a result, rejects all representations of Whiteness.

The IEIBI attitude is characterized by intense racial pride and support for all things

Black. The emersion aspect of these attitudes occurs as the extremity in views becomes

more balanced—a balance that can be observed within the Internalization attitudes

(Worrell et al., 2006). The three Internalization attitudes under NT-E are Internalization

Afrocentric (IA), Internalization Bicultural (IB), and Internalization Multiculturalist

Inclusive (IMCI). These attitudes are characterized by an acceptance and positive regard

for Blackness and the maintenance of a positive racial identity within a multicultural

world (Worrell et al., 2006). The IA attitude describes the individual who has taken on an

appreciation of Afrocentric values and issues of the African Diaspora. The IB attitude

describes the individual who identifies with an aspect of group identity that is in addition

to race (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, etc.). Finally, the IMCI attitude describes the

person who accepts and appreciates Black culture as well as all other cultural groups

(Simmons et al., 2008).

Psychological nigrescence, with its roots in the Civil Rights Movement, has been embraced, researched, and applied over a span of 40 years. Even with recent revisions and expansion the theory retains its popularity as the seminal theory of Black racial identity development. Gaining much of its research attention through research under Janet Helms's conceptualization of racial identity attitudes (Cokley, 2002), psychological nigrescence also has been tested empirically. The research on Black racial identity development, conceptualized under the model of psychological nigrescence, has contributed widely to the current understanding of Black identity development. Furthermore, the development of a Black racial identity brings with it implications for psychological and social wellbeing.

Becoming Black: Associated Outcomes in Research

Research on racial identity development has been heavily pursued with much of the attention focused on African Americans (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009). Attention to Black racial identity development likely persists because African Americans are more likely than Caucasian Americans to experience barriers to successful racial identity development due to historical and oppressive experiences in America (Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006). As a result of an undeveloped or underdeveloped racial identity, African Americans become more susceptible to negative outcomes (Ford & Harris, 1997). Therefore, researchers have been interested in the impact of a positive racial identity as a buffer for negative outcomes and contributor to positive outcomes and healthy self-concept (Caldwell et al., 2004). The successful development of a positive racial identity has been associated with a multitude of psychosocial outcomes for African Americans including but not limited to self-esteem, academic achievement, acculturative

stress, self-actualization, self-acceptance, anxiety, hostility and anger, psychological distress, affective states, substance abuse, hallucinations, depression, marital discord, sensitivity, cultural mistrust, and violent behaviors (Bynum et al., 2008; Caldwell et al., 2004; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Ford & Harris, 1997; Nasir et al., 2009; Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Parham & Helms, 1985; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Resinow et al., 1999; Rotheram-Borus, 1990; Tatum, 2004; Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000; Townes et al., 2009; Whatley, Allen, & Dana, 2003).

Psychological distress, self-esteem, and other psychosocial outcomes have been found to correlate directly with the statuses of psychological nigrescence. High Pre-Encounter attitudes are associated with low self-actualization and self-acceptance, high anxiety, inferiority, personal inadequacy, suppression of anger, hypersensitivity, memory impairment, paranoia, hallucinations, alcohol concerns, low self-esteem, low self-regard, acculturative stress, immature defenses, and general psychological distress (Hyers, 2001; Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Parham & Helms, 1985; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Thompson et al., 2000). Pre-Encounter attitudes are considered less developed racial identity attitudes. The race-neutral perspective and oblivion to racial issues associated with the Pre-Encounter status may make individuals less prepared to deal with racial discrimination (Ford & Harris, 1997). Negative adjustment is likely since positive racial identity development serves as a protective factor against racial discrimination (Nasir et al., 2009). Furthermore, assimilation to White culture or adopting a negative perception of African Americans, which are also characteristic of a Pre-Encounter attitude, makes it more likely that these individuals will be rejected by the Black community (Ford & Harris, 1997). One study demonstrated findings that are opposite to the pattern of

negative adjustment associated with Pre-Encounter attitudes. In an investigation of

African American ethnic identity, Hyers (2001) found that Pre-Encounter attitudes were

associated with greater life satisfaction. This finding is surprising considering that the

Pre-Encounter attitude is representative of an unhealthy racial identity. However, such an

association makes sense when considering that a lack of acknowledgment of racial

prejudice may provide protection against discrimination and a sense of well-being, albeit

distorted (Hyers, 2001). Still, this distorted sense of well-being becomes threatened when

the individual actually experiences racial prejudice. There is a greater likelihood that he

or she will attribute the occurrence to self rather than external forces (Hyers, 2001).

Therefore, at best this positive sense of well-being is only temporary.

Mixed results have been described for the Encounter racial identity attitude. The

Encounter attitude has been associated with positive affective states such as low anxiety,

high self-actualization, and high self-acceptance (Parham & Helms, 1985; Thompson et

al., 2000). On the other hand, the Encounter attitude has also been most associated with

feelings of confusion related to racial events (Nghe & Mahalik, 2001). It is also

hypothesized that the anger, confusion, and feelings of alienation associated with the

Encounter attitude may be related to negative outcomes on academic achievement. This

occurs when an individual associates academic achievement with White culture, and as a

result, rebels against such achievement (Tatum, 2004). The conflicting dynamics that

occur as a result of a racial encounter and the Encounter attitude as characteristic of a

transition from an undeveloped identity to a healthier one is likely what accounts for the

mixed findings.

Findings for the Immersion-Emersion attitudes reveal an overall experience with negative adjustment. High immersion attitudes are associated with high levels of hostility, outward expression of anger, acculturative stress, cultural mistrust, immature defenses, higher levels of depression, feelings of inferiority and inadequacy, hypersensitivity, low-actualizing tendencies, low self-regard, high anxiety, low self-esteem, greater psychological distress, and lower levels of psychological adjustment (Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Parham & Helms, 1985; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Townes et al., 2009; Thompson et al., 2000). An Immersion experience is characterized by a superficial conception of a secure identity; thus, although individuals with this attitude have a strong sense of Black pride and may even be more accepted by the Black community (Ford & Harris, 1997), the attitude is considered unsophisticated and in reality is underdeveloped (Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Thompson et al., 2000). It is the Emersion aspect of this attitude—that is, the emergence from a pro-Black/anti-White perspective to a more balanced view—that makes the Immersion-Emersion attitude more advanced than the Pre-Encounter and Encounter attitudes. Thus, despite the evidence of negative adjustment and outcomes, an Emersion attitude is considered a more sophisticated identity status (Ford & Harris, 1997).

As the most sophisticated level of racial identity, research suggests that Internalization attitudes are associated with high self-esteem, low levels of perceived culture-specific stressors, low levels of depression, and overall psychological health and well-being (Parham & Helms, 1985; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Resinow et al., 1999; Thompson et al., 2000). Aside from the positive correlation to positive psychosocial outcomes that can be expected from a more healthy racial identity attitude, more

provocative findings related to the Internalization attitudes have imparted remarkable

insights into the processes underlying healthy racial identity formation. One such finding

is that high Internalization attitudes correlate positively with acculturative stress, which is

the distress associated with pressure to adopt values of majority culture (Thompson et al.,

2000). The negative indication inherent in the experience of acculturative stress assumes

negative adjustment; thus, a correlation with Internalization attitudes seems

contradictory. However, a more careful investigation reveals that with a healthy and

integrated racial identity comes also a greater awareness of race and racial issues.

Therefore, an individual with an Internalization attitude may perceive a need and exercise

a greater tendency to negotiate between cultures. Thus, a positive correlation between

Internalization attitudes and acculturative stress works out to be a healthy occurrence for

African Americans.

Another finding that provides insight into healthy identity development is the

finding that Internalization attitudes are negatively correlated with paranoia as assessed

by the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (Whatley et al., 2003). Still,

positive associations between Internalization attitudes and paranoia in other research has

been considered adaptive in the sense that these individuals will have a high sensitivity to

racism and discrimination and thus better prepared for these encounters (Thompson et al.,

2000). Another interesting finding related to the Internalization attitude is its significant

correlation with age, suggesting that life experience promotes the development of a more

advanced identity attitude (Thompson et al., 2000). Finally, the finding that a negative

correlation exists between Internalization attitudes and academic achievement is

especially intriguing considering that this outcome is more characteristic of an

underdeveloped identity. What is perhaps more interesting is that the finding only held true for African American males (Ford & Harris, 1997). While the authors did not resolve this apparent inconsistency in their discussion, other researchers suggest that rebellion against academic achievement as a value of White culture becomes more likely with a strong conception of Blackness (Nasir et al., 2009; Tatum, 2004). Consideration for similar findings about academic underachievement in the reviewed role model research may also suggest the likelihood that African American males develop such maladaptive views about success through receipt of misguided messages from peers, media, street culture, and negative role models. Still, although some negative attitudes persist within the Internalization attitudes, outcomes are often positive and more likely to be so when pro-Black attitudes are accompanied by pro-White attitudes (Resinow et al., 1999).

Summary

Racial identity development is a process of grave significance for African Americans. Psychological nigrescence, originally conceptualized as a developmental process of growth from self-hatred to self-acceptance, has shifted to a modern understanding of racial identity as a multidimensional attitudinal framework (Worrell, 2008). Eight racial identity attitudes cluster under the broader statuses of Pre-Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization, with an additional un-clustered Encounter attitude. Pre-Encounter and Encounter attitudes are less sophisticated and less developed than Immersion-Emersion and Internalization attitudes. Research shows that Pre-Encounter attitudes are strongly correlated with negative outcomes, while outcomes for the Encounter attitude have produced mixed findings due to the transitional nature and conflicting experiences of this status. Despite classification as a higher-level identity

status, Immersion-Emersion attitudes are largely associated with negative outcomes. Ford and Harris (1997) recognize an Immersion-Emersion racial identity status as more advanced since the impact on group belongingness proves to be minimal. Instead, those with this identity attitude may be more likely to experience acceptance among their racial group. Thus, Immersion-Emersion attitudes, although associated with negative outcomes on a personal level, may retain their status as more developed due to a lack of such outcomes on a group level. Finally, the Internalization attitudes, with the most distinctive findings, are suggested to be most associated with positive outcomes. As such, the Internalization attitudes are the most differentiated as psychologically healthy.

Given the level of sophistication of the Immersion-Emersion and Internalization attitudes, race is likely to be considered as central to the identity of those who are represented under these racial identity clusters; whereas for the Pre-Encounter and Encounter attitudes, race is not perceived to be as central. An understanding of racial identity development under nigrescence theory progresses the previously discussed considerations for racial centrality in self-definition and its influence on role model selection. The centrality of race can be gauged by a determination of racial identity status, with greater sophistication in racial identity being evident of greater racial centrality and less sophistication being evident of less racial centrality.

African American Males and Role Model Selection: Trends in Research

The importance of race in role model selection has been investigated in the research on role models for African Americans and extant literature surrounding the topic has repeatedly shown that they tend to gravitate toward other African Americans as role models. Often, these identified role models are parents and other family, popular media

figures, educators, and community leaders (Assibey-Mensah, 1997; Bryant &

Zimmerman, 2003; Earl & Lohmann, 1978; Hurd et al., 2009; Reglin, 1994; Ringness,

1967; Shade, 1983; Taylor et al., 2003; Yancey, Siegel, & McDaniel, 2002; Zimmerman,

Salem, & Maton; 1995). Yet, within this same body of literature some researchers have

determined that African American males, in particular, are often unable to identify role

models—African American or other—and worse, African American males often adopt

negative role models (Ascher, 1992; Assibey-Mensah, 1997; Bryant & Zimmerman,

2003; Hamann & Walker, 1993; Hurd et al., 2009; Shade, 1983; Shreffler, 1998;

Thompson & Lewis, 2005; Yancey et al., 2002; Zimmerman et al., 1995; Zirkel, 2002).

These findings are impactful to the discussion of role models in the lives of African

Americans as can be observed when considering that the presence of role models for

minority students has been argued to be more significant than the presence of role models

for Caucasian American students (Hamann & Walker, 1993). Some researchers go so far

as to suggest the presence of African American male role models in particular as the most

necessary for African American male youth for the purpose of modeling possible

outcomes (Ascher, 1992; Graham, 1987; Hall & Pizarro, 2010; Hamann & Walker, 1993;

Hurd et al., 2009; Maylor, 2009; Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer, 2005; Reglin, 1994;

Walker, 1988; Zirkel, 2002). An analysis and synthesis of this literature follows.

Who are the Role Models?

Categorized under the heading of "significant others" Shade (1983) embraced the

notion that African American youth rely on family, friends, media, and even Caucasian

American society as role models. Shade evaluated the findings of previous research and

determined that for different developmental stages in life, African Americans rely on

various significant others as role models. Ringness (1967) discussed an emphasis on motherly influence when suggesting that in early childhood both boys and girls identify most with the mother. After early childhood, Ringness suggests that male children begin to identify with their father as a role model. Shade's analysis expands the mother's influence, describing her as the most influential between preschool and high school, particularly in terms of educational performance. Bryant and Zimmerman (2003) reported support for this notion by suggesting that role modeling is included in the wide spectrum of parenting behaviors involved in adolescent development. Their study, investigating role models for African American adolescents, showed that 62.8% of African American male adolescents identified their mother as their female role model and 42.9% identified their father as their male role model. A similar project conducted by Zimmerman et al. (1995) looking at male role models for African American male school drop-outs determined that most participants, nearly two-thirds, were able to identify a male role model, with 53% identifying their father and another 15% identifying a non-parental adult male.

In a study by Hurd, Zimmerman, and Xue (2009) on the protective effects of role models in the lives of African American adolescents, the discrepancy within parental preference becomes more apparent. While 96% of participants were able to identify one or two role models, only 37% identified a father or stepfather as a male role model. This is in comparison to 56% who identified a mother or stepmother as a female role model. Still, parents were the most prevalent and were followed in prevalence by siblings, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. Famous people, friends, godparents, and family members' significant others were also identified as role models. A study investigating the

relationship among ethnic identity, health risk behaviors, and role model for urban

adolescents produced similar findings: 42% of participants identified a parent or relative,

with 22% choosing a parent role model; 39% identified a figure from the media,

consisting of actors, historical figures, political leaders, singers, comic book characters,

and community leaders; and 19% identified a non-familial known role model, which

consisted of friends, known professionals, teachers, and clergy (Yancey et al., 2002).

These findings support the notion that parents are especially influential as role models.

Still, a significant amount of individuals are looking to others as their role models as

well.

During the preschool to high school developmental period, teachers and other

family members are also seen as influential (Shade, 1983). Within this developmental

period, career aspiration becomes relevant and research suggests that African American

males are also influenced by role models in this area of their lives. For instance, when

developing career aspirations, African American males rank the person holding the job

they want as the most influential, even in comparison to parents, teachers, school

counselors, other family, and friends (Shade, 1983). On the other hand, other research on

how African American youth perceive role models produced opposing findings (Assibey-

Mensah, 1997). Assibey-Mensah identified a conflict between participants' interpretation

of a role model and their professional aspirations, when noting that 95% of participants

identified a role model whose professional careers they did not want to emulate. Finally,

in the young adult developmental period, college students identify peers, teachers,

counselors, friends, and family as their primary role models while adults between 18 and

35 years old achieving educational and occupational mobility identify their parents (Shade, 1983).

The literature on the theoretical implications about the prevalence of parental role models fail to take into account the reality that many youth lack at least one parent in the home. Research that examined the availability of role models for 53 latency age boys from father-absent homes addresses this absence. Earl and Lohmann (1978) were interested in whether or not participants had access to their fathers or other Black men as potential role models. It was determined that Black males were consistently present and/or influential for the participants; all males in the study identified their fathers or males other than their fathers to whom they had access as potential positive role models. It should be noted that Earl and Lohmann appear to have made an assumption that participants' perception of Black males as influential was equivalent to perceiving these Black males as role models. Regardless, Earl and Lohmann's findings were clear that even without present fathers, African American males look to other males as models.

Although it appears that parents and other relatives are most frequently identified by African American males as potential role models, other research presents findings that are starkly different. When one researcher asked African American males to identify a role model and that role model's occupation, participants overwhelmingly identified sports and media figures (Assibey-Mensah, 1997). Of approximately 4,000 participants, from 85% of 10-year olds and 98% of 18-year olds identified athletes, primarily basketball and football players, as role models. Movie or television stars followed athletes in popularity. None of the participants identified an educator as a role model; neither did they identify a parent or relative. Yancey and colleagues (2002) presented

similar findings. In their study, males and African Americans were more likely to select a public figure (i.e., actor, singer, political leader, etc.) than a known individual as a role model. In fact, only 7% of adolescents, overall, identified professionals while 34% chose famous individuals; 24% of African Americans identified sports figures as role models (Yancey et al., 2002). Given their finding that 98% of those identifying a sports figure were male, it is likely that the majority of the African American participants who identified a sports figure were also male. Such a finding offers an important perspective about the significant role of public figures as role models and the fact that even without direct or personal contact, these individuals remain largely influential.

Professional sports figures are but one subset of the popular media figures that are often identified by African American males as role models. Another subset includes those popular figures found in entertainment. For instance, in Taylor et al.'s (2003) study comparing gang-involved and non-involved African American male adolescents on positive individual and social behavior showed that the most frequently identified role model for gang-involved participants was a rapper. Perhaps it is the case for adolescents that being involved in gang activity is what is particularly predictive of identifying rappers as role models. Bryant and Zimmerman's (2003) research show different findings for African American high school-aged students. In their study, over half of participants identified a parent as a role model, followed by 20% who identified some other family member. Only 2.5% identified a famous person as a role model. In fact, more participants (approximately 12%) identified "no one" as a role model than those who identified a famous person. The difference in these findings may be attributed to how the researchers

presented the question to participants (i.e., "who is your role model" versus "what male or female figure do you look up to").

Potential without Presence: Absence of Role Models

African American males are able to identify what a role model is and readily observe role model potential in individuals who exert positive influence (Somers & Piliawsky, 2004). Even so, they are not always able to identify personal role models, and particularly a role model matched on the basis of race and/or gender. Twenty-eight percent of the African American adolescents in Zimmerman et al.'s (1995) study were unable to identify any male role model. In a case study of a mathematically talented African American male adolescent, Thompson and Lewis (2005) report that role models, described as passive socializers, were not observed at all by the participant. Instead, active socializers, those more traditionally viewed as mentors, contributed to the participant's success.

In a study investigating the effect of role model relationships on academic outcomes, 44% of students of color, as compared to 36% of White students were unable to identify a role model of any kind (Zirkel, 2002). The same was true in a study by Yancey and colleagues (2002) where 44% of urban adolescents, regardless of race, were unable to identify a role model. These figures changed when race was considered. African Americans (53%) and Latinos (54%) were less likely to identify a role model than Caucasian Americans (64%).

Negative impact of role model absence. An inability to identify a personal role model is problematic when considering the findings that suggest that having a role model serves a protective function against negative outcomes (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009;

Zirkel, 2002). In their study on such protective effects of role models, Hurd et al.

determined that urban adolescents' tendency to identify two role models showed more

protective effects than having even one role model. Still, the presence of just one role

model allowed urban adolescents to avoid negative behaviors when exposed to negative

adult others. In Zirkel's study, students with a role model, and particularly a role model

matched on race and gender, performed better academically than those with no role

model. Gender and racial match, being of particular importance, raises concerns for

African American males. The gender-role socialization perspective predicts that because

fathers are especially important role models for sons, male youth suffer more (e.g., poor

educational outcomes) from father absence (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006). Thus, when

considering the frequent absence of fathers from African American families, a lack of

other African American males as role models may be especially disadvantageous for

African American males.

Does Presence Equal Adequacy: The Effect of Negative Role Models

Much of the research investigating role model characteristics for African

American males neglects a discussion about the type of influence imparted on the

emulator. In fact, asking participants who they look up to or perceive as a role model

barely speaks to the direction of their influence; and researchers often fail to gather

additional information about identified models that would provide insight into the

direction of influence—whether positive or negative. It is suggested by researchers that

some adolescents are more prone to the influence from negative role models—those who

encourage or condone socially undesirable behavior—than other adolescents. Hurd,

Zimmerman, and Xue (2009) explain that adolescents who are exposed to neighborhood

crime are more likely to observe those who participate in criminal behavior, subsequently

identifying them as role models. Ascher (1992) adds that the reason African American

boys are surrounded by negative images of African American men as potentially negative

role models is because positive African American men have fled from inner-city

neighborhoods leaving African American youth without appropriate male models in the

home, community, and media. Assibey-Mensah (1997) supported this notion when

claiming that Blacks, being three times more likely to live in poverty, are robbed of the

role models that have been critical to their success in the past. Thus, largely as a part of

neighborhood environment, negative role models do exist.

Shade (1983) goes deeper into the issue by presenting a perspective on how

African American youth develop an aspiration to emulate negative role models. For

Shade, a role model or significant other is one whose role entails communicating the

norms of culture or society, defining and modeling behavior appropriate for the culture or

society, and providing necessary information about the environment. Upon further

investigation of norms within African American youths' role model experiences, Shade

argues that television and street culture often fill the role defined for role models. In her

description of television and street culture as "third parents" Shade suggests that for low-

income youth television serves more of a socializing function than other things or people.

Television and street culture mimic role models by communicating, defining, and

modeling behavior less desired by parents and the broader community, in effect, meeting

the criteria for 'role model' albeit a negative depiction of such.

Similar to Shade's discussion of negative role models is Thompson and Lewis's

(2005) description of image socializers as those who are also potentially negatively

influential to African American youth as role models. Image socializers are described as those who establish an image to which adolescents can attach a value claim. They are distinguishable from passive and active socializers because they do not necessarily provide a vision of success and achievement as with passive socializers or manipulate the adolescents' social world as with active socializers. Instead, image socializers plant an image in a person's mind, influencing their social world. Under this definition, Thompson and Lewis classify media figures perceived as role models and negative role models such as street thugs. Data from Thompson and Lewis's case study revealed that although image socializers did not contribute to the participant's success, these socializers were seen as extremely influential to other African American males in general.

Gender- and Race-Matched Role Models: The African American Male Influence

When positive role models are present, consideration must be taken for other important characteristics (i.e., racial and gender match) that also are influential. The need for African American men as role models has been recognized as essential for the advancement of educational and psychosocial outcomes or simply as a way to promote Black success (Ascher, 1992; Hamamm & Walker, 1993; Zirkel, 2002). Modeling of success feeds into the idea that race- and gender-matched role models are beneficial because they model future possibilities for African American males (Zirkel, 2002). In addition, observing race- and gender-matched role models provides an example of the racial and gender structure of the culture (Zirkel, 2002). Therefore, the absence of these individuals sends a negative message about future possibilities, and seeing individuals in positions of success shows potential emulators that opportunities are available not only to

the general public but to their specific cultural group as well. This failure to observe

future possibilities may have been especially relevant for the significant amount of youth

in Zirkel's (2002) study who were unable to identify race- and gender-matched role

models. In this study investigating the relationship between race- and gender-matched

role models and academic achievement, findings indicated that fewer students of color

identified race- and gender-matched role models than Caucasian American students

(Zirkel, 2002). In particular, 50% of the students of color identified non-matched role

models as compared to only 17% of Caucasian American students. Furthermore,

identifying a race- and gender-matched role model was associated with better academic

performance.

African American males can serve as effective role models for their youth

counterparts since there is potential to relate personally and to fully understand the

African American male experience. For instance, Hamann and Walker (1993) elaborated

on the importance of African American teachers as role models, stating that they tend to

have a better understanding of difficulties experienced by African American students

than do teachers of other races. Reciprocally, young African American males also can

gain understanding from older African American male role models through personal

identification. Ascher (1992) argues the importance of African American men as role

models by suggesting that African American boys need to bond with other African

American men in order to learn the rights and responsibilities of becoming a responsible

young man. This bonding experience is seen as a potential way for African American

male role models in general to make up for the absence of African American males in the

family (Maylor, 2009). Finally, Hall and Pizarro (2010) add that the presence of Black role models can decrease self-hate in African American male youth.

Hurd and colleagues (2009) assert that African American adolescents not only prefer race-matched role models but also prefer same-gender role models for similar reasons; they are given an image of what they can achieve. Hurd et al.'s suggestion is strongly supported by the data from Yancey et al.'s research that revealed that 91% of males and 80% of females chose same-gender role models. Furthermore, 98% of those selecting media figures were male and so was their identified role model (Yancey et al., 2002). This point is further driven by Zirkel's assertion that there are still limits observed when an African American of one gender perceives an African American of another gender as his or her role model. For example, it is possible for an African American male to be influenced by an African American female role model, but she is limited in her knowledge of maleness (Zirkel, 2002). This is in line with the argument that, particularly for adolescents, same-gender adult role models are best in meeting the developmental needs of identity clarification and future role exploration (Greenberger, Chen, & Beam, 1998). On the other hand, a Black male role model interviewed in a study by Maylor (2009) suggested that maleness is not necessary to successfully serve as a role model for African American males.

Although race and gender-matched role models are associated with more positive outcomes, the strongest evidence is for race-matched role models. In Hurd et al.'s (2009) research gender match was significant for academic outcomes for females only; having a gender-matched role model was not related to similar outcomes for males. Hamann and Walker (1993), however, argue that African American students' understanding and

educational development are enhanced by same-race, same-gender role models. Furthermore, they were able to show the tendency for students to identify race- and gender-matched role models. Their research results determined that of the 52% of their participants who identified a teacher as a role model, 41% identified teachers of the same race and gender. These teacher role models were more likely to be of the same race than the same gender.

Research on college students with hearing impairments has shown similar results for African Americans (Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer, 2005). In a study investigating deaf students' attitudes toward role models, African American participants were the only ethnic group surveyed to perceive a greater need for racially-matched role models than deaf role models (Parasnis et al., 2005). Other study participants (Caucasian, Asian, and Hispanic) perceived the need for a deaf role model as more important than or just as important as the need for a role model of the same ethnicity as themselves. Thus, it appears that the salient identity for African American students with hearing impairments is with race, not impairment (Parasnis et al., 2005). Furthermore, in Yancey et al.'s (2002) study 72% of all adolescents, across races, chose a role model of the same race or ethnicity with 96% of African Americans identifying a role model of the same race.

Other researchers have questioned the relative value of non-Black positive influencers as potential role models for African American males (Shreffler, 1998). For instance, Reglin (1994) acknowledged that while Caucasian American teachers can certainly serve as role models for African American males, there is a need for African American male teachers as role models. The visibility of African American teachers promotes the establishment of future possibilities and positive self-image for African

American students. Reglin also suggests that when African Americans cannot be found,

educators should look into the local community to recruit them from local businesses,

colleges (e.g., students and professors), and churches. Walker (1988) provides further

evidence of the nature of the impact when African American males are allowed to

experience other African American males as their role models. Walker discussed a

program whereby African American male high school students served as classroom aides

to elementary students. Although race was not a factor in matching during the initial

implementation of the program, the results demonstrated that African American

elementary students were extremely accepting of the assistance of the African American

classroom aides and that African American classroom aides were more successful than

classroom aides of another race. Other research on Black male educators as role models

has revealed that Black males within a leadership position inevitably become role models

for Black males (Maylor, 2009).

Summary

The reviewed research shows the most evidence for the idea that role models for

African American males are often parents, siblings, and extended family, nonfamilial

known individuals to include teachers, professionals, and clergy, and popular media

figures including athletes, actors, musicians, and political and community leaders. Parents

or sports figures appear to be the most identified; yet even when fathers are absent from

the family, African American males still look to other males as role models.

Unfortunately though, a percentage of African American males are unable to identify a

role model at all. Another observation was that when role models can be identified there

often is not a clear indication from researchers of the type of influence exerted by the role

model. As such, special attention must be paid to the environmental conditions of the population under investigation, especially since the environment has been considered as a significant contributor to whether or not positive or negative role models are available. Finally, a strong body of research backs the notion that role models who are similar on race and gender provide optimal conditions for a positive influence on African American males. Moreover, race, as supported by research and argued by researchers, is considered to be more important than any other characteristic.

Of the research reviewed on role models for African American males, few studies addressed research trends in role model selection for a particular subset of African American males—those attending college. Could the same developmental patterns emerge for this population as with African American male youth and adolescents? Are role models particularly relevant on the college level? Considering that the ability to identify a role model is associated with positive outcomes for African American males, college populations are particularly relevant to the discussion. College attendance is evidence of some level of achievement. Thus, investigating factors such as role model identification, characteristics most influential in role model selection, and racial identity development for college students lays the foundation for an integration of role models and racial identity for African American males.

HBCUs vs. PWIs: Institution Type as a Predictor of Cultural Experience

In making their decision to attend an institution of higher education, African American students have a choice between institutions where they are the minority and institutions that have a critical mass of Black students, faculty, and staff. The basis of their decision could significantly impact their college experience, personal development,

academic wellbeing, and postgraduate career aspirations. The cultural differences

between these two types of institutions, predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and

historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), are considerable and the decision

to attend will send students down two different paths on their journeys to degree

completion. HBCUs were created with the purpose of providing education to African

Americans at a time when African Americans were unwelcomed at PWIs (Brown &

Davis, 2001; Stewart, Wright, Perry, & Rankin, 2008). One of the goals of HBCUs has

been to maintain the historical and cultural tradition of African Americans (Brown &

Davis, 2001), and as such, these institutions were designed with African Americans in

mind and with the intention to meet their unique needs. PWIs were not designed with the

same mission and even though racial diversity has increased at these institutions over the

course of time, many other cultural variables that would make the environment

welcoming for African Americans have not (Adams, 2005).

Findings have strongly supported the idea that African American students fare

better at HBCUs than they do at PWIs (Adams, 2005; Allen, 1992; Brown & Davis,

2001; Cheatham, Slaney, & Coleman, 1990; Closson, & Henry, 2008; Davis, 1994; Fries-

Britt, & Turner, 2002; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Love et al., 2009; Negga, Applewhite, &

Livingston, 2007; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Spurgeon & Myers, 2010; Stewart

et al., 2008). The differences in experiences have everything to do with the commitment

of HBCUs to Black education and the cultural climate of these institutions in holding to

this commitment. HBCUs have resources and social capital that make them more

effective in responding to the needs of the students (Kim & Conrad, 2006). This

information is significant when considered within the contexts of social comparison

through racially matched role models and racial identity development. HBCUs have environments that promote nurturance of African American students. This, in turn, allows for easy access to African American role models and the development of strong racial identities that occurs through exposure to diverse and supportive faculty, peers, and staff and the commitment to Black tradition and cultural awareness.

Research comparing the experiences of African American students at HBCUs versus those at PWIs has found that students at HBCUs have more positive experiences and report gains related to academic outcomes, cultural awareness, faculty support, racial identity development, access to African American role models, social support and integration, sense of belonging, institutional attachment, career aspirations, and overall psychosocial adjustment (Allen, 1992; Adam, 2005; Brown & Davis, 2001; Davis, 1994; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Palmer et al., 2010; Spurgeon & Myers, 2010). HBCUs are suggested to be more nurturing and family-oriented and to provide a more supportive learning environment that consists of supportive and involved faculty (Davis, 1994; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Love et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2010; Spurgeon & Myers, 2010; Stewart et al., 2008); a characteristic that is apparently difficult to come by at a PWI. Allen (1992) found that institutional racial composition is significantly correlated with relations with professors. African American students at HBCUS have been found to have increased levels of engagement with faculty including individual contact, more meaningful connections, more positive student-faculty interactions, and closer relationships with faculty (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Stewart et al., 2008). Perhaps positive outcomes are experienced by students at HBCUs because the frequency of contact between students and faculty is a predictor of academic and

cognitive growth, higher grades, and higher degree aspirations (Cheatham et al., 1990; Kim & Conrad, 2006).

Faculty diversity is another aspect of attending an HBCU that students electing to attend a PWI may sacrifice. Students at HBCUs have access to a higher percentage of Black faculty and staff. Black faculty made up 58.2% of full time faculty at HBCUs in 1999 as opposed to representing less than 2% of full time faculty at PWIs. Furthermore, 27% of the faculty members at HBCUs were White and 14.2% were other races (Stewart et al., 2008). Such diversity in faculty and exposure to racially similar professors and administration make it likely that African American students will perceive positive role models at HBCUs (Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010). Additionally, students at HBCUs may have access to role models in their own profession through a network of alumni and renowned professionals who are hosted by HBCUs (Stewart et al., 2008). The potential for African Americans to identify role models is in line with one of the goals in the founding of HBCUs, which is to provide Black role models to African Americans so that they would be more positively impacted by the dynamics of society (Brown & Davis, 2001).

On the other hand, African American students at PWIs do not have the same potential to perceive racially-matched role models through African American faculty and staff. Not only do these students have less access to Black faculty but they also complain of a lack of interaction with and support from faculty in general (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010). African Americans at PWIs report feeling alienated and isolated because of a lack of contact with White faculty and students (Allen, 1992; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Stewart et al., 2008). The lack of interaction with faculty members also contributes to students'

feelings of unbelonging and disconnect from the institution (Closson & Henry, 2008). As a result, African American students at PWIs may need to look to others for support and ultimately may have a more difficult time identifying African American role models.

General Summary and Integration

A consideration for the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical uses of the term 'role model' necessitates a two-part definition that is descriptive of both the role model's possessive qualities and the perceptions of the individual identifying the role model. As such, for the current study, a role model is defined as 'an individual who one strives to be like by acknowledging, desiring, or adopting a similar characteristic or an individual who one looks up to.' This definition is distinguished from 'mentors' in that the influence of role models is not necessarily intentional and identification of a role model does not require interaction for such influence to occur. Nevertheless, mentors and role models can be one in the same. Further investigation reveals that the types of role models selected vary tremendously on variables such as relationship, gender, and race.

The similarity hypothesis linked with social comparison theory supports the idea that match, based on some similar characteristic, is likely in the case of role model relationships. Furthermore, the significance of that match is often solely related to perceived similarity as opposed to some other characteristic of importance. The self-defining comparisons hypothesis explains why racial match or match on some other similar characteristic holds such significance in social comparisons. The fact that one prefers to compare one's self with a similar other suggests that the domain of comparison, in this case race, is central to that person's self-definition. Thus, it is suggested that when race-matched role models for African Americans are perceived as

important despite dissimilarity in other regards, then race for African Americans must be perceived as important. This introduces racial identity as a relevant construct.

Racial identity, defined as the extent to which importance is ascribed to shared racial heritage and the qualitative meaning attributed to membership within the racial group, is the construct used to determine racial centrality. Black racial identity, the importance of Blackness for African Americans, is conceptualized based on psychological nigrescence. Psychological nigrescence is a theoretical concept that describes a process of becoming Black, which entails progression from a psychologically unhealthy to a healthy conception of Blackness and overall self-acceptance. Black racial identity, described as part of psychological nigrescence consists of racial identity attitudes ranging in degree of sophistication with more sophisticated attitudes being the most psychological healthy and most related to positive outcomes.

A look at trends regarding role models for African American males reveals that their role models often are known individuals with whom they have interaction such as parents, siblings, extended family, and nonfamilial known individuals such as teachers, clergy, and other professionals. Role models for African American males also include popular media figures such as athletes, entertainers, and community leaders. Still, African American males are often unable to identify role models or identify role models who exert negative influence. Research suggests that the remedy for some of these more unfortunate realities is encouragement of role model selection based on racial similarity, with the best possibility for African American males being other African American males as role models. For African American male college students, attending HBCUs may be the way to gain access to such role models. Beyond theoretical suggestions and

conceptual arguments that racial centrality (or a more sophisticated racial identity attitude) purports racial matching in role model selection, there is little-to-no empirical research integrating these constructs. The current study will provide such integration.

Statement of the Problem and Hypotheses

African American males experience negative outcomes when unable to identify a role model (Hurd et al., 2009) and unfortunately, African Americans are more likely than their Caucasian American counterparts to be unable to identify positive role models (Yancey et al., 2002). Moreover, research has consistently supported the finding that African American males are susceptible to and often experience a host of negative outcomes (Assibey-Mensah, 1997; Hays & Mindel, 1973; White & Rayle, 2007). Role model research is timely and necessary for addressing this issue. A look into the elements that influence role model selection, namely characteristics on which individuals compare themselves to role models, will shed light on the discussion. When role models are identified by African American males they vary with regard to degree of similarity and influence (Ascher, 1992; Hurd et al., 2009; Shade, 1983; Thompson & Lewis, 2005); and it is proposed that racially similar role models have the potential to be the most influential because of what their presence suggests to African American males about future possibilities (Zirkel, 2002). However, it may be inaccurate to assume that race alone will influence role model selection, without also considering the extent to which an individual considers race as central to their self-identity.

Furthermore, when using an African American college population differences between the HBCU and PWI college experiences and subsequent effects on racial identity development cannot be ignored. All of these pieces—role model preference,

racial identity, and institution type—must be incorporated to determine the most accurate depiction of the role model selection process for African American males. Determination of how African Americans identify role models and identification of the role model characteristics on which they base their decision will provide the potential for resolving the problems that have been identified in existing role model research: the inability to identify role models, selection of negative role models, and selection of models whose success is unattainable. Likewise, the investigation of the role model selection process and the role of racial identity, especially as investigated in a college population, can determine the true importance of racial similarity in role model selection as well as the effect racial centrality has on the identification of racially-similar role models.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 states: <u>African American male college students will identify role models who are African American more often than role models of another race</u>. Social comparison theory purports that comparisons to similar others are the comparisons that are most likely to occur (Festinger, 1954; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Wood, 1989). Furthermore, research on role models for African American males suggest that racial match in role model selection appears to be important to African Americans (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009; Maylor, 2009; Parasnis, Samar & Fischer, 2005; Reglin, 1994). Although role models may differ on other characteristics and although these role models may appear irrelevant on other domains of comparison, African Americans often consider race as particularly significant. Furthermore, match on characteristics other than race, such as gender, also occur when selecting a role model (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Shreffler, 1998); however, theory and research agree that racial match, for multiple

reasons, very often occurs in the social comparisons of African Americans. The research

reviewed has not specifically investigated role model race as a primary variable.

Hypothesis 2 states: <u>African American male college students who attend HBCUs</u>

<u>will identify African Americans as role models more than will African American male</u>

<u>college students who attend PWIs</u>. A finding that African American male college

students tend identify racially-matched role models would make it important to

investigate potential differences based on institution type. African American students at

HBCUs are likely to have exposure to more African American peers, alumni, faculty, and

professionals than those at PWIs—individuals who could potentially serve as positive

role models. Furthermore, the experience of attending an HBCU leads to the likelihood

that more interaction with faculty will occur. These environments have proven to be

nurturing and supportive, promoting positive academic and other outcomes for the

students therein, namely the ability to identify racially matched positive role models.

Hypothesis 3 states: <u>For African American male college students, more</u>

<u>sophisticated racial identity attitudes as measured by the Cross Racial Identity Scale</u>

<u>(Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, and Internalization</u>

<u>Multiculturalist-Inclusive attitudes) will accurately predict the race of the primary role</u>

<u>model (i.e., the higher the scores on each of these scales the more likely the primary role</u>

<u>model will be African American)</u>. Research on racial identity attitudes tied to an

expanded nigrescence theory suggests that Immersion-Emersion and Internalization

attitudes are more advanced than the Pre-Encounter and Encounter attitudes (Nghe &

Mahalik, 2001; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Vandiver, 2001). Identification with and positive

perceptions of the African American race occurs in the former attitudes, whereas

misconceptions, self-hatred, and negative views of Blackness permeate the latter attitudes

(Simmons, Worrell, & Berry, 2008; Vandiver, 2001). Perceived significance of

Blackness, which occurs within the Immersion-Emersion and Internalization attitudes,

makes it more likely that social comparison to other African Americans will take place.

Extant research on social comparisons through role model selection fails to consider the

relevance of racial identity level and instead assumes that perceived similarity alone will

promote comparison (Assibey-Mensah, 1997; Reglin, 1994). Consideration for racial

centrality, measured by racial identity level, may reveal what actually occurs in the

process of selecting a role model, particularly with African Americans. Higher levels of

racial identity suggest greater favorability of the Black race and with greater favorability

there is a greater likelihood of perceived similarity and positive comparison. Thus, racial

identity level may serve as a predictor of role model race.

     Hypothesis 4 states: <u>African American male college students will list a variety of</u>

<u>characteristics that influence their selection of role models (e. g., relationship status,</u>

<u>gender, professional background, etc.).</u> Hypothesis 4 investigates the potential that

African American male college students may find role model characteristics other than

race to be important. Research on the role models of African American males suggests

that role models, although often matched on race or gender, also possess a multitude of

other characteristics that make them appealing as standards of comparison. Role models

have been identified on the basis of family relation (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Hurd et

al., 2009; Ringness, 1967; Shade, 1983; Zimmerman, Salem, & Maton, 1995), perceived

success (Assibey-Mensah, 1997; Taylor et al., 2003), prominence and popularity

(Yancey, Siegel, & McDaniel, 2002), proximity, occupational similarity, and professional

aspirations (Shade, 1983). The focus of the proposed study on racial similarity and

identity, although an important one, should not overshadow the possibility that other

characteristics may be perceived by African American male college students as equally

important. It is the goal of Hypothesis 4 to produce discussion that will yield informative

data and potentially produce a holistic approach to understanding role model

characteristics that are important (and unimportant) to the population of interest.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Methods

Participants

      Sample Size. Sample size was determined, in part, by conducting a power analysis. A power analysis based upon desired statistical power of .80, alpha level of .05, effect size of .50, and degrees of freedom of 1, yielded a sample size of 32 for Hypotheses 1 and 2. The same procedures were used for Hypotheses 1 and 2 since the statistical procedures used to address these hypotheses are within the same test family (Chi-square). Power was set at .80; this is considered an adequate standard for social science research (c.f. Borenstein, Rothstein, & Cohen, 2001). The effect size was set at .50, which is determined by Cohen's standards to be a large effect. Thus, with a minimum of 32 participants the statistic used for Hypotheses 1 and 2 would do well in detecting a large difference.

      For Hypothesis 3, a different method for determining minimum sample size was used because this hypothesis is not designed to answer a question of a statistically significant effect as is answered by power analyses. In conducting a predictive discriminant analysis (PDA), Garson (2008) suggests that the smallest group should have at least 4-5 times the number of participants as there are independent or predictor

variables. Since there are 3 predictor variables for Hypothesis 3 (Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive racial identity attitudes), the minimum number of participants in either group (racially-matched role model versus non-racially matched role model) would be 15. However, to allow for the inclusion of the Pre-Encounter attitudes in any post hoc analyses (total of 6 predictor variables), the minimum group size is 30, for a minimum total sample size of 60 participants (30 per group) to conduct a PDA. Since researchers are generally encouraged to avoid low sample sizes when conducting PDAs (Poulsen & French, n.d.), the sample size for this study was set at 120, double the amount for the calculated minimum.

Participant demographics. Data were collected from 200 individuals. In total, 96 individuals were excluded from the final analysis. Thirty-two participants were excluded from the analysis because they were female. An additional 27 participants, although male, were excluded because they did not meet inclusion criteria of being African American/Black. Another 25 participants who identified as African American males were excluded because they did not meet inclusion criteria of being currently enrolled in an undergraduate program; 22 were post-baccalaureate and three attended community colleges. An additional 10 participants did not indicate their degree status (i.e., graduate versus undergraduate) and thus were excluded. Finally, two participants were excluded due to having excessively missing data on the measures.

The final sample consisted of 104 African American males actively enrolled in undergraduate programs at 32 different colleges and universities across the United States. Participants attended predominantly White ($n = 82$), ethnically-mixed ($n = 6$), and historically Black ($n = 16$) institutions. Students represented 25 predominantly White, six

ethnically-mixed, and one historically Black colleges and universities. Participant ages

ranged from 18 to 28 years, with most participants falling between the ages of 19 and 23

years. Five participants did not report their age. Most participants were juniors or seniors

(57.7%), attended PWIs (78.8%), and were from working or middle class backgrounds

(75.9%). Further demographic information for participants is provided in Table 1.

Instruments

Role models. The Role Model Survey (see Appendix A) is a self-report

questionnaire created by the primary investigator and validated by three experts in the

area of role model research to collect qualitative and quantitative data about participants'

role models. The primary investigator sent the original version of the Role Model Survey

to three Ph.D.-level professionals who have published role model research using an

African American sample. The general finding from these experts was that the qualitative

survey questions should be more open-ended and general. Changes were made to the

Role Model Survey in consideration of the feedback including the consolidation of

questions, elimination of questions, and rewording of questions to make them more open,

and less leading.

The final version of the survey consisted of 18 items, including open-ended

questions and closed-ended demographic items. Participants were directed to read the

definition of a role model provided and to answer questions that follow. The definition

given stated "*A role model is often defined as "someone who you strive to be like or*

someone you look up to." Based on their response, signifying their ability to identify or

not identify a role model, participants were directed to answer a set of questions. If the

participant was able to identify a role model based on the definition, then he was asked to

Table 1

Frequency Counts for Participant Demographic Variables

Participant Characteristics	Frequency	%
Age:		
18	5	4.8
19	13	12.5
20	31	29.8
21	20	19.2
22	14	13.5
23	9	8.7
24-28	7	6.8
Did not specify	5	4.8
Classification:		
1st Year/Freshman	5	4.8
2nd Year/Sophomore	15	14.4
3rd Year/Junior	26	25.0
4th Year/Senior	34	32.7
Did not specify UG classification	24	23.1
School Racial Composition:		
Mostly Black (HBCU)	16	15.4
Mixed	6	5.8
Mostly White (PWI)	82	78.8
Importance of Religion:		
Not important	10	9.6
Somewhat important	21	20.2
Very important	70	67.3
Did not specify	3	2.9
Self-Reported Family Income:		
Less than $10,000	8	7.7
Between $10,000 and $20,000	10	9.6
Between $20,000 and $30,000	11	10.6
Between $30,000 and $40,000	12	11.5
Between $40,000 and $60,000	17	16.3
Over $60,000	39	37.5
Did not specify	7	6.7

Table 1 cont.

Participant Characteristics	Frequency	%
Primary Community Raised:		
Rural	12	11.5
Suburban	48	46.2
Urban	42	40.4
Other	2	1.9
Racial Composition of Community:		
Mostly Black	46	44.2
Mixed	35	33.7
Mostly White	23	22.1
Ethnic Organization Memberships:		
None	22	21.2
1	35	33.7
2	28	26.9
3 or more	18	17.3
Did not specify	1	1.0
Extracurricular Involvement:		
Academic/Department/Professional Organization	45	43.3
Athletic/Sports/Recreation Team	21	20.2
Fraternal/Greek Organization	44	42.3
Honor Society	16	15.4
Multicultural Organization	41	39.4
Performing Arts Organization	13	12.5
Political Organization	6	5.8
Religious Organization	26	25.0
Service Organization	32	30.8
Social Organization	36	34.6
State/Regional Organization	8	7.7
Student Council/University-Wide Organization	12	11.5
Other	6	5.8

Table 1 cont.

Participant Characteristics	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Highest Level of Education of Parents:	Mother		Father	
Elementary school	--	--	1	1.0
Some high school	3	2.9	3	2.9
High school diploma or equivalent	11	10.6	26	25.0
Business or trade school	3	2.9	3	2.9
Some college	22	21.2	18	17.3
Associate or two-year degree	8	7.7	10	9.6
Bachelor's or four-year degree	27	26.0	23	22.1
Some graduate or professional school	3	2.9	2	1.9
Graduate or professional school	25	24.0	15	14.4
Did not specify	2	1.9	3	2.9
Self-Reported Family's Socioeconomic Status:				
Poor	6		5.8	
Working Class	36		34.6	
Middle Class	43		41.3	
Upper Middle	17		16.3	
Wealthy	1		1.0	
Did not specify	1		1.0	
Physical Health:				
Very Poor	--		--	
Poor	1		1.0	
Fair	15		14.4	
Good	47		45.2	
Very Good	38		36.5	
Did not specify	3		2.9	
Mental Health:				
Very Poor	--		--	
Poor	1		1.0	
Fair	13		12.5	
Good	39		37.5	
Very Good	51		49.0	

Note. "--" denotes that no responses were recorded for the item's answer choice. $N = 104$.

provide additional information about his identified role model, as follows: role model's

initials, questions about characteristics of their role model (i.e., *Tell me about this*

person. Why do you/did you look up to (or want to be like) this person?"), and

demographic characteristics about the role model (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual

orientation, educational background, occupation, known/unknown, living/deceased,

institutional affiliation, and relationship to role model). The following statement was also

included: "**If you are able to identify more than one role model, please select the*

individual who you consider to be your primary role model." If a participant was unable

to identify a role model he was prompted to answer a different set of open-ended

questions about why he was unable to identify a role model (i.e., *Why haven't you had a*

role model?) and about what role model characteristics *would* appeal to him most (i.e.,

Would you like to have a role model? and *What type of individual do you look up to?*).

For these participants, role model demographic questions did not apply.

      Racial identity. The Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) (Vandiver et al., 2000)

was used to measure racial identity. (The CRIS is not included in the Appendices at the

request of the developers. Those interested in obtaining the measure should contact Dr.

Beverly Vandiver.) The CRIS is a measure of Black racial identity attitudes as described

by Cross's revised model of nigrescence (Vandiver et al., 2002). Per the CRIS manual,

the term "racial identity" is not used on CRIS forms due to the potential for biased

responding. Instead, the survey is titled the Cross Social Attitude Scale. The CRIS is

written at about a sixth grade reading level and consists of two sections. Section I consists

of 23 demographic questions and Section II is comprised of 40 items that measure racial

identity attitudes (Worrell et al., 2004). Items in Section I may be supplemented but

elimination of items is discouraged because these demographic variables may play a role in understanding and interpreting racial identity attitudes (Worrell et al., 2004). One additional demographic item asking participants to indicate their extracurricular involvement was added to Section I by the primary investigator in order to provide further descriptive information about the sample.

Items in Section II are responded to on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Section II is comprised of six subscales that measure six different racial identity attitude clusters. These attitudes are adapted from the four stages associated with the revised nigrescence theory, except the attitudes represent themes of the stages rather than the stages themselves (Vandiver et al., 2002). There are three Pre-Encounter subscales (Pre-Encounter Assimilation (PA), Pre-Encounter Miseducation (PM), and Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (PSH)) that measure the extent to which individuals subscribe to the themes that align with the Pre-Encounter stage of Cross's nigrescence theory. Items on the PA subscale measure attitudes that subscribe to the values of mainstream White culture (e.g., *I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American*). The PM subscale consists of items that measure attitudes that portray a belief of stereotypical or negative attitudes toward Blacks (e.g., *Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work*). The PSH subscale contains items that measure attitudes that show a dislike for being Black (e.g., *Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black*).

The Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) subscale measures the extent to which attitudes align with this stage of nigrescence theory. This particular subscale focuses on the aspect of the Immersion-Emersion stage where an individual portrays a

hatred for all things White (e.g., *I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for all White people"*). The last two subscales measure themes of the Internalization stage of Cross's model. The Internalization Afrocentricity (IA) subscale measures attitudes that subscribe to a pan-Africanist ideology and a view that all people of African descent must align for a common cause (e.g., *I see and think about things from an Afrocentric perspective"*). Finally, the Internalization Multiculturalist-Inclusive (IMCI) subscale measures attitudes that align with self-internalization and acceptance of a Black identity as well as other identity categories (e.g., *As a Multiculturalist, I am connected to many groups (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays, and lesbians, etc.)"*) (Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver et al, 2000; Vandiver et al., 2002; Worrell, Vandiver, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2004).

Internal consistency has been established for each subscale. For the PA subscale α has ranged from .83 to .85. For the PM subscale, α has ranged from .77 to .89. The PSH subscale reliability has ranged from .70 to .88. The IEAW subscale has established reliability with α ranging from .83 and .90. The IA subscale reliability has ranged from .82 to .85. For the IMCI subscale, α has ranged from .76 to .86 (Vandiver et al., 2002; Worrell et al., 2004). The reliability estimates for the CRIS subscales in the final validation sample were high, ranging from .78 to .89 (Worrell et al., 2004). Construct validity has been established for the CRIS through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. In a study conducted by Vandiver et al. (2002) that utilized exploratory factor analysis, six factors loaded onto the six CRIS subscales, thus establishing structural validity. In a second study by the same authors, confirmatory factor analysis was used to

further establish construct validity and showed that a six-factor model fit with the six subscales of the CRIS.

Convergent and discriminant validity were also tested in the study by Vandiver and colleagues (2002), the former through CRIS item comparisons with another measure of racial identity and the latter through CRIS item comparisons against multiple other non-related measures. Convergent validity was successfully established through testing the similarity between CRIS scores and scores on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). Hypotheses regarding the constructs of racial salience, centrality, and evaluation as measured by the subscales of the CRIS and MIBI were all supported through significant correlations between the scores of the measures (i.e., correlations of at least $|.30|$ achieving significance at the .001 level). Discriminant validity was successfully established through low correlations between CRIS scores and scores of the Big Five Inventory, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Vandiver et al., 2002), all measures of constructs unrelated to the construct of racial identity.

Study Design

The primary goal of this research project was to describe the relationship among the variables of institution type and racial identity in relation to the variable of role model race. The design of the proposed study was correlational using a survey technique. According to Christensen (2004), correlational studies are research that investigate the relationship between two variables and then determine the degree of that relationship. It was proposed that a relationship exists between institution type and role model race as

well as role model race and racial identity. Survey methodology was employed to test these hypotheses.

A secondary goal of this study was to determine what additional role model characteristics were appealing or unappealing to participants. This was important in order to avoid anchoring on one variable (role model race) as the only variable of importance to African American males in role model selection. Information about role model characteristics was expected to further inform the literature on African American male college students' identification of role models. This goal was achieved through the open-ended questions on the Role Model Survey and subsequent qualitative analysis.

All instruments were presented in electronic format and participants completed the measures through the Integrated Network Quizzing, Surveying, and Interactive Testing (InQsit) system, a secure online testing system that securely collects and stores research data.

Procedure

Sampling procedure. Stratified and snowball sampling procedures were initially used to obtain the study's sample. The primary investigator and her committee identified a HBCU similar in size and educational status to the researcher's host institution, a Midwestern PWI, as there appeared to be more than enough African American male students enrolled on these two campuses to meet the minimum sample size. The primary investigator later added two other campuses, one PWI and one HBCU, in an attempt to increase the sample. After doing so, the sample of African American males from HBCUs still had not reached the minimum level necessary for the study; the primary investigator then employed other means to reach potential participants as detailed below.

Medium-sized Midwestern PWI. This is the primary investigator's host institution. Once Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained, a recruitment message was emailed to all undergraduate students on multiple occasions across two semesters. The recruitment message was also sent to students on behalf of willing instructors at each of the four universities and to organizations exclusive to Black students (e.g., Black student associations). In some cases, extra credit was offered by instructors as an incentive for participating. The electronic communication used to solicit participants included a written purpose of the study, incentives, and the electronic link to the study (see Appendix B).

Various in-person recruitment strategies could be employed at the host institution to attract eligible participants. For instance, participants were solicited at a pizza party hosted by the primary investigator. The party was sponsored by the multicultural office on campus, the entity that supports and provides programming for multicultural and ethnic minority students. The primary investigator promoted the pizza party on Facebook to users who attended the host institution. University-owned laptops were set up at the event, allowing participants immediate access to the online survey. Flyers (see Appendix C) were distributed at this event containing a brief description of the study, the study link, and contact information for the primary investigator and faculty advisor. Students who attended the event were given flyers and asked to distribute them to eligible participants. One other similar recruitment event occurred in conjunction with the university's multicultural office.

Participants were also recruited via word-of-mouth invitation. The primary investigator visited meetings of student organizations at the host institution, whose

membership was partially or exclusively African American. During these visits, the primary investigator made an announcement about the purpose of the research and the incentives offered for participation. The primary investigator also distributed written copies of the recruitment message (see Appendix B) with the link to the study, and collected email addresses of the African American males present who were interested in participating. The primary investigator then sent the students an invitation email and two-to-three follow-up invitation emails to encourage participation.

Medium-sized Southern HBCU. The IRB on this campus only approved recruitment via the psychology department. A psychology faculty member on this campus agreed to make class announcements to students within the university's psychology department about the option to participate in the study. Willing participants were to contact the primary investigator in order to gain access to the study link. Participants were offered extra credit for their participation in the study.

Medium-sized Eastern HBCU. This campus was added after the primary investigator was unable to obtain a sufficient sample from the fist HBCU. The campus was selected due to its similarity to the other campuses. On this campus, multiple instructors across various departments made class announcements or sent email announcements to their students about the study. One additional method of recruitment specific to the Eastern HBCU was used. A list of over 160 student clubs and organizations was consulted in order to present information about the study and the option to participate. Organization leaders were contacted via email and asked to pass on information about the study to the organizations' membership. This recruitment included

reaching out to predominantly male student organizations such as historically Black fraternities.

Medium-sized Southern PWI. This campus was added as a match to the Eastern HBCU. IRB approval on this campus was limited to recruitment within the psychology department only. In this case, instructors made class announcements about the option to participate in the research. No course credit was offered as an additional incentive.

Despite multiple and varied approaches to recruitment on four different campuses, an adequate sample size was not attained; therefore additional recruitment strategies were necessary. Recruitment via the social media site Facebook was pursued. The primary investigator posted messages inviting eligible individuals to participate and others, whether eligible or ineligible, to repost the message for others to see. These posted messages included the recruitment message (Appendix B). A Facebook group was also created for users to join in order to show their support for the research project and ultimately promote the study to other eligible users. Facebook was also utilized to identify and recruit other eligible participants through their identified membership in certain groups (e.g., Black student associations, Black fraternities, Black professional organizations, etc.).

Next, recruitment was pursued by reaching out to national organizations with predominantly or exclusively African American male membership. The primary recruitment base were national, regional, and state sects of the five historically Black fraternities. However, this solicitation also included a non-fraternal Black male corporation as well. Email communication was utilized to contact organization leadership in order to solicit participation using the recruitment message. One final recruitment

technique utilizing media recruitment was employed at the host institution. A one-time radio announcement was played on a campus-wide radio program using a script modeled after the recruitment message.

In all recruitment strategies, participants were encouraged to pass the link for the study to other potential participants. Eventually, all recruitment options were exhausted, and the data collection was closed.

Survey procedure. Upon accessing the survey through InQsit participants first viewed the information sheet for the study, which detailed the purpose of the study as well as risks, benefits, and incentives associated with participation. Participants were informed that the purpose of the research was to examine the relationship between their selection of role models and their attitudes toward self and social concepts. No foreseen risks were associated with the study. In exchange for their participation in the study, participants were offered one of two incentives: the chance to win one of four $25 gift cards from Amazon.com or the option to receive course credit for research participation (if relevant and permitted on their respective campus). After indicating they had reviewed the information sheet, participants were presented with Section I of the CRIS to collect demographic information. The next two measures, Section II of the CRIS and the Role Model Survey, were then presented in a randomized fashion. This was done to minimize the possibility of an ordering effect so that the possibility that encountering one survey having an influence on responses to the other survey would be minimized. Finally, participants were thanked for their assistance. The study was expected to take about 25-30 minutes to complete. On average, however, participants completed the measures in 20 minutes and 52 seconds.

Statistical Design and Analyses

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were planned to address the hypotheses for this study. The hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 1: African American male college students will identify role models who are African American more often than role models of another race.

Hypothesis 2: African American male college students who attend HBCUs will identify African Americans as role models more than will African American male college students who attend PWIs.

Hypothesis 3: For African American male college students, more sophisticated racial identity attitudes as measured by the Cross Racial Identity Scale (Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, and Internalization Multiculturalist-Inclusive attitudes) will accurately predict the race of the primary role model (i.e., the higher the scores on each of these scales the more likely the primary role model will be African American).

Hypothesis 4: African American male college students will list a variety of characteristics that influence their selection of role models (e. g. relationship status, gender, professional background, etc).

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were analyzed quantitatively. A chi-square analysis was planned to determine the number of participants falling into the categories of racially-matched and non-racially matched role models. A chi-square was also planned to identify any group differences between participants from HBCUs and participants from PWIs on the dependent variable of role model race. Predictive discriminant functions analysis was

planned to predict group membership (i.e., racially-matched versus non-racially matched role model) based on the predictor variables of PA, PM, PSH, IEAW, IA, and IMCI.

Hypothesis 4 was analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative analysis process was implemented through a grounded theory framework with the use of open and axial coding. Grounded theory aims to describe and integrate concepts in order to explain some social phenomenon under study (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The purpose of the grounded theory approach is to generate theory through constant comparisons, analyzing data as it is collected through coding (Kendall, 1999). The purpose of this study was not to generate theory, but to extract themes from the comments; the coding techniques utilized within the grounded theory framework are also appropriate for the task of extracting themes. Under the grounded theory method analysis occurs while data are being collected; thus sampling is based on the verification of the emerging theory so that when the theory is satisfied, sampling can be ceased (Fassinger, 2005). As such, no predetermined sample size was required for qualitative analysis and assessment of participants' answers to open-ended responses on the Role Model Survey occurred until the emerging themes were strongly supported.

Open and axial coding methods were used in the analysis of written responses on the Role Model survey. Open coding, defined as the "interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically," was used first (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12). Open coding was followed by axial coding, the process of putting the data back together through making comparisons between the categories and subcategories. Categories were then related to their subcategories and the relationships were tested against the data. This process involved four researchers, trained in open and axial coding techniques,

examining data for similarities and differences and developing categories and subcategories.

It is suggested that multiple researchers be used during the coding process (Corbin & Straus, 1990). As such, the research team consisted of the primary researcher (current author), two graduate students and one advanced undergraduate student in counseling psychology trained in the coding methods. Training consisted of researchers completing an online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training for investigators involved in social and behavioral research involving human subjects. Next, the primary researcher completed a presentation to the team members giving the background and purpose of the current study and an introduction to the coding methods to be used in analysis of qualitative data. Researchers were given three articles to read, which described conceptual, theoretical, and empirical concepts of grounded theory and the coding methods used therein. In the next phase of training, researchers were given handouts with detailed information about how coding would occur and were given a sample dataset unassociated with the current research to code during a practice coding phase. Finally, researchers reconvened to discuss and finalize the categories reached during training. After the training phase, the initial phase of coding for the current study commenced.

Researchers analyzed written responses to the five open-ended questions asked on the Role Model Survey in order to highlight characteristics of importance to African American males in identifying a role model. Analysis occurred in three phases. Phase I included data from 15 participants. During Phase I, each researcher was given a copy of the data transcriptions and examined the transcriptions line-by-line multiple times.

During this process of open coding, each researcher looked for words or series of words that were consistently mentioned throughout the dataset. Researchers wrote memos throughout the process, especially capturing patterns of word or phrase repetition. Next, each researcher worked to categorize words and series of words into themes and subthemes. During the next step of axial coding, researchers compared, made connections, and related the individually-developed themes to subthemes. The research team then convened to compare individually-identified themes and subthemes and to ultimately agree upon categories and subcategories representative of the data. During this step, researchers returned to the raw data as needed to support or negate the inclusion of a theme under discussion and the category was included only if all researchers reached a consensus.

During Phases II and III of qualitative analysis researchers received an updated copy of the transcriptions from new waves of incoming data. Phases II and III of analysis each included data from 13 participants. Again, each researcher examined the transcriptions line-by-line multiple times in order to capture recurring words or phrases. During the next step, axial coding continued through comparing the team-determined categories and subcategories that emerged during Phase I against the new data. This occurred by determining into which category words and word phrases belonged or determining if a new category needed to be developed to accommodate the new data. As with Phase I, researchers needed to unanimously agree upon categories and subcategories before they could be included in the finalized list. Strong support for themes emerged after the first two phases of analysis, and during Phase III, no new themes emerged. As such, analysis was complete at Phase III with a sample of 41 participants.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Results are presented with an explanation of the quantitative statistical tests and

the qualitative coding techniques used in data analyses. Data for the first hypothesis were

analyzed using a frequency distribution analysis and a Chi-square goodness-of-fit

statistical test. For the second hypothesis, frequency distribution analysis and a Chi-

square test of independence was planned but not achieved due to inadequate group sizes.

The intended statistical test to address the third hypothesis was a predictive discriminant

analysis; however, the final sample did not contain the appropriate distribution of

participants for this analysis to be accurately performed. The fourth hypothesis was

addressed using qualitative analyses and specifically, open and axial coding.

Preliminary Quantitative Analyses

Role Model Demographics

Preliminary analyses include descriptive statistics on selected study variables

along with all variables included in the hypotheses. Of the 104 participants, most (81.7%)

endorsed having a role model either currently or in the past. Of these participants, 91.8%

endorsed having a Black (i.e., African, African American, or Black) role model, whereas

8.3% endorsed having a role model of a race other than Black (i.e., Mixed, Caucasian, or

Other). Most role models were male (81.2%), educated (62.4% with at least a Bachelor's

degree), were unaffiliated with the participant's university (80%), and were known by

the participant prior to attending college (74.1%). The most common relationship

between a participant and his role model was a parent relationship (37.6%), followed by a

peer or friend relationship (23.5%), and then a pastor, minister, or clergy relationship

(18.8%). Role model characteristics are detailed further in Table 2.

Reliability Estimates for CRIS Scales

A test of internal consistency was run for each of the six subscales of the CRIS.

Each subscale produced a Cronbach's alpha greater than .80, thereby demonstrating good

reliability (Field, 2005). Reliability estimates for each subscale are as follows: PA

subscale, $\alpha = .83$; PM subscale, $\alpha = .81$; PSH subscale, $\alpha = .86$; IEAW subscale, $\alpha = .91$;

IA subscale, $\alpha = .84$; and IMCI subscale, $\alpha = .85$. Table 3 outlines descriptive statistics

for the CRIS subscales.

CRIS Subscale Intercorrelations

An intercorrelation matrix was run for the subscales of the CRIS. There were

significant positive correlations between the PA and PM subscales ($r = .25$, $p < .05$), the

PM and IA subscales ($r = .22$, $p < .05$), the PSH and IEAW subscales ($r = .52$, $p < .01$),

and the IEAW and IA subscales ($r = .30$, $p < .01$). There was a significant negative

correlation between the IEAW and IMCI subscales ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$). All subscale

intercorrelations are presented in Table 4.

Table 2

Frequency Counts for Role Model Demographic Variables

Role Model Characteristics	Frequency	%
Race:		
African	2	2.4
African American	55	64.7
Black	21	24.7
West Indian/Caribbean Black	--	--
Hispanic Black	--	--
Mixed	1	1.2
American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native	--	--
Asian American/Pacific Islander	--	--
Caucasian/White	2	2.4
Other	4	4.7
Gender:		
Female	15	17.6
Male	69	81.2
Did not specify	1	1.2
Sexual Orientation:		
Heterosexual	79	92.9
Homosexual (Gay/Lesbian)	2	2.4
Bisexual	3	3.5
Unsure	1	1.2
Other	--	--
Educational Background:		
Elementary school	--	--
Some high school	3	3.5
High school diploma or equivalent	6	7.1
Some college	14	16.5
Bachelor's degree obtained	27	31.8
Master's degree obtained	13	15.3
Doctoral degree obtained	11	12.9
Other professional degree obtained	2	2.4
Unsure	7	8.2
Did not specify	2	2.4

Table 2 cont.

Role Model Characteristics	Frequency	%
Personally know role model:		
Yes	72	84.7
No	12	14.1
Did not specify	1	1.2
Role model alive:		
Yes	71	83.5
No	7	8.2
Did not specify	7	8.2
Role model affiliated with university:		
Yes	14	16.5
No	68	80
Did not specify	3	3.5
Role model relationships:		
Parent	32	37.6
Step-parent	2	2.4
Grandparent	7	8.2
Sibling	3	3.5
Aunt/Uncle	6	7.1
Cousin	4	4.7
Other Relative	3	3.5
Peer/Friend	20	23.5
Fraternity Brother/Sister	9	10.6
Academic Advisor	4	4.7
Professor/Instructor	8	9.4
University Administrator	2	2.4
University Alumni	4	4.7
Employer/Former Employer	3	3.5
Pastor/Minister/Religious Leader	16	18.8
No relationship	8	9.4
Other	3	3.5

Note. "--" denotes that no responses were recorded for the item's answer choice. $N = 85$.

Table 3

Mean and Reliability Estimates for CRIS Subscales

Subscale	N	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Pre-Encounter Assimilation (PA)	101	3.49	1.41	0.83
Pre-Encounter Miseducation (PM)	100	3.7	1.43	0.81
Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (PSH)	100	1.89	1.17	0.86
Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW)	97	1.48	1.05	0.91
Internalization Afrocentricity (IA)	96	3.07	1.41	0.84
Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI)	100	5.41	1.50	0.85

Table 4

CRIS Subscale Intercorrelations

	PA	PM	PSH	IEAW	IA	IMCI
PA	--					
PM	0.25*	--				
PSH	0.12	-0.84	--			
IEAW	-0.12	-0.07	0.52**	--		
IA	-0.08	0.22*	0.06	0.3**	--	
IMCI	0.07	-0.04	-0.06	-0.29**	0.02	--

Note. $N = 88$.

*p < .05.   **p < .01.

Planned Quantitative Analyses

Hypothesis 1

The chi-square goodness-of-fit statistic was calculated to test Hypothesis 1, which stated that African American male college students would identify African American role models more often than they would role models of another race. Participants were asked to identify their role model's race from ten answer choices, of which five described a Black racial category (i.e., African, African-American, Black, West Indian/Caribbean Black, and Hispanic Black). Participants identifying their role model as any of the five Black racial groups were grouped into one category ("Black role model"). Participants classifying their role model in any of the non-Black racial categories (i.e., Mixed, American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Caucasian/White, or Other, without specifying a race) were grouped into another category ("non-Black role model"). In one case, a role model was classified as "Other" and then specified as "Black/Cuban." This case was coded under the category of "Black role model." Those who answered "No" to the statement "Are you able to identify a role model for yourself" were excluded from this analysis.

Table 5 details the findings of the chi-square analysis. The analysis was run using the two groups, "Black role model" and "non-Black role model," to determine if there was a significant difference in the frequency with which participants identified Black role models versus those of another race. With the chi-square statistic exceeding the critical value of 3.74, it was concluded that there was a significant difference in frequencies of Black versus non-Black role models. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 5

Results of Chi-square Analysis for Hypothesis 1

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-square
Black Role Model	78	91.8	$\chi^2 = 59.31$
Non-Black Role Model	7	8.2	

Note. $N = 85$. Critical value $= 3.74$, $p < .05$, *df* $=1$.

Hypothesis 2

To address Hypothesis 2, African American male college students who attend HBCUs will identify African Americans as role models more often than will African American male college students who attend PWIs, a chi-square test of independence was planned. However, due to inadequate group sizes, the assumption of adequate expected frequencies was not met and the chi-square analysis could not be interpreted. Of the 85 participants who identified having a role model, the number of cases falling into the category of non-Black role model was only seven. This small group size made it impossible to meet the assumption that each cell of the contingency table has a minimum of five cases. Thus, Hypothesis 2 could not be addressed. It should be noted that the two participants identifying a White role model attended a PWI. The four participants identifying a role model's race as "Other" represented all institution types and did not specify the racial or ethnic background of their role models. One participant attending a PWI identified a Mixed-race role model and did not specify the racial or ethnic backgrounds of the role model.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 states that for African American male college students, more sophisticated racial identity attitudes as measured by the Cross Racial Identity Scale (Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, and Internalization Multiculturalist-Inclusive attitudes) will accurately predict the race of the primary role model (i.e., the higher the scores on each of these scales the more likely the primary role model will be African American). Hypothesis 3 was intended to look at the relationship between the variables of racial identity and role model race through predictive

discriminant analysis (PDA). Unfortunately, the same limitation identified when addressing Hypothesis 2, the small group size for the category, "non-Black role model," also applied to this analysis. Garson (2008) suggests that the smallest group size used in a PDA be 4-5 times as large as the number of predictor variables. In this case, the three advanced attitudes of the CRIS racial identity attitudes (IEAW, IA, and IMCI) were to be used in the analysis, requiring a minimum group size of 12-15 participants, which was not achieved. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 could not be addressed.

Qualitative Analysis

A final list of themes was derived after three phases of coding. Participant responses were analyzed as data emerged, with a final sample of 41 participants whose responses were analyzed qualitatively. Of these participants, 68.3% were from the PWI sample, and 31.7% were from the HBCU sample. Participant responses yielded fruitful information about role model characteristics that are perceived as important. Table 6 illustrates the thematic categories that emerged from the data. Eleven final themes were extracted from the data to address the question of what characteristics African American male college students perceive as important in a role model. These themes are: Personality Attributes, Community, Success, Spirituality, Providing Inspiration or Challenge, Mentorship, Education, Family, Emotional Support, Career Interest, and Proximity. Many of the themes also include subthemes; all are discussed here.

Table 6

Thematic Categories Derived from Axial and Open Coding

Thematic Category	Key Phrases
1. Personality Attributes (n = 15)	
General Traits	"goal oriented," "down-to-earth," "humble"
Intelligent	"intelligent"
Integrity	"a man of integrity"
Hard-working	"level-headed"
Passionate	"he is really passionate about things he really cares about"
Dedicated	
Manhood	"sets the example for how a man should be"
2. Community (n = 11)	
General Concern or Involvement	"supports his community"
Concern for Social Issues	"a humanitarian and an activist"
Affiliation with Greek Organization	"[willing] to put themselves last when it comes to the needs of others"
3. Success (n = 8)	
Financial	"they run their own business"
Professional	"he is successful in his career"
4. Spirituality (n = 8)	"great man of God"
General References	"God fearing man"
Faith in God	"[he] believes in the Lord"
5. Providing Inspiration or Challenge (n = 7)	"he makes one want to give the best of themselves at all times"

Table 6 cont.

Thematic Category	Key Phrases
6. Mentorship (n = 6)	
Teaching	"he is more than happy to give me advice on music,
Advice-Giving	teaching, and life in general"
7. Education (n = 5)	
Values Education	"he is well-educated"
Has Education	"has multiple degrees"
8. Family (n = 5)	
Responsibility to family	"loyal to his family"
Father-figure	"I want to be a father just like him"
9. Emotional Support (n = 5)	"there when I need her"
	"always been there for me"
10. Shared Career Interest (n = 4)	"this person is a pioneer in my career path"
11. Proximity (n = 2)	"I grew up with [my role model]"

Note. Based on questions from Role Model Survey: 1. Tell me about this person. 2. Why do you/did you look up to (or want to be like) this person? 3. What type of individual do you look up to? *N* = 41.

Themes Derived from Qualitative Analysis

      Personality attributes. The theme of personality attributes was the most commonly observed in role model descriptions. It was not always something that the role model *did* or provided but rather who or how they *were*—an element of being. Often, it was a trait or characteristic specific to the model that appealed to the respondent. Still, some traits were mentioned so consistently that they could be placed into their own sub-category. As such, personality attributes as a theme is sub-categorized into general traits and commonly occurring specific traits: intelligent, passionate, hard-working, dedicated, integrity, and manhood.

      General personality traits consist of descriptions of personality-related attributes that were not mentioned across role model descriptions yet were still attractive to the respondents. Fifteen respondents noted characteristics of their role model that described personality traits. These traits include descriptions of role models as "goal oriented," "down-to-earth," "humble," "level-headed," "kind," "reasonable," "funny and generally fun to be around," "well-rounded," "influential," and "motivated." One role model was commended for her "work ethic and professionalism." Another description was overflowing with mentions of personality attributes:

> This person has a high spirit and always kept a smile on his face. [He] has a huge heart and valued family the most. [He] was a southern man, so he had a lot of charm and was very respectful.

Even one participant who identified never having a role model (and not wanting one) listed only personality attributes when asked what type of individual he looks up to. He described this type of individual as "Confident, Secure, Stable, Able, Competent, A leader, Dignified, Intelligent, Respected, Mature, and Wise [*sic*]."

There were also specific traits that commonly occurred and garnered support from multiple participants. That a role model was "intelligent" proved to be a major area of emphasis for 6 respondents across demographic variables. For instance, role models who were described as intelligent were professors, parents, government employees, fellow classmates, and doctors. Another commonly occurring personality trait was the description of role models as "hard working," which was supported by 5 participants. Role models described as hard working varied on other characteristics, professions, and educational level. These role models ranged from fishermen to lawyers to firefighters in occupation and were parents, grandparents, peers, or even of no relation to the respondent. Despite demographic variations, the perception that they were hard-working provided a common thread among these models.

Role models were also noted for their integrity or character by 6 participants. Statements of integrity included descriptions of role models as "a man of integrity," "the definition of a good person," and "God, and people who are [genuinely] about doing what is right." One respondent described his role model as "an all-around good person, I feel like he only has good intentions in mind [*sic*]." These statements described intentions or actions perceived as morally acceptable. Another respondent described the aspect of his role model's integrity that appealed to him, saying "[My role model] personifies [integrity] and owning up to one's actions. [He] stress individuality as well as hard work. Above all else, [he] has a very close connection with God, which I found to be an indispensible quality." Another respondent, one who had identified never having a role model, discussed the type of individual he would look up to:

> People who show integrity in the face of notoriously money-grubbing industries, especially Hollywood and television. Filmmakers and music artists who tackle relevant issues with dignity, produce genuine comedy without taking refuge in profanity, give enjoyable performances no matter the role, and generally avoid catering to a "lowest common denominator."

This respondent, a film major, described an ideal model within the context of his field of study and displayed a strong concern regarding the need for integrity within a role model, particularly in the entertainment industry.

Next, descriptions of role models as "passionate" and "dedicated" also occurred often. Initially, research team members perceived an overlap in the description of role models as passionate and dedicated. Similarity in the descriptions of role models as passionate and dedicated was noted in the intensity with which these individuals approached something. However, a closer look at statements allowed for a distinction to be made. Statements about passion centered on the feelings of the role model about something or feelings that motivated something, whereas statements about dedication showed in the description of the actions of the role models. Passionate role models were described with statements such as "he is really passionate about things he really cares about" and "he is also very passionate."

Two participants described their role models' passion but focused on different aspects. One wrote, "[My role model] is humble. He fought for what he believed was right and prevailed. He spent 27 years in jail for that and never gave up his ideas or [beliefs]." The other wrote, "This person is a pioneer in my career path. He is well educated and passionate about what he does. I hold the same passion as he does, and since he is older I look up to him." One role model was praised for his passion toward a

belief that motivated an active stance, while the other was noted for his passion toward

his career. Role models identified as dedicated were described with statements such as

"he strived to achieve a goal and he did not stop," "was dedicated in whatever she did,"

or described simply using the term "dedicated."

Three respondents were attracted to the qualities of manhood that their role model

portrayed. Particularly, they described their role models as good examples of how a man

should be. Three different participants described what they perceived as a display of

exemplary manhood. The first wrote, "He went back to school and finally got the

Diploma he always dreamt of getting. That shows me *a real man* and a real goal oriented

person." Another wrote:

> I looked up to [my role model] because I wanted to be just like him. He was very
> inspirational in the way he dealt with people. I wanted to be like [him] because he
> epitomized of what I thought was a hard working *"man."*

The third wrote, "I look up to this person because he represents a strong African

American male and he sets the example for *how a man should be.*" These role models

were identified for their determination, inspiration and hard work, and strong

representation as an African American male, respectively. The perception of the aspects

of manhood differed across respondents, but the display of manhood on the part of the

role model was such that respondents deemed it impactful enough to emulate.

Community. The next most commonly occurring theme was that of community,

which was acknowledged by 11 respondents. This occurred through a discussion of a role

model's interest in the well-being of one's community. The theme of community was

broken down into sub-categories to include a general concern for or involvement with

community, concern for social issues, or affiliation with a fraternal organization. Role

model characteristics falling in the category of general concern for or involvement with community were described by emulators with statements such as "supports his community" and "[willing] to put themselves last when it comes to the needs of others." One respondent who identified as never having a role model described what he would look for in a role model, mentioning the importance of community involvement. He wrote "The ideal person I look up to/seek is a young successful man who is educated, financially stable to invest or purchase anything of his liking, strong in faith, *involved with the community,* as well as mentally & physically healthy!"

There was also a strong identification of role models who displayed a concern for community on the societal level in their fight for social issues. Two separate role models were described respectively as "a well-rounded individual, as he is a demonstrated activist, artist, and revolutionist" and "a humanitarian and an activist." A third role model was applauded for his "determination of fighting injustice [in] government." Another respondent highlighted the social concern of his role model as personally relevant to his own experience in society:

> Martin Luther King is my role model because he strived to achieve a goal and he did not stop. Even after all of the trials and tribulations, he still fought for justice. If he and others did not do what they did, I would not be in college or treated somewhat fair in this society.

Finally, the relevance of community concern was noted in role models' affiliation with fraternal organizations. Role models were either noted as involved with a fraternal organization or noted to be a fellow member of the fraternal organization of the respondent.

Success. The theme of success was heavily supported in participant responses with references being made to both professional and financial success. Specifically, participants repeatedly used the word "successful" to describe their role model. Even participants who identified not ever having a role model referred to success as an important role model attribute. Four other responses referenced career autonomy and professional success as important, with descriptions such as "highly successful in his field," "they run their own business," and "he is successful in his career." Financial success was referenced in a response from one participant who identified never having a role model. In his response describing characteristics he would perceive as important in a role model, he described financial security, saying "The ideal person I look up to/seek is a young successful man who is educated, financially stable to invest or purchase anything of his liking, strong in faith, involved with the community, as well as mentally and physically healthy." The perception of professional, financial, or general success in life (however defined by the respondent) was widely supported as an important characteristic of a role model.

Spirituality. Spirituality was a theme that garnered support from 8 respondents in their discussion of role model characteristics. This was the case with even those who identified as never having a role model. Usually a general reference was made to spirituality, faith, and ministry when describing role models. Role models were described as "Christian," "great man of God," or "youth minister." One respondent reported he looked up to his role model because "they are strong in their walk with God." In one unique description of his role model, a respondent described the role his model played in helping him with his own faith, saying "I looked up to [him] because at a time where I

was very curious about my religion and what God meant to me I needed someone who would be open to my questions. He was that role model." Role models were also identified for their strong faith or belief in God with statements such as "[he] believes in the Lord," "because of their strong faith," "strong in faith," "his relationship with God," and "God fearing man." In some cases, respondents identified God directly as their role model. One respondent wrote:

> GOD is the essence we all derive our soul experiences from and the reason miracles happen and the impossible becomes possible… I look up to God because it is the most high, most pure form of being there is, it is who Jesus emulated.

Providing inspiration or challenge. Role models were often described as sources of inspiration for respondents. This was usually described in terms of the respondent wanting to be good or improved at something as a direct result of his role model's actions or ways of being. Respondents also drew inspiration from role models when their model challenged or motivated them to be good or improved at something. Role models were described with statements such as "he makes one want to give the best of themselves at all times," "he was very inspirational in the way he dealt with people," and "he always believed in accomplishing whatever you wanted to do." One respondent described the challenge he perceived from his role model that inspired him, saying "He is very wise and pushes me to be the best I can be… He always challenges me to live outside of the box and to break free from my comfort zone to achieve what I want." Another respondent described his own successes in light of the challenge he perceived from his role model, who is his father and an executive in the medical field:

> [My role model] and his associates are constantly there and pushing me to do better. As a result I've personally achieved such high expectations that several

people around me never thought possible. Its also nice to talk to people that have been in the same situation as me as a black man in college or as a man in general. Not only this but he is very successful in life and that gives me a goal to achieve later [*sic*].

He attests to experiencing personal success due to the challenge and inspiration drawn from his role model.

Mentorship. Unsurprisingly, participants often alluded to the mentorship received in role model relationships. Six participants described their role models as mentors in two common ways: teaching and advice-giving. As teachers, role models were described with statements like: "…when he tries to teach you a lesson he lets you teach it to yourself (he is not one to tell someone what to do per-say [*sic*]" and "…not only does he support me in all I do but he is there to be my friend and teacher." Another responded wrote:

> [He] was my middle school band director. We kept a close relationship throughout my high school years, and beginning with my junior year, he began giving me private trumpet lessons. [He] helped me to prepare audition material for all the colleges I wanted to apply to.

Different from a teaching role or assisting in the improvement of a skill, role models were also described in an advice-giving role. Respondents gave statements such as "he is more than happy to give me advice on music, teaching, and life in general" and "I take his advice and learn from his actions." Among other characteristics, one participant described the mentoring he receives from his cousin, who is his role model:

> He is 25 years old, he takes care of his mother, younger cousin, and child. He is very wise and pushes me to be the best I can be. He was not able to attend college, but he works hard to provide for his family. *He has been monumental in my life, mentoring me and providing me with much needed advice*. He always challenges

me to live outside of the box and to break free from my comfort zone to achieve what I want.

Education. The theme of education emerged across 5 participants' responses as an important attribute in role models. Education was mentioned from two different perspectives. In one regard, role models were described by their emulator in terms of their educational attainment, as *having* education. Role models were described as "educated" and having "multiple degrees." Respondents also often listed the specific degree or degrees that the role model had attained, which often included graduate and professional degrees. In another regard, one role model was described as *valuing* education. The respondent seemed to be impressed with his role model's drive for completing his education as opposed to degree attainment:

> He [didn't] finish high school when he was younger so education was his main focus for his children. He did the best he could as far as teaching and was able to find us the help if we needed it. He went back to school and finally got the Diploma he always dreamt of getting.

Whether a role model's value for education was on the secondary or post-secondary level, respondents noted it as a notable characteristic.

Family. Family emerged as another theme of perceived importance for respondents when identifying role models, with two major areas being emphasized. The first description of family was evident in the discussion of role models as having a value for or a strong responsibility to their own families. Respondents described role models with statements such as "valued family the most," "loyal to his family," and "loving family." One respondent described his father as his role model and gave an account of his father's allegiance to his family, saying "I admire what my father do [*sic*] for me, my

brothers and my mother everyday. Because of his history, he wanted to provide that

support to his family that he wasn't given when he was younger."

In some cases, respondents simply mentioned in their role model description that

the individual had provided for multiple family members, without necessarily outwardly

stating that this was a quality they perceived as important. For instance, a respondent

wrote about his cousin, "He was not able to attend college, but he works hard to provide

for his family." In other cases, participants were more direct that family loyalty was an

attractive characteristic of their role model. For instance, one respondent captures this

phenomenon differently, by not only emphasizing his father's commitment to caring for

his family but also by making his own commitment to carry on these values:

> He was my father. He worked hard and gave me and my brother all the things we
> needed growing up. He is the reason I played sports and did well in HS. He
> passed my senior year of HS and now I'm just striving to make sure I show the
> family values he gave me.

The other way that the theme of family became evident was specific to the role of

fathers and father-figures, as has been noted in some of the previously described role

models. Two respondents stressed the importance of the father role in light of their belief

that many Black males lack father-figures. One respondent discussed this perspective in

detail:

> The person I look up to the most is my father. Most Black or African American
> people don't have father figures to look up to or even those they consider a
> father…[My father] didn't have that father figure when he grew up, so he wanted
> us to know that whatever we do in life that he will be there each step of the way.

The other respondent described his role model with statements such as "[he] still has time

to be a great father" and "I want to be a father just like him."

Emotional support. Five respondents mentioned the importance of support and encouragement provided by their role models, best captured as a description of emotional support. Respondents described their models with statements like "encouraging," "there when I need her," "always been there for me," and "will always be there for me supporting me."

Career interest. A theme that emerged strongly during Phase II of analysis that was not as present in the data analyzed during Phase I was the theme of shared career interest. Four respondents alluded to their role models' careers as the prominent characteristic for why they looked up to the individuals. Role models were described with statements such as "this person is a pioneer in my career path," "He was a performer. And all my life that's all I've really known [*sic*] ," and "I am a music education major, with a minor in trumpet. [My role model] is a band director (music educator) and trumpet was his main instrument." Another respondent discussed the influence his role model had on his interest in becoming a screenwriter. He wrote, "Watching his films and how absurd and strange some of the scenes and characters in those scenes were really spoke to me, and it was because of him why I wanted to become a screenwriter [*sic*]."

Proximity. A theme that did not garner as much support as other themes was proximity of an individual as a characteristic of importance. Only two participants alluded to proximity in their description of their role model. Still, it was determined to be different enough from the other themes to warrant its own category. Statements about proximity included a description of one role model as teaching in a neighborhood in a northeastern U.S. city, which a respondent described as "the very place from which I hail." Another respondent simply stated "I grew up with [my role model]."

Other characteristics. There were other role model characteristics described by respondents that did not sustain strong support, but are worth mentioning because they are different enough from the previously-described themes that they can be informative about characteristics perceived as important. Factors such as age came out in participant responses. For instance, one respondent said about his role model, "since he is older I look up to him," Another characteristic that emerged often in participant responses was a general perception of similarity between a respondent and his role model on some factor. For instance, a respondent stated in response to the question of why he looks up to his role model, "mainly because his physical attributes are quite relative to my own." In response to the same question, another respondent wrote "Its also nice to talk to people that have been in the same situation as me as a black man in college or as a man in general [*sic*]." The idea of a shared experience was important.

One respondent noted that his role model showed interest in the things the respondent was doing in life. Another respondent liked that his role model stressed individuality, and similarly, while a respondent who did not have a role model said that he looks up to "people who are themselves." One other respondent described his role model as a "natural leader." For another respondent, it was an important characteristic that his role model was "one of the few black men at my church." In a list of attributes that a participant described in an ideal role model, he listed "mentally and physically healthy." Another factor of importance for one participant was that his role model was not involved in criminal activity. He reported about his role model that he "never committed crimes for money" and "he doesn't do drugs." Finally, one respondent commented on his role model's ability to overcome adversity.

Group Differences in Qualitative Data

A comparison of the responses of those with role models against those without role models showed a great degree of similarity regarding what traits they viewed as important in a role model. Individuals without role models were asked what type of person they would look up to as a role model and their responses were inclusive of many of the previously identified themes. The themes of personality attributes, integrity, community, success, spirituality, and education were all represented across responses of those without role models. On the other hand, when asked why they have not had a role model, new thematic information arose. There was a sense that these individuals were very confident in their own abilities and felt that there was no need to look up to another individual. One respondent wrote, "Instead of striving to be like other people, I preferred to aim for the ideal version of myself." Another wrote:

> "I say no because I never had a male figure that has influenced me as a role model. I've always looked to myself for my own role model. My father was never there for me which indirectly motivated me. Instead of seeking a role model to look up to, I value the better things in life and use the simple fact that I can not afford or obtain them as motivation to do and become who I am today [*sic*]."

One respondent had a similar response but added that he could take on a role modeling role for others:

> "I haven't felt there to be a need for one, after all we are all only human. And I [believe] I did a good job in taking up my own set of values that I might want to share with others."

What was perhaps even more intriguing was that most of the respondents without role models suggested that they did not want one. To the question "Would you like to have a role model" most answered some form of 'no.' Some admitted that they would welcome a role model but have fared well without one. For instance, one respondent

wrote, "It would have been nice, but I think not having a role model made me into the person I am." Another individual admitted to opposing the idea of a role model at all:

> "I may be the only person who is confident in opposing a role model. I highly support individuality and feel more accomplished with trying to better myself into an ideal man versus attempting to sculpt myself into another person's preset attributes and characteristics."

There was only one difference noted between the respondents who attend HBCUs and those attending PWIs. As noted, the theme of Career did not emerge until Phase II of analysis, the phase in which more HBCU participant responses were analyzed. In fact, all four individuals whose responses included thematic information about shared career interest attended HBCUs. None of the responses of individuals at PWIs included career-related information. The theme of Spirituality appeared to be well represented in the HBCU participant responses as well; however this theme was derived during the initial coding phase and was equally represented in the responses of those attending PWIs.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

It has been said that it is difficult for African American males to attain positive role models. However, research on role models for African American males often focuses on youth and notes the prominence of negative role or unattainable role models. The purpose of the present study was to, instead, examine role models for African American male college students from the perspectives of two vastly different institutional cultures, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The aim was to examine the preferences of the target population for role models and to examine the role of race in selecting a role model. Race of an individual has consistently been identified as a prominent area of comparison when selecting someone as a role model, but an important factor often ignored in existing research on role model relationships for African Americans is the role of racial identity. Therefore, the goals of this research were to a) investigate who the target population identify as role models and whether or not these role models are racially-similar, b) identify any differences that exist based on the type of institution attended (HBCU versus PWI), c) determine the relationship, if any, between racial identity and role model race, and d) examine what other characteristics the target population identify as important when selecting a role model.

Discussion

Hypothesis 1

It was hypothesized that participants would identify racially-similar role models more often than they would racially-dissimilar role models. This hypothesis was clearly supported as nearly all (92%) of the participants who identified role models identified Black role models. This number proved to be a significantly higher number than those who identified non-Black role models. The finding that participants overwhelmingly identified role models of the same race, and in many cases the same gender, aligns with the suggestions of social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). Individuals prefer to compare themselves with similar others. This finding also coincides with findings from previous research on role models for African Americans (Parasnis et al., 2005; Yancey et al., 2002). Previously reviewed research (Acher, 1992; Hamamm & Walker, 1993; Zirkel, 2002) produced findings that African American participants almost always selected role models of the same race and this study's findings follow the same pattern. This further leads to the suggestion that race is significant in role model selection.

Hypothesis 2

It was hypothesized that African American males attending HBCUs would identify Black role models more than would participants attending PWIs. This hypothesis could not be addressed statistically because of sample size differences. As noted, only 8% of participants identified a non-Black role model, a sample too small to conduct the relevant statistical analyses. This hypothesis could have been addressed using the planned chi-square analysis with a larger group size of participants identifying racially-dissimilar role models. However, no method could be identified to recruit a sample of this group of

individuals without compromising the integrity of the study's design. Still, the fact that individuals with racially-dissimilar role models were difficult to identify is strongly suggestive of the impact of race on role model selection. Only 8% of all role models identified were racially-dissimilar to the participant, regardless of institution type. Most HBCU participants had a role model (81%) and of those identifying a role model, most identified a Black role model (92%). Similarly for participants at PWIs, most had a role model (83%) and of those identifying a role model 93% identified a Black role model. It is clear that African American males, regardless of institution, consistently identified a racially-similar role model. It is still unclear to what extent any difference between the groups was significant.

Hypothesis 3

It was hypothesized that higher scores on the IEAW, IA, and IMCI subscales, the attitudes most indicative of a strong Black identity, would predict the choice of a Black role model. This hypothesis could not be addressed statistically due to inadequate group sizes. Very few participants identified having a non-Black role model; therefore, the predictive nature of racial identity attitudes on role model race could not be determined. Information is present in the data, however, that suggests that a conclusion can be drawn about role model race in relation to racial identity without the desired statistical analysis. Only 6.7% of African American college students sampled in this study identified a role model who was not Black. Furthermore, Black role models were identified regardless of whether a participant attended a PWI or an HBCU. That Black role models were so greatly identified among the sample—and despite institution type—suggests that race is central to the population under study. When also considering that most of the participants

aligned with the IMCI attitude, suggesting a stable and healthy Black identity, it may be safely concluded that race was a central component to the identity of those in the study. All things considered, it must be concluded from this study's findings that the current project's African American male college students tend to choose Black males as role models and tend to have strong Black racial identities.

Hypothesis 4

It was hypothesized that participants would list a variety of characteristics as influential to role model selection. This hypothesis was addressed qualitatively so that subjective information could emerge from participants that could explain and expound on information derived from the group data. The themes emerging as consistent with previous research were the themes of proximity, career similarity, and perceived success. The theme of success was one of the most commonly identified by participants. That a role model was financially or professionally successful was noted as important in considering them as such. Even though the role models of these study participants were usually related, known individuals, or university-affiliated as opposed to famous public figures, attaining success was the common factor. The participants in this study appeared to recognize a more realistic or attainable success in their role models, noting business ownership, financial security, and investing as the areas of attraction in their role models. The type of success noted by these participants is different than the attention to material success often linked with famous role models.

Role model qualities that appeared to make a great difference were ones specific to the person being identified as a role model, their personality attributes. Who role models were as individuals and the traits of their personality made them attractive role

models. Still certain traits stood out more than others and all-in-all, participants extracted the traits of intelligence, working hard, passion, dedication and integrity—all of which positively identify role models. One characteristic requiring a bit more development and explanation is the theme of manhood. Respondents were not always clear in what they felt was definitive of 'manhood' but gave descriptions of their role models as "a real man" and "how a man should be." The emergence of this characteristic certainly makes relevant the role of gender-match in role model selection. It was surprising that more participants did not reference gender more.

Other areas of identification uncovered in this study appear to describe elements of African American culture. Spirituality, family, and community were embraced and commonly highlighted as important qualities of role models. The first and third most occurring relationships between participants and their role models were parents and ministers, respectively. Collectively, about 65% of role models were related to their emulator and another 19% were ministers. Thus, over 80% of role models fell into the category of family or spiritual leader. When considering these figures, perhaps it is not surprising that the themes of family and spirituality emerged. Participants described their role models as being loyal to their family and having strong values toward providing for family. More often than not it was likely the case that they were referring to parental figures in these explanations. Still, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles were also well-represented as role models and the identification of these relatives as role models may be more suggestive of an overall value for family.

Role models were described as supportive and actively involved in their communities or pursuing community-oriented personas (e.g., humanitarian, activist, etc.).

The care and concern for the wellbeing of others was at the base of these role model descriptions. However, descriptions of community-oriented role models were explained more as a concern and involvement with community in general that was not specific to race. In other words, participants did not emphasize community in the sense of Blackness (i.e., the Black community). In this way, respondents may not have been describing 'community' on a cultural level but rather a multicultural level. This interpretation of community is consistent with the sample's higher scores on the IMCI racial identity subscale. Adopting a multicultural worldview would suggest that community is perceived as humanity and transcends culture. It is interesting to note, though, that despite adopting a multiculturalist-inclusive racial identity, most participants identified same-race role models.

Fraternal membership was also included under the thematic category of community. Approximately 7% of respondents in the qualitative sample identified the importance of a fraternal connection, which is comparable to the quantitative finding that 9% of role models were affiliated with participants as a fraternity brother or sister. Furthermore, 42% of the entire sample reported involvement in a fraternal organization. If the fraternal organizations referenced are predominantly Black, this suggests another avenue for Black college males to be exposed to positive Black role models. It must be considered, however, whether the percentage of individuals affiliated with fraternal organizations in this sample is actually representative of the population since part of the recruitment strategy was to solicit participation from traditionally Black fraternities. These individuals may be overrepresented in the sample. Still, the presence of fraternal

members in the sample and their report of having fraternity-related role models, answers the question, in part, of who these individuals look to as role models.

Qualitative findings also revealed that mentors were also often identified as role models. This finding was not surprising considering that the terms role models and mentors are often confused, used interchangeably, and are often one in the same. Whereas, a mentorship involves intentional interaction wherein a mentor takes on an active socializing function, a role model relationship may not be intentional and the role model's socializing function is passive (Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Participants appeared to especially appreciate the advice-giving role of their mentor-like role models. Similarly 'supportive,' 'encouraging,' 'challenging,' 'motivating,' and 'inspiring' were notable descriptions for role models. These elements of role model relationships were meaningful because they are actions offered on behalf of the role models described by the emulators in a manner that could not be achieved if there was no relationship between the two. Perhaps these qualities make a world of difference in the lives of those identifying the role model. For the participants in this study, it appeared that when they knew their role models, these elements of support and inspiration were more personal and possibly more meaningful. Note the participant who described the outcome of his role model challenging him, "As a result I've personally achieved such high expectations that several people around me never thought possible."

Education was an area commonly cited as important by participants. Perhaps this is not so surprising when considering that the respondents are in the process of pursuing higher education. Individuals often described the educational accomplishments of their role models by stating their role model's degree-status or describing them as "educated."

Previous research has not emphasized the importance of education as relevant to African American males when identifying role models. Fame, fortune, and monetary gain have been discussed as a popular standard for African American males when selecting role models. It can be argued that educational attainment falls within the guidelines of success and that the emphasis on role models' educational attainment is comparable to emphasizing other forms of success. Still, there was an element of education described by participants that had less to do with pursuing education at or beyond the postsecondary level and more to do with exhibiting a value for education. For instance, role models who were not educated beyond high school were still noted for their commitment to completing their education and promoting it to others.

Group differences were identified between those attending HBCUs and PWIs in the qualitative analysis. It was discovered that participants from HBCUs yielded information about shared career interest with their role models that participants from PWIs did not report. All participant responses coded under the Career theme were from HBCUs. Furthermore, none of the PWI responses coded supported the theme of shared career interest. It should also be noted that most of the responses under the Career theme categorized role models who were described as prominent and professionally successful individuals who were not personally known by the respondent. Perhaps there is a connection between attending an HBCU and being exposed to prominent and historical African American figures within one's own field who can adequately serve a role model function. It may not be as great a possibility for Black students attending PWIs to be exposed to successful Black figures across various fields of study.

The other group difference noted was between participants with role models and those without role models. Participants without role models presented themselves as confident and self-sufficient, not seeing the need for a role model. This finding brings up the question of whether certain personality characteristics in an emulator affect whether they choose a role model. In other words, do individuals with autonomous or independent personalities fare better without role models? Is there a different level of intrinsic motivation possessed by these individuals than what is observed in others? Have these individuals had unique life experiences that have influenced their world view?

Another way to interpret this finding is to consider another potential consequence of not having a role model. Cited research (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006) suggests that not having a role model leads to negative outcomes for individuals; however, it is worth considering as well if not having a role model can also have a positive effect on an individual. This is fair to consider when looking at the response of one participant who suggested that not having a role model is what made him the person he became. Perhaps these individuals had to work harder to meet the needs that are usually satisfied by role models. In turn, they perceive themselves as more confident, autonomous, and as already possessing ideal characteristics without external influence.

Still, it is important to reconsider the previous discussion of modeling and the socializing function it serves. From a social learning perspective, it is unlikely that anyone experiences behavioral outcomes without external influence. In other words, these individuals have not attended college in a vacuum; they have interacted with many potential role models, even if the interaction was fleeting. The influence may have come from a moment in time and not a significant two-way relationship. Exposure to and

observation of multiple others in the lives of the men in this study who suggested never having a role model likely impacted their behavior and outcomes. Thus, despite not being able to identify specific models, it remains probable that influence and emulation occurred for these men through observation of some models at some point along the way.

Other Findings Regarding Role Model Selection

An important finding in the current study was that the majority of participants tended to identify having a role model as opposed to not having one. Eighty-seven percent of participants reported having a role model (currently or in the past), which speaks directly to the concern about whether or not African American males are able to identify role models. The fact that most participants in the study were able to identify a role model conflicts with previous findings that role models are difficult for African American males to attain (Zirkel, 2002). However, why so many participants were successful in identifying a role model is unclear. Is it that role models are more available than what has been previously believed? Could it be something special about the population sampled that contributed to their successful identification of a role model? Recall that the findings in Zirkel's study revealed that 53% of Black participants were unable to identify a role model. In Zimmerman et al.'s (1995) study, 28% could not identify a role model. These figures are higher than the 13% in the current study that identified not having a role model. Perhaps it is the difference in the populations sampled that has led to a difference in the stated figures. The current study utilized African American male college students from urban (40.4%), suburban (46.2%), and rural (11.5%) backgrounds, while the other two studies surveyed adolescent students from an

ethnically diverse city and an urban city, respectively. It is important to take this seemingly subtle difference into consideration.

Most of the current participants came from self-identified working class (34.6%), middle class (41.3%), or upper class (16.3%) socioeconomic backgrounds. Individuals from these backgrounds are the likely candidates to pursue or have resources for postsecondary education. Only about 6% of participants identified coming from a "poor" socioeconomic background. Furthermore, most participants reported that their mothers (81.8%) and fathers (65.3%) were college-educated, with some college, holding a 4-year degree, or holding an advanced degree. It is possible that given their family socioeconomic backgrounds, many participants may have been exposed to successful others who could potentially serve as positive role models. In contrast, younger Black males in adverse environments, with less education, or falling into lower socioeconomic conditions may have fewer opportunities to be exposed to educationally, professionally, or financially successful individuals who could be identified as positive role models. Previously cited literature discusses the potential for Black males to identify with those who are negative influences, especially when present in their home environments (Ascher, 1992; Hurd et al., 2009). However, the population in the current study may be from environments where individuals display positive qualities, thereby appealing to participants as appropriately imitative and readily identifiable as role models.

Regarding role model relationships for participants, parent relationships (37.6%) were the most common, followed by peer/friend relationships (23.5%) and pastor/minister/religious leader relationships (18.8%). These findings coincide with the earlier discussion about who most commonly serves as role models for African

Americans, where multiple researchers argued that parents serve an important role in this regard (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Hurd et al., 2009; Ringness, 1967; Yancey et al., 2002; Zimmerman et al., 1995). These results are also consistent with Shade's (1983) discussion of role models in young adulthood, where it is suggested that peers, friends, teachers, counselors, and family are the most likely role models. Whereas in Yancey et al.'s (2002) research on adolescents, a collective 19% of participants identified friends, known professionals, and clergy, nearly 19% of this study's participants identified clergy alone as role models. This finding in the current study suggests that there was some value for religion, or at least religious leaders, on the part of the participants. When also considering the qualitative finding in this study that spirituality tied as the third most supported theme, with 19% of respondents mentioning elements of spirituality in their written responses, it further appears that religion and spirituality were embraced among the study's sample. It may be possible that this regard for faith among the sample may be what influenced the frequent selection of religious leaders as role models. Still, it could also be that the regard for clergy as role models speaks more to their presence in their communities and therefore their influence as positive individuals who are attractive role models. It is unclear whether or not there is a relationship between an individual's spirituality and their selection of spiritual role models. It is plausible to consider, however, that one has an effect on the other.

Most other identified role models were either academically or fraternally connected or related in some other way. Only 9.4% claimed no relationship to their role model and 3.5% identified their role model relationship as "Other." This is another finding that challenges previous findings about who African Americans identify as role

models. Previously discussed studies determined that when Black youths identified role models, they were most likely to identify sports, media, or other public figures (Assibey-Mensah, 1997; Yancey et al., 2002). In the current study, most role models were personally familiar to the participant and were affiliated as relatives or associated with their educational institution in some way. Only three individuals specifically identified a famous or public figure as a role model.

It is interesting to note that so many role models (84.7%) were known to the participants. Moreover, many of the role model relationships identified were with individuals who the participant had a relationship and possibly regular contact (i.e., relatives, friends, ministers, professors/instructors, etc.). This information is suggestive that the relationships described could simultaneously (or actually) be mentorships. As mentioned before, role models and mentors are often described and/or thought of interchangeably. A definition of what was meant by the term 'role model' was provided for participants for use in this specific study. Still, it is possible that when seeing the term role model, some may have defaulted to the idea of a mentor. It should also be noted, however, that one participant described his relationship with his role model as "Other" and then specified that his relation to his role model was "Mentor," which suggests that he was clear on the difference between the two concepts.

Gender of role models. Although role model gender was not a variable under investigation in this study, the results regarding role model gender deserve attention. Of the participants identifying a role model, most (81.2%) identified a male role model. Similar results were achieved in other role model research for African Americans of both genders. Recall that 91% of males and 80% of females in Yancey et al.'s role model

research identified gender-matched role models. When considered in light of other research that takes into account role model gender, this study's findings appear even more interesting. Other role model research investigating gender as a variable has asked participants to identify a role model of each gender or simply looked at the impact of gender-match on outcome variables (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Hurd et al., 2009). The high percentage of participants in this study who identified a male role model is remarkable in that participants were simply asked to identify one individual as a role model and still overwhelmingly identified other Black men.

Important Racial Identity Findings

Racial identity was examined in order to establish how important participants perceived race to their self-identity and to determine the extent to which racial centrality was predictive of a role model's race. Participants scored highest on the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive subscale, indicating an attitude that accepts multiple socio-demographic aspects of one's identity in addition to Blackness as well as a general acceptance for other cultural groups. The IMCI attitude was the only attitude that was strongly representative of most participants. This finding indicates that participants generally perceive their race as central to their self-identity but also embrace other cultural identities and groups. The Internalization attitudes have been described as the most sophisticated and psychologically healthy. Individuals subscribing to Internalization attitudes have been shown to exhibit positive outcomes and to be more aware of race and racial issues. This sample overwhelmingly subscribed to this attitude.

In the normative sample ($N = 336$) for the CRIS, participants obtained a mean score of 5.59 on the IMCI subscale (Worrell, Vandiver, & Cross, 2004), which compares

to the mean score of 5.41 for the current sample. Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, and Fhagen-Smith (2002) conducted a validation study for the CRIS and their findings also revealed a mean IMCI score ($M = 5.58$) comparable to the current study that was higher than mean scores for all other subscales. The samples in these two validation studies included Black college students from PWIs. Additionally, in a study investigating racial identity and internalized racism, an HBCU population was sampled and the findings still revealed strongest support for the IMCI attitude (Cokley, 2002). Similarly, a study investigating racial identity and Afrocentric values utilizing students from both HBCUs and PWIs also uncovered mean scores that were highest for the IMCI subscale (Cokley, 2005). The current sample's endorsement of the multiculturalist inclusive attitude suggests that participants compare with others similar to them and tend to show strong agreement toward the IMCI attitude.

The attitude with the next highest mean score was the PM subscale. However, participants' scores on this subscale fell short of suggesting strong support for this attitude. Participants' PM scores indicated that they more often than not disagreed with statements describing negative or stereotypical views of Blackness. This finding did not coincide with those for the normative sample, where the mean PM score was lower ($M = 2.74$) than the PM mean for the current sample ($M = 3.7$). Cokley's (2002) study, on the other hand, yielded results similar to the current study. The PM attitude was the attitude with the second highest mean score.

Mean scores for the PA and IA subscales also indicated that participants did not show strong agreement with attitudes that dismiss Blackness or, to the other extreme, advocate for an Afrocentric perspective. Participants were generally not supportive of

statements that described self-hatred for one's Black race (PSH) and hatred for the White race (IEAW). These subscales garnered the least amount of representativeness among participants. The same was true for the CRIS's normative sample. Individuals in the normative sample did not indicate strong support for either the IEAW or the PSH attitudes, and they subscribed least to the PSH attitude. Again, these trends were true for Cokley's (2002) research and Vandiver et al.'s (2002) research except in Vandiver et al.'s research, the mean IEAW score was lowest. What the findings of the current study suggest is that participants were on neither extreme regarding their perspective of Blackness. They were neither anti-Black nor pro-Black but rather fell within a healthy average—one that has been suggested to be most indicative of good psychosocial outcomes and psychological health.

Why participants were so skewed toward the multiculturalist attitude is unclear. The fact that the sample was so greatly skewed toward Black role models supports that they have an appreciation for Blackness as is suggested in the IMCI attitude. Strong support for the IMCI attitude also suggests equal acceptance of cultural groups on a broader spectrum, and this suggests that the sample may see farther beyond race than what their role model selection suggests. Another possibility is that individuals wanted to be viewed as culturally inclusive as opposed to having negative attitudes toward a cultural group; as such it is possible that responses on the CRIS may have been indicative of an attempt to portray socially desirable attitudes. Still, participants in the normative sample and samples similar to the sample under investigation in this study tended to show strong support for the IMCI attitude; therefore, this may be an accurate representation of attitudes in the population.

Limitations

Limitations exist in the selection of a survey method using self-report tools. When using self-report measures the potential for social desirability bias is likely and when using measures such as the CRIS the potential for socially desirable responding is greater. The CRIS uses sensitive items to capture racial identity levels, some of which are not socially desirable to endorse (e.g., *I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black*). The finding that the IMCI attitude had the greatest support makes one consider socially desirable responding. Appearing to be accepting of Blackness along with multiple other cultural identities as mentioned on the CRIS (i.e., Hispanics, Whites, Asian Americans, Jews, gays and lesbians) is more favorable than accepting negative statements about Blackness. Using an additional racial identity measure to compare scores and assess inter-method reliability may have allowed for more confidence in the finding.

Another limitation of the survey method, specifically with using an electronic survey, is the potential threat to external validity due to non-standardized testing environments. With dissemination of an electronic survey, there is little opportunity to control for extraneous variables in participants' surroundings that could potentially contribute to the variance. Participants' environments when taking the survey are not equivalent, and therefore, completion of the measures is not standardized. Although the method of dissemination makes the study amicable to replication, the non-standardized nature challenges the generalizability.

Another limitation was how the grouping variable was conceptualized in Hypothesis 3. Role model race was used as the grouping variable in determining the predictive nature of racial identity. The planned analysis, predictive discriminant

analysis, is used when predicting membership into naturally occurring or pre-defined

groups and participant demographics are often used as grouping variables. In this study,

role model demographics were used to group the participants, which inadvertently

created a limitation. More favorable uses of grouping variables examine gender, race, or

some other demographic variable usually of the population being recruited. Grouping in

this manner would give a researcher greater latitude in achieving the appropriate group

sizes because certain demographics can be targeted when recruiting. The study may be

flawed in attempting to use role model race as the grouping variable because it could not

be known when recruiting participants what the race of their role model would be; nor

would it have been appropriate to solicit participants by directly asking about role model

race. Because of the risk of compromising the study by recruiting based on role model

race, it was nearly impossible to effectively pursue individuals in a way that would have

allowed for more appropriate group sizes.

Another option would have been to consider another way to statistically

investigate the relationship between racial identity and role model race. A limitation in

addressing Hypothesis 3 is its failure to uncover the causal nature of the correlation

between role model race and racial identity. The goal of Hypothesis 3 was to determine if

racial identity was predictive of role model race; however, determining causality may

have been quite beneficial in revealing implications for practice. No attempt was made in

this study to determine if strong Black racial identity leads to selecting a Black role

model or if having a Black role model causes one to have a strong Black identity.

Addressing causality would have been especially beneficial to the worlds of research and

practice pertaining to the areas of racial identity and role models as well as research on African American adolescents and young adults in general.

Another limitation of the current study has to do with the method of recruitment and sampling. This study utilized snowball sampling as one of its methods of data collection. When using snowball sampling, a threat to external validity is always possible. It is unclear to what extent snowball sampling versus other techniques resulted in the study's sample; however, the lack of control over who was targeted by other participants makes it likely that biases are present. For instance, if fraternal members reached out to other fraternal members and thus fraternity members become overrepresented in the sample, the sample becomes less representative of the general population. Furthermore, the results, and more specifically the qualitative data, could have been impacted and over-representative of one particular participant type.

One final limitation is regarding the small sample size of participants attending HBCUs. Only 15% of the study's sample was representative of HBCUs. Although the number of participants in the HBCU sample met the power analysis requirements to obtain adequate power and, therefore, was large enough to run analyses, the results are more difficult to generalize to the general population of African American male college students attending HBCUs. An equal number of PWIs and HBCUs were targeted but resulted in a disparate numbers of participants. The disparity between the numbers of participants representing PWIs versus HBCUs may be due, in part, to the on-campus recruitment strategies employed at the host institution, a PWI. Electronic recruitment strategies appear to have been less successful than on-campus events. Similar recruitment was more difficult to achieve at other institutions. Considering again that snowball

sampling procedures were utilized, it is probable that the networking that occurred among the participants from campuses where on-campus events were held impacted the group from which individuals were most successfully recruited. Another reason for the small HBCU sample size is that participants were difficult to recruit at HBCUs due to being underrepresented. Multiple instructors notified the primary researcher that they could not forward information about the study because they had no Black male students in their classes. Others were willing to forward information about the study but warned that they only had one or two Black male students in their classes. It may have been necessary to utilize more direct methods to reach this population at HBCUs given their apparent absence from these settings.

Research and Applied Implications

Research

In terms of the limitations identified in the current study, future research should use different methodological techniques in acquiring the sample and in administering study instruments to ensure stronger generalizability of results. Although the CRIS was administered appropriately to participants, administering the instrument in a standardized, controlled environment, as opposed to electronic dissemination, would have better served as a buffer to threats to the study's generalizability. Furthermore, a less varied recruitment strategy for obtaining a sample is also a way to increase generalizability. Any future research using multiple institution types would benefit from a well-planned and strategized method for recruiting individuals so that group sizes are comparable. Efforts in future research to recruit from HBCUs, for instance, must take into account the possibility that Black males may not be as readily available as Black females. As such,

greater efforts for more personal contact, emphasis on the relevance of research to

potential participants, in-person recruitment strategies similar to the recruitment events

developed for the current study, or greater incentives may need to be employed to capture

the attention of those being solicited.

The findings of the present study scratch the surface in terms of integrating the

variable of racial identity into role model research. Obviously, with appropriate sampling,

future research should investigate the relationship between racial identity and role model

race. Research should determine if there is a correlation and if the relationship is causal.

Role model research is already beneficial in its conceptualization of positive experiences

for African Americans. Furthermore, racial identity is already a heavily established area

of research and is also a positive area of focus in research on Black populations.

Therefore, understanding how racial identity of African Americans overlaps with the

presence of role models in their lives could promote more positive directions in

conceptualizing research on this population.

Related to the integration of racial identity and role model research, it may also be

beneficial to examine the characteristics of those who do not have role models but still

have strong racial identities. Racial identity based on whether or not one had a role model

was not investigated in the current study. However, it became evident in qualitative

findings that participants who did not have a role model were generally not interested in

having one. Participants who answered 'no' to the question of having a role model

presented themselves as confident and capable and felt as if they had the tools within

themselves needed to be successful, even without having someone to look up to. It would

have been interesting to examine if the projected confidence was also evident in their

racial identity level by looking at the relationship between racial identity level and role model presence or absence.

The population of individuals who are without role models also deserves its own research attention. The fact that those without role models in the current study also presented themselves as confident may suggest that these individuals possess their own set of unique characteristics. Research on Black male youth who lack role models suggests that this is a negative phenomenon (Hurd et al., 2009; Zirkel, 2002); however, the findings of this study suggest that for college-educated African American males, not having a role model may not necessarily be a detriment to their development. It would be interesting to investigate how individuals without role models satisfy the needs for themselves that role models satisfy for others. This group of men would be interesting to examine on these and other variables and outcomes, especially using qualitative methods.

Another possible research topic would examine the relationship between racial identity and role model selection for White individuals as well as those from other racial groups. The literature suggests that racial identity tends to be more salient for minority groups than for majority groups (Cokley, 2005). Looking at the extent to which racial identity is related to selection of racially similar role models across multiple racial groups would potentially place a microscope on the claims of social comparison theory. If role model selection based on race were found to be impacted by racial identity or if group differences were apparent between minorities and White populations, the theoretical suggestion that individuals assimilate to similar others would appear over simplistic and would become convoluted. Regardless of the findings, research comparing racial groups on this variable would be valuable.

The results of this study were significantly different from previous research (Assibey-Mensah, 1997; Yancey et al., 2002) that found media figures are prominent role models for African American males; further research on college students and role modeling is necessary. Much attention was given in the discussion about the differences between the role models selected for this study's African American male college sample as compared to adolescent populations used in previous research. Role models for the current participants were known individuals who had direct contact and influence on the participants whereas adolescents have been described as identifying individuals with whom they may never have contact (e.g., famous athletes, musicians, and other public figures). Perhaps more qualitative research is needed investigating what adolescents look for in their role models. Socioeconomic status may also be a relevant variable of investigation in future research as more than half of the participants in the current study were from a working-to-middle class socioeconomic background and most were from at least a working class background. It is unclear the socioeconomic background of African American participants discussed in previous research on role models; therefore the differences noted between college-educated versus high school students pertaining to role model presence have less to do with developmental level and more to do with social class. Qualitative research, investigating what these individuals find attractive in their role models, may settle this discrepancy.

Practical Applications of the Findings

Many of the practical implications become evident when considering the qualitative responses. These implications become relevant for African American college students, their parents and relatives, their university instructors and administrators, and

their community leaders and ministers. The sample made it clear who they seek as role models and what they view as important in their role model selections. All of the traits identified for role models were positive and redeemable characteristics. Participants expressed the attractiveness of educational, financial, and professional success. They were also interested in personal relationship, encouragement, and support. They found it admirable for role models to be family and community-oriented, selfless, and honorable.

Family, community leaders, university-officials, and the other common role models may not have even been aware of the impact of their actions and ways of being that were so greatly influential. It may be because of these role model relationships that the men in the current study succeed educationally. Parents were shown in the current study and in previous research to be the most common role model type. Knowing this, parents can learn from this study that they have the greatest potential for positively impacting their children. They are extremely likely to be perceived by their children as role models, and therefore, should take advantage of such opportunity to be positive influences on their children.

Similarly, instructors, advisors, and other university-affiliated individuals, especially those who are African American, need to understand the potential impact of not just their presence but their example. African American professors and instructors may consider taking a more active role in reaching out to African American students in a mentoring role or a caring role at minimum. This idea extends to non-teaching professionals who work in university settings as well. One participant described his role model, an employee in the university Admissions office. He described her as an "African American female" and a "fellow Greek" and stated, "She was just dedicated in whatever

she did and she made sure that everything was done to the best of her abilities."
University administrators may be unaware of the potential influence they hold in contributing to the success of African American male college students whose paths they cross. More than half the study's participants were already half way through their undergraduate journey and the traits they identified in their role models may have fostered the drive and developed the tools these individuals needed to get to where they were.

Approximately 82% of the study's sample identified having a role model. This figure is markedly different from what is suggested in media, research, and literature on African American males. It has been repeatedly and strongly suggested that positive role models are not available, especially for African American males. However, the participants in the current study found positive individuals to emulate and as previously stated, most found available role models in their own homes and communities. It has been previously noted that a college population differs in some ways from an inner city population and that the differences between these populations likely provides the explanation for why the former can identify positive role models and the latter cannot. Socioeconomic status, privilege, exposure to educated others, memberships in families of legacy, and other factors related to access may ensure that positive and successful others are readily available and accessible. Most participants in the study had college educated parents and identified a socioeconomic status higher than what is typical of inner city youth sampled in other research.

Still, the fact that ministers, former employers, peers, and non-parental relatives were also identified as role models suggests that findings are applicable on the

community level as well. This sheds light for the adolescents discussed in previous research findings, who majorly identified famous athletes and media figures as role models. Perhaps this is a message to ministers and other prominent leaders within Black communities that there is a need for them to be more present in the worlds of Black adolescents in adverse environments. Other Black professionals in positions of influence, such as employers and local business owners, can embrace the same advice and make themselves more present in the worlds of those Black youth who would otherwise not seek them out as role models. The end result could be that youths begin to see possibilities for themselves beyond what their environments could ever provide.

Summary

This study addressed the problem of the lack of positive role models for African American males by investigating the presence of racially-matched role models and the relevance of racial identity all within a social comparison theory framework. In the investigation it was discovered that African American male college students identify a broad range of individuals as their role models. Role models were African American and often male and consisted of relatives, peers, clergy, educators, and other non-relative known individuals. The investigation also uncovered that participants exhibited great evidence of having a strong multicultural identity that may or may not have influenced their role model selection. Still, future research is needed to examine the relationship between racial identity and role model selection. It can be concluded from the research that racial-match in role model selection is absolutely apparent and even more important, role models are useful and valuable.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Role Model Survey

Role Model Survey

Instructions: Please read the definition below and answer the questions that follow.

A role model is often defined as "someone who you strive to be like" or "someone you look up to".

1. Based on this definition are you able to identify a role model for yourself?
   A. Yes, I currently have a role model
   B. Yes, I previously had a role model
   C. No

If you answered YES (A or B) to #1, please respond to the following (#2, #3, and #4) based on the person you identified. *If you were able to identify more than one person, please select the individual who you consider to be your primary role model.

2. Please provide this individual's initials.

   _____

3. Tell me about this person. (<u>Please use the initials of this person rather than a name or any other identifying information.</u>)

   +---+
   | |
   | |
   | |
   | |
   | |
   | |
   | |
   +---+

4. Why do you/did you look up to (or want to be like) this person? (<u>Please use the initials of this person rather than a name or any other identifying information.</u>)

   +---+
   | |
   | |
   | |
   | |
   | |
   | |
   | |
   +---+

If you answered NO to #1, please respond to the following (#5, #6, and #7).

5. Why haven't you had a role model?

6. Would you like to have a role model?

7. What type of individual do you look up to?

Instructions. If a role model was identified, please provide the following demographic information about <u>your role model</u>. If not, please skip this section and continue to the next page.

8. Role Model's Race
    - ☐ African
    - ☐ African-American
    - ☐ Black
    - ☐ West Indian/Caribbean Black
    - ☐ Hispanic Black
    - ☐ Mixed
    - ☐ American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native
    - ☐ Asian American/Pacific Islander
    - ☐ Caucasian/White
    - ☐ Other
        If you selected "Other", please specify. _____

9. Is your role model of Hispanic origin?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Unsure

10. Role Model's Gender
    - ☐ Female
    - ☐ Male

11. Role Model's Sexual Orientation
    - ☐ Heterosexual
    - ☐ Homosexual (Gay/Lesbian)
    - ☐ Bisexual
    - ☐ Unsure
    - ☐ Other
        If you selected "Other", please specify. _____

12. Role Model's Educational Background
    - ☐ Elementary school
    - ☐ Some high school
    - ☐ High school diploma or equivalent obtained
    - ☐ Some college
    - ☐ Bachelors degree obtained
    - ☐ Master's degree obtained
    - ☐ Doctoral degree obtained
    - ☐ Other professional degree obtained
    - ☐ Unsure

13. What is/was your role model's occupation/profession?

_____

14. Do you personally know your role model (i.e. have met him/her)?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No
      If you selected "YES" how many years have you known this individual?
      _____

15. Is your role model living?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

16. Is your primary role model affiliated with the university you attend?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No
      If you selected "YES", please specify the affiliation.
      _____

17. Did you have this role model before coming to campus?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

18. Check all that apply regarding your relationship to your role model.
    ☐ Parent
    ☐ Step-parent
    ☐ Grandparent
    ☐ Sibling
    ☐ Aunt/Uncle
    ☐ Cousin
    ☐ Other Relative
    ☐ Peer/Friend
    ☐ Fraternity Brother/Sister
    ☐ Academic Advisor
    ☐ Professor/Instructor
    ☐ University Administrator
    ☐ University Alumni
    ☐ Employer/Former Employer
    ☐ Pastor/Minister/Religious leader
    ☐ No relationship
    ☐ Other
      If you selected "Other relative", please specify the relative. _____
      If you selected "No relationship", please explain._____
      If you selected "Other", please specify. _____

Appendix B

Recruitment Message

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in the dissertation research study "An Examination of Role Model Selection and Social Identity Attitudes for African American Male College Students". The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between your selection of role models and your attitudes toward self and social concepts. In order to participate you must be an African American male at least 18 years of age and be currently enrolled in an undergraduate program. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey that is expected to take 25-30 minutes to complete and is a one-time participation. After completing the survey you will be given the opportunity to enter a drawing to win a $25 gift card to Amazon.com or to receive course credit (as applies). Participation in this research study would be completely voluntary and you would be free to withdraw or discontinue participation at any point in the study without penalty or prejudice from the researcher.

By choosing to participate in this study you would offer unique information about personal success and the potential success of others like you.

To participate, please follow the link:
http://inquisitor.bsu.edu/inqsit/show_module.cgi/export/home/bowman/Carey?Survey

Thank you!

Kory L. Carey, MA   Sharon L. Bowman, Ph.D.
Researcher/Doctoral Student   Doctoral Chair and Faculty Advisor
Counseling Psychology &   Counseling Psychology &
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Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer

Appendix D

Informed Consent

The title of this study is "An Examination of Role Model Selection and Social Identity Attitudes for African American Male College Students". The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between your selection of role models and your attitudes toward self and social concepts. Looking at role model selection will offer unique information about personal success and the potential success of others like you. Also, examining your social attitudes will make it easier to understand your role model selection.

This research project is intended for African American males at least 18 years old, who are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey that is expected to take 25-30 minutes to complete and is a one-time participation.

After completing the survey you will be given the opportunity to enter a drawing to win a $25 gift card to Amazon.com or to receive course credit (as applies). You can select either a gift card or course credit for your participation, but not both. If you are interested in either of these opportunities you will be asked to email the researcher, stating whether you wish to receive a chance to win the $25 gift card or course credit. You will not be asked to give your name or any other identifying information during the study, so even if you email the researcher after the study your identifying information cannot be linked with your responses. You will be given more information about this step at the end of the survey.

There are no physical or psychological risks associated with participating in this study; therefore you can expect to complete the survey without discomfort. There are no direct benefits associated with your participation. However, it is expected that this research will benefit the broader research world by examining concepts that have not yet been examined together.

Your responses will only be used for the purpose of this research. Your answers to the survey questions will remain completely confidential and you will not be able to be identified based on your responses. You will remain anonymous. Upon the completion of this research or after a period of two years, your responses will be deleted. Participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw or discontinue participation at any point in the study without penalty or prejudice from the researcher.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the researcher or the doctoral chair of the researcher. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Research Compliance. Contact information is below.

Please indicate your understanding of the previous information and your agreement to participate in this study by clicking I AGREE. By clicking I AGREE you are consenting to participation in this study and expressing that you understand the information explained and have had questions answered.

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