

LESSON PLAN

BLACK MALE SCHOLAR IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION

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CONNECTIONS TO MIDDLE SCHOOL AND/OR HIGH SCHOOL

Middle and high school students will learn about Black male scholar identity and the impact various social beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes have on Black male identity. The lesson draws upon the work of Gilman Whiting on scholar identity in Black males, research studies from the *Black History Bulletin* volume 77, no. 1, and a chapter from Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow*. Students will learn how the media creates racialized narratives that confirm and reinforce stereotypes of Black males and will develop a course of action that focuses on creating opportunities for young men of color or a counternarrative that identifies racial bias and the impact it has on Blacks and others.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS) STANDARDS

Social Studies Teacher Expectations

- Learners will understand how personal, social, cultural, and environmental factors contribute to the development and the growth of personal identity.
- Learners will be able to identify biases that can influence a person's perception of other individuals including individuals belonging to groups with different physical, social, or cultural characteristics.
- Learners will be able to describe the influence of perception, attitudes, values, and beliefs on personal identity and the interactions of peoples across time and space.
- Learners will demonstrate understanding by identifying a list of goals for personal development and writing a plan that demonstrates courses of action that can lead to those goals.
- Learners will demonstrate understanding by using vignettes, cases, or works of literature that identify perceptions, bias, and stereotypes, and writing a summary paragraph identifying the impact on the individual and others.

ACTIVITY 1

Give students a short background on President Barack Obama's White House Initiative on Educational Excellence. Introduce students to President Barack Obama's newest initiative, "My Brother's Keeper: Creating Opportunities for Boys and Young Men of Color." Use facts from both initiatives to give students a landscape of the overall mission and goals.

African Americans lack equal access to highly effective teachers and principals, safe schools, and challenging college-preparatory classes, and they disproportionately experience school discipline and referrals to special education. African American student achievement not only lags behind that of their domestic peers by an average of two grade levels, but also behind students in almost every other developed nation. Over a third of African American students do not graduate from high school on time with a regular high school diploma, and only four percent of African American high school graduates interested in college are college-ready across a range of subjects.¹

Using a smart board or projector, show students a copy of the initiatives. Highlight key parts of the initiative's policies, missions, and functions. Lead a five- to ten-minute dialogue on the purpose of the White House's involvement in the education of African Americans. Instruct students to read both initiatives.

SOURCE A: President Barack Obama’s White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans (2013)²

SOURCE B: My Brother’s Keeper: Creating Opportunities for Boys and Young Men of Color (2014)³

ASSESSMENT

Ask students to collaborate and create an action plan to improve education for African Americans. Encourage students to use the initiative as a template for student action in their school. Direct students to part three of the My Brother’s Keeper initiative online. Have students collaborate and share their story with the White House: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>. Look for the share your story prompt “How are you and your community helping to create opportunities for disadvantaged youth?”

ACTIVITY 2

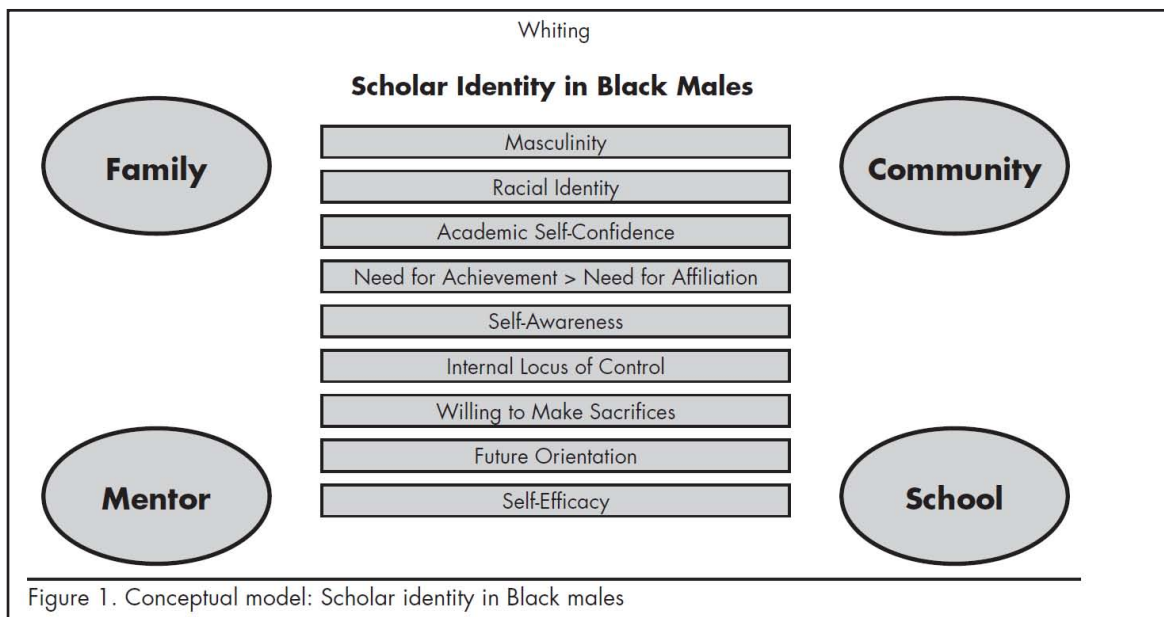
Provide a short background on the co-founders and the purpose of the *Black History Bulletin (BHB)* publication (formerly the *Negro History Bulletin*). Discuss the role of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) and the importance of studying African American culture and history. Use visuals and photographs from the ASALH website to guide the discussion. Encourage students to write down the main ideas. Distribute copies of the *BHB* volume 77, no. 1, which can be accessed on the ASALH website. ⁴

SOURCE C: *The Black History Bulletin* Volume 77, No. 1

Read Dr. LaVar J. Charleston’s *BHB* article “From the Gridiron to the Ivory Tower: A Case for Cultivating a Student Identity Development Curriculum for African American Male Student-Athletes.”

ASSESSMENT

How does Dr. Charleston’s student identity development curriculum promote scholar identity in Black males? Write two paragraphs citing various examples from his article. Use the conceptual model (figure 1) to guide your analysis of the article.



ACTIVITY 3

Using Michelle Alexander’s work as a guide, discuss the myth of a postracial society, the drug war, and the prison-industrial complex. Provide a short introduction to Michelle Alexander’s book *The New Jim Crow* and the purpose for reading her material in class. Instruct students to read chapter 5 of Alexander’s book. Instruct students to take notes or make an outline on important terminology like *structural racism*, *War on Drugs*, *racial segregation*, and *racial indifference*.

SOURCE D: Read chapter 5 of Michelle Alexander’s book *The New Jim Crow*.⁶

ASSESSMENT

Write an essay or journal entry using the following prompts.

- What is structural racism and how does it manifest in society?
- How does the racial caste system perpetuate mass incarceration of Black males?
- President Reagan launched a War on Drugs, which has profound implications for the New Jim Crow. How does the War on Drugs impact African American and Latino males today? In what ways does it perpetuate the New Jim Crow?
- What are some ways that we as social agents disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline?

ACTIVITY 4

Have students review their products (essays, journals, responses) from the previous four activities. Inform students that this is a “pulling it all together” lesson, which will bridge the concepts from all four activities in a culminating course of action or counternarrative on the development of Black male scholarly identity.

ASSESSMENT

Instruct students to choose a “pulling it all together” activity that helps them conceptually grasp the main tenets of Black male scholar identity. Provide examples or prompts for the activities.

- Students can write a course of action on disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline through community/grassroots efforts.
- Students can write a short essay on President Obama’s executive order and how to link parts of the initiative to a student identity curriculum in their school.
- Students can start a student task force to assess and recommend practices that create opportunities for young men of color.

Notes

1. President Barack Obama, “White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans,” 2013, <http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/whieaaa/executive-order/>.
2. The White House, “My Brother’s Keeper: Creating Opportunities for Boys and Young Men of Color,” 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>.
3. Obama, “White House Initiative.”
4. The Association for the Study of African American Life and History, www.asalh.org.
5. Gilman Whiting, “From At Risk to At Promise: Developing Scholar Identities among Black Males,” *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education* 17, no. 4 (2006), 222–29.
6. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York: The New Press, 2010).