How and Why Three Potential Causes of Academic Disidentification May Affect Interests in Academic Work at the Secondary Level Among Inner-City Black Males

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HOW AND WHY THREE POTENTIAL CAUSES OF ACADEMIC DISIDENTIFICATION MAY AFFECT INTERESTS IN ACADEMIC WORK AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL AMONG INNER-CITY BLACK MALES

ERNEST WILFERT WILLIAMSON III

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Seton Hall University

2011
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ABSTRACT

Three potential causes contribute to the manifestation of academic disidentification among young urban Black males in particular: stereotype threat, cool pose, and a dearth of positive Black role models. The purpose of this study was to investigate how these causes affect young inner-city Black males' interests in academic work at four inner-city Newark high schools. To meet this purpose, I (a) randomly solicited a sample of young urban Black male high school students who may be suffering from academic disidentification; (b) conducted interviews with a select number of these potentially at-risk students; and (c) collected, analyzed, and presented data gathered from the interviews using thematic content analysis.

Most of the responses of the 22 participants were counterintuitive to the theoretical causes of the Academic Disidentification Theory; however, many of the participants had a weak knowledge base of outstanding African American males in academic and/or intellectual fields of study. As a result, I am calling for further diversification of curricula and all forms of media, with the intent of expanding the knowledge base of African American intellectual exceptionality for African American male students at the secondary level in particular. In addition, I am suspect of the reliability of the 'peer pressure aspect' of "Stereotype Threat" and the "Cool Pose Theory", in determining attributive causes of academic disidentification among young Black males in particular.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Under the instruction and guidance of Dr. Charles Achilles, I have been made greatly aware of the importance of understanding precisely how research methodology and research design undergird a dissertation. His wisdom shall be upheld and valued for generations to come.

I am indebted to Dr. Carol Frances for her encouragement and desire for me to produce the best dissertation possible. Her assessment of my potential, and her willingness to critically advise and motivate me during my doctoral studies, will continue to be valued for the rest of my life.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my family for their love and support during my doctoral studies. My mother, father, grandparents, and siblings never doubted my ability to complete my doctorate, and they were quick to express pride in my efforts to continue my doctoral studies over the years.

Finally, I owe much praise and love to God for His willingness to enable me to face and overcome every hurdle I encountered during my doctoral studies. All of my successes inside and outside of academe are a result of God’s power and dominion.
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>...........................................................................................................</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>..................................................................................................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION...</td>
<td>........................................................................................................................................</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem.</td>
<td>...........................................................................................................</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Causes for Academic Disidentification.</td>
<td>....................................................................................................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement.</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study.</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study.</td>
<td>....................................................................................................</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions.</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Delimitations of the Study.</td>
<td>....................................................................................................</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study.</td>
<td>.........................................................................................</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations of the Study.</td>
<td>.......................................................................................</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE RELATED RESEARCH, THEORY, AND LITERATURE</td>
<td>........................................................................................................................</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Overview</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Disidentification: An Introduction</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results from Previous Studies of Academic Disidentification</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Identity</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogbu’s Cultural Inversion Theory and Academic Disidentification</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat and Academic Disidentification</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Between the Dearth of Positive Black Role Models and Academic Disidentification</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool Pose and Academic Disidentification</td>
<td>.......................................................................................</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>...........................................................................................................</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>...........................................................................................................</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>...........................................................................................................</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>...........................................................................................................</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Content Analysis</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background and general information about how TCA works</td>
<td>.......................................................................................</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Depth Interviewing</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper conduction</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steps for Properly Conducting In-Depth Interviews</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper Presentation</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role and Responsibilities of the Interviewer</td>
<td>........................................................................................................</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>...........................................................................................................</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE I. Stereotype Threat ................................................................. 62

TABLE II. Cool Pose ........................................................................... 68

TABLE III. Positive Black Male Role Model ........................................... 70

TABLE IV. Association of Whiteness with Exceptional Intellectual/Creative Achievement (Genius) ............................................................... 71
APPENDICES

Appendix A. Participant A ................................................................. 99
Appendix B. Participant B ................................................................. 101
Appendix C. Participant C ................................................................. 103
Appendix D. Participant D ................................................................. 105
Appendix E. Participant E ................................................................. 107
Appendix F. Participant F ................................................................. 109
Appendix G. Participant G ................................................................. 111
Appendix H. Participant H ................................................................. 113
Appendix I. Participant I ................................................................. 115
Appendix J. Participant J ................................................................. 117
Appendix K. Participant K ................................................................. 119
Appendix L. Participant L ................................................................. 121
Appendix M. Participant M ................................................................. 123
Appendix N. Participant N ................................................................. 125
Appendix O. Participant O ................................................................. 127
Appendix P. Participant P ................................................................. 129
Appendix Q. Participant Q ................................................................. 131
Appendix R. Participant R ................................................................. 133
Appendix S. Participant S ................................................................. 135
Appendix T. Participant T ................................................................. 137
Appendix U. Participant U ................................................................. 139
Appendix V. Participant V ................................................................. 141

International Review Board Items ...................................................................... 143
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
The Problem

Though academic disidentification is not unique to the Black community, it is much more pronounced among Black males in urban elementary and secondary schools than it is among other groups. Finn (1989) contended in the article, “Withdrawing from School”, that academic disidentification is similar to alienation because of the noninvolvement in school-related activity. Academic disidentification, then, can be characterized as “an emotional and physical withdrawal from school, leading to a host of negative behaviors, including poor academic performance, complete withdrawal or ‘dropping out’ of school, or even potential delinquency”.

According to Voelkl (1997), disidentification from school is regarded as “a lack of feelings of valuing school and belonging in school”. The emotional state of disidentification is described as “the student neither feels a sense of belonging nor of valuing school”. The youngster does not feel like an accepted member, has little or no sense of “fitting in,” does not feel comfortable or adequate, fails to incorporate school into his or her self-definition, may feel anger or hostility toward school, would rather be in another setting, has little feeling of commitment, or may be distrustful and suspicious of the institution (Voelkl, 1997).

Steele (1992) proposed the idea that stereotype threat causes some African American students, as well as other minority groups, to de-value the role of academics, and therefore to disidentify with school and to disassociate personal success with academic achievement. When confronted by a long-term stereotype threat, many of these students disengage from the academic domain, so that it no longer holds specific relevance or significance to their self-perceptions. Other theoretical explanations for the failure of some minority groups to identify with school
include Fordham's Raceless Identity theory (1996), Majors and Billson's Cool Pose theory (1992), and Ogbu's Cultural Ecological perspective (1998). These theoretical explanations proposed that some minorities, particularly African American males, fail to identify with school because they have developed a shared identity that resists the adoption of the primary culture’s norms and values. They learn to act aloof as a way to defend against insults to their pride and self-confidence, and they feel compelled by peer pressure not to conform to the dominant society’s expectations. Those African Americans who do become high achievers learn to adopt what Fordham (1996) referred to as a “raceless identity.” In so doing, they adopt mainstream ways of acting and thinking in order to circumvent the racial stigma associated with being African American.

Steele’s (1992) definition of disidentification is “the lack of a relationship between academic self-esteem and global self-esteem, with the implication that there has been a relationship in the past”. This is a particularly troubling phenomenon, as identification with academics has been discussed as an important factor in educational success (Finn, 1989; Steele, 1992). Theoretically, students who identify more with academics should be more motivated to succeed because their self-esteem is directly linked to scholastic performance. For these students, performing well should be rewarding; a poor performance should be something to overcome.

Given the educational crisis facing our Black male youth, Gosa and Young (2007) were concerned that otherwise intelligent black males are rejecting formal education as a means to success, instead adopting identities that eschew school achievement and peer groups that privilege street culture over school culture.
Potential Causes for Academic Disidentification

Stereotype threat is a possible cause of academic disidentification among inner-city Black males in particular. Stereotype threat refers to being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In other words, students, especially Black males, disidentify with academic engagement because of the real possibility of being rejected by peers who resent the idea of engaging in academic work—something considered to be a “White thing.” A stereotype of which Blacks are often aware is that they have lower intellectual abilities than other groups, such as Whites (Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolfe, & Crocker, 1998). When Black males internalize and accept such a stereotype about their innate academic abilities, they tend to disidentify with academic engagement.

Fryer and Paul (2005) aptly noted that even able Black male students might choose to underperform in school in order to avoid “acting White.” Fryer and Paul (2005) wrote, “If minority students today deliberately underachieve in order to avoid social sanctions...that by itself could explain why the academic performance of 17-year-old African-Americans...has deteriorated since the late 1980s” (p. 54). The African American community must produce a much larger corpus of academically successful students at all educational levels in order to reconfigure the current academic identities of Black males in particular. Fryer and Paul called attention to the need for “new identities” among African American students and other minorities. Fryer and Paul wrote,

Minority communities in the United States have yet to generate a large cadre of high achievers, a situation as discouraging as the high incarceration rates among minorities who never finish high school. As long as distressed communities provide minorities with their identities, the social cost of breaking free will remain high (p. 59).
A dearth of positive Black male role models is another potential cause for disidentification among young inner-city Black males. Positive Black male role models are those who embrace intellectual work within academic settings, such as schools. Scholars such as Gibbs (1988), Hilliard (2002), and Hoberman (2000) have reaffirmed that the media images of Black men are heavily pejorative, bellicose, and skewed toward the criminal or the sensational. Due to the negatively prominent images presented, such perceptions become subconsciously affixed as the common standard for all Black males (Majors & Billson, 1992; Tatum, 1997; Wharton, 1988). This not only contributes to young Black males’ having a narrow perception of their options, it also reinforces some commonly held beliefs of the general society (Hoberman, 2000).

The effect of negative role models on Black male youth adds tremendously to their teachers’ dilemmas. Shreffler (2001, p. 12) wrote,

For example, most of my Black male students idolize two groups of men: rappers and professional athletes. A number of notable figures in these fields, most of whom are Black males like my students, have failed drug tests, abused alcohol, and acted violently in public. Only a few of them contribute much in the way of constructive messages to these teenage boys.

Many young urban Black males do not have biological fathers to identify with, because the fathers are voluntarily absent, incarcerated, or dead. As 70% of Black children are born to single mothers, according to Hymowitz (2008), many young boys grow up without ever having a positive and consistent role model to learn from, and furthermore, to learn from on how to identify with school.
Cool pose is yet another potential cause for academic disidentification among young inner-city Black males. Majors and Billson (1992) claimed that Black males adopt a "cool pose," which is a ritualized approach to masculinity that allows them to cope and survive in a socially oppressive environment. Black males learn to project this façade of emotionlessness, fearlessness, and aloofness to counter the inner pain caused by the damaged pride and poor self-confidence that result from their existence as a member of a subjugated group (Osborne, 1999). Cool pose is generally incompatible with the popular perception of the "good student" as a hard-driving, disciplined, and highly-motivated individual, closely identifying with school. Thus, Black boys adopt a strategy for coping with their membership in a stigmatized group that is opposed to academic identification (Osborne).

Cool pose, which is a probable cause of academic disidentification, seems to emerge from communities and environments that gravitate towards a disturbing and consistent sensibility that neglects academic interests and academic success. Therefore, in order to avoid the label of "acting White," many Black males in urban and even suburban localities purposely underachieve and assume "cool poses" to diminish peer pressure, and most disturbingly, to sustain an anti-intellectual identity.

Negative Consequences of Academic Disidentification

According to Sayegh (2004), academic disidentification has the negative effect of inhibiting scholastic success, as postulated by the main assumption of the general theory of domain identification. Griffin (2002) concluded that, if the threat of a negative stereotype does lead to disidentification from academics, then adverse behaviors from the disidentified student can be expected. Based upon the evidence from a number of studies (Aronson & Salinas, 1998; Griffin, 2002; Hansford & Hattie, 1982; Major et al., 1998; Osborne, 1995, 1997; Salinas &
Aronson, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995), Black and Hispanic students appear to identify less with academics than White students. Similarly, the findings of Dietrich (1998), Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Fries-Britt (1998), Graham, Taylor, & Hudley (1998), Griffin (2002), Majors (1994), Matute-Bianchi (1991), and Ogbu (1991) indicated that both Blacks and Hispanics have developed subcultures that illustrate cultural opposition toward academics, which further suggests detachment from the academic domain. Because of this detachment, the participation-identification model, which describes school completion and dropout in terms of school engagement, according to Finn (1989), would predict that Black and Hispanic students are more likely to drop out of school. The research confirms this; dropout rates are highest for Black and Hispanic students, with Hispanics demonstrating the highest rates of withdrawal (Gibson, 1991; Rumberger, 1987; Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984).

According to Griffin (2002), if stereotype threat does lead to disidentification from academia, then students from any group who face negative cultural forces regarding academics, or a threat from negative stereotypes about academics, should place less emphasis on school performance when dropping out is a consideration. Scholars such as Ogbu (1992) and Walsh (1987) have found that Black and Hispanic students tend to be marginalized in academic settings and in various societies, regardless of subjection to stereotype threat or cultural opposition.

Higher levels of alienation from school among Black and Hispanic students compared to White students have been documented in research by researchers such as Calabrese and Poe (1990), and according to Finn (1989), such academic alienation is closely associated with academic disidentification. “For Asian students, a positive academic stereotype exists (Kao, 1995, as cited in Griffin, 2002)”, and other research shows that Asians have higher levels of

**Problem Statement**

Academic disidentification remains a problem for Black males, the Black community, and for the United States of America. There is a well-documented link between academic disidentification and unproductivity, such as academic underachievement, academic disengagement, and elevated high school dropout rates, especially among inner-city Black males. For example, Griffin (2002), mentioned that Black males, in particular, disidentify more than any other group, and as a result Black males are more likely to drop out of school.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to augment the body of literature on academic disidentification by identifying more effective ways to decrease the disproportionate rate of academic disidentification among inner-city Black males in particular, focusing on how and why theoretical causes of academic disidentification may affect their self-image and ultimate academic interests at the secondary level. Three potential causes contribute to the manifestation of academic disidentification among young urban Black males in particular: stereotype threat, cool pose, and a dearth of positive Black role models. The purpose of this study was to investigate how these causes affect young inner-city Black males’ interests in academic work at four inner-city Newark high schools. To meet this purpose, a) randomly solicited a sample of young urban Black male high school students who may be suffering from academic disidentification; b) conducted interviews with a select number of these potentially at-risk students; c) and collected, analyzed, and presented data gathered from the interviews using
thematic content analysis. The findings of the study are reported in this dissertation, and I offer policy recommendations as needed.

**Significance of the Study**

The execution of this study can augment the literature on how and why the probable causes of academic disidentification affect selected students. Secondly, researchers and policy makers can identify, with greater confidence, more effective ways to decrease the disproportionate rate of academic disidentification among young inner-city Black males.

**Research Questions**

The primary research question is:

How and why do the three outlined potential causes of academic disidentification significantly deter or disinterest young, inner-city Black males from showing academic interest at the high school level?

Subquestions include:

1. How does stereotype threat relate to academic disidentification among young inner-city Black males and their interest in academic work at four inner-city Newark high schools?
2. How does a dearth of Black role models relate to academic disidentification and affect young, inner-city Black males’ interest in academic work at four inner-city Newark high schools?
3. How does cool pose relate to academic disidentification and affect young inner-city Black males’ interest in academic work at four inner-city Newark high schools?
Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study include the small number of participants in the study and the perceptions of the students being limited exclusively to their viewpoints about how their academic identities interfere with, or limit, their interests in academic work at school. The limitations do not undermine the implications of the study, because, according to Maxwell (1992), internal generalization is important for most qualitative researchers, and the “value of a qualitative study may depend on its lack of external generalizability” (p. 274).

Delimitations of the Study

Only ninth- and tenth-grade inner-city Black males from the aforementioned schools participated in this study, because beyond these grade levels, many young Black male students who have already academically disidentified with school have dropped out of high school or been expelled.
CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THE RELATED RESEARCH, THEORY, AND LITERATURE

Chapter Overview

This section presents a framework of the major theories and studies about academic disidentification, along with some potential causes for it. Initially, the reader will be introduced, in greater depth, to informational and theoretical work about academic disidentification and academic identity. Second, the reader will be informed of the possible relationship between stereotype threat and academic disidentification. Third, the possible relationship between cool pose and academic disidentification will be discussed in greater depth, and finally, the possible relationship between a dearth of positive Black male role models and academic disidentification will be discussed.

Academic Disidentification: An Introduction

According to Wickline (2003), academic disidentification is an ever-increasing problem in American society. Not much is known about how and why the potential causes of academic disidentification—stereotype threat, cool pose, and the dearth of positive Black male role models—affect inner-city Black males' interest in academic work at the secondary level. Osborne (1997) and Steele (1992) both mentioned, in their respective studies, that African American male students are at a heightened risk of failing to engage and associate with academia at all levels. According to Steele, limited academic engagement and achievement among these students manifest due to a culture of low expectations and support for Black male students. Academic engagement is defined as "students' putting forth mental effort to achieve the knowledge and skills generally associated with the outcomes of formal schooling" (Wehlage, 1989, as cited in Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992).
African American male students tend to shift their interests and energies from academic work to non-academic work in an effort to maintain a positive sense of self. For example, a student who is good in a band but does not perform as well in academics will probably lower the level of importance placed on study and shift his or her sense of self-worth to the band (Adelabu, 2007). A lack of identification with academics has been shown to cause or contribute to poorer performance (Osborne, 1995).

According to Aronson (2002), disidentification occurs when one redefines the self-concept, such that a threatened domain no longer is used as a basis of self-esteem (e.g., Aronson, Blanton, & Cooper, 1995; Pellham & Swann, 1989; Steele, 1992). According to Howard (2003), adolescents become increasingly aware of their identities along racial, gender, and academic lines as they enter high school. Thus, for African American students, academic identities are difficult to separate from gender and racial identities. These students must negotiate the intrapersonal dynamics of dual cultures—personal and racial/ethnic culture with school culture. Welch and Hodges (1997) defined academic identity as, “a dimension of a larger, global self-concept and is central to academic performance and achievement motivation” (p. 37).

Motivation is enhanced when students can see the relevance and utility of what they are expected to learn. For inner-city Black males, academic identity is also tied to one’s overall self-concept, or “the personal commitment to a standard of excellence, the willingness to persist in the challenge, struggle, excitement and disappointment intrinsic in the learning process” (White, 1984, p. 121). Powell (1989) noted that the academic self-concept (i.e., identity) for inner-city Black males, among others, is directly linked to how well they develop prosocial strategies for coping with racism in schools, and how well they overcome obstacles to academic success. Empirical research has lent some support to the disidentification hypothesis, as Black males
seem to identify less with school than White males. However, Steele (1992) noted that there remains much to be understood about the process of disidentification.

Results from Previous Studies of Academic Disidentification

Gosa and Young (2007) noted that three decades of ethnographic research conducted by Ogbu and associates had documented how the adaptation of oppositional culture hinders the academic achievement of young inner-city Black males, among other groups. Gosa and Young also mentioned that oppositional symbolic beliefs represent appropriate Black attitudes and behaviors defined in opposition to those thought to be appropriate for Whites. Such beliefs include the interpretation of typical pro-schooling attitudes and behaviors (e.g., speaking “standard English” and studying hard), as symbolically wanting to be like “them” rather than “us.” Engaging in these activities is viewed pejoratively as “acting White.” (Gosa & Young, p 4)

According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), as cited by Gosa and Young (2007), when school achievement becomes racialized, Black males who want to pursue academic success have to cope with the burden of acting White by proving that they are still authentically Black (Fordham, 1996). Bratton & Lewis (2004) mentioned that the “acting White” hypothesis has postulated that some African American youths avoid social and academic achievement behaviors in order to evade the peer rejection and alienation that may befall them when they are accused of “acting White.” According to Bratton and Lewis (2004), Black teens’ conceptualization of “acting Black” provides no positive refuge for achievement constructs that these youths may embrace as their own. Bratton also noted that, when Black youths have a clear and constructive reference of group definitions, self-definitions and directives, it is likely that their tendency or need to conceptualize achievement in relationship to Whiteness will disappear.
According to Gosa and Young (2007), the emerging research on oppositional culture suggests that Black males may be more susceptible to adopting oppositional identities than Black females, because of pervasive inclinations to associate realistic and positive identifications with academic underachievement, rebellion, and popular culture, which are heavily infused with a “gangsta” mentality. Results from Hansford and Hattie’s (1982) meta-analysis of the relationship between self and academic achievement provides supportive evidence for the disidentification hypothesis. Although Hansford and Hattie were not specifically addressing this hypothesis, the correlation coefficients between various measures of self and academic performance provided for Black, White, and Hispanic students suggests greater academic disidentification for Blacks and Hispanics than for Whites (Griffin, 2002). However, it is not known how and why the potential and probable causes of academic disidentification affect the academic interests of inner-city Black males more than inner-city males of different racial backgrounds.

As Griffin (2002) noted, the participation/identification model would predict that Black and Hispanic students are more likely to drop out of school than White and Asian students. Research confirms this; dropout rates are highest for Black and Hispanic students, with Hispanics demonstrating the highest rates of withdrawal (Gibson, 1991; Rumberger, 1987; Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984). Recent figures from the National Center for Educational Statistics show that Hispanics have, on average, an event dropout rate of 10.46% for 1994 through 1996, compared with 6.56% for Blacks and 4.26% for Whites (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Data were not reported for students of Asian descent.

Research by Osborne (1995, 1997) also demonstrated support, at least partially, for the academic disidentification hypothesis. Osborne (1995) found that correlations among a measure
of self-esteem and measures of academic achievement declined from eighth to tenth grades for Blacks, and were much weaker for Black males than for Whites or Black females. In a second study, Osborne (1997) again examined correlations among measures of self-esteem and academic performance across a variety of content areas. As with the first study, Blacks showed a trend of disidentifying over time (specifically from eighth to twelfth grades), but this was especially pronounced for males. The correlations for Hispanics and Whites did not demonstrate any identifiable pattern over time.

Researchers such as Cross and Phagen-Smith (2001) had posited in previous studies that individuals developed different racial identity beliefs based upon the challenges at a specific point in their lives (Cross & Phagen-Smith, 1999). Mainstream identity theorists suggested that individuals enter adolescence with an unclear self-concept; the developmental process through which one takes ownership of the self-concept occurs because of self-exploration and self-reflection (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966; as cited in Phinney, 1989). Phinney (1989) reconceptualized the Erikson/Marcia model of identity development to consider the unique manifestation of this process for different racial and ethnic minority groups.

According to Phinney (1989), individuals enter adolescence with poorly-developed racial identities, leading to an identity crisis period, during which time the challenges associated with racial or racial group membership are confronted; and assuming they are able to successfully resolve these challenges, they formulate a positive racial identity. In response to this rather limited view of Black racial identity development over the lifespan, Pellham and Swann (1989) introduced the term “nigrescence recycling,” which refers to the manner in which an individual reconstructs his or her racial self-concept based upon the specific encounter episodes one experiences at different periods in life.
Academic Identity

For inner-city Black males in particular, the struggle to assume a positive and productive identity has been persistent and disturbing for numerous researchers, including Osborne, Ogbu, and Gosa. Griffin (1996) noted that, the more one identifies with academics, the more salient academic outcomes became in shaping one’s perceptions of self. This linkage suggests a positive relationship between academic identification and self-perception, and research has provided evidence for this relationship (e.g., Cohen, 1974; Gold & Mann, 1984; Hansford & Hattie, 1982).

According to Osborne (1995), young inner-city Black males, in particular, disidentified with academics over time, as the connection between their self-esteem with the task of learning declined over time. Osborne’s contention was that students’ not identifying with academics would have lower motivation to succeed because there is a minimal connection, if any, between academic outcomes and self-esteem—good performance is not rewarding, and lackluster performance is not punishing—leaving those who have disidentified with no forceful incentives to augment effort in academic pursuits.

Steele’s (1992) concept of disidentification is the lack of a relationship between academic and global self-esteem, with the implication that there has been a relationship in the past. This is a particularly troubling phenomenon, as identification with academics has been discussed as an important factor in academic success (Finn, 1989; Steele, 1992).

Inner-city Black males, in particular, appear to place less importance upon academics than either Asian or White males when considered within the framework of the relationship between academic accomplishments and various global measures of self (Steele, 1992). To understand better what produces this discrepancy, it is important to determine which factors are
associated with differential academic identification among these groups (Harper & Tuckman, 2006). Two possible explanations for this discrepancy are cultural inversion and stereotype threat (Harper & Tuckman), both of which are discussed below.

Cross and Phagen-Smith (2001), as cited in Harper & Tuckman (2006), asserted that African Americans pass through six periods in which they face unique challenges that precipitate the reconceptualization of one’s racial identity: infancy and childhood, preadolescence, adolescence, late adolescence and early adulthood, adulthood, and adult identity refinement. The nigrescence recycling, inspired by the period-specific trials that one faces, encourages the development of a racial identity that is enhanced by the periodic, context-specific re-examination of what it means to be Black (Harper & Tuckman, 2006). In an effort to provide an integrated view of African American racial identity that reflects these components, Sellers (1993), as cited in Harper & Tuckman (2006), introduced the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). The MMRI is based upon four assumptions:

First, Black racial identity is assumed to consist of both situationally determined and stable properties, as Harper & Tuckman (2006) mentioned. Some situations may encourage African Americans to define themselves with respect to racial group membership. But, in other situations, race may be substantially less salient, thus activating the other aspects of one’s identity that Harper and Tuckman mentioned. However, at the same time, in situations perceived to be ambiguous, the extent to which race is a superordinate construct in one’s self-concept will determine the manner in which one interprets seemingly neutral events with respect to racial connotations (Shelton & Sellers, 2000). Additionally, among African Americans, the regard with which one holds Blacks is thought to remain relatively stable over time (Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke 1998a).
Second, according to Harper and Young (2006), this model assumes that all individuals have a number of different hierarchically ordered identities. Third, the model assumes that an individual’s perception of his or her racial identity is the most valid indicator of his or her racial identity, according to Harper and Young. This stands in stark contrast to early models of racial identity, which focus on behavioral indicators as a means to understand the self (i.e., Horwitz & Horwitz, 1939). Although the model does assume a correlation between race-related behaviors and racial self-concepts, it asserts that overt behavior is often constrained by contextual factors, while subjective self-perceptions differentiate affective and evaluative race judgments from other constructs and allow for the role of the individual in the construction of one’s racial self-concept (Sellers et al., 1998a).

Lastly, as noted by Harper and Young (2006), the model assumes individual differences in perceptions of what it means to be an African American. While many stage models of Black racial identity propose an evolution from a "bad," underdeveloped racial identity to one that is "good," the MMRI does not issue judgment as to what constitutes a healthy or unhealthy racial identity (Sellers et al., 1998a). Instead, the model asserts that the efficacy of one’s racial identity is dependent upon the demands of a particular environment.

Cross and Fhagen-Smith’s (2001) and Harper and Young’s (2006) findings suggest that students at different points in their high-school careers may construct qualitatively different views of Black racial identity, and that the racial identity of ninth-grade adolescents reflects a range of influences that differ significantly from those of the twelfth-grade students preparing to enter adulthood. According to Scott (2003), as cited in Harper and Young (2006), early adolescents’ Black racial identity may reflect low-racial centrality, as significance is placed on other aspects of the self-concept. By late adolescence/early adulthood, a period of examination
and exploration may inspire the adoption of a Black racial identity in which race is the central construct. Further, while a young adolescent’s relative inexperience in life prevents him or her from anticipating the multiple issues that relate to being classified as an African American, as one progresses through life, he or she is likely to acquire wisdom that contributes to the development of one’s racial self-concept and racial self-esteem (Harper & Young, 2006). As such, the initial purpose of this study was to test for the replication of the four previously discovered racial identity profiles across grade levels.

With respect to the relationship between racial identity and academic outcomes, researchers generally hold one of two perspectives when attempting to understand achievement and achievement-related behaviors among African American students: One contends that Black racial identity impedes academic success, and the other asserts that Black racial identity facilitates achievement (Chavous, Bernat, Schmeelk-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, & Zimmerman, 2003). The models of the first perspective argue that African American youth come to recognize existing systemic barriers to their success, and subsequently distance themselves from behaviors that would ensure educational success. This is because of a belief that these behaviors are unlikely to lead to success and prosperity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1988).

Researchers who operate in this paradigm assert that African American students tend to devalue domains in which Blacks traditionally have been unsuccessful, thus protecting their self-esteem against failure (Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998; Hughes & Demo, 1989). Because of (inaccurate) perceptions of a lack of academic ability among people of color, some African American students come to reject achievement-related attitudes and behaviors; as a result, the correlation between self-esteem and academic outcomes decreases steadily among African
American students (especially males) over time (Osborne, 1997). Some African American students deliberately reject academic achievement as “acting White,” instead choosing to play the role of class clown or adopting other modes of creative expression embraced more readily by their African American peers (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1990).

Ogbu’s Cultural Inversion Theory and Academic Disidentification

Ogbu (1992) explained that cultural inversion, or cultural opposition, occurs when members of a minority group adopt behaviors that directly contradict a specific, prominent aspect of the dominant culture. Given that Black people have assimilated into the Anglo-dominant culture over long time periods, one can anticipate Ogbu’s association of disidentification with cultural inversion. Griffin (2002) noted that, while cultural inversion may manifest for various reasons for some members of a given minority group, Ogbu argued that its origination can be understood by considering the voluntary and involuntary status of that group. Involuntary minorities may be typified by individuals who were conquered or relocated against their will, and who often do not hold the same positive expectations for their future as voluntary minorities, Griffin (2002) stated.

Ogbu (1990) identified two primary types of minorities. The immigrants who moved to the United States willingly for social advancement, such as better financial opportunities, education, and/or greater freedom, were called the immigrant minorities. This category consists of Jews, Koreans, South Americans, persons of Caribbean heritage, the Irish, and others. The second type is caste-like minorities, whose ancestors became Americans by way of discriminatory practices. The category consists of Blacks and Native Americans. According to Ogbu, caste-like minorities frequently perform poorly in school.
According to Ogbu (1990), as cited in Wickline (2003), Black adults, while verbally supporting education, often taught their children to devalue school by not securing jobs or wages commensurate with their education. Wickline (2003) mentioned that children also hear their parents and other adults talk about job frustrations, glass ceilings, unfair standardized tests, discrimination, and various societal barriers. According to Ogbu (1990), the involuntary minority students who adopt the behaviors and attitudes conducive to school success, those who use standard English, and those who behave according to the standard practices of the school are often accused by their peers of “acting White.” Gosa and Young (2007) argued that Fordham and Ogbu’s and Fordham’s (1986) cultural ecological thesis posits that the poor academic achievement of Black youth can be attributed to the adoption of an oppositional collective identity. According to Fordham and Ogbu, Black youth who accept or adhere to adopting oppositional culture tend to sustain pejorative evaluations of the opportunity structure, and most importantly, associate doing well in school as “acting White.”

**Stereotype Threat and Academic Disidentification**

Howard (2003) mentioned that stereotype threat is a “social psychological predicament rooted in the prevailing image of African Americans as intellectually inferior” (p.807). This research informed the work of Steele (1997), who has shown that the most immediate effect of stereotype threat can be the anxiety that undermines academic performance, particularly for women and culturally diverse students. When women, African American, and Latino undergraduate students were informed that members of their respective groups had not fared well on previous academic tasks, Steele found that these members did not perform well on varying cognitive tasks. It is my contention, as well as Howard’s (2003), that Steele’s research suggested that when students are mindful of negative stereotypes that exist about their group membership,
and even as they try to combat such stereotypes, they still perform poorly. These findings underscore the prevailing thought that stereotype affects school performance, especially for those students from ethnic minority backgrounds (Howard, 2003).

According to Steele (1997), stereotype threat is a general threat not tied to the psychology of particular stigmatized groups. It affects the members of any group about whom there exists some generally-known negative stereotype (e.g., a grandfather who fears that any faltering of memory will confirm or expose him to stereotypes about the aged). Stereotype threat can be thought of as a subtype of the threat posed by negative reputations in general (Steele).

According to Steele (1997), the effort to overcome stereotype threat by disproving the stereotype—for example, by outperforming it in the case of academic work—can be daunting. As these stereotypes are widely disseminated throughout society, a personal exemption from them earned in one setting does not generalize to a new setting, where either one’s reputation is not known, or where it has to be renegotiated against a new challenge (Steele, 1997).

Steele (1997) also wrote that the stereotypes considered in his work allege group-based limitations of ability that are often reinforced by the structural reality of increasingly small group representations at more advanced levels of the schooling domain. Thus, for group members working at these advanced levels, no amount of success up to that point can disprove the stereotype’s relevance to their next, more advanced performance. For the advanced female math student who has been brilliant up to that point, any frustration she has at the frontier of her skills could confirm the gender-based limitation alleged in the stereotype. This would make this frontier, because she is so invested in it, a more threatening place than it is for the non-stereotyped. Thus, the work of dispelling stereotype threat through performance probably
increases with the difficulty of work in the domain, and whatever exemption is gained has to be re-won at the next new proving ground (Steele).

Wickline (2003) mentioned that, in contrast to reflected appraisal theories that maintain self-views develop from how individuals think others see them (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934, 1962; as cited in Wickline, 2003), stereotype threat theory proposes that people do not need to believe or internalize stereotypes for them to be influential. Wickline, among other researchers, has mentioned that evidence for the validity of stereotype threat came from numerous experimental studies (see Steele, 1997; and Aronson, 2002, for reviews).

As a result, stereotype threat manifests when one encounters a situation in which one’s performance could validate the pejorative stereotype about one’s group, and this threat may impair performance in the domain of interest. Steele (1992), as cited in Griffin (2002), has noted that certain stereotypes regarding academic performance appear to influence actual performance, and as a result, some minorities may have difficulty identifying with school. Several experiments have provided supportive evidence for the stereotype threat hypothesis. Steele and Aronson (1995), as cited in Griffin (2002), found that Black males, when placed in a diagnostic-testing situation that could confirm a racial stereotype about intellectual ability, performed at a lower level than Anglo males. However, when placed in a non-diagnostic testing situation, there was a similar performance between Black and Anglo males. In addition, Steele and Aronson found that, even when faced with non-diagnostic testing conditions, young inner-city Black males had lower scores than White males when all students were asked to identify their race immediately before taking the test, but Black and White males showed similar levels of performance when racial identity was not requested (Steele & Aronson).
Griffin (1996) noted, in sum, that Steele and Aronson (1995) found that when race was primed in some way, either indicating the test was diagnostic of one's ability or simply asking test takers to identify their race, then scores obtained by Black male participants were decreased relative to Whites. Salinas and Aronson (1998) obtained similar results for Hispanic males. According to Griffin's analyses of the aforementioned findings, besides academic performance, stereotype threat may also have other pejorative effects—or positive effects if the stereotype is positive—on facets related to the academic arena, such as student identification with academics and schooling.

In a work entitled, “Race and the Schooling of African Americans,” Steele (1992) contended that, since pejorative stereotypes may corrupt self-perceptions, African American students may be susceptible to the stigma of performing poorly in school. Steele (1995) wrote that this could cause these individuals to activate the defensive mechanism of academic disidentification to protect their self-perceptions.

Relationship Between the Dearth of Positive Black Male Role Models and Academic Disidentification

Scholars such as Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) concluded that the roles of parents and families in the education of students is vital and of great necessity. In Howard's (2003) study entitled, “A Tug of War for Our Minds: African American High School Students’ Perceptions of their Academic Identities, and College Aspirations”, one of the major findings was that students mentioned parents as one of the more powerful influences on their academic identities. According to Howard (2003), the students' frequent mentioning of parents as key players in the development of their academic identities is crucial for a number of reasons. It
would appear to highlight the importance of parental involvement in their children’s schooling. Howard (2003) stated:

According to the findings from this study, although schools continue to have influential effects on youth, parents continue to play an important role in influencing academic identity. Secondly, the findings from this work also challenge prevailing myths that the parents of students in urban schools are not concerned about their children’s educational pursuits. A number of the students helped to reiterate the fact that their parents cared deeply about helping them reach their academic goals. (p. 9)

In No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning, Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003) mentioned that the at-risk factors associated with lower educational attainment and increased behavioral problems are single-parent households and very young mothers. More than 60% of Black children today live in households with only one parent, compared to 23% of White children, and more than a third of Black mothers have their first child when they are 18 or younger (Thernstrom & Thernstrom). Becoming a parent at such a young age not only limits the educational opportunities of the mother, but has been shown to have a negative impact on the child’s educational success (McShepard, Goler, & Batson, 2007).

According to Rhodes (1994), role models, particularly one’s parents, matter. How and why they do so is a major question in this study. Furthermore, parents’ educational attainment affects students. In fact, the progeny of parents who are more educated tend to pursue and attain more schooling (Plug & Vijverberg, 2003). According to Jenkins (1995), the educational attainment of mothers has a positive and profound effect on school commitment.

Studies suggest that role models are helpful to young inner-city Black males. According to Wilkins’ (2005) research, young Black males expressed being profoundly affected by casual
or short-term interactions with role models and advocates. This indicates the importance and need for positive guidance and encouragement throughout the academic careers.

The probability of an inner-city young Black male having a stable adult male role model in his life seems slim. When these young men turn to the schools, they find very few men there either. In 1995, McNerney and Herbert found that female teachers make up 70% of public and 78% of private school instructors, while, in the 1990s, 86% of elementary school teachers and 61% of middle school teachers were women. For example, in Palm Beach County, Florida, which in 1998 was the 15th largest school district in the nation, of 3,056 elementary school teachers, only 345 were male (Profile: Palm Beach County Schools, 1998).

Only slightly more than one-third of all Palm Beach County's school-based administrators are men. Respectable men from the Black community and mainstream society must step forward to fill vital role model positions for at-risk Black urban male youth, Shreffler concluded. Male teachers who are Black, White, and "other" are in the most opportune positions to do so, yet few Black men presently serve as teachers in inner-city schools (Shreffler, 2001).

Wilkins (2005) cited scholars who reaffirmed that the media images of Black men are heavily pejorative, bellicose, and skewed toward the criminal or the sensational (Gibbs, 1988; Hill & Rowan, 2009; Hilliard, 2002; Hoberman, 2000). Wilkins also cited researchers who mentioned that, due to the negatively prominent images presented, such perceptions become subconsciously affixed as the common standard for all Black males (Majors & Billson, 1992; Tatum, 1997; Wharton, 1988). This not only contributes to young Black males' having a narrow perception of their options, it reinforces some commonly-held beliefs of the general society (Hoberman). The effect of negative role models on Black male youth adds tremendously to their teachers' dilemmas.
Gaeddert (1992), as cited in Taylor (1997), noted that it is from other people’s actions that we become familiar with society’s demands and the rules we are expected to obey as we imitate or selectively respond to models during social learning. According to Gaeddert, males and females generally choose same-sex models. Therefore, the absence of fathers is likely to have adverse effects on the young African-American male child. A Black child born today has only a one in five chance of growing up with two parents until the age of 16 (Ingrassia, 1993). Two out of three births to Black women under 35 are out of wedlock (Smith, 1993). In the inner-city, at least 40% of Black children are raised in fatherless homes (Shade & Edwards, 1987). In these fatherless homes, a child is more likely to live in poverty (Ingrassia).

The 1990 census figures showed that 65% of the children of Black single mothers were poor (Ingrassia, 1993). As such, they were shown to be exposed to greater risks, both educationally and socially. Additionally, they were not likely to be promoted with their peers, and will probably drop out of school earlier than their peers (Ingrassia). A mother can be smothering, especially if her son is the only man in her life (Smith, 1993). Ingrassia noted that boys, in particular, need male role models. Without a father, who will help them define what it means to be a man? Fathers do things for their children that mothers often do not. Though schools have limited numbers of Black male teachers, further exacerbating the problem, Black men must be deliberately sought out to address this challenge. Thus, the need for Black male role models in inner-city schools, and more importantly, in the home, is paramount when one tries to analyze and offer solutions for the dearth of young inner-city Black males graduating from high school and enrolling in America’s colleges and universities.

According to Lynn (2002), there is a need for male teachers in early childhood programs and elementary schools to serve as role models, especially for Black males reared by women in
single-parent homes. The great shortage of Black male teachers has an impact on high school dropout rates, especially among inner-city Black males. Given that many young inner-city Black males have shown disinterest in secondary schooling (Lynn, 2002), one also can see, in part, why these same males show a disinterest in enrolling in college. Apparently, being in the presence of Black male teachers, who are positive role models, has much to do with attitudes and levels of interest in persisting and excelling in school at all levels.

The E.O.P., or Educational Opportunity Program, was designed to dramatically improve the social and academic skills of Black male students. The program’s objectives were to keep Black male students, mainly from urban environments, from dropping out of school and to inspire them to go to college (Taylor 2003). Programs like the E.O.P. have been effective in the Black community. Fifty-one participants graduated from high school, 57 more completed high school within the year 1991, and 49 participants were admitted to college within the first group trained from 1986 to 1990 (Taylor 2003).

Positive effects have also been obtained from the Project 2000 Program. Only one of the 20 students involved in the program was below grade level. Discipline problems virtually disappeared, and attendance improved significantly, Holland (1996). The Black Male Initiative was initiated at the City University of New York (CUNY). According to Jaschik (2005), “more than $2 million will be awarded for a variety of efforts: counseling programs for young Black males; the creation of new centers to help young Black males deal with academic, financial and personal issues; recruitment programs in top schools and in prisons; and efforts to help faculty members — male and female, of all racial backgrounds — better reach Black males in particular” (p. 1).
Jaschik (2005) suggested that one pervasive theme for CUNY officials working on the Black Male Initiative is the interrelationship between the issues facing the university system and those facing the New York City schools and economy. Here too, the challenge is obvious. At the high school level, for instance, only 31% of Black males graduate after four years.

Cross (2005) said, “It is crucial that CUNY educators realize the impact on Black males of larger societal trends” (p. 1). He also stated that, “it isn’t enough to have Black educators as role models, but the colleges need to have people who are familiar with the language of urban black life and are comfortable using it (while at the same time not assuming that such language will be appropriate for all black students)” (p. 1).

Jackson (2007) highlighted short- and long-term goals for overcoming the chronically low college enrollment rate among young Black inner-city males. The short-term goals mentioned were: 1) instructing Black males to read at grade level by the third grade; 2) providing positive role models for young Black males; 3) creating a stable home environment for Black males that includes contact with their fathers; 4) ensuring that Black males have a strong spiritual base; 5) controlling the negative media influences on Black males; and 6) teaching Black males to respect all females. Jackson mentioned the following long term goals:

First, invest as much money in educating Black males as in locking up Black men. Next, help connect young Black males to a positive vision of themselves in the future. Third, create high expectations and help young Black males live into those high expectations. Next, build a positive peer culture for Black males. Fifth, teach young Black males self-discipline, culture and history and then, teach young Black males and the communities in which they live to embrace education and life-long learning. (p.1)
In the Fagan (1998) article, entitled Correlates of Low-Income African American and Puerto Rican Fathers’ Involvement with Their Children, social beliefs about African American fathers were stated. The article, as cited in Chance (2003), also mentioned how teenage parenting and the large number of female single parents in African American communities are not supporting the African American male as a father. The role of a father in the household is vital in a myriad of ways, aside from simply providing for the family.

According to Chance (2003), a father or some type of male role model is essential to the success of the Black male in many ways. Fagan (1996), as cited in Chance (2003), noted that recent research showed that children’s social competence is related to fatherly support, the amount of time fathers spend in child-centered activities, and fatherly participation in effectively arousing physical play. This quotation coincides with the previous idea relating to the effects of female dominance in the home and in the education system (Chance).

According to Harper and Tuckman (2004), American boys associate being Black and male with deviant behavior and academic disengagement. In summary, while high levels of parental involvement have been shown to relate to enhanced academic achievement, African American parents (in particular, those of a low socioeconomic group) are less likely than White parents to exert influence in support of students’ academic aspirations. With regard to student aspirations, Harper and Tuckman mentioned that Blacks who expressed high levels of ethnic identification, coupled with feelings of marginality brought about by awareness of racism and other more subtle discriminative practices, were likely to express what McAdoo (2002), as cited in Harper and Tuckman, termed a “contradictory value system,” in that idealized academic values and beliefs are filtered through concrete experiences, which may act to inhibit dreams and discourage efforts. Because these students are not likely to experience consistent exposure to
adults who have achieved a noteworthy degree of mainstream success, their life goals and values, accordingly, may be adjusted downwards (Ogbu, 1988; Mickless, 1990; Hale, 2003). These students are particularly vulnerable to the adoption of an “oppositional identity,” or one that intentionally decries attitudes and avoids behaviors associated with academic achievement.

According to Reese’s (2004) Realness Survey, “gangsta-thug” rappers are seen as authentic Black men, while positive role models, who by and large are disassociated from the “gangsta-thug” culture, are ignored. According to Reese’s survey, 92% of Black males knew that Suge Knight was the Chief Executive Officer and co-founder of the “gangsta rap” label, Death Row Records, while only 31% of the Black males taking part in the Realness Survey knew that Kwesi Mfume was the director of the NAACP two years ago. Chance (2003) noted that, because rap stars make large amounts of money, many young Black males idolize them. Many rap stars speak about the lifestyle they used to live, which often mimics the lifestyles to which many young inner-city youth can relate. If young inner-city Black males are starting to separate themselves from school, it may be because they see it as being biased towards them or will just take too long to complete (Chance).

In Orange’s (1996) article, as cited in Chance (2003), he restated a comment based on an article written in 1986 by Bandura. In this comment, he mentioned the modeling effect that the media will have on real life. “Bandura (1986) ascertained that the media have a modeling effect on society, where life models the media” (Orange). Children who become enchanted with rap, movies, or any other element of media may model themselves after what they see, and since the message presented by the media is often negative about the Black culture, they will find themselves at a disadvantage in society (Chance, 2003). In concert with the thinking of Chance, I also contend that a disidentified young inner-city Black male, who, as a child and during
adolescence sees Blacks as entertainers in the media, will be more motivated to enter the world of entertainment and forgo academics or underperform academically. This contention was considered during the interviews of the selected participants in this study.

**Cool Pose and Academic Disidentification**

*Where did cool pose theory originate from?* Cool pose theory comes from two distinct sources. The first is Merton’s (1968) theory of anomie (as cited in Wickline, 2003), in which behavior defined by others as deviant or unacceptable occurs in a group because they are denied the means to achieve mainstream society’s goals, even as they share a belief in their value. The second is Ogbu’s (1991) Cultural Inversion theory, which explains some Black males’ behavior as a way of coping with outside pressure from peers, racism, and feelings of hopelessness.

Not every Black male is assumed to adopt cool pose as an adaptive strategy, but Majors and Billson (1992) claimed that it is a relatively frequent phenomenon. While racism and oppression hinder a man’s progress, cool pose allows him a form of social competence. It is social regard and not White-sanctioned values, such as academic achievement, which significantly contribute to the identity of males who adopt this strategy.

To adopt uncool strategies—such as studying, relating to teachers, and enjoying school field trips—is to invite social criticism, forcing a choice between academic success and peer support (Ogbu, 1994). Here, Maslow’s (1987) needs hierarchy is consistent: belongingness must have predominance over esteem and achievement needs. If success at school provokes peer rejection, it may be discounted or devalued. Thus, academic achievement dismissal and cool pose behaviors may have reciprocal influence. If a Black male learns it is not cool to achieve at school because his peers reject it, he may fail to perform or may discount his work (Wickline, 2003). Despite success, academic failure or dismissal can reinforce a self-image of one who is...
above school because he has aligned himself with his peers, thus promoting further disidentification with the academic realm. As a result, academic achievement no longer becomes salient to identity (Wickline).

According to Majors and Billson (1992), the essence of cool pose of a young Black male is to appear in control, whether through a fearless style of walking, an aloof facial expression, the clothes he wears, a haircut, his gestures, or the way he talks. The cool pose shows the dominant culture that he is strong and proud, despite his status in American society. Flashy or provocative clothes are part of the cool pose. For example, an unbuttoned belt, expensive sneakers, and thick gold chains are part of this look (Majors & Billson).

Some elements of the cool pose have been analyzed in terms of kinesics, the subtleties of body movements (Goleman, 1992). One is a distinctive swaggering gait, almost a walking dance, which can include tilting the head to one side, while one arm swings to the side. The hand is slightly cupped while the other hand hangs to the side or is in the pocket. Other aspects of cool pose are now widely imitated in the White culture (Majors and Billson, 1992). These include rap and elaborate handshakes, like the high-five popularized by athletes.

The cool pose is by no means found among the majority of Black men, but is particularly common among inner-city Black youth as a tactic for psychological survival to cope with such rejections as storekeepers who refuse to buzz them into a locked shop, as mentioned by Goleman (1992). For a young Black man whose prospects in life are poor at best, the cool pose is empowering. Dr. Majors said, as cited by Goleman (1992): "He can appear competent and in control in the face of adversity. It may be his only source of dignity and worth, a mask that hides the sting of failure and frustration." The cool pose appeals, too, as a sign of manliness and "Lots of inner-city black boys live in a world with few men around, and "They are struggling to find
ways to be a man”, so “Adopting the cool pose is a way to show their maleness”, Dr. Pousiant said, as cited by Goleman (1992). In Goleman’s article, Dr. Staples said: “Much of cool pose is ritualistic imitation of peers. If you’re not seen as cool, you’re an outsider. It’s a way to be included.” However, the cool pose has its negative side. “Though it’s a source of pride and identity, the cool pose is dysfunctional in some ways,” and “It also means you may not be able to back down from a fight or apologize to your girlfriend when you’ve done something hurtful”, Dr. Billson said, as cited by Goleman.

In addition, the following question remains pertinent to this study: Given that cool pose is assumed by poor inner-city Black males more than any other group, how and why do these young men feel that having interest in academic work at the high school level in particular is unneeded? This question is both relevant and vital to this study. Self-identity or a conception of self may be related to cool pose, especially among inner-city Black males. Furthermore, the perpetuation of anti-intellectualism and unfavorable self-identity may be compounded by accepting, idolizing, and embracing lyrical messages and images evinced in various media. If inner-city Black male students identify with anti-intellectual messages found in various visual and auditory media, then the cool pose behaviors in academic settings may frequently manifest.
CHAPTER III
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Initially, the reader will be introduced to the research design used in the study. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) is the methodology that was used in this study, in tandem with in-depth interviewing, which was the primary method of collecting data. A TCA is flexible, in that it can be employed to examine virtually any type of communication (Abrahamson, 1983). The purpose of this chapter is to explain how I collected, analyzed, and presented the data relevant to answering the research questions mentioned in Chapter I. In addition, the reader will be informed as to my role in conducting this qualitative study. Ethical considerations will be mentioned at the end of the chapter. The transcriptions of all 22 of the in-depth interviews can be found in Appendixes A-V. The IRB materials are located after Appendixes A-V.

Design

This is a cross-sectional nonexperimental study. In this study, 22 randomly-selected ninth- and tenth-grade African American boys from urban Newark high schools were interviewed using an in-depth interviewing protocol. According to Garger (2010), nonexperimental designs allow the researcher to determine if a variable tends to occur in significant proportion with another variable. Nonexperimental designs are often easy to implement, because the researcher does not have to manipulate any of the variables or conditions of the study, and consequently, nonexperimental study designs are a good choice for field and exploratory research in which the relationships among variables are unknown or need to occur freely and without manipulation (Garger).
Method

Thematic Content Analysis

Background and general information about how TCA works. A TCA will be used in the study. A TCA is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data, and a satisfactory TCA portrays the thematic content of interview transcripts (or other texts) by identifying common themes in the texts provided for analysis (Anderson, 2007). Anderson (2007) listed 15 steps that the researcher should follow when conducting a TCA:

1. Before beginning, make multiple copies of the interview transcript, or other extant text, including post-interview notes.

2. Highlight all descriptions relevant to the topic of inquiry.

3. From the highlighted areas, mark each distinct unit of meaning. Meaning units are separated by a break or change in meaning. Err on the side of too many units. However, be sure to retain all information relevant to understanding the unit within the meaning unit. Otherwise, relevant information will be disconnected from source as the TCA continues. Units may vary in text length. Units consist of each individual interview question, each individual interview response, and the unitization of whether or not the response(s) to each of the interview questions are anticipated or unanticipated.

4. Cut out units and put similar ones together in a pile. Code each unit; for example, 1-16 for interview #1, page 16, or by text line number.

5. Label each pile as initial categories (themes), using key words or phrases copied from highlighted texts. Use your own categories sparingly. Revise categories as you continue to code data.

6. If obvious information is missing from text, identify them, for example, “no effect.”
7. Go through the entire interview transcript, identifying distinct units, grouping and regrouping similar and dissimilar units, and re-labeling categories. Use your own categories/themes sparingly, retaining words copied from the meaning units being described.

8. Read all meaning units per category and redistribute units as appropriate. Re-label categories as appropriate. Collapse or subdivide categories as appropriate.

9. After a few days, reread the original interview transcript or text without looking at your units or categories.

10. Return to meaning units and categories made on the first pass, and reconsider each unit and category. Redistribute units as appropriate, carefully considering whether your units are too small or too large. Re-label as appropriate. Collapse or subdivide categories as appropriate, considering carefully whether your categories are too small or too large.

11. Look over your categories as a whole. Consider whether you have too many categories (or less likely, too few) to render meaning to your highlighted texts, given your topic. If so, return to #10.

12. For each additional interview transcript (or other texts), use the TCA as above.

13. When all TCAs are complete, read each separately. Then, while retaining meaning units, combine categories/themes for all interview transcripts and notes. Collapse or subdivide categories as appropriate. Re-label categories as appropriate. Err on the side of having too many categories. Err on the side of retaining labels for categories that are identical or similar to the words in the interview transcripts.
14. After a few days, reread your total categories as a whole. Consider whether you have too many (or too few) categories to make overall sense of the interview transcripts, given your topic.

15. Redo all the instructions above until you are satisfied that the categories reflect the interview transcripts as a whole. Once you are satisfied, your categories are themes and you are done with the TCA for this study. (p. 3)

This researcher will adhere to these 15 steps.

According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. In-depth interviews are extremely helpful when the researcher wants detailed information about a person’s thoughts and behaviors, or wants to explore new issues in depth. If the potential participants are not comfortable talking openly in a group setting, then in-depth interviews should be used (Boyce & Neale).

In-depth interviews are different from other types of interviews used in qualitative research methodologies. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), some key characteristics of in-depth interviews include: open-ended questions, semistructured formatting, understanding and interpreting what is heard, being conversational, recording responses, recording observations, and recording reflections. The respondents should not, and cannot, simply answer yes or no to questions posed by the interviewer; instead, they should expound upon the question relayed to them by the interviewer (Boyce & Neale). In-depth interviewing should consist of open-ended questioning.
With reference to the semistructured formatting of the questioning, some preplanned questions should be readily available to ask during the interview. However, Boyce and Neale (2006) wrote that the interviewer should also allow questions to flow naturally, based on information provided by the respondent. The interviewer should not insist upon asking specific questions in a specific order. The flow of the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee dictates the questions asked and those omitted, as well as the order of the questions (Boyce & Neale).

The interviewer should try to interpret what is being heard, as well as seek clarity and a deeper understanding from the respondent throughout the interview. Though the primary role of the interviewer is that of a listener, the interviewer should be conversational (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Another characteristic of in-depth interviews involves the recording of the responses. Typically, responses are recorded with audiotape and written notes (i.e., field notes) (Boyce & Neale). With reference to recording responses and recording reflections during in-depth interviewing, Boyce and Neale mentioned that the interviewer should observe and record nonverbal behaviors on the field notes as they occur, and the interviewer should record his or her views and feelings immediately after the interview, as well. In essence, in-depth interviews involve not only asking questions, but the systematic recording and documenting of responses, coupled with intense probing for deeper meaning and understanding of the responses; thus, in-depth interviewing often requires repeated interview sessions with the target audience under study (Boyce & Neale).

**In-Depth Interviewing**

**Advantages.** The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as
surveys. They also may provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Other advantages of in-depth interviews, according to Mahoney (1997), include the yielding of very rich data, details, and various new insights; the permitting of face-to-face contact with respondents; the opportunity to explore topics in depth; the opportunity for the interviewer to explicate or clarify questions, which increases the likelihood of useful responses; and the opportunity for the interviewer to be flexible in administering the interview to particular individuals.

Limitations. As interviews generally take place in a wide range of settings, the interviewer’s control over the environment is limited (Mahoney, 1997). The activity of in-depth interviewing involves the reality of being prone to bias. For example, according to Boyce and Neale (2006), a particular program or clinic staff might want to prove that a program is working. Their interview responses might be biased, and responses from community members and program participants could also be biased due to their stake in a particular program.

Proper conduct. According to Mahoney (1997), the following factors should be taken into consideration in conducting in-depth interviews: the selection of a setting that provides privacy for participants; the selection of a location where there are no distractions and it is easy to hear respondents speak; the selection of a comfortable location; the selection of a nonthreatening environment; the selection of a location that is easily accessible for respondents; the termination of telephone or visitor interruptions to respondents interviewed in their offices or homes; and the provision of seating arrangements that encourage involvement and interaction.

Steps for Properly Conducting In-Depth Interviews

With reference to the proper way to conduct in-depth interviews, Kyale (1996) mentioned seven stages of the interviewing process: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing,
analyzing, verifying, and reporting. These are all important steps that an interviewer should take and master when conducting in-depth interviews.

1. Thematizing. In this step, the purpose of the interviews is elucidated and the determination is made of what is to be discovered. According to Kyalle (1996), the first basic question is whether the interviewer is using the interview for program planning. For example, the researcher may want to use in-depth interviews as part of the needs assessment process by interviewing key members of the target audience and/or influential stakeholders. Alternatively, the researcher may desire to use in-depth interviewing to complement other methods of evaluating the program (Guion, 2009). Once the general purpose has been decided, then the key information to be gathered through the in-depth interview process can be pinpointed (Guion).

2. Designing. After determining what is necessary to know, one must design a way to find it out. A key part of this process is designing an interview guide (Guion, 2009). An interview guide is a list of questions and probing follow-ups that guide the interviewer through the interview. When preparing this guide, one should anticipate and organize the issues that he plans to explore (Guion). The interview guide helps the interviewer stay on track, helps insure that important issues/topics are addressed, provides a framework and sequence for the questions, and helps maintain some consistency across interviews with different respondents (Guion). However, if the discussion warrants it, the researcher must be willing to transition or change directions during the interview.

According to Guion (2009), there are three basic parts of the interview guide: the facesheet, the actual questions, and the postinterview comment sheet. The facesheet is used to record factual information such as the time, date, and place of the interview. Also, any special conditions or circumstances that may affect the interview are recorded. Demographic
information about the interviewee is noted on the facesheet as well (Guion). The actual interview questions, probing questions or statements, and anticipated follow-up questions comprise the second part of the interview guide, and a column alongside the questions is used for observations made during questioning (Guion). The final part of the interview guide provides a place to write notes after the interview that details the interviewer’s feelings, interpretations, and other comments (Guion).

3. Interviewing. The in-depth interview consists of three essential components. According to Guion (2009), the first part involves the interviewer’s introducing himself and his study. It is critical to establish a good rapport with the respondent; the respondent should be put at ease by the interviewer by emphasizing that the objective of conducting a good in-depth interview weighs heavily on the interviewer and not the interviewee. The interviewer’s responsibility is to listen and observe while guiding the respondent through a conversation until all of the important issues on the interview guide are explored (Guion). Guion mentioned that the following strategies have been used by researchers to improve the quality of the in-depth interviewing experience for both the researcher and the respondent. The strategies include:

Active listening. This means to listen and rephrase what was said, to insure that the interviewer completely understands the meaning the respondent intends.

Patience. Do not rush the respondent, and allow him/her to speak freely while guiding the conversation to cover important issues.

Flexibility. Be open to slight deviations from the topic, which may require rearranging/ reordered the questions or coming up with new questions. If the respondent deviates too far from the topic, then carefully return him or her to the topic at hand.
Audio recording. When possible, audiotape the interview for later reference and increased accuracy, but always ask permission of the interviewee before audio recording (Guion, 2009).

4. Transcribing. Developing a written text of the interviews is a critical part of the transcribing process. The researcher/interviewer must bring together all of his or her information-gathering approaches into one written form (Guion, 2009). Thus, the interviewer would write out each question and response (verbatim) from the interview, using the recorded audiotape and notes, including the side notes (observations, feelings and reflections); the side notes are differentiated from the respondent’s notes, typically by highlighted text (Guion, 2009).

5. Analyzing. With reference to this vital step in conducting an in-depth interview, the interviewer should study the important information and look for themes, commonalities, and patterns to try to make sense of the information. If more questions are raised that need clarity in order to serve the purpose of the study, then another in-depth interview is warranted to examine the issue more thoroughly (Guion, 2009).

6. Verifying. Verifying involves checking the credibility and validity of the information gathered (Guion, 2009). For example, if the interviewer is studying outcomes of a parenting class on improving parental communication with their children, then he or she would interview the parent who attended the training, the children, and the spouse or partner, if applicable. If each one says basically the same thing, then the weight of evidence would be upon the credibility and validity of the information. This is an example of triangulation (Guion).

7. Reporting. The final step of the process is to share what was learned from the in-depth interviews with other internal and external stakeholders. Some reporting could be in the form of a formal written report, such as a report of accomplishment or published needs
assessment findings (Guion, 2009). Others could be oral reports, such as at a meeting of the board of county commissioners. Regardless of the means by which the information is shared, the important point is to share it (Guion).

Proper Presentation

According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interview data may stand alone or be included in a larger evaluation report. In presenting the results of in-depth interviews, one must use care in presenting the data and using qualitative descriptors, rather than trying to quantify the information. One might consider using qualifiers such as, “the prevalent feeling was that...” or “several participants strongly felt that...” or even “most participants agreed that...” (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Boyce and Neale (2006) also noted that providing quotes from respondents throughout the report adds credibility to the information, and interviewers should be careful that they do not identify the respondent or provide quotes that are easily traced back to an individual, especially if the interviewer has promised confidentiality. For example, if only one youth was interviewed as part of the sample, and in the report the interviewer notes that, “one respondent described a particular program as having no impact on accessibility for youth because the services are ‘way too expensive for someone my age,’” it would be clear to the reader that the quote was from the youth. When presenting the results of in-depth interviews, the data can be displayed in charts, tables, and/or graphs of various sorts.

The Role and Responsibilities of the Interviewer

According to DeCarlo (1998), the role of the interviewer is to help motivate participants to share their thoughts and feelings on the topic being studied, and the interviewer needs to be able to listen carefully, to know when to seek clarifying information, and to pay attention both to
verbal as well as nonverbal responses. DeCarlo emphasized the importance of the interviewer’s genuine interest in both the subject matter and in the participants, because participants can easily detect an interviewer who appears phony. According to DeCarlo, the interviewer should be polite, not forget to greet the participants, and not forget to thank them for their time and help. In addition, the interviewer should explain what he or she is doing, and the interviewer should tell the participants what will happen during the interview and how the information will be used (DeCarlo).

Ideally, the interview will flow like a conversation and end naturally, but this is not always the case, as Mack (2005) mentioned. Mack noted that the interviewer should be aware of signs of impatience, annoyance, and boredom from the participant, because these are cues that the interviewer needs to be more attentive and engaging, or that it is time to wrap up the interview. It may also be appropriate to take a break, which may actually result in the participant’s providing additional information, and even though the tape recorder may be turned off during the break, the interviewer can take brief notes to be expanded upon later (Mack).

It is the interviewer’s responsibility to keep the questions simple, ask about only one thing at a time, avoid yes/no questions, and to avoid asking leading questions. An interviewer can avoid asking yes/no questions by asking “what?” or “how?” instead of asking “do you” or “would you?” An interviewer can avoid asking leading questions by asking, “What do you think of after school programs?” instead of “Do you think after school programs are helpful to students in any way?”

According to DeCarlo (1998), the body language of the interviewer is an important factor and determinant of effective in-depth interviewing. The interviewer should show that he or she is interested by maintaining eye contact and making sounds indicating he or she is listening, such
as “um hum, I see, yes.” DeCarlo also advised interviewers not to cross their arms, doodle on their interview form, or check the time repeatedly, because those behaviors will signal that the interviewer is not interested in what the participant has to say, and may decrease the amount of information the interviewer is able to obtain.

Silence can also be important, according to DeCarlo (1998). Some interviewers feel uncomfortable when participants do not say anything; however, the participants may simply be composing their answers, so give them time, DeCarlo advised. If you interrupt them, you may miss a thoughtful response, and do not insist on an answer if the participant seems uncomfortable, because forcing a response may simply make him or her even more reluctant to answer future questions (DeCarlo). Finally, the interviewer should try to keep the participant focused on the subject. DeCarlo wrote that a little drifting may be acceptable, but try to gently bring the participant back in a positive way (e.g., “I understand that you think teachers need to be paid more, and that’s an important issue. But right now let’s focus on the role of sex education in classrooms. OK?”).

Interviewer anxiety is a potential and common challenge for the interviewer. According to DeCarlo (1998), it is important that the interviewer get plenty of practice, so that he or she is comfortable with the questions. DeCarlo suggested practicing with a coworker or friend at least two to three times before meeting with a participant, and if still anxious, the interviewer could do his or her first interview together with a coworker who is more experienced.

The possibility that the interviewer does not like the participant is another potential problem for the interviewer (DeCarlo, 1998). It is alright not to like everyone being interviewed; however, the interviewer must remember that he or she is not interviewing the person to establish...
a personal relationship, but because the interviewer is interested in the participant’s thoughts and feelings about the topic (DeCarlo).

The possibility that the interviewer will have emotional reactions to the responses may be another challenge for the interviewer (DeCarlo, 1998). It is important to realize that an in-depth interview is different from a counseling or education session, and that, while interviewers may find themselves shocked or alarmed at what they hear, it is important that they keep the goals of the interview in mind (DeCarlo). The possibility that the interviewer may talk too much, or try to influence the participant, may be another issue of concern for the interviewer (DeCarlo). This can happen almost unconsciously; therefore, the interviewer may need to pay careful attention to his or her own speech (DeCarlo).

According to Mack (2005), researchers engage with participants by posing questions in a neutral manner, by listening attentively to participants’ responses, and by asking follow-up questions and probing based on those responses. They do not lead participants according to any preconceived notions, nor do they encourage participants to provide particular answers by expressing approval or disapproval of what they say (Mack).

The definition of in-depth interviewing, its advantages and limitations, the proper conduct of such interviewing, the proper presentation of such interviewing, and the roles and responsibilities of the interviewer all have been explained in this literature review. In-depth interviewing is a qualitative method used by researchers in various fields, including the social sciences, with the ultimate intent of retrieving valuable information from participants in an up-close and personal way.
Data Collection

Data collection occurred during the 2009-10 academic year. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with the students to gain insight into their perceptions of school in general, and of their academic identities. The participants were randomly selected from four urban high schools in New Jersey. The four high schools were selected based on high dropout rates and location in low-income areas, which are potential indicators of academic disidentification. The four specific study sites are: Newark Vocational High School, West Side High School, Malcolm X Shabazz High School, and East Side High School. Twenty-two students in total participated in the study. The rationale for randomly selecting a total of 22 students from the four schools is that the sample size will be big enough to ensure credibility regarding this author’s findings and outcomes.

The participants were randomly selected via letters of solicitation. Each guidance counselor from each of the four high schools distributed letters of solicitation, informed consent letters, and assent letters randomly to ninth- and tenth-grade African American boys. Students could not be identified specifically via determinations of the respective high school principals or any other chief operatives at the schools because of the Principals’ concerns about “singling out students as those who have specific problems such as academic disidentification.” Nevertheless, the students who chose to take part in the study did exhibit, in various degrees, traits of individuals who suffer from academic disidentification (see Chapter IV).

The students selected for the study were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Participants were called “Participant A,” “Participant B,” and so forth. The four Newark high schools were chosen because of their exceptionality regarding issues associated with academic disidentification, such as dropout rates among Black males. Before interviewing the students,
this interviewer informed each participant that he would be asked questions relatable to the following themes: stereotype threat, Cool Pose Theory, and the dearth of positive Black male role models. The 30- to 60-minute in-depth interviews occurred on school premises, and they were tape recorded and transcribed. The transcripts served as primary sources of data for content analysis.

Specific themes were analyzed during this study, and extra themes arose during the research process. These content-based themes were developed through a close examination of problematic issues and characteristics related to stereotype threat, Cool Pose theory, and the possible relationship between positive Black male role models and academic disidentification. Listed below is the protocol of the themes which emerged. These themes were unitized numerically; for example, Interview Question #1 was the first designated unit, Interview Question #2 was the second designated unit, and so on. The following is a list of the major themes:

- Stereotype threat
- Cool pose
- Dearth of positive role models

The Researcher's Role

Particularly in qualitative research, the role of the researcher necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study (Cresswell, 1994). My perceptions of aspiring to succeed in an academic setting have been shaped by personal experiences of being a former young urban Black male, similar to the young men who were selected to participate in the interviewing process. Anderson (2007) articulated that the researcher groups and distills from the texts a list of common themes in order to give expression
to the communality of voices across participants. The researcher should make every reasonable attempt to employ names for themes from the actual words of participants, and to group themes in a manner that directly reflects the texts as a whole (Anderson). While sorting and naming themes requires some level of interpretation, this interpretation must be kept to a minimum. The researcher’s own feelings and thoughts about the themes, or what the TCA themes signify, are largely irrelevant. The researcher forestalls interpretation of the meaning of the identified themes in the discussion section of the TCA dissertation (Anderson).

**Ethical Considerations**

Cresswell (1994) cited scholars who have mentioned that most authors who discuss qualitative research design address the importance of ethical considerations: Locke et al., 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1988; and Spradley, 1980. First and foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants. The following safeguards were employed to protect the participants’ rights: 1) The research objectives were articulated verbally and in writing so that they are clearly understood by the participants; and 2) Written permission to proceed with the study as articulated was received from the superintendent, the principals of the high schools and the parents/guardian(s) of the participants.

**Presentation of Data**

The data is presented in matrices illustrating the frequency of the participants’ responses to the interview questions asked, and the frequency of the participants’ responses to the anticipated and unanticipated themes mentioned. The various frequencies are denoted as percentages. For example, if 70% of the participants’ responses to a particular interview question are similar, then that frequency or percentage was recorded in the appropriate matrix.
4. What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?
5. What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?
6. What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?
7. What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?
8. When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?
9. When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does the person appear to you in your imagination?

Questions about Cool Pose and Disidentification

10. What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?
11. Is it cool to be a “good student?” Why or Why not?

Questions about the Dearth of Black Male Role Models

12. Do you think the first election of a Black president will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?
13. Do you know what a role model is? (A definition will be given if the participants do not know what a role model is.)
14. Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?
15. Can you think of Black male role models?
16. Would you consider me to be a Black male role model? Why or why not?
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to augment the body of literature to help make a positive difference in the education of young Black males by focusing on how and why three potential causes—stereotype threat, cool pose, and a dearth of positive Black male role models—contribute to the manifestation of academic disidentification among young urban Black males. Data were collected from 22 in-depth individual interviews of 22 ninth- and tenth-grade Black boys, representing four different Newark high schools, respectively. Data collection procedures, as well as the analysis of the data, will be described and elucidated in this chapter. The results of the data analysis of the findings will be explicated in this chapter. Thematic Content Analysis was utilized to answer the research questions set forth previously.

The Participants

Data collection was achieved via the receipt of 22 specific responses from 22 ninth- and tenth-grade Black male students from four specific urban high schools in Newark, New Jersey. Each of the 22 students were given a packet containing a letter of solicitation, which had to be signed by the participant; a letter of informed consent, which had to be signed by the participant and the parent or guardian; and a letter of assent, which had to be signed by the participant only. The 22 interview participants were identified by letter, from A-V, during the study. The alphabetical coding of the interview participants is listed below beside the respective high schools of the participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Name of High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Westside HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Westside HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Westside HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Westside HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Westside HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Newark Vocational HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Newark Vocational HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Newark Vocational HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Newark Vocational HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Newark Vocational HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Central HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Central HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Central HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Central HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Central HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Malcolm X Shabazz HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Malcolm X Shabazz HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Malcolm X Shabazz HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Malcolm X Shabazz HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Malcolm X Shabazz HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Malcolm X Shabazz HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Malcolm X Shabazz HS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thematic Content Analysis of Data

Aside from the anticipated themes—stereotype threat, cool pose, and a dearth of positive Black male role models—two additional unanticipated themes arose during the study: The themes are Intellectual/Creative Exceptionality and Race and Intellectual/Creative Exceptionality and Gender. The relevance of these themes will be discussed in this chapter, as well. The frequency of responses to questions related to the anticipated and unanticipated themes will be presented in a series of tables, and the significance of the frequencies, which are recorded as percentages, will also be discussed in this chapter. The complete verbatim transcripts of all of 22 interviews can be found in the appendices after the reference section of this dissertation.

Discussion of Responses to Questions

The results of this study are rather schizophrenic. On one hand, the participants recognized the importance of showing interest in schoolwork, expressed the need for and value of having positive Black male role models, and associated being a good student with being “cool.” On the other hand, most of the participants associated “acting Black” with negativity and incivility, as opposed to “acting White”, or acting appropriately, in a classroom setting.

Though the participants were chosen randomly, manifestations of potentially poor self-identity indicators among the participants were disturbingly clear to the researcher. Most of the participants associated “acting White” within a classroom setting with academic engagement, and the exhibition of high intelligence, among other positive attributes. However, many of the participants associated “acting Black” within a classroom setting with academic disengagement, “acting ignorant,” “acting ghetto,” and displaying disruptive behavior inside and outside of the classroom, among other negative behaviors. Participants A and D from Westside High School associated “acting Black” with being ignorant; Participant B from Westside associated acting
Black with “something leading to negative consequences;” Participant K associated “acting Black” with “yelling or acting out in class;” and many of the other participants associated “acting Black” with negative attributes and/or behaviors.

Most of the participants mentioned the great importance of having positive Black male role models in their lives. Most of the participants said that being a good student was “cool.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Theme</th>
<th>Original Issue</th>
<th>Frequency of Response to Thematic Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat</td>
<td>1. Problem showing interest in school work?</td>
<td>Yes 99% No 91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat</td>
<td>2. Knowledge of other students who have/are experiencing stereotype threat?</td>
<td>Yes 55% No 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat</td>
<td>3. Associating “acting White” in school with favorable behavior/attributes</td>
<td>Yes 99% No 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[41% made no association at all]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat</td>
<td>4. Associating “acting Black” in school with unfavorable behavior/attributes</td>
<td>Yes 77% No 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[14% made no association at all]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[9% associated “acting Black” with favorable behaviors/attributes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat</td>
<td>5. Associating “acting Asian” in school with favorable behaviors/attributes</td>
<td>Yes 18% No 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[82% made no association at all because they had never heard of the expression “acting Asian”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat</td>
<td>6. Associating “acting Hispanic” in school with unfavorable behaviors/attributes</td>
<td>Yes 1% No 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[99% made no association at all because they had never heard of the expression “acting Hispanic”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat</td>
<td>7. Associating “Light Skin” with appearance of “Good Student”</td>
<td>Yes 9% No 91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responses to Questions About Theme 1

**Stereotype threat.** Theoretically, individuals who experience stereotype threat are more susceptible to suffering from academic disidentification than individuals who do not experience stereotype threat. In this study, Participants A, B, D, F, H, I, J, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, and V stated that they had never been afraid of showing interest in school due to peer pressure, which is a major symptom of stereotype threat. Though Participants C, E, G, and K stated that they had experienced fear in showing interest in their schoolwork in primary school, all of them mentioned that they began to disregard taunting and name calling in high school.

When asked if showing interest in schoolwork had ever been a problem, Participant C said, “I did at first, but not really no more. I noticed it don’t get you nowhere. You know what I’m saying? Once you there and you don’t do it, you are going to do something that will cause depression. I wasn’t a follower and I was called a nerd, but now I don’t care.” Participant E said, “In third grade I wasn’t good at reading and I didn’t want to ask questions, and I was afraid of people looking down upon me. As I got older I asked questions, which made me smarter.” Participants C and E apparently took the initiative to disregard the peer pressure and emotional pain associated with stereotype threat in order to enable themselves to get the most out of their educational experiences. Participant G responded similarly to Participants C and E. Participant G said, “When I was in the fourth and sixth grades, I was afraid to show interests in my work because students was gonna call me a nerd, but after I went to school, I noticed that it’s not about what other people say, so I just went on and did my work.”

Unlike Participants C, E, and G, Participant K took the initiative to disregard responses resulting from stereotype threat, in part because of his destitute environment. Participant K said,
“I am not afraid because I want to get good grades, but I was afraid to show interests in the pan, I now want to be interested because I want to have a good future, and I thought how I was living in a poor place so I decided to change and start showing interests in my work.”

The researcher proceeded to ask the participants the following questions: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? One hundred percent of the participants stated that showing interest in schoolwork is neither a White thing nor a Black thing. Sometimes, when an African American student excels in academics, he or she is accused by peers of doing something that is “White,” or “atypical of Black behavior,” if you will.

Fifty-nine percent of the participants associated “acting White” in school with favorable attributes, such as very high intelligence, a strong command of the English language, stability of behavior, and academic engagement. Participant D said “acting White” means “to act proper with consistent good etiquette.” Participant E said, “Acting White” means to “speak proper, to act smart, and to get good grades.” Participant F said, “It means that a Black brother is speaking proper English or is active in any academics and not just sports. I have been accused of ‘acting White’, but it doesn’t bother me.” Participant H said “acting White” means “getting good grades.” Participant K said “acting White” means “acting very smart.”

Seventy-seven percent of the participants associated “acting Black” in school with unfavorable attributes, such as inferior intelligence, “being ignorant,” “disruptive behavior,” roughness, and lack of academic engagement. Participant A associated “acting Black” with being “ignorant.” Participant B said, “acting Black” doesn’t mean anything to me, but to ‘act Black’ is not a good thing and it might lead to negative consequences.” This response from Participant B is somewhat conflicting in that the subject knows that “acting Black” has negative
connotations, but says that the phrase “acting Black” means nothing to him. In a sense, this is a positive disconnect exhibited by Participant B, but the fact that Participant B knows that “acting Black” is negative raises the question of how Participant B views his own “Blackness.” Participant D said, “‘Acting Black’ means to be ignorant and to have less interest in school.”

Participant E said that “acting Black” means “basically acting ignorant and not doing the right thing; that’s about it.” Participant F said “acting Black” means, “being ignorant, doing ignorant things like talking while others are talking, but it means nothing to me personally. I try not to think that way, but I do understand the meaning.” This participant clearly tries to disidentify with the many negative meanings associated with “acting Black;” however, the fact that he has to try to not think like someone who thinks while “acting Black” is disturbing and demands attention from researchers in the future. Participant G said “acting Black” means “acting ignorant and that’s it.”

Participant H said, “‘Acting Black’ means having your pants down in class, texting in class, being disruptive, and talking out of turn in class.” Participant I said, “To ‘act Black’ means to use slang as primary language. To me, I guess, it means ‘roughness.’” Participant K said that “acting Black” means “yelling or acting out in class.” Participant M said that “acting Black” means “to be in the back of the class, to be real loud, to not complete work, to be late to class, hang out in the hallway, and text during class.” Participant P associated “acting Black” with “negative activity in class.” Participant Q associated “acting Black” with “something negative.” Participant R gave perhaps the most disturbing response to the question: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything at all? He said “acting Black” means “acting like a Black Negro and acting ghetto.”
Most of the participants did not associate “acting Hispanic” or “acting Asian” with any personal attributes at all; however, 19% of the participants associated “acting Asian” with being extremely intelligent and especially able in mathematics. Though Participant I had never heard the expression “acting Asian,” he said, “I think it means they are really intelligent and fast learners.” Participant K said “acting Asian,” “means you are good at math or something like that.” Though many youngsters, and perhaps even adults, associate Asiatic persons with having outstanding abilities in the hard sciences, the last thing young urban Black males, who associate Whiteness with more favorable attributes, need is to think or associate Asiatic heritage with more favorable attributes than their own Black heritage when it comes to scientific contributions. The researcher is not insisting that any of the participants in this study are thinking in such ways, but one has to consider the implications of racial stereotypes when they are analyzed comparatively.

Participant O said “acting Asian” means “you have a Blackberry and you are good with a calculator.” How does such a response affect this child’s perceptions of his own ability to be good at mathematics or to be “good with a calculator?” More research is needed to study the psychological ramifications of not identifying with accessibility and mathematical skills, as it pertains to racial groups. Participant U said “acting Asian” means “trying to learn and acting smart.”

Though only 9% of the participants associated “light skin” with appearance of a “good student,” such association should not be evident among any person of any racial background, given the considerable progress made after slavery and Jim and Jane Crow in America’s history. In response to the question, When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind, and how does that person look to you in your imagination?, Participant M said, “light skinned,
low haircut, normal height, male, and in a uniform.” Participant L said, “I see more of a light-skinned Black male, dressed proper, with nice shoes, button up shirt, and khaki pants”.

Responses to Questions About Theme II

Cool pose. As previously stated in Chapter I, cool pose is generally incompatible with the popular perception of the “good student” as a hard-driving, disciplined, and highly-motivated individual, closely identifying with school. Thus, Black boys adopt a strategy for coping with their membership in a stigmatized group that is oppositional to academic identification (Osborne 1999).

Ninety-one percent of the participants stated that to be a good student is “cool,” and over 90% of the participants stated that to finish high school and succeed financially is “cooler” than to not finish high school and succeed financially. Usually, dropping out of high school is deemed nondetrimental to individuals who suffer completely, or in part, from academic disidentification. Participant A said, “It’s cool to be a good student, because it will lead to scholarships and having a good life.” Participant B said, “To be a good student is not cool, but getting an education is necessary to get a job. It’s not cool because a lot of people insult you.” Participant B understands the importance of doing well in school; however, he does not associate academic achievement with “coolness” because of insults from peers, which is a key part of the definition of stereotype threat, the initial theme previously discussed.

“To finish high school and succeed financially” was an overwhelming response from some of the participants for the following reason: Financial success without a basic high school education is potentially impossible, due to a lack of skills and information. Participant E said, “It’s cooler to finish high school and succeed. I feel that way because if you haven’t dropped out of high school, you may not understand, and you may be ripped off your money because you
don’t have the knowledge.” Participant J said, “I think it’s better to graduate so you won’t get gypped out of your money.” Participant P said, “It’s cooler to finish school and succeed financially, because you don’t want to be financially messed up when you drop out of school.” Surprisingly, Participants E, J, and P, among others, seemed to understand how realistic a potential backlash of engaging in work without a high school education may be, regardless of how lucrative opportunities may appear.

Participant C said that to succeed financially with or without graduating from high school are both equally acceptable. Specifically, he said, “It depends on what you are dropping out of school for. You should stay in school, because you can learn things every day. Both cases are good to me.”

Table 2. Cool Pose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Theme Original Issue</th>
<th>Frequency of Response to Thematic Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cool Pose</td>
<td>8. Is it cool to be a good student?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool Pose</td>
<td>9. Is it cooler, or just as cool, to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responses to Questions About Theme III

Dearth of positive Black male role models. Eighty-six percent of the participants agreed that having positive Black male role models is important, and over 81% of the participants said that the election of Barack Obama encouraged them to show even greater interest in their schoolwork now than before Barack Obama took office. Participant C talked about how the election of Barack Obama influenced him. He said, “Now I feel that I can become president, but before, I never watched presidents on TV; but I do now because he is the first Black president and he influenced me a lot.” Participant F said, “Since he’s a Black president, it gave me pride that out of the darkness came a Black role model, and that inspired me to go on and work harder.” Many of the other participants issued similar responses to the question: Do you think the first election of a Black president will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why, or why not?

Interestingly, 19% of the participants were not encouraged to show more interest in their schoolwork due to Barack Obama’s election. Participant R stated, “He’s not really Black, and he hasn’t changed the way I view my school interests.” Participant R’s statement is interesting when one considers who, why, and how “authenticating Blackness,” or “authenticating race” in general should be studied in relation to academic interests among all students. Participant O said that his scholastic interests have not increased because, “going around saying he’s president when he is not president; what are you going to do, not be interested?” This response by Participant O is worth studying, because, What if the interest levels of young urban Black males were to decrease after the term(s) of President Obama is completed?

Eighty-six percent of the participants had no trouble in citing positive Black male role models. Thirteen of the participants in the sample cited President Obama as a role model when
they were presented with the question, “Can you think of any positive Black male role models?” Participant H said, “I can’t think of any Black role models, even based on your definition.” For this study, a positive Black male role model is one who has graduated from high school and encourages youngsters to go to college, or has graduated from college at the undergraduate level, or at least has attended. This response from Participant H was just one disturbing response given during the interview session that I conducted with him. Participant H also said, “Black male role models are very important, because I have no Black male role models at all and I feel that we don't have Black mentors.” Ironically, Participant H said that the election of President Obama has encouraged him to care even more about his schoolwork. “We have no excuse that we cannot be such-and-such a thing,” Participant H stated.

Table 3. Positive Black Male Role Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Theme Original Issue</th>
<th>Frequency of Response to Thematic Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Black Male Role Model</td>
<td>Yes 86% No 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are positive Black male role models of importance?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Black Male Role Model</td>
<td>Yes 82% No 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Was the election of President Obama a stimulant to work harder in school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Black Male Role Model</td>
<td>Yes 90% No 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Can you think of any Black male role models?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion of Unanticipated Themes

In response to the question: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name comes to mind immediately? Thirty-six percent of the participants cited males of Caucasian
heritage only, and 23% of the participants cited males of African heritage only. The person of
genius mentioned by the participants more so than any other person of genius was Albert
Einstein. His name was mentioned 10 times, or nearly 50% of the time. The next person of
genius who was mentioned by the participants more than any other person, excluding Albert
Einstein, was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Table 4. Association of Whiteness with Exceptional Intellectual/Creative Achievement (Genius)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Theme Original Issue</th>
<th>Frequency of Response to Thematic Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association of Whiteness with exceptional Intellectual/Creative achievement (genius)</td>
<td>13. Associated genius with White males only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Whiteness with exceptional Intellectual/Creative achievement (genius)</td>
<td>14. Associated genius with Black males only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Whiteness with exceptional Intellectual/Creative achievement (genius)</td>
<td>15. Predominately associated geniuses with White males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Whiteness with exceptional Intellectual/Creative Achievement (genius)</td>
<td>16. Predominately associated genius with Black males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Whiteness with exceptional Intellectual/Creative achievement (genius)</td>
<td>17. Associated genius with males only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is my contention that young Black boys, especially those in urban schools, must have a broader knowledge base that clearly and more frequently makes mention of persons of genius of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Diversification of curricula at the primary and secondary levels is still an issue of tremendous importance because of the great need for minority groups, especially Black Americans, to see African American examples of excellence in all fields, including the hard sciences.

In this study, the participants seem to have a distorted and limited knowledge base of Black persons of genius. Far too often, the participants cited Black entertainers and popular Black leaders, namely Dr. King, President Obama, and Malcolm X; while they overwhelmingly cited White male scientists as examples of persons of genius, namely Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, and Bill Gates. I am not asserting that the mentioning of Black entertainers and Black leaders as potential persons of genius is inappropriate; however, the participants should have been able to mention other outstanding Black persons besides Dr. King, President Obama, Malcolm X, and Michael Jackson.

Conclusively, the data shows that having a role model like President Obama does encourage many of the young Black boys in this study to show greater interest in their schoolwork. Conclusively, the data also shows that persons can have traits of academic disidentification and still show adequate interest in schoolwork, which probably will not result in dropping out of school or being expelled from school. Conclusively, the data shows that the self-image of the urban Black male high school student needs to be reconfigured in a more positive way, in order to thwart strong possibilities of detraction from academic interests. Diversification of school curricula and visual media need to be implemented much more aggressively, because,
in this day and age, Black boys should not be associating negative behaviors and attributes with Blackness. The data shows this disturbing association conclusively.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter begins with specific conclusions regarding responses of the participants. The primary research question for this study was: How and why do the three outlined potential causes of academic disidentification significantly deter or disinterest young, inner-city Black males from showing academic interest at the high school level? The subquestions were: How does stereotype threat relate to academic disidentification among young inner-city Black males and their interest in academic work at four inner-city Newark high schools? How does a dearth of Black role models relate to academic disidentification and affect young, inner-city Black males’ interest in academic work at four inner-city Newark high schools? How does cool pose relate to academic disidentification and affect young inner-city Black males’ interest in academic work at four inner-city Newark high schools?

The purpose of this study was to augment the body of literature on academic disidentification by identifying more effective ways to decrease the disproportionate rate of academic disidentification among inner-city Black males in particular, focusing on how and why theoretical causes of academic disidentification may affect their self-image and ultimate academic interests at the secondary level. To meet this purpose, I a) randomly solicited a sample of young urban Black male high school students who may have been suffering from academic disidentification; b) conducted interviews with a select number of these potentially at-risk students; c) collected, analyzed, and presented data gathered from the interviews using thematic content analysis; and d) reported the findings of the study and offer policy recommendations as needed.
Stereotype Threat as a Cause of Disidentification

So far in their secondary education, the participants in this study were not afraid of losing companionship, being bullied, or accused of “acting White”, and, though Stereotype Threat has been regarded as a potentially strong cause of academic disidentification, the results of this study indicate that the cardinal cause of academic disidentification is rooted in a denigrated racial identity, meaning poor knowledge of self due to being unfamiliar with notable academic and intellectual African American men. What was particularly shocking was watching the majority of the participants struggling to name notable African American role models, who were outstanding in intellectual and/or academic fields of study. Indeed, many of the participants were able to cite Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and President Obama, when asked to mention exceptional Black individuals; however, the participants in this study, and probably many other disidentified youth, may not be able to mention other Black intellectuals, who contributed to American society, via invention or philosophical offerings in the social and hard sciences.

Some of the participants stated that they used to be victims of stereotype threat; however, over time they were able to ignore any repudiation for showing interest in schoolwork, in some cases without aid from anyone. Conclusively, however, the data showed, overwhelmingly, that the participants associated “Blackness” in terms of behavior with negativity; and the participants associated “Whiteness”, in terms of behavior with positive academic attributes. Such stereotypical associative thinking results in poor self-esteem and a dejected self-concept or self-identity. Though the researcher cannot prove that the participants exhibited poor self-esteem, the data shows conclusively that most of the participants had considerable degrees of dejected self-concepts or self-identities. For inner-city Black males, academic identity is also tied to one's
overall self-concept, or “the personal commitment to a standard of excellence, the willingness to persist in the challenge, struggle, excitement and disappointment intrinsic in the learning process” (White, 1984, p.121). These words of White still ring true. Proponents of the causal relationship between Stereotype Threat and Academic Disidentification were not lax in citing the devastating pressures that capable Black male students face when they are engaged and achieving in school academically; however, in this study, what was much more disturbing was the complete ignorance of numerous intellectual and academic contributions given by African American men, in particular. Black males who want to pursue academic success have to cope with the burden of acting White (Fordham 1996, 1999). However, even though the “threat” of “acting White”, or being a “nerd”, has been attributable to academic disidentification, a stronger contribution to academic disidentification may be the “X Factor”. The “X Factor”, as I define it, is basically an unknown, or profoundly insufficient, knowledge base of African American intellectualism. To a great extent, the results of this study negate a major part of Stereotype Threat as a contributing factor to Disidentification Theory.

As previously stated in Chapter IV, most of the participants named famous White scientists, such as Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, and Bill Gates, as prime examples of genius; but not one participant could name one prominent African American thinker, aside from Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and President Barak Obama. More than likely, for the majority of the students in this study, it may be possible to maximize their academic interest if they consciously and unconsciously associate being Black with being smart. In this study, 23% of the participants associated “Blackness” with genius only; while 36% of the participants associated “Whiteness” with genius only. How can the majority, if not all, of the participants
embrace their academic identities when such identities, for the most part, are not equally positioned with those of most White and Asian students?

**Dearth of Positive Black Male Role Models as a Cause of Disidentification**

The dearth of positive Black male role models is another potential cause of academic disidentification. “Boys must be shown that there are African American men who love and care for them consistently and who are very concerned that they achieve success in school and life” (Holland, 1996, p. 315). Holland’s words need to be reiterated, given the unabated problems facing young Black males who are in need of guidance, and the fact that far too many fathers are not involved in their sons’ lives. Because of absent fathers, young inner-city Black males, in particular, are hindered from growing properly psychologically, socially, and academically.

As previously mentioned in the review of literature, Howard’s (2003) study entitled, “A Tug of War for Our Minds: African American High School Students’ Perceptions of their Academic Identities, and College Aspirations”, revealed that students mentioned parents as one of the more powerful influences on their academic identities.

Young inner-city Black males may have been victimized by disidentification and the lack of an educated Black male role model. Young inner-city Black males need more educated Black role models to emulate. Conclusively, the results of this study reaffirm the importance of having educated Black male role models. Thus, a dearth of positive Black male role models is strongly attributive to academic disidentification as a theoretical concept. In fact over 80% of the participants said that having a positive Black male role model was important. So, the results of this study reaffirm the importance of having educated Black male role models for disidentified young inner-city Black males, particularly. However, many of the respondents cited “Black luminaries” in the fields of entertainment, government, and the arts as positive Black male role
models. The participants in my study would be so much more engaged in academics if they had a much larger knowledge base of Black male role models in the social and hard sciences. Conclusively, the results show that the participants knew of only a handful of Black role models, if any at all. As previously stated, a positive Black male model, in this study, is one who has graduated from high school and attended or graduated from college.

**Cool Pose Theory as a Cause of Disidentification**

To adopt uncool strategies—such as studying, relating to teachers, and enjoying school field trips—is to invite social criticism, forcing a choice between academic success and peer support (Ogbu, 1994). Cool Pose Theory, ostensibly, is another potential cause of academic disidentification. The results of this study strongly refute Cool Pose Theory as being strongly contributive to Disidentification Theory. Over 90% of the participants said that to be a good student is “cool” and to drop out of school for whatever reason is “un-cool”. Most of the participants know the importance of a high school education. Many of them are not laissez faire about assimilating into the dominant culture via obtaining adequate education to help them survive and succeed in America. None of the participants assumed a ‘cool pose’ during the interviewing.

**Implications for Policy and Research**

Further diversification of curricula at the primary, secondary, and perhaps even at the post-secondary, levels of education in the United States of America might broaden the association of “acting Black” with more positive identities. The words of Chance need to be reiterated. Children who become enchanted with rap, movies, or any other element of media may model themselves after what they see, and since the message presented by the media is often negative about the Black culture, they will find themselves at a disadvantage in society (Chance,
2003). If Black boys are introduced to the lives of famous Black physicists, fine artists, and the like, then perhaps Black boys may develop a stronger identity that consciously and unconsciously reflects a more accurate and inclusive knowledge and perception of self. If a stronger identity of self is achieved among Black boys, then perhaps their interest levels in academic and intellectual pursuits would increase even more. In the past, studies have shown that positive associations between African American achievement and students' knowledge of such achievements have positive and visible academic results among particular ethnic groups, especially among African American boys. The potential for all American children needs to be more actualized, and the actualization of African American males' academic identities is necessary in the effort to erase academic disidentification.

The diversification of media within schools and outside of schools might also broaden associations of intellectual and creative achievements made by African American boys. It is my assertion that Black male role models, such as Barack Obama, steer many young urban Black males away from several of the symptoms of academic disidentification, such as little or minimal engagement and/or interest in their academic work.

More research needs to be done to investigate further the implication that having African American males in positions of political power, and perhaps in other positions of power that require social, intellectual, academic, and leadership skills leads to heightened scholastic interests and verve among young urban Black males.

This study strongly reaffirms the importance of introducing and sustaining knowledge and images of positive Black male role models. Such role models need to be much more engaged with the processes of assuring inner-city Black males, in particular, that they cannot only aspire to achieve in school, but that they have a long history of achieving academically,
intellectually, and so forth. Given that African American history is American history, inner-city Black males, should not have a hard time mentioning and, in some cases identifying with, famous Black intellectuals. In this study, many of participants had a difficult time naming Black intellectuals as examples of geniuses and, even role models, except for very familiar persons such as Dr. King, Malcolm X, President Obama, and Michael Jackson. Surely ninth- and tenth-grade students can think of more examples of exceptional Black men than the aforementioned ones.

The responses of the participants in this study lead one to ask the all important question: Why did most of the participants respond counterintuitively to the Academic Disidentification Theory? It is the researcher’s contention that, possibly, because of the general overwhelming progression of educational, economical, and social changes affecting the African American community, most of the counterintuitive responses of the subjects seem to reflect a shift of noteworthy change.

The participants in this study were inner-city African American boys from inner-city high schools; nevertheless, the participants’ responses to the interview questions in general might suggest that either parents and/or teachers are making a more considerable impact on the academic perspectives of the participants than previously thought. Though the focus of this study was on academic interests, and not academic achievement, among young urban Black males, one can offer conjecture that academic interest and academic engagement usually results in higher probability of academic achievement than academic failure.

African Americans have made great strides since the days of slavery and Jim and Jane Crow, and yes, more African Americans have attended and graduated from college within the
last three decades than during any period in American history. There are also more African American millionaires and billionaires today than during any other juncture in American history.

Though these strides have been made, African Americans still suffer undeniably from disenfranchisement, racism, and abject poverty in greater proportions than other groups. So, perhaps the greater investigative question for researchers interested in the current relevance of Academic Disidentification theory may be how applicable and reliable are the theoretical causes of Academic Disidentification among young Black males; in addition to a growing discussion of why the responses of the participants in this study seem to imply a general state of a much healthier academic identity. Furthermore, one must be cautious to categorize the participants in this study as individuals who are simply not academically disidentified because of the seemingly uniformity of their counter-intuitive responses during the in-depth interviewing. Indeed, a longitudinal study would be a most appropriate follow-up investigation to offer a stronger response as to why the participants responded as they did in this study.
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Appendix A

Transcript of Interview with Participant A

Interviewer: Hello, Participant A, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant A: No, because school is nothing to be afraid of.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant A: No, I do not.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant A: It doesn’t mean a White or Black thing; it’s something you have to do.

Categorical Theme is Cool Pose

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant A: A laid back person, relaxed.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student?” Why or why not?

Interview Participant A: It’s cool to be a good student because it will lead to scholarships and having a good life.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant A: I think it did, because it sets a tone like ok, now we know whatever we dream of someday can come true if we put our minds to it. Not exactly, it changed my level of interests.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant A: It’s cooler to finish high school because nowadays it’s something good to fall back on.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant A: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?
Interview Participant A: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant A: Colin Powell, Dr. King, Obama, and Malcolm X, because they set the tone for African Americans.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant A: Yes, because you are going for your PhD.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant A: Saying something like “dude.” Whites like to dress tight, some of them shirt and tie whereas with Blacks, dress is looser. Acting White is about dressing sometimes how you speak...womm...I’m not too sure of anything else. There is no acting White in a school setting...it doesn’t make sense.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant A: Ignorant.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant A: Doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant A: Nothing at all.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant A: Bill Gates, umm...George Lucas

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant A: Well, tall, light-skinned, shirt, tie, shoes, bags, umm that’s about it.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time Participant A, and have a nice day.
Appendix B

Transcript of Interview with Participant B

Interviewer: Hello Participant B, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant B: No, because I know the insults aren’t true and the names and pressure are not true.

Interviewer: Participant B, do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant B: No.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant B: It’s neither.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant B: A person that does what he has to do to get the right or legal things done. Like somebody who goes to work, has a job.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student?” Why or why not?

Interview Participant B: I don’t think it’s cool, but getting an education is necessary to get a job. It’s not cool, because a lot of people insult you.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant B: It made me show more interests, because if he can be president, so can I.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant B: I think it’s cooler to graduate from high school and succeed financially because business skills.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant B: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant B: Yes, because it’s encouraging to get to their position.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?
Interview Participant B: My brother, Bill Cosby, umm, nobody else.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant B: Yes, because of your education.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant B: It’s an insult to the White race... it doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant B: It doesn’t mean anything, but to act Black is not a good thing and it might lead to negative consequences.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant B: Doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant B: Doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant B: Albert Einstein, Edison, that’s it.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant B: Somebody in graduation gown; it could be anybody.

Researcher: Thank you for your time Subject B, and have a nice day.
Appendix C

Transcription of Interview with Participant C

Interviewer: Hello, Subject C, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant C: I did at first but not really no more. I notice it don’t get you nowhere. You know what I’m saying. Once you there and you don’t do it; you are going to do something that will cause depression. I wasn’t a follower and I was called a nerd, but now I don’t care.

Interviewer: Subject C, do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant C: Yeah, I know a couple of them.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant C: No, It got to do with what you wanna do.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant C: Um, cool means to me, it means you are a nice person; you don’t like drama and everybody likes you.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student”? Why or why not?

Interview Participant C: Yes, because a good student gets a good job, and that’s the cool person at the end.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant C: Yes, because if he can do it, then I can do it, and because now I feel that I can become president, but before, I never watched presidents on TV, but I do now because he is the first Black president and he influenced me a lot.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant C: It depends on what you are dropping out of school for. If you should stay in school because you can learnt things everyday. Both cases are good to me.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant C: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?
Interview Participant C: No, because I have a mind of my own.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant C: Umm, no, I don’t know. Umm, Obama is one. I am my own person and I have my own thoughts about what I want to do, and that’s it.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant C: You, yes, because you, like, you’ve shown people that it is never too late to get an education. You are not a role model to me, but you are a role model.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant C: Doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant C: Doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant C: Doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant C: Doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant C: I just think a genius is one who has met their goal.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant C: Books in their hands, thick glasses—that’s it.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time Participant C, and have a nice day.
Transcript of Interview with Participant D

Interviewer: Hello, Subject D, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant D: No, because I know it’s just stereotyping and I feel that I can do whatever I want.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant D: No.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant D: No, anybody can do their schoolwork, but I feel that I don’t think it’s because of everybody else thinking that they shouldn’t have interests because it’s not something that Black people do.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant D: To be popular, to inspire people.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student?” Why or why not?

Interview Participant D: I think it is real cool to be a good student, because of what I just said.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant D: Yes, because it shows me that with determination and education I can do whatever I want, including becoming a Black president.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant D: Well, I think everybody should have an education. I think everyone should graduate from high school, because you will always learn something new in school.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant D: Yes, inspires you to do great things.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant D: Yes, because, yes because of the umm of the stereotypes that they put on Black men because they make a difference.
Interviewer: What stereotypes?

Interview Participant D: That we can’t make the same accomplishments, and trying to make us settle for less.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant D: Yes, Obama... No, I can’t think of any others right now.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant D: Yes, because you have your masters degree and you are going for your PhD, and that inspires me to do the same.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant D: It means to act proper consistent good etiquette.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant D: To be ignorant and to have less interests in school.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant D: I have no idea.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant D: Means nothing to me.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant D: Einstein.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant D: Determined, serious face, not affect by what’s around you. Ignorant of what’s around you. Focused.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time Subject D, and have a nice day.
Appendix E

Transcript of Interview with Participant E

Interviewer: Hello, Participant E, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant E: No, I haven’t, because I come from a family where my mom I do my work. Like, in third grade, I wasn’t good at reading and I didn’t want to ask questions. As I got older I asked questions which made me smarter. I was afraid of people looking down upon me.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant E: I don’t know of any.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant E: Doesn’t have anything to do with race; it depends on the person.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant E: It’s somebody that’s a good role model, or people somebody look up to doesn’t show negativity.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student?” Why or why Not?

Interview Participant E: It’s cool in a way because it’s not dumb; going to college is a good thing. It will get you farther.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant E: Yes, what made me think a Black president made me more interested in school, it really mutates all of the umm the stereotype that a Black person can’t be something so now we have one that unlimited everything.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant E: It’s cooler to finish high school and succeed. I feel that way because if you haven’t dropped out of high school, you may not understand, and you may be ripped off your money because you don’t have the knowledge.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?
Interview Participant E: Yes, somebody that shows a positive attitude, explaining why you should do the right thing and not the wrong thing.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant E: Yes, make me a prouder person as a Black person to say that a person is Black like Obama helps break stereotypes, like Blacks won’t amount to anything and they’re criminals, all Black males are saggin their pants, gang-affiliated, work in fast food restaurants makes me more proud.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant E: Kobe Bryant, Dr. King, my father, my uncle, my cousin, a lot of people.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant E: I would consider you a Black role model because you graduated from high school and you have been to college.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant E: Speak proper, act smart, getting good grades.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant E: Basically, acting ignorant, not doing the right thing; that’s about it.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant E: I couldn’t tell you.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant E: Nothing at all.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant E: Einstein...I don’t know any other geniuses...Phil Jackson, he’s a genius.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant E: I see a Black African American with a suit, a tie, a uniform, glasses, most likely glasses.

Interviewer: Thank you, Participant E, for your time, and have a nice day.
Appendix F

Transcript of Interview with Participant F

Interviewer: Hello, Participant F. Are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant F: No, I was never afraid to show interests because the students are like in my class, like, they don’t pay attention in class or learning, and so it is my time to shine for like I never felt peer pressure.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant F: Yes, I think they are afraid to show interests because they want to be cool and hang out.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant F: Nothing to do with race; never thought that way.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant F: Cool means something that is hot or in style.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student”? Why or why not?

Interview Participant F: Well, these days yes and no; sometimes you get picked on for being cool. The people that do they work that do all good things because they are active and even when people who treat them bad, and the people who do bad things, they cool, because they get away with it, so I can do it, too.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant F: Yes, because when he had his inauguration, entire class saw it, and we honored it. Since he’s a Black president, it gave me pride that out of a darkness came a Black role model and that inspired me to go on and work harder.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant F: In my opinion, I don’t think it’s cool. He should have stayed in school. It doesn’t matter, finishing school is first priority to me, because I know where I come from and I want to be better; otherwise, it’s just getting by, because if you drop out you have nothing to fall back on.
Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant F: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant F: Because if they can do it, then I can do it.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant F: Obama.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant F: Yes, because you seem like an educated person, and you have attended college.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant F: Means like that a Black brotha is speaking proper English, or is active in any academics and not just sports. I have been accused in acting White. I am the best math student in my class, and my peers say I’m acting white, but it doesn’t bother me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant F: Being ignorant, doing ignorant things, talking while others are talking, but it means nothing personally to me. I try not to think that way, but I do understand the meaning.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant F: Means nothing; I have no idea.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant F: The girls are different; the Latinos want confrontation in the classroom when it comes to the females, but not the males, that’s what acting Hispanic means to you.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant F: Einstein, Stephen Hawkin.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant F: Any color, but I would tend to see a Black brotha with a tie, dress shirt, suit, or classy.

Interviewer: Thank you, Participant F, for your time, and have a nice day.
Appendix G

Transcript of Interview with Participant G

Interviewer: Hello, Participant G, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant G: When I was in the fourth-sixth grade because students was gonna call me a nerd, but after I went on to school, I noticed that it’s not about what other people say, so I just went on and did my work.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant G: No.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing, White thing, or neither?

Interview Participant G: It’s neither, because doin’ getting’ your education is for both Blacks and Whites.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant G: Cool, it could me tryin’ to be down, or at least trying to be down. Down means trying to be a follower.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student?” Why or why not?

Interview Participant G: Umm, I think it’s cool to be a good student, because if you be a good student, you might get another student want to become a good student; you may become a leader.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant G: Yes, because it make me wanna become a second Black president. Before he became president, I didn’t think about becoming president.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant G: You should finish high school regardless, because that’s really what you are supposed to do in life.

Interviewer: Do you know what a role model is?

Interview Participant G: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?
Interview Participant G: Yes, they are important, because it could probably influence us in becoming a future Black male role model.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant G: Michael Jackson, no, that’s it.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant G: Yes, because you are trying to become a doctor, and that’s a role model to others.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant G: Means that White people because they be in school so much they speak very proper, umm, that’s it.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant G: Acting ignorant, and that’s it.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant G: Means nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant G: Trying to speak the language, and that’s all.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant G: Michael Jackson, umm, that’s about it.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interviewer Participant G: No image, nothing.

Interviewer: Thank you for participation, Participant G, and have a good day.
Appendix H

Transcript of Interview with Participant H

Interviewer: Are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant H: No, why should you be afraid to do well in school?

Interviewer: Participant 5, do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant H: Some are afraid and some don’t want to do it because it gives them a poor self-image.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing, White thing, or neither?

Interview Participant H: It’s neither.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant H: Cool gets good grades, laid back.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student?” Why or why not?

Interview Participant H: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant H: Yes, because we have no excuse that we cannot be such and such a thing.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant H: It is not cool to drop out of school, regardless.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant H: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant H: Yes, very important, because I have no Black role models at all, and I feel that we don’t have Black mentors.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?
Interview Participant H: I can't think of any Black role. Even based on your definition.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant H: Yes, because you are doing this survey.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant H: Doing something that's not Black; it means that's you are doing something a label means that you are acting stupid or different unlikable. Acting White means getting good grades.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant H: Having pants down in class, texting in class, to not be engaged in class, talking, being disruptive.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant H: Nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant H: Nothing.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant H: Einstein, that's the only genius I know, Bill Gates, no others; it's hard to think of anymore, I'll stop there.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant H: It could be anyone, no set standard.

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation.
Appendix I

Transcript of Interview with Participant I

Interviewer: Hello, Participant I, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interests in schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant I: No, because I know what I came to school for, and it’s not like to impress anyone else, because I accomplish nothing if I don’t do my work.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant I: Yes, I know a couple. I think they don’t have any interests in doing their work and they want to have fun, and sometimes they are afraid to show interests in their work but any.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing, White thing, or neither?

Interview Participant I: No, because anybody can do the work; a Black person can do as well as a White person or Chinese person as long they put their minds to it.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant I: Alright, cool means to me is like someone who is relaxed and they don’t aren’t quick to react, more laid back.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a “good student?” Why or why not?

Interview Participant I: Yes it is cool, because it is something that helps you in the long run. Will result in having fancy car and big house, it also furthers your knowledge, and knowledge is the best thing you can have.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about doing well in school? Why or why not?

Interview Participant I: No, I don’t think it affected me, because he was just like the rest of us. Didn’t have any effect on my interest level in school, and I don’t know why. I can’t explain it; it was just another election. His race didn’t matter to me.

Interviewer: Is it “cooler” or just as “cool” to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant I: It’s cooler to finish high school and succeed financially, because I feel like dropping out of high school is a waste of time, because your parents want to see you do good and I want to help them feel complete. Dropping out of high school is like cheating at a game.

Question 8: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?
Interview Participant I: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant I: Not important. If I had a role model, he wouldn't be just Black, he could be White or Spanish.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant I: Umm, my uncle, umm, that’s it, because I don’t really know many African American adults.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant I: I would say yes, because you attend college at Seton Hall, and you are doing a study to help African Americans who are in a state of depression.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant I: Umm, it doesn’t really mean anything to me, but sometimes people say talking proper is acting White... Getting straight A’s.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant I: I guess means using slang as primary language. To me, I guess it means roughness.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant I: Never heard that before, but I think it means they are really intelligent and fast learners.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant I: Talking really fast in English and Spanish, and that’s it.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant I: My Hispanic friend, EINSTEIN, BILL GATES, umm OBAMA, and that’s it.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person appear to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant I: They don’t look like anything.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time.
Appendix J

Transcript of Interview with Participant J

Interviewer: Hello, Subject J, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant J: No, I'm not afraid, because it's my schoolwork to help me with my schoolwork. No, if I don't show interests, I won't get help from someone who knows more than me.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant J: No.

Interviewer: Do you think showing interests in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant J: It's neither.

Interviewer: What does the word "cool" mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant J: Cool means to me somebody who is respectful, responsible.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or Why not?

Interview Participant J: It's cool to be a good student, because you make money and help people.

Interviewer: Do you think the election of the first Black president has or will encourage you to do care more about doing your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant J: Yes, reason why, because he gives me an example. I'm Black, if I do work and hard work, I know I can be like him.

Interviewer: Is it cooler or just as cool to succeed financially and graduate from high school, or to succeed financially and drop out of high school?

Interview Participant J: It's cool to finish high school, because you need something to fall back on.

Interviewer: Are Black role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant J: Yes, because I'm going to take the example of him. I'm going to be like him. I want to go anywhere he goes.

Interviewer: Do you know what a positive Black male role model is?
Interview Participant J: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant J: Obama, Dr. King, Malcolm X, my father.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a Black role model?

Interview Participant J: Because you want to help people to be like a somebody one day.

Interviewer: What does acting White mean to you?

Interview Participant J: Means you think you know better than everyone else.

Interviewer: What does acting Black mean to you, if anything.

Interview Participant J: Means something positive.

Interviewer: What does acting Asian mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant J: Nothing; never heard of it.

Interviewer: What does acting Hispanic mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant J: Acting Hispanic? Never heard of that.

Interviewer: When you hear the word “genius,” what name or image comes to mind?

Interview Participant J: Obama, my father, any person who is older than me.

Interviewer: When you envision a good student, what image comes to mind?

Interview Participant J: A girl outside, doesn’t matter, attire doesn’t matter, but it is a female of no particular color.

Interviewer: Thank you for this interview, and have a nice day.
Appendix K

Transcript of Interview with Participant K

Interviewer: Are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork?

Interview Participant K: I am not afraid, because I want to get good grades, but I was afraid to show interests in the past. I now want to be interested, because I want to have a good future, and I thought how I was living in a poor place, so I decided to change and start showing interests in my work.

Interviewer: Do you know other students who are afraid to show interest in their schoolwork?

Interview Participant K: I know of a lot of students.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant K: I think it’s neither a Black or White thing, because there are a lot Whites and Blacks who fail and succeed in school.

Interviewer: What does cool mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant K: Cool means impressing girls and being popular.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or Why not?

Interview Participant K: It doesn’t fall under the category of being cool. The words “nerd” or “smart guy” are terms for a good student, which is a good thing, but not a cool thing. It’s a good thing because it will make your parents proud.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of an African American president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interests in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant K: I think it encourages all students to show more interest in school. Race has nothing to do with it.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant K: I think it’s better to graduate, so you won’t get gypped out of your money.

Interviewer: Do you know what a positive Black male role model is?

Interview Participant K: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant K: Yes, because they set the example.
Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?
Interview Participant K: My dad, Obama, Kobe Bryant, that’s it.
Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model?
Interview Participant K: Yes, because you are in college and you are setting the role.
Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant K: Acting uncool, or acting very smart.
Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant K: Acting Black means yelling or acting out in class.
Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant K: It means you are good at math, or something like that.
Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant K: Acting Hispanic means having a Spanish accent.
Interviewer: When you hear the word “genius,” what images pop up in your mind?
Interview Participant K: Denzel Washington.
Interviewer: When you envision a good student, what mental image comes to mind? How does the person appear to you in your imagination?
Interview Participant K: Dressed in uniform, carrying books and stuff; might have glasses, might not have glasses. That’s it, any skin color.
Interviewer: Thank you for your time.
Transcript of Interview with Participant L

Interviewer: Are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant L: Not really. I just always feel confident.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant L: No.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant L: Neither; race has nothing to do with it. Students, they react how they want to react in school.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant L: It means like, to me, I think cool would be like a person who fits in...umm what can I say, a person that just I say relaxed, quiet, a fun person to be around.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant L: Yes, it is cool to be a good student, because you want to set yourself as a role model to maybe a younger sibling in your family.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your school work? Why or why not?

Interview Participant L: Umm, no, I still feel the same. I don’t, I just feel the same about everything.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant L: I would rather finish high school, because I want to walk across the stage, and I want to be able to do other things.

Interviewer: Do you know what a role model is?

Interview Participant L: Yes
Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant L: Yes, they are important, because they encourage us to do the right thing.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant L: Obama, umm, that’s it.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant L: Yeah, because the things you are doing. You are trying to do something in your life.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant L: I really don’t know. It means nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant L: You are acting more like, how can I say this, acting foolish, like bad retarded.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant L: Nothing, never heard of that.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant L: Nothing, never heard of that.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant L: Genius...I don’t know right now.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant L: I see more of a light skin black male, dressed proper, nice shoes, button up shirt, khaki pants.

Researcher: Thank you for your time, Subject 19, and have a nice day.
Appendix M

Transcript of Interview with Participant M

Interviewer: Hello, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant M: No, I don’t worry about that.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant M: I know plenty of them, because they might actually be what they are called.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant M: Neither Black or White, because its Black kids who can do their work and White kids.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant M: Talkative, talking out loud, outgoing.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant M: It’s cool sometimes you could be cool. It is good to be a good student because the people who not getting their work done help me out I’ll help you out.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your school work? Why or why not?

Interview Participant M: No, anybody can be president.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant M: That right there, I can’t answer, but I would rather be well off and have the education, something to fall back on.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant M: Yeah.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant M: No, anybody can be a role model.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?
Interview Participant M: Drake (R&B) singer, Jay-Z (the rap artist), my older brother, and that's it.

Interviewer: Would you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant M: Yeah.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant M: Front of the class, quiet, getting work done, always has his hand raised, teacher's pet.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant M: Back of the class, real loud, work not completed, late to class, in the hallway, texting in class.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant M: Froze, don't talk much.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant M: Never heard of it.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant M: Einstein, Dr. King, that's it.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant M: Light skinned, low haircut, normal height, a male, in a uniform.

Researcher: Thank you for your time, and have a nice day.
Appendix N

Transcript of Interview with Participant N

Interviewer: Hello Participant N, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant N: Umm, no, I never been afraid, because work is something you learning; it’s up to you to learn to go forward in life.

Interviewer: You know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant N: Yes, they wanna be down and cool.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant N: Neither, because everybody can learn; it just up to you to do it.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant N: It’s learning, getting far, like going to college and doing something with your life.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant N: Yes, because like I said before, without out a diploma or somethin’ or you end up moppin’ the floor or working at McDonalds. You can go higher than that and make more money.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant N: Yes, because I use to say I can’t do something, and I always thought we’d never have a Black president. I think I can be president now, but not before.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant N: You should finish school, because you are missing a lot on life; you won’t have a higher education that you could have if you stayed in school.

Interviewer: Do you know what a role model is?.

Response: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant N: Yes, they are important, because back then in slavery that said we couldn’t even read having our hands chopped up, but not we can learn. He can do it, so I can.
Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?
Interview Participant N: Yes, my father, brother, uncle.

Interviewer: Do you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?
Interview Participant N: Yes, because you graduated from college.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant N: I’ve never heard of that.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant N: It could be a good thing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant N: Nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant N: Nothing.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?
Interview Participant N: Malcolm X, Dr. King, Obama, Ras Baraka.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?
Interview Participant N: Someone with books and pencils in hand, dressed in any kind of way and of any race or gender.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time.
Appendix O

Transcript of Interview with Participant O

Interviewer: Hello Participant O, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant O: Uh no, schoolwork is something you have to do.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant O: Uh, yes, they wanna still get good grades, but still look good for their friends.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant O: It's neither; nothing to do with race, lot black people showing interests.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant O: Anything can be cool.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant O: Well, yes, at the end of the day, you get a lot of perks with that, because senior year you will have a free class, a class that you don’t have to take because you've taken it during summer maybe, and this is why it’s cool to be a good student.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant O: Still the same, not really going around saying he’s president when he’s not president, what are you going to do, not be interested?

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant O: I would finish high school and succeed financially because just to say you did it.

Interviewer: Do you know what a role model is?

Interview Participant O: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant O: Yes, because the way influence you will have some effect on how you turn out.
Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?
Interview Participant 0: Malcolm X, Dr. King, Jessie Jackson, Obama.

Interviewer: You consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?
Interview Participant 0: Yes.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant 0: Ignorant, you are not what they are, or what they think; it’s a positive thing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant 0: Nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant 0: Means you have a Blackberry and you are good with a calculator.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant 0: Never heard of that before.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?
Interview Participant 0: Hawking, Einstein.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?
Interview Participant 0: Any race, any style of dress, any gender.

Researcher: Thank you for your time.
Appendix P

Transcript of Interview with Participant P

Interviewer: Hello Participant P, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant P: Umm, I never been afraid, because school is the way out for me.

Interviewer: You know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant P: I know a lot of students who are.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant P: Neither White or Black, you either like it or you don’t; nothing to do with race.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything.

Interview Participant P: Umm, the word cool means what somebody thinks about you. Two types of cool: one type, you do everything you should be doing, doing things to impress others, or do what you suppose to be doing. I try to do my work.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant P: It’s cool to be a good student because when you are, you can be cool in other ways and you don’t have to worry about anything else.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your school work? Why or why not?

Interview Participant P: Yeah, it show me if he can be president, I can do whatever I want. I have more chances of being a success.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant P: To finish school and succeed financially; you don’t want to be financially messed up when you drop out of school.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant P: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant P: Yes they are, because they’ve gone through everything I’ve gone through.
Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant P: Football coach.

Interviewer: You consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant P: Yeah, why not, you are here interviewing me.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant P: Umm, trying to be smart, something they’re not.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant P: Negative activity in the classroom.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant P: Nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant P: Never heard of that.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant P: Bill Gates, that’s it.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant P: Any style of dress, any race or gender.

Researcher: Thank you subject fl, have a great day.
Appendix Q

Transcript of Interview with Participant Q

Interviewer: Hello, Participant Q, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant Q: No, because I feel if I'm doing my schoolwork I'm doing good; at the end of the day, I'm going to have money and a good job.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who seem to be afraid to show interest in schoolwork?

Interview Participant Q: Yes, they try to be cool and down.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant Q: Neither, because anybody can do well or not do well.

Interviewer: What does the word "cool" mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant Q: Laid back, trying to be like others, trying to fit in with the crowd.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant Q: It's cool to be a good student, because you can get scholarship for your grades, and when you do bad in school you can't play sports.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your school work? Why or why not?

Interview Participant Q: Yes, since he's a president, I can be president one day. He's a role model, and before I always felt it would be a White person president.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant Q: Have the money and education, because knowledge is power.

Interviewer: Do you know what a role model is?

Interview Participant Q: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant Q: Yes, because if they can do it, I can do it, too.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant Q: Obama, my cousin, that's it.
Interviewer: You consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant Q: Yes, because you show interest in the students, and it sound like you wanna make a better situation.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant Q: Polite, you have home training.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant Q: Something negative.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant Q: Never heard of that.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant Q: Never heard of this.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant Q: Einstein, Obama.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant Q: Prep student, tie, dress shoes, and dress pants.

Researcher: Thank you very much for your time.
Appendix R

Transcript of Interview with Participant R

Interviewer: Hello, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant R: No I have not, because I really don’t care what people think or say about me.

Interviewer: Do you know of other students who are afraid to show interest in their schoolwork?

Interview Participant R: No, I don’t think so.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant R: It’s neither; people shouldn’t care about what color they are.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant R: Trying to be down with another person, or trying to fit in with that bad.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant R: Yes, it is cool to be a good student.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your school work? Why or why not?

Interview Participant R: Yes, because he’s trying to bring us to a better place, just because he’s Black doesn’t mean and he’s not really Black hasn’t changed the way I view my school interests.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant R: To finish high school and succeed financially, because if you jump out of school you won’t have the knowledge to teach potential kids school-wise.

Interviewer: Do you know what a role model is? (Yes)

Interview Participant R: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant R: Teaches us how to change ourselves, how to treat others how you want to be treated.

Interviewer Question 10: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?
Interview Participant R: Michael Jackson, Obama.

Interviewer: You consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant R: Yes, because you have the skills and talent to teach that kid the right thing.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant R: It means you talk a certain way and behavior means talking I don’t know.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant R: Acting like a Black Negro, acting ghetto.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant R: Nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant R: Trying to speak their language.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant R: Michael Jackson, Grandfather, that’s it.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant R: A girl, dressed properly.

Researcher: Thank you very much for your time.
Appendix S

Transcript of Interview with Participant S

Interviewer: Hello, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant S: No, because I am not ashamed of myself.

Interviewer: Do you know of any other students who are afraid to show interest in their schoolwork?

Interview Participant S: Yeah, yes, I do, because they don’t want to be labeled.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Explain.

Interview Participant S: It’s neither; race doesn’t matter.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant S: Just the temperature.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant S: Yes, because it’s cool to show your potential, and it’s a way to be a leader.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant S: It did, sort of, because I can now see myself being president.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant S: To graduate high school and succeed financially, because at least you have your diploma and something to fall back on, and you will have more opportunities.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant S: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant S: To me, it’s not important to me because I don’t have any Black role models, but I have Black female role models.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?
Interview Participant S: My little brother’s father, Hill Harper.

Interviewer: Do you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant S: Yes, because of your education.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant S: Personality, the way you speak, really doesn’t it mean anything to me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant S: Acting ignorant.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant S: Nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant S: The way you talk.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant S: Nothing comes to mind.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant S: No set example.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time.
Appendix T

Transcript of Interview with Participant T

Interviewer: Hello Participant T, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant T: Umm, I would say no; I have to keep my grades up. I know I will be able to get into a good college.

Interviewer: Do you know of any other students who are afraid to show interest in their schoolwork?

Interview Participant T: I wouldn’t say they’re afraid. I would say the economy keeps them away.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant T: A Black thing, because a lot of Black leaders inspired me.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant T: Someone that is mature, that is smart; someone who can adapt to his environment.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant T: Yes, because if you are not a good student, you can’t have fun or opportunity.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant T: Yes, because he Black man in office. I now feel I can do that, too.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed financially? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Interview Participant T: Better to finish high school and succeed, because if you don’t graduate from high school you won’t make the 20,000 dollars.

Interviewer: Do you know what a role model is?

Interview Participant T: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant T: Yes.
Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant T: Dr. King, W.E.B. DuBois, Obama.

Interviewer: Do you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant T: I would, because seeing that you have graduated from high school and you are going for your doctorate and makes me a more positive student.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant T: To me, nothing.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant T: It doesn’t mean anything to me.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant T: Ok, umm, that I’m not acting myself.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant T: Nothing.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant T: W.E.B. DuBois, Dr. King, Einstein, Harriet.

Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant T: No particular image.

Researcher: Thank you for your time.
Transcript of Interview with Participant U

Interviewer: Hello, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant U: I'm here to get an education. I am going to always follow my dreams and go to school.

Interviewer: Do you know of any other students who are afraid to show interest in their schoolwork?

Interview Participant U: Yeah, I know a lot of students who hang out and skip school, but I just do my work.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant U: Has nothing to do with race; it has to do with the environment.

Interviewer: What does the word "cool" mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant U: The word cool that someone is trying to do stuff, impresses others, and it could be a negative way or a positive way.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant U: It's kinda cool, because you get respect from the teachers and from the students sometimes.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant U: Yeah, definitely encouraged me, because for a Black man to become president, that history in the making, and I would like to become president one day, so that is real motivation, and before I didn't think I could ever be president.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed?

Interview Participant U: If you drop out of high school, you will be missing a lot in your lifetime; you need an education because there is nothing to lean back on.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant U: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?
Interview Participant U: It’s very important to me, because they are a lot like me. I mean, I’m black; where they go, I can go, too.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant U: Umm, the President Obama, and Sargent Grant, and Kobe Bryant, Dwight Howard the basketball player.

Interviewer: Do you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?

Interview Participant U: Yeah, cuz you got your masters, now you are going for your PhD, so that’s good stuff man.

Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant U: I mean like, they exaggerate in class, getting attention in class, trying to get more attention than anybody else, criticizing other students in the classrooms about their educational skills, looking down upon those.

Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant U: Acting ghetto, not using the right pronunciation.

Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant U: Speaking in a different way and dressing differently, trying to learn acting smart.

Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?

Interview Participant U: I don’t know.

Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?

Interview Participant U: Bill Gates, Obama, Dr. King, Michael Jackson, that’s it.

Interviewer: What image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?

Interview Participant U: In uniform, any race, well-combed hair, always smiling.

Interviewer: Thank you, and have a nice day.
Appendix V

Transcript of Interview with Participant V

Interviewer: Hello, are you afraid or have you ever been afraid to show interest in your schoolwork? Why or why not?

Interview Participant V: No.

Interviewer: Do you know of any other students who are afraid to show interest in their schoolwork?

Interview Participant V: Not really.

Interviewer: Do you think that showing interest in schoolwork is a Black thing? Is it a White thing? Is it neither a White or Black thing? Explain.

Interview Participant V: It’s neither. Race doesn’t matter.

Interviewer: What does the word “cool” mean to you, if anything.

Interview Participant V: Popular. Just chill.

Interviewer: Is it cool to be a good student? Why or why not?

Interview Participant V: Yes, because getting good grades will benefit in the future.

Interviewer: Do you think the first election of a Black president has or will encourage you to care more about showing interest in your school work? Why or why not?

Interview Participant V: He’s Black, and he’s president, so I know I can do it, too.

Interviewer: Is it cooler to drop out of high school and succeed financially, or to finish high school and succeed?

Interview Participant V: Better to finish high school, so you won’t do something stupid with your money.

Interviewer: Do you understand the definition of a positive Black male role model that I gave to you at the beginning of this interview?

Interview Participant V: Yes.

Interviewer: Are Black male role models important to you? Why or why not?

Interview Participant V: Yes, because kids need somebody to look up to.

Interviewer: Can you think of any positive Black male role models?

Interview Participant V: Obama. Dr. King, that’s about it right now.
Interviewer: Do you consider me to be a positive Black male role model? Why or why not?
Interview Participant V: Well, you are trying to be a doctor, so yeah, I would say yeah.
Interviewer: What does “acting White” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant V: Acting proper and getting good grades.
Interviewer: What does “acting Black” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant V: Ignorant, et al'kin' jokes in class, stuff like that.
Interviewer: What does “acting Asian” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant V: Nothing.
Interviewer: What does “acting Hispanic” mean to you, if anything?
Interview Participant V: Nothing.
Interviewer: When you think of the word “genius,” what image or name immediately comes to mind?
Interview Participant V: Umm...Einstein, Obama, Dr. King...
Interviewer: When you envision a “good student,” what image comes to mind? How does that person look to you in your imagination?
Interview Participant V: Could be anybody...no certain look, really.
Interviewer: Thank you, and have a nice day.
Institutional Review Board Items
I, the researcher, am asking you the parent/guardian for permission to approach your child to be in this study. This is a research study regarding urban African American males’ interests and identity with interests in academic work at the high school level.

1. Researcher’s Affiliation:
   This study is being conducted by Ernest W. Williamson III a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University, College of Education & Human Services, Department of Education Leadership Management and Policy as part of the requirement for a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration.

2. Purpose of the Study:
   The purpose of this study is to investigate how and why “stereotype threat,” “cool pose,” and a lack of positive African American male role models, may attribute to your child’s possible disinterest in his schoolwork. In other words the researcher is trying to find out why many young African American males students show little interest in their school work. This study is designed to gain further insight into a problem that is hurting our young African American boys.

3. Procedures:
   Participants will be interviewed by the researcher in a library study room on the participant’s premises. The interview will be audio taped. I plan to ask 25 to 50 children between the ages of 14 and 17 to participate in my research.

4. Voluntary Nature of the Study:
   Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants are free to not answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. Participants will be paid $5.00 for their participation.
Letter of Solicitation

Ernest W. Williamson III
250 Central Ave. Apartment#125
Newark, New Jersey 07103

Date

Name of High School
Location of High School

Dear Student:

Researcher’s Affiliation

I am requesting your participation in a study being conducted at your high school on how and why many urban African American males at the high school level show disinterests in their academic work. As a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University, College of Education & Human Services, Department of Education Leadership Management and Policy this research is being conducted as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration program. The purpose of this letter is to recruit you as a member of the study regarding disinterests and lack of identity with academic work at your high school.

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this study is to find out why many young African American males students show lack of identity and interests in their academic work at school. This study is designed to gain further insight into a major problem that is hurting our young African American boys.

Duration of Participation:

The students who participate in the study will be interviewed for no longer than 90 minutes. The interviews will be conducted in the library study rooms at your high school.

Description of Procedure:

An informed consent form will be signed before the beginning of the interview. The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. Attached are sample questions from the study.
Voluntary Nature of the Participation:

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and participants will receive five dollars for their participation in the study.

Statement of Anonymity:

The names of the participants will be known to the researcher. The audio tapes will be destroyed once the study has been completed. Subjects will be assigned a letter and number (e.g., A1) in reporting of data.

Risks to Subjects:

The researcher anticipates no negative consequences for subjects participating in this study; however, if participant wants to stop the interview process for any reason, the researcher will allow the student to withdraw from participation and the student will report to the guidance counselor.

Access to Information and Confidentiality:

The records for this study will be kept confidential and secure. Only the researcher will have access to the records. Subjects will be identified by the assigned code. The audio tapes will be marked with the assigned code and the date of the recording. I plan to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. To keep this information safe, the audiotape of your interview will be placed in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s office. To protect confidentiality, your real name will not be used in the written copy of the discussion. Copies of the audio tapes will be kept until the dissertation is completed and then they will be erased.

Thank you for your anticipated support and participation, in this study. Please feel free to contact me at 973.761.9397 or williamsonedu@slu.edu for any questions you may have regarding the study.

Sincerely,

Ernest W. Williamson, M.A., ABD.

Name: ________________

Yes, I would like to participate in an interview for the study entitled “How and Why Three Potential Causes of Academic Disidentification May Affect Interests in Academics at the Secondary Level among Inner-city Black Males.”