
THE SCHOLAR IDENTITY MODEL

Black Male Success in the K–12 Context

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The occlusions in the pipeline from kindergarten to college to employment and to becoming productive and contributing members of the nation for far too many Black, Brown, and low-income students has for years now preoccupied academic and lay scholars alike. The issues at the crux of the pipeline seepages—public education, discrimination and access, student achievement, and effective teaching—have been discussed, debated, and presented as a clarion call to the nation (Alexander & West, 2012; Ford, 2010; Harry & Klinger, 2005; Harry, Klinger Cramer, & Sturges, 2007; Kozol, 1992, 2006, 2012; Ogbu, 1978; Pager, 2009; Whiting, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Woodson (1933/2013).

To situate the reader, I begin with a few truisms about teachers and teaching to establish what Wiggings and McTighe (2005) call “enduring understandings” (p. 25): Teaching is a time-honored profession, American society has moved away from truly honoring its teachers, a teacher can be one of the most influential people in a child’s life, it takes a visionary believer/teacher to make lasting change. And there is no predetermined genetic requirement for one to create or be a part of that long-term change.

People, unlike mathematical or scientific problems, are not so easily understood or solved. No two humans are genetically identical. Even monozygotic twins who develop from one zygote have infrequent genetic differences because of mutations occurring during development. And although research

shows that the DNA of any two humans differs by about 0.1%, no one has been able to successfully map the difference that 0.1% means—if it means anything at all of significance. (Bruder et al., 2008; “Genographic Project,” 2005; Singer, 2012).

I have been asked over the years, mostly by White American women teachers, “Can I be effective in this work that you (read African American/Black man) do?” It is important to note that I have never had any doubt about the sincerity of the interlocutor. The question is at first blush innocuous enough. However, the question also reveals doubts about identity, ability, and possibly empathy. In effect, I am not like them: male and of a different race, culture, and class. The straightforward answer to most of these teachers is, “Yes, you can.” Not only is it possible for that teacher to be effective, but it also is impossible to effect positive change if one cannot envision it. And the statistics tell us that without such teachers, systemic and long-term change is not possible.

Statistical data from the National Center for Education Information (NCEI) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reveal important demographics about teachers and the implications those demographics hold potentially for the aforementioned hypotheses regarding systematic change. A full-time and part-time public school teachers in 2007–08, some 76% were female, and a slightly lower percentage of private school teachers were female (74%). Additionally, among males and females, 83% of public school teachers were White, 7% were Black and 7% were Hispanic, 1% were Asian and 1% were of two or more races, and less than 1% were Pacific Islander or less than 1% were American Indian/Alaska Native (NCES, 2007–2008).

The NCEI, which has been studying teachers since 1979, conducted five national surveys of teachers. The latest, *Profiles of Teachers in the U.S. 2011* (Feistritzer, 2011) provides very useful data from the teacher’s perspectives, showing that nearly 85% (a higher number than the NCES 2008 data) of the teaching force is female. As with the NCES data, European American (White) females are disproportionately represented on the nation’s teaching landscape. Even with the rapidly shifting national demographic data on race and ethnicity, the expected numerical impact on the pool of teachers based on trends in college graduation will be minimal for decades to come (Kratz & Rodin, 2010).

It is, therefore, incumbent upon all teachers to believe they can be as effective in this work that I, an African American (Black) male educator, do. There are no hidden secrets, no special handshakes, passwords, or street credibility needed. What is needed is a belief in the untapped potential of all who enter our classrooms. A visionary teacher, regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, education, or sexual orientation, can have a net positive effect on the educational outlook and attainment of the youths who are entrusted to us.

When, Where, and How I Enter

The work on the Scholar Identity Model (SIM) began in earnest at the moment that I could reflect existentially on my youth and life experiences as they related to real-life issues of self-efficacy, motivation, academic self-confidence, race, poverty, manhood, and so much more. It was at that moment that I better understood what I, and so many millions of others, had been up against.

Although intuitively I had been aware of the academic disengagement of many of my peers, as well as my own at various points in time, it wasn't until 1996 when I began teaching at a small predominantly Black university (BU) in the midwestern part of the United States that the intellectual groundings of the theories that would eventually become the SIM emerged. This BU served primarily those who lived in the nearby communities. Many administrators and teachers could have opted for employment at better-known local institutions (and several made the attempt), but BU was like a family. It was nurturing and somewhat holistic, a mom-and-pop kind of place. Students with extenuating circumstances also found BU more accepting of them. The most salient of these circumstances centered around race, motivation, and preparedness.

While working at BU for four years, I was asked to be a motivational speaker for a local fatherhood program (FP) that had a simple mission: to assist young fathers with pathways to parenting skills, including being in the child's life; paying child support; having a relationship with their child or children; possibly resolving relationship issues with the mother or mothers of their children; employment preparation, attainment, and sustenance; and educational continuation and completion. After just two visits, I became a volunteer mentor and teacher at this program for young (16 to 26 years old) Black and Brown low-income fathers and fathers-to-be. Working with these two populations helped to crystallize for me the varied and complex issues surrounding Black and Brown men and boys' academic underperformance and achievement. The opportunity for me to work, teach, volunteer, mentor, and conduct research at BU (four years) and FP (six years) provided the foundations for the SIM framework.

Troubling Observations

Within weeks of arriving at each location (BU and FP), I observed through classroom interactions, interviews (informal and formal), and small- and large-group activities that many of the young men had very low beliefs in their own ability to complete tasks. Many failed to time manage or saw the

need to be oriented toward the future or long-range goals. Too many were convinced that the lack of opportunities as well as the few missed opportunities that had been presented was just the way it is, and there was very little they could do personally to change their life's outcomes. They also held misplaced notions about gender, race, culture, and masculinity. To a lesser extent, even those at BU, generally older and more focused students who were returning to college, had strong doubts in their academic abilities oftentimes traceable to their elementary and secondary educational experiences and teachers' expectations.

Now That I Know, What Can I Do?

The theory related to the SIM was first published in my doctoral dissertation, *Young Black American Fathers in a Fatherhood Program: A Phenomenological Study* (Whiting, 2004). The SIM as an individual model was published in the summer of 2006 in *Gifted Child Today* as "Enhancing Culturally Diverse Males' Scholar Identity: Suggestions for Educators of Gifted Students" (Whiting, 2006a). A variation appeared later that same year in the *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education* titled "From At Risk to At Promise: Developing Scholar Identities Among Black Males" (Whiting, 2006b). Whiting (2006a) outlined nine constructs that are conceptually combined to illustrate a psychosocial model of achievement. The model was initially designed more specifically to provide educators working with Black and Brown males with a road map for fostering scholar identities. The model demanded that they themselves, the educators, families, communities, and eventually the mass media, view the students through a different, more capable lens; hence, they would expect different efforts from the student and assist in instilling the idea of being a scholar, oftentimes by becoming better, more understanding teachers.

The SIM was never designed to fix a problem. The premise of the SIM is not to fix broken, less capable, less intelligent, or less desirous students, but to motivate, educate, and, most important, relate to capable, intelligent students. But in order to relate to a student, a genuine concern and belief in the unseen potential or talent must be developed and honed by the teacher, coach, guardian, or mentor.

Moving the model from theory to practice, in the summer of 2006 the Scholar Identity Institute (SII) was cocreated at Vanderbilt University with Professor Donna Y. Ford. For the next four years, the SII provided intensive engagement for nearly 100 young Black males. The SII was designed to expose the young men (mostly eighth and ninth graders) to the constructs of the SIM. For two weeks during the summer the young men were exposed time and again to Albert Bandura's theories of self-efficacy (1997), E. A.

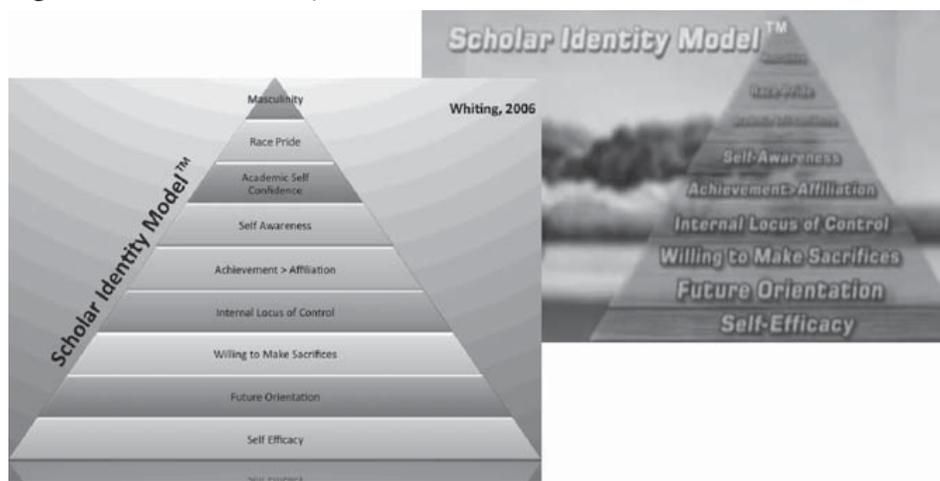
Locke's theory on goal setting (1968), bell hooks's (2004) discussions of masculinity, sexuality, and popular culture, and other scholarly writings on various topical subjects from Donna Ford, Tarek Grantham, William Cross, William Julius Wilson, Thabiti Lewis, and me.

The young men were provided with a curriculum on psychosocial behavior, aiding them in assessing their personal roles and responsibility as well as ways to cope with the sometimes structurally racist and sexist beliefs present in their everyday lives. The curriculum was extensive and refined over the years with the goal of being accessible, engaging, personal, relevant, and fun. In 2009, after four summers directing intensive programming, four pillars or supports were added to the nine SIM constructs. Additionally, in 2009, I wrote two follow-up articles: *Gifted Black Males: Understanding and Decreasing Barriers to Achievement and Identity* and *The Scholar Identity Institute: Guiding Darnel and other Black males*. What follows is a brief description of each of the nine constructs and the four pillars of the SIM.

The Conceptual Model

The SIM is often depicted in pyramid form, signifying strength, wisdom, and beauty. The selection of the pyramid structure was quite deliberate, for it is also one of the most iconic symbols of genius and wonder in the modern world. The pyramid is composed of the nine constructs. Because of space limitations, I provide brief descriptions of the first two constructs and abbreviated descriptions of the remaining seven. The constructs are inextricably linked and all have individual as well as collective importance.

Figure 6.1 Scholar Identity Model



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Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1994), self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.

Self-efficacy (SE) is the foundational construct for the SIM that all the other constructs are built on and ascend from. SE is the belief in one's self to accomplish a given task with the full knowledge and comprehension of the requirements for completion. In the development of the SIM and the populations worked with, SE is central to academic achievement/attainment (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). The SIM is also concerned with the intersections of race, gender, culture, and socioeconomic status with SE.

Working with young men at BU, FP, and in the more formal SII, we found an increased level of academic SE across the board. These young men demonstrated an increased self-confidence, self-control, and resiliency. They began to believe they could succeed at problem solving when fully comprehending a task (e.g., when using the scale of SE, it was noted that when faced with a task of cognitive ability, the students did not feel what Steele & Aronson (1995) refers to as a *stereotype threat*). As the summer's SII progressed, the participants' increased levels of SE became stronger. In words and deeds, they were more than whistling Vivaldi (Steele, 2012), they pushed back against negative stereotypes about Black males. Time and again, they exceeded the requirements and sought out new ways to challenge themselves. Initially, many of the young men would wing it when they did not know an answer; many would also blame extenuating circumstances for their missteps. Issues relating to masculinity and stereotype threat initially interfered with asking for assistance. However, after one summer's work, when faced with an unfamiliar or difficult obstacle, they asked for assistance. Once the young men understood the importance of their SE, they were ready for future orientation.

Future Orientation

The construct future orientation is concerned with the relationship between conscious goals, intentions, and task performance. According to E. A. Locke (1968), (a) hard goals produce a higher level of performance (output) than easy goals, (b) specific hard goals produce higher level of output than a goal

of do your best, and (c) behavioral intentions regulate choice behavior. The theory also views goals and intentions as mediators of the effects of incentives on task performance and that an individual's conscious ideas regulate his or her actions.

Much of the goal setting is identified with the task at hand. For example, if one interrogates a student entering college, the student's focus or field of vision into the future is usually one semester and oftentimes one class or the next exam at a time, whereas, fifth and sixth graders could only envision that week and usually just the day or what the afternoon held. Based on the age of the individual, realistic goal setting will vary; goal setting is a learned and practiced skill, as students mature they are able to plan further into the future. When working with junior high (11–14 years old) and high school students (15–18 years old) who are from low-income and minority groups, knowledge of and plans for setting goals for postsecondary educational studies or careers cannot be emphasized enough. And with those in college, conversations about postgraduate work and employment preparation should begin in the first year. The thought process is a trained process; the more frequently one envisions goals, the more preparation goes into making them a reality.

Motivation theories indicate that people who have aspirations tend to stay focused and prepare for success (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Dweck & Elliott, 1988; Graham, 1991, 1994). They think about the present and the future, particularly regarding how one's current behaviors and decisions influence future achievements. Diverse males with future targets are not overly concerned about immediate gratification and short-term passing interests and ephemeral goals. These students set realistic goals; likewise, they recognize the importance of a high grade point average, excellent school attendance, and participation in challenging courses as helpmates to reaching their dreams. They also not only have a plan, but a plan B and a plan C. Because very few of these young 18- to 21-year-olds know fully what they want or are actually capable of achieving, having productive alternative scenarios are encouraged.

Willing to Make Sacrifices

To accomplish one's set academic goals, choices have to be made concerning time, effort, or resources. Sociologist Robert K. Merton (1948) coined the familiar phrase *self-fulfilling prophecy*, which is the process whereby a person or group that has a strongly held value, belief, or an expectation, true or false, affects the outcome of a situation. Many adults have learned through experiences of trials and tribulations that sacrifices are necessary for reaching short-term, medium, and long-term goals.

Black males who possess or are working toward a scholar identity also understand that sacrifice may be necessary to attain various goals. They believe and understand and are more likely to relinquish some aspects of a social life (e.g., particular friends, parties, too many social organizations, popularity, and so forth) and other distractions (e.g., Internet surfing and social networking sites), gaming (from Bored.com to Zynga and Xbox), and television (including hours of watching sports) to reach those desired goals. They will plan or limit social time, allocating the bulk of their time and efforts toward becoming more productive scholars.

Internal Locus of Control

A student receives (in his or her estimation) a poor grade on an exam. Many of us have been there; what we attribute that grade to makes all the difference in future endeavors. Was it bad luck? Fate? Were we incapable, or did we not muster enough effort? (Weiner, 1980). Knowing which of these categories (luck, fate, ability, and effort) the student chooses to associate with or attribute to the examination results are at the core of internal locus of control. Black males who have a strong internal locus of control are optimistic, even when faced with poor results; these males believe they can do well because they (a) believe they can, (b) planned for the difficult (time consuming) work, (c) made the time to study and prepare for the examination, and (d) when not sure, they are willing to ask for help. Thus, when they receive a less than expected result, they don't blame the test, where they were seated, or a teacher with malevolent intentions. These males take responsibility and live with the results. And most important, they challenge themselves to do better next time.

Self-Awareness

The teacher says, "Young man, please pull your pants up." The young man complies, but thinks, "This is the style and everyone thinks I look/am cool." As soon as he is out of the teacher's view, and until called on the infraction again, he continues his *sagging* (wearing pants below the waist). Self-awareness is an honest appraisal and understanding of one's perceived and real strengths and limitations. It is not only how you see yourself but also how you are viewed by others and how you contribute to that view. Self-awareness is bound up with effort, etiquette, sincerity, character, and self-control (G. Pesare, personal communication, April 15, 1991). Black males who have a realistic grasp on those areas in need of work are willing to consider and process new information, ideas, and societal expectations toward their self-improvement (e.g., they seek a tutor in classes where they are not doing well,

they study longer and more often, and they realize that certain attire triggers negative assumptions). And finally, they take immediate and sustained actions to make appropriate transitions based on their situation.

While the current youth culture of sagging comes from a troubled and negative place (American prisons), it has become part of a contemporary vogue similar to women smoking in the Roaring Twenties, the Fonzie style of the 1950s, or the long hair of hippies in the 1960s. And as with other periods in time, these various fads are seen as troubling to the status quo. In this era, though, and particularly for Black males, the stakes appear much higher: criminalization, incarceration, and even murder (e.g., Trayvon Martin). Therefore, as a part of self-awareness, young Black and Brown men must be able to code switch as they make the transition into adulthood.

Achievement Greater Than Affiliation

The need for achievement and the need for affiliation are found in varying degrees in all students. Neither is inherently wrong. The need-for-achievement student is *achievement motivated* and therefore seeks attainment of realistic but challenging goals, and academic advancement. The student has a strong need for feedback as it relates to achievement and progress, and a need for a sense of accomplishment. The need-for-affiliation student is *affiliation motivated* and has a need for friendly relationships and seeks interaction with other people. The affiliation driver produces motivation and the need to be liked and held in popular regard (McClelland, 1978).

When the goal of academic success is foremost, but the student assigns the need for affiliation greater importance and yet still expects to receive high academic marks, discontinuity arises. Harvard economist Roland Fryer (2006) found that Black and Brown students often opt for more friends and forego higher grade point averages. A student with a strong scholar identity knows this and makes the sacrifice of having friends who are not motivated toward similar academic goals. For these diverse males, the need for achievement is stronger than the need for affiliation; thus, the number of friends they have or their popularity does not determine their identity.

While they may be social and desire meaningful friendships, they are not troubled about being popular for the sake of popularity. Black and Hispanic males with a strong need for achievement understand that high academic achievement will take them far in life. Conflicts about a student turning his back on his community, culture, or race in pursuit of academic goals may exist. The scholar identity student possesses an unassuming confidence, preferably drawn from having family and friends who respect and support him and do not impede his progress.

Academic Self-Confidence

A teacher wields unimaginable power. A child's academic self-confidence is developed through a series of successful encounters. Unfortunately, seemingly inconsequential microaggressions (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder (2008) set the standard for how students view themselves. Teachers' expectations drive student achievement; therefore, developing a strong sense of academic self-confidence in young Black males must be understood as an imperative—pushing without coddling.

Black males who believe they are strong students feel comfortable and confident in academic settings, learning, and playing with ideas. Most important, they do not feel inferior in school, and they do not feel the need to negate, deny, or minimize their academic abilities and skills. These males have a strong work ethic—they spend time doing schoolwork, they study, and they require little prodding from parents and teachers. An often underused cog in the teacher tool kit is the role of the teacher as a facilitator, a guide, and a confident person who will allow himself or herself to see and not be threatened by an outgoing young student with verve. (*Verve* is the propensity for energetic, intense, highly stylized body language and is an essential component of a learning style of expression for African American children. (Boykin, 1994.).).

This does not mean allowing a student to be the class clown or disruptive to the goals of the agenda but merely understanding and having the savvy to use the behavior as a teachable moment, even if the student is doing the teaching. I often use the concept of Academic Aikido in my workshops. Here I am referring to the ability to understand the underlying battles taking place in all classrooms every day, with students pushing against authority merely as a stage of development. For most males (as with females), the onset of puberty marks a point where students, even when faced with the fact that they are wrong, once they commit to leaning into an idea, thought, or position, they are unable or unwilling to back down. It is at this point when the adult drawn into this battle of wills must appear concede ground, turn (only momentarily), and give way in the direction the student is pushing. It is then and only then that the student can relax enough to hear the adult. While listening and learning from the student, we begin to turn them in the direction we wanted to go all along. The turn may be subtle, or it may be a hairpin turn, but we must be willing to hear and see it when they cannot. Ultimately, students with a high academic self-concept understand that in order to be successful, effort is just as important, or more important, than ability. In essence, a student does not care what we (the adult) knows until they know we (the adult) cares. The application of Academic Aikido provides the adult with the opportunity to display care and redirect the student's focus.

Racial Identity and Pride

Even before the election of America's first African American president, keyboards across the nation could be heard tapping away about the so-called Obama effect, writers across the nation seemed to be signaling the arrival of a new postracial society. It was as if the 2008 election of President Barack Obama marked the end of race and racism. That notion has been beaten back (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Kaplan, 2011; Metzler, 2008; Hughey, & Jost, 2011; Sharpley-Whiting, 2009; Touré & Dyson, 2012; Wise, 2010). In too many ways, society has and continues to remind Black and Brown boys and men of their race and what that race means. The average Black teen acts in line with (and sometimes against) stereotypical racialized scenarios daily. In any case, self-esteem and self-concept, racial identity, and pride still affect students' achievement and motivation (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Teachers and others in positions of authority in teaching and learning capacities must receive continued professional development regarding the persistent significance of race, identity, and racism.

For Black males, possessing race and a scholar identity has high salience; they are comfortable being Black boys or men. They seek greater self-understanding as a racial being but are also aware of the importance of adapting to their environment and being bi- or multicultural (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Just as important, they do not equate achievement with acting White or selling out (Ferguson, 2001; Ford, 2010; Fordham, 1988; Fryer, 2006; Whiting, 2006). These young men refuse to be constrained by social injustices based on gender, socioeconomic status, and race or ethnicity.

Masculinity

Masculinity is often a difficult concept to pin down. Broadly, masculinity is recognized as possessing the qualities or characteristics of manliness or of being a man. There are nonetheless myriad ways of being a man and expressing manliness, even though as a culture we tend to accept hegemonic masculinity—tough, hard, domineering, and dominating—as normative. Contemporary representations of and ideas about American Black masculinity tend to lean toward the negative—hypersexual, thug, gangster, violent, abusive, less intelligent athlete, and absent father. Out of whole cloth and against the grain of mainstream culture, Black men, women, and boys have attempted to craft an oppositional narrative of Black masculinity that at times conforms with hegemonic American masculinity, confirms the worst stereotypes of American Black Masculinity, or upends the former narratives.

The role of the SIM in schools is crucial to combatting retrogressive notions about Black masculinity. Studies like Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*:

Children in America's Schools (1992) or *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America* (2006) or *Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America* (2012) reveal how schooling, teachers, administrators, and peer pressure can exacerbate negative self-concepts and destroy academic self-confidence. Using ethnographic accounts, Ann Arnett Ferguson (2001) also presents in *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* the structural rituals that lead to the hardening of young Black boys during their school years that oftentimes contribute to feelings of uselessness and desperation.

But here I counter that Black males with a scholar identity do not equate hard work, the pursuit of high academic ranking, intelligence, and studiousness with being unmanly. Moreover, they do not equate success with selling out or acting White. Rather, being a scholar is taught and celebrated as an integral part of a self-possessed masculinity. Such students do not feel the need to belittle and resist learning opportunities; in fact, students with a scholar identity feel empowered as young *men* in that they are able to access knowledge that will add to their future goals and expectations.

Four Pillars: Home, School, Community, Mentoring

The nine constructs of my SIM must not only be understood as something that happens in one classroom on a Saturday morning or at a two-week summer camp. The SIM must be woven into the fabric of the young scholar's life. The mere comprehension and knowledge of any construct is insufficient for full integration of information. For the constructs to become an integral part of daily life choices, the scholar's ability to apply and analyze what is learned as well as synthesize, evaluate, and ultimately create from that information is at the heart of transferring the theory (Bloom's taxonomy, 1984). Therefore, it is necessary that the four pillars support and encourage the scholar outside the model.

Home is the first place students should receive positive messages about being a scholar. Students from single-parent and two-parent families need to have family training on SIM.

School is where children between the ages of 5 or 6 years old (often earlier) spend a significant portion of their day. If successful, this process goes on for at least 13 years. Therefore, the formative years are crucial; what is learned must be sustained and continue across the grades, especially from elementary into middle school, between middle school and high school, and again between high school and college. Educators need continued professional development. While working with teachers across the country, I have noticed that more than three quarters of those surveyed had not read an

entire book relating to professional development since graduating from their last college class. Many have read brief articles (less than 10 pages), and if funds are available, they have attended half-day or full-day seminars once a year. This type of ad hoc professional development falls woefully short of what should be provided for one of our nation's most valuable resources. The SIM is more than professional development; it shifts into personal development. It empowers teachers, and it can be the answer to knowing how to establish and maintain that special learning relationship with all students.

Community is inclusive of home and school, but SIM defines communities as those spaces between and around the home and the formal school settings. They are the nerve centers that may occupy a significant portion of a student's life, particularly those students who have working or uninformed or uninvolved, or for other reasons, absentee guardians. Community leaders (local youth centers, YMCAs, gyms, sport teams as well as community police) should all be exposed to a much pithier version of the SIM; they should be made aware of the constructs, their definitions, and the basics on how to assist in the affirming qualities of the model.

I can remember my first thoughts when I heard former National Basketball Association Most Valuable Player Charles Barkley state, "I am not a role model." "How silly!" I mused. "Does he not know that a person who is considered a role model seldom if ever chooses to become someone's role model?" I have yet to meet a student who did not have a role model outside the home. In my life I've had three or four, all male, none of them my father. My first was someone I'd never meet: Julius "Dr. J." Erving. He never knew it, but I wanted to be as famous as he was. Dr. J never asked for my attention, but to me it didn't matter. He was a symbol of a strong, well-liked, and all-powerful Black male. With my academic pursuits, my high school track coach filled the void. He was someone I could talk to, watch, and attempt to emulate. Indeed, he recently sent me a picture of himself and a group of students visiting the White House. He is still a role model; he too never asked to take up that mantle. He told me that I had potential before I knew what the word meant, and that has made a difference ever since.

The role model/mentor is critical in the life of young boys. A successful mentor is able to guide, push, and support the young Black male, which is central to success. A mentor's wise and good counsel can last a lifetime.

From Here to Where?

The SIM and the SII were not developed to live on the pages of journals or books. As with all research, they were conceived as a response to a very

real human need. There are numerous next steps, projects in the works, that relate to the model.

In 2012 the Heinz Endowments awarded \$1.5 million to two school districts for training and implementation of the SIM. Although the two school districts are in the same city, the schools have differing needs. One is a public school district developed during the late 1970s and early 1980s, now more than 30 years old. The other is a charter school district less than 10 years old, which has the feeling of a new car. As different as the two districts are, they have several things in common: They both have students who need and can benefit from the SIM, they have teachers and administrators who truly care about children, and they now have the financial support to implement the work. The trick is the transfer of knowledge for self-sustainability as well as the ability to believe that an intrinsic paradigm shift is possible.

Also in 2012, my SIM went international. For two months I worked with hundreds of educators across India, from New Delhi to the Assam Valley to Gujarat. Teachers there are now faced with what America had been forced to confront in 1954. India has joined 135 other countries from the United Nations in the Right to Educate Act of 2010.¹ And as with *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), there is bottlenecking and confusion about how to implement equal schooling for all its citizens. India is the world's largest democracy, but access to schooling is not equal. The SIM is poised to assist administrators and teachers with a modified way of thinking, and the model was modified to address their needs. For example, after brainstorming with several groups of teachers in different parts of the country, the constructs race pride and masculinity evolved into global awareness and gender equity.

Finally, the model was originally intended to work within the nine-month school calendar with an intensive summer training component. The work with the school districts funded by the Heinz Endowments, will provide the opportunity for that implementation. Continued evaluation, assessment, and validation of the SIM and SII are foremost from the research perspective.

Recommendations for Practice

Michelle Alexander and Cornell West (2012), Devah Pager (2009), and William Julius Wilson (2009) are just a few of the researchers who have provided credible evidence regarding the dismal landscape of opportunities made available to America's Black, Brown, and other low-income males, and increasingly to females, without adequate academic credentials. These citizens will encounter far greater difficulty in locating and securing employment in the

nation's workforce. Future employment opportunities are based almost solely on educational attainment; although a young student may be able to name entertainers and athletes who have become successful without completing college. The fact remains that being able to name them attests to their rarified existence. As fortunate and famous or infamous as they are, they are also outliers, anomalies, statistical blips on the radar of life and therefore should not be used as one's life model.

The SIM provides Black males with more holistic, realistic, positive, and motivational ways to think about themselves as well as ways to plan and cope with what life may throw their way.

Things We Can Do Today

As educators, parents, caregivers, coaches, mentors, and administrators, we have a model to assist us in moving the needle in a positive direction. Regardless of race, gender, or pedigree, we adults must first view young Black males through a positive lens. We must ignore the negative stereotypes offered up willy-nilly via mass media. If we can watch *The Three Stooges*, *Dumb and Dumber*, and any and all sundry White males from politicians to policemen behaving badly and not think stereotypically of the young White males sitting in our classrooms, we must apply that same logic to Black men and boys.

Saying we must change our views is the easy part. Doing the work to overcome and replace those historic and corrupt stereotypes dangling over the heads of unsuspecting children sitting in our classrooms will prove understandably more difficult. So it is necessary that we *read more*, have more open and honest *conversations about race and racism* in America, and *practice social action*. Stepping out of our racial, cultural, and class zones is not easy. Every teacher who ever spent one day in a classroom attempting to assist a struggling student whom the teacher believed he or she could not relate to and did not know why understands that stepping out is just the beginning—jumping in is what is needed. We place all these steps under the umbrella of professional development. All who work with students need to continually enhance their cultural competency. We need to seek out effective mentors for students and learn from those mentors. We need to not only attend to personal and professional development but also encourage administrators to be more proactive in seeking out those who can best assist teachers in that development. After all, what we profess to love about this career—helping others, teaching others—demands it. The SIM is but one small step in the right direction.

Note

1. The Constitution (Eighty-Sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a fundamental right in such a manner as the state may, by law, determine. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full-time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school that satisfies certain essential norms and standards.

Article 21-A and the RTE Act came into effect on April 1, 2010. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words “free and compulsory.” Free education means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school that is not supported by the appropriate government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses that may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. Compulsory education casts an obligation on the appropriate government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance, and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6–14 age group. With this, India has moved forward to a rights-based framework that casts a legal obligation on the central and state governments to implement this fundamental child right as enshrined in the Article 21A of the constitution, in accordance with the provisions of the RTE Act.

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