

DEVELOPING A SCHOLARLY IDENTITY MINDSET: AN AFTERWORD TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

By Chance W. Lewis and Jerlando F. L. Jackson

In the United States, the educational pipeline for Blacks, particularly Black males, is at best, a leaky faucet.¹ This great country prides itself on being a world-leader in the field of higher education—serving as home to some of the best higher education institutions in the world. However, it is safe to say that not all students who attend these institutions have fully embraced a “scholarly identity” and developed aspirations for high levels of academic achievement.

In the fast-paced twenty-first century, media perceptions of Blacks have created new challenges in preparing this population to develop, embrace, and sustain an identity that is focused on scholarly aspirations. Most notably, a multitude of media images make Blacks, particularly Black males, who choose a “scholarly identity” or an intellectual career path seem like exceptions to the rule rather than the norm for this population.² As a result, we, the guest editors of this special issue, note that it is absolutely critical to revisit the stages of ethnic identity development³ given the plethora of media influences that Black students and professionals face on a daily basis (e.g., social media and mainstream media).

The unfortunate reality is that many Blacks, given their daily lives in their homes, communities, and schools, are not effectively prepared to develop identities as scholars or to understand the impact that media influences may have on their aspirations. Additionally, this demographic faces a unique challenge in that the majority of mainstream media portrayals of this population are negative, circumscribing aspirations to a small set of careers as athletes, entertainers, or criminals.⁴

As a result, a quiet crisis exists as this population struggles to fulfill societal expectations weighed against expectations of fully utilizing their intellectual and scholarly potential. Unfortunately, too many Blacks are succumbing to societal norms instead of taking advantage of opportunities to gain access to our nation’s most prestigious institutions.⁵ As a result, fewer Blacks are able to obtain job opportunities or start business ventures that take advantage of their scholarly identities, more fully utilizing their “smarts” to benefit society.

Expanding the number of Blacks who fully embrace their scholarly identities is critically important for scholarly investigation. This edited volume, *The Impact of Media on Scholar Identity Development*, offered its readers a cohesive and comprehensive examination of the experiences that shape Blacks to embrace this mindset.

ARTICLES

This special issue was organized into four articles. First, Ronald Parker and James L. Moore III provided a qualitative examination of seven Black male college students’ perceptions of media and the stereotypes they encountered about Blackness and maleness. The findings provided useful and applicable insight into how Black male students may construct and project a healthy identity in today’s digital media culture.

Second, Marlon C. James critically examined his own journey at a predominantly White institution and his development of a Black scholar identity as a faculty member. This article illustrated the difficulty of staying true to oneself while working in a Eurocentric system. We are sure this resonated with many Black faculty and administrators in higher education who are facing the same issues on a daily basis.

Third, Lamont A. Flowers, Lawrence O. Flowers, Tiffany A. Flowers, and James L. Moore III explored the impact of online science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses on student learning at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). These authors examined data from 170 students enrolled in online and traditional courses in science and engineering to determine if students in online courses self-reported greater cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning gains than students in traditional courses. Results from this important examination revealed that Black students taking traditional science and engineering courses self-reported greater affective and psychomotor learning gains than students taking online courses. These findings have large implications as we prepare more Black students to enter STEM-related professions.

Finally, LaVar J. Charleston examined how significant involvement in intercollegiate athletics creates an oppositional relationship to academic and student identity development among Black male student-athletes. This article presented a personal case that implicates the utilization of a student identity development curriculum to overcome barriers formulated by pervasive media imagery and an overconcentration on athletic prowess, rather than intellectual ability. By exploring student development literature through the lens of his own personal case study, Charleston elucidated how these influences can affect a student-athlete's development and presented a model for improving the educational outcomes of black male student-athletes.

These articles offer readers cutting-edge action research and practices that facilitate powerful counternarratives which disrupt pejorative portrayals of Black males in the media.

REFRAMING BLACK MALE IDENTITY

Few publications have systematically attempted to examine this population within and across various sectors of society. Hopefully, this volume assisted readers in understanding many of the complex issues and experiences facing this population so they can take full advantage of the opportunities presented to them and more fully embrace their scholarly identities in academic and career pursuits. Moreover, the scholarship and overarching lesson plan in this issue will equip teachers, researchers, and administrators with new approaches and fresh perspectives that not only further the development of Black male scholarly identity in the classroom, but also advance our journey toward justice and equality.

Notes:

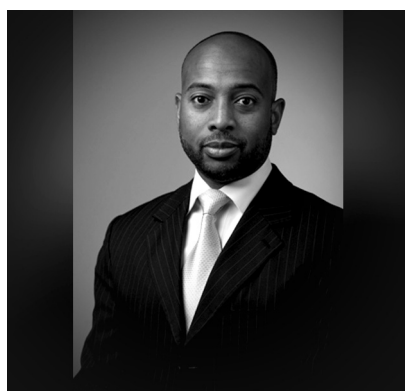
1. Donna Ford, *Reversing Underachievement Among Gifted Black Students: Theory, Research and Practice* (Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, 2010); Jerlando Jackson, ed., *Strengthening the Educational Pipeline for African Americans: Informing Policy and Practice* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007).
2. Chance Lewis and Kris Erskine, *The Dilemmas of Being an African American Male in the New Millennium* (West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publications, 2008).
3. William Cross and Peony Fhagen-Smith, "Nigrescence and Ego Identity Development: Accountability for Differential Black Identity," in *Counseling across Cultures*, eds. Paul Pederson, Juris Dranguns, Walter Lonner, and Joseph Trimble (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 108–23.

4. Lewis and Erskine, *Dilemmas*.

5. Shaun Harper, "Black Male Student Success in Higher Education: A Report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study," *Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2012); Jerlando Jackson and James L. Moore III, "African American Males in Education: Endangered or Ignored," *Teachers College Record* 2 (2006): 201–5; Jerlando Jackson and James L. Moore III, "The African American Male Crisis in Education: A Popular Media Infatuation or Need Public Policy Response," *American Behavioral Scientist* 51, no. 7 (2008): 847–53; Lewis and Erskine, *Dilemmas*.



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