

Kadeajah Goslin

Title: Connecting Adolescents’ Beliefs and Behaviors: Positive Youth Development and Character

Advisor: Dr. Jacqueline Lerner, Ph.D. Professor of the Counseling, Developmental and Educational Psychology Department at Boston College

Adolescence is a period of biological, social, cognitive and psychological changes. These changes occur in various contexts such as the home, school, and neighborhood in which adolescents develop. It is in these contexts where adolescents’ relationships, values, skills, and behaviors are affected as adolescent development involves a bidirectional relationship between adolescents and their contexts. In examining how adolescents develop, this research seeks to understand what factors across development promote high character, specifically, in African American adolescents. Whereas all adolescents experience general developmental changes, African American adolescents experience other environmental and racial issues that may impact their development. Similarly to all youth, African Americans adolescents develop morals, beliefs and values. This research is interested in examining the factors that connect African American adolescents’ moral beliefs to their behaviors. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the role of intentional self-regulation skills and other internal strengths, along with character exemplars—mentors and models—in the virtuous behaviors of African American adolescents.