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## THE IMPACT OF RACIAL IDENTITY, MASCULINITY, AND ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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THE IMPACT OF RACIAL IDENTITY, MASCULINITY, AND ACADEMIC SELF-  
CONCEPT ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN  
MALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Education  
at the University of Kentucky

By  
Howard J. Lloyd

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Keisha Love, Associate Professor of Counseling Psychology

Lexington, Kentucky

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### THE IMPACT OF RACIAL IDENTITY, MASCULINITY, AND ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Previous literature has evidenced that young African American males are experiencing less academic success than their Caucasian male and African American female counterparts (Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004; Flores, 2007). The deceleration of achievement in this population has spawned some inquiry into the struggles of African American students. However, investigators have primarily examined differences in sex, school attributes, socioeconomic status, family structure, and other external factors. Previous research has also highlighted the unique obstacles young African American men face in education settings. While researchers have identified several external predictors of academic achievement among African American males, scant information relates to identity factors outside of racial identity that correlate to and help predict academic achievement. The purpose of the current study was to investigate the influence of identity components (racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept) on the academic achievement of young African American male high school students. The data used for this study were archival and obtained from an umbrella project entitled the African American Males in Education Project A.A.M.P.E.D. Participants were recruited from a predominately African American High School located in the Southeastern U.S. There were 156 participants, all of which were African American males between the ages of 13-19. The findings from the current study can be summarized in three key points (a) the independent variables (academic self-concept, racial identity, and masculinity) were each significantly correlated to GPA, (b) the combination of the aforementioned identity factors significantly predicted GPA, and (c) no moderation or mediation effects were present in regards to the relationship between racial identity and GPA. Specifically, the findings suggested that following the control variable of parental education level, masculinity is the largest contributor in predicting GPA. Results also highlighted new findings regarding the unique and changing relationship of young African American males and academic self-concept. The current findings raised crucial questions about the inclusion of this population in research and future study. In conclusion, results from this study support the need for further research using identity factors in reference to the academic outcomes of young African American male students.

**KEYWORDS:** African American, male, identity, academic achievement, intersectionality

Howard Lloyd, M.S.

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Student's Signature

November 25, 2013

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Date

THE IMPACT OF RACIAL IDENTITY, MASCULINITY, AND ACADEMIC SELF-  
CONCEPT ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE  
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## Chapter One: Introduction

African Americans have encountered a myriad of barriers such as institutional inequality and discrimination that have made attaining educational equality and academic success challenging (Benjamin, Henry, & McMahon, 2005). Decades of educational inequity and systematic discrimination have created what is now termed the “achievement gap.” The achievement gap is a phrase used to describe significant differences between African American students and their Caucasian peers in educational outcomes, such as standardized test scores, grade point averages, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment and graduation rates (Flores, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Nettles, Millett, Ready, Ludwig, & Forman, 2003; Saunders, Williams, & Williams, 2004). Rooted in discriminatory laws and policies, evidence of the achievement gap stretch as far back as 1740, a time when educating African Americans was illegal (Roucek, 1964). In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, that African Americans could legally be educated like their Caucasian counterparts, but in “separate but equal” facilities. For decades, African American schools suffered massive inequity in educational resources, such as funding, textbooks, and school buildings that rendered their educational experiences separate and *unequal* (Anderson, 1988; Benjamin et al., 2005; Vaughn, 1974). Despite inequities in access to educational resources and systematic discrimination, African Americans made enormous educational strides between 1896-1954. The literacy rate among African Americans increased substantially from 40% in the 1890’s to 70% by 1910 (Roucek, 1964). Furthermore, advances were made in higher education, such that by the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Historically Black

Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) were established to assist African Americans in the pursuit of higher education (Humphries, 1994).

In 1954, the Supreme Court altered the educational structure of the United States again by desegregating school systems. In the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the high court ruled that "separate but equal" would no longer apply to school systems in the U.S. The ruling asserted that the previous policy of "separate but equal" was unconstitutional and was detrimental to racial and educational equity. Following desegregation African American students experienced a number of positive educational outcomes including increased standardized test scores, high school completion rates, and college enrollment rates from the 1970's to 1990's, which narrowed the achievement gap (Benjamin et al., 2005; Humphries, 1994).

### **Statement of the Problem**

However, since the late 1990's, the rate at which the achievement gap has been narrowing between African American and Caucasian students has slowed (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009; Slavin & Madden, 2006). Currently, the most prominent achievement gaps are between young African American males (YAAM- will be used as an acronym to describe young African American males, specifically those in primary, secondary, and post-secondary education settings) and their Caucasian male counterparts. For instance, young African American men have produced lower grade point averages, graduation rates, standardized test scores, and post-secondary retention rates compared to their African American female counterparts *and* Caucasian peers (Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Coley 2001; Davis, Williams & Williams, 2004; Flores, 2007; Hedges & Nowell, 1999; Saunders & Wilder, 2000).

The deceleration of the narrowing achievement gap has spawned some inquiry into the academic struggles of African American students.

Investigators have primarily examined differences in sex, school attributes, socioeconomic status, and family structure as explanations for the achievement gap. For instance, accumulated research has shown that predominately African American schools have a higher proportion of inexperienced and out of field teachers, which may contribute to a lower quality of instruction and ultimately, lower academic outcomes for many African American students (Cook & Evans, 2000; Mayer, Mullens, & Moore, 2000; Wilkins, 2006). Additionally, research has demonstrated that students from low-income households and households with a higher number of occupants tend to encounter adverse academic outcomes (Marks, 2006; Taylor & Harris, 2003). So, despite increased knowledge about the achievement gap, the literature has yet to provide sufficient explanations for it.

While research on those external factors among young African American males students has generated important information, they have not led to a reacceleration in achievement rates. Thus, novel information and insights may be required to address the decreasing rate of achievement in YAAM populations. One avenue for accessing novel information is examining the internal factors that may contribute to academic difficulties or successes. Research concentrated on the influence of identity components on the academic outcomes of YAAM may be used to deepen the understanding of what is required to address the needs of this population.

## **Limitations of the Current Literature**

Three major limitations were found in the current literature pertaining to academic achievement among African American males, (a) use of majority non-Black samples in research, (b) lack of in-group comparison, and (c) consideration of internal factors. Below is a brief description of how each of these limitations may inhibit current research and how they will be addressed in the current study.

**First limitation.** Although descriptive studies regarding African American males' academic achievement struggles are abundant, the majority of research studies and educational programs designed to improve academic outcomes have used predominately Caucasian samples (Noguera, 2003). Such research has been the foundation of innumerable conceptualizations, interventions, and strategies used to understand the educational needs of student populations. However, due to cultural differences and varying educational experiences between Caucasian and African American students, some of the information gained through majority Caucasian samples may not be applicable to YAAM students. Research has shown that the educational experiences of young African American men diverge from those of Caucasian students in a number of ways. Specific differences between these groups include, but are not limited to, student and teacher perceptions, attitudes towards academics, and other variables (Ferguson, 2003; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Roderick, 2003; Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). Therefore, research findings generalized to African American males without consideration of the differences in educational experiences may be less impactful.

**Second limitation.** Moreover, while differences between African American males and their Caucasian peers have been widely evidenced in educational as well as

psychological literature, within group variation among African American males has not been as thoroughly investigated (Chavous et al., 2008; Eisele, Zand, & Thomason, 2009). Given the status of YAAM in education, the positive gains made and experiences of this population are not often highlighted in literature. Several researchers have shown some young African American men are achieving at high levels (Harper 2005; Payne, 2008). Studies like these show that, although many young African American male students are struggling to achieve, others are exceeding expectations. Due to the focus on comparative research with young African American male students in relation to Caucasian students, young African American women, and other groups, minimal research demonstrates the complexity and diversity of the educational experiences and outcomes of African American male students. Therefore, additional research must be conducted that examines determinants of academic achievement outcomes explicitly with samples of young African American males.

**Third limitation.** Further, of the psychological literature that has focused on identifying determinants of academic achievement among African American males, the majority has focused on external factors such as socioeconomic status, family size, and school quality (Mayer et al., 2000; Taylor & Harris, 2003; Wilkins, 2006). While several external predictors of academic achievement among African American males have been defined in the literature, scant information relates to internal factors outside of racial identity. As such, a focus on identifying additional internal factors seems to be the next logical step.

To this point, researchers have quantitatively examined one internal predictor of academic achievement among young African American men. Racial identity has been



defined as a communal group identity based on an individual's perceptions of shared racial heritage, background, or legacy with a group (Helms, 1990). This communal identity describes shared experiences, customs and values, belief systems, and schemas (Davis & Gandy, 1999). There has been a multitude of research examining the influence of identity on academic outcomes in young African American males concentrates on the sole impact of racial identity (Chavous et al., 2003; Harper & Tuckman 2006). Current research concerning racial identity and achievement outcomes of young African American men have produced varied results. Several studies, for example, have shown a positive relationship between higher racial identity levels and academic achievement with African American students in secondary and post-secondary education settings (Chavous et al., 2003; Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998); others have shown an inverse relationship between these variables (Witherspoon et al., 1997). Still, other research has found no relationship between higher racial identity levels and academic achievement (Awad, 2007), which makes discerning just how racial identity affects African American males' academic achievement difficult.

Researchers have yet to incorporate and consider the simultaneous and intersecting identities of this population, which could be counteracted to develop a more comprehensive understanding of YAAM and their educational experiences. Racial identity has been shown to impact academic achievement among members of this group (Davis, 2006). However, numerous internal factors have not been investigated thoroughly as simultaneous contributors to the academic achievement of young African American men (Cokley & Moore, 2007; Dancy, 2011; Mickelson & Greene, 2006). This is troubling due to foundational psychological and educational research regarding the

importance and impact of self-perception on behavior (Bandura, 2011; Erikson, 1968). This research highlights the connections between the way individuals think and feel about themselves (internal factors) and the resulting actions. Thus, a more comprehensive understanding of academic achievement among YAAM, and the interaction of multiple identity factors must be examined within African American male samples to better explain behaviors and possibly academic outcomes. Therefore, the population must be viewed as more than racial beings; meaning identity variables in addition to racial identity should be explored as potential contributors to academic achievement.

**Addressing limitations.** The current study attempted to address these limitations. To address the first limitation, I examined the outcomes of a student sample composed entirely of African American male high school students. The second limitation was addressed by utilizing the information from the sample to discuss the varied expression of identities within this group of students and how they influence achievement outcomes. The last limitation was addressed by examining the associations and predictive nature of internal variables such as racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept on the academic outcomes of YAAM Students.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

The following chapter will provide an overview of the current context of YAAM in school settings, a review of literature and a discussion of the current study. First, a brief overview of the cultural context of young African American men in educational settings will be provided. The purpose of this discussion is to underscore the current contexts that may influence the attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs of YAAM towards education. Next, previous research will be examined to identify known contributors to academic achievement, and gaps in the literature that may be filled because of the proposed study. Specifically, a review of literature in areas of intersectionality, racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept will be provided. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the current study including research questions and hypotheses.

### **Current Status of Young African American Men**

The experience of racial discrimination, educational and occupational barriers, and judicial inequity are cited in the literature as common contributors to the additive stressors of African American males (Fordwood, Asarnow, Huizar, & Reise, 2007; Leong & Leach 2007). African American men encounter a variety of additive stressors, many of which are associated with belonging to a disadvantaged group (Poussaint & Anderson, 2000). Some researchers have suggested that reactions to these additive stressors may come in the form of exacerbated health issues including somatic symptoms, emotional and mental distress, and negative behavioral outcomes (Watkins, Walker, & Griffith, 2009). Specifically, mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety) may manifest in externalizing behaviors including substance use, truancy, academic problems and

increased suicidal ideation for young African American men (Joe, 2006; Jones, 1997; Lyon et al., 2000; Parham & McDavis, 1987). However, African American men are less likely than other groups to report mental health concerns or utilize mental health services (Abe, Mertz, Powell, & Hanzlick, 2006; Lindsey, Joe, & Nebbitt, 2010).

The confluence of additive stress, lower access to mental health resources, the underutilization of available mental health resources, and systematic discrimination may contribute to adverse physical and behavioral outcomes among young African American men. For instance, African American men have the lowest life expectancy of any racial group (Ornelas, Amell, Tran, Royster, Armstrong-Brown & Eng, 2009). In addition, middle aged and older African American men are disproportionately diagnosed with cancer and heart disease. African American men's health risks are also increasing in reference to sexually transmitted infections (STIs). African American men are significantly more likely than Caucasian and Latino men to contract HIV and in 2010, accounted for 31% of all new HIV infections in the U.S (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

In addition, a number of behavioral outcomes should be of concern to researchers examining the lived experiences of young African American men. Data show that rates of suicide, homicide, and incarceration among YAAM are rising, making the school aged population susceptible to not only adverse educational outcomes, but life circumstances as well. Suicide rates among young African American men are increasing (Joe, Baser, Neighbors, Caldwell & Jackson (2009); Joe & Marcus, 2003). The lower accessibility and utilization of mental health services, as well as the likelihood of being diagnosed with a behavioral or conduct disorder, all serve as barriers for YAAM in need

of psychological services. The combination of these obstacles and additive life stressors may be contributors to the rising suicide rates of this population. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), suicide is the third leading cause of death among African American male youth and emerging adults between the ages of 15-24 years old. Between 1980 and 1995, suicide completion rates among African Americans increased by 114% (Joe & Kaplan 2002).

Data collected by Payne (2008) also showed that YAAM are at greater risk of homicide than any other population. Although African American men consist of 6% of the U.S. population, they account for over 45% of homicide deaths (Boyd & Watson, 2004; Payne, 2008). Previous studies have also found that nearly one-third of African American men have had some involvement with the criminal justice system and were seven times more likely to be imprisoned than men from other racial/ethnic groups to serve time in prison (U.S. Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

The aforementioned life stressors particular to young African American men have far-reaching consequences. In addition to undergoing the traditional developmental transitions of adolescence (e.g., puberty, high school), YAAM are charged with the task of forging healthy racial and gender identities in the face of systemic inequity, prejudice, and discrimination, only compounding the stress of their teenage years. As previously mentioned, many tend to externalize behaviors to express psychological distress. However, since the majority of adolescents' time is spent in school settings, the warning signs of psychological distress may be seen by educators first, who may simply interpret the resulting behaviors as disruptive or disrespectful. In turn, the psychological distress of many YAAM remains invisible for those most in need of mental health services. In

short, the additive stressors on this population are sometimes expressed in a way that can be easily misunderstood, leading to more negative educational consequences instead of an examination of a student's context or psychological support.

### **Unique Educational Experiences of African American Men**

Further, research highlights many of the adverse educational experiences that are unique to young African American men. These unique consequences include unfavorable perceptions, expectations, placements, and punishments for YAAM in various school settings. Several researchers have shown that some educators underestimate the potential of African American males in the classroom, and have lower behavioral, academic, and occupational expectations for young African American men (Hauser-Cram, Sirin, & Stipek, 2003; Roderick, 2003; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Research has also shown that some teachers have varying perceptions of the same behavioral action when displayed by African American and Caucasian students. When African American male students displayed inattention, teachers described the student as being bored and having a low attention span; however, when Caucasian students displayed inattention it was perceived as a cue to recapture the students' interest (Ferguson, 2003). These studies allude to the perceptions and expectations some educators have in regards to African American male student populations and provide evidence of the potential biases and assumptions many YAAM may regularly encounter in school settings.

Czopp, Lasane, Sweigard, Bradshaw, and Hammer (1998) investigated peers' perceptions of students who exhibit cool/hypermasculine behaviors defined by researchers as the presentation of being unemotional, self-confident, and calm under

pressure, in a sample of 176 college students. Researchers created four vignettes, two exemplifying hypermasculine male students, and two describing “typical” male students (i.e., show emotion, anxiety, and some confidence); each style of vignettes was created for both a hypothetical Black and White student. Study participants were given the vignettes and a corresponding survey. Results were analyzed by way of univariate analysis of variance (ANOVAs). Researchers found that the students described in the hypermasculine vignettes were perceived as significantly more socially desirable and masculine than the male students in the control vignette; however, the hypermasculine students were also perceived as significantly less academically capable and interested. Findings from this study did not reveal significant racial differences. Another study by Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, and Bridgest (2003), reinforced Czopp and colleagues’ findings with a sample of teachers but with differences among racial groups. A group of 136 teachers were shown videotapes of cultural movement styles such as “a stroll” typical to many young African American males, and a standard walking movement. Teachers were then asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their perception of the student’s level of aggression, achievement, and need for special education. Teachers perceived African American male students who demonstrated a “stroll” as being in greater need of special education. Educators also perceived African American students with a “stroll” to be lower in academic achievement than a student displaying a standard movement style (Neal et al., 2003). To this end, the assumptions and biases of educators may also contribute to a number of adverse educational outcomes evident in this population.

In fact, YAAM are disproportionately suspended for minor misbehaviors and similar infractions compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003). YAAM are suspended from school at a higher rate than any other ethnic groups (Epstein, March, Conners, & Jackson, 1998; Martinez, 2009). Furthermore, African American males are overrepresented in special education programs, limiting their opportunities for achievement in academic settings. Artiles, Harry, Reschly, and Chinn (2002) investigated the overrepresentation of African American males in special education programs around the United States. Artiles and colleagues contend that since the late 1970's adequate changes have not been made to the special education system. As a result, African American students are disproportionately placed in special education classes, at a ratio of five times as high as Asian students and twice as high as Caucasian students (Artiles et al., 2002). Therefore, when African American males enter the school system they encounter a greater likelihood of being placed in classrooms with a slower learning pace, covering less material, and ultimately making less academic progress over the course of a full school year (Artiles et al., 2002). Conversely, Grantham (2004) found that African American males were underrepresented in talented and gifted programs (TAG). He found that this incongruity may be related to the academic achievement gap previously detailed. Grantham also found that many students choose not to participate in (TAG) programs, thus stagnating the number of African American males represented in these programs.

A byproduct of these experiences and perhaps a precursor to the educational struggles YAAM experience may be their relationship with academic environments. Some studies indicate that YAAM are less likely to identify with academics, meaning,



the belief in one's academic ability or skill is not significantly affected by academic performance (Cokley, McClain, & Jones, 2011; Osborne 1997; Steele, 1997). For example, a student may believe that his or her academic abilities are above average although he or she has a below average GPA. Research has shown that YAAM experience this phenomenon, specifically a non-significant relationship between academic self-concept and grade point average at a higher rate than any other racial or gender group (Cokley, 2002; Demo & Parker, 1987). Moreover, the higher prevalence does not bode well for YAAM because previous research indicates the more students identify with academics, the higher the likelihood for favorable academic outcomes (Osborne & Rausch, 2001; Thompson & Gregory, 2011).

The consequence of these experiences may be the slowing rate of academic achievement in this group. For example, numerous studies have demonstrated scoring gaps in standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) where African American students tend to score lower than Caucasian students (Flores, 2007; Jencks, 1980; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Slavin & Madden, 2006). As of 2006, an estimated 91% of African American and 87% of Latino students were not considered proficient in mathematics. However, only 63% of Caucasian and 53% of Asian American students were considered not proficient in mathematics in 2006 (Flores, 2007). Similarly, Strutchens, Lubienski, McGraw, and Westbrook (2004) found that on a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics assessment, African Americans' scores averaged 72% of their Caucasian counterparts. Additionally, African American students averaged only 32% of the scores of Caucasian students when required to answer items with extended constructed response tasks.

Given the stressors experienced by YAAM, identifying approaches that foster more positive academic outcomes is crucial. However, to do so effectively, educators and mental health professionals must come to a more complete understanding of the factors that may impact the academic outcomes of young African American males.

### **Frequently Studied Correlates of Academic Achievement**

A number of variables have been shown and theorized to be associated with academic achievement in this population; the following section will focus on the most commonly studied areas. Previous research investigating differences in achievement with African American students has often focused on three areas (a) genetic factors, (b) socioeconomic and family structures, and (c) school attributes (Armor, 1992; Cook & Evans, 2000; Flores, 2007; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969; Ogbu, 1990; Roderick, 2003; Strutchens et al., 2004; Taylor & Harris, 2003).

**Genetics and heritability.** Researchers and academicians from a cross section of fields over several years have debated the genetic bases of intelligence and its impact across racial groups (Guthrie, 2004; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jencks, 1980; Jensen, 1969). Claims of intellectual inferiority among African Americans were present in studies that inaccurately manufactured flawed results and reasoning that evidenced large gaps in cognitive functioning and brain development (Burmeister, 1853; Garrett, 1973; Guthrie, 2004; Jensen, 1969; Mayo, 1913).

Jensen (1969) offered the most noted claim of genetic heredity as the explanation for achievement discrepancies. Jensen gathered data from various intelligence tests given to both African American and Caucasian populations and investigated correlations

between Intelligence Quotient (IQ) scores, varying amounts of genes and environmental factors to estimate the heritability of IQ. He asserted that IQ was approximately 80% gene dependent and 20% derived from environmental influences. Jensen's research has since been discounted as many have challenged his explanations of the achievement gap due to statistical inaccuracies, poor methodology, and weak theoretical foundations (Crane, 1994; Guthrie 2004; Jencks, 1980). In *The Bell Curve*, authors Herrnstein and Murray (1994) argue that a large proportion of cognitive ability is derived from an individual's genetic makeup. The authors concluded that the struggles of disadvantaged groups in terms of cognitive ability, achievement gaps, class differences, occupational status, and other variables could be partially explained by the genetic heritability of cognitive ability. Similar to their predecessor, Herrnstein and Murray's explanations have faced great scrutiny. Researchers and academicians criticize *The Bell Curve* for selectively attending to data in order to frame their argument (Gould, 1996). Several researchers have disparaged the findings and explanations derived from the authors due to their disregard for the wide-range of environmental factors that have been shown to impact achievement for different groups (Devlin, Fienberg, Resnick, & Roeder, 1997). However, the possible impact of genetic differences on achievement gaps between Caucasian students and students of color has continued to be debated.

**Socioeconomic status.** The consideration of socioeconomic status (SES) as a contributor to academic achievement began in the era of Binet and Simon (1911), when they and other researchers explained differences in intelligence test scores by referring to the effects of social class on individuals. Since then, researchers have a more nuanced understanding of socioeconomic status and have found a number of proximal measures to

assess the socioeconomic status of younger students, including number of books in the home, level of parental education, and enrollment in government assistance programs (e.g., Women, Infants, and Children Program, W.I.C.).

Taylor and Harris (2003) provided contemporary evidence of the association between socioeconomic standing and achievement when test results from a group of 7,793 students. The sample was composed of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Savannah-Chattam County Public School System (SCCPSS). African American and Caucasian achievement scores were correlated with factors related to socioeconomic status (e.g., percentage of Black student enrollment, percent eligible for free lunch, percent of White student enrollment). Results indicated negative correlations between African American students' achievement scores and percentage eligible for free lunch as well as African American student enrollment. Another study comparing cognitive assessment results of 483 African American and Caucasian students yielded results comparable to earlier findings. African American students given a battery of intelligence tests (The Weschler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence and Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale) scored more than 1.0 standard deviations below the mean of their Caucasian counterparts. However, when researchers controlled for family and neighborhood poverty measures, the achievement discrepancy was lessened by just over 50%. Researchers also found that 36% of African American children were estimated to live in families considered under the poverty line, in comparison with only 12% of Caucasian children (Wight, Chau & Aratani, 2011). The aforementioned studies support the assertion that lower socioeconomic status is related to lower grades and parental education levels (Armor, 1992; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000).

Findings related to SES and academic achievement are important because research has shown that African American students are more likely to live in families and neighborhoods where residents' yearly income is below the poverty (Biblarz & Raferty, 1999; Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, & Duncan, 1996; Hoschild, 2003). A review of the literature also evidenced that the relationship between standardized test scores and family income were more pronounced in African American samples (Nettles et al., 2003). Students from African American households with a yearly income of \$10,000 or less scored an average of 130 points lower on the SAT than students who lived in homes where the yearly family income was at least \$100,000. The same research shows that an identical economic disparity only results in a 50-point test score discrepancy among Caucasian students (Nettles et al., 2003). Although the pattern of positive correlations between achievement and socioeconomic status generally mirror that of other ethnic groups, African American students seem to be more negatively impacted by occupying lower economic status.

**Family structure.** In addition to findings regarding socioeconomic status, previous literature has also shown associations between family structure and academic achievement. Researchers have found connections between certain family structures and lower achievement outcomes for students of all backgrounds. For instance, data show an inverse relationship between number of siblings in the household and achievement on standardized tests. Results from several studies indicate the likelihood of educational attainment decreases as the size of one's household increases (Blake, 1989; Marks, 2006; Powell & Parcel, 1999). Students from single parent, stepparent, and divorced families have lower achievement outcomes when compared to students from two parent and intact

families (Amato, 2000; Biblarz & Raferty, 1999). These findings are of interest because African Americans are more likely than other student populations to be raised in single parent homes or homes that have been impacted by divorce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). African Americans also have higher average persons per household than the national average. Caucasian households have an average of 2.48 person per home, African Americans average 2.75 persons, and the national average holds at 2.58 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Studies highlight a number of factors that have impacted the persistent gap in achievement between African American and Caucasian students. Research findings suggest at the current rate, gaps related to reading achievement may take 30 to 50 years to close, and gaps related to mathematics and science achievement may take 75 to 100 years to close (Hedges & Nowell, 1999).

**School attributes.** Further inquiry has also revealed the impact of school attributes on the academic achievement of African American students. School attributes usually include, but are not limited to, teacher experience, class availability, classroom size, and number of students below poverty level. Data have shown African American students are less likely to be instructed by experienced and qualified teachers. Several studies have illustrated the disparities in quality educators and resources for students attending predominately African American schools (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009; Mayer et al., 2000; Wilkins, 2006). Cook and Evans (2000) measured school quality by investigating changes to the composition, racial makeup, and community type of predominately African American schools. Authors found an overall decline in school quality in schools primarily attended by African American students in urban areas. Data

showed that students who attended predominately African American or Latino schools were twice as likely as those attending predominately Caucasian schools to have teachers with three or less years of teaching experience. Analyses also showed that students who attended schools in districts where the majority of residents were below the poverty level were also more likely to have inexperienced teachers (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009; Wilkins, 2006). Further study has illustrated that children attending predominately minority schools in urban areas are more likely to have teachers without certification in particular subject areas, larger schools, and larger classroom sizes, all of which have been linked to deleterious achievement (Hoschild, 2003).

The aforementioned school characteristics have been linked to poor academic outcomes among African American students in particular. Nettles et al. (2003) conducted a study using data from 878,695 high school students, which included a sample of 87,795 African Americans who completed the SAT. Nettles and colleagues corroborated earlier research that found African American students scored near one standard deviation below their White counterparts. However, increases in test scores were present for African American students with greater access and higher enrollment in advanced coursework. Overall, a smaller discrepancy between the scores of African American and Caucasian students was present when curriculum and instruction were comparable. Nettles and colleagues highlighted the fact that students in predominately African American school settings had less access to advanced coursework than students in predominately White school settings, thus making them more susceptible to lower academic outcomes. Similar results were found in a study conducted using achievement data from 1965 through 1992. Hedges and Nowell (1998) also found that in a nationally representative sample of

160,000 students, African American students' standardized test scores were about one standard deviation below those of Caucasian students. The authors also revealed the discrepancy in achievement between African American and Caucasian students was greater at higher levels of achievement and indicative of differences in school and teacher quality.

### **Summary of Frequently Studied Correlates**

The aforementioned research clearly indicates a number of factors related to the academic performance of young African American men. The multitudes of research analyses aimed at identifying the most important factors in the achievement gap have underscored the complexity present in this issue. The partial contribution of the previously mentioned correlates leave an opportunity for further study to expand the scope of thoroughly investigated variables. Therefore, in continued studies with YAAM in education including variables far extending the reach of current literature is imperative. In addition to examining the unique educational contexts of this population, future researchers should also investigate the influence of various internal factors that may precede differential academic outcomes. To advance literature concerning young YAAM in academics, research must also utilize theoretical positions that consider the importance of intersecting identities and their impact.

### **Intersectionality as a Theoretical Framework**

Research that examines one aspect of identity may overlook the social, cultural, and systemic consequences of intersecting selves. Many have highlighted the need for burgeoning researchers to become more purposeful in the inclusion of multiple identities and their intersections in future study (Noguera, 2003; Pastrana, 2004; Steward &



McDermott, 2004). Reid (2002) suggested that gender and other intersections should be recognized in every facet of psychological research and practice. Reid also asserted that the scarcity of research including multiple identities has contributed to a gap in psychological literature, which has contributed to some academicians and clinicians being uninformed about the impact of intersecting identities and their affects on individuals. Accordingly, further research with young African American men should utilize a theoretical framework that recognizes the salience of multiple identities.

Seminal literature in the field gives credence to the importance of including identity in research, theory and practice (Bandura, 1986; Erikson, 1968). Specifically, social cognitive theory posits human behavior and learning is in part based upon knowledge acquired from observing, experiencing, and interacting with the world (Bandura, 1986). Moreover, this idea allows individuals to create a cognitive framework for how to operate in the world. Therefore if YAAM students may be developing beliefs about self, and self in reference to educational environments that will in turn influence choices and behaviors. Thus in order to better serve these students it is imperative research taps into those internal workings. From a developmental standpoint, Erickson (1968) highlights the various phases of psychosocial development during which individuals come to know and understand themselves. During adolescence (13-19 years of age), young people are most likely to encounter identity v. role confusion, simply a time where adolescents attempt to resolve the questions, “Who am I and who do I want to be?” (Erickson, 1968). At this time, the internal struggle of forming a more stable identity manifests in various behavioral outcomes. For YAAM students and other groups, processes such as establishing boundaries or exploring gender identities may be

expressed differently given cultural and societal expectations and norms. However, the culmination of these processes is often expressed behaviorally although shifts in ideas, thoughts, or perspectives may be present preceding those behaviors. Therefore, research aimed to better understand a population and possible antecedents to behavioral outcomes may consider utilizing measures and theoretical frameworks that access individual identity factors.

One such framework is *Intersectionality*, which considers the reciprocal and cyclic relationships of differing identity components. Steinbugler, Press, and Dias (2006) stated that the underlying assumption of intersectionality is that class, gender, race, and sexuality, among others, are categories that are permanently and indissolubly linked to one another. These authors' proposed five tenants of intersectionality: (a) race, gender, class, and sexuality are inextricably linked, (b) intersections of these identities result in unique individual experiences, (c) intersections generate both opportunity and oppression, (d) individuals simultaneously experience advantage and disadvantage due to their various social locations, and (e) these identities intersect on social, personal, and structural levels. Therefore, an intersectionality framework suggests that the multitude of individual identities a person holds all have an impact on the individual's perspectives, experiences, and outcomes.

Considering the inherent identity intersections of young African American men, the utilization of an intersectionality framework lends itself to a more deliberate evaluation of identities such as gender and race and their impact on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of this population. Specifically, for young African American men, an intersectionality framework has the potential to yield noteworthy findings by examining

the complexities of persons who strongly identify with multiple identities (Pastrana, 2004). Identifying as young, African American, and male would be seen as assets in this model, leading to a greater depth of knowledge about this population. Thus, intersectionality as described by Steinbugler et al. (2006) was used in this study as theoretical support for examining multiple identity variables in relation to academic achievement among young African American men. The following sections will highlight the relevance of racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept in the lives of young African American men and their impacts on academic achievement.

### **Racial Identity**

A crucial aspect of identity development among young African American men is racial identity. Throughout psychological literature, racial identity development has been used to describe the individual processes through which people from different racial groups come to understand, integrate, and experience race as a part of their identities. Racial identity is defined as a communal or group identity based on an individual's perceptions of shared racial heritage, background or legacy with a particular racial group (Helms, 1990). Therefore, research on racial identity development (RID) with African Americans is used to examine individuals' understanding and experiences related to identifying as African American. The following sections will briefly describe three racial identity models and the study of racial identity in relation to the academic achievement of YAAM.

### **Racial Identity Development Models**

In the last four decades, several researchers have put forth several models of racial identity development; however, only a few are prevalent in racial identity research.

Therefore, a brief overview of the three most notable RID models is presented. The source of racial identity development research in African American populations can be linked to Cross (1971) and the creation of a developmental model describing the process of racial identity formation.

In 1971, the first African American racial identity development model and seminal work of Dr. William Cross was published. Perhaps the most noted RID model, the Nigrescence Model (Cross, 1971, 1995) examined how African Americans develop a sense of racial identity. Cross proposed a five-stage model explaining the process African Americans navigate to reach a healthy racial identity. These five stages highlighted self-perceptions of race and their consequence on thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The structure of the racial identity model espoused in the early 1970s has undergone some revisions since its introduction (Pope-Davis, Liu, Ledesma-Jones, & Nevitt, 2000). Cross (1995) made revisions to the model by reducing the number of stages from five to four: (a) Pre-Encounter, (b) Encounter, (c) Immersion-Emersion, and (d) Internalization.

The first stage, Pre-Encounter is the phase in which individuals idealize mainstream cultures values, customs and simultaneously belittle their own. In the second stage, Encounter, individuals experiences an event that directly challenge their previous thinking about racial norms causing, unsettling and often negative emotions and recognition of an inaccurate worldview. In Immersion-Emersion, the third stage, two distinct processes take place. Here, individuals immerse themselves in activities that are highly identified with Black culture (e.g., clothing styles, hair, dialect, symbols of racial identification or pride) and endorse anti-white attitudes (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley,

Cross, & Worrell, 2001). In the final stage, Internalization, African Americans show a deep sense of self-acceptance, black pride, and security regarding their place in society as well as in the black community.

Similarly, Helms (1990, 1995) proposed a process of racial identity development for both African American and Caucasian individuals. Helm's representation of identity development in persons of color closely reflects the stages present in Cross' *Nigrescence Model*. Her elaboration on the stages of (a) conformity, (b) dissonance, (c) immersion/emersion, and (d) internalization follow a similar trajectory of Cross' (1971, 1995) model from pre-encounter through internalization statuses in the aforementioned model. Helms' addition to the model of RID among persons of color is found in her fifth stage, Integrative Awareness. In this stage, not only have individuals internalized the positive aspects of their racial identity, but have also begun to collaborate with members of other oppressed groups as well as the majority group to eradicate social injustices and systematic oppression.

Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998) introduced the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). The basis of the model was to underscore the individual importance of self-identification and meaning of race for African Americans. Sellers et al., identify several assumptions of the MMRI (a) identities are both stable and contextually influenced; (b) racial identity constitutes one of several identities within individuals' self-concepts; (c) no inherent value is assigned to the endorsement of a particular racial identity; and (d) MMRI is concerned with the status of individuals' racial identities at a given point, it is not concerned with the stage of

individuals' racial identity development. The aforementioned tenants of MMRI gave rise to the four dimensions of the model racial: *salience*, *centrality*, *regard*, and *ideology*.

The first dimension, salience describes the perceived relevance of race as a part of an individual's self-concept in a particular moment or situation. Dimension two, centrality, refers to the degree to which an individual defines him or herself in relation to race. Racial centrality, unlike racial salience is thought to be stable over time and consistent across context. The third dimension, regard, describes positive or negative feelings associated with identifying as African American. Regard is separated into two categories, public and private. Public regard examines an individual's perception of how others view African Americans; while private regard is meant to examine individuals' own views of African Americans. Lastly, ideology refers to an individual's belief about how African Americans should act, which include four ideological philosophies: (a) nationalist, (b) oppressed minority, (c) assimilationist, and (d) humanist. Each of the ideological philosophies relate to a particular set of beliefs and attitudes regarding how African Americans should operate in the world around them (Sellers et al., 1998). The nationalist ideology highlights the independence and distinctiveness of the Black experiences, desiring little input and influence from majority culture. The assimilationist ideology is about connecting similarities between the Black experience and that of mainstream American society. Often times these philosophies can be thought of ends to the ideology continuum. Both the oppressed minority and humanist ideology highlight similarities between groups. An individual with an oppressed minority ideology seeks to connect with or be attuned to the similarities between Black and other minority group

experiences, while those with a humanist ideology attempt to integrate the similarities of people from any culture or society into the way they interact with the world around them.

The three described racial identity models have been consistently used in research to explain how African Americans form a sense of racial identity (Rodgers, 2008). Although each model serves a similar purpose, the lens through which identity development is viewed varies. However, the MMRI's emphasis on the centrality, salience, regard, and ideology components of racial identity lends itself to an investigation of young African American male high school students at a developmental level in which all of these dimensions are forming. Additionally, the MMRI acknowledges the importance of intersectionality in its tenants by describing an awareness of racial identity as part of multiple and interacting identities a person may occupy. The MMRI also serves as a non-evaluative elucidation of racial identity development by discussing development in terms of ideologies and dimensions instead of statuses and stages. Due to these differences, MMRI was determined to be a better fit for the aims of the current study.

The creation of RID models has also allowed academicians to further examine the impact of racial identity on other aspects of African American life. Thus, several researchers have examined racial identity in relation to the academic outcomes of African American students, including young men. For the purposes of this paper, several of those studies will be examined.

### **Racial Identity and Academic Achievement**

Several studies have examined the impact of racial identity on academic achievement; however, findings on the topic remain murky. Numerous studies have

shown a positive relationship between higher racial identity levels and academic achievement (Chavous et al., 2003; Sellers, Chavous, and Cooke, 1998); others have shown an inverse relationship between these variables (Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Witherspoon et al., 1997), and yet other researchers have found a minimal relationship between higher racial identity levels and academic achievement (e.g., Awad, 2007). Thus, there are opposing viewpoints concerning the function of racial identity in the academic achievement of young African American students. The assorted findings leave uncertainty about how exactly racial identity impacts academic achievement among African American students, and whether it truly is one of the biggest internal predictors of academic achievement among YAAM.

As well as mixed results regarding the impact of racial identity on academic achievement, the language used to describe findings can seem unclear. For example, many researchers have used terms such as “high/low” to describe a racial identity status or level of importance to an individual. A variety of studies, using a number of scales and subscales have used high and low as a means of describing findings. Throughout the following discussion of previous literature, the term “high racial identity” is meant to signify those who have scored higher on various racial identity scales, while “low racial identity” is meant to signify those who have scored lower on these measures. The terms are not meant to describe a hierarchical value system of racial identity. The subsequent sections will provide more specific details regarding previous findings.

**Positive impact of racial identity.** One perspective is that highly identifying as African American may serve as an impetus for academic achievement (Roderick, 2003). Several authors have discussed the affirmative effects of positive racial identification in



academic settings (Bergin & Cooks 2002; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). Some suggest that higher racial identification for African American students may help them feel more connected to their community and culture (Ford & Harris, 1997). Additional research shows that elevated racial identity and strong minority ideologies may help to buffer African American students from adverse psychological effects of racism and discrimination, and may contribute to better school performance (Sellers et al., 1998). In fact, a qualitative study of YAAM students found that academically gifted students endorsed the importance of their African American identity and connectedness to it, as an essential component of their educational success (Graham & Anderson, 2008).

In Sellers et al. (1998), researchers used racial centrality and racial ideology subscales as measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) to investigate the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement as measured by GPA in a college student sample. Data were collected from 248 undergraduate students at one historically Black university (HBCU) and one predominantly White university (PWI) both located in the Mid-Atlantic United States. Multiple regression analyses showed that racial centrality and ideology were significantly associated with students' GPA. Specifically, analyses determined that higher levels of racial centrality were positively associated with higher GPAs, but those with higher levels of racial centrality who endorsed assimilationist attitudes had lower GPAs.

Chavous et al. (2003) investigated the impact of racial identity on academic outcomes among 606 African American high school students attending majority African American high schools in the Midwestern United States. The sample consisted of 287

males and 319 females. Data were collected from the same participants once in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the other in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The measures included in the survey consisted of an educational beliefs packet, Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI), and school outcomes data obtained by researchers. Researchers categorized participants into groups as determined by their MIBI scores. Four group clusters were created (a) buffering/defensive were individuals who endorsed items related to high centrality and private regard, but lower public regard; (b) low connectedness/high affinity were individuals with low race centrality, low public regard, and high private regard; (c) idealized were individuals with high centrality, public and private regard; and (d) alienated individuals were those who endorsed low levels of centrality, public and private regard. MANOVA analyses performed with these groups showed that students in the buffer/defensive group identified as having endorsed higher racial centrality, group identification, and positive feelings toward their racial identity had better academic outcomes. The positive academic outcomes included lower drop out rates, higher rates of post high school attainment, and better grades. Individuals who were identified as alienated and endorsed feelings of disconnectedness and negative personal and societal attitudes towards African Americans scored lower than the average on all academic outcome related variables.

In addition to these studies several researchers have illustrated the positive impact of racial identity on a number of academic outcomes related to achievement. Chapman and Cokley (2008) found similar results in their study of 274 African American students from a historically Black college in Texas. Path analyses showed that students with more positive racial identity attitudes were positively correlated to academic self-concept and

negatively correlated to devaluing academics both of which have been found to be consistent predictors of academic achievement (Cokley, 2002; Gerardi, 1990; Lent, Brown, & Gore 1997). Research also supports qualitative findings regarding the impact of positive racial identity on the academic attainment of YAAM students. Roderick (2003) used longitudinal data gathered from 15 YAAM attending a Chicago high school to gain insight regarding the experiences of this population in educational settings. Findings from the qualitative interviews showed that resilient and high achieving students discussed their racial identity in an affirmative manner, often associating it with their motivation and determination to succeed academically.

Some evidence supports the argument that positive racial identity is associated with academic achievement among young African American students. Prior studies demonstrate that racial identity may in fact provide valuable information about YAAM students and their academic achievement.

**Adverse impact of racial identity.** However, some researchers have endorsed an alternative perspective that asserts identifying as African American may negatively impact students ability to achieve (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Steele, 1992; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Several articles completed by Ogbu (1987), Fordham (1985, 1988) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986) serve as the most prominent examples of the *oppositional* perspective. The oppositional perspective maintains that African American students relate academic attainment to Whiteness and is therefore, in direct contradiction with their connectedness or identification with the African American community (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Ogbu (1987) contends that the accumulation of history and sociocultural contexts have contributed to a fundamental difference in the way African Americans and

other minority groups have responded to discrimination within academic settings. He explained that students from voluntary minority groups (members of racial or ethnic groups who chose to enter the U.S. of their own will) view education and academic achievement as an avenue for upward mobility, one example of this group would be southern Florida's large Cuban immigrant population. This group (voluntary minorities) believes that academic success will reap the same benefits for them as it has for the majority culture. However, individuals from involuntary minority groups (members of racial or ethnic groups who did not chose to enter the U.S. of their own will) tend to view educational attainment and its rewards as disproportionately beneficial to members of the majority culture. Members of involuntary minority groups, by way of systematic racism and discrimination, have experienced a history of injustice and inequity, regardless of achievement. Therefore, many identifying as members of an involuntary minority group have developed alternative feelings toward the benefits and meaning of educational attainment. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) described these feelings and behaviors as a rejection of things associated with the dominant culture. In this work, authors concluded that, for some African American youths academic achievements, school involvement, and other correlates of academic success are linked to whiteness. Consequently, African American students have developed attitudes and behavioral patterns that lead to underachievement in academics, due in part to an oppositional stance of Whiteness.

Specifically, Fordham (1988) analyzed qualitative data obtained from six high achieving African American students attending a high school in Washington, DC. Fordham's findings show that this particular group of students felt that academic achievement was accompanied by unwanted criticism and ridicule. As a result of this

unwanted attention, several students reported purposefully underachieving to avoid the negative effects of high achievement. Participants in the study also discussed their perceptions that, in order to be successful in academics, they must separate themselves from what they perceived as typical black culture, attitudes, and behaviors. Although conducted in the 1980's, Fordham's study results have been supported by other research inquiries. Witherspoon et al. (1997) used data collected from 86 African American high school students in the Midwestern United States to investigate the influence of various racial identity attitudes on self-esteem, academic self-concept, and grade point average. The cross sectional study included male ( $N = 30$ ) and female ( $N = 56$ ) students ranging in ages from 12 to 18 years old. Participants of the study were required to have a 2.0 GPA or higher and be a first generation college student upon graduation from high school or a member of a low-income family. Witherspoon and colleagues used the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS), Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS) and student GPA's to address the primary research questions. Results of multiple regression analyses showed that the strongest predictors of GPA were Immersion attitudes and academic self-concept, which accounted for 27% of the variance in GPA. Results also showed a significant inverse relationship between Immersion attitudes and GPA, as Immersion attitudes increase; GPA decreased. Also important is evidence that young African American men were significantly more likely to have a lower GPA and endorse Immersion attitudes than were female students. The findings support previous studies that suggest some YAAM underachieve in part because of the perceived relation to Whiteness.

Harper and Tuckman (2006) conducted a study in which racial identity clusters from the MIBI were used to examine the influence of racial identity on the academic outcomes of African American students. Researchers sought to address whether similar racial identity clusters would emerge among this group of students and whether those clusters were related to achievement. Harper and Tuckman obtained data from 289 participants ( $N = 131$  male) from three public high schools in a large, urban, Midwestern school district. Participants ranged from 14 to 18 years of age and classified as either freshman or senior students. After MIBI scores were obtained, participants were placed in one of four groups (idealized, buffering/defensive, alienated, low connectedness/high affinity), each group representative of a racial identity cluster. The idealized cluster was characterized by high levels of racial centrality and both public and private regard; buffering/defensive cluster was formed by those with high levels of racial centrality and private regard, but lower levels of public regard; the low connectedness/high affinity cluster were participants that showed low levels of racial centrality and public regard, but high private regard; the alienated cluster was composed of those with low levels of racial centrality, public, and private regard. When the clustering was complete, a 2 x 2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the racial identity and GPA. Results from the study indicated that alienated students had significantly higher GPA than those students identified as idealized. Although these findings evidence the significance of the impact of racial identity on academic achievement, the findings contradict previous research regarding the way in which its impact is made. The results of this study suggest that YAAM students who do not place importance on identifying as African American,

nor endorse positive attitudes about African Americans, tend to achieve at a significantly higher level than their peers.

**Insignificant impact of racial identity.** In addition to evidence that racial identity may positively or negatively impact achievement, researchers also contend racial identity is not an important factor in academic outcomes for African American students. Awad (2007) also investigated the extent to which racial identity, Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS), and self-esteem predict academic outcomes as measured by GPA and Graduate Record Examination (GRE scores). Awad used data from 313 African American college students, of the 313 total participants; GPA data were obtained from 168 students, information regarding the sex of participants in the GPA sample was not available. Participants represented various class year ranks from freshman to senior, and an age range of 17 to 47 ( $M = 19.3$ ) years old. Awad used the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSEC), Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS) and GPA to measure the constructs. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses indicated that the only significant factor in GPA was academic self-concept. Thus, none of the racial identity components examined were able to significantly predict or evidence GPA.

African American adolescents also seem to be impacted differently by societal cues regarding intersections of their gender and race. In a study sample of 274 African American participants, Cokley and Moore (2007) discovered differences in academic achievement for male and female students. They reported that young men's racial centrality was negatively related to academic achievement, while young women's racial centrality was positively related to academic achievement. A possible explanation for this finding is that young men strongly identifying with their racial and ethnic makeup are

also influenced by disproportionately negative portrayals specific to African American men as generally unproductive members of society (Diemer, 2002; Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Jamison, 2006; Ward 2005). These results may signal that the most pervasive and unflattering images of this population adversely impact the academic achievement of those who strongly identify as both African American and male. Further, contradictory findings such as these extend the need to investigate other identity variables in conjunction with racial identity, which may help advance the literature concerning academic achievement among young African American men.

### **Masculinity**

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple identity factors that may have a significant influence on the academic achievement of young African American men, examination of what being African American *and* male means must be included. Thus, a discussion regarding the influence of masculinity on both the identity of YAAM and their academic outcomes will be discussed.

First, clarifying differences between commonly used terms such as masculinity, gender identity, and sex is necessary. Sex is defined by the anatomical differences between men, women, and intersex individuals (Unger, 1979). Unlike sex characteristics, which are attributed to the anatomy of an individual, researchers have defined gender as complex, socially constructed labels that include connectedness, satisfaction, conformity, and membership to a group founded on sex-based societal norms (Egan & Perry, 2001). In essence, the term is used to describe an individual's beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes in association with being male or female (Worell & Remer, 2003). According to Stewart and McDermott (2004), these beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes have been traditionally



classified as masculine or feminine, depending on their adherence to socially constructed norms for men and women. Therefore, masculinity can be defined as the expression of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors most commonly associated with men (Brod & Kaufman, 1994; Davis, 2005). Thus, study of men's gender identity or maleness is often framed through the construct of masculinity. Research on masculinity has yielded valuable information regarding the behaviors and attitudes most closely related with identifying as a male.

A number of studies have examined the construct of masculinity (Bem, 1974; Cheesbro & Fuse, 2001; Kohlberg, 1966; Mahalik et al., 2003). One of the most researched forms is Hegemonic masculinity emphasizes the display of maleness through antifemininity, power and success, control, aggression, and emotional invulnerability (Connell, 2005). Brannon (1976, 2008) discussed four tenets of hegemonic masculinity: (a) *No Sissy Stuff*, (b) *The Big Wheel*, (c) *Give 'Em Hell*, and (d) *The Sturdy Oak*. *No Sissy Stuff* alludes to the ideal masculine male's rejection of femininity. Both *The Big Wheel* and *Give 'em Hell* give credence to the perception that to be masculine, one must wield power, aggression, and toughness. Lastly, *The Sturdy Oak* posits the necessity for masculine men to possess emotional strength and invulnerability. Research in this arena suggests that emotional restriction, power, aggression, and rejection of femininity are the cornerstones by which masculinity are most commonly defined in our current societal context (Doyle, 1989; Jamison, 2006). These four elements highlight many of the most accepted and evidenced attitudes and behaviors associated with being male. In contemporary American society, the tenets of hegemonic masculinity dominate both social and cultural mediums, especially those representing African American men

(Jamison, 2006). Due to the prevalence of hegemonic masculinity, YAAM developing gender identities learn to display masculinity by performing in accordance with the most accessible behaviors and attitudes associated with maleness. Therefore, understanding the unique context in which YAAM perceive and exhibit masculinity is needed in order to gain insight about its impact on various social, psychological, and educational outcomes.

### **Masculinity Among African American Men**

The socially constructed norms for masculinity have been discussed throughout psychological research and reflected in contemporary culture. However, these views may not reflect the attitudes, behaviors and experiences of diverse groups because much of the research and literature concerning masculinity has primarily focused on heterosexual, middle-class, Euro-American men (Diemer, 2002). Therefore, the experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of YAAM may not be thoroughly represented in masculinity research.

African American men have a unique background that requires the recognition of history, race, culture, and societal influences in the development of masculinity. Several authors have discussed ways in which the experiences of this group diverge from other racial and ethnic groups (Mahalik et al., 2003; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). Due to the establishment of masculine norms by a predominantly White culture, the difficulty of African American men to reach these standards is often overlooked. Many encounter numerous instances that make consistently displaying the traditional tenets of masculinity (e.g., control, power, aggression, success, and emotional invulnerability) difficult. Young African American males face police brutality, racial profiling, and other discriminatory acts, as well as, assumptions regarding their appearance, ability, and other traits (Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Hunter & Davis, 1994). Common portrayals of this

population reinforce ideas that African American men are poor, uneducated, and materialistic (Diemer, 2002; Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Jamison, 2006; Ward, 2005). African American men have continuously endured systematic and societal oppressions that invalidate their “manhood” and make the Euro-American standard of masculinity almost unattainable for this group. Given the combination of aforementioned factors, believing that young African American men may not experience or express masculinity in the same way as other racial or ethnic groups is reasonable.

Some authors contend that due to racial discrimination and emasculating encounters, many African American men have developed alternative ways through which to express masculinity. One of the most popular explanations of masculinity among African American men is *cool pose*, a concept created by Majors and Billson (1992). These authors frame masculine expressions of African American men as defenses, offenses, and coping strategies used to deflect racism and other harmful experiences related to their racial and gender identifications. Others examining *cool pose* described the phenomenon as one in which YAAM find self-esteem and build a sense of identity from stereotypically masculine activities including athletics, music, and non-academic ventures (Cokley & Moore, 2007). In *cool pose*, African American men display exaggerated or alternative masculine attitudes and behaviors for the purpose of demonstrating power, control, and other stereotypically masculine traits. Expressions of masculinity include what the authors refer to as *scripts* (particular behaviors one should display in given situations), *postures* (physical stance displaying calmness), and *impressions* (emotional and material appearance). Authors state that African American

men may use *cool pose* to resolve the struggle between self-protection and participation in societal norms (Majors & Billson, 1992; Osborne 1999).

A number of other authors maintain that African American men seek to compensate for encounters that strip away their power, control, and autonomy through attitudes and behaviors that reflect hypermasculinity. Hypermasculinity is a term used to describe one who displays exaggerated masculine traits (Ward, 2005). Hypermasculinity is a system of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors emphasizing the dominance, aggression, and power of men (Diemer, 2002; Jamison, 2006; Ward, 2005). Evidence of this concept is seen in aggressive video games, violent movies, sexually explicit music and other content. Hypermasculinity is the rejection of all things remotely feminine, including the display of particular emotions (e.g., sadness and fear), lack of physical prowess, and any other trait that could be construed as stereotypically feminine. The most pervasive images of men in media and society suggest that men gain certain benefits (e.g., power, respect, sexual attention) from exaggerated masculine expression (Diemer, 2002; Ward, 2005).

However, Majors and Billson (1992) and others argue that, although cool pose may be functional in many settings, it may relate to adverse consequences for YAAM in school settings. Components to both *cool pose* and hypermasculinity pertain to its possible impacts on educational attainment. Authors suggest that attitudes and behaviors aligned with *cool pose* make it difficult for YAAM seeking educational assistance, evidencing a strong interest in academics, or showing vulnerability in school settings (Majors & Billson, 1992). As a result, faculty may perceive some students as disengaged, unmotivated, and less likely to succeed in academics (Ferguson, 2003; Neal et al., 2003).

Authors have also suggested that mass media, hegemonic masculine standards, and socialization messages have had a deleterious effect on the connection that YAAM perceive between themselves and academic achievement (Harper, 2006; hooks, 2004; Mahalik et al., 2003). These factors, in conjunction with aversive school related experiences, may lead some YAAM students devaluing or disidentifying with academics, which are both associated with negative academic outcomes. Acknowledging and investigating the intersecting identities of YAAM students may contribute to a better understanding of how being African American and male impact a number of academic outcomes in this population (Cokley, McClain, Jones & Johnson, 2011; Sirin & Rogers, 2005). Furthermore, the impact of being African American and male has yet to be thoroughly investigated in relation to several outcome factors, including academic achievement (Cokley & Moore, 2007; Davis, 2003).

### **Gender, Masculinity, and Academic Achievement**

Current psychological and educational literature provides limited information as to the impact of gender identity and academic achievement. Much of the current research highlights differences between young African American men and women as they pertain to academic outcomes (e.g., grades, standardized test scores, educational advancement) but does not investigate gender identity components such as masculinity (Davis, 2003; Warikoo & Carter, 2009).

**Presence of masculinity in academic achievement.** Clear and significant achievement differences appear between young African American men and African American women. However, less research seems to be devoted to identifying the underlying mechanisms of these differences. For example, the impact of masculinity and

specific masculine attitudes and expressions (i.e., *cool pose*, hypermasculinity) is rarely studied and has yet to be quantitatively investigated in relation to the academic achievement of young African American men. Of the few authors who have explored this area, each has done so through a collection of qualitative data.

Price (1999) conducted a study with six African American high school students from a small Midwestern city. The author of this study was exploring the experiences of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade African American male students in regards to the impact of masculinity and racial identity on relationships with teachers, peers, and school settings. Data were gathered from each participant over the span of one school year. Several interviews were conducted with each student outside of the school setting and interviews were described as “open ended.” Price particularly examined the school experiences of two young men with varied experiences in their school setting. The author highlights the difficulty of achievement for both students and differences in each individual’s understanding and expression of masculine and racial identities. “Jeff,” who more closely resembled Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) conceptualization of a successful African American male student (i.e., detached from black community and peers, identifies more with White culture), encountered difficulty succeeding academically and connecting with peers. Alternatively, “Marcus,” whose attitudes, behaviors, and experiences with peers and teachers were more representative of *cool pose*, was able to maintain successful relationships with peers and succeed academically. Both participants reported a desire to persist and achieve in school. While this qualitative study does not support oppositional or hypermasculine hypotheses in academic achievement, evidence of differences in peer and faculty support emerged.

A qualitative study by Harper (2006) showcased the connection between gender identity and the academic success of high achieving YAAM students. Harper interviewed 32 African American men from six large, public universities across the United States. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 22 and required to meet several criteria for eligibility in the study, including a 3.0 or better GPA, leadership, and involvement in multiple campus organizations, and relationships with high-ranking college faculty and administrators. Harper conducted one face-to-face interview (2-3 hours in length) and a minimum of two follow up phone interviews with each participant. Study participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview approach. Dialogue with these students revealed the network that young men built with each other at their respective universities to access peer support and build close relationships. Students also described how older males at their universities reached out to them and encouraged their involvement in campus programs and organizations. The young men also highlighted how their identification as African American men gave them access to an array of networks and opportunities that they may not have otherwise had. For example, several students mentioned involvement with campus organizations and access to top tier university officials. These students seemed to have a positive view of themselves as well as others who identified as young African American men.

Additionally, Dancy (2011) obtained data from 24 African American men from 12 colleges and universities around the country. The purpose of the study was to gain insight regarding students' constructions of masculinity and its impact on various outcomes including academics, social life, and development. Participants consistently spoke of three areas in which their gender identity influenced their lived experiences: (a)

self-expectations, (b) responsibilities and relationships to family, and (c) worldviews and life philosophies. Within these domains, the young men expressed how their identities as African American men helped to shape their desire to succeed academically, contribute to their communities, and serve as role models among other things. In short, these YAAM discussed masculinity in relation to its positive academic, social, and developmental impacts. Consistent with these findings is qualitative research conducted by Martin & Harris (2007), who studied a group of 27 African American male student-athletes ranging in ages from 18-24 years old, representing a variety of sports. The 27 student-athletes were from four Division I research universities. Participants in the study provided data illuminating the influence of masculinity in their academic and athletic successes. Qualitative data were analyzed using phenomenological techniques popularized by Moustakas (1994) and a semi-structured interview format. Many reported views of masculinity unrelated to those proposed by Majors and Billson (1992) and others, instead many articulated alternative avenues for exhibiting “cool” including leadership, academic achievement, and accountability. For example, many of the students expressed an association between masculinity and having strong morals, integrity, and courage. These findings serve as an example of the varied meanings of masculinity within African American male populations.

These studies had several limitations. The majority of qualitative studies on masculinity and academic achievement tends to be focused on investigating high and low achieving students, which may preclude certain segments of YAAM from participating in research. For example, previous studies have highlighted the ways in which young African American students may protect themselves against potential threats to self-



concept that may arise through academic participation. For these students, missteps in the academic arena serve not only as a personal blunder, but also one that reinforces negative ideas about that group. Thus, YAAM may devalue or reduce their identification with academics, as a protective mechanism to buffer them from being harmed via unsuccessful or discriminatory academic experiences.

### **Academic Self-Concept**

Academic self-concept is defined in psychological and educational literature as feelings, perceptions, and attitudes regarding one's academic or intellectual skills (Reynolds, Ramirez, Margina, & Allen, 1980). Academic self-concept is used as a general notion of how one perceives them self in relation to academic ability. The term focuses on a broad, evaluative perspective of one's academic capabilities, where other concepts such as self-efficacy are more specific (Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997).

Studies have shown academic self-concept is significantly correlated with grade point averages. For example, Reynolds (1988) used data from nearly 600 college students, representative of numerous cultures and academic majors. Findings from this study evidenced a significant relationship between academic self-concept and GPA. Gerardi (1990) surveyed approximately 98 freshman students (92% of which self-identified as minority) enrolled in low level mathematics. Concurrent with a freshman skills examination and math skill assessment, students also completed the Brookover Self-Concept of Ability Scale (Brookover, 1964). Results of this study showed academic self-concept correlated with assessment scores and was also significantly and positively correlated to the students' GPA.

In recent years results demonstrating the positive impact of academic self-concept have remained consistent in much of the literature. Cokley and Chapman (2008) used an entirely African American sample of 274 college students to examine the impact of ethnic identification, anti-white attitudes, and academic self-concept on achievement. The study specifically showed that African American students' with higher levels of academic self-concept were significantly more likely to also have a higher GPA. These studies are part of a strong literature base that identifies academic self-concept as a significant correlate and predictor of academic success, specifically GPA (Awad, 2007; Cokley, 2000; Okeke, Howard, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2009; Osborne & Rausch, 2001; Reynolds, 1998).

While the majority of research regarding academic self-concept alludes to a positive, significant, and consistent relationship with desirable academic outcomes, a select group of studies challenge those findings within YAAM populations. Specifically, studies have shown that academic self-concept is less likely to be a significant correlate and predictor of GPA in YAAM populations, which are findings unique to this group (Cokley 2002; Demo & Parker, 1987).

Few researchers examine the differences in academic self-concept between YAAM and other student populations. However, Osborne (1997) conducted a longitudinal study with high school students from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Data collected as part of the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) represented both young men and women who identified as Caucasian, African American, or Hispanic. The nationally representative sample included 15,037 students, 5,868 White boys, 5,711 White girls, 1,070 African American girls, 1,062 African American boys, 694 Hispanic girls, and 632

Hispanic boys. The purpose of the study was to examine trends among African American students and the possible differences between racial and ethnic groups in the relation of academic self-concept and academic outcomes such as GPA. Several analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were conducted to determine whether significant differences between groups occurred. Results of the analysis showed that when SES and test scores were controlled, young African American men were significantly more likely to experience a disconnect between academic self-concept and academic outcomes, in that it was not significantly predictive of academic success. Furthermore, YAAM were the only groups to demonstrate this trend (Osborne, 1997).

Similar findings were present in a study conducted by Cokley, McClain, and Jones (2011). Researchers utilized data from 96 African American students (41 males, 55 females) from an urban high school in the Southwestern U.S. for examining academic self-concept and its relationship with various psychological and academic factors. One-way ANOVA's were conducted to determine differences between young men and women in the sample. Analyses showed that young African American men had significantly lower GPA's than their female counterparts. Moreover, analyses found that YAAM were more likely to have a non-significant relationship between academic self-concept and GPA. Data showed that older male students became increasingly disidentified with academics while older female students showed significantly higher levels of identification. Finally, results from hierarchical multiple regressions found that not identifying with academics and gender had an effect size of .20 in predicting grade point average (GPA).

Evidence suggesting that, for some, this trend persists at the collegiate level can be found in a study completed by Cokley and Moore (2007). Researchers collected data from 274 participants, from ages 17 to 41 ( $M = 20.54$ ) attending a historically Black college in Texas. The aim of the study was twofold. The first was to examine the extent to which gender moderates the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement. The second was to investigate whether devaluing academic success (DAS) helped to explain the gender difference in academic achievement. Correlations used to examine the relationship between racial identity and gender showed that, for men, a significant negative relationship between GPA and high racial identity existed, while a significant positive relationship between the two variables was present for young women. Additionally, Cokley and Moore found that DAS was significantly higher for young African American men. Furthermore, researchers found that DAS partially mediated the relationship between sex and academic achievement. The aforementioned findings demonstrate the importance of various identity intersections related to YAAM, including age, racial identity, and sex.

This particular finding among YAAM students has been termed *academic disidentification* (Cokley, 2002). Academic disidentification is defined as the lack of a significant relationship between academic self-concept (an individual's feelings about academic ability) and achievement outcomes, such as grade point average (GPA) (Cokley, 2002; Osborne, 1997). Several researchers have developed hypotheses as to the connection between academic disidentification and other academic outcomes among YAAM as a function of masculinity and racial identity intersections (Cokley, 2007; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Majors and Billson, 1992; Ward, 2005). The prevalence of this

trend among YAAM populations in comparison to other groups is especially troubling due to the wealth of research that has shown that academic identification and academic self-concept are positively related to academic achievement across groups (Osborne & Rausch, 2001; Thompson & Gregory, 2011). Consequently, more research must be conducted to further the understanding of academic self-concept with YAAM populations.

### **Intersections of Race, Masculinity, Academic Self-Concept and Academic Achievement**

Research on the adverse educational outcomes for young African American men is plentiful. However, research investigating simultaneous, identity related antecedents of these academic outcomes has yet to be pursued. Although varied, current literature underscores the impact of racial identity in the academic achievement of young African American men. For some, identifying with one's race serves as an academic advantage, while for others it may serve as an impediment. In addition, previous qualitative research indicates both racial and masculine identities are salient in the academic experiences of YAAM. Yet, no quantitative studies have been conducted to date that examine the possible relationships between masculinity (i.e., *cool pose*, hypermasculinity), racial identity, academic self-concept, and GPA. Therefore, racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept should be studied simultaneously to gain greater insight regarding the academic experiences and outcomes of young African American men. Contemporary studies are needed to pursue the meanings and intrapersonal intricacies of multiple identities to help explain the achievement difficulties within this population (Mathews & Williams, 2007).

## **The Current Study**

A review of previous literature has shown that gaps exist between the academic achievement of young African American men and other groups. While previous literature has shown racial identity to be a consistent factor in the academic achievement of young African American students, results vary as to whether highly identifying and/or placing importance on being African American is associated with academic achievement. Authors have also asserted that young African American men express a particular pattern of masculine behaviors and attitudes that may relate to differences in the relationship between academic self-concept and achievement. To this end, researchers have yet to thoroughly examine racial identity, masculinity, academic self-concept and their intersections as they pertain to the academic achievement of young African American men. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to further extrapolate these relationships, or lack there-of, by addressing several research questions as applied to a sample of African American male high school students. Thus, from this point, the use of the YAAM acronym, will be in reference to this group of young African American males in grades 9-12. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, associations among variables, potential moderators, and potential mediators were tested to comprehensively examine the relationships between multiple forms of identity, academic self-concept, and academic achievement.

## **Operational Definitions**

The following section provides a brief description of the measures used for each variable included in the study. The section also provides an operational definition of the variables as understood specifically in relation to the current study.

**Racial identification and grade level.** Although not included as variables in the study, both racial identification and grade level of participants were vital in this study. Racial identification was self-reported via a fill in the blank section on the provided questionnaire, which gave students the opportunity to self-identify. Included as YAAM students in the study are those who identifications included but are not limited to (Carribbean, Nigerian, Black, Black/White). For the purposes of this study, the term African American can be defined as students who have self-identified as belonging to the African diaspora, examples of which are listed above. Grade level was defined by student's endorsement given a multiple choice item regarding their class status as freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior..

**Parental education level.** Parental education level was used as a control variable in the current study because it has been shown to consistently and significantly relate to positive academic outcomes. Parental education level was operationalized using student responses to the following prompts “my mother graduated from a 4-year college” and “my father graduated from a 4-year college.” For the purposes of this study, parental education is defined as the number of parents who received a degree from a four year institution. Prior research suggests that parental education, which is often used as a proxy for SES, consistently impacts the academic achievement of students across cultures; however, for African American students it may be more impactful in predicting academic achievement (Nettles et al., 2003; Taylor & Harris, 2003).

**Racial identity.** Racial identity was operationalized using the *Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity – Teen* (MIBI-T), which assesses three dimensions of racial identity (centrality, regard, and ideology) as identified by the Multidimensional Model of

Racial Identity (MMRI) (Sellers et al., 1998). Specifically, the racial centrality subscale was used to assess for racial identity in this study. The racial centrality subscale is used to evaluate the importance of racial group membership to one's self-concept. Thus, in the current study racial identity is defined as the salience of race to an individual's self-concept as measured by the MIBI-T.

**Masculinity.** The masculinity variable was operationalized using *The Auburn Differential Masculinity Inventory* (ADMI; Burk, Burkhart, & Sikorski, 2004), a 60-item self-report measure used to assess varying attitudes and behaviors associated with the construct of masculinity. The ADMI examines five distinct areas: (a) hypermasculinity, (b) sexual identity, (c) dominance and aggression, (d) conservative masculinity, and (e) devaluation of emotion. The total score from this inventory was calculated by taking the average of all items. For the purposes of this study, masculinity is defined as the endorsement of stereotypical masculine attitudes as measured by the ADMI.

**Academic self-concept.** Students' total score from the Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS; Reynolds, Ramirez, Margina, & Allen, 1980) was used to operationalize the construct of academic self-concept. The total score was calculated by taking the average of all items. The ASCS is a 40-item scale used to assess students' attitudes and feelings regarding their ability in academic settings. The ASCS has seven subscales: (a) grade and effort, (b) study habits and organization, (c) peer evaluation of academic ability, (d) self-confidence in academics, (e) satisfaction with school, (f) self-doubt regarding ability, and (g) self-evaluation with external standards. In accordance with the ASCS and for the purpose of this study, academic self-concept is defined as the expressed attitudes and perceptions of one's general academic ability.



**Academic achievement.** Self-reported student grade point averages (GPA) was used to assess participants' level of academic achievement. GPAs were measured on a 4-point scale by which students were able to select from a range below 2.5 to 4.0 as their current GPA. 4.0. For example, students were prompted by the statement "My current overall grade point average is..." and checked the box for 3.0-3.5.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The following research questions and research hypotheses were formed in an attempt to examine the aforementioned variables and their impact on GPA outcomes with high school aged African American males. Furthermore, the research questions and hypotheses were decided upon to address the previously mentioned gaps in current literature. The research questions and hypotheses specific to this study are as follows:

**Question one.** What is the relationship between racial identity (centrality), masculinity, and academic self-concept among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis one.** A statistically significant relationship between racial identity (centrality), masculinity, and academic self-concept will be evidenced among YAAM students.

**Question two.** What is the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis two.** A negative and statistically significant relationship between racial identity and academic achievement (GPA) will be evidenced among YAAM students.

**Question three.** What is the relationship between masculinity and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis three.** A negative and statistically significant relationship between masculinity and academic achievement (GPA) will be evidenced among YAAM students.

**Question four.** What is the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis four.** A positive and statistically significant relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement (GPA) will be evidenced among YAAM students.

**Question five.** When controlling for parental education level, do racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept predict Academic Achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis five.** Controlling for parental education, the variables racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept will be statistically significant predictors of academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students.

**Question six.** When controlling for parental education level, does masculinity moderate the relationship between racial identity and Academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis six.** Controlling for parental education, masculinity will moderate the relationship between racial identity (centrality) and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students.

**Question seven.** When controlling for parental education level, does academic self-concept moderate the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis seven.** Controlling for parental education, academic self-concept will moderate the relationship between racial identity (centrality) and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students.

**Question eight.** When controlling for parental education level, does the interaction between academic self-concept and masculinity moderate the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis eight.** Controlling for parental education, the interaction of academic self-concept and masculinity will moderate the relationship between racial identity (centrality) and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students.

**Question nine.** When controlling for parental education level, does masculinity mediate the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis nine.** Controlling for parental education, academic masculinity will mediate the relationship between racial identity (centrality) and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students.

**Question ten.** When controlling for parental education level, does academic self-concept mediate the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students?

**Hypothesis ten.** Controlling for parental education, academic self-concept will mediate the relationship between racial identity (centrality) and academic achievement (GPA) among YAAM students.

### **Chapter Three: Method**

This chapter provides information pertaining to demographic characteristics of study participants, data collection procedures, and planned data analyses.

Pertinent information including school setting, student classifications, and number of participants are mentioned. Moreover, the sections provide details regarding the previous use and psychometric properties of scales contained in this study.

#### **Participants**

The data used for this study were archival and taken from the African American Male Project in Education (AAMPED.), a project aimed at collecting data for the purposes of contributing to emerging literature on YAAM populations in education settings. The AAMPED project gathered a variety of information about the educational experiences of African American male high school students, using a variety of measures. The overarching objective of the AAMPED project was to examine the associations between contextual, identity, and behavioral factors that may impact academic outcomes in the YAAM population. To examine these possible associations, a questionnaire was formed containing eighteen surveys used to address each of the aforementioned factors. Subsequently, the wealth of information obtained has been used in independent projects including the current study.

The participants for this study were recruited from a Jefferson County High School located in Louisville, KY. The school was selected due to the access to African American male students attending a predominantly African American high school. Demographic data released by the Kentucky Department of Education (2010) showed the student population of Jefferson County High Schools as 93, 271. Approximately 62% of

students are part of the free and reduced lunch program. African American students make up 35% of the Jefferson County student population as compared to 11% statewide. Comparatively, the participants in this study attended a high school with a student population of 1,212 students, 82.6% of which accessed the free and reduced lunch program. Approximately 77% of the high school's students identified as African American. Participants included in the study ranged in status from freshman to senior students and were between the ages of 13 to 19. A total of 163 African American male students participated in this study. Of the remaining 156 participants after data screening, there were 19 freshman, 81 sophomores, 42 juniors, and 14 seniors. The mean parental education level was 2.60, signifying that about half the students had at least one parent who completed a college level degree ( $n = 75$ ).

### **Procedures**

A cross-sectional, correlational design was used to collect data for the AAMPED project. Once Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted, the AAMPED team and Central High School administration agreed upon a site and date for survey administration. Each participant received a parental consent form (see Appendix A) approximately one week before data collection. The parental consent form provided pertinent information regarding involvement in the study including the purpose, duration, limits of confidentiality, and rewards associated with participation. On the date of administration, participants were called to the school auditorium where parental consent forms were collected and participants were provided with a student assent form (see Appendix B) to sign as an indication of understanding their rights and willingness to participate in the study. Each participant was then provided with the AAMPED

Questionnaire which was composed of 18 surveys (including the measures used in the current study) meant to assess a combination of students experiences in education settings and a number of identity variables. Students were also provided with the questionnaire to take home and bring back the following day. After the questionnaire was completed each student turned the questionnaire in to a research investigator who inspected the questionnaire for completeness. Each student that successfully completed the AAMPED questionnaire was given a \$20 dollar Wal-mart gift card. Following data collection all informed consent, student assent, and AAMPED questionnaires were filed and secured by the principal investigator.

### **Measures**

The following sections detail the construction and psychometric properties of the scales used in the current study. The scales used have been evidenced as valid and reliable measures and were therefore deemed as appropriate to address the previously mentioned research questions and hypotheses.

**Demographic questionnaire.** The participants completed a brief survey on the first page of the AAMPED questionnaire where students self-reported background information, including race, grade level, family member with whom the student resided, whether the student received free or reduced lunch, parental education level, and current grade point average (see Appendix D).

**Parental education level.** Parental education level was used as a control variable in the current study. Prior research suggest that parental education, which is often used as a proxy for SES, consistently impacts the academic achievement of students across cultures (Taylor & Harris, 2003); however, for African American students, it may be

more impactful in predicting the academic achievement (Nettles et al., 2003). Parental education level was operationalized using student responses to the following prompts “my mother graduated from a 4-year college” and “my father graduated from a 4-year college.” For each question, a yes response was coded as 2 and a no response was coded as 1; the two responses were summed..

**Masculinity.** *The Auburn Differential Masculinity Inventory* (ADMI; Burk et al., 2004) assesses varying components of masculinity utilizing a 60-item self-report scale (see Appendix E). The ADMI attempts to capture attitudes and behaviors associated with the expression of exaggerated masculinity in a variety of men, for example, “*I think men who cry are weak*” is an item in the survey. The ADMI uses a randomly arranged, Likert-type scale response format in which participants are able to select between (1) *not at all like me* to (5) *very much like me*. The items on the ADMI were constructed to examine five distinct areas: (a) hypermasculinity, (b) sexual identity, (c) dominance and aggression, (d) conservative masculinity, and (e) devaluation of emotion. The total score for the ADMI is computed by summing all items of the measure; ADMI subscale scores are obtained by summing only the items assigned to a particular scale. Higher scores indicate that individuals hold beliefs closely aligned with those described as part of hegemonic masculinity (Brannon, 1976, 2008). Some of these beliefs include anti-femininity, emotional invulnerability, and the importance of yielding power and control. For this study, the total score was used instead of specific subscales for data analysis as a number of the subscales tapped into conceptualizations of masculine expression among this group.

The internal consistency of the total scale scores has been reported between .85 and .83 in several data collections with a sample of male college students (Burk et al., 2004). Reliability for the current study was .89. Convergent validity for the ADMI has been demonstrated by its moderate correlations to other hypermasculinity measures such as the Hypermasculinity Inventory (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984)  $r = .70$ , and measures used to describe hypermasculine attitudes and behaviors including, the Antisocial Practices Scale (APS)  $r = .49$  (Gynther, Burkhart, & Hovanitz, 1979), Hostility Towards Women Scale (HTW)  $r = .48$  (Marshall & Moulden, 2001), and the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS)  $r = .22$  (Zuckerman & Link, 1964). Additionally, discriminant validity of the ADMI scale has been evidenced by its moderate total score correlations with measures disassociated with hypermasculinity such as the Marlow Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS)  $r = -.32$  (Crowne & Marlow, 1967), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)  $r = -.14$  (Rosenberg, 1965, 1979), and the Mehrabian Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES)  $r = -.11$  (Mehrabian, 1996).

**Racial identity.** *The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen* (MIBI-T; Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008) is a revised version of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) created by Sellers and colleagues (2008) to serve as a developmentally appropriate Black Identity inventory for adolescents. The original MIBI scale is constructed of 51-items and uses a 5-point Likert response design from (1) *really disagree* to (5) *really agree* to assess racial identity attitudes. The measure was normed using a large sample of African American college students from historically Black and predominately White colleges and universities across the country and reliability of MIBI subscale scores range from .70 to .83.



Similar to its predecessor, the teen version, MIBI-T, is used to assess three dimensions (centrality, regard, and ideology) previously discussed as part of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). The MIBI-T consists of 21-items and seven elements (centrality, private regard, public regard, nationalist ideology, assimilationist ideology, humanist ideology, and minority ideology) intended to assess the racial identity attitudes of adolescents from the aforementioned three dimensions. MIBI-T scale responses are recorded using 5-point Likert scale responses that range from 1 (*really disagree*) to 5 (*really agree*). Composite subscale scores are generated by calculating the sum of endorsed items on a particular subscale and dividing by 3. The racial centrality subscale is used to evaluate the importance of racial group membership to one's self-concept. Therefore, the higher the score on the racial centrality subscale, the more important identifying as African American is to an individual's self-concept. Survey items specific to the racial centrality subscale include prompts such as "*If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would say is that I'm Black.*"

The MIBI-T scale was normed using a sample of 489 African American middle and high school students from a small Midwestern city, representing an array of backgrounds. Subscales from the MIBI-T range from the Centrality subscale  $r = .55$  to the Private Regard subscale of  $r = .76$  (Scottham et al., 2008). Researchers contended that the lower alphas were in part due to the conciseness of the total scale and subscales. In order to ensure reliability, researchers used a Spearman-Brown formula to estimate the reliability of the subscales, accounting for their brevity and found alpha levels ranged between .75 to .88. The current study evidenced the alpha of the centrality subscale as  $r = .69$ . The MIBI-T has been compared to self-reported race related behaviors and

attitudes and has evidenced consistent construct validity. Content validity of the MIBI-T was tested using a confirmatory factor analysis that yielded a good fit, indicating the measure is consistent with the MMRI and accurately represents the three dimensions and seven factors previously mentioned (Scottham et al., 2008). However, for the purposes of this study, the Racial Centrality subscale that assesses the importance of race to an individual's definition of self was used to assess racial identity among the participants (see Appendix F).

**Academic self-concept.** Reynolds and colleagues (1988) developed the 40-item ASCS to assess factors related to students' feelings toward school and their general ability in the academic arena. The ASCS comprised of 4-point Likert style responses in which participants endorse items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The scale has a reported Cronbach's alpha of .91 in African American samples (Cokley, 2003). The ASCS has seven subscales with reliability ranging from .59 to .92 (Reynolds, 1988). In the current study  $r = .83$ . The ASCS scale measures seven unique factors: (a) grade and effort, (b) study habits and organization, (c) peer evaluation of academic ability, (d) self-confidence in academics, (e) satisfaction with school, (f) self-doubt regarding ability, and (g) self-evaluation with external standards. Each of these factors is used to create a comprehensive picture of how students feel about varying school related components with items such as "*I have doubts that I will do well in school*" and "*I feel that I am a better than average student.*" Construct validity for the scale has been demonstrated by its moderate correlations to student grade point averages, convergent validity with several general self perception measures including the Rosenberg Self-

Esteem Scale (RSES). For this study, the total score was used to assess the academic self-concept of participants.

**Academic achievement.** Student grade point average (GPA) was used as the outcome variable and indicator of academic achievement. Grade point averages were assessed using a single item in which students were prompted to check 1 of 5 boxes (3.5 or higher, 3.5-3.0, 3.0-2.5, 2.5-2.0, below 2.0) in accordance with the statement “My current overall grade point average is” (see Appendix C). In this study GPA was coded as follows (3.5 or higher = 5, 3.5-3.0 = 4, 3.0-2.5 = 3, 2.5-2.0 = 2, below 2.0 = 1). The use of GPA as an achievement outcome is not uncommon in education and psychological literature, and has been used in reference to this population on numerous occasions (Osborne, 1997, 2001; Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998). For example, Cokley (2002) requested students endorse a range of grade point averages (i.e., 2.00-2.99, 3.00-4.00) in order to identify students examining academic disidentification. Research has also confirmed the accuracy and validity of self-reported GPA. Cassady (2001) revealed a .97 correlation between self-reported GPA’s and those obtained via official records, while Kuncel, Crede, and Thomas (2005) conducted a meta-analysis, which determined self-reported GPA as a “reasonably good” reflection of official records. Previous research has also shown GPA to be a reliable predictor of future student success (Sawyer, 2013). In the context of the current education system, grades are the primary measure with which academic success is determined. Previous literature highlights the importance and frequency of GPA in secondary education. The vast majority of secondary school systems use individual class grades to produce a student’s grade point average, which is then used to determine whether students meet graduation criteria, qualify for admission at

colleges and universities, and eligibility for scholarships and numerous other awards (Allen, Robbins, Castillas, & Oh, 2008). However, previous research has also elaborated on the complexities of grade point averages. Grade assignments are based on much more than academic knowledge such as both cognitive (i.e., test scores, assignment scores), and non-cognitive (i.e., perceived effort, attitude, conduct, teacher perceptions) factors (Bowers, 2011; Cross & Frary, 1999; Klapp, Lekholm, & Cliffordson, 2009).

### **Data Analyses Summary**

Data analyses in this study were conducted to determine the statistical associations between the predictor variables (racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept) and the outcome variable (grade point average). Bivariate correlations were employed to examine the correlations between both predictor and outcome variables. Furthermore, hierarchical regression procedures were conducted to test whether these factors would significantly predict grade point average above and beyond the control variable (parental education level) as well as determine whether a moderator or mediator relationship was present. The PASWStatistics 20.0 program (SPSS 20) was used to analyze the collected data.

## Chapter Four: Results

### Preliminary Data Analyses

Data were screened manually and electronically for missing values, scales, invalid computations, and other possible data entry errors. Missing values in the data set were revealed. All missing data were then converted to a value 999 in SPSS 20. The remaining data were then screened for outliers, homogeneity of variance (HOV), and normality. Multivariate outliers were assessed using Mahalanobis distance and Cook's D procedures, which resulted in the identification of no outliers. Both univariate and multivariate outliers were examined using graphical assessments including probability-probability (p-p) plots, quantile (q-q) plots, scatter plots, and box plots. The graphic assessments indicated that there were several univariate outliers; however, these outliers were identified only in the ASCS scale. Seven outliers were identified (case numbers 29, 34, 74, 95, 97, 116, 121). After examining each case it was determined the outliers were a result of homogenous item responses, consequently those cases were removed, reducing the sample size to  $N = 156$  from 163. Given the slight reduction in sample size, G\*3 Power statistical software was used to determine whether the sample would be adequate to detect small effect sizes in the data. With the adjusted sample size, regression analyses were able to detect effect sizes as low as .10 with .86 power, confirming the adequacy of the sample size.

After the data were cleaned and outliers were removed, the tenability of normality and homoscedasticity of each subscale was checked. The ASCS kurtosis statistic of 1.77 was the only statistic above +/- 1.0. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) state that normally distributed data have skewness and kurtosis statistics close to 0. Furthermore, data

showing skewness and kurtosis above  $\pm 3.0$  may not be normally distributed. The ASCS kurtosis statistic of 1.77 indicates that the scores for the subscale are more peaked and clustered at the center of the distribution. However, each subscale met multivariate assumptions and remained in the range of normal skewness and kurtosis  $> \pm 3.0$  (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis statistics for each variable are provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1  
*Means and Standard Deviations of Variables*

<u>Descriptive Statistics</u>				
<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parental Education	2.61	0.79	0.57	-0.77
Academic Self-Concept	2.67	0.24	0.61	1.78
Racial Identity	3.28	1.03	-0.08	-0.45
Masculinity	3.02	0.50	0.24	0.11
Grade Point Average	2.88	0.99	-0.22	-.591

*Note.*  $N = 156$ ;  $M$  = mean;  $SD$  = standard deviation

## Correlations Among Variables

Pearson correlations were calculated (See Table 4.2) to determine the bivariate relationship among and between predictor variables and the criterion. Analyses showed the predictor variables (parental education level, academic self-concept, racial identity, and masculinity) were not significantly correlated with one another. These results did not support hypothesis one, which stated significant relationships would be found among each of these variables. However, several predictor variables were significantly correlated to the outcome variable. As predicted, parental education, which was used as a control variable throughout the study, was significantly and positively correlated with GPA ( $r = .25, p < .001$ ). YAAM whose parents have higher levels of education were significantly more likely to have higher GPAs, which aligns with previous literature examining academic achievement across racial groups (Armor, 1992; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000). Hypothesis two, which stated that there would be a significant and negative relationship between racial identity and GPA, was supported ( $r = -.13, p = .04$ ). These results support literature by Aronson and colleagues (2002) and others that found that the relationship between racial identity and GPA was significant and negative for this population. Hypothesis three, which stated there would be a significant and negative relationship between masculinity and GPA was supported ( $r = -.19, p = .01$ ). The significant relationship between masculinity and GPA is such that as masculinity level increases, GPA decreases. As this dissertation is the first to quantitatively examine this relationship among YAAM, these findings may lend support to previous qualitative data that suggests increased racial identity levels and stereotypical masculine behaviors and/or



attitudes are connected to deleterious academic outcomes (Majors & Billson, 1992; Mickelson & Greene, 2006; Price 1999; Sirin & Roger-Sirin, 2005). The negative and significant correlation between academic self-concept and GPA ( $r = -.20, p = .01$ ) did not support hypothesis four, which stated the relationship would be significant and positive. Data from this study show that YAAM with higher levels of academic self-concept are more apt to have low GPA's. This finding challenges previous research that has reiterated the strong, positive correlation between these two variables (Awad, 2007; Cokley, McClain, & Jones, 2011; Gerardi, 1990; Reynolds, 1998; Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997). The results from bivariate correlations underscore the importance of several variables including parental education level, academic self-concept, and masculinity in the academic achievement of YAAM.

Table 4.2

*Correlations Among Independent and Outcome Variables (N = 156)*

<i>Independent Variables</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. PED	-	-.045	-.052	.032	.257**
2. ASCS		-	.155	.051	-.204**
3. RID			-	-.042	-.134*
4. MASC				-	-.197**
5. GPA					-

*Notes.* PED = parental education level; ASCS = academic self-concept scale; RID = racial identity; MASC = masculinity; GPA = grade point average

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

## **Predicting Academic Achievement**

In the next phase of data analyses, hierarchical multiple regressions (HMR) as described by Warner (2008) were conducted to examine whether racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept were significant predictors of academic achievement for the sample. According to the author, hierarchical multiple regressions are conducted in steps and the rationale in ordering the steps should correspond with theory or previous literature. Thus, the current HMR was conducted in four steps. Due to the quantity and consistency of research indicating parental education level and academic self-concept as significant contributors to GPA in YAAM and other populations (Armor, 1992; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000; Okeke, Howard, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2009; Osborne & Rausch, 2001), parental education level was chosen as the control variable and academic self-concept was used in the first step of the HMR procedure. Research regarding the contribution of racial identity on GPA has been mixed, therefore, it was chosen to follow the aforementioned variables. Finally, because researchers have not quantitatively examined the contribution of masculinity levels to GPA for YAAM populations it was chosen to be the final variable entered in the HMR. After controlling for the influence of parental education each predictor variable was added in a separate step of the regression (See Table 4.3). The influence of parental education was controlled for and entered in Step 1. Results showed parental education level was a statistically significant variable in the prediction of GPA and accounted for 6.6% of the variance  $\beta = .25, F(1, 140) = 9.905, p = .002$ . In Step 2, ASCS was added as a predictor and the total model accounted for a total of 10% of the variance in GPA. ASCS explained an additional 3.7% of variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .037  $p = .018$ ,

which indicated a statistically significant contribution to the overall model,  $\beta = -.19, F(2, 139) = 7.995, p = .01$ . In Step 3, RID was added as a predictor and the total model accounted for a total of 11% of the variance in GPA. RID contributed an additional .8% of variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .008 of the variance in GPA  $\beta = -.09, F(3, 138) = 5.782, p = .25$ , indicating the addition of RID was not statistically significant. In the final step, MASC was added as a predictor and the model as a whole accounted for a total of 15% of the variance in GPA. MASC contributed an additional 4.0% of variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .040 of the variance in GPA  $\beta = -.20, F(4, 137) = 6.133, p = .01$ , which signaled the addition of MASC was statistically significant to the overall model. Beta values indicated that when controlling for parental education level, masculinity makes the largest uniquely significant contribution to GPA, followed by academic self-concept. The regression procedure also demonstrated that the variance accounted for in GPA more than doubles when all predictor variables are present in the model.

Table 4.3

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Predicting GPA (N = 156)*

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
PED	0.32	0.10	.25*	.31	.10	.25	.31	.10	.24	.31	.10	.25
ASCS				.81	.34	-.19	-.75	.34	-.18	-.69	.34	-
RID							-.90	.08	-	-.10	.08	-
MASC									.09			.10
										-.40	.15	-
$R^2$			.06			.10			.11			.15
<i>F</i> for change in $R^2$			9.91**			5.75*			1.32			6.50*

*Notes.* PED = parental education level; ASCS = academic self-concept scale; RID = racial identity; MASC = masculinity; GPA = grade point average

\*  $p < .05$ ., \*\* $p < .01$

## **Moderation Analyses**

A moderator effect is described as an interaction in which variable(s) alter the direction or strength of the relationship between a predictor and criterion (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004). Statistical analyses were conducted to determine whether masculinity and/or academic self-concept moderated the relationship between racial identity and GPA. According to Frazier et al. (2004) a multiple regression is the desired analysis from which to determine whether a moderator effect is present. The first step in conducting a test of moderation is the creation of an interaction term. The interaction term was created by centering the independent variables (racial identity) as well as the moderator variables (masculinity, academic self concept), which subtracts the mean from all values making them 0 to reduce the possible impact of multicollinearity. Next, a product term was generated by multiplying the now coded/standardized predictor and moderator variables together. Finally, the product terms were created as a variable to represent the interaction in further statistical procedures.

After the product terms were formed, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted. Similar to the previous hierarchical multiple regression, several blocks were included in each test of moderation. The first test of moderation was conducted to examine the interaction of racial identity and masculinity on grade point average (See Table 4.4). Parental education was entered in Step 1 as a control variable or base line. As in the previous hierarchical regression accounted for 6.6% of the variance in GPA  $\beta = .25, F(1, 147) = 10.400, p = .002$ . In Step 2, the main effects of RID and MASC were examined by adding each variable into the regression. When RID and MASC were

added to the model, the total model accounted for a total of 10% of the variance in GPA. The addition explained an additional 5.9% of variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .059,  $\beta = -.21$ ,  $F(3, 145) = 6.905$ ,  $p = .009$ , which indicated a statistically significant contribution to the model. In Step 3, the interaction term of RID and MASC was added as a predictor and the total variance accounted for by the model remained at 10%. The interaction of RID and MASC contributed an additional .01% of variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .001 of the variance in GPA  $\beta = .02$ ,  $F(4, 144) = 5.168$ ,  $p = .77$ . The results show that although the addition of racial identity and masculinity add significantly to the variance accounted for in the model and help to significantly predict grade point average, the interaction was not significant thus, no moderation effect was present.

The second test of moderation was conducted to examine the interaction of racial identity and academic self-concept on grade point average (See Table 4.5). Parental education was again entered in Step 1 as a control variable and accounted for 6.6% of the variance in GPA  $\beta = .25$ ,  $F(1, 140) = 9.905$ ,  $p = .002$ . In Step 2, the main effects of RID and ASCS were examined by adding each variable into the regression. When added RID and ASCS contributed 4.6% to the variance, meaning the total model accounted for a total of 11% of the variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .046 of the variance in GPA  $\beta = -.178$ ,  $F(3, 138) = 5.782$ ,  $p = .032$ . In Step 3, the interaction term of RID and ASCS was added to model and the total variance accounted 11%. The interaction of RID and ASCS contributed an additional .0% variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .000,  $\beta = .003$ ,  $F(4, 137) = 4.305$ ,  $p = .97$ . The analyses indicate that the unique contribution of academic self-concept and racial identity are statistically significant to the overall prediction of

grade point average, but because their interaction was not significant, no moderation effect was present.

The final test of moderation was conducted to examine the interaction of masculinity and academic self-concept on racial identity and grade point average (See Table 4.6). The criterion variable used for this test of moderation was GPA. Parental education was again entered in Step 1 as a control variable and accounted for 6.6% of the variance in GPA  $\beta = .25, F(1, 140) = 9.905, p = .002$ . In Step 2, the main effects of MASC and ASCS were examined by adding each variable into the regression. When added MASC and ASCS contributed 7.5% to the variance, meaning the total model accounted for a total of 14.1% of the variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .075 of the variance in GPA  $\beta = -.196, F(3, 138) = 6.061, p = .003$ . In Step 3, the interaction term of MASC and ASCS was added to model and the total variance accounted 14.2%. The interaction of RID and ASCS contributed an additional .1% variance in GPA,  $R$  squared change = .000,  $\beta = .003, F(4, 137) = .305, p = .85$ . The analyses indicate that the unique contribution of academic self-concept and masculinity are statistically significant to the overall prediction of grade point average, however their interaction was not significant, thus no moderation effect was present.



Table 4.4

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Moderating Effects of Masculinity*

(*N* = 156)

Variable	Model 1		Model 2			Model 3			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
PED	.32	.10	.25	.32	.09	.25	.32	.09	.26
RID				-.12	.08	-.13	-.12	.07	-.13
MASC				-.41	.15	-.21	-.41	.15	-.21
RID x MASC							.04	.13	.02
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.06			.12			.13	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		10.40**			4.89*			.08	

*Notes.* PED = parental education level; RID = racial identity; MASC = masculinity; GPA = grade point average

\* *p* < .05., \*\**p* < .01

Table 4.5

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Moderating Effects of Academic Self-Concept (N = 156)*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2			Model 3			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
PED	.32	.10	.25	.31	.10	.24	.31	.10	.24
ASCS				-.75	.34	-.18	-.75	.35	-.18
RID				-.09	.07	-.09	-.09	.08	-.09
ASCS x RID							.01	.32	.00
$R^2$		.06			.11			.11	
<i>F</i> for change in $R^2$		9.90**			3.54*			.001	

*Notes.* PED = parental education level; ASCS = academic self-concept scale;

RID = racial identity; MASC = masculinity; GPA = grade point average

\*  $p < .05$ ., \*\* $p < .01$

Table 4.6

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Moderating Effects of Masculinity and Academic Self-Concept (N = 156)*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2			Model 3			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
PED	.32	.10	.25	.32	.10	.25	.32	.10	.25
ASCS				-.76	.33	-.18	-.79	.35	-.18
MASC				-.38	.15	-.19	-.38	.15	-.19
ASCS x MASC							.13	.71	.01
$R^2$		.06			.14			.14	
<i>F</i> for change in $R^2$		9.90**			7.58*			5.65	

*Notes.* PED = parental education level; ASCS = academic self- concept; MASC = masculinity; GPA = grade point average

\*  $p < .05$ ., \*\* $p < .01$

## **Mediation Analyses**

Mediation is a phenomenon present when an independent variable accounts for the relationship between a predictor and criterion (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Due to the exploratory nature of the study, mediation analyses were conducted to examine whether the independent variables academic self-concept and masculinity account for the relationship between racial identity and GPA. One possibility within those interactions is mediation. The mediation framework put forth by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used to determine the appropriateness of this statistical procedure. The authors also suggest that hierarchical regression is the most appropriate means of exploring whether a mediator is present. Before conducting the hierarchical regression, data must meet a number of requirements to be deemed suitable to undergo a test of mediation. The first of those requirements is that the predictor, mediator, and criterion variables must all be significantly correlated to one another. However, it was previously reported that the variables to be examined through mediation are not significantly correlated to one another and the criterion variable (See Table 4.2). Therefore, the statistical procedure testing for mediation could not be completed.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

In this study, I examined the contributions of academic self-concept, racial identity, and masculinity on GPA in high school aged African American males. This study's aim was to gain further insight as to whether intersecting identity factors were related to one another and, if so, to what extent; as well as whether this combination of variables would significantly predict GPA in this population. The results obtained can be summarized in three key points (a) the independent variables (ASCS, RID, MASC) were not significantly related to one another, (b) statistically significant associations were present between each of the independent variables and the outcome (GPA), (c) the combination of the aforementioned identity factors were statistically significant in predicting GPA for the sample. Specifically, no significant relationships were present among independent variables. However, when those variables were examined as correlates to the outcome variable (GPA), parental education level, academic self-concept, racial identity, and masculinity were all found to be statistically significant.

As predicted parental education level was consistent with previous research findings that show high parental education level related to high academic achievement. Prior research findings have indicated that higher parental education is usually associated with a number of positive academic outcomes such as higher grade point averages and standardized test scores (Armor, 1992; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000; Taylor & Harris, 2003). Contrary to my hypothesis and the majority of literature on the topic, results showed that YAAM with higher levels of academic self-concept were more likely to have lower GPA's. These results counter previous research that evidence academic self-concept as a variable with a consistent, positive, and significant correlation with GPA and other

academic achievement outcomes. Across a span of many years, numerous researchers, using diverse samples of students, have found the positive and significant relationship has held true (Awad, 2007; Gerardi, 1990; Osborne & Rausch, 2001; Reynolds, 1998; Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997). Though results diverge from the majority of findings, they partially support emergent data specific to YAAM populations. As previously discussed, several studies have shown an increasing disconnect with YAAM populations and academic self-concept through the course of high school and post-secondary education (Cokley, 2002; Cokley, McClain, & Jones, 2011; McMillan et al., 2011). These studies have shown that over time, the statistically significant association between academic self-concept and achievement outcomes become non-significant in YAAM populations. The results from the current study give credence to the mounting evidence that shows YAAM may have a different relationship with academic self-concept than other groups. Potential reasons for the differences among this group may be related to the reported educational experiences of YAAM. Research shows that African American male students are more likely than other groups to encounter negative experiences in educational settings including harsher punishments and lower academic and behavioral expectations (Hauser-Cram, Sirin, & Stipek, 2003; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Roderick, 2003). In addition, these young men are more likely to experience discrimination, prejudice, and presumptions that may adversely affect their education than their peers (Czopp et al., 1998; Ferguson, 2003; Leong & Leach 2007; Poussaint & Anderson, 2000). Thus, some YAAM may form a protective mechanism that lessens the psychological impact of negative experiences in educational settings. If indeed these students have formed a mechanism by which they are able to believe in their

academic skill and ability beyond a particular set of outcomes such as GPA, their academic self-concept may remain elevated regardless of the academic outcome. Therefore, these results not only lend support to growing literature but also may signal the need to examine the validity of academic-self concept as an accurate correlate of GPA and other achievement outcomes.

In regards to masculinity, the hypotheses were fully supported and the variable was statistically significant and negatively associated with GPA. The information yielded from this study is novel in that this is the first study to quantitatively examine masculinity in association with GPA in high school aged African American males. The findings of this study link to a number of conceptualizations of how masculinity may influence academic outcomes in this group. One such concept is *cool pose*, which posits that, due to systematic and societal oppressions, some African American men are unable to consistently express stereotypical masculine traits (e.g., aggression, power, control, and emotional invulnerability) in the same way as the majority culture (Majors & Billson, 1992; Ward, 2005). The *cool pose* concept states that YAAM have learned and developed alternative means of expressing masculinity. In many instances these expressions (scripts, impressions, postures) are embellished masculine behaviors and/or attitudes performed to demonstrate the stereotypical masculine traits. In connecting this conceptualization to the academic arena, authors note that the activities, behaviors, and attitudes used to express masculinity in YAAM are usually non-academic. Therefore, results from the current study, a significant and negative association between masculinity and GPA, may allude to new information related to a social and developmental intersection. In high school, adolescents are often moving through developmental stages

in which they desire to demonstrate their gender and sexual identities, included in this is exploring and understanding part of those identities through expression. Possibly, many YAAM have internalized some social, experiential, and/or media messages that they are unlikely to succeed in educational arenas. Combined with the experience or perception of systematic and/or social inequity in the classroom, it may be more beneficial to place focus, energy, and attention on avenues through which they perceive as more likely to successfully demonstrate masculinity (e.g., sports, entertainment). Further, these results indicate the need for more in depth study regarding the messages YAAM encounter in regards to how education does or does not fit within their framework for masculinity.

Supporting previous research, the findings from this study showed that racial identity had a significant and negative association with GPA (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Steele, 1992; Steele & Aronson, 1995). This finding may indicate that, for this population, racial identity continues to play an imperative role. Additionally, it lends support to the idea that racial identity may operate differently for YAAM than it does their female counterparts. Over the course of decades racial identity has contributed greatly to the literature on African Americans and academic achievement, yet uncertainty remains as to the function of racial identity in association with academic outcomes such as GPA. Results from the current study may underscore changes in the impact of racial identity in YAAM populations, making the inclusion of this and other identity factors essential to further research.

Regression analyses supported the original hypothesis in that the combination of ASCS, RID, and MASC were statistically significant in predicting GPA when parental education was controlled. Previous literature has shown that each of the factors aside



from masculinity was able to significantly predict GPA (Cokley, 2002; Gerardi, 1990; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Nettles et al., 2003). This study provided the first evidence that this particular set of factors significantly predict an academic outcome for YAAM. In regards to the predictors, masculinity was the largest contributor to the prediction of GPA outside of the control variable. Masculinity accounted for more of the variance in GPA than ASCS and RID, this finding signifies the importance of its inclusion as an impactful identity component in association with academic outcomes in this group. However, results from moderation hypotheses show that the interaction effects of masculinity and academic self-concept on the relationship between racial identity and GPA. Although independently, these variables show a significant impact on GPA, in concert they do not add to its prediction. Thus, the analyses support the overarching idea of intersectionality and the significance of identity factors on GPA but may also suggest further examination in regards to which identity components interact with one another in a way that significantly changes the relationship between racial identity and GPA.

### **Contributions to the Literature**

The general aim of this study was to examine a unique set of factors believed to impact the academic outcomes of YAAM for the purposes of filling a gap in the research literature. Through this study I successfully addressed some identified limitations to previous literature by engaging research with a theoretical foundation focused on intersectionality, non-comparative research, utilizing an African American male sample, and investigating identity variables. To this point little research has been conducted on the influence of intersecting identity factors on academic outcomes with African

American male populations (Dancy, 2011; Mickelson & Greene, 2006). By addressing the presented research questions, this study was able to further support a growing research base that indicates YAAM populations have a distinctive educational experience such that consistent, reliable, factors used to predict academic outcomes, behaviors, and attitudes with many other groups may not be as accurate with this population. Novel information was gained about the dynamic interactions of academic self-concept, racial identity, and masculinity and GPA. In particular, the use of masculinity as an associated and predictive variable was non-existent in quantitative studies related to academic outcomes with YAAM populations. The addition of the masculinity variable yielded novel information about the possible impact of being African American and male in education settings, all of which to this moment had only been discussed theoretically and qualitatively studied. This study increases awareness of a quantitatively understudied variable and highlights the importance of revisiting and perhaps revising the manner in which we have come to understand the relationship between YAAM and academic outcomes.

### **Limitations**

The findings of this study must be considered within the context of the data and methodology used. First, the data used were from a convenience sample of students who are not nationally representative. Participants were students from one high school, located in an urban setting, in the southeastern United States. These demographics lead to limited generalizability of results. To improve on this limitation, efforts should be made to coordinate a study with a number of different high schools within the region or around the country in an attempt to obtain information from students with a wider variety

of life experiences and backgrounds. Additionally, the students who chose to participate in the study may have had an impact on the findings. It is possible that the chance to engage in the project by filling out a questionnaire after school hours may have elicited responses or participation from a particular segment of the YAAM student population. Perhaps those choosing to participate have a stronger interest in school or were pulled by the incentive of a small gift card. Although, the current study did not seek out information regarding reason for participation it may have influenced the findings in some way. Second, the data used in this study were collected as part of a larger project, therefore there was limited variability in regards to the selection of measures and variables included in the study. For example, GPA was measured in a restricted range in which participants choose between 1-5 ranges, which matched their current GPA. This approach may have led to a more limited understanding of the variety present in grades for this population. To alleviate this limitation in the future, researchers should leave space for students to fill in their exact GPAs or follow the procedures necessary to procure student records and obtain official averages as the current student GPAs used in the current study were not verified by official school records. Additionally, researchers disagree regarding the usefulness of GPA as an outcome variable. Given these differences in opinions, additional means of measuring academic achievement (i.e., extracurricular activities, honors and awards, standardized test scores) should be examined to supplement reported GPAs. Another limitation to consider is the relevance of a variable to specifically address changes that may be present for YAAM students at different grade levels. While the current study began to address intersectionality by focusing on the associations between racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-

concept, the inclusion of a grade level variable may have added valuable information. Using the current data to more specifically examine changes in YAAM students as directly or indirectly related to grade or age would add to literature on within group differences, and increase awareness of how this social location does or does not connect with the other identity variables examined.

Next, the MIBI-T measure was used as a developmentally appropriate tool meant to assess the racial identity component within the YAAM population. Although still consistent and acceptable for use, the MIBI-T has only three items used to assess racial centrality and is less reliable than its original counterpart the MIBI, which offers a total of fifty-one items, and eight items to assess racial centrality. Therefore, possibly, the variation in racial identity may have been limited and impacted the results of RID in the current study. Finally, the ADMI, was used as a measure of masculinity for high school aged African American males. However, the measure was normed on Caucasian male freshman college students, differences in masculine expression between these groups may not have been examined or accounted for by this measure. Additionally, the ADMI is sensitive to males who endorse items related to hypermasculine behaviors and attitudes, possibly restricting the information that can be generalized to male populations that fall on the other end of the masculinity continuum.

Given the limitations of this study the results have limited generalizability. Furthermore, due to the design of this study causality cannot be inferred. Despite a number of limitations this research still provides a rich foundation for future research and replication.

## **Implications and Future Research**

The information gained as a result of this study provides clues to a number of interventions and research possibilities that should be considered in future work with YAAM. Foremost in digesting and applying these findings to future intervention and research is shift perspective. In many instances the outcomes of YAAM in educational settings are seen from a deficit perspective, meaning research with this population often focuses on the identifying the problem. Although the results are directly attached to a measurable academic outcome, the importance of this study lies in its intent to gain insight and better understand the possible intersections of identity variables.

The findings that YAAM who have higher levels of academic self-concept and masculinity are more likely to have lower GPAs implicitly suggest that researchers, educators, and clinicians need to be more attentive to the meaning of these variables in the lived experience of this population. Perhaps instead of simply being uninterested or engaged with academics, YAAM have created a shield, armor with which to protect their esteem and self-worth given the possible harm that experiences with peers and teachers may cause. Many YAAM at some point in their education will encounter aversive circumstances whether in regards to assumptions based on prejudice, unfair treatment, or lowered expectations. Consequently, to enact a belief in personhood, including the way an individual thinks about himself and his abilities as an African American, as a man, and as a student in a way that remains steady in the face of academic adversity makes sense. These protective mechanisms may relate to a number of things that impact educational achievement. However, the implication is that, in order to assist these young men in

consistently excelling academically, researchers, educators, and clinicians should be willing to examine why this “armor” may be necessary for YAAM and how to change it.

Attempts at future interventions with this group should be made on micro (immediate surroundings), meso (community), and macro (systems) levels. For example, individuals interacting with YAAM students on a daily basis (e.g., teachers, parents, volunteers) should articulate an awareness of the difficulties YAAM may face in academic settings and validate those experiences, while encouraging students to persist and highlighting their resilience. Further, this awareness and validation should be coupled with efforts to challenge the internal ambivalence YAAM may feel about the fit of academics and masculinity. Interventions at the micro level could include establishing a connection between academics and successful adults who share pieces of their identities (e.g., African American, male) to underscore the viability of academic success and both racial and masculine connectedness. Other low-level interventions such as including African American males in classroom examples, discussion of prior students achievements, as well as those who identifying successful African American men in a variety of occupations, may assist students in developing schemata to challenge the stereotypes and negative encounters they will most likely encounter at some point in their educations.

While some educators, counselors, and others may be familiar with the obstacles YAAM students encounter, many may not. Thus to create environments in which these young men can experience support, validation, and challenge, systems and organizations should work to incorporate self-reflection, multicultural awareness, and competencies as an essential component of working with all students. Therefore school systems,

professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association (APA), community groups and others should work to create and participate in workshops, trainings, and continuing education courses dedicated to the development of a multiculturally sound skill set. Additionally, open dialogues and programming concentrated on these issues by employers and organizations may make them more salient for those unfamiliar with the impediments to education YAAM students encounter. Perhaps, system supported interventions such as these may assist innumerable educators, help professionals, and community members challenge the assumptions and biases they hold about YAAM who struggle in academics. The goal being that, through an increased awareness of self and better understanding of contextual factors, those interacting with YAAM students may be more equipped to offer them what is needed to succeed.

Through changes at the micro and meso levels impacting the immediate environments and communities of this group, perhaps shifts would occur at other levels. For example, major changes must also occur at the macro level which includes cultural norms and societal changes in attitudes towards this population. The value assigned to the lives of YAAM is evident in the perpetuation of systematic inequity in judicial, political, and educational systems. The continued overt and covert discrimination experienced by young African American men communicate a disregard for their general well-being. The maintenance of systemic bias also helps to preserve the negative associations and assumptions made about YAAM. In efforts to counteract societal inequity, attention should be brought to the fallacies present in these systems and the novel information that may lead to their correction. Engagement with and dissemination of research specific to

the needs of YAAM students is one way to highlight these continued issues and their possible solutions.

Future research could expand and further the initial findings of this study in a number of ways. Because the sample used for this study was exclusive to adolescents, future study could further research by using participants in a different age range, educational setting, and/or social developmental level. Additionally, future studies may also attempt to trace participants throughout their high school or collegiate careers to gather longitudinal data. These two changes would contribute meaningful information about how identity intersections may evolve or develop over time as well as provide insight into the experiences of YAAM at varying life stages. The increased use of identity variables in future studies, along with socialization, perceived and/or experienced discrimination, and school quality measures may also lead to a more holistic view of academic outcomes. To improve future study, researchers may also seek to perform advanced statistical analyses. Specifically, more complex statistical procedures could be undertaken to deepen the understanding of within group differences using a cluster analysis. For example, using a cluster analysis with varying levels and combinations of identity factors could provide more information as to how exactly variables intersect to impact particular academic outcomes in YAAM populations.

Further avenues for research include the development of masculinity or racial identity measures or scales that are created and normed specifically for African American men. The creation of such measures may be able to link the theoretical and qualitative information gained from this population into a usable quantitative tool that more accurately assesses how masculinity and racial identity operate in the lives of YAAM.



The development of these types of measures could then be studied in association with both academic outcome variables and other identity variables to extend research on the topic.

The current study has revealed a number of interesting and important findings about the impact of academic self-concept, racial identity, and masculinity on GPA, however, a continued commitment to expanding research and interventions with young African American male students is necessary for lasting change to occur.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

#### **Psychological, Cognitive, & Contextual Predictors of African American Male Student Academic Identity**

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study about how high school students feel they are doing in school. Your child is being invited to take part in this research study because he is a student at \_\_\_\_\_ High School. If your child volunteers to take part in this study, he will be one of about 300 African American male high school students to do so.

The person in charge of this study is Dr. Kenneth Tyler, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology at the University of Kentucky. There will be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study. The purpose of the study is to determine whether certain ideas your child may have about himself are related to his experiences at and feeling about school.

By doing this study, we hope to learn how to make classroom teachers better prepared at interacting with African American male high school students. Many of the questions on the survey your child will complete ask about your child's feelings about and attitudes towards school, teacher-student interactions, being African American and a young African American man, African American culture, and race-related issues.

The research procedures will be conducted after school at \_\_\_\_\_ High School, with a location to be determined (i.e., the school cafeteria or auditorium). The total amount of time your child will be asked to volunteer for this study is two hours. Your child will receive \$20 for completing the survey to the best of his abilities. A candy bar will be provided to those who do not wish to complete the survey.

On the day where the research is scheduled to take place, your child will come to their designated site to complete the survey. Members of the research team will be there to greet and provide instructions for the session. Your child will be given a form, which will let them know that no one else will see their answers and they are free to not participate in the study. Your child will also be told that no classroom teachers will be allowed to participate or interact with your child during the survey completion time. Your child will be asked if they understand this form and will sign on the bottom line of the form and return the form if he/she wants to participate. Your child will then be provided a survey packet and a pencil. Instructions on how to complete the survey will be provided. Instructions for the surveys will be read aloud, while your child will read the instructions on his own. Your child will have two hours to complete his survey packet. Once surveys are completed and checked for missing pages, your child will be given \$20.

To the best of our knowledge, the things your child will be doing have no more risk of harm than he would experience in everyday life. We cannot and do not guarantee that your child will receive any personal benefits from taking part in this study. One possible

benefit for participating in this study is providing information to people who can, in the future, help to make school experiences better for your child.

If you decide that your child can take part in the study, it should be because you really want him to participate. Your child will not lose any benefits or rights he/she would normally have if you choose not to have him/her participate. Your child can stop answering survey questions at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights he/she had before volunteering. If you decide to not have your child participate in this study, your decision will have no effect on what happens with your child at his school.

If you do not want your child to take part in the study, you do not have to complete and return this form. As a result, your child will not be notified for participation in the survey completion and will not be expected to complete the survey. There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

Your child's information from the surveys will be combined with information from other students taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered, not on individual children or classrooms. Your child, his friends, or his school will NOT be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name, your child's name, your child's teachers' names and the school's name and any other identifying information private.

This study is confidential. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you give came from your child.

We may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

If you decide to allow your child to take part in the study, your child still has the right to decide at any time that he no longer wants to continue. You, nor your child, will be treated differently if your child decides to stop taking part in the study. Again, your child will receive \$20 for completing the survey to the best of his abilities. A candy treat or snack will be provided to those who do not wish to complete the survey.

Given the length of the survey, it is likely that your child may stay up to two hours after school to complete the survey and receive the \$20. Therefore, you will need to make sure that your child is able to make it home afterwards.

If you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study or your child's participation in it, you can contact the investigator, **Kenneth Tyler at (859) 257-7873 or [Kenneth.Tyler@uky.edu](mailto:Kenneth.Tyler@uky.edu)**. If you have any questions about your rights or your child's rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your condition or influence your willingness to continue taking part in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to have child take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to have child take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of child given consent to take part in the study

**Appendix B:**

**Assent Form**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Dr. Kenneth Tyler in the Department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology, College of Education, University of Kentucky. You are invited because you are an African American male high school student.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be provided a survey packet and a pencil and then instructions on how to complete the survey will be provided. Instructions for each survey will be read aloud, while you read quietly. You will have two hours (120 minutes) today to complete the survey packet. Once surveys are completed, you will receive \$20. A candy treat or snack will be provided to those who do not wish to complete the survey.

Participation in the study is finished once the completed survey has been submitted and \$20 has been provided to you.

Your family will know that you are in the study.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Dr. Tyler and/or one of his assistants. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Dr. Kenneth Tyler—or one of his assistants—questions at any time about anything in this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind at any point during the study. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do. You know your parent(s) have agreed to let you be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Legal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

## Appendix C:

### Oral Assent Script

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work at the University of Kentucky. I am interested in learning about how African American male high school students feel about being students and other information that may be related to such feelings. On your desk is a set of questionnaires and a pencil. In the questionnaire are questions that ask you about some of the ways you feel about yourself and the environment and people around you. I want you to read each question and circle the answer that you feel best answers the question.

Your participation in this survey or set of questionnaires is entirely voluntary. This means that you do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can stop participating at anytime. Twenty dollars (\$20) will be given to you once you turn in your completed survey packet. Another item will be provided to you if you do not want to participate or if you do not want to complete the survey. You will not get in trouble for wanting to stop completing the questionnaire.

Also, your participation in the survey is also confidential. This means that no one at \_\_\_\_\_ High School, not even your teachers, will know of your responses to the questions on the survey.

If you have any questions about anything in the questionnaire, please feel free to ask me.

Any questions? If not, please begin completing the survey and thank you. Again, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and if you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

**Appendix D:**  
**Demographic Data**

1. I receive free or reduced cost lunch at school.  Yes  NO
2. I live with:
- a. Mother  Yes  NO
  - b. Father  Yes  NO
  - c. Another Family Member  Yes  NO
  - d. A non-family member  Yes  NO
3. My mother graduated from a 4-year college  Yes  NO
4. My father graduated from a 4-year college  Yes  NO
5. My brother(s) and or sister(s) are attending or graduated from a 4-year college  
 Yes  NO
6. My current overall grade point average is:
- a. 3.5 or higher
  - b. 3.5-3.0
  - c. 3.0-2.5
  - d. 2.5-2.0
  - e. below 2.0
7. Grade level
- a. 9<sup>th</sup>
  - b. 10<sup>th</sup>
  - c. 11<sup>th</sup>
  - d. 12<sup>th</sup>
8. Please fill in terms of racial/ethnic group I consider myself to be \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E:

### Auburn Differential Masculinity Scale

#### Participant Instructions

The following statements describe certain beliefs. Please read each item carefully and decide how well it describes you. Rate each item on the following 5-point scale: 5 *very much like me*, 4 *like me*, 3 *a little like me*, 2 *not much like me*, 1 *not at all like me*.

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. If another man made a pass at my girlfriend/wife, I would tell him off.      | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I believe sometimes you've got to fight or people will walk all over you.    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. I think women should date one man.   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. I think men who show their emotions frequently are sissies.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. I think men who show they are afraid are weak.                               | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. I think men who cry are weak.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. I don't get mad, I get even  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Even if I was afraid, I would never admit it.                                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. I consider men superior to women in intellect.                               | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. I think women who say they are feminists are just trying to be like men.    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. I think women who are too independent need to be knocked down a peg or two. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. I don't feel guilty for long when I cheat on my girlfriend/wife.            | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. I know feminists want to be like men because men are better than women.     | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. Women, generally, are not as smart as men.                                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. My attitude regarding casual sex is "the more the better."                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



16. I would never forgive my wife if she was unfaithful.	5	4	3	2	1
17. There are two kinds of women: the kind I date and the kind I would marry.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I like to tell stories of my sexual experiences to my male friends.	5	4	3	2	1
19. I think it's okay for men to be a little rough during sex.	5	4	3	2	1
20. If a woman struggles while we are having sex, it makes me feel strong.	5	4	3	2	1
21. I am my own master; no one tells me what to do.	5	4	3	2	1
22. I try to avoid physical conflict.	5	4	3	2	1
23. If someone challenges me, I let him see my anger.	5	4	3	2	1
24. I wouldn't have sex with a woman who had been drinking.	5	4	3	2	1
25. Sometimes I have to threaten people to make them do what they should.	5	4	3	2	1
26. Many men are not as tough as me.	5	4	3	2	1
27. I value power over other people.	5	4	3	2	1
28. If a woman puts up a fight while we are having sex, it makes the sex more exciting.	5	4	3	2	1
29. I don't mind using verbal or physical threats to get what I want.	5	4	3	2	1
30. I think it is worse for a woman to be sexually unfaithful than for a man to be unfaithful.	5	4	3	2	1
31. I think it's okay for teenage boys to have sex.	5	4	3	2	1
32. I like to be in control of social situations.	5	4	3	2	1
33. I prefer to watch contact sports like football or boxing.	5	4	3	2	1
34. If I had a son I'd be sure to show him what a real man					

should do.	5	4	3	2	1
35. If a woman thinks she's better than me, I'll show her.	5	4	3	2	1
36. I notice women most for their physical characteristics like their breasts or body shape.	5	4	3	2	1
37. I think it's okay for men to date more than one woman.	5	4	3	2	1
38. I sometimes feel afraid.	5	4	3	2	1
39. I think men who stay home to take care of their children are just as weak as women.	5	4	3	2	1
40. I'd rather stay home and watch a movie than go out to a bar.	5	4	3	2	1
41. I like to brag about my sexual conquests to my friends.	5	4	3	2	1
42. When something bad happens to me I feel sad.	5	4	3	2	1
43. I can date many women at the same time without commitment.	5	4	3	2	1
44. I don't mind using physical violence to defend what I have.	5	4	3	2	1
45. I think men should be generally aggressive in their behavior.	5	4	3	2	1
46. I would initiate a fight if someone threatened me.	5	4	3	2	1
47. Women need men to help them make up their minds.	5	4	3	2	1
48. If some guy tries to make me look like a fool, I'll get him back.	5	4	3	2	1
49. I consider myself quite superior to most other men.	5	4	3	2	1
50. I get mad when something bad happens to me.	5	4	3	2	1
51. I want the woman I marry to be pure.	5	4	3	2	1

52. I like to be the boss.	5	4	3	2	1
53. I like to think about the men I've beaten in physical fights.	5	4	3	2	1
54. I would fight to defend myself if the other person threw the first punch.	5	4	3	2	1
55. If another man made a pass at my girlfriend/wife, I would want to beat him up.	5	4	3	2	1
56. Sometimes I have to threaten people to make them do what I want.	5	4	3	2	1
57. I think it's okay to have sex with a woman who is drunk.	5	4	3	2	1
58. If I exercise, I play a real sport like football or weight lifting.	5	4	3	2	1
59. I feel it is unfair for a woman to start something sexual but refuse to go through with it.	5	4	3	2	1
60. I often get mad.	5	4	3	2	1

## Appendix F:

### Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity- Teen

*Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own attitudes, using the 5-point scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the scale below to best represent your answers.*

(1) Really Disagree; (2) Kind of Disagree; (3) Neutral; (4) Kind of Agree; (5) Really Agree

1. I feel close to other Black people. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people. \_\_\_\_\_
3. If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would say is that I'm Black. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Black parents should surround their children with Black art and Black books. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from Black businesses. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Blacks should support Black entertainment by going to Black movies and watching Black TV shows. \_\_\_\_\_
7. People of all minority groups should stick together and fight discrimination.
8. There are other people who experience discrimination similar to Blacks.
9. Blacks should spend less time focusing on how we differ from other minority groups and more time focusing on how we are similar to people from other minority groups. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Most people think that Blacks are as smart as people of other races. \_\_\_\_\_
11. People think that Blacks are as good as people from other races. \_\_\_\_\_
12. People from other races think that Blacks have made important contributions. \_\_\_\_\_
13. I am happy that I am Black. \_\_\_\_\_
14. I am proud to be Black. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I feel good about Black people. \_\_\_\_\_
16. It is important that Blacks go to White Schools so that they can learn how to act around Whites. \_\_\_\_\_
17. I think it is important for Blacks not to act Black around White people. \_\_\_\_\_
18. Blacks should act more like Whites to be successful in this society. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as Black.
20. Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as Blacks. \_\_\_\_\_
21. Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see. \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix G:**  
**Academic Self Concept Scale**

Listed below are a number of statements concerning school-related attitudes. Rate each item as it pertains to you personally. Base your ratings on how you feel most of the time. Use the following scale to rate each statement:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
A	B	C	D

INDICATE YOUR RESPONSE BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE LETTER. Be sure to answer all items. Also try to respond to each item independently, do not be influenced by your previous choices.

	S D	D	A	S A
1. Being a student is a very rewarding experience.	A	B	C	D
2. If I try hard enough, I will be able to get good grades.	A	B	C	D
3. Most of the time my efforts in school are rewarded.	A	B	C	D
4. No matter how hard I try I don't do well in school.	A	B	C	D
5. I often expect to do poorly on exams.	A	B	C	D
6. All in all, I feel I am a capable student.	A	B	C	D
7. I do well in my courses given the amount of time I dedicate to my studying.	A	B	C	D
8. My parents are not satisfied with my grades in school.	A	B	C	D
9. Others view me as intelligent.	A	B	C	D
10. Most courses are very easy for me.	A	B	C	D
11. I sometimes feel like dropping out of school.	A	B	C	D
12. Most of my classmates do better in school than I do.	A	B	C	D
13. Most of my instructors think that I am a good student.	A	B	C	D
14. At times I feel school is too difficult for me.	A	B	C	D
15. All in all, I am proud of my grades in school.	A	B	C	D
16. Most of the time while taking a test I feel confident.	A	B	C	D
17. I feel capable of helping others with their classwork.	A	B	C	D
18. I feel teachers' standards are too high for me.	A	B	C	D
19. It's hard for me to keep up with my classwork.	A	B	C	D
20. I am satisfied with the class assignments that I turn in.	A	B	C	D
21. At times I feel like a failure.	A	B	C	D

22. I feel I don't study enough before a test.	A	B	C	D
23. Most exams are easy for me.	A	B	C	D
24. I have doubts that I will do well in school.	A	B	C	D
25. For me, studying hard pays off.	A	B	C	D
	S D	D	A	S A
26. I have a hard time getting through school.	A	B	C	D
27. I am good at scheduling my study time.	A	B	C	D
28. I have a fairly clear sense of my academic goals.	A	B	C	D
29. I'd like to be a much better student than I am now.	A	B	C	D
30. I often get discouraged about school.	A	B	C	D
31. I enjoy doing my schoolwork.	A	B	C	D
32. I consider myself a very good student.	A	B	C	D
33. I usually get the grades I deserve in my courses.	A	B	C	D
34. I do not study as much as I should.	A	B	C	D
35. I usually feel on top of my work by the end of the school year.	A	B	C	D
36. Others consider me a good student.	A	B	C	D
37. I feel that I am better than the average student.	A	B	C	D
38. In most of the classes, I feel that my classmates are better prepared than I am.	A	B	C	D
39. I feel that I don't have the necessary abilities for certain classes.	A	B	C	D
40. I have poor study habits.	A	B	C	D

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## Vita

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### EDUCATION

- 2008-Present Ph.D. candidate in Counseling Psychology, University of Kentucky  
Dissertation Chair: Keisha Love, Ph.D.  
Dissertation Title: The Impact of racial identity, masculinity, and academic self-concept on the academic achievement of African American male high school students
- 2010-2011 Education Specialist in Counseling Psychology  
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
- 2008-2010 Masters of Science in Counseling Psychology  
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
- 2004-2008 Bachelor of Arts in Psychology  
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### SUPERVISED CLINICAL AND SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE

- July 2013- Present  
Doctoral Intern  
University of Maryland Counseling Center, College Park, MD  
Supervisor: Ted Pickett, Ph.D.                      Doctoral Supervisor: Noah Collins, Ph.D.
- August 2011-May 2013  
Therapist and Group Leader, Doctoral Practicum  
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Supervisor: Apryl Tandy, LCSW                      Doctoral Supervisor: Jeff Reese, Ph.D.
- January 2012- May 2012  
University of Kentucky Counseling Psychology Program  
Supervisor: Keisha Love, Ph.D.
- August 2010- July 2011  
Therapist and Group Co-Leader, Post-Masters Practicum  
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- January 2010- May 2010  
Mental Health Counselor, Post-Masters Practicum  
Family Counseling Services, Lexington, KY  
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Mental Health Counselor

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Supervisor: Marcia Partin, LCSW      Doctoral Supervisor: Jeff Reese, Ph.D.

#### PUBLICATIONS

Stevens-Watkins, D., & Lloyd, H. (2010). Recent perceptions of health service providers among African American men: There is work to do. *Journal of Best Practices in Health Professions Diversity: Research, Education and Policy* 3, 59-71.

Tyler, K.M., Tyler, A., Rice, D., Lloyd, H., Burris, J., Thompson, F., Whitley, R.  
The content of African American male characterization: Towards a model of African American male identity. Manuscript in Progress

#### PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Cunningham, L., Farro, A., Lloyd, H. (2011). Ethical Considerations for Technologically-Based Assessments. Poster presented at the 119th Annual American Psychological Association Conference in Washington, DC.

Lloyd, H. (2011). Professionals on Parade. Kentucky Psychological Association Annual Conference, Frankfort, KY.

Lloyd, H. (2011). Manhood and Masculinity: Perspectives of African American Men. The Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology Colloquium, Lexington, KY

Stevens-Watkins, D., & Lloyd, H. (2010). Honesty in survey research with people of color. Poster presented at the 118th Annual American Psychological Association Conference, San Diego, CA

Stevens-Watkins, D., & Lloyd, H. (2010). Risk for suicide in African American males. Poster presented at the 188th Annual American Psychological Association Conference, San Diego, CA.

Love, K., Thomas, D., Smith, L., Lloyd, H., Hargrove, G., Freison., K., Smith, La Toya. (2008). Parental Attachments and Emotional Well-Being among African American College Students: Research Perspectives and Student Perspectives for Counselors. Kentucky Psychological Association Conference. Louisville, KY.