

ED 401 371

UD 031 369

AUTHOR Jackson, Cydney H.; And Others  
 TITLE African-American Women's Mentoring Experiences.  
 PUB DATE Aug 96  
 NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (104th, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 9-13, 1996).  
 PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS \*Black Students; College Faculty; \*College Students; Ethnic Groups; \*Females; Higher Education; Interpersonal Relationship; \*Mentors; Minority Groups; Modeling (Psychology); \*Racial Identification; \*Self Concept; Significant Others  
 IDENTIFIERS African Americans; \*Identity (Psychological)

## ABSTRACT

Intervention studies suggest that providing appropriate role models produces positive differences in ethnic minority members' levels of career maturity. The availability of appropriate role models is particularly important for African American women because of their double minority status; neither career interventions developed just for women nor career interventions developed just for African Americans address the issues that these women face (S. L. Bowman, 1993). The availability of appropriate role models for African American women was studied on two university campuses, and the impact of this availability on the self-concept of African American women was studied. Participants were 159 African American women from the University of Kansas and Ball State University. They provided demographic information, completed a measure of their within-culture identity, and described their role models. Seventy-six percent indicated that they did have an achievement role model. The role model was a relative 56% of the time, a teacher or professor 18% of the time, and a person in the media 15% of the time. Data show that African American women prefer African American women role models, but that they are not finding them on college campuses. The identification with a relative or teacher from outside the college community may provide a buffer for the negative impact of being a token in the university environment. (Contains 2 tables and 12 references.) (SLD)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
 \* from the original document. \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

African-American Women's Mentoring Experiences

Cydney H. Jackson and Mary E. Kite

Ball State University

Nyla R. Branscombe

University of Kansas

Presented at the 1996 meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Canada.

Correspondence should be sent to Mary E. Kite, Department of Psychological Science, Ball State

University, Muncie, Indiana 47306, e-mail 00mekite@bsuvc.bsu.edu.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it  
 Minor changes have been made to improve  
reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-  
ment do not necessarily represent official  
OERI position or policy

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND  
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL  
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary Kite

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Abstract

Intervention studies suggest that providing appropriate role models produces positive differences in ethnic minority member's levels of career maturity (Dunn & Veltman, 1989). The availability of appropriate role models is particularly important for African-American women; because of their double minority status, neither career interventions developed just for women nor career interventions developed just for African-Americans address the issues that these women face (Bowman, 1993). We explore the availability of appropriate role models for African-American women on two university campuses and explore the impact of this availability on the self-concept of African-American women.

## African-American Women's Mentoring Experiences

The importance of accessible role models to African American's success has been widely noted. Garibaldi (1991), for example, points to the availability of roles models as one of six factors accounting for the success of historically black colleges. Tangible evidence for his claim comes from the fact that black colleges account for about one fifth of the total African American enrollment in higher education, but produce two-fifths of all African American Bachelor's degrees and one third of all Master's degrees. Intervention studies suggest that providing appropriate role models produces positive differences in ethnic minority's levels of career maturity (Dunn & Veltman, 1989).

Research suggests that, when available, African American adolescents overwhelmingly prefer role models of their own ethnicity (Thomas & Shields, 1987). Unfortunately, ethnic minority role models are a scarce resource in higher education and the few who are there are often overburdened (cf. Moses, 1989). Yet the scarcity of appropriate role models may influence the college experience for African-Americans compared with White-Americans; African-Americans, for example, are almost twice as likely to drop out of college as White-Americans (e.g., Steele, 1992). These statistics are particularly troubling because African-Americans on the whole, report valuing education more than Whites (Cook & Curtin, 1987; Sigelman & Welch, 1991).

The availability of appropriate role models is particularly important for African American women, who are typically categorized as women or as ethnic minorities, but rarely as a member of both groups (Bowman, 1993). As a result of their double minority status, neither career interventions developed for women nor career interventions developed for African Americans address the complexities these women face. For example, African Americans tend to be more

group centered, placing more value on cooperation and interpersonal matters than do Caucasians who tend to have a more individualistic, competitive focus (Sue & Sue, 1990). Yet African American women may be more likely than their male counterparts to adopt a family-oriented perspective, leading them to focus on traditional gender roles and careers (Coates, 1987).

The presence of accessible role models undoubtedly influences African-American's self-concept. Some argue that disidentification with school leaves many African-Americans vulnerable to dropping out (Steele, 1992). For other individuals, disidentification with their ethnic minority group may occur, and this can create a different type of psychological vulnerability including reduced self-esteem and alienation (see Branscombe & Harvey, 1995; Phinney, 1990; Porter & Washington, 1979). In this article, we explore the link between the availability of an appropriate role model and the self-concept of African American women.

### Method

**Participants.** One hundred fifty-nine African-American females from the University of Kansas and Ball State University participated in the experiment to fulfill an introductory course requirement. The majority of respondents grew up in primarily African American neighborhoods ( $M = 60.92\%$ ,  $SD = 38.97$ ) and had primarily African American friends ( $M = 73.32\%$ ,  $SD=27.52$ ). Slightly fewer than half went to a majority African American high school ( $M = 48.37\%$ ,  $SD = 33.91$ )

**Procedure.** Participants provided demographic information and then completed a measure of their within culture identity (e.g., primarily identified as African American, female, or American). Those who indicated they had an achievement role model reported the race and gender of that person and their satisfaction with that individual. Participants from the Ball State sample also described who that person was; these women also completed a measure assessing the

perceived climate of the university. All participants reported their degree of perceived control, satisfaction, depression, and loneliness.

## Results

Seventy-six percent of the sample indicated that they did have an achievement role model whom they looked up to. Data from the Ball State sample indicated that 56% of the time, this role model was a relative; other categories consistently checked were teacher/professor (18%) or person in the media (15%). It is noteworthy that the majority of the role models were not members of the university community (98%). The role models were primarily African American women (74%), followed by African American men (15.3%), white women (5.6%), and white men (5.6%). Regardless of role model sex or race, satisfaction with the role model was high ( $M = 5.17$  on a 6-point scale). However, race of role model was marginally related to within culture identity  $\chi^2(2) = 4.99, p < .08$ ; preference for an ethnic minority role model was greater in those who placed greater importance on either their gender or racial identities (92%) or both (90%) versus their American identity (64%). Moreover, gender of role model was related to within culture identity,  $\chi^2(2) = 8.22, p < .02$ ; those who placed greater importance on both race and gender (85.5%) were more likely to prefer a female role model compared to those who placed greater importance on either race or gender (58.3%) or their American identity (54.5%).

Personal well-being also varied by within culture identity (see Table 1); those identified as American reported greater control but more depression than the other two groups. Satisfaction was highest for those who reported both gender and race as important.

Despite the relative unavailability of an achievement role model on the university campus, participants were not dissatisfied with the climate of the university (see Table 2). Significant  $t$  tests comparing mean ratings on the chilly climate items to the midpoint of the scale indicated

more positive than neutral scores on that measure.

### Discussion

Our data show that African American women overwhelmingly prefer African American women role models, but that they are not finding these women on university campuses. Moreover, this preference is greater for those who identify as either African American or women rather than Americans. Although the unavailability of a role model does not appear to affect perceptions of the campus climate, perhaps the identification with a relative or teacher from outside the university provides a buffer from the negative impact of being a token in a university environment (cf. Moses, 1989). However, achievement data for ethnic minorities suggest that the success of these women is not guaranteed (e.g., Steele, 1992) and additional data suggest that more readily available role models is important to ensure this success (e.g., Bowman, 1993). Our findings that cultural identity is related to well-being support this claim. Unfortunately, relatively few studies have examined the impact of role model availability on African American women's achievement; future research should more closely examine these issues.

## References

- Bowman, S. L. (1993). Career intervention strategies for ethnic minorities. The Career Development Quarterly, *42*, 14-25.
- Branscombe, N. R., & Harvey, R. (1995). Coping with prejudice among African-Americans: Implications for group identification and self-esteem protection. Unpublished manuscript, University of Kansas.
- Coates, D. L. (1987). Gender differences in the structure and support characteristics of Black adolescents' social networks. Sex Roles, *17*, 667-687.
- Cook, T. D., & Curtin, T. R. (1987). The mainstream and the underclass: Why are the differences so salient and the similarities so unobtrusive? In J. C. Masters & W. P. Smith (Eds.), Social comparison, social justice, and relative deprivation (pp. 217-264). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Garibaldi, A. M. (1991). The role of historically Black colleges in facilitating resilience among African-American students. Education and Urban Society, *21*, 103-112.
- Moses, Y. T. (1989). Black women in academe: Issues and strategies. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges Project on the Status and Education of Women.
- Phinney, J. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. Psychological Bulletin, *108*, 499-514.
- Porter, J. R., & Washington, R. E. (1979). Black identity and self-esteem: A review of studies of the Black self-concept, 1968-1978. Annual Review of Sociology, *5*, 53-74.
- Sigelman, L., & Welch, S. (1991). Black Americans' views of racial inequality: The dream deferred. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1990). Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice. New York: Wiley.

Steele, C. (1992, April). Race and schooling of Black Americans. The Atlantic Monthly, 68-78.

Thomas, V. G. & Shields, L. C. (1987). Gender influences on work values of black adolescents. Adolescence, 22, 37-43.

Table 1

Personal Well-Being by Within Culture Measure.

---

	Both gender and race	Either gender or race	American	F	p
Control	4.75	4.79	5.62	4.31	.03
Satisfaction	4.12	4.79	4.69	4.14	.07
Depression	2.79	3.50	1.85	9.30	.007
Loneliness	2.81	2.86	2.08	ns.	
	n=106	n=14	n=13		

---

Note. Higher numbers indicate more positive well-being.

Table 2

Mean Scores on Chilly Climate Items Compared to Midpoint of Scale

<u>Item</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>
1. Professors at Ball State are approachable when I wish to discuss career plans.*	3.25	1.27	-3.34*
2. Professors at Ball State do not take students of my ethnicity seriously.	4.06	1.74	<1
3. Professors at Ball State make eye contact with me during lecture.*	3.06	1.95	-2.73
4. Professors at Ball State imply I need extra assistance even when I am confident of my abilities.	2.66	1.75	-4.33*
5. There are professors at Ball State who serve as role models or mentors to me.*	4.72	2.11	1.93
6. I am given ample opportunity to participate in classroom discussions.*	2.44	1.81	-4.87*
7. Professors at Ball State treat me with respect.*	2.44	1.08	-8.17*
8. I have been treated unfairly by professors at Ball State because of my ethnicity.	2.94	1.87	-3.21*
9. I have often had professors in whose classes I felt too uncomfortable to ask questions.	3.41	1.95	-1.71
10. I have professors at Ball State who recognize and greet me outside of class.*	3.22	1.96	-2.25
11. I feel comfortable at Ball State even though most of my fellow students are white.*	2.75	1.52	-4.65*
12. The white students in my classes make me feel unwelcome.	2.44	1.54	-5.73
13. My professors ask me to speak for all members of my ethnic group.	3.41	2.17	-1.54
14. I benefit by being a minority group member here at Ball State.*	4.03	2.01	<1

Note. Higher numbers indicate more positive attitudes. Items marked with \* are recoded; to interpret mean, item should be worded in the negative.



U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



# REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

UD031 369

## I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <i>African American Women's Mentoring Experiences</i>	
Author(s): <i>Cydney Jackson, Mary Kite &amp; Nyla Branscombe</i>	
Corporate Source: <i>Ball State University</i>	Publication Date: <i>8/96</i>

## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.



Check here  
For Level 1 Release:  
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Sample*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 1

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Sample*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 2



Check here  
For Level 2 Release:  
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but not in paper copy.

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exemption is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Sign here → please

Signature: <i>Mary Kite</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <i>MARY Kite Professor</i>	
Organization/Address: <i>Dept. of Psychological Science Ball State Univ. Muncie IN 47306</i>	Telephone: <i>317 285 1702</i>	FAX: <i>317 285 - 8980</i>
	E-Mail Address: <i>mkite@wp.bsui.edu</i>	Date: <i>8/21/96</i>



(over)

### III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

### IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

### V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

**ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education**  
Box 40, Teachers College  
Columbia University  
New York, NY 10027

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

**ERIC Processing and Reference Facility**  
1100 West Street, 2d Floor  
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080

Toll Free: 800-799-3742

FAX: 301-953-0263

e-mail: [ericfac@inet.ed.gov](mailto:ericfac@inet.ed.gov)

WWW: <http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com>