THE POSSIBLE SELVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AS A MEDIATOR OF

CONDOM USE AND NEGOTIATION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

LAUREN MARKLE

(Under the Direction of Celeste Condit)

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to expand upon the available methods for developing HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns by utilizing Possible Selves theory. A detailed look at representations of African American men in U.S. television media since 1980 is provided from which implications for possible selves are extrapolated. Next interview transcripts from 12 HIV-positive African American men in Athens, GA are analyzed to determine a range of possible selves articulated. Comparisons are made between the two analyses and recommendations are made for the use of Possible Selves theory in HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns.

INDEX WORDS: Possible Selves, HIV/AIDS, Rhetorical Analysis, African
                 American males, Television Representation, Ethnography,
                 Prevention, United States Media

THE POSSIBLE SELVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AS A MEDIATOR OF

CONDOM USE AND NEGOTIATION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

LAUREN MARKLE

B.S., Georgia Southern University, 2007

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2009

THE POSSIBLE SELVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AS A MEDIATOR OF

CONDOM USE AND NEGOTIATION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

LAUREN MARKLE

Major Professor:	Celeste Condit	
Committee:	Vicki Freimuth	
	Roger Stahl	

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2009

DEDICATION

For Shane.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

On August 2, 2008 the Centers for Disease Control (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2008) released a report revealing a more updated and accurate statistic which estimates 56,300 new HIV infections per year; 40% greater than the previous estimate of 40,000. These new statistics came with additional insight: HIV infection rates among African Americans are 7 times greater (87.3 per 100,000 individuals) than their white counterparts (11.5 per 100,000). As a result, calls for additional research in HIV/AIDS prevention have been made from activist groups, sociologists, epidemiologists, and biomedical scientists alike (AIDS Action, 2008). This project is intended to function as a response to these requests. Though not purporting a new prevention methodology, by understanding how and why African American males engage in risk-taking behaviors, this thesis seeks to contribute to the ongoing development of new, effective HIV prevention efforts.

According to the CDC the most effective strategy for controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS is prevention (CDC, 1988). While abstinence from intercourse and drug use remain the only methods to guarantee prevention, maintaining a monogamous sexual relationship and condoms are the two forms of prevention currently promoted by the United States government to persons choosing to engage in intercourse under the Abstinence, Being Faithful, and Condoms (ABC) strategy (Sindig, 2005). While

communication theory and rhetorical scholarship have much to offer for those wishing to encourage the development and sustainment of monogamous relationships, that is not the aim of this project. This project is specifically focused on decision-making, condom use and negotiation among African American men. When used correctly and consistently, condoms are 90% effective at preventing HIV transmission (Hearst and Chen, 2004). In addition, according to a position statement published by the World Health Organization and UNAIDS, "The male latex condom is the single most efficient available technology to reduce the sexual transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. …Condoms will remain the key preventive tool for many, many years to come" (p.27). With HIV infection rates among African Americans at an unprecedented scale, developing new messages and techniques for dissemination targeted at promoting condom use and negotiation among this population is both imperative and urgent.

To better understand safe-sex decision-making among African American men, this project draws upon scholarship ranging from public health, sociology, psychology and rhetoric. Specifically, I am interested in how the possible selves of African Americans are determined by both individual life-experiences and ethnic identity. In addition, through this research I attempt understand how the possible selves of one's ethnic identity are rhetorically presented and socially constructed in television media and whether these representations predict/reflect/construct the individual constructions of possible selves among those persons with a shared ethnic identity. Finally, the aim of this project is to understand how one's available possible selves may mediate a relationship between the individual and frequency or likelihood of condom use and negotiation.

Literature Review: Possible Selves Theory

Whether in the context of health behaviors, job performance, or even what to do tonight - we are always making decisions that have immediate and long-term consequences. Understanding how and why decisions are made is therefore a useful practice for promoting and preventing behavior. In an attempt to theorize decision-making, possible selves theory developed within a framework of social-cognitive studies of self-concept, specifically focused on the relation between motivation and social-cognition (Erickson, 2007). When Markus and Nurius (1986) first theorized possible selves, they defined them as "aspects of the self-concept that represent imagined future outcomes, including goals, ideals, hopes, and fears" and argued that possible selves functioned as an incentive, or motive, guiding behavior by providing "an evaluative and interpretive context for the now self" (p. 962). Possible selves are an affect-laden self-schema and as such play an inextricable role in determining one's emotional state depending upon their positive or negative valence (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The relationship between the possible selves and well-being is further extrapolated by one's belief that they can achieve or avoid them. Interest in possible selves theory derives from this role in motivating individuals towards positive possible selves and away from negative ones (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

While some continue to theorize that the possible self is valenced (negatively or positively) to promote or avoid behaviors (Brewer & Pickett, 1999; Pickett, Bonner, & Coleman, 2002), others have expanded on or challenged that notion to understand possible selves in a more complex system where fulfilling the social schema of a group membership (Cameron, 1999), mimicking role models (Lockwood, Chasteen, & Wong,

2005; Lockwood & Jordan, 2002; Lockwood & Kunda, 1999), self-worth (Crocker &

Wolfe, 2001), optimistic thinking (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1997; Heckhausen, 1991;

Scheier & Carver, 1992) or fulfilling a fantasy (Klinger, 1990; Pham & Taylor, 1999;

Oettinigen & Mayer, 2002) may play a role in how possible selves are impacted and

how, in turn, possible selves impact behavior. Because of this proliferation of

scholarship, Erickson (2007) offered specificity to Markus and Nurius' (1986) original

definition by stating the following:

> Possible selves are conceptions of our selves in the future, including, at least to
> some degree, an experience of being an agent in a future situation. Possible
> selves get vital parts of their meaning in interplay with the self-concept, which
> they in turn moderate, as well as from their social and cultural context. (p.155)

This definition, though not directly challenging that which Markus introduced, does point

to the emergent themes in the field. While theorizing the possible selves has become a

broad study, scholars more recently adhere to three research interests: the construction of

possible selves by understanding either (1) the self as a collective schema or (2) the self

as a story and (3) understanding possible selves as motivators for action. These two

approaches to negotiating possible selves, in conjunction with understanding possible

selves as a motivator for action, function as the primary outlets for possible selves

theorizing and, I will show, provide a rich theoretical text to develop ethnographic studies

that are designed to understand safe-sex behavior and decision-making.

Self as a Collection of Schemas

Self-concept was the first factor theorized to influence one's possible selves. Self-

concept is one's knowledge or understanding of themselves and their values, ideals, and

goals. Self-concepts are thought to influence possible selves by affecting their

possibilities or narrowing the range of possible selves that an individual develops. For

this reason, Singer (1966) and Taylor et al. (1998) argue that fantasies do not function as

a solid-basis for acting. Fantasies, Singer explains, allow the individual to construct

possible selves without attending to past performance or the future probability. Self-

concepts inform even the most trivial possible selves, such as whether or not to attend a

dinner party or go shopping.

Similar to self-concepts, self-schemata are constructed from conceptions of the

past, present and future. The likelihood of future positive events is in part a result of

applying past experiences to future events. Put differently, expectations are partly

representative of a person's performance history (Bandura, 1997). The present also

contributes to the self-schemata: our future depends on what/where/how we are now.

Expanding on this idea, Cross and Markus (1994) explain that competence is perceived in

relationship to self-concept and performance. The process thus becomes cyclical:

performance informs self-concept, which informs possible selves, which in turn

motivates improved performance to attain the positive possible self.

Of course, a person's identity and possible selves are not constructed in an

isolated environment but are deeply embedded in their social context (Oyserman and

Markus, 1994). Social psychologists have paid particular attention to how group identity

can construct one's possible self and thereby predict behavior (e.g. Yowell, 2000).

Belonging to a group can inform people about how they should behave, what they have to

look forward to, or what they are capable of either individually or collectively (i.e. self

and group efficacy).   For possible selves theorists, racial and gender identities are formed

as group affiliations. Because a person's racial identity can affect their identity formation,

understanding how racial identity is developed is germane to the study of identity

construction as it relates to possible selves (Unemori, Omoregie, Markus, 2004). Yi

(1999) defines racial identity as "an enduring fundamental aspect of the self that includes

a sense of membership in an ethnic group and the attitudes and feelings associated with

that membership" (p.16) and ethnicity as "meaningful groupings of people that are based

on race and/or culture of origin" (p.16). Possible selves theories have made significant

findings in ethnic and racial identity, specifically among African Americans and

Hispanics. Cultural identity can prescribe for an individual what should be valued, what

is attainable and how group members should behave (Oyserman and Markus, 1993).

Stereotypes of a cultural identity can positively and negatively impact a person's

ability to construct domain-specific possible selves. Hunter et al. (2006) found that

young African American men associated discursive tropes such as "deadbeat daddies" in

their personal narratives of African American manhood as possible selves to avoid. Kao

(2000) addresses racial stereotypes by contending that adolescents "define their goals

primarily in terms of the stereotypical images attached to their ethnic group. Specifically,

minority youth focus on avoiding failure defined by prevalent group stereotypes" (p.410).

Kao found that the desire to perform academically and professionally was consistent

across all races but that academic performance varied greatly between African

Americans, Whites, Hispanics and Asians. While African American youths sought to

avoid the stereotype of poor intelligence, Hispanics were focused on avoiding manual

labor.

For African American youth, negotiating identity (and thus possible selves)

requires both creating a positive sense of self and rejecting the negative identities

ascribed to African Americans (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). This process is further complicated when attaining a positive possible self, particularly in the domains of academic and career achievement, which may lead to community members labeling them as "acting white". Oyserman, Gant and Ager (1995) argue that this is precisely the point: racial identity is performed. Blackness is an inescapable attribute for African Americans. Thus, adhering to the performance of their racial identity is of great importance for fear of having no cultural identity to belong to at all. In response to these circumstances, Oyserman et al. (1995) argue that those who construct gendered African American identity schema that have (a) a sense of community embeddedness, (b) an awareness of racism, and (c) conceptualization of achievement as African American will increase in academic persistence and performance. Community embeddedness is understood in the context of high familialism among African Americans. Familialism, including among non-biologically based kin networks, "involves viewing the family and family relationship as centrally self defining and viewing social obligations to family as ongoing and normative" (Oyserman et al., 1995, p.1219). African American youth with an increased sense of obligation to the family then are more likely to perform academically towards the ideals of their community/family.

The effects of racism include a feeling of exclusion or negative judgment from others and a belief that one's group membership (i.e. race) limits one's chances of success in various domains. By recognizing racism, one has the opportunity to displace negative interactions with their peers and discredit negative self-attributions that emerge from obstacles and failures. In America, where people are both publicly and personally valued according to their academic, occupational, or material successes, the ability to

7

accredit failure to external sources is of great consequence. What Oyserman et al. (1995) contribute most to existing scholarship is the importance of schema that allow for imagining success as an African American. Conceptualizing achievement and success as a possible performance of African Americans can address the tension that is often produced by an increase in connectedness to African American identity and achievement. This argument became even more influential by their finding that African Americans employ collectivism as a strategy for attaining achievement-oriented possible selves more frequently than their White counterparts (1995).

Conceptualizing success as an African American trait may prove difficult for African American youth whose social context, most often in an urban setting, often depicts increased rates of poverty with decreased opportunities for employment (Bowman, 1991). Such conceptualization is an especially arduous task for young African American males who face increased risk for arrest, incarceration, and school dropout (Corely, Cernkovich, and Giordano, 1989; Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992). To allow for conceptualization of African American success, Oyserman et al. (1995) found that young African American males were best able to conceptualize African American success by focusing on their personal similarities to successful others who were African American. Bandura (1997) also argues that observed performances of others and persuasive messages received by respected others impact a person's expectations for the future. It is from this hypothesis that literature expounding upon the impact of role models on possible selves has been advanced. Lockwood, Chasteen and Wong (2005) found that because young adults had a stronger positive health promotion orientation than they do health prevention, they react better to positive role models who are examples of the

positive benefits of good health behaviors than they do to negative role models who show the costs of unhealthy behavior. In congruence, Lockwood and Kunda (1999) found that individuals who had positive role models often had increased motivation and self-evaluation.

Additionally, possible selves are frequently incongruent with cultural identity in individual fantasies. Recalling Singer's (1966) critique of fantasies, Triandis (1996) contends that fantasies about a distant future, for people in certain cultural groups, may be beneficial. Triandis is particularly interested in groups whose cultural products cultivate a long-term perspective and rigid cultural values. Cultural products are those myths, legends, languages and rigid cultural values that produce "norms that apply across situations and over time" (Oettigen, 1997, p.1212). Cultural values and norms largely determine action by informing the public "who interacts with whom, when, in what way, and with what kind of outcome" (Oettigen, 1997, p.1206). Triandis explains that fantasies may enable people to cognitively escape the confines of their cultural norms and develop alternative goals. Triandis (1996) also argues that the higher the norm-oriented the culture is, the more effective distant fantasies may be in motivating behavior and the less effective positive expectations about behavior will be in motivating behavior.

Scholars stress that identity formation does not occur through racial affiliation alone (Yi, 1999) and attending to racial identity as the singular source for constructing possible selves ignores other identities that influence African Americans such as socioeconomic status, age, gender, and sexual orientation (Myers et al., 1991). In the context of identity and possible selves' formation, gender has been frequently found an adequate predictor of possible selves' construction. Females have been found more

9

likely than males to construct greater frequencies of possible selves in the domains of career, marriage, children, divorce, and death of spouse (Segal, DeMeis, Wood, and Smith, 2001). While young African American females are more likely to develop positive possible selves in the academic domain, such possible selves have a greater influence on academic performance for young African American males (Oyserman et al., 1995). Oyserman et al. (1995) stated it succinctly that "perhaps females and males scan the environment differently". Whether Oyserman et al. attribute how each gender "scans" to either physiological or cultural traits is not stated, but if we are to understand the way in which one perceives the world around them and their role in it as an effect of their culture, it seems plausible to argue that these scanning processes may be learned and potentially altered behaviors.

Self as a Story

A more recent trend to conceptualize the self as a narrative or story was first introduced by Bruner (1990) who grounds his theory in narrative psychology and social constructivism. This narrative is constructed by symbolic activities and informed by cultural identity whereby our thoughts (and story) both constitute and are constituted by culture. Challenging the idea of an objective reality, thus theoretically engaged in the "interpretive-turn" in social science, Bruner (1992) argues "the 'reality' that we impute to the 'worlds' we inhabit is a constructed one…'Reality' construction is the product of meaning making shaped by traditions and by a culture's toolkit of ways of thought" (p.19). This culturally constructed world around us then informs what has been and what is to come: a life story or narrative in which we place ourselves. It is through

narrative that we are able to "achieve 'reality', that is, get a reliable 'fix' on the world" (Bruner, 1991, p.41).

Bruner suggests that narrative has ten primary characteristics: diachronicity, as it takes place over a sense of time; particularity, as the story evolves around particular situations or events; intentional state entailment, or the attribution of beliefs, morals and desires to various characters within the life story; hermeneutic composability, since narratives contain certain elements which allow it to be classified as a story (e.g. beginning, middle, end); canonicity and breach, that the normal state must be in some way interrupted in order for there to be a story; narrative accrual, or the belief that stories build on one another such that the next story is informed by the previous; genericness, or the opposite of particular, so that the narrative can fit into some broader genre of story; normativeness, since the narrative informs the story teller and its characters what is and is not appropriate behavior; context sensitivity and negotiability, or the idea that narrative requires a negotiated role/relationship between the story, the reader and the author; and referentiality, the idea that one's narrative references "reality", though not in a direct manner. Bruner (1992) explains that while scientific theories are judged by their verifiability, stories are judged by their verisimilitude or 'lifelikeness'. Thus one's social, political, economical, racial, cultural, and gender contexts (to name a few) collectively inform one's life story. In addition, narrative is formed out of experience and simultaneously gives meaning to current experiences and in this way is inseparable from the self (Ochs and Capps, 1996). Bruner (1992) pays particular attention to the importance of the self as "perhaps the single most universal thing about human experience" (p.35).

Narratives construct possible selves by establishing order among seemingly disconnected events so that the past, present, future and imagined worlds have a sense of continuity (Ochs and Capps, 1996). It is in these imagined worlds that possible selves are constructed in an arguably arbitrary relationship to past and present experiences. For example, Hunter et al. (2006) used narrative theory to understand how possible selves were developed among young African American men whose father voluntarily left their home and failed to pay child support. The young men were found to employ a narrative of loss-survival-redemption whereby they were able to construct a possible self based on their understanding of 'manhood'. Because the narratives included the elements of survival and redemption, the young men were able to develop positive possible selves of 'respectable manhood'. For these young men it becomes clear that 'respectable manhood' is not only informed by unique experiences, but that respectability as understood for these young men is likely to have different criteria from a young man whose father is not present because he is working too often.

Narrative has also been theorized as a tool by which individuals can negotiate possible selves. Supporting narrative as a teaching technique to develop positive possible academic selves among Latina middle school students, Daisey and Jose-Kampfner (2002) argue "if students have no sense of their lives having a story, they are unlikely to act purposefully during adolescence to pursue their goals" (p. 581). Similarly, Richardon and Eccles (2007) argued that voluntary reading among adolescents provides an outlet whereby new possible selves, cultural identities, and performances can be "tried on" and act as educational experiences for identity construction. For example, by reading about historical African American figures, a young African American male was able to develop

12

values that resisted contemporary stereotypes of African American men as lazy and unintelligent. In another context, Halverson (2005) conducted an evaluation of a youth theatre for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth that were able to engage in role playing and performance arts. Halverson concluded that the public performance of personal narratives encourages youth to explore possible selves and externalize the negative experiences they've encountered as a result of their sexuality. Visualizing their emotionally painful stories as independent of themselves, these youth were able to move beyond the traumatic events and establish a positive future.

In addition to an intervention model, narrative theory is often utilized as a means for scholars to interpret possible selves. As a methodology, narrative obtains high levels of participant input by asking participants open-ended questions and then analyzing them (Packard and Conway, 2006). When compared to the more frequently employed interview and a questionnaire, Whitty (2002) found that narrative more accurately explicated people's ideal selves without reducing the amount or quality of data that the other two forms of measurement offer. Because possible selves are not necessarily individual constructions, focus-groups have also been successful at determining the ideal selves for a group or culture (Kao, 2000). Understanding narrative as a producer, enabler, and a decipherer of possible selves provides a fresh and perhaps more rich theoretical perspective to address possible selves theory.

Motivation

Thus far this review has attended to two contributing factors to the construction or negotiation of possible selves. To stop here would miss the largest implications that theories of possible selves have for health promotion. Possible selves research is often

13

closely tied to theories of Action Control. Theories of Action Control attempt to explain

how thoughts about the self get transformed into action (Atkinson & Burch, 1970). One

way to understand how possible selves impact action or behavior is to examine valence.

Hooker (2002) explains "possible selves include positive images of self in the future, or

hoped-for selves, as well as negative images of self, or feared selves" (p.325). Possible

selves are thus understood as either positively or negatively valenced (i.e. desired or

feared). Building off of fight/flight research in psychology, Markus and Nurius (1986)

argue that people are more likely to make decisions and behave in a manner that will

move them towards positively valenced, desired possible selves and away from

negatively valenced, feared possible selves.   Oyserman and Markus (1990) have

challenged negative valence as a motivator for action and argue that the negative possible

self is not itself motivating unless when perceived to simultaneously increase the

likelihood of attaining, or balancing, a positive possible self. For example, Oyserman

and Saltz (1993) use valence to explain delinquent behavior in youth. They propagate a

theory of possible selves balance by building off of research that suggests delinquent

behaviors are often understood as a means to create a desired, positive possible-self, such

as "the cool guy in school" (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Balance, they argue, is one's

ability to understand both positive expectations and possibilities to be avoided within the

same goal. They reason that without balanced possible selves, people may not initially

take into account the negative consequence of delinquency. Oyserman and Saltz (1993)

contend that balanced possible selves lead youth to identify a positive self-identifying

goal to work towards while remaining aware of the consequences of failing to attain it.

Further, they explain, "this balance may preserve motivation to attain the positive

possible self and therefore avoid the negative self, leading these youths to make more attempts to attain expected selves and avoid feared ones" (p.360). While the valence of possible selves explains which possible selves become constructed as a goal and therefore acted upon, it does not explain which actions are taken to achieve that goal.

The two variables most frequently considered in theories of Action Control that attempt to explain what actions are taken include cognitive expectations of *self-efficacy* and *outcome expectancy* (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is defined as "the degree of confidence an individual has in his or her personal agency to affect outcomes. Outcome expectancy refers to the degree of confidence one has in the attainability of an outcome; it is linked to, but not isomorphic with, self-efficacy (because some outcomes may not be totally under one's control)" (Kuhl, 1985). Thus goals, whether to achieve or avoid a particular possible self, are considered attainable when both self-efficacy and outcome expectancy are high and become increasingly perceived as less attainable when one or both of these variables begin to decline. As Kuhl (1985) mentioned, the two variables often reinforce one another and are related: When constructing a goal, persons with both high self-efficacy and outcome expectancy are likely to behave in a manner congruent to achieving that goal. High outcome expectations also lead to strong performance (i.e. behavior that coincides with goal attainment) and as a result, such strong behavior leads to high expectations for success. One's expectations for success are often directly tied to their belief that they are able to or have the agency to achieve that goal. Various situations ranging from education level to physical and mental health can impede one's self-efficacy. For example, a person living with cancer may have positive expectations for their future health because of their faith, despite feelings of low self-efficacy.

15

Erickson (2007) challenges this notion of self-efficacy by collapsing it with the concept of agency. Put differently, Erickson (2007) explains that not all hopes and fears become possible selves; possible selves require some agency in a future situation. Agency is one's ability to create elaborate and distinct possible selves. Markus and Nurius (1986) originally suggested that agency could contribute to both positive and negative possible selves but scholars since have argued that agency is a characteristic intrinsic only to the construction of positive possible selves (Erickson, 2007; Hooker & Kaus, 1994). For example, if I envision myself mourning the death of a parent there is more agency than the mere concept of mourning because I am in the story, choosing to grieve even if I do not have control over the death. Alternatively, if I envision myself graduating with an M.A. in Rhetoric, there is even a greater sense of agency available because of my perceived ability to impact the likelihood of graduation. Agency is typically a cultural construct that people within particular social, racial, ethnic, gender or economic groups share in common.

Possible selves have also been theorized not as directly related to motivation, but as a component in the self-regulatory processes through which motivation and behavior are influenced (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Within this paradigm, possible selves become related to abstract notions and broad global constructs. Cantor, Markus, Niedenthal, and Nurius (1986) originally explained this function by contrasting possible selves with life tasks, which are defined as "the problem that people see themselves as working on and devoting energy to solving at a particular period on life" (pp.97-98). Life tasks are understood as abstract notions while possible selves are theorized as concrete manifestations that give life tasks meaning. Erickson (2007) further explains that "in

pursuing life tasks, people are likely to be guided by distinct representations of themselves in the future" (p.349). For example, Hooker and Kaus (1992) found that individuals who had a positive possible health self were more likely to engage in behaviors that promoted health than those who simply had global health constructs. Thus, we can understand condom use and negotiation as a life task that is given meaning by various possible selves ranging in domains from health to career.

Implications

While possible selves research has crossed disciplines and amounted to a broad array of findings across a multiplicity of themes, it is its particular ability to *understand individuals as culturally constructed beings who develop narratives from their past and present experiences which, in turn, develop possible selves that function to motivate behavior* that I am particularly interested in. Understanding individuals as culturally constructed allows me to effectively address the target population at hand and recognize that African American males do not define their own group schema in isolation, but also through other sources such as tropes and narratives circulating within mass media. In addition, individual narratives are neither strictly bound to their racial identity nor free from it. Finally, while health promotion campaigns cannot change the life experiences of individuals by themselves, in recognizing identity as culturally constructed we may develop new insights that allow for behavior modification. Though possible selves theory has not yet been utilized to predict condom use or negotiation, it is the purpose of this project to expand the literature and methods for application of possible selves theory while contributing to existing knowledge of decision-making and health promotion.

17

Condom Use and Negotiation

Condom negotiation is understood as an attempt to either verbally or non-verbally discuss the use of condoms during intercourse, whereas condom use is the behavior of utilizing a condom during intercourse. These two concepts are intertwined such that condom use depends on effective communication to translate into behavior (Liu, 2007). While verbal-direct communication is commonly understood as the primary means by which condoms are utilized (Malim, 2002), researchers have found that condom use is frequently negotiated nonverbally or indirectly, particularly among women and minorities (Lamm, Mak, Lindsay, and Russell, 2004). Condom use has been a focus of health promotion specialists and communication scholars (Free, Roberts, and McGuire, 2007) as well as psychologists (Abraham, Krahe, Dominic, Fritsche, 2002).

Methodology

This thesis is comprised of two smaller projects: an analysis of possible selves of African American men represented in United States television media and an analysis of twelve interviews conducted with seropositive African American men in Athens, GA. From these findings two possible hypotheses are developed for much-needed future research.

Media Analysis

Representations of race, gender, class and sexuality in media are only important insofar as one grants the viewer/reader/observer the agency to interpret and critically analyze the messages provided. Fiske (1987) suggests that the viewer and reader are two different terms: the television viewer is a social subject, someone who is merely seeing the television, while a reader is an active audience, paying attention to the programming

and making meaning from the process. Fiske also outlines the distinction between readerly, writerly and producerly texts. Readerly texts are closed texts that are easily read since they promote only a singular interpretation, often that of the dominant ideology. Writerly texts are those texts that are open to various interpretations and resist enforcing closure upon a dominant ideology. Because of this vast openness, writerly texts lack coherence and unity, therefore constantly requiring all readers to produce a meaning making process. Fiske (1987) argues that the television text can then be characterized "as a site of struggle between the dominant ideology working to produce a closed text by closing off opportunities it offers for resistive readings, and the diversity of audiences who, if they are to make the text popular, are constantly working to open it up to their readings" (p. 94). It is here that he establishes the role of television as a producerly text: combining the easy reading of the readerly text with the televisual characteristics of the writerly. Thus, televisual media is a uniquely rich text to understand message consumption among African American men.

Central to Fiske's (2003) notion of the media is the understanding that the media "affect and produce the 'reality' that they mediate" (p. 11). As a result, the media is always reflective of the social differences present in American culture (1994). Fiske (1994) offers the O.J. Simpson trial as an example of this phenomenon, arguing that the story gained and maintained national attention because it was reflective of the contemporary concerns about interracial marriage and provided an arena to address these concerns through dialogue. For Whites especially, the event reaffirmed the fear of the angry black male and provided credibility to their belief system (Fiske, 1994). In this

same way, I understand media as both productive and reflective of a shared "reality" among African Americans.

For Fiske, the media is also bound by the "reality"[1] experienced by the individual readers of its text, and while it does not reproduce a direct "reality" (otherwise genres such as science fiction would not exist), it does reproduce the dominant sense of "reality". For example, in order to function as producerly texts, situation comedies must adhere to the logic of cause and effect. Readers would be confused by a program that began with a series of problems experienced by the characters and ended without any reconciliation. Fiske (1989) explains that, "every element (of a program) is there for the purpose of helping make sense: nothing is extraneous or accidental" (p. 24). To engage the reader in the cause and effect process of the show, various conventional representational codes such as lighting, editing, camera angles, sound, and music inform the reader what parts of the dialogue they should pay attention to for the story line (1987). The "reality" produced is not only that of cause and effect, but also of dominant ideology. In Fiske's (1987) example of the show *Hart to Hart* he explicates the representation of the villain as a minority, with dark lighting, of lower class and with less taste and the hero as a white male with wealth, intellectual prowess, bright lighting, less extreme close-ups, and a handsome appearance as a representation of the dominant white, patriarchal ideology. Fiske argues that by having a preferred reading of the text, -- that

---

[1] For the purposes of this paper, "reality" will appear with apostrophes surrounding the text in order to emphasize the difference between an objective reality, which may or may not exist, and the perceived "reality" which is experienced by individuals. This leaves open to you, the reader, the understanding that there are available many different 'realities' for various audiences.

is, the reading intended by the producers -- the reader chooses not only to recognize the dominant ideology, but to participate in its preservation. This preferred reading however, is not where Fiske spends most of his theoretical efforts. Instead, Fiske argues that it is in the process of negotiating meaning that people have the power to activate social change.

Fiske's theory suggests that the intentionality of the producers is not what reproduces the social order, but that individual readings create an open arena for meaning production and this meaning production then shapes and reaffirms the reader's experiences. Fiske (1987) explains that, "social experience is much like a text: its meanings depend upon the discourses that are brought to bear upon it" (p.15). For example, research of young aboriginal children reading the show *Rambo* align not with the white hero, but with the black villain who loses the fight between good and evil at the end of the program (Fiske, 1989). Fiske explains that this reading then shapes the experiences of the aborigines providing a narrative for ways to fight oppression and white dominance. I will utilize this argument by Fiske to understand the televisual texts as providing a narrative, or life story, that present possible selves available to African American men.

Important to understanding Fiske's theory is the contention that readers find pleasure in negotiating meaning through a text. That is to say that the reader takes pleasure in aligning the various codes in a program with one's life experiences in a way that reaffirms their existence, or through reading a text in a manner that allows for the text to challenge the dominant ideology. I argue, however, that meaning-making takes far more energy than Fiske credits. For example, the oppressed may find that constantly negotiating a meaning is too exhaustive to maintain. Condit (1989) cited African

Americans who turn off the television because of this very frustration, an act which then silences their public voices.

Condit (1989) further notes that negotiating the meaning of a text requires knowledge of alternatives. Condit (1989) offers the example of children who often watch programming that has been tailored for them by producers and is screened first by their parents to ensure that the program's message is affirmative of the rules and morals they enforce. For example, a child watching *Barney* is taught the value of honesty and has no knowledge of an alternative discourse to make-meaning or question the text. Even if the child is aware that lying is often a beneficial tactic to achieving additional playtime, they are often unaware of a dialogue that allows for a reading which reconciles or addresses the tension between their "reality" and the message. Beyond Condit's (1989) argument, I contend that there are broader implications from the process of televisual learning for children. By introducing children to a submissive reading of the text only shortly after they have become conscious (Fiske, 1989), children are then primed to create dominant readings of texts and avert negotiated meanings in the future. In this way, the social change process is again hindered. The absence of knowledge of alternative discourse is not merely limited to children. It is not difficult to imagine a 70 year old African American man in 1970 unable to negotiate a meaning that allowed him pleasure from a television program. Taken one step further, if there are strong limitations to the polysemy available within a televisual text and the text provides a narrative for the reader to adopt, we can understand this narrative as a life story which constructs the possible selves of those individuals represented in the program. It is with an underlying assumption that

22

television circulates ideology through various modes of representation and that there are

rhetorical limits on polysemy that I will conduct my analysis.

It is important to note that I am not suggesting audiences directly mimic what is

represented on television, but instead that these observations shape our modes of

understanding, interpretation and experience. Put differently:

> Media images provide a diffuse confirmation of one's world view, promote
> acceptance of current social arrangements, and reassure people that things are the
> way they ought to be. In social psychological terms, media images become
> incorporated into cognitive schema and heuristics, and are called up during
> processes of identity formation, self-evaluation, attribution, and social
> comparison. (Coltrane, 2000, p.364-365)

In this thesis I explore whether media representations of African American men have a

substantive impact on the ways in which African American men construct their possible

selves and, in turn, make decisions about health behavior.

Of the 29,254 reported persons living with HIV (non-AIDS) and AIDS in

Georgia, the majority (64%) are over 40 years of age (Georgia Department of Human

Resources, 2008). Among this group, most are between the ages of 40 and 44 (6,222)

with very few above 55 (3,754). The average age of persons interviewed for this project

was 40.6, with 56 as the oldest. For the purposes of this project, I am interested in the

influence of television for persons aged 40 and younger. This number has been chosen

based on the aforementioned data and because by 1968 televisions were more readily

available and viewed with greater frequency than they had been a decade earlier

(Abramson, 2003). Because this project is interested in media effects, it is best to attend

to an era that both accurately reflects the participant population and addresses television's

affordability, accessibility and viewing habits. It would seem that 40 years of age would

place my research back to 1968, however, children do not begin watching adult-content television at birth. Both Disney and Nickelodeon's target markets include children ages 5-11. Thus, we can assume that at age 12 children begin viewing adult-content television on their own volition.   Additionally, children most often reach a peak television viewing stage at age 12, during which time they are most vulnerable to perceive pressures, ostensibly constructed via media, to adhere to particular cultural and identity norms for social acceptance. With this data in mind, my research dates back to 1980 (Stroman, 1984).   I have collected direct media analyses published between 1980 and the present from books or peer-reviewed journals that specifically address representations and portrayals of African American men in United States media.   References were collected through LexisNexis, EBSCOhost, and GoogleScholar search engines.

From these findings, common narratives were explicated and conclusions were drawn about the representations of the possible selves of African American men in United States television media. Specifically, I address representations of available futures for African American men, the decision-making strategies and behaviors employed by these men to attain or avoid possible selves, and how forms of group membership affect the availability of possible selves to the men. For example, in Entman and Rojecki's (2001) *Black Images in the White Mind: Media and Race in America,* the authors argue that there are three identities represented in contemporary media for African American men. One such identity is that of the African American male who requires the help of a White man because "Blacks cannot handle the world of intellect and power" (p. 27). The authors cite *Jerry Maguire, Men of Honor, Rules of Engagement,* and *Finding Forrester* as examples of films that employ this identity in

their narrative. To show how this identity is translated from film to other media forms, the authors analyze the representations of African American men during four randomly selected weeks in 1997 of evening news on ABC, CBS, and NBC. They found that 75.5% of the news stories centered on Whites and covered a range of 12 unique topics from science and technology to economics. Conversely, African Americans were proportionately overrepresented as entertainers, sports figures, or objects of discrimination. The ratios for White to Black presence in the topics of health, foreign affairs, economics and electoral politics were all over 86. According to Entman and Rojecki these patterns have significant consequences:

> Such patterns of racial inclusion and exclusion, if typical, would reinforce an image of Blacks as a distinct group whose identity, knowledge, and interests are both narrower and systematically different from Whites (p.64).

From a possible selves perspective, these findings suggest a narrower range for African American possible selves than their White counterparts. If African American men were to adopt the positive possible selves of entertainer and/or athlete within their career domain and the negative possible self of "object of discrimination" multiple dilemmas would arise. First, measures taken to attain the positive possible self do not encourage endeavors which promote education or attaining financial security. Because other possible positive selves, such as economist or politician, are rarely represented in the media as African American, and because the media portrays Blacks as a "distinct group" from Whites, young African American men may assume that they lack the self or social efficacy to attain them. If they lack the talent or efficacy to attain either athlete or entertainer selves, what remains is a dismal future. Avoiding discrimination becomes a nearly impossible endeavor with no guidance or alternative opportunities. What remains

25

is a young African American male with no guidance on what positive possible selves he should develop or knowledge of how to attain those that he does create. If Oyserman and Markus (1990) are correct, actions to avoid negative possible selves (e.g. object of discrimination) are only engaged insofar as they also move the individual towards a positive possible self. Thus, avoiding discrimination alone, such as that experienced by a PLWHA, is not sufficient for effective safe-sex promotion or subsequent practices. This short and incomplete analysis does not intend to condemn the media for inaccurately portraying the presence of African Americans in various career fields; in fact Entman and Rojecki admit that most of these numbers are not far from national statistics. However, accepting that media both reflects and reproduces "reality," we must become conscious of its many influences on decision-making.

Interviews

The theories set out by Brunner (1990, 1992) and Bandura (1977) provide a rich base to conduct an analysis of interviews with seropositive African American men receiving services through AIDS Athens. For this project, I have obtained approval through the Institutional Research Board. Twelve (12) thirty-minute paid interviews were conducted. During these I asked questions that elicited responses from the participant that included two narratives: their young life-story, or what they anticipated/hoped their future held as a child and through adolescence, and their current life-story after their HIV-diagnosis (for an interviewer guide see Appendix A). In addition, I determined their sexual health behaviors, specifically frequency of condom use and negotiation strategies employed, both prior to and after their diagnosis. Upon transcribing and reviewing the interviews as a single artifact, I explicated common

26

themes among the life stories/narratives and used this information to further elucidate a range of constructions of possible selves among the participants during the two aforementioned life-stages. Finally, I hypothesized whether (and if so, how) the men's possible selves play(ed) a role in determining their condom use and/or negotiation.

By interviewing HIV positive men, I was able to ensure that the research participant has engaged in risk-taking behaviors and belonged to the target group of individuals that HIV prevention campaigns desire. The South comprises 68% of all AIDS cases among rural populations, and in the South rural populations are almost as likely as their urban counterparts to contract HIV. Further, 50% of all HIV diagnoses made in rural communities are of African Americans and approximately 75% of all rural HIV diagnoses are among men (Center for AIDS Prevention Studies, 2006). Persons living in rural communities face particular challenges such as poverty, HIV stigma, and a lack of healthcare, available sexual partners, education and resources that necessitate unique HIV/AIDS prevention strategies. Though AIDS Athens is not located in a rural city, it serves the residents of Clarke County and nine other surrounding, primarily rural-based counties including Jackson, Barrow, Walton, Oconee, Madison, Oglethorpe, Elbert, Greene, and Morgan (AIDS Athens, 2007).

This population was also selected as a convenience sample. I reside in Athens, Georgia and through AIDS Athens, a community based organization that provides emotional and financial aid to persons living with HIV/AIDS in Athens and its eight surrounding counties, I have access to both the facilities and resources necessary to recruit and conduct the interviews.

27

A limitation to this particular population was the need for participant recall. Because the interviews required the participants to recall events, emotions, goals, possible selves, and behaviors from a time prior to their diagnosis with HIV, responses may have been impacted by their diagnosis and the life experiences that followed. In addition, by recruiting men through the AIDS Athens facility, participants may have been more proactive and involved in treatment than all seropositive African American men in Athens, GA.

<div align="center">Preview</div>

The remainder of this thesis is organized into three chapters. In chapter two, I begin with a review of current communications scholarship that analyzes representations of African American men in United States television media since 1980. From these findings, I conduct a qualitative meta-analysis to determine the possible selves of African American men as represented in the media. I then explore the implications of these possible selves on condom use and negotiation if adopted by viewers. Next in chapter three, I first outline the methods employed for analyzing the interview transcripts. I then examine the texts of the interviews held with HIV-positive African American men at AIDS Athens and explicate the range of personal, professional, and health-related possible selves articulated by the research participants prior to and after their HIV diagnoses. Next I examine the impact of these possible selves on their condom use and negotiation. Finally, I compare the range of the possible selves shared by the participants with those circulated in United States television programming since 1980. The final and concluding chapter includes a summary of the research findings, a proposition of two hypotheses for future research, examines the problems associated with using possible

selves theory to understand televisual representations, and makes suggestions for future

possible selves, media and HIV/AIDS prevention research.

CHAPTER 2

POSSIBLE SELVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN IN U.S. TELEVISION MEDIA

While today it seems outdated, television is the source of the most commonly shared images and messages in America's history (Gerbner, Signorielli, and Shanahan, 2002). In 1946, less than one percent of American households had a television set and with World War II came a strict manufacturing freeze. However in 1954, following the war's end, the westward expansion of networks, and a rise in mass production efforts, over 55% of American households had a television set and by 1962 that number would rise to 90% (Genova, 2006). In 2005, Nielsen Media Research reported that 99% of American households had at least one television and the average American watched about four hours of programming each day. Thus it comes as no surprise that scholars and parents alike are interested in the media's influence on the American public. Whether it is James P. Steyer's *The Other Parent* (2002)*,* encouraging parents to closely evaluate what their child is learning and to limit their television viewing, or James Hirsen's proclamation in *Hollywood Nation* (2005) that the liberal West coast is "blurring the lines between entertainment and news to force their views onto the rest of the country" (p. 27), it seems as though the debate over whether media influences our minds is culture is over: what remains to be determined is how and what it is influencing with what valence. Entering into these debates is a host of scholars specifically interested in representations of race and gender in media (see Mintz, 1995 or Nakayama, 2000 for reviews). Much of their research involves conducting content evaluations and rhetorical

analyses of a given archive to explicate and evaluate stereotypical tropes, narratives, roles or representations adopted by or attributed to African American males in televisual media. Gates (1992) explains that African Americans are interested in how media constructs them for two primary reasons. First, they have never had control of the media and therefore have had no control of the images that represent them. Second, most media representations of African Americans have historically been negative.

Of even more concern is the influence that television has as "the chief means through which all Americans engage, understand, negotiate, and make sense of the material circumstances of their lives" (Gray, 1995, p.43). The more one watches television the less ability they have to become selective in what they view and, according to cultivation theorists, this increases the viewer's acceptance of the messages, stereotypes, and ideologies represented on television (Gerbner, et al., 2002). African Americans watch more television per week than any other racial group in America (Fahri, 2002; Gray, 2005). Additionally, African Americans understand less how the mass media operates and perceive fewer outside influences on the media than other races (Becker, Kosicki, & Jones, 1992). Thus, it becomes important that representations of blackness are interrogated and critically discussed. Patricia Hill Collins (2004) further explains the influence of television on Blacks, arguing that "because they lack opportunities to be seen as 'real' men and women, the pressures Black people face to see themselves through the lens of mass media's Black sexual stereotypes affects every aspect of everyday life" (p.199). Collins explains that these stereotypes lead to, among other things, the proliferation of HIV/AIDS within African American communities.

As a part of the media, television plays a primary role in the production, circulation, shifts, changes, and transformations of ideology (Hall, 1981). Ideologies, usually unconsciously derived, provide points of identification for people to articulate beliefs as if they were truths. Television's influence on ideology comes in the form of "representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work" (Hall, 1981, p.90). Regarding race, these representations and descriptions frequently come in the form of stereotypes. Walter Lipmann (1922) defined stereotype as a phenomenon that "precedes reason" as a "form of perception (that) imposes a certain character on the data of our senses" (88-89). As such, stereotypes function as schema which not only help us categorize the world, but provide us with suitable expectations. When we associate additional behaviors (e.g. barking, jumping, slobber) to a particular schema (e.g. dogs are identified by four legs, hair, snout, etc.) it is called priming (Gorham, 2004). Gorham (2004) explains "once we see or hear something in the environment that activates a schema, related concepts tend to be primed, or triggered, and we're more likely to expect them and respond to them than to unrelated concepts" (p. 16). In this way, priming alters our interpretations of things to make them fit, or appear congruent with, our schema.

Because "most of what we know, or think we know, is a mixture of all the stories and images we have absorbed" (Gerbner, Signorielli, and Shanahan, 2002, p.43) television circulates and proliferates stereotypes. While the television continues to alter its function, role and capabilities in America, its influence is widespread (Gerbner et al., 2002). In his book *The Negro in American Fiction* (1937), Sterling A. Brown was the first to employ Lipmann's definition to explicate four "distinctive clusters" of Black

32

representations in plays, poetry and novels. Specifically, Brown suggested that

representations of Blacks in media typically portrayed "the 'contented slave,' the

'wretched freedman,' the 'tragic mulatto,' and the 'comic negro'" (Dates & Mascaro,

2005, p.51). Dates and Mascaro (2005) draw primarily on Gramsci and Stuart Hall to

succinctly explain the contemporary importance of stereotypes, stating "racial images in

the mass media are endowed with color-coded positive and negative 'moral features'.

When these symbols become familiar and accepted, they fuel misperceptions and

facilitate misunderstandings among racial or cultural groups" (p.53). In addition,

stereotypes of our own gender and race in the media inform us of our own cultural

identity and how other races perceive us (Dates & Mascaro, 2005). For example, in a

study of 412 undergraduate students, cultivation theorist Punyanunt-Carter (2008) found

that associations of African Americans with low occupational status and negative

personality characteristics were positively related to the frequency of television

viewership.

In relation to possible selves, ideologies which inform and produce the

stereotypes articulated through the media may work to inform black males how to

identify with their race, and, in turn, what possible selves are available as a result of such

an identity's schema. It is important to note that while many scholars reviewed in this

chapter have as their goal a criticism of a racist ideology that pervades televisual

discourse, that is not the central aim of this chapter. Neither is it a goal to understand how

representations on television may help sustain White racism. Instead, my goal is to

identify a range of possible selves for African American men made visible through

television by using previous scholarship which identifies popular representations of African American men.

While some of today's televisual representations of Blacks mimic these original portrayals, their presence has waned significantly. Today, Brown's stereotypes seem distant ancestors to the mediated representations appearing in sitcoms, television advertisements, and local and national news coverage. While scholars almost unanimously agree that contemporary representations of Black men in the media is undesirable (Dates and Mascaro, 2005), most are hopeful that the gradual decrease in media's racial bias will eventually lead to a positive resource for Black youth (MacDonald, 1992). Two more recognized taxonomies of television representation of African American men include those produced by Stuart Hall (1981) and Entman and Rojecki (2001). Stuart Hall (1981) specifically argues that there exists a "grammar of race," which is best understood through three tropes of blackness represented in television media: the native, the slave-figure, and the clown. Hall explains that these tropes are unified and function with the understanding of Blacks as primitive, or "in fixed proximity to nature" (p. 92). Hall continues on to explain that primitivism has both positive and negative implications:

> The primitive nobility of the aging tribesman or chief, and the native's rhythmic grace, always contain both a nostalgia for an innocence lost forever to the civilized, and the threat of civilization being over-run or undermined by the recurrence of savagery, which is always lurking just below the surface; or by an untutored sexuality, threatening to "break out." (p. 92)

Hall's tropes have been employed by scholars to evaluate and critique a variety of televisual outputs such as situation comedies and even animation. However, as the following overview will show, much progress has been made since the early 1980s and

34

Hall's list, though useful, is not exhaustive. Entman and Rojecki's (2001) *Black Images in the White Mind: Media and Race in America* offers an updated analysis of the common identities represented for African American men in U.S. film. These identities include: the Magical Negro, the Black male who assists a victimized White female, and the Black who requires help from a White male in order to succeed in a world of intellect or power. While neither author is exhaustive, both provide well-recognized and utilized taxonomies for understanding and grouping representations of African American men in United States media since 1980. Both works have been well-recognized and reviewed within their field and together cover the range of data with which this project is interested. As such, this chapter will proceed with four sections. The first section will address shifts in the presence of African American males in U.S. television media since 1980 and the following will address the common tropes most frequently applied to black men appearing on television including: primitivism, assisting White females, and an additional stereotype which I have labeled as "educated, middle class, and acting-white." The section on primitivism will additionally contain the slave figure, innate athleticism, the criminal/buck, and comedic relief/coon. Because the identity of the Black man requiring the assistance of a White male to handle the world of success and intellect does not appear in television media with the frequency Entman and Rojecki suggest in film, but is driven by the stereotype that African American men are unintelligent, it will be included in the subsection addressing the 'coon character.' Additionally, because this analysis is limited to representations of African American men in United States *television* media since 1980 and because depictions of the Magical Negro are rare, if at all visible, outside of film it will be omitted from the discussion. Each section will provide a detailed review

of scholarship published since 1980 that conducts content or rhetorical analyses of television media produced during or after 1979 pertaining to the subject at hand and concludes by suggesting the implications of such representations on the available possible selves of African American men. The section will conclude with a review of the implications of possible selves articulated through United States television media since 1979 and provide suggestions for future use of possible selves theory in media studies. The aim of this chapter is to provide the necessary information for the following chapters which examine how these findings related to those possible selves articulated by research participants.

Presence and Absence

Like any industry functioning in a capitalist economy, television networks must have an income that exceeds their expenses in order to survive. Because networks make their profits by selling airtime for commercials and product placement, they must produce programming that draws an audience desired by marketers. Thus, it was not until African Americans became a demographic with enough disposable income to purchase excess goods and services that television networks began producing television shows with this audience in mind. In 1960 the black bourgeoisie constituted roughly 10 percent of the African American population, but by 1991 this statistic had risen to nearly 35 percent. This new middle class market quickly became an untapped resource in the marketplace and a sought after demographic for advertisers (Gray, 1995). Television producers needed to develop a new product. As a result, it was through the 1980s and early 1990s that television networks and advertisers took dramatic steps to attract this new, young class (MacDonald, 1992; Armstrong, 1999).

The mad-dash to garner Black audiences of all types also led producers to develop programs that completely denied the social and cultural variety of African Americans. On this, Harper (1996) notes the absence of geographic and linguistic indicators in the hit Fox series *Martin* explaining that producers "never bothered to key the show to the topography of its putative Detroit setting -- never mind getting the actors to drop the East Coast inflection that passes as *the* 'recognizably' African-American speech patter in favor of an accent that rings true to the ears of this native" (p.170). Even in those programs which do attempt to articulate some cultural variety among Blacks, Harper argues that it "manifests only in the broadest possible caricature" (p.170). For example, in *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, the characters frequently comment on the obvious cultural differences between the West Philadelphia-raised cousin Will and his wealthy relatives, the Banks. However these cultural differences are articulated through the most obvious, shallow means (e.g. Will's uncomfortable presence at a formal dinner or Ashley Bank's interest in learning rap from presumed expert Will) and fail to ever seriously interrogate the cultural disparities at hand. Additionally both Will and the Banks occupied positions of extreme "caricature" of their social status and upbringing, which ensured infinite opportunities for slapstick comedy (Harper, 1996).

Still, few television programs contained all-Black casts like those mentioned above. Vice president of research at CBS David Poltrack explained that in the 1980s, when African Americans comprised about 14 percent of the total audience, "you are not going to have a hit show if you only appeal to Blacks. However, if you can take a show that has appeal among all segments but particular appeal among Black families, that's a very good candidate" (quoted in Bogle, 2001, p. 264). Although ideally growth in

television programming containing Black lead characters would emerge from an altered

social consciousness, this would soon prove to not be the case (Atkin, 1992). The biggest

indicator of such failed social progress was the following backlash of the 1980s with

Reagan-era conservatism that subsequently shifted the role of Black television actors.

The return to middle-class family values necessitated a return to less progressive

programming. Previously successful shows, such as *Strike Force, Trauma Center, Bay

City Blues,* and *Ryan's Four,* which featured African American actors as a part of their

ensemble or in a supporting role, were cancelled in 1980. As Donald Bogle (2001) notes,

"those few African American performers who were prominently featured in primetime

series found themselves, more often than not, starring or co-starring in what were

essentially white shows" (p. 253).

At the turn of the 1980 decade, blacks became increasingly concerned that they

had hit their peak in nonfiction television during the 1970s (MacDonald, 1992). The

1980s began with a meager presence of black characters and shows, most of which never

survived more than two seasons. Those black television stars that did make it in 1980s

primetime programming were primarily males such as Denzel Washington, Philip

Michael Thomas, and Michael Warren. Still, it was the older, more established actors

such as Mr. T that garnered the most public attention (Bogle, 2001). Of Mr. T, Bogle

(2001) notes, "with his gold chains, his exposed beefy biceps, and his Mowhawk-style

haircut… Mr.T's entire personal was the old-style physically powerful and intimidating

buck" (p.270). With early 1980s representation primarily limited to comedic roles, J.

Fred MacDonald (1992) termed the era an age of "the New Minstrelsy." This was

coupled with a still devastating lack of African American presence in the television

production industry to regulate representations of blacks. In 1981, of the 5,569 members of the Writer's Guild, only 65 were black and only four of those earned a weekly salary (MacDonald, 1992).

From this age emerged an unprecedented scenario where hundreds of thousands of African Americans had a university education and the Black bourgeoisie had a formidable identity, yet were unable to find such an identity present on television (MacDonald, 1992). It seemed when African Americans made action in the "real" world, television networks responded with an equal and opposite reaction. Nowhere was this more (in)visible than in the National Basketball Association (NBA). In the 1955-1956 season, only 7 percent of the NBA was African American, but by 1982 this percentage reached 72, with 80 percent of the league's starting positions occupied by African Americans. As a result, TV viewership declined and during the 1982-1983 season CBS only aired springtime playoff games (MacDonald, 1992). This pattern would all change, however, as the dominance of ABC, CBS and NBC broadcasting faded slowly away to the rise of new technology allowing an array of stations, each addressing unique target audiences in the form of narrowcasting.

In addition to an increase in network choices, the increasing affordability of videocassette recorders made viewers more capable of determining how they spent their time watching television (MacDonald, 1992). With increased competition for viewers and profits, broadcasters needed to develop loyal viewers and by the 1990s were developing more diverse, black-themed programming. While the 1980s only saw fourteen black-themed network television sitcoms, during the 1990s, this number skyrocketed to thirty-three (Hunt, 2005). For example, during the early 1990s Black Entertainment

Television (BET) began airing original series such as *Screen Scene* and *Teen Summit.*

Additionally, between the late 1990s into the 2000s television programs became

decreasingly segregated. The number of Top 20 primetime television shows popular

among both White and Black audiences increased from one in 1990 to four in 2000.

These new shows included reality television such as *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and

Survivor (Entman and Rojecki, 2000)*.* Beginning with the series *Cops* and followed most

notably by *The Real World,* the reality television industry is booming. Given the high

profit margin, resulting from low production costs, ease of foreign distribution and use of

non-unionized actors, the reality program continues to be an ever-expanding genre of

television entertainment that will hopefully provide new avenues for Black presence on

television (Murray and Ouellette, 2004).

While African American presence on television has steadily increased over the

past three decades, it has not been without struggle. By 1999, the fall line-up of the four

major television networks – ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox – introduced twenty-six new

situation comedies and not one of those included an African American in a lead role.

Within a month, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP) established the Diversity Initiative aimed at increasing diversity in the network

television industry in order to improve African American representation on television

(Hunt, 2005). This initiative was followed-up with the 2002 establishment of the

Hollywood Bureau, a division of the NAACP which "continues the NAACP's tradition

of media monitoring and social advocacy" by monitoring "offensive and defamatory

images in film and television and campaigning for greater minority participation in the

entertainment industry" (NAACP, 2009). Yet in 2000, a survey of 141 primetime

commercials contained only thirty-eight that were integrated. Furthermore, the sample contained thirty-four images of White couples and only two Black couples (Entman and Rojecki, 2000).

Today this ebb-and-flow in African American representation continues. The 2000-01 primetime series contained a racial distribution of 76% White, 18% African American, 2% Latino/Hispanic, 2% Asian Pacific American, and 0.2% Native American, suggesting that along with Whites, African Americans are slightly overrepresented in television drama (Greenberg, Mastro, and Brand, 2004). In the 2007-2007 primetime season, the NAACP (2008) noted a dramatic decrease in Black screen presence from previous seasons. In 2008, Fox's situation comedy with an all-African American lead, *Do Not Disturb,* was canceled after only three episodes and in February 2009 the CW, a network that regularly features African American leads, announced they would not renew their two programs with mostly Black performers, *Everybody Hates Chris* and *The Game* (Wyatt, 2009). If television is the "common storyteller of our age" (Gerbner, 2002, p.44) and these stories provide viewers with knowledge to interpret their surroundings, what happens to the possible selves of African American men when their presence on television is 'token' at best? Three plausible options for the construction of possible selves come to mind. Most obvious is that without television presence, African American men would be forced to develop possible selves from other constructs such as learned experience, role models, literature and newspapers. If the Black male still constructs possible selves from the television in spite of African American male absence, then he will either identify with characters on some basis other than race or understand the absence of African American males as a statement about his role in popular culture

41

and citizenry. Absence of African American male presence suggests they are outside of social norms, not mainstream, and are of no public interest. This may, in turn, limit the range of possible selves of African American men by suggesting that the wealthy, privileged lives appearing on television are beyond their reach.

<div align="center">Primitivism</div>

The other common critique African American representation contends that the majority of films and television present "static, one-dimensional, monolithic images of blacks" (Dates and Mascaro, 2005, p.54). This has historically manifested itself in the representation of African Americans as primitives. Primitivism as represented in televisual media since 1980 has been imbricated in a variety of narratives and tropes about African American men. From the slave figure to the innate athlete to the sex-obsessed brute to the dangerous Black man to the stock token Black character present for comedic relief, the primitive Black man has a long-standing tradition in television news and entertainment. What, however, are the implications of such representation on the possible selves of African American men? This section will proceed by reviewing each of these aforementioned tropes and discussing their implications for the possible selves of African American men.

Slave Figure

Hall (1981) understood the slave figure as the character that is devoted and childlike. Frequently the slave figure is cunning, untrustworthy and occasionally mocking of Whites. The native for Hall is a savage and is frequently seen in anonymous masses which rest in contrast to a solitary White hero. While today few programs are produced which actually depict black slaves, the White servant role, often seen as the

sidekick, thrives. One obvious example is the 1983 situation comedy *Just Our Luck* about

Shabu, a black genie who had been liberated from a bottle so that he could serve his

White master "for 2000 years or until your death" (MacDonald, 1992, p.258). Unlike the

White genie in *Bewitched,* Shabu was cut off from a cultural base and lived only to serve

his White master. Bogle (2001) suggests that Shabu not only taught Whites to rest-

assured that black power would only lead to the service of Whites but "with his eyes

popping and his jaw dropping … Shabu came across as an unabashed coon character"

(p.254).

Less obvious was the rise of White/Black buddy television programs during the

Reagan era which provided for White males an assuring message that Black males were

nothing to fear because they were the dependable, loyal friends with no societal gripes

(Bogle, 2001). In the early 1980s, *Hill Street Blues* became a popular NBC primetime

drama series featuring an odd-ball pairing of a rugged, White urban cowboy, Renko and

his sensitive, Black partner, Hill. During one episode Hill becomes involved with the

Black Officers Coalition and considers running for president. Renko becomes

increasingly jealous of the time Hill commits to the organization and confronts Hill about

his fear that he will adjust his priorities and place the coalition over his relationship with

Renko. Hill sympathetically responds by assuring Renko that their relationship will

always come first and promises not to run for presidency. Bogle (2001) explains, "in the

end, loyalty to his partner mattered to him more than organizing for affirmative action.

The private code prevailed" (p.275).

Later, in 1984, *Miami Vice* emerged as another interracial partnership of two

cops. Bogle (2001) notes that while the producers made earnest efforts to present the

43

show as a true partnership, important discrepancies remained. For example, the show's White cop, Sonny Crockett, played a ladies' man whose sexuality always remained a secondary story-line for the show. Conversely, Bogle (2001) explains that audiences "didn't have to fret about Tubbs and his women because it was clear that Tubb's most important relationship was with Crockett" (p.283). As the show progressed, Tubbs became more like a 'deluxe sidekick' than a partner. Bogle (2001) notes the increasing number of episodes focusing on Crockett's personal trials and even the increasing sequences in which Tubbs literally follows Crockett three steps behind, concluding that "television didn't seem ready for this kind of glamorous, sexy Black leading man" (p. 286).

Representations of the Black sidekick, like the examples provided, bring a welcome addition of 'public servant' as a possible self for African American men. This addition, however, is not without sacrifice. Working for the 'good guys' requires a decision-making process that suggests an African American male must be willing to sacrifice his racial identity and sexuality to attain the possible self. Additionally, he is always second-rate to the public servitude of Whites. While possible selves theorists have attended to the role agency, outcome expectancy, and self-efficacy play in motivating action, they have not attended to the sacrificial components of seemingly positive, possible selves. In determining whether or not to construct a desired possible self of 'public servant,' one likely weighs the necessary actions to attaining said goal against other possible selves such as racial allegiance.

Innate Athleticism

In 1988 Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder of CBS Sports offered for his audience an argument for the innate athletic superiority of Blacks. He attributed their overwhelming success not to personal dedication but "because slave owners in earlier centuries had practiced selective breeding programs, mating strong black males with strong black females to produce the most rugged workers possible" (cited in MacDonald, 1992). While Snyder's need to explain the success of black athletes through genetics is a more patently racist statement than the majority of his colleagues would endeavor, sports broadcasters are commonly criticized for their narrow depiction of black competitors as 'innate athletes' instead of 'hard workers'. This tradition is most transparent and criticized amidst discussion of the quarterback position in American football.

While most appreciate football as an American pastime that emphasizes the brawn and athletic skill of men, the quarterback position has been historically revered as 'the brains behind the operation'. Good quarterbacks must be able to analyze the field and make quick decisions that frequently determine the success of their team. Not surprising, and in concordance with the previous stereotypes reviewed, Whites have historically been the dominant race for this position. It has not been uncommon to observe a primarily African American team with a White quarterback. Arguably, this tradition promoted two common stereotypes: the superior intelligence and work ethic of Whites (Birrell, 1989; McCarthy and Jones, 1997) and the presumed innate athleticism of Black athletes (Jackson, 1989; Whannel, 1992). This assumed athleticism among Blacks "has its roots in the antebellum-era stereotype of the Black Buck, or Brute" (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005, p. 67). Much has changed however, since Willie T. Thrower became

the NFL's first African American quarterback in 1953: Doug Williams of the Washington Redskins had an MVP performance in Super Bowl XXII, Michael Vick was the number one overall pick in the 2001 NFL draft, and in 2007 there was an African American starting quarterback on five of the thirty-two NFL teams (ESPN.com, 2007). After examining NFL telecasts, Rada (1996) found that sportscasters were more likely to discuss the body type, strength and size of Black athletes and the cognitive qualities of Whites. In a content analysis of 32 (162 hours) collegiate and NFL football games, Billings (2004) contrasted depictions of Black and White quarterbacks to determine if these previous, commonly employed stereotypes are functioning today. While they found that these two primary stereotypes were present in the broadcasts, their pervasiveness had decreased since previous analyses. While Blacks were still represented overall as intellectually inferior, certain cerebral characteristics, such as concentration, were used to explain both the success and failure equally across race. In addition, when the ratio of Black to White quarterbacks was taken into account, there was no statistically significant difference in the frequency they were discussed. Innate athletic ability, however, continued to be a quality disproportionately attributed to Black quarterbacks.

When television viewers are informed that Black athletes earn success not through the hard work, like their White counterparts, but through their innate ability, there are substantive consequences for the messages relayed about the range of possible selves for African American men and the decision-making that accompanies them. In their 2004 study, Murrell and Curtis concluded that for Blacks athletic "performance was a function not of what the player does, but what the player is: a natural athlete" (p.230).

46

Of course, this is not simply limited to the realm of football. In an analysis of the adjectival and adverbial descriptions of African American and White participants in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Billings and Eastman (2002) found that White athletes were portrayed as succeeding because of their commitment, while Blacks succeeded again, due to innate athletic ability. Following coverage of different games by Larry Bird and Michael Jordan, Boyd (1997) found that black players are characterized by their athleticism and style of play while White players were identified with the primary, middle class, American values of aptitude, hard work, and determination.

Hoberman (2000) warns that media and popular culture's over-identification of African Americans to athleticism could limit the success of African American children by encouraging physical self-expression over academic success. In a 1994 study, Fraser and Eccles try to understand adolescent possible selves, as they relate to ethnic identity, through the concretization and internalization of adult role models. They accurately predicted, "given the visibility, high salaries, and glory associated with being a black athlete, coupled with the lack of visible role models in other fields," that black adolescents with salient black identities would "describe sports-related hoped-for selves more frequently than Whites and more frequently than Blacks with less salient identities" (p.4-5). However, unlike Hoberman's (2000) prediction, Fraser and Eccles found among their population that Black adolescents – particularly those with salient Black identities – aspired to academic success more frequently than Whites or those with less salient identities. These results may be an indicator of the positive effects role models may have, such as Michael Jordan telling kids to stay in school, in constructing the possible selves of adolescents.   This notion is further supported by Oyserman et al. (1995) and

47

Bandura (1997), who both contend that observing positive role models provides African

American boys the chance to identify similarities with a successful other and, in turn,

develop positive possible selves that may have previously been understood as unavailable

to their ethnic identity (for a more complete review of these works, see Chapter 1). If

one's role model is a Black athlete and the role model's success is "observed" through

the lens of the sportscaster it seems likely that as increasing attention is given to the

intellect of the black athlete, so too will attention be given to the possible intellect-related

selves of adolescent, African American men.

Brute / Criminal

When Allen Iverson, a guard for the Philadelphia 76ers and winner of the

National Basketball Association's Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player awards,

was arrested in 2002 for a domestic dispute, an array of news stories and features aired on

television. Iverson has what Brown (2005) refers to as the cultural identity of the hip-hop

generation: "a race man and hip-hop culture, which offers African Americans an

alternative identity" (Brown, 2005, p.66). This "alternative" is set against the NBA's

previous all-stars, such as Michael Jordan, who adopted a persona and cultural identity

that appealed to middle-class, White Americans. Brown contends that Iverson's persona

best exemplifies the cultural identity crisis of young Black males and suggests that the

media accounts of Iverson's 2002 domestic dispute, which involved no physical abuse

and for which the charges were dropped, "were constructed in a way that catered to the

dominant culture's fears about black masculinity. The reports reduced Iverson to the

familiar images that have been historically constructed about black men: that they are

aggressive, angry, prone to violence and sexually aggressive" (Brown, 2005, p.67). White

middle-class values may be exceptionally difficult to negotiate for those young African American men who live in impoverished circumstances and who have fewer opportunities for education and economic advancement. Perceived self-efficacy for the possible selves constructed by this group may be low as a result. Thus, the hip-hop identity may become a refuge for achieving cultural success. As a refuge, it rejects all that is White and middle-class, including education. Thus, young men adopting the hip-hop identity may develop positive possible selves that are actually illegal in order to attain success.

Beyond a volatile personality, representations of African American men frequently involve the association of blacks to criminal activity. These representations range from local and national news coverage to less obvious associations. These ties to criminality emerge from the long-standing trope of the 'black brute' (Haspel & Lacy, 2009). As a caricature, the 'black brute' is a violent and sexually aggressive African American male that emerged in late nineteenth and early twentieth century novels and films (Kinney, 1982). While the earlier caricature-like representations reminiscent of *The Birth of a Nation* have almost completely faded, today it is in the overrepresentation of African Americans as criminals or sexual aggressors that the stereotype is promulgated. For example, after looking at 'reality-based' cop programs airing in January of 1992 (e.g. *Cops. FBI, America's Most Wanted, The Untold Story*) Oliver (1994) found that while White characters were most often shown as police officers, Black characters were portrayed most frequently as criminal suspects.

Crime on Local and National News. Most recent scholarly attention to the representation of African Americans as criminals or brutes appears in national and local

news programs. The trend to disproportionately represent African Americans as criminals has been found nationwide across an array of local and national news networks (Gant & Dimmick, 2000; Gilens, 1999; Gilliam et al., 1996; Gunter, 1998). In more recent history, the portrayal of African Americans as criminals became a subject of widespread debate after the repugnant bias in media coverage following the devastating impact of hurricane Katrina on the city of New Orleans (for examples see Kinney, 2005; Ralli, 2005). In Haspel and Lacy's (2009) rhetorical analysis of Katrina stories in television and print news between August 26 and September 6, 2005, they argue that a recurring narrative pervaded to reinforce the mythic trope of the Black 'brute' which, in the aftermath of Katrina, manifested as Black "looters and shooters" (p.7). The misrepresentation of African Americans as criminals (Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski, 2006) was further illuminated by the overrepresentation of Whites as victims (Carlson and Baynes, 2007; Miller and Roberts, 2008). For example, news sources were ridiculed for suggesting that African Americans retrieving food from a convenience store were "looting" while their White counterparts were simply "finding" food to survive (Duke and Wiltz, 2005).

While the representation of African Americans in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina was obvious and blatant, it is, more often, represented in a more subtle manner that runs beneath levels of conscious awareness. Entman (1992) suggests that the "threatening young black male" is one stereotype frequently reinforced via television news through stories which would allow viewers to associate an unjustified threat to young, Black males. In a content analysis of two local Chicago news programs, Entman found that news stories focused on crime more frequently than any other subject. Those

stories dealing with violent or drug-related crime (i.e. murder, rape, robbery and drug dealing) were more likely to identify an African American perpetrator while those about non-violent crime (i.e. fraud and political corruption) most often identified a White perpetrator. While neither Blacks nor Whites were disproportionately represented within the two domains, violent and drug-related crimes were overrepresented in proportion to non-violent crimes. When pictured standing still, 65% of Whites and only 49% of blacks (all of whom were male) were identified with a name in the caption. Because racism functions through the homogenization of a group, withholding the names of African Americans could reinforce the idea that Black criminals are pervasive, "that the name is not important since the individual stands for a familiar category of persons outside the Whites' own group" (p. 350-351). Entman also notes that pictures displaying the alleged criminal restrained by an officer contained Black males 38% of the time in contrast to only 16% of Whites. This imagery, Entman argues, suggests that Black male criminals are more menacing and dangerous than White male criminals. Similarly, in a content analysis of a random sample of local news stories airing in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, Dixon and Linz (2000) found that Blacks, when compared to crime data reports, were overrepresented as perpetrators and underrepresented as victims of crime. Additionally, Blacks were more likely to be portrayed as lawbreakers than in positive roles as police officers while the opposite was true of Whites. In yet another analysis, local news coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles riots, during which more Latinos were arrested than Blacks, "media depictions heavily emphasized and often equated Blacks as the 'rioters'" (Hunt, 1997, p. 117). In 2000, another content analysis of local Los Angeles television news looked at stories about White, Hispanic and/or Black juvenile

lawbreakers (Dixon and Azocar, 2006). Black juveniles were the only racial category overrepresented as lawbreakers in relation to the counties records for that month, suggesting little change local news network practices since the early 1990s.

Criminal Behavior Elsewhere on Television. Criminal behavior appears in a variety of other forms such as associations with poverty, commercial advertising and primetime television. In an analysis of 1,699 television commercials airing between 1992 and 1994, Coltrane and Messineo (2000) found that White males were most often represented as powerful while African American males were largely represented as sexually agressive. Entman and Rojecki (2001) conducted an analysis of three ten-day samples of local news stories airing in 1990 on ABC, CBC, and NBC affiliate stations in Chicago that specifically addressed poverty. They found that the most frequent manifestation (40% of the 239 stories) of poverty in news stories was in crime committed by African American men. In these news stories, poverty was described as a threat resulting from the poor's involvement in crime, gangs and drugs. Moreover, the Black neighborhoods described as poverty stricken were signaled by geographic references, "'on the [Chicago] South Side' or in a 'tough neighborhood'" (p. 98) suggesting that all African Americans in the communities were alike both in their economic status and their criminal behavior.

These common references to African Americans as criminals may, Entman and Rojecki (2001) warn, encourage the development of schemas or stereotypes among audience members that associate all African Americans with criminal behavior. If this schema is adopted by young Black males, particularly those living in 'tough neighborhoods,' the influence on their ability to construct positive possible selves could

be devastating. Framing theory suggests that the news is able to determine what is important to its viewers by selecting what stories to cover. For a young man living in a crime-stricken community observing that the only presumably 'meaningful' presence of African American men is criminal behavior, the self-efficacy required to select possible selves outside of his current living conditions may be damaged. Additionally, the disparity between the actual presence of Black victims and their presence on television, young Black males may perceive their communities and their gendered and racial identities as more violent than they truly are. This may, in turn, promote further violence among African American men. Additionally, this may make constructing a possible self outside of criminal activity difficult for young Black males.

In primetime drama African Americans have a standing history of underrepresentation as perpetrators (Bogle, 2001; Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Entman (1990) argues that this occurs because major media outlets require the viewership of Black audiences to survive in the competitive business and fear that such representation will draw negative attention or reduce ratings. However, this does not mean that African Americans are absent from crime scene dramas. As MacDonald (1992) explains:

> Outlaw behavior has become an asset, in fact, as many black characters have been created as reformed criminals now working for 'the system.' Anthony in *Designing Women* is an ex-convict. "From a streetwise con man turned investigative reporter on *The Insiders,* to a comical escapee from a Texas chain gang on *Stir Crazy,* to a paroled murderer now investigating cases for a white female lawyer on *Gabriel's Fire,* entertainment TV has propagated the message that no one knows crime like blacks know crime. (MacDonald, 1992, p.260)

While presenting black men in law-abiding, government jobs again expands the range of possible selves represented in television, this pattern of representation offers an unrealistic decision-making process for young black men as they attain these selves.

Portraying that such a career can be attained through unlawful activity and that unique

career pathways are still available once one is convicted of a crime could have

devastating impacts on young black men by suggesting that involvement in crime is not

irreparable and that crime can be a legitimate way out of their current conditions.

Moreover, this suggests that current behavior is does not in an immediate sense determine

or impact future possible selves. This belief, when applied to sexual practices, could

materialize as a condom gone unworn.

Still other representations of the African American man as a brute/criminal have

alternative consequences for possible selves. After analyzing the representations of

African American men across six seasons of Music Television's (MTV) hit reality series,

The Real World, Orbe (1998) revealed that through editing, lighting, and camera angles

the series constructs black men as volatile, angry, and sexually aggressive. Orbe warns

that such representation not only perpetuates negative stereotypes of black men, but also

provides Whites with 'legitimate' examples to draw upon and justify their fear of black

males. Maintaining the strong influence of the narrative that other scripted television

series hold on possible selves, reality television provides what pretends to be a realistic

image of potential selves for young African American men. Being on *The Real World*

inherently means that popular culture has deemed you 'cool'. Following the series, cast

members tour the states entertaining college students at bars, signing books, and returning

to reality television in one of MTV's many high-stakes, drama-filled, competitions such

as *Real World Challenge: The Gauntlet.* When television offers a message that

legitimate 'cool' status for young, African American men is attained through aggressive

and sexually promiscuous behavior then it seems logical that a young, African American

male seeking 'peer acceptance' as a positive-possible self will adopt these behaviors which again may result in unprotected intercourse.

Comedic Relief / Coon

The final popular manifestation of primitivism in television comes in the form of what Bogle (1973) branded the "coon character," but often is associated with buffoon-like persona of the characters in such early television programs as *Amos 'n' Andy* (Greenberg, Mastro, and Brand, 2004). Typically, coons are present for comedic relief and are characterized by their lack of intelligence or knowledge of social norms, laziness, and over exaggerated facial expression. Bristor, Lee and Hunt (1995) provide a Rhodes Furniture commercial to explain how this stereotype manifests visually:

> When the president asks several employees, who cut the furniture prices? ...
> Although the white employees manage to convey their innocence and single out
> their guilty colleague without any exaggerated stereotypical expressions, the
> African-American man does not. His appearance is comical; his eyes are open
> wide, to the point of appearing to bulge, and his expression is one of almost
> vacuous stupidity. (p. 52)

Throughout the early 1980's this stereotype was present in the overrepresentation of African Americans in comedy roles on predominantly White television shows. For example, the comic bartender Ted Lange on *Love Boat,* hip disc jockey Venus Flytrap on *WKRP in Cincinnati,* and *Enos'* street-savvy cop named Turk all brought easy laughs to the primetime screen (Bogle, 2002; MacDonald, 1992). Additionally, MacDonald (1992) argues that even late night comedy shows such as *Saturday Night Live* and *Fridays* placed African American men in predictable, stereotypical coon-like roles.

Blaming and Emasculating Black Males. Beyond comedy, portrayals of African Americans which associate the race with stupidity and laziness also evolve from the

'coon character.' For example, practices of modern racism in national news were found

to reinforce this notion by presenting stories attributing the failures of African Americans

to their own wrongdoings, while portraying Whites as victims of unfair policy (Gray,

1989). Another materialization of the 'coon character' is the Black female emasculating

the Black father by suggesting he is "ridiculous and foolish," which appeared frequently

in shows like *The Jeffersons* and *Sanford and Son*[2] (Baptiste, 1986, p. 49). Baptiste argues

these programs portray African American men and women as "perennial antagonists and

black men as fools," informing viewers that "Black America is comedy and Black men

are buffoons to be put down and/or ridiculed!" (p.50). Other shows ranging from *Walker,*

Texas Ranger to Bill Moyer's on *Nightline* constructed images of African American men

as inept at saving lives and lazy fathers (Page, 1997).

　　Handling Success and Intellect. Closely related to the 'coon' is the frequent

narrative occurring in television programming where the Black male is unable to function

or 'get by' in the world of intellect or success. Much like the findings of Entman and

Rojecki (2000) presented in Chapter 1, Gant and Dimmick (2000) conducted a content

analysis of 239 local news stories and discovered that while African American presence

mirrored the demographics of the community (55 news stories centered on an African

American as the newsmaker), the social roles associated with those representations did

not. No African Americans were associated with business, medical health, or as private

---

[2] While *Sanford and Son* was produced between 1972 and 1977 (International Movie Database, 1999), thus

not initially included in my sample, it continued to air heavily through the 1980s (Baptiste, 1986).

Additionally, the program was mentioned by two of the research participants as a television program they

enjoyed watching prior to contracting HIV. For this reason, I have included it in this analysis.

individuals and they were marginally represented in roles as educators. Tamborini and

Mastro (2000) conducted a content-analysis of court drama during one week of

primetime programming airing on ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox in the fall of 1997 and

found while blacks were shown as representatives of the court in proportion to their

actual statistical presence, they only appeared occupying positions as police officers. The

position of judge, attorney (with two exceptions), witness and victim were all relegated to

Whites.

In television advertising, this theme occurs in the representation of African

American men as overwhelmingly occupying menial jobs. For example, Licata and

Biswas (1993) found that commercials airing on the broadcasting stations ABC, NBC

and CBS in 1991 were significantly less likely to depict African American males in

leadership positions than those appearing on black-oriented channels such as BET

suggesting that, though presence of African Americans in commercial advertising has

increased greatly since the 1960s (Wilkes & Valencia, 1989), advertisers still fear that

White audience members will become threatened by black leaders. Bristor, Lee and Hunt

(1995) use an extensive array of commercials to argue the most common role portrayal of

African Americans in television advertising is the "fast food or other low wage worker

often happily helping a White customer" (p. 52). This comes as no surprise when we

remember that both the 'coon' and slave figure appear under the umbrella of primitivism.

The implications for possible selves resulting from the 'coon character' are

widespread. These messages inform young Black males that their race and gender limit

them from the occupational, familial or social success granted to others. By putting the

joke on African American males, television media suggests that the world will always

57

laugh at the Black man, which in turn may inhibit young Black males from developing possible selves which would garner any public attention.

<div align="center">Sexually Neutralized</div>

When Black men do appear as intelligent or skilled they are almost never portrayed as intimately involved with another Black female. Even rarer is any intimacy with White females or other males of any race. Entman and Rojecki (2001) explain that Black males are either portrayed as incompetent aggressors or, if they are successful personally or professionally, they are stripped of their sexuality. In either instance, Black males fall short of a well-rounded representations. MacDonald (1992) explains succinctly why this character became increasingly popular during the backlash of the 1980s: "In this classic characterization, African-American males were rendered romantically unappealing to White women, thereby constituting no rivalry to White male prowess" (MacDonald, 1992, p.259). Thus, if African American males are to garner any social or political power, they must reduce their threat to White males by hiding their sexuality. Hall explains that the history of Blacks "tells them unequivocally that any White attention to Black sexuality is likely to result in rape or lynching: black survival depends upon keeping Black sexuality out of the sight of whites" (p.95). Such explanation seems plausible given the persuasive use of sexual neutralization employed by defense attorneys during the Anita Hill trials. Hall (2005) asserts that the aim of Clarence Thomas's defense was to align him with the Bill Cosby/Cliff Huxtable figure of the "tamed Black male" (p.107) as opposed to the sexual predator-like images of Willie Horton and Rodney King.

Two obvious television examples of the sexually neutralized Black male occurred in the programs *A-Team* and *Designing Women.* Bogle (2001) explains that Mr. T's character, B.A. was a "buck domesticated for the small tube" who was seemingly uninterested in romance. Instead "B.A. usually just hung out with the fellas (*sic*). Rather than reach some heated sexual climax, B.A. preferred to blow up a building" (Bogle, 2001, p.270). In *Designing Women,* a show full of coy single women, their friend and helper Anthony was always available with sympathy or aid, but "operated around them like an ebony eunuch in a harem of White flesh, never able to touch the tempting merchandise, never even fantasizing about romantic liaison" (MacDonald, 1992, p259). Bramlett-Soloman and Farewell (1996) analyzed eight weeks of the top three daytime soap operas in 1995 for racial patterns in intimate relationships. Of the 421 intimate moments aired, 372 involved exclusively White characters and 49 exclusively Black. Not one depiction of intimacy was interracial. The authors concluded that intimacy was depicted as a primarily White act that Blacks only occasionally partake in and that interracial intimacy continues to defy social norms. If young Black males are informed that any attained power results in the loss of intimate possible selves, they may be more likely to forgo one of the two. Moreover, the absence of homosexual relationships among Black males on television may reinforce the belief that homosexuality is wrong and further encourage African American males to use their surroundings to determine what homosexual intimate possible selves are available.

Educated, Middle Class and *White?*

While both Entman and Rojecki (2001) and Hall (1981) suggest that scholars move beyond mere arguments of the positive or negative representations of African

American men, I found it surprising that neither included a seemingly positive stereotype in their arguments. Because of the overwhelming popularity of *The Cosby Show* and many other programs which depict African American men as educated and middle class, it is impossible to accurately discuss the representation of possible selves for African American men in television without addressing this increasingly popular theme particularly in light of the widespread debate over the impact of these programs (Bogle, 2001; Gray, 1995; Smith, 2008). According to Havens (2000) *The Cosby Show* attained domestic and international success because Black and non-White postcolonial citizens could identify with the Cosby family, not due to their on-screen struggles with oppression (which were absent), but because they avoided stereotypical representations of Blacks while maintaining distinctly Black cultural references such as jazz. *The Cosby Show* gave viewers a chance to see themselves on television as something other than a primitive. While the presence of alternative representations of African American men as educated, active fathers, law-abiding citizens, and occupying leadership roles is needed to say the least, the quality of such presence has come under an arguably justified criticism.

One common critique is that these programs suggest a dichotomy between 'hood (i.e. bad) and integrated (i.e. good) Black masculinity. For example, on *Real World: Denver* this conflict appeared between two African American housemates, Tyrie and Stephen, who represent the two extremes. In a confession, Tyrie labels Stephen as an "acceptable Negro," that is, "the Black guy everybody would gravitate to because they had so much more in common" (Bell-Jordan, 2008, p.360). Another example is the representation of two extreme social classes and values in *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* (Harper, 1996). When *The Cosby Show* tried to include a more diverse representation of

African Americans it was through Theo's new friend who, by the end of a single episode, quickly realized the error of his 'hood' mentality and began performing better in school (MacDonald, 1992). Bell-Jordan (2008) warns that the absence of "diverse or complex representation of African American males" in television programming "reinforces essentialist thinking, limits the interpretation of black masculinity, and positions it as inherently in conflict" (p.360).

Another critique found the middle-class African American family frequently portrayed on sitcoms such as *Amen, Homeroom, 227, Snoops, Family Matters, True Colors, Moesha* and *The Cosby Show* paint an unrealistic picture of Black America. Bogle (2001) explains of the 1980's primetime trends:

> Most programs painted a portrait of an integrated culture in which African Americans were an important part of the workforce. Cast as top-notch professionals, their race and culture often were inconsequential, and if such an aberration as a workplace race problem flared, it was promptly defused. (p.264)

MacDonald (1992) expanded on this notion to state, "seldom does TV portray the indignities that blacks routinely encounter, regardless of social or economic status. Seldom, too, does the medium present life in the inner city with compassion or understanding" (p.254). A 1989 report from the National Commission for Working Women of Wider Opportunities for Women stated "real-world racism, which is pervasive, subtle, and blatant, is commonplace in America but virtually invisible on entertainment television" (cited in MacDonald, 1992, p. 254). Today, this same critique remains of reality shows such as *Father Hood* and *Run's House* which follow famous hip-hop dads as they navigate the daily perils of fatherhood. Smith (2008) explains, "like *Cosby,* neither *Run's House* nor *Father Hood* deal in any strong way with racism,

61

economic distress, or other society barriers" (p.395). Presenting African American life on television in such a manner provides a convincing education for Whites that African Americans who continue to commit crime or live in poverty are a product of their own misbehaviors, not of any cultural or legislative racism. Additionally, when African Americans watch such programming the signifiers and modes of representation are so disparate from their life it may be difficult to implicate the self into such roles and imagine a future, possible self that involves the middle-class success, career, life free from crime, successful marriage or college education that are all depicted. The viewer instead might accept these programs as a chance for mental escape from the day-to-day realities of living as an African American.

Whether such mental escape or fantasy is a viable method for altering the possible selves of African American youth has been thoughtfully debated. Singer (1966) and Taylor et al. (1998) argue that fantasies do not function as a solid-basis for acting. Fantasies, Singer explains, allow the individual to construct possible selves without attending to past performance or the future probability. Recalling Singer's (1966) critique of fantasies, Triandis (1996) contends that fantasies about a distant future, for people in certain cultural groups such as African Americans, may be beneficial. Triandis is particularly interested in groups whose cultural products cultivate a long-term perspective and rigid cultural values. Cultural products are those myths, legends and language and rigid cultural values which construct "norms that apply across situations and over time" (Oettigen, 1997, p.1212). Cultural values and norms largely determine action by informing the public "who interacts with whom, when, in what way, and with what kind of outcome" (Oettigen, 1997, p.1206). Triandis explains that such fantasies may enable

people to cognitively escape the confines of their cultural norms and develop alternative goals. Triandis (1996) also argues that the higher the norm-oriented the culture, the more effective distant fantasies may be in motivating behavior and the less effective positive expectations about behavior will be in motivating behavior.

Still others contend that despite the inconsistencies between the Huxtables and the struggling African American, their presence is indelibly influential on the development of identity for African Americans. Robin Bylorn notes "their reality was not my reality, but their inherent Blackness compensated for our incompatibilities" (as cited in Hopson, 2008, p.442). Hopson (2008) explains that, like Bylorn, he and his brothers were enthralled by their chance to see people who looked like them on the television. Hopson succinctly identifies the importance to televisual presence on possible selves stating, "the pictures symbolized who we were and what we could become" (p.442). From the 1980s through the present, television has produced an increasing amount of programming with African American characters in with progressively varying traits, roles and performances. As presence continues to both increase and vary, African American men will be educated on an increasingly more complex array of possible selves from which to choose.

Conclusion

Research addressing representations of African American men abound. However, one obvious shortcoming is the lack of scholarship dedicated to explicating the health-related possible selves of African American men. This may be a result of an absence of this domain in television media or it may be a shortcoming of scholars. This will remain unclear until further examination is given to the televisual representations of future health of African American men. Research has shown that the representations of African

American men in United States television media have continued to improve since 1980. However, while the plots, professions, and personas of African American men have changed over time, the dominating binary of representation has not. Much like Entman and Rojecki (2000) spoke of representations of Black males in film, I contend that the representations of African American men in television media are constricted by a binary which prohibits the Black male from being portrayed as whole. Within this binary African American males are either represented as primitive Black males or successful but absent of their gender and/or race identity. Put differently, African American males are rarely shown as intelligent, professionally successful, engaged fathers that maintain both their racial and gender identities. Most often when an African American male is depicted with any social power, his racial or gender identity is sacrificed. When assessed through the lens of possible selves theory, this binary poses clear limitations on the construction of possible selves for African American men. Most notable is the absence of achieved possible selves in a variety of domains such as professional, personal, health, cultural and social. Without a complex array of possible selves made visible in representations of African American males, young Black males who are cultivated by television's presence may find it difficult to construct multiple selves in different domains at once.

Of course, there are the occasional exceptions. Most recently these have appeared in reality television programming. *Run's House* and *Father Hood* both suggest that the possible self of hip-hop identity need not exclude the possible selves of role model, disciplinarian and active father for African American men (Smith, 2008). Dubrofsky and Hardy (2008) compared constructions of race in two shows: the all-black ensemble's *Flavor of Love* and the predominantly White show, *The Bachelor.* Both shows create a

scenario where females compete against each other for the love of one man. In the case of *Flavor of Love*, the sought-after male is the famous 1980s hip-hop artist Flavor Flav. While Dubrofsky and Hardy (2008) do recognize the racial stereotypes promulgated by the show, they argue that, unlike constructions of whiteness in *The Bachelor*, *Flavor of Love* provides "a fluid and complex understandings of Black identity through active claiming of identities" (p.373). They explain that while both shows are "over the top" in their performances of identity, only *Flavor of Love* is self-consciously so. Viewers are aware that Flavor Flav is both a person who is performing for a show as are the many women who compete to be his "wifey". What results is a series that exceeds the constraining "ghetto identity… and the demand to conform to any single identity" (p.383). By providing a context in which African Americans understand racial identity as a performance, there stands an opportunity for young Black males to recognize the impact of cultural norms on their development of possible selves, and begin to critically asses those implications.

Across the board, representations of African American men are improving. In a 2001 content analysis of 2,315 speaking characters appearing on primetime network television, Mastro and Stern (2003) found that along with Whites, blacks were overrepresented in commercials and were shown in a well-rounded array of occupations, relationships and activities; suggesting that challenges of the past have been met triumphantly and the new battle is over the representations (or lack thereof) of Hispanics and Asians. These findings provide hope that as America progresses towards racial equality for Blacks, the established binary ordering representations of African American

65

men will break apart and provide fear that the fight for racial equality across the United

States is far from over.

CHAPTER 3

POSSIBLE SELVES OF HIV-POSITIVE AFRICAN AMERICAN

MEN IN ATHENS, GA

This chapter will analyze the transcriptions from the twelve semi-structured interviews conducted with HIV positive African American men. This population was selected for three reasons. First, I am interested in African American men because they are disproportionately impacted by the domestic HIV/AIDS virus. Second, by working with an HIV population, I can gain additional insight into two life-stages (i.e. pre and post HIV diagnosis) instead of one. Finally, this is a convenience sample. Because I discussed very intimate details with the participants and needed their responses to be honest and thorough, selecting a population which I had already built rapport with was extremely beneficial to this study. Overall, participants appeared comfortable and provided long, seemingly unfiltered responses to the questions asked. This analysis will use verbatim and paraphrased responses to explicate the range of possible selves that participants indicated prior to and after their diagnosis. In addition it will consider whether participants engaged in life tasks to attain each of the possible selves articulated. Finally I will address how the possible selves articulated by the research participants compared with those represented in United States television programming since 1980.

Participant Demographics

Twelve African American men with HIV/AIDS who receive services from AIDS Athens were interviewed for this project. While this is a small number of participants,

67

their demographics were broadly representative of the most recent state data for African American men living with HIV/AIDS in Georgia. Participants ranged from twenty-four to fifty-six years of age, with an average age of 40.6 and a median age of 40.5 years. The most recent statistics indicate that the majority (64%) of seropositive African American men living in Georgia are over 40 years of age (Georgia Department of Health, 2008). Among this group, most are between the ages of 40 and 44 (6,222) with very few above 55 (3,754). The majority of research participants were in their thirties (5), followed by their forties (3) and fifties (3). Only one research participant was in his twenties. The average annual household income for the year prior to the interview was $7,424; however this number includes two who did not earn any money the previous year (one is a student and the other was incarcerated). When these two incomes were removed, the average annual household income among participants was $8,909. One participant finished the 8th grade and another the 11th, while most had completed high school or received a GED (5) or attended some college (3). One participant was still in college, and another had received his bachelor's degree.

When asked how long they had been living with HIV, responses ranged from one to twenty years with an average of 9.75 years and a median of 10.5. Age of HIV diagnosis ranged between seventeen and forty-seven years of age; the average was 31, with a median of 31.5. One was diagnosed at seventeen, four were diagnosed during their twenties, three during their thirties and four during their forties. Seven contracted HIV through unprotected intercourse, four were unsure (i.e. either through unprotected intercourse or injection drug use [IDU]) and one was raped. While I never directly asked participants of their sexual identity, two mentioned intercourse with men only, four

mentioned having intercourse with men and women, and five mentioned having intercourse only with women. This is not reflective of 2007 state data which states that among the reported HIV/AIDS cases in Georgia, 73% resulted from men having sex with other men (MSM). However, because the state only reports MSM, heterosexual contact and IDU as methods for HIV transmission among adults, it may not accurately account for those men who have intercourse with both sexes. Due to the down-low culture so pervasive among African American men, in which men pass as straight and privately have sex with men, this is quite likely. Of the four men who admitted to having sex with both men and women, three identified as straight, one of whom was married. Of the six participants who had married a spouse, two were still married. Three had been previously incarcerated for a year or more.

Methods

This research project received approval from the Institutional Research Board on July 10, 2008. Data collection occurred from October 2008 through March 2009. Participants were recruited through posters at AIDS Athens and through personal contact. As a volunteer in the food pantry, I recruited many of the participants when they came in to pick up their weekly goods. As an incentive, participants were offered fifteen dollars for their time. Interviews were conducted at AIDS Athens and lasted an average of 24.3 minutes. To protect the identity of the participants, release was obtained through informed consent, all recordings were transcribed in private by me, and precautions were taken to remove any identifying information from the transcript. After transcription was completed, the audio files were destroyed.

69

During the interview twenty-seven questions were asked. Six of these questions were about the basic demographic data described above. Questions that followed were selected to ascertain how the participant related to his future prior to and now after their HIV diagnosis. Additionally, during these two time frames participants were asked about who they admired, their television viewing habits and preferences, what they planned to do in the future, what they expected for their health in the future, the types of sexual health practices they engaged in and their general personality (for full Interviewer Guide, see Appendix A). These questions were selected to grasp how the participant related to their future prior to his HIV diagnosis and now. Additionally, these questions were developed with an interest in how television viewing and role models may have influenced participants' relationship with their future and how their relationship with the future could have impacted their safe-sex decision-making skills. Possible selves theory suggests that people's possible selves are both influenced by and influence their self-concept and cultural and social surroundings (Erickson, 2007). Television has been theorized to influence our understanding of the world around us and ourselves, particularly in relation to gender and racial identities, by cultivation theorists (Gerbner, Signorielli, and Shanahan, 2002), cultural theorists (Hall, 2005), and psychologists (Baptiste, 1986) alike. Thus, it seems plausible for television to influence people's possible selves. People's possible selves are then said to impact their decision-making skills and behavior (Bandura, 1977) so it then goes that television may impact people's behavior. For this project I am specifically concerned with safe-sex as a behavior which is enacted for self preservation for a future possible-self.

70

Possible Selves

This section proceeds with three sub-sections. Each will address one of the possible selves domains discussed with the research participants: professional, personal and health. Within each domain, I will discuss the range of possible selves articulated and compare them with those portrayed in United States television media for African American men, as outlined in chapter two. I will also draw on the possible implications of the outline possible selves for engaging in protected intercourse, which I explained in chapter one as a life task given meaning through possible selves in a variety of domains (see Table 1). Note that any of the implications drawn out from possible selves theory or from televisual representation are not statements of fact, claim or causality, but are hypothetical implications that presuppose broad assumptions about television's ability to impact people's construction self and cultural identities, the impact of these identities on the construction of possible selves, and the impact of identities and possible selves on decision-making.

Professional Aspirations

When asked what career they aspired to prior to their HIV diagnosis, participants expressed a broad range of possible selves. These ranged from clergy to makeup artists to lawyers to, most frequently, professional athletes. Much like the innate athleticism discussed in chapter two, most of the participants believed these possible selves were attainable because of something intrinsic to their being. For example, Darrel (3), who cross-dressed every day, indicated that he wanted to be a musician. When I asked him how his life experience led him to believe that he would be successful he responded "Uh, I thought I was you know, going to be, you know, really really successful. I was talented,

71

my family was talented, my family was successful so I just thought I was going to lead into success and it didn't happen that way with me" (3, I24). Later I asked him why he thought success was inevitable and he explained, "Um, just growing up seeing family members with the same interest and everything so, I just thought it was going to be inherited, like my diabetes or something" (3, I28). For him, the success of his family members as musicians meant *ipso facto* that he would too become a success. In my interview with Howard, he indicated that as a child he wanted to be a professional football player and believed it was a possibility because he was the fastest runner in his school (10). Another participant, Adam, indicated that he wanted to play professional basketball and believed it was attainable because he was tall and could jump high (6). Garrett indicated that at a young age he had a spiritual awakening, that he was "called and anointed" (1, I19). When participants indicated a sense of inevitable success as a result of innate talent, they were consistently not making decisions that would help achieve their positive-professional-possible selves. For example, Adam and Howard did not play their respective sports in high school. In fact, Adam stated "Never played on a school team, but I always played you know with my friends outside and all but I always wanted to play for a school team, but my mother was always 'school first' you know, 'get your grades first' so basically, I was waiting for college" (I36). Not only was he seemingly unaware that colleges do not recruit from neighborhood basketball courts, but he chose not to attend college. Later he admitted now that at thirty-two years of age he was "getting too old" to pursue a basketball career. When I asked Garrett how he maintained the belief that he would become a preacher throughout his drug addiction, he responded "I figured I would do it in God's time" (1, I16). Televisual representations

72

Table 1

Post-HIV Diagnosis Possible Selves in Personal, Professional, and Health-Related

Domains and Participant's Consistent Use of Condoms during Sexual Encounters

	Personal PS	Professional PS	Health PS	Consistent Use of Condoms
1- Garrett	+	+	+	Y
2- Shane	-	-	-	Y
3- Darrel	-	+	+	Y
4- Joseph	NW	-	-	No Intercourse
5- Chris	-	+	-	N
6- Adam	NW	+	-	N
7- Lawrence	-	-	-	N
8- Terry	-	+	-	N
9- Martin	+	+	+	Y
10- Howard	-	-	+	Y
11- Phillip	-	-	+	Y
12- Willard	-	NW	+	Y

Key:

+   Constructed Possible Self and Engaged in Life Tasks to attain it.

-       No Possible Self Indicated.

NW   Articulated a Possible Self but is not Actively Pursuing it.

Y   Condoms consistently used during intercourse regardless of partner's status

N   Condom use varies by scenario

of African American male athletes consistently refer to their success as a result of innate athleticism, whereas televisual representations of white male athletes consistently portray their success as a result of hard work. Thus, African American men who watch their role models succeed through the lens of sportscasters would not be informed of the life tasks necessary to attain a professional-possible self (i.e. training, high school basketball teams, etc.). This connection between innate talent and African American men is not limited to athletics. Because by and large the majority of successful African American men represented on television are athletes, African American men may be receiving little to no education from television about the importance of life tasks or intermediary goals in attaining long-term possible selves. Hence, this (lack of) knowledge may be applied to a broad range of possible selves constructed by African American men. Because choosing protected intercourse is a life task associated with reaching a long-term possible self, it is easy to see how this relationship with a possible self could have influenced safe-sex decision-making.

When participants indicated that they had a positive-professional-possible self prior to contracting HIV and took active steps to attain them, they were most often met with difficult limitations. For these participants, when a life experience made attaining their desired possible self unlikely, they saw no other professional alternative and ceased to construct professional-possible selves. The most talkative of all participants, Terry, stated he wanted to be a campaign manager at a young age and went to Georgia Military College to study political science whereupon he learned he had an extreme phobia of public speaking and quit school. For another participant, Willard, blowing out his knee in

74

the 11th grade was so devastating he decided to quit school (12). One exception was Chris (5) who wanted to become a lawyer and continues to pursue his law degree today.

These findings parallel with the arguments advanced in chapter two. For example, Chris grew up in poverty yet expressed that "I always wanted to do something different bes- you know, besides what my family has always done. My family has always, always stuck in Georgia and I've always been the odd one" (5, I46). At first, it seemed that Singer (1996) and Taylor et. al (1998) may be wrong: Chris listed *Family Matters* and *Full House* as his favorite childhood programs, perhaps fantasizing about a future *was* beneficial. Then Chris expressed, on multiple occasions, the influence his world-traveling, open-minded, well-educated godfather had on his perceptions about what he was capable of attaining and what he wanted to be. This seems to support previous findings that personal role models are beneficial to the construction of positive-possible selves (Lockwood, Chasteen, & Wong, 2005; Lockwood & Jordan, 2002; Lockwood & Kunda, 1999) more than it does refute the arguments made in chapter two. My interview with Terry felt as though a living example of the 'white/Black buddy' program sat before me. Terry never wanted to become a politician himself, but only to serve (a presumably white) one. In his lengthy interview, Terry spoke in admiration of an almost all-white ensemble: Ed Sullivan, Elvis Presley, Lyndon B. Johnson, John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, Hilary Clinton, and finally, Martin Luther King, Jr. In addition, he only watched television programs with all-white leads: *Two and a Half Men, King of Queens, Andy Griffith, Beverly Hillbillies,* and *Everybody Loves Raymond.* He even specifically stated that he did not like *The Cosby Show* and when I asked him why, he responded, "I just don't" (8, I84). Interestingly, Terry seemed aware of the tensions

75

inherent to his worldview stating early on "you might think I'm a Uncle Tom, if I keep on talking, you might think I'm a militant" (8, I14). It was as if he had adopted the manifestation of white fear in the 1980s; he wanted professional success but only to the service of those who he admired. More poignantly, both Terry and Willard perceived their available positive-professional-possible selves as so narrow that when their hoped-for self seemed unattainable, all hope at attaining any professional-possible self was lost. As Gerbner et al. (2002) explain, "Underrepresentation in the world of television means a relatively narrow (and thus more stereotyped) range of roles and activities" (p.53). Without a possible self to work towards, there is no meaning given to the life task of protected intercourse.

Occasionally, participants would indicate that they had no professional-possible selves at a given time. For example, I asked Willard what he would have told me about his future career when he was twenty. He responded "I wouldn't have said nothin' cause I was still wild then, you know what I'm saying? I wasn't thinking about doing nothing, just running around on the street, that's what I was doing" (10, I26). Martin, who has struggled with his sexual and gender identity since he was twelve, explained that he had no professional-possible self because "I was just so attached to my mother. I didn't want to leave her, I was so attached to her. That was where I wanted to be" (9, I39). Joseph, Martin and Phillip all recognized previous drug addictions as impediments to establishing professional selves. For these men, their identity and material conditions may have influenced their ability to construct possible selves. Again, without a possible self, life tasks lack meaning and therefore become unimportant.

76

For the majority of participants, dealing with the absence of a professional-possible self was not a distant memory of a time before HIV, but a present-day struggle. Naturally, the two participants receiving disability had no professional-possible selves. For some, like Shane, the fear of imminent death, a reality of his current health, made it difficult to develop a professional-possible self. Shane was raised by his mother, a prostitute, in a home that always had men coming and going. Many of these men raped him. To escape his circumstances, Shane enlisted in the military. After only two years of service, he was involuntarily discharged due to his HIV status. In another effort to improve his circumstances, Shane enrolled in college, but by his senior year became so ill with full-blown AIDS that he could no longer attend. When I asked him what he wanted to do now, he responded, "Really, I haven't sat down and planned out a goal because, well I'm always thinking that maybe tomorrow my last day and the thing is that, I didn't plan out what I'll be doing six months a year from now, and I'm trying to do that now because I feel like if I accomplish that or something, or something somewhere down the line my life will be taken from me so" (2, I41). When I asked Shane to explain to me why he came to this conclusion he responded "I say it comes from being HIV positive. I mean what scares me is that I was kicked out of the navy and then when I was about to get a degree then all that just went downhill so it's like I'm scared of trying to achieving" (I43). Still others, like Howard (10), found it nearly impossible to imagine a possible-self at all:

> M: How do you presently feel about the future and what do you expect?
> I 49: What you mean?
> M: Mmm..what are you planning for right now?
> I 50: I just going to sit around the house now and just grow old I guess, that's be the only thing I can do! (laughs)

M: Well what are you looking forward to?

I 51: What you mean? I ain't understand that.

M: What are you looking forward to?

I 52: Looking forward to?

M: Yeah.

I 53: Like what I like to go do and stuff like that?

M: No, like in your future, what's coming up that you think is going to be pretty cool?

I 54: (pause) I don't really know. (pause) That's a hard question for me to answer. See I live one day at a time now, I put everything in God's hands, so I just feel better like, you know, I don't want to wake up every day talking about HIV this, HIV that cause it ain't cool to me. (laughs)

Like Shane, Howard knew that planning for the future meant facing the realities of HIV. Possible selves theory suggests that our personal circumstances, self identity, self-efficacy and group efficacy can impact our construction of possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986). In this case, a fear of addressing self identity impeded the development of the self-efficacy necessary for constructing a possible self. Because television programming seeks a sustainable audience and viewers prefer to see stories where positive possible selves are attained (MacDonald, 2002), it comes as no surprise that this outcome was not predicted by the findings in chapter two.

Not every HIV diagnosis led to such destruction. In fact, many participants indicated a professional-possible self that they were working to attain. Darrell (3) wants to become a well-known makeup artist in drag pageantry and currently runs a makeup studio in his home. Adam (6) wants to produce music and just finished night classes in video and music production. Terry (8) wants to own his own car dealership, but has realistic expectations. Right now, Terry is saving money for a home by rebuilding cars purchased at car auctions and selling them. He plans to purchase a home with a large front yard and sell the cars he rebuilds on his front lawn. Willard (12) is saving money to

buy a water compressor so he can have his own traveling car wash service. With possible

selves constructed and life tasks engaged, possible selves theory might suggest that these

men would be more likely to engage in protected intercourse. Darrel and Willard both

use condoms regularly during intercourse. This may have been an interesting point,

except that the majority of the participants regularly use condoms every time they engage

in intercourse and it was not reflective of their hoped-for professional-selves. Thus, I will

not hypothesize that professional-possible selves, either as represented on television or

developed in person, significantly give meaning to condom use as a life task.

The overwhelming lack of attainable positive possible-selves recounted by the

participants may be driven by other influences as well. Recall that self-concepts, self-

schemata, and cultural identity all influence people's possible selves. In the interviews, I

asked each of the participants to describe his personality: not one of the participants

described himself as motivated or a hard worker. Only Terry (8) described himself as

intelligent. In fact, the entire range of adjectives used by participants included laid-back,

chill, care-free, outgoing, spiritual, drama-free, and caring. These descriptions in no way

challenge the stereotypes promulgated on television, particularly that of the primitive

Black man. Even more surprising was the alarming number of participants who admired

their role models for their laid-back, care-free persona. Joseph (4) indicated this theme

very clearly when I asked him why his father was his favorite role model as a child:

> Um. (pause) He was, he was very carefree person. I was thinking about that the
> other day, might have been last night. He was a carefree person, not unlike
> myself. But, he was a real carefree person. You know, little things didn't bother
> him. My dad never hollered at, that was always my mom. (I28)

Similarly, Martin's (9) role model was an older woman who lived next door. When I asked him why her, he responded, "she seemed to be nice and lived right, she was just a nice person. You know somebody I could talk to all the time" (I22). When I asked Howard (10) what he did to be like his role model, James Brown, he responded, "I didn't have an attitude you know, be nice to people and stuff like that. I thought he was a good guy myself" (I19). I am not attempting to downplay the importance of a positive role model that exhibits great humanity, nor am I suggesting that admiring someone for their kindness leads to absent professional-possible selves, nor am I even suggesting that African American men growing up in torn homes do not need these role models. However, I found it worth noting that only Chris (5) as a child admired an adult that went to college and escaped his circumstances and only Chris has managed to maintain a professional-possible self throughout his entire life. I cannot help but wonder if perhaps these role models were selected because there was no alternative. Television rarely depicts African American men with successful careers or as hard workers. Further, while their surroundings were probably full of hard workers, all but Darrel grew up in poverty and likely had little or no presence of professionally successful African American males in their lives.

Personal Possible Selves

To obtain information about people's personal-possible selves I asked questions pertaining to their hoped-for relationships and living conditions. Across the board, these were the most difficult possible selves for participants to articulate both before and after their HIV diagnosis. When a personal-possible self was identified prior to HIV diagnosis, it took on one of three forms: a possible self that was an immediate short-term

80

goal; a long-term possible self that they were not working to attain; or there was none at all. My conversation with Terry (8) was very indicative of the first trend. I began by asking him what he wanted as a teen for his future relationships and living conditions:

> I 30: I never thought about it.
> M: If I had said, okay, at seventeen, paint me your Hollywood story, what's going to happen to you? Are you going to get married? Are you going to have kids? Are you looking for the white picket fence? Do you want the city life? What was your story?
> I 31: Um, I just wanted the prettiest car and the prettiest girl. I didn't think too far ahead of that. I just wanted a pretty girl and a nice car and that's basically, and uh, I wanted to go to college, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to be. Of course, now, a lot of people go to college not knowing what they want to be.

Terry indicated he viewed news telecasts regularly throughout his life. In chapter two I discussed how news telecasts routinely produce a sense of inescapable poverty and crime, which may lead to a reduction in self or group efficacy. However, Terry's communication did not reflect such doom. In fact, Terry mentioned throughout our conversation that he saw the positive impacts legislation and government aid had made on his community. From this conversation, the real material circumstances of living in poverty come to life. Today the Pell Grant and HOPE Scholarship make a college education affordable for most Georgians. Terry continuously went to great lengths to assert his intelligence, stating more than once that he was self-educated, well read and an excellent speller. It makes sense that at seventeen Terry's ideal personal-possible self was to identify as a college student and when that seemed out of reach or too far off, he focused on short-term goals that were easier to achieve. When I asked Willard (12) what his goals were after dropping out of high school he responded, "Well actually, I just went out and started working, actually I was kind of lost, I wasn't lost, but just started working and raising my family and everything. Actually back then I just had a goal to raise my

81

family, just working two jobs" (I32). At seventeen Willard was faced with the reality of

raising two daughters without a high school diploma. He had little time or ability to

construct any other personal-possible self outside of mere survival. Martin's (9) response

was similar to Terry and Willard's, but his limitations were quite different. Although

Martin desired a normal family life of his own, sexual confusion resulting from a

childhood rape led him to choose an easily achieved alternative:

> Um, I wanted to have something. I wanted to have a family and a house. You
> know, I wanted to have children like my mother did. Um, but that's life. I had to
> make a decision you know, so I decided to go into the military. (I42)

Perhaps if Martin had seen a stable home with a single, bisexual African American father

on television, he would have thought it possible. But to argue so would be to fall back

into the use of fantasy as a means for constructing possible selves. While I agree that

television can, in many ways, shape how we understand our circumstances and

experiences, I further see how regardless of what these participants were informed by the

media, their material condition made negotiating and meeting their goals unrealistic.

Additionally, possible selves theory cannot account for Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs,

which would have been extremely useful when considering each of these accounts.

Naturally, Willard was not worried about fulfilling his need for self-actualization when

his health and safety needs were at risk.

None of the participants who indicated a long-term personal-possible self prior to

their HIV diagnosis ever actively engaged in achieving it. At thirty Howard (10) finally

constructed a personal-possible self that was in the distant future, "I was ready to settle

down and just be myself then, just get me a wife and a couple kids and let that be it, you

know. I wanted kids and give them what I didn't have, send them to college and stuff like

that" (I27). When I asked him what he was doing at that time to obtain these goals he stated that he had been pouring concrete and was "making good money" but then used his expendable income to get involved in drugs. Similarly, Phillip (11) had a lot of distant positive personal-possible selves early on. When I asked him what he wanted his life to look like as an adult he responded "Um, you know, I just wanted to be a basketball star, big house, maybe some kids" (I23). Adam (6) suggested a similar plan: "I'd say I was going to just be an entertainer and you know, performing music, being rich. That's everybody's dream, a large house, a swimming pool, you know, a nice little family?" (I42). In so many ways, Phillip and Adam adopted the goals of the hip-hop identity as represented on television. Not only did Phillip define success through material goods, but he also became heavily involved in criminal activity as well. For both of them, establishing a family life and fatherhood seemed an afterthought. I cannot discern whether this was because family life seemed inevitable or because they completely adopted the primitive Black man stereotypes that are propagated on television. Certainly the primitive Black man's poor judgment and obsession with sex could also interpret children as an inevitable event. Still, personal experience and cultural identity could have the same effect. Either way, this perception is not conducive to promoting protected intercourse.

Participants who did not construct a personal-possible self prior to their HIV diagnosis were primarily influenced by their previous experiences. Darrel (3), who was particularly influenced by his previous relationships, stated, "Well, at that particular time I really wasn't into, I mean a lot of my relationships were just short term, I didn't really see myself with anybody long term through my life" (I23). Joseph (4) began abusing

83

drugs and alcohol shortly after his divorce. When I asked him what his future looked like prior to his HIV diagnosis, he responded "Pretty grim. Yeah, you know, when I was married and everything, things were different and it was like, we separated in April, by my birthday in September I was homeless, smoking crack. That's five months" (I44). Joseph indicated that by the time he was involved with drugs he could no longer construct a positive-personal possible self. I'm hesitant, however, to suggest that possible selves theory could account for either the impact of personal tragedy or drugs and alcohol on decision-making.

For many participants, like professional-possible selves, diagnosis was a turning-point in the construction of personal-possible selves. Participants either have no goals at all or they have goals which they work daily to attain. For those without positive-personal selves, future goals were very general, such as 'happiness,' and were usually attainable by simply choosing to be satisfied with their current conditions. None of these participants established long-term personal-possible selves prior to their HIV diagnosis either. Terry (8) identified no plans for future relationships, but wants to see the Bulldogs win a national championship and the Braves take the World Series once again. Howard (10) stated he is looking forward to sitting in a rocking chair and watching his family grow up. He previously identified both as his favorite pastimes. Lawrence, a newlywed who regularly attends church, had a similar response. When I asked him what he wanted to be doing in ten years he responded "enjoying the rest of my life" (I53). I responded by asking Lawrence what "enjoyment" entailed and he answered, "Being happy, getting married, and learning things, I guess from church and stuff" (I54); all were clearly activities he was already engaged in. These possible selves reflect the televisual

84

representation of the primitive Black man, specifically the slave-figure, who has no societal gripes and takes life as it is.

For Shane and Phillip, the only two participants with AIDS, my request to construct a personal-possible self was so difficult it brought them to tears. When I asked Phillip (11) where he saw himself in ten years he could only respond, "with God" (I39). Shane (2) who worried about hurting others after his death stated, "sometimes I don't want to, a lot of the time I don't want live and don't want to go on because you just don't have those people with you, you know. I mean, you have some casual friends, but I just don't have anybody that will stick by me and hold my hand and um, tell you about God and there for you so" (I34). Shane passed away, alone, shortly after this interview. Again the limitations of ideology have been met with a material reality: AIDS.

With the exception of Chris the college student, only participants that had been HIV positive for at least ten years stated they were working to attain positive personal-possible selves. The stories for these participants were hopeful. While HIV remains a permanent part of their daily reality, they have not allowed it to construct their personal identity. At times, this made internalizing their HIV-status difficult. Garrett (1) did not tell his wife he was positive for years and thereby passed the disease on to her. Today, Garrett clearly understands decision-making as an integral component to achieving goals:

> I think if you do the right thing, the right thing is going to come to you. It was mostly when I was putting myself in crazy situations that crazy stuff happened. That's like, here's a crazy example, since I've stopped stealing, I haven't been to jail. Okay. And so if I don't do certain things, I don't get certain repercussions. And if I do certain things, I'm going to reap the benefits of it. Just trying to be positive (I33).

For example, Garrett is very concerned about the welfare of children who are born in to difficult circumstances and wants to become a good role model for his nieces and nephews, whom he believes are trapped in a vicious cycle. To obtain this goal he chooses to attend twelve-step meetings regularly and avoids befriending drug users. As a devout Christian, Garrett also understands his relationship with God as a necessary measure to becoming a good role model and husband. For example, Garrett is aware that he is attracted to men, but uses his faith to maintain a heterosexual marriage: "In my mind I still think 'look at that guy, wouldn't he be great to be with' and so because of my spiritual, religious beliefs, I know it's not right. So I choose God, know what I'm saying? Not to live that lifestyle" (I34).

Martin (9) spent fifteen years addicted to drugs and alcohol in order to avoid facing his HIV diagnosis, but recently moved into a half-way home and has been clean for three months. When I asked him where he wanted to be in ten years, he responded "In my own place, um, with a friend, somebody, man or woman, I just want to be hopefully in a healthy relationship with somebody and being able to talk and be loved. You know, cause it ain't all about the sex, it's just about, just having a companion and right now I got a lot of goals set, too, but that's just basically staying clean. That's my priority. No matter what happens, I can't go back to the way it was" (I32). Martin, who prostituted for food, understands a sober life as a necessary part of establishing a healthy relationship. For each of these men, developing a healthy grasp on their self-efficacy was necessary before they could establish possible selves worth working for. Not one of these stories reflected the possible selves implications mentioned in chapter two. Interestingly, both Garrett and Martin indicated that they no longer watch much

86

television: Martin is too busy attending meetings and Garrett believes that the only worthy source of information is the Bible.

Health-Related Possible Selves

Chris (5) and Darrel (3) were the only participants with clear health-related possible selves prior to their HIV diagnosis. Both constructed their possible selves in relation to their pre-existing conditions: Crohn's disease and childhood diabetes, respectively. The remaining responses were either a complete absence of health-related possible selves or a response similar to Terry's (8): "I figured I'd be in good health forever" (I26). To each of these responses I asked why the participants believed this was true. Two different responses were given. Participants either believed they would be healthy forever because they had no previous health concerns or because their family was in good health and the deceased members died of "old age" (2, I16). The rarity of health-related possible selves prior to HIV diagnoses is much like the rarity of health-related possible selves of African American men represented in television media. Not one of the stereotypes promulgated on television had any clear construction of future health for African American men. In fact, to depict the unintelligent, living-in-the-now primitive Black man concerned for his future health would violate the stereotype's schema. Possible selves theory would suggest that without a possible self set as a goal, people will not intentionally make decisions to attain it. Thus possible selves theory would account for the participants behavior as this: without a health-related possible self, participants did not make decisions to attain a particular health-status (i.e. engage in protected intercourse).

Just as previous health conditions led Chris and Darrel to consider their future health, so too did an HIV diagnosis for the remaining participants (see Table 2). When projecting their future health, not one participant considered a health threat outside of HIV. The most pervasive theme shared among the participants was a belief that their future health was not up to them, but this did not prevent them from establishing health-related possible selves nor from making-decisions to attain them. Garrett (1), Joseph (4), Adam (6), Terry (8), Martin (9), Howard (10), Phillip (11) and Willard (12) believed that their future health would be determined by God. Goals, whether to achieve or avoid a particular possible self, are considered attainable when both self-efficacy and outcome expectancy are high and are increasingly perceived as less attainable when one or both of these variables begin to decline. For these men, prayer was the most frequently acknowledged action taken to attain their goals. In this way, their faith gave them the self-efficacy necessary to construct a positive health-related possible self. By and large, this group of men also regularly engaged in health practices which would promote longevity. With the exception of Terry, all of these men unfailingly use condoms during intercourse. The only two participants to discuss the daily importance they place on eating healthfully, Garrett and Adam, also belonged to this group. In addition, these men were the most optimistic about the future of HIV/AIDS. For example, Garrett (1) stated "I'm really optimistic. They may even come up with a shot or something to take just, or just pill or a once a month shot or anything, I'm so optimistic. You know what I'm saying? I'm living and so long as I take care of myself, I'm going to live a long time" (I31). Similarly, when I asked Howard (10) what he thought his health was going to look like he explained, "I don't claim the HIV cause I feel like God going to heal me, he's

88

going to heal a bunch of us out here, that's what I think, they gonna come up here and pretty soon and it going to get back on track" (I40). Though Howard indicated multiple times that he has come to terms with his status and he engages in life tasks that will enable him to remain healthy, his faith provided him with an optimistic attitude that increases the outcome expectancy of his goal.

Three participants, Darrel (3), Chris (5), and Lawrence (7), all believed they would live a long time, but attributed their future health to their current CDL-counts. These participants could not construct a well-thought out possible self beyond merely predicting age. This makes me question whether these participants were discussing possible-selves or merely expectations. So far, Chris's CDL-count has remained low enough to avoid any medication or treatment. When he has intercourse with men who are HIV-negative, Chris regularly uses a condom, but when his partner is HIV-positive Chris stated that he engages in both insertive and receptive intercourse without protection. Lawrence does not have AIDS, but his counts are high enough to remain on treatment. Though his new wife is aware that Lawrence is HIV-positive, they do not wear a condom consistently because they find them uncomfortable. These interviews took place in a room covered in bookshelves containing information about HIV/AIDS, where weekly group support meetings are held and where monthly information sessions take place. All of these men had been in the room before. Lawrence and Darrel both openly acknowledged that they did not know much about HIV. Possible selves theory contends that people use their past and current experiences to determine their possible selves. These participants used their current health (HIV-positive with low CD4-counts) to predict their future health, but that does not mean they necessarily constructed a possible

89

self. Possible selves theory also suggests that we use self-efficacy to determine what possible selves to adopt. These participants never indicated having any control over their current health. In fact, Lawrence contracted HIV through rape and Chris and Darrel both contracted HIV while in a monogamous relationship due to an unfaithful partner. Perhaps the low self-efficacy associated with their current health status prevents Darrel, Chris and Lawrence from adopting longevity as a true possible self and, in turn, reduces their goal-oriented decision-making. For example, when I asked Darrel what his future health looked like he responded, "Um, I think I can live longer, but at the same time I still think that the virus can still turn into something else even if I take the medication and all that you know" (I46). The lack of self-efficacy associated with contracting HIV may continue to influence their current relationship with the disease. Moreover, perceiving HIV status as a transgression may enact the schema of criminality, which television represents as inescapable for African American men. If this occurs, it seems even less likely that self-efficacy and positive decision-making would follow.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

A few noteworthy themes appeared during this analysis. First, the possible selves articulated by research participants closely mirrored the televisual representations of African American men. This further supports Condit's (1989) critique on the rhetorical limits of polysemy. Of the representations mirrored, the most pervasive stereotype modeled by the participants was the primitive Black male, and more specifically the innate athlete. Frequently the implications for possible selves drawn from primitive stereotypes in chapter two were mirrored by the participants even when the direct stereotype was not visible. This may be because participants could not perceive the

majority of the stereotypes associated with the primitive Black man as desirable selves, but still adopted the ideological messages conveyed in the television programs. Very few of the positive possible selves articulated in any of the domains prior to HIV diagnosis reflected the televisual representations of the 'educated, middle-class, and white' discussed in chapter two. This may be a result of the participants' cultural identity or their material circumstances. Post-HIV diagnosis, participants indicated fewer professional and personal possible selves and more health-related possible-selves than they did pre-HIV diagnosis.

Possible selves theory was capable of addressing participants' life tasks when they were engaged in them, but there is no way to prove that engaging in life tasks is a sign of a possible self. Even further, possible selves theory had a difficult time addressing a pervasive theme: having a possible self without working to attain it. While sweeping guesses were made about participants' self-efficacy and outcome expectancy to explain their failure to make-decisions at attaining a possible self, I am not fully convinced these variables could fully account for their decision-making processes. Even more troublesome, possible selves theory cannot account for material circumstances such as how a drug addiction, personal tragedy, and lack of resources all impact decision-making. Because all but one person in the sample practiced unprotected intercourse prior to contracting HIV and all but one of them failed to establish and effectively work towards a possible self prior to this HIV diagnosis, great support for possible selves theory was found. The most fruitful domain to explore the use of possible selves as they imbue meaning on condom use as a life task is, without a doubt, health. By and large, possible selves theory was able to account for the behavioral outcomes presumably

resulting from participants' health-related possible selves. Thus, while I am not willing to hypothesize that possible selves in every domain predict condom use (recall my argument at the end of professional-selves), I do hypothesize that health-related possible selves can impact condom use. The failure of possible selves theory to align with the other domains may be a result of possible selves theory's inability to account for the aforementioned variables or it may be that protected intercourse is, in some way, not a life task associated with attaining possible selves in the domains of professional and personal selves. I cannot help but think that the more selves that give a life task meaning the more important it will become. Therefore one important finding from this research is the need to evaluate which domains condom use is associated with and the available methods for attaching it as a life task to other domains.

While I did not begin this research project with the intention of exploring the importance of face-saving and cultural identity in decision-making, I believe it is a useful conversation. Both prior to and after their HIV diagnosis, participants openly discussed the influence of face-saving and cultural identity on their behavior. In Terry's (8) lengthy interview, he began to talk about his experience in high school and how important football was to him: "So they just, you know, and I would just, I would, I would make a C whenever I could have made a B, just to let the guys know that I was tough. I played football. I didn't want to make all As" (I23). I wanted to understand if Terry did not want to make all As because he was ascribing to a stereotype of race or athleticism, so I asked him if the thought making good grades would make him seem less Black. To this Terry responded, "No. Not less Black, just less tough. When you are living in a tough neighborhood or a tough area you don't want to come across as a nerd, you might get beat

up. You know, get rocks thrown at you. You know what I mean?" (I24). The face Terry

needed to save was constructed by his cultural identity, which in this case made very real

the consequences of appearing nerdy.

Even more surprising was the frequent references made to face-saving and

cultural identity as explanations for why participants were making poor sexual-health

decisions. I asked each participant if, prior to their HIV diagnosis, they ever worried

about their partner's impressions if they proposed using a condom. While the majority

stated "no," they were not able to give a reason why they chose not to wear condoms.

Those participants that did say they worried about their partner's impressions,

consistently admitted to irregular use. When I asked Darrel (3) this question he

responded with an often-heard scenario:

> I 40:Um, sometimes but I didn't know how to bring it about, but if they had one it
> was okay. If they didn't, I was still okay, but um I really at that time, I didn't,
> um (pause)
> M: So were you the person that would carry the condoms or was it your sexual
> partner?
> I 41: Both, but I would have them, but it wasn't necessarily on me but I mean, I
> would have them at home or something like that.

Post-HIV diagnosis, most unprotected intercourse was a result of poor education.

Participants frequently indicated that they believed intercourse with other seropositive

males placed them at no risk and that without ejaculating into another person, HIV could

not be spread. When mis-education was not cited, fear of rejection was. HIV-stigma

regularly impacted the daily lives of the men interviewed. For example, Chris and Martin

admitted that their friends and family still do not know their status. Joseph admitted he

has not been in a relationship since his diagnosis because he fears the rejection. Terry

continues to inform his sexual partners about his status, but since he began doing so has

not been able to establish a meaningful relationship. While these stories appear sad, they made me hopeful about the future of HIV/AIDS and persons living with it. All of these men indicated multiple moments in their past they regret and most of them continue to make questionable decisions pertaining to their personal and professional lives, but not one of them continues to knowingly spread HIV. There may be educational barriers to be broken, but the future looks bright.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This research project began with an interest in finding new avenues to promote condom use and negotiation among African American men. As HIV spreads rapidly across all populations in the United States, it continues to affect African Americans disproportionately. While so much attention has been given to the effectiveness of mediated social marketing campaigns, little more than theorizing has been done about the impact of regular television viewing on the ways people make decisions about their sexual health (Collins, 2004). Few other health epidemics are spread at such an intimate level. Few other health epidemics produce such a great dilemma for health-prevention professionals. If we are to fight an epidemic that spreads unlike those before it, we must try new methods. While this study is not intended to, nor does it purport to, establish a new method for promoting condom use and negotiation, my hope is that these findings will be useful in a variety of research fields and eventually produce new, innovative ideas in health promotion. To this cause, some interesting observations were made which I believe are worth sharing in this final chapter. This chapter will proceed with three sections. The first will summarize the project and suggest two hypotheses. The second section will address some concerns associated with the use of television in conjunction with possible selves theory and the final section will provide critiques of possible selves theory and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

This project was interested in three different questions: (1) What is the range of possible selves of African American men represented on television? (2) Is the range of possible selves articulated by the research participants similar to those represented on television? (3) What are the implications of the range articulated by the research participants on condom use and negotiation? In this section I will attempt to provide brief summaries to each of these questions and will then construct two hypotheses.

(1) What is the range of possible selves of African American men represented on United States television since 1980?

Representations of African American men on United States television since 1980 functioned within three primary stereotypes: the primitive Black man, the sexually neutralized Black man, or the educated and middle-class Black who lacks a salient Black identity. The most popular of these stereotypes is the primitive black man, which manifests as the slave figure, the innate athlete, the criminal/buck, and the comedic relief/coon. I argue that through a politics of difference, representations of African American men are restricted to a binary whereby Black men are never represented as fully successful. In this binary Black men are either able to maintain their racial and gender identity at the expense of intelligence, civility, and personal and private success or they can have any of those traits at the expense of either their masculinity or their racial identity. That is to say, in order for Black males to maintain their gender and racial identity they must be represented as primitive in some way. Conversely, African American men may be represented as successful business men and good fathers but lack the cultural signifiers of blackness thereby sacrificing their racial identity, or they may be

96

represented as intelligent or hard-working, but must be simultaneously revoked of their masculinity or sexuality.

Of course, television representations of males of all races frequently engage this binary. Ray Romano on *Everybody Loves Raymond* may have a successful career and marriage, but he is frequently portrayed as inconsiderate, lazy, and unintelligent. Doug Heffernan in *King of Queens* exhibits hyper-masculinity and prowess in his marriage to a woman that is extremely attractive, but is regularly portrayed as unintelligent and lazy, all for comedic flair. Dr. Gregory House in *House* may be very intelligent and have a successful career but his personal life is a complete failure. Jon in *Jon and Kate Plus 8* has a successful career and is an active parent, but is regularly emasculated by his wife and portrayed as lazy. If the lead character has no shortcomings, how is the television program going to create drama or humor? Regardless, I am convinced this binary can be broken. Zach Morris on *Saved By the Bell* is masculine, successful, and intelligent enough to engage in mischief every week at Bayside High. Tom Scavo on *Desperate Housewives* is an involved parent with a successful business and marriage. Most drama surrounding him occurs when he faces the daily tribulations of owning a business and being a father to two rambunctious boys. Certainly African American men can get a slice of this pie. This is not to say that all negative representations of Black males must cease – situation comedies nearly wholly rely the characters' personal shortcomings – but it is to say that more representations of African American men are needed that challenge these traditional stereotypes.

(2) Is the range of possible selves articulated by the research participants similar to those found on television?

97

While there were positive-possible selves constructed after their HIV diagnosis which did not mirror those represented on television, the overwhelming majority of those recounted prior to the participants' HIV diagnosis adhered to the primitive Black male stereotype. The most pervasive stereotype was innate athleticism. This manifested in participant's construction of possible selves, such as professional athlete or famous musician, without perceiving the absence of life tasks as detrimental to obtaining the self. For example, Adam (6) wanted to become a professional basketball player, yet saw no problem in choosing not to play on an official team. While other primitive stereotypes did not appear as frequently, their implications for possible selves (i.e. that none would be constructed) did. For example, the 'coon character' would be easily described as outgoing, funny, and laid-back and is never portrayed as establishing a possible self. Similarly, the majority of the participants described themselves as outgoing and laid-back and routinely failed to construct possible selves in all three domains. The 'educated, middle-class, Black male who acts white' was nearly invisible during the interviews. In fact, participants openly acknowledged the threat that academic success and condom use placed on their cultural identities. Just as the common stereotypes represented on television did not portray future health as a concern for African American men, participants almost never constructed health-related possible selves prior to their HIV diagnosis.

(3) What are the implications of possible selves articulated by the research participants on condom use and negotiation?

All but one participant, who contracted HIV through rape, engaged in unprotected intercourse at some point prior to contracting HIV. Prior to their HIV-diagnosis,

participants had few personal, professional or possible selves that they were actively

engaged in attaining and those that were engaged in attaining them were interrupted by

their material circumstances at some point prior to contracting HIV. Recall that many of

participants indicated that they were living in-the-moment not for-the-future and

therefore were not constructing possible selves at all. For example, Terry (8) indicated

that he "just wanted a pretty girl and a nice car" (I31). Those participants who did

construct a possible self were rarely actively engaged in the life tasks necessary to attain

it. For instance, Garrett (1) was convinced he was going to get married and become a

minister, yet he was using drugs and engaging only in homosexual intercourse. Those

participants who were making decisions to attain a possible self were routinely met with

the limitations of their material circumstances, which led them to abandon their possible

selves altogether. For example, when Howard's (10) dream of becoming a professional

basketball player was shattered due to a knee injury, he started hanging with "the wrong

crowd, started wanting to stay out of school and all that, there was a lot of chasing behind

girls," he "wasn't thinking about doing nothing, just running around on the street, that's

what (he) was doing" (I26). The two participants with established professional selves

who were successfully engaged in life tasks to attain now only engaged in unprotected

intercourse within what they believed was a monogamous relationship.

After their HIV-diagnosis, only Lawrence (7) indicated indifference to condom

use. Lawrence projected no professional or personal possible selves and irregularly uses

condoms when having intercourse with his wife. All other participants regularly practiced

what they believed was "safe-sex[3]." Thus, I have included education about the

transmission of HIV/AIDS as another life task associated with possible selves. With the

exception of Shane, every participant that reported always using a condom during

intercourse had a well-developed health-related possible self. Garrett (1) and Martin (9)

were the only participants to project a possible self in all three domains. If the participant

was not fully educated on HIV transmission and therefore did not routinely use condoms,

they either had no personal possible self or a personal possible self which they were not

working to attain. Professional possible selves were not associated with any trend in

condom use either prior to or after HIV-diagnoses.

Hypotheses

I am not attempting to argue that these hypotheses are results from my analysis, but that

from my analysis emerged two hypotheses that may prove fruitful for future, further

research.

H1: Television influences people's possible selves.

Gray (1995) stated it succinctly in his book *Watching Race* that "popular culture,

and more specifically commercially mediated forms and representations, has become one

of the chief means through which all Americans engage, understand, negotiate, and make

sense of the material circumstances of their everyday lives" (p. 43). This argument is

echoed by a host of other scholars all asserting that the messages circulated on television

---

[3] I write "safe sex" to remind the reader that sex is only safe insofar as those engaged in intercourse are

educated about protected intercourse. For example, two of the participants who practice "safe sex"

believed they were fully preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS by not ejaculating in their partners, and others

believed that intercourse with another HIV positive individual was safe for both parties.

shape our identities and beliefs (Grossberg, 1992; Hall, 1981; Lipsitz, 1990; Rose, 1994).

Possible selves theorists routinely argue that it is our identities, beliefs, and understanding of our current and past conditions which determine the possible selves we construct (Bandura, 1977; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Erickson, 2007). The representations of African American men, in particular those of the primitive Black man, routinely mirrored those articulated by the participants and the binary placed on African American men was clearly acknowledged by participants. To augment this analysis, further research is needed that includes larger samples, individuals at younger ages, different racialized groups, and both HIV positive and negative participants.

H2: Having a positive health-related possible self improves one's likelihood of condom use or negotiation.

Participants rarely indicated a health-related possible self prior to their HIV diagnosis and those who indicated a health-related possible self after their diagnosis were less likely to engage in unprotected intercourse. Although I would ideally put forth a hypothesis that positive possible selves in a variety of domains improve the likelihood of condom use and negotiation, the analysis conducted in chapter three of this thesis does not provide me with sufficient confidence to do so. Note, however, that I am not ruling out the possibility for other domains to influence condom use and negotiation. The data set was quite small and everyone interviewed was HIV positive; a larger data set including a seronegative population might provide different results. It is also possible that the questions aimed at discerning the participants' personal and professional possible selves were not effective. Given the variety of responses provided, however, I find it unlikely that the questions actually primed a response.

101

The Problem with Television

While I still stand by the hypothesis that television influences people's possible

selves, I am aware of the claims against it. For example, MacDonald (1992) notes that

even as televisual representations of African American men have improved since the

1980s, there has sadly been little improvement in the daily life of the young Black male.

While I agree that overall televisual representations have improved, the most pervasive

stereotype embodied and performed by the research participants was the primitive Black

man. Perhaps further research is needed to determine why these new identities are not

being adopted. Others may argue that Black men were constructing positive-possible

selves long before television arrived. I completely agree. However, possible selves

theory suggests that we draw from an array of variables to construct our possible selves.

My argument is not that television functions as the sole contributor to our possible selves,

but that television's arrival in American homes meant new ways to learn about and relate

to our cultural, gender, racial, social, and group identities. I am also not arguing that

television significantly altered how African Americans saw their racial identity. If

anything, television appears to have frozen the racial stereotypes in time. The plots, jobs

and settings represented on television have all changed over time, but much of the

ideology has remained the same (Gerbner et al., 2002). However, because television

remains so prevalent and continues to circulate and reinforce the dominant ideology, and

thus the aforementioned stereotypes of Black males, I believe there is reasonable cause to

evaluate its role in the proliferation of HIV/AIDS among African American communities.

While I am increasingly convinced that television's significant influence on our

culture, worldviews, and behavioral practices, with each ounce of increased conviction I

am met with increased doubt in the ability to alter television's messages. For example, local news stations would find it nearly impossible to accurately represent the ratio of White to Black crimes. On a day-to-day practice, news stations must chose what stories they believe will draw the most audience members. If at the end of the quarter they find there is an over-representation of African Americans in violent crime, how are they to respond? Certainly they could not spend a week covering every crime in the city committed by a White person. Entman (1994) raises this question when he asks how we could hold news programs responsible for representing reality when reality is so problematic, "not only because news stories inevitably select some news stories and leave out others. More important, over time, the specific realities depicted in single stories may accumulate to form a message that distorts social reality" (p. 509). The NAACP's efforts to get more Blacks involved in the production of television programs is commendable, but as chapter two made evident, there is still so much work to be done. If television is going to truly adopt positive representations of African American males, or persons of any minority, the entire logic which structures what stories become headlines and which sitcoms become successful must be reevaluated.

<div align="center">Suggestions for Future Research</div>

Possible selves imbue life tasks with meaning. Put differently, our day-to-day activities are given meaning and purpose through their relationship with a possible self. I saw evidence of this idea in every interview. Martin (9) is committed to staying sober, so he spends roughly five hours a day in meetings and counseling. He chooses to surround himself with sober people. He wakes up in a half-way home. His conversations are full of regret about his past and hope for his future. He keeps his schedule full so that he has

no time to fall off track. His days are full of life tasks that would have no meaning without the many possible selves he has constructed. Lawrence (7) has no future plans at all. He spends his days laying around and doing the bare minimum to survive. When he has intercourse with his wife, they only use a condom when it feels good at the moment. When he wakes up at 3pm, he watches television. Lawrence admitted that he finds his day to day tasks unfulfilling and suffers from mild depression. His life tasks have no meaning because they do not have a purpose other than survival.

While using a condom is a decision that affects possible personal, professional and health-related selves, participants routinely failed to recognize it as a life task. It would be useful for future research to examine the effectiveness of presenting condom use as a life task for personal and professional selves, though I would warn that these messages may stigmatize persons already living with HIV/AIDS. In addition to this research, it would prove useful to further evaluate how gender identity and role negotiation can impact initiation of condom use. When I asked Martin (9) why he never felt comfortable asking his partners to use a condom he responded, "I was just, I was just a little sissy I guess. My my gender was kind of crazy from the beginning so I didn't know what I was supposed to do, you know what I'm saying?" (I52). Many other participants, particularly those that were raped, provided similar responses. Elwood and Williams (1999) conducted a research study on the impact of role negotiation and power on condom use in Chicago bathhouses. They argued that there exists among MSM a power relationship between inserters and receivers of anal intercourse, and they use Foucault to argue that "individuals with power have pervasive terminological control to define appropriate behavior and policies" (p. 121). This power relationship between

MSM engaging in intercourse is exercised through a politics of silence whereby receivers are subordinate and therefore are not in a position to negotiate condom use. Thus, further research is needed to examine ways in which MSM sexual politics are circulated and picked up as well as new avenues for the re-negotiation of these roles.

Beyond the bedroom, participants had a difficult time engaging in meaningful life tasks. To this end, I make two research suggestions. First, research is needed to determine how the life tasks of African American men are represented on television outside of athletics. If other representations of successful Black men also attribute their success to some primitive feature, or they fail to depict their success as a result of life tasks, this may provide additional understanding as to why participants so frequently established possible selves without engaging in the life tasks necessary to attain them. When participants constructed a possible self without engaging in life tasks, they made no mention of attaining short-term selves as an imperative for attaining them. The opposite was true for participants who were actively engaged in life tasks to attain a possible self. For example, when I asked Martin (9) where he saw himself in ten years, he provided a realistic response: "In my own place, um, with a friend, somebody, man or woman, I just want to be hopefully in a healthy relationship with somebody and being able to talk and be loved" (I62). He immediately continued on to explain that he had "a lot of goals set, too" which involved staying sober each day. Others, like Terry (8) who would like to sell his own cars, indicated that his short-term goal was to save enough money to buy a home with enough land to sell cars off of. Possible selves theory needs to account for self-distance. Put differently, possible selves theory should suggest that when a person constructs a possible self that is in a distant future, shorter-range selves

must be established to attain the long-range self in order to increase the self-efficacy necessary to attain the long-range possible self.

While possible selves theory argues that cultural identity impacts what possible selves individuals construct, research so far has only worked to prove this claim. For example, Fraser and Eccles (1994) used the frequency of televisual representations of Black male athletes and possible selves theory to accurately predict that young African American males with salient racial identities would be more likely to construct 'professional athlete' as a possible self. However, more research is needed to determine how various social identities are used to rule out various possible selves. For example, the majority of television's representations of professionally successful African American men fail to associate them with strong, Black identity performances. Even *The Cosby Show,* which showed the family engaged in Black cultural signifiers such as enjoying jazz music, failed to depict a life which, in any way, reflected the daily lived experience of most African Americans around the nation. It seems likely that as people construct possible selves, they weigh their decisions against predictable sacrifices. If African American men perceive particular professional selves with a loss of racial, gender, social or group identity, they may be less likely to adopt them. This may particularly be the case among African Americans whose cultural products increase the rigidity and importance of cultural values and norms (Triandis, 1996). This was evident when Terry (8), who loved learning and achieving in school, explained to me that he did not want to earn good grades in school because he was afraid to appear "less tough" than his football teammates and neighborhood friends expected. The findings from this research may help

106

explain why, even though television's representations of Black men continue to improve, the material conditions of young Black males have not.

As the most important cultural product in Black culture, I must stress the importance of the Black church in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. I am not alone in this effort. According to the Black AIDS Institute, "No one individual, organization or institution can end Black America's AIDS epidemic, but there are few institutions more critical than the Black church" (Black AIDS Institute, 2008). Historically, the Black church has been criticized for its slow response to HIV/AIDS and its strong messages against homosexuality which arguably promote the pervasive downlow culture so detrimental to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS (For a review see Griffin, 2006). Ten out of twelve participants mentioned their faith as an integral component in understanding their life. Post-HIV diagnoses, this relationship appeared beneficial to promoting life tasks, such as education, nutrition and condom use, associated with attaining a health-related possible self. However, faith was not related to any increase in current personal or professional-possible selves. This complicates my explanation in chapter three that prayer gave the participants the perceived self-efficacy to construct possible selves. Understanding how the Black church rhetorically constructs prayer and God's ability to materialize possible selves in a variety of domains is an important step for understanding and critically evaluating how the Black church can help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

No literature review could have prepared me for the experience of interviewing the twelve men in Athens, GA. Each individual shared with me a story so influenced by their real, material surroundings that I could not help but question the power of ideology.

Because they are both grounded in social construction, I was hopeful about the ability to use possible selves theory and stereotypes (by way of ideology) together. When it became apparent that there were some shortcomings to this plan, my first, most brazen, reaction was to provide a thorough material critique of ideology. However I quickly remembered that it is through ideology's circulation that power and resources remain in the hands of few and thus shapes the material circumstances of the many. While televisual representations may have informed the participants what they were capable of becoming and how to become them, their material circumstances often set their limits and boundaries. Television only produces messages that people with expendable incomes want to hear. As Blacks continue to merge into middle-class existence, I am hopeful that improved televisual representations will lead to improved constructions of possible selves and, eventually, improved material reality. Possible selves theory always looks to the future and with such a dismal past for both HIV and African Americans, I see it a useful tool for developing an optimistic world view. Whether this perspective is beneficial or not is yet to be determined.

REFERENCES

Abraham, C., Krahe, B., Dominic, R., Fritsche, I. (2002). Do health promotion messages target cognitive and behavioural correlates of condom use? A content analysis of safer sex promotion leaflets in two countries. *British Journal Of Health Psychology, 7,* 227-246.

Abramson, A. (2003). *The History of Television, 1942-2000.* McFarland & Company.

AIDS Action. (2008, August 2). Estimate of annual HIV incidence increases to 56,300 release of new estimate shows need for a National AIDS Strategy. *AIDS Action.* Retrieved November 15, 2008 from

http://aidsaction.org/newsite/communications/press-releases/080208.htm

AIDS Athens. (2007). About us. *AIDS Athens.* Retrieved December 11, 2008 from

http://www.aidsathens.org/about.html

Armstrong, K. L. (1999). Nike's Communication with Black Audiences: A Sociological Analysis of Advertising Effectiveness via Symbolic Interactionism. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *23*(3), 266-286.

Atkin, D. (1992). An analysis of television series with minority-lead characters. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 9,* 337-349.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy theory: Toward a unifying theory of behavior change. *Psychological Review, 84,* 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.

Baptiste, D. A. (1986). The image of the Black family portrayed by television: A critical comment. *Marriage and Family Review, 10*, 41–63.

Becker, L. B., Kosicki, G. M., & Jones, F. (1992). Racial differences in evaluations of mass media. *Journalism Quarterly, 69 (1),* 124- 134.

Bell-Jordan, K. E. (2008). Black.White. and a Survivor of The Real World: Constructions of Race on Reality TV. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *25*(4), 353-372.

Billings, A. (2004). Depicting the Quarterback in Black and White: A Content Analysis of College and Professional Football Broadcast Commentary. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *15*(4), 201-210.

Billings, A. C., & Eastman, S. T. (2002). Gender, ethnicity and nationality: Formation of identity in NBC's 2000 Olympic coverage. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 37,* 349-368.

Birrell, S. (1989). Racial relations theories and sport: Suggestions for a more critical analysis. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 6,* 212-227.

Black AIDS Institute. (2008). Black ministers take the lead. *Statements.* Retrieved April 1, 2009 from http://www.blackaids.org/ShowArticle.aspx?articletype=NEWS&articleid=408 &pagenumber=2

Bogle, D. (2001). *Primetime blues: African Americans on network television*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Boyd, T. (1997). *Am I black enough for you: Popular culture from the 'hood and beyond.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
110

Bowman, P.J. (1991). Work life. In J.S. Jackson (Ed.), *Life in Black America* (pp. 124-155). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Bramlett-Solomon, S. & Farwell, T. M. (1996). Sex on the soaps: An analysis of Black, White and interracial couple intimacy. In V. T. Berry & C. I. Manning-Miller (Eds.) *Mediated messages and African-American culture* (pp.146-158). London: Sage.

Bretl, D. J., & Cantor, J. (1988). The portrayal of men and women in U.S. television commercials. *Sex Roles, 18*, 595–609.

Brewer, M. B., & Pickett, C. L. (1999). Distinctiveness motives as a source of the social self. In T. R.Tyler, R. M.Kramer, & O. P.John (Eds.), *The psychology of the social self* (pp. 71–87). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bristor, J., Lee, R. G., & Hunt, M. R. (1995). Race and ideology: African-American images in television advertising. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, *14*(1), 48-59.

Brown, S. A. (1937). The Negro in American Fiction. New York: Antheneum.

Brown, T. J. (2005). Allan Iverson as America's Most Wanted: Black masculinity as a cultural site of struggle. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, *34*(1/2), 65-87.

Cameron, J. E. (1999). Social identity and the pursuit of possible selves: Implications for the psychological well-being of university students. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 3*, 179-189.

Carlson, N. F., & Baynes, L. M. (Eds.). (2007). Rethinking the discourse on race: A symposium on how the lack of racial diversity in the media affects social justice

and policy. *Proceedings from the 2007 St. John's Law Symposium, Journal of Legal Commentary, 22.*

Center for AIDS Prevention Studies. (2006). *CAPS Fact Sheet.* Retrieved October 15, 2008, from http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/pubs/FS/revrural.php

Centers for Disease Control. (1988, March 11). Perspectives in disease prevention and health promotion condoms for prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. *MMWR: Weekly, 37,* 133-137.

Cernkovish, S.A, & Giordano, P.C. (1992). School bonding, race, and delinquency. *Criminology, 30,* 261-291.

Coltrane, S., & Messineo, M. (2000). The perpetuation of subtle prejudice: Race and gender imagery in 1990s television advertising. *Sex Roles, 42(5/6),* 363-388.

Collins, P. H. (2004). *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender and the new racism.* New York: Routledge.

Condit, C.M. (1989). The rhetorical limits of polysemy. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 6,* 103-122.

Crocker, J., & Wolfe, C. T. (2001). Contingencies of self-worth. *Psychological Review, 108,* 593-623.

Cross, S.E., & Markus, H.R. (1994). Self-schemas, possible selves, and competent performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 86,* 423-439.

Daisey, P., & Jose-Kampfner, C. (2002). The power of story to expand possible selves for Latina middle school students. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 45,* 578-588.

Dixon, T.L., & Azocar, C.L. (2006). The representation of juvenile offenders by race on

    Los Angeles area television news. *Howard Journal of Communications, 17,* 143-

    161.

Dubrofsky, R. E., & Hardy, A. (2008). Performing Race in Flavor of Love and The

    Bachelor. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *25*(4), 373-392.

Duke, L., & Wiltz, T. (2005, September 4). A nation's castaways: Katrina blew in, and

    tossed up reminders of tattered racial legacy. *The Washington Post,* pp. D01.

Elwood, W., & Williams, M. (1999). The politics of silence: Communicative rules and

    HIV prevention issues in gay male bathhouses. Elwood, W. (Ed.) *Power in the*

    blood: A handbook on AIDS, Politics and Communication. Mahwah: Lawrence

    Erlbaum Associates. (pp. 121-132).

Entman, R. M. (1990). Modern racism and the images of blacks in local television news.

    Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 7, 332-345.

Entman, R. M. (1994). Representation and reality in the portrayal of Blacks on network

    television news. *Journalism Quarterly, 71,* 509-520.

Entman, R. M., & Rojecki, A. (2001). *Black image in the white mind: Media and race in*

    America. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Erickson, M. G. (2007). The meaning of the future: Towards a more specific definition

    of possible selves. *Review of General Psychology, 11,* 348-358.

ESPN.com. (2007, September 19). McNabb says black QBs under more pressure. *ESPN*

    News Services. Retrieved February 3, 2009 from

    http://sports.espn.go.com/nfl/news/story?id=3025308

Fahri, P. (1997). A television trend: Audiences in black and white. In S. Biagi, & M.

    Kern-Foxworth. (Eds.), *Facing difference: Race, gender, and media.*(pp.202-

    205). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Fraser, K., & Eccles, J. S. (1994, February). *Ethnic differences in adolecents' possible*

    selves: The role of ethnic identity in shaping self-concept. Paper presented at the

    Society for Research on Adolescence Conference in San Diego, CA.

Fiske, J. (1987). *Television culture.* New York: Rutledge.

Fiske, J. (1989). *Understanding popular culture.* Cambridge: Unwin Hyman.

Fiske, J. (1994). *Media matters.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Fiske, J. (2003). *Reading television.* New York: Rutledge.

Free, C., Roberts, R., & McGuire, M. (2007). Sex workers' accounts of condom use:

    Implications for condom production, promotion and health policy. *Journal of*

    Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care, 33, 107-111.

Gant, C., & Dimmick, J. (2000). African Americans in television news: From description

    to explanation. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *11*(3), 189-205.

Gates, H. L. (1992). TV's Black world turns-but stays unreal. In M.L. Anderson & P.H.

    Collins (Eds.), *Race, class and gender: An anthology* (pp. 310-316). Belmont,

    CA: Wadsworth.

Genova, T. (2006). *Number of TV Households in America.* TV History. Retrieved

    January 30, 2009 from http://www.tvhistory.tv/Annual_TV_Households_50-

    78.JPG

Georgia Department of Health. (2008). *2008 Georgia data survey: HIV/AIDS*

    surveillance. Retrieved March 31, 2009 from

114

http://health.state.ga.us/pdfs/epi/hivstd/HIV%20Data%20Summary%2010_16_08
.pdf

Georgia Department of Human Resources. (2008). Georgia HIV/AIDS surveillance
summary. Retrieved December 24, 2008 from
http://health.state.ga.us/pdfs/epi/hivstd/2006%20HIV-
AIDS%20Surv%20Summary-final.pdf

Gerbner, G., Larry, G., Signorielli, N., & Shanahan, J. (2002). Growing up with
television: Cultivation processes. In B. Jennings & D. Zilmann (Eds.), *Media
effects: Advances in theory and research.* (pp. 43-67). Mahwah, New Jersey:
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Gilens, M. (1999). *Why Americans hate welfare: Race, media and the politics of anti-
poverty policy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gilliam Jr., F. D., Inyegar, S., Simon, A., & Wright, O. (1996). Crime in black and
white: The scary world of local news. *Harvard International Journal of
Press/Politics, 1,* 6-23.

Gorham, B. W. (2004). The social psychology of stereotypes: Implications for
audiences. In Lind, R.A. (Ed.), *Race/Gender/Media: Considering diversity across
audiences, content, and producers.* (pp. 14-21). Upper Saddle River, NJ : Allyn &
Bacon

Gray, H. (1989). Television, black Americans and the American dream. *Critical Studies
in Mass Communication, 6,* 376-386.

Gray, H. (1995). *Watching race.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Greenberg, B. S., Mastro, D., & Brand, J. (2002). Minorities and the mass media: Television into the 21st century. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.) *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 333-351). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrences Erlbaum Associates.

Griffin, H. (2006). *Their own receive them not.* Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press.

Grossberg, L. (1992). *We gotta get outta this place: Popular conservatism and postmodern culture.* New York: Routledge.

Gunter, B. (1998). Ethnicity and involvement in violence on television: Nature and context of on-screen portrayals. *Journal of Black Studies, 28,* 683-703.

Hall, S. (1981). The whites of their eyes: Racist ideologies and the media. In G. Dines & J.M. Humez (Eds.), *Gender, race, and class in media: A text reader* (2nd ed.) (pp.89-93). London: Sage Publications.

Hall, S. (2005). Encoding and decoding in the television discourse. In D. Hunt (Ed.), *Channeling blackness: Studies on television and race in America* (pp. 46-59). New York: Oxford University Press.

Halverson, E.R. (2005). InsideOut: Facilitating gay youth identity development through a performance-based youth organization. *Identity, 5,* 67-90.

Harper, P. B. (1996). *Are we not men? masculine anxiety and the problem of African-American identity.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Haspel, K. and Lacy, M. G. (2005, November 20). Framing black shooters, looters, and brutes: An analysis of responses to hurricane Katrina in major news coverage. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Dresden International Congress Centre, Dresden,*

Germany Online <PDF>. Retrieved from

http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p93005_index.html

Havens, T. (2000). `The biggest show in the world': race and the global popularity of The

Cosby Show. *Media, Culture & Society*, 22(4), 371.

Heckhausen, H. (1991). *Motivation and action*. Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.

Hearst, N., & Chen, S. (2004). Condom promotion for AIDS prevention in the

developing world: Is it working? *Studies in Family Planning, 35,* 39-47.

Herman, G. (2005). The politics of representation in network television. In D. Hunt (Ed.),

Channeling blackness: Studies on television and race in America (pp. 155-174).

New York: Oxford University Press.

Hoberman, J. (2000). The price of 'black dominance.' *Society, 37(3),* 49-57.

Hooker, K. (2002). New directions for research in personality and aging: A

comprehensive model for linking levels, structures, and processes. *Journal of*

Research in Personality, 36, 318-334.

Hooker, K., Kaus, C.R. (1994). Health-related possible selves in young and middle

adulthood. *Psychology and Aging, 9,* 126-133.

Hopson, M. C. (2008). "Now Watch Me Dance": Responding to critical observations,

constructions, and performances of race on reality television. *Critical Studies in*

Media Communication, 25(4), 441-446.

Hoyle, R.H., & Sherrill, M.R. (2006). Future orientation in the self-system: Possible

selves, self-regulation, and behavior. *Journal of Personality, 74,* 1673-1696.

Hunt, D. M. (1997). *Screening the Los Angeles "Riots": Race, seeing and resistance.*

New York: Cambridge University Press.

117

Hunt, D. M. (2005). Black content, white control. In D. Hunt (Ed.), *Channeling blackness: Studies on television and race in America* (pp. 267-302). New York: Oxford University Press.

Hunter, A.G., Friend, A.C., Murphy, S.Y., Rollins, A., Williams-Wheeler, M., Laughinghouse, J. (2006). Loss, survival, and redemption: African American male youths 'reflections on life without fathers, manhood, and coming of age. *Youth and Society, 37,* 423-452.

International Movie Database. (1999). Episode list for *Sanford and Son.* Retrieved March 13, 2009 from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068128/episodes

Jackson, D. Z. (1989, January 22). Calling the plays in Black and White. *Boston Globe,* A30, A33.

Kao, G. (2000). Group images and possible selves among adolescents: Linking stereotypes to expectations by race and ethnicity. *Sociological Forum, 15,* 407-430.

Kellner, D. (1995). Cultural studies, multiculturalism and media culture. In G. Dines and J. Humez (Eds.), Gender, race and class in media (pp. 5–17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kinney, J. (1982). The rhetoric of racism: Thomas Dixon and the "damned black beast." *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910, 15,* 145-154.

Kinney, A. (2005, September 1). "Looting" or "finding"? *Salon*. Retrieved March 28, 2009, from http://dir.salon.com/news/feature/2005/09/01/photo_controversy.

Klinger, E. (1990). *Daydreaming: Using waking fantasy and imagery for self-knowledge and creativity*. Los Angeles: Tarcher.

Lam, A. G., Mak, A., Lindsay, P. D., & Russell, S. T. (2004). What really works? An exploratory study of condom negotiation strategies. *AIDS Education and Prevention, 16,* 160-171.

Licata, J. W., & Biswas, A. (1993). Representation, roles, and occupational status of black models in television advertisements. *Journalism Quarterly, 70,* 868-882.

Lipmann, W. (1922). *Public Opinion.* New York: Macmillan.

Lipstiz, G. (1990). Listening to learn and learning to listen: Popular culture, cultural theory, and American studies. *American Quarterly, 42,* 615-637.

Liu, M. , 2007-11-15 "Condom Use Communication among Chinese Young Women: Test of a Behavioral Intervention Targeting Knowledge, Attitude, Risk Perception, Self-efficacy, and Intention" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the NCA 93rd Annual Convention Online* <PDF>. 2008-11-25 from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p195454_index.html

Lockwood, P., Chasteen, A.L., & Wong, C. (2005). Age and *Regulatory* Focus Determine Preferences for Health-Related Role Models. *Psychology and Aging*, *20*, 376-389.

Lockwood, P., & Jordan, C. H. (2002). Motivation by positive or negative role models: Regulatory focus determines who will best inspire us. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*, 854-864.

Lockwood, P., & Kunda, Z. (1999). Increasing the salience of one's best selves can undermine inspiration by outstanding role models. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76,* 214-228.

MacDonald, J. F. (1992). *Blacks and White TV: Afro-Americans in Television Since 1948*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Malim, H. N. (2002, July). *Condom negotiation skills among women in prostitution*. Paper presented at the International Conference on AIDS, Salem, India. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. WePeD6297. Retrieved October 30, 2008 from ERIC database.

Markus, H. R., & Herzog, A. R. (1992). The role of the self-concept in aging. In K. W. Schaie & M. P. Lawton (Eds.), Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics (Vol. 11, pp. 110-143). New York: Springer.

Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist, 41,* 954-969.

Mascaro, T.A. (2004). Homicide: Life on the street. *Journal of Popular Film and Television, 32,* 10-19.

Mastro, D. E., & Stern, S. R. (2003). Representations of race in television commercials: A content analysis of prime-time advertising. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 47,* 638-647.

McCarthy, D., & Jones, R. L. (1997). Speed, aggression, strength, and tactical naiveté. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 21,* 348-362.

Miller, A. and Roberts, S. (2008, August 6). Race in national versus local television news coverage of Hurricane Katrina: A study of sources, victims, and negative video. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Marriott Downtown, Chicago, IL Online* <PDF>. Retrieved from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p272053_index.html

Mintz, S. (1995). The Mintz report: Race, ethnicity, and social roles in film and TV. *Film and History, 25,* 34-39.

Murray, S., & Ouellette, L. (2004). *Reality TV: Remaking television culture.* New York: New York University Press.

Murrell, A. J., & Curtis, E. M. (1994). Casual attributions of performance for Black and White quarterbacks in the NFL. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 18,* 224-233.

Myers, L.J., Speight, S.L., Highlen, P.S., Cox, C., Reynolds, A.L., Adams, E.M., & Hanley, C.P. (1991). Identity development and worldview: Toward an optimal conceptualization. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 70,* 54-63.

NAACP. (2008, December 18). *NAACP report shows television industry still falls seriously short in achieving diversity* [Press Release]. Retrieved from http://www.naacp.com/news/press/2008-12-18/index.htm

NAACP. (2009). *NAACP Hollywood bureau.* Retrieved from http://www.naacp.org/programs/hollywood/index.htm

Nakayama, T. (2000). The significance of `race' and masculinities. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 17*, 111-113.

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (1996). Narrating the self. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 25,* 19-43.

Oettingen, G., & Mayer, D. (2002). The motivating function of thinking about the future: Expectations versus fantasies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83,* 1198-1212.

Oliver, M. B. (1994). Portrayals of crime, race, and aggression in `reality-based' police

   shows: A content analysis. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *38*(2),

   179.

Orbe, M. P. (1998). Constructions of reality on MTV's "The Real World": An analysis of

   the restrictive coding of Black masculinity. *Southern Communication Journal*,

   64(Fall), 32-47.

Orbe, M. P. (2008). Representations of Race in Reality TV: Watch and Discuss. *Critical

   Studies in Media Communication*, *25*(4), 345-352.

Oyserman, D., Gant, L., & Ager, J. (1995). A socially contextualized model of African

   American identity: Possible selves and school persistence. *Journal of Personality

   and Social Psychology*, *69*, 1216–1232.

Oyserman, D., & Markus, H.R. (1990). Possible selves and delinquency. *Journal of

   Personality and Social Psychology, 59,* 112-125.

Oyserman, D., & Saltz, E. (1993). Competence, delinquency, and attempts to attain

   possible selves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65,* 360-374.

Packard, B.W., & Conway, P.F. (2006). Methodological choice and its consequences for

   possible selves research. *Identity, 6,* 251-271.

Page, H. E. (1997). Black male imagery and media containment of African American

   men. *American Anthropologist, 99*, 99-111.

Pham, L. B., & Taylor, S. E. (1999). From thought to action: Effects of process- versus

   outcome-based mental simulations on performance. *Personality and Social

   Psychology Bulletin*, *25*, 250–260.

Pickett, C. L., Bonner, B. L., & Coleman, J. M. (2002). Motivated self-stereotyping:
Heightened assimilation and differentiation needs result in increased levels of
positive and negative self-stereotyping. *Journal of Personality and Social
Psychology*, *82*, 543–562.

Punyanant-Carter, N.M. (2008). The perceived realism of African American portrayals
on television. *Howard Journal of Communications, 19,* 241-257.

Rada, J. (1996). Color blind-sighted: Racial bias in network television's coverage of
professional football games. *The Howard Journal of Communications, 7,* 231-
240.

Rada, J., & Wulfemeyer, K. T. (2005). Color coded: Racial descriptors in television
coverage of intercollegiate sports. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media,
49,* 65-85.

Ralli, T. (2005, September 5). Who's a looter? In storm's aftermath, pictures kick up a
different kind of tempest. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from
http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/05/business/05caption.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=
Who%27s%20a%20looter&st=cse

Rose, T. (1994). *Black noise: Rap music and black culture in contemporary America.*
Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Ryff, C. D. (1991). Possible selves in adulthood and old age: A tale of shifting horizons.
Psychology and Aging, 6, 286-295.

Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1992). Effects of optimism on psychological and
physical well-being: Theoretical overview and empirical update. *Cognitive
Therapy and Research*, *16*, 201–228.

Segal, H.G., DeMeis, D.K., Wood, G.A., & Smith, H.L. (2001). Assessing future possible

  selves by gender and socioeconomic status using the anticipated life history

  measure. *Journal of Personality, 69,* 57-87.

Sindig, S. W. (2005). Does 'CNN' (condoms, needles, negotiation) work better than

  'ABC' (abstinence, being faithful, condoms) in attacking the AIDS epidemic?

  International Family Planning Perspectives, 31, 38-40. Singelis, T.M., & Brown,

  W.J. (1995). Culture, Self, and Collectivist communication linking culture to

  individual behavior. Health Communication Research, 21, 354-389.

Singer, J. L. (1966). *Daydreaming*. New York: Random House.

Smith, D. C. (2008). Critiquing reality-based televisual Black fatherhood: A critical

  analysis of Run's House and Snoop Dogg's Father Hood. *Critical Studies in Media

  Communication*, *25*(4), 393-412.

Stroman, C. A. (1984). The socialization influence of television on black children.

  Journal of Black Studies, 15, 79-100.

Tamborini, R., & Mastro, D. E. (2000). The color of crime and the court: A content

  analysis of minority representation on television. *Journalism & Mass

  Communication Quarterly*, *77*(3), 639-653.

Taylor, S. E., Pham, L. B., Rivkin, I. D., & Armor, D. A. (1998). Harnessing the

  imagination: Mental simulation, self-regulation, and coping. *American

  Psychologist*, *53*, 429–439.

Tierney, K., Bavc, C., & Kuligowski, E. (2006). Metaphors matter: Disaster myths,

  media frames and their consequences in hurricane Katrina. *The ANNALS of the

  American Academy of Political and Social Science, 604,* 57-81.

Triandis, H. C. (1996). The psychological measurement of cultural syndromes. *American Psychologist*, *51*, 407–415.

Whannel, G. (1992). *Fields in vision: Television, sport and cultural transformation.* London: Routledge.

Whitty, M. (2002). Possible selves: An exploration of the utility of narrative approach. *Identity, 2,* 211-228.

Wilkes, R. E., & Valencia, H. (1989). Hispanics and blacks in television commercials. *Journal of Advertising, 18,* 19-25.

Wyatt, E. (2009, March 18). No smooth ride on TV networks' road to diversity. *The New York Times*, pp. C1.

Yi, K. (1999). Ethnic identity formation: From stage theory to a constructivist narrative model. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 36,* 16-26.

Yowell, C.M. (2000). Possible selves and future orientation: Exploring hopes and fears of Latino boys and girls. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 20,* 245-281.

Interviewer Guide:

1. Are you HIV positive?

___ Yes (continue below)

___ No (Thank the person for their time and end the conversation)

2a. Would you say you live in urban or rural Georgia?

___ Urban

___ Rural

2b. What county do you live in? _____

3a. Can you give me a ballpark of what your family's household income was for this last year? _____

(note to recruiter/interview: if individual is hesitant or confused about telling you their income, then ask them 3b below; but if they answer 3a, then do not ask 3b)

3b. I'm going to give you a range of incomes. Please tell me which one your family's household income for this past year fits into.

___ Below $25,000

___ Between $25,000 and $35,000

___ Between $35,000 and $45,000

___ Between $45,000 and $55,000

___ Above $55,000

4. How old are you? _____ (specific age)

___ 18 or older

___ Under 18

5. How would you describe your educational level?

___ 6th Grade or less

___ 7th to 8th grade

___ 9 to 11th grade

___ 12th grade without a diploma

___ 12th grade with a diploma

___ GED

___ Some college

___ Associate degree

___ Complete 4-year college degree

___ Some graduate education

___ Graduate degree

6. Are you in enough health to participate in a thirty minute interview?

___ Yes (Continue below)

___ No (Thank the person for their time and end the conversation)

7. As a child, what television programs do you remember watching?

Probe for details:

Favorite show?

Who did you most identify with?

What do you remember liking about the show?

Did you ever role-play those characters?

Could you identify with them?

8. Did you look up to any public figure as a child?

If "No": Did you have a role model? Did you have a hero? Who? What

did they mean to you? Why that person? Did you aspire to be like them?

How? Did you think you could become like them?

If "Yes": Why that person? What did you admire about them? Did you

aspire to be like them? How? Did you think you could become like them?

9. When hearing the word "health," what first comes to your mind?

Probe: Have you read or seen anything lately in the news about health?

10. Before getting diagnosed with HIV, did you ever think about what your health

would look like across your lifetime?

If unclear or "No": Many people have a "story" about their future health. They imagine that they are likely to get particular diseases or face particular health challenges at particular ages. Even if they don't ever spell out this story, it is in the background for them, and they might make plans like retirement or insurance or where to live and such, based on that presumed story. Do you think that you had such a projection?

11. "What was that story"?

Probe for details:

anticipated diseases and age of onset

anticipated longevity

anticipated health challenges (pain, medication, surgery)

PROBES:

When did you think you would face significant

illnesses? Why?

Did you think about what you might die from? Did you think

about when you might die?

Probe for both their "hoped for" health story and their "feared"

health story

12. WHY do you think that you thought your health and other future aspects would look like that across your lifetime?

(Clarifications/if no response: some people think that their health will be

like that of some family member; others think about their future health in

terms of specific risks in their environment; others project their future

129

health based on what it has been in the past; others think about their health by judging whether they do particular behaviors that they are told are risky; others think about their health in terms of spiritual factors; others use other factors: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR YOU USED IN IMAGINING WHAT YOUR HEALTH WOULD BE LIKE IN THE FUTURE?)

PROBES: "Why"

13. Prior to your diagnosis, what did you think your future looked like?

Probe for details:

Anticipated career plans

Anticipated relationships (i.e. marriage, divorce, children)

Anticipated living conditions

14. WHY do you think that you thought your future would look like that?

(Clarifications/if no response: some people think that their future will be like that of some family member; others think about their future in terms of past experiences; others plan on their future being optimistic and better than their present; others project about their future based on their education or career plans: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR YOU USED IN IMAGINING WHAT YOUR HEALTH WOULD BE LIKE IN THE FUTURE?)

PROBES: "Why"

15. How did you contract HIV and when were you diagnosed?

Through sex, intravenous drug use, or mother-to-child?

130

16. Prior to your diagnosis did you ever use condoms during intercourse?

17. IF YES: How did you feel about using condoms?

> PROBES:

>> About what percent of your sexual encounters included the use of condoms?

>> What types of intercourse did you engage in?

>> Were you ever afraid of your sexual partner's impressions or opinions about condoms if you were to suggest using one?

>> What factors determined whether or not you chose to use a condom during sex

17b. IF NO: What was your opinion of condoms?

> PROBES:

>> What did your friends think of condoms?

>> Did any of your friends use them?

>> What deterred you from using a condom during intercourse?

> Were you ever afraid of your sexual partner's impressions or opinions about condoms if you were to suggest using one?

18. How do you feel now about your health in the future?

> Probe for details:

>> Do you have any expectations for the progression of HIV?

> (note: do not probe for more information than the subject is comfortable.)

19. How do you project the future of your partner's health?

> Probe for details:

HIV status of partner?

Sense of inevitability for partner's HIV diagnosis

20. How do you presently feel about your future and what do you expect?

Probe for details:

What are you planning for right now?

What are you (not) looking forward to?

Where do you see yourself in five/ten/fifteen years?

What steps are you taking to prepare for your future?

21. Do you currently ever use condoms during intercourse?

21a. IF YES: How did you feel about using condoms?

PROBES:

About what percent of your sexual encounters included the use of

condoms?

What types of intercourse did you engage in?

Were you ever afraid of your sexual partner's impressions or

opinions about condoms if you were to suggest using one?

What factors determined whether or not you chose to use a

condom during sex?

21b. IF NO: What was your opinion of condoms?

PROBES:

What did your friends think of condoms?

Did any of your friends use them?

What deterred you from using a condom during intercourse?

Were you ever afraid of your sexual partner's impressions or opinions about condoms if you were to suggest using one?

22. We've talked your understanding of the future both past and present. I'm wondering about how this understanding is related to other features of how you think about yourself. If you were to describe yourself beyond the issue of health, how would you describe yourself?

Prompt: (Finish this sentence: "I am a person who.....")

Prompt: (I imagine my life-story will go like this.....)

23. Where do you think that these other components of your self come from?

if none volunteered, (likeness and/or difference to a family member, likeness to peers or other groups, behavior matching health-producing template, spiritual factors, previous health status, environmental risks, etc.)

24. How do you think your projections of your future health are related to these other components of your sense of yourself?

25. Is there anything else related to your expectations for your future health or life that you would like to share or explain more?

26. What, if any, television programs do you watch now?

26a. If None: What do you do for entertainment?

26b. If Programs are given: Probe for details

Frequency of television viewing

Reasons for watching those programs/channels/actors

27. Do you identify with any person in the media, actor, character, athlete today?

27a. If Yes: Probe for details

Why this person?

In what way do you identify with them?

27b. If No: Why not?