

EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF SAME-RACE OCCUPATIONAL ROLE  
MODELS AND OCCUPATIONAL STEREOTYPES ON ELEMENTARY-AGED  
BLACK STUDENTS' SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

A Dissertation

by

KARLEN BROOK MOORE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010

Major Subject: Counseling Psychology

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Linda G. Castillo
Committee Members,	Reuben A. Buford May
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## ABSTRACT

Examination of the Influence of Same-Race Occupational Role Models and Occupational Stereotypes on Elementary-Aged Black Students' School Engagement.

(August 2010)

Karlen Brook Moore, B.S.; M.S., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Linda G. Castillo

Oppositional Culture Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory propositions were explored via employment of social cognitive career theory mechanisms. The effects of observed same-race occupational role models and occupational stereotypes and their indirect effects on school engagement through occupational expectations and future aspirations were explored in elementary-aged Blacks.

Occupational expectations and future aspirations of Black youth were not significantly affected by occupational prestige of jobs held by observed same-race occupational role models. However, it was found that future aspirations of Black youth significantly impacted their school engagement. Future aspirations and school engagement were not significantly affected directly or indirectly by occupational stereotypes. Other noteworthy findings were that educational expectations and future aspirations were negatively correlated with grade. Future studies should be done to further explore relevant contextual factors which can affect school engagement in

elementary-aged Blacks, they should also explore declining educational expectations and aspirations with grade.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, spiritual and biological, especially my father and mother (Sherrell and Delores Moore) who planted a desire for education in me at an early age. Also, this paper is written in the memory of my grandfather, O.L. Flowers, who valued education and adamantly sought it for his children and grandchildren.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would also like to thank my father and mother (Sherrell & Delores Moore). The past nine months have been awesome. To my parents and siblings, you guys have been a source of support, encouragement and hope. You guys sacrificed much financially and have prayed and fasted for me as I wrote. This dissertation is truly a collective accomplishment. My promise to you is that I will get better and that I will not forget that which I first learned.

Finally, thanks to my friends (Angela, Marion, Bill, My Bryan Family, & The Ohio Clique!), Counseling Psychology Faculty Members and staff (Kristie Stramaski and Cathy Watson) for your support through a challenging endeavor. I also want to extend my gratitude to Hilliard Elementary administrators, teachers and students; without their support and assistance I would have no data for my dissertation.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Unique Occupational History of Blacks**

Similar to other visible racial/ethnic groups, Blacks developed societies that valued work, business, and trade, but have an interrupted occupational history due to slavery, colonialism and continued oppression (Carter & Cook, 1992). Jaynes and Williams (1989) stated there was a time in our recent history where most Black Americans could not work, live, shop, eat, seek entertainment, or travel where they chose. Perhaps most startling is the assertion that “African-American people since slavery have faced a working life wherein the option of implementing one’s self-concept has remained an elusive dream (Blustein, 2006, p.156)”. Deng and Zhang (2008) reported Blacks in white –collar occupations increased in 1984 (38.2%) and in 1994 (42.2%) compared to the percent in 1974 (23.3%), but stated this percentage declined in 2002 (27.7%).

The occupational history of Blacks and current trends has significantly impacted current occupational behaviors of Blacks. For instance, Black Americans are significantly more likely to hold jobs in the service sector (Deng & Zhang, 2008). Black Americans also exhibit lower levels of career maturity than do their White counterparts (Cheatham, 1990).

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This dissertation follows the style of *Journal of Counseling Psychology*.

Furthermore, the occupational prestige of Black Americans is far lower than Whites (Conley & Yeung, 2005) which creates a skewed representation of observable occupational role models for children (Bowman, 1996).

Portfeli, Hartung, and Vondracek (2008) stated many have underestimated the importance of career information for children and have erroneously assumed they are incapable of comprehending the world of work. While career research has placed limited emphasis on childhood career development (Palladino-Schultheiss & Stead, 2004; Hartung, Porfeli & Vondracek, 2008) leading career theorist (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951; Gottfredson, 1981, 1996; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Super, 1942, Super et al, 1996) have all acknowledged the relevance of career development throughout the life span. This is perhaps a primary factor in the *The Career Development Quarterly* designating the study of child vocational development as a special issue in 2008.

In the early 1900s, Parson's predicted only 3.2-7.2% of students across the Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, DC area were expected to complete their last year of high school (1909). The educational problems of Parson's time lead him to become concerned about the school to work transition and specifically children's plans and awareness about work. While Parson's writings were published on the eve of a great economic depression, this issue is of major concern in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A primary concern of the present research is that the occupational history of Black Americans has affected the academic achievement of Black children (Bowman, 1995; Cook, Church, Ajanaku, Shadish, Kim, & Cohen, 1996; Kao & Tienda, 19998;

Kenny, Gualdron, Scanlon, Sparks, Blusteing, Jernigan, 2007; Mau & Bikos, 2000, Palladino-Schultheiss, 2005).

### **Academic Achievement Gap and School Engagement**

The educational plight of Black children in America has been a well documented one and is deserving of serious and sustained attention. The academic achievement gap between U.S. Blacks and White Americans has remained constant for the past half-century (Boykin & Ellison, 2009). For the past 30 years, reading, mathematics, and science test score disparities have shown up in successive cohorts of 9, 13, and 17 year old children. Given the rate of change over the past 30 years, achievement gaps could take fifty years in reading and more than a century in math to converge (Hedges & Nowell, 1999). Furthermore, the academic achievement gap does not appear to be a benign statistical fact as many Black students suffer from poor school achievement, high school dropout, overrepresentation in special education classes, low standardized test scores (Irving & Hudley, 2008) and are less engaged in school than White students (Ogbu, 2003).

Miller-Cribbs, Cronen, Davis and Johnson (2002) suggest that the problem of dropout remains a crisis for U.S. society. Past estimates suggest that individual dropouts cost federal and state governing bodies \$58, 930 over the course of the individual's lifetime (Imel, 1993). In 1991 there were 3,881,000 dropouts between the ages of 16 and 24. Over the course of their lifetime, this will cost the nation \$228.7 billion (Imel, 1993). Mann (1986) suggests the best way to prevent high school dropout is to, "make elementary school more successful (p. 71)." While the research concerning the academic











































































































































































