Race, gender and class differences in academic achievement motivation

Angela D. Wimes
Atlanta University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations

Part of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
RACE, GENDER AND CLASS DIFFERENCES
IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

BY

ANGELA D. WIMES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JULY 1989
The data used for the analysis was obtained from a study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.
for the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education titled, "High School and Beyond."
The three volumes of material included the data collection instrument, tables and other statistics generated from the study, which was first conducted in 1980 and followed-up in 1982, 1984 and 1986.

The study found only negligible race, gender and class differences in academic achievement motivation. Significant race and class differences, however, were found in levels of educational attainment. Self-esteem was not a factor in either area as blacks consistently scored higher than whites, but achieved at significantly lower levels of educational attainment.

Further study is needed in the area of educational attainment in order to determine the causes of low achievement among African-Americans as compared to whites. Also, efforts are needed to help alleviate low educational attainment among blacks, a problem that continues to have far-reaching implications.
I would like to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt thanks to the following individuals for their valuable assistance and perpetual support:

My thesis advisor, Dr. Wilbur H. Watson, chairman of the Department of Sociology and editor of Phylon, Atlanta University; my thesis committee, Dr. Komanduri Murty, Criminal Justice Department, Atlanta University and Dr. Ann Baird, Sociology Department, Morehouse College; all of my Sociology professors; Dollars & Sense magazine; my plethora of wonderful friends and, most importantly, my family: Riley, Sr., Athenia, Donna and Riley, Jr. Wimes.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract........................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements....................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents........................................................................................ iv
Statement of Problem.................................................................................. 1
Review of Literature.................................................................................... 6
  Historical Overview of Blacks in American Education.......................... 6
  Blacks in Education System-Separate and Unequal................................. 7
  Family Life, SES and Academic Achievement........................................ 12
  Self-Image and Academic Achievement................................................ 17
  Teacher Expectation and Academic Achievement................................... 23
  Race and Gender Differences.................................................................... 26
Theoretical Orientation and Conceptual Framework................................. 32
Methodology.................................................................................................. 43
  Description of Population and Sampling Procedure............................. 43
  Data Collection Instruments.................................................................... 43
  Definitions and Operationalization of Variables...................................... 47
Hypotheses.................................................................................................... 53
Plans for Data Analysis................................................................................ 54
Limitation of Research Design.................................................................... 54
Findings.......................................................................................................... 56
  Gender Differences.................................................................................. 56
  Race Differences..................................................................................... 60
  Class Differences..................................................................................... 63
  Summary of Findings.............................................................................. 64
Conclusion and Research Implications...................................................... 70
Bibliography................................................................................................. 73
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1. Percent of High School Seniors with Different Levels of Post-Secondary Education...... 57

2. Self-Concept Scores by Race and Sex....................... 59

3. Locus of Control Scores by Race and Sex................. 59

4. Mean Self-Concept Scores by Race......................... 62

5. Mean Locus of Control Scores by Race..................... 62
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education is thought by some to be the stepping stone to a "good" job and upward social mobility. Subscribing to this particular school of thought, the black community, over the last 100 or so years, has concentrated its efforts on achieving not only upward social mobility, but social change and equality as well through high educational achievement (Blackwell, 1975).

Following the Civil War, which presumably emancipated blacks, who were largely denied education because it was against the law, educational opportunities began to open up for them due, in part, to efforts by black Reconstructionists. These noteworthy efforts resulted in nearly one million black youths being enrolled in school by 1900. However, the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision (1896) which ushered in the separate but equal doctrines, had far-reaching and long term implications that went beyond public property and permeated the veins of the entire social structure of American society. "This decision justified racial segregation, legitimized educational apartheid and institutional duality and re-established the tradition of white supremacy with black inferiority and structured privilege based upon color" (Blackwell, 1975: 102). Plessy vs. Ferguson led to the creation of a dual educational system from which blacks today are still trying to recover.

For instance, black students were educated in over-
crowded, deteriorating schools, often having had to walk many miles to get there. Black students also suffered from the unavailability of educational resources and were given an industrial/vocational education to learn skills to serve whites or a liberal arts education necessary for their admission to predominantly black colleges, with the rationalization from Northerners and Southerners alike that blacks could not handle a strenuous college prep/academic curriculum (Blackwell, 1975). Additionally, far less money was spent on the education of black children than white children and black teachers were paid less than white teachers, although traditionally they carried a heavier workload. On the other hand, because blacks did not enjoy equality in the distribution of this country's employment, hence, economic resources, many black children could not attend school or dropped out of school at an early age to contribute to the economic survival of their family.

It was not until the 1954 Supreme Court decision, Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, that the separate-but-equal doctrine relative to education was declared unconstitutional and equal educational opportunity was legally accessible to blacks. Later, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 assisted in eroding barriers to desegregation.

Today, some barriers are still present, but, not as visible as they once were, Schulman, Steel and Bobo (1987)
concur with this assessment in their research on racial attitudes of Americans. In referencing Kinder and Sears (1981) the researchers agree that overt racism has virtually disappeared, but prejudiced attitudes have not and are manifested in what Sears et. al. termed "abstract, moralistic resentments of blacks." Hence, overt discrimination has been replaced by a new, sophisticated prejudice or "symbolic racism" (Sears, Hensler and Speer, 1979) most evident in whites general antipathy to busing and refusal to vote for black political candidates.

In his controversial study on race relations in America, Wilson (1978) found that adversities faced by blacks have less to do with race than with socio-economic status. Wilson argues that "the recent mobility pattern of blacks lend strong support to the view that economic class is clearly more important than race in predetermining job placement and occupational mobility...the black experience has moved historically from economic racial oppression by virtually all blacks to economic subordination for the black underclass" (Wilson, 1978).

Among those who disputed Wilson's findings was Willie (1978) who found that in general the "significance of race" is increasing, particularly for middle-class blacks, who, due in part to such integration programs as school desegregation, and affirmative action, are in more direct and constant contact with whites than ever before.
Relative to education, Willie found that the gap between median income between blacks and whites increased as education increased.

Despite the continuing significance of race in America, few would argue that opportunities for blacks have increased dramatically over the years. But, are blacks taking advantage of these opportunities in the numbers that they should? Do they still view education as a chance to negate their second class citizenry and attain the great American dream? Is institutional racism still interfering with black educational achievement?

If the latter is the case, we are confronting a major problem that W.E.B. DuBois so insightfully predicted in 1903:

Herein lies buried many things, which if read with patience, may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.

Evidence and experience suggest that even in the late 1980s, DuBois's prediction was indeed correct. The problem of the color line is the perpetual problem of the 20th century, so deeply ingrained as it is in the minds of black and white Americans as well as entrenched in American social structures in the form of institutionalized racism, which encompasses the American educational system as well as the labor market. With reference to education, the
literature indicates that the educational aspirations and attainment of blacks is proportionately less than whites and the educational aspirations/attainment of black men is less than black women (Staples, 1982).

In light of this persistent social phenomenon, the purpose of this paper is to determine to what extent black males and females differ in achievement motivation in educational pursuits; to what extent does race enter into self-image and act as an incentive to success in educational pursuits; and to what extent does race impact negatively on achievement motivation. And finally, to what extent does internalized oppression impact upon educational achievement aspirations of black males and females?
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historical Overview of Blacks in American Education

Interest in the sociology of education peaked in 1967 with the publication of *The American Occupational Structure*, by Peter Blau and O.D. Duncan (1967). One of the most important findings in the research of Blau and Duncan revolved around the importance of education in terms of occupational mobility. More specifically, education was shown to be a major determinant of one's position in the stratification system.

A second and related finding showed that ascribed characteristics were directly related to educational achievement. For example, Blau and Duncan revealed that the education of the father was the best predictor of a son's educational achievement. Sons of fathers who had graduated from college were more likely to be college graduates than their counterparts who did not have a father with a college education. Probably the most controversial finding in the monograph was the racial differential in educational achievement.

Blau and Duncan's (1967) research showed that the educational process worked differently for blacks than for whites. Education for blacks was not an automatic pass to upward social and economic mobility. Moreover, blacks had lower levels of education than their white counterparts. The following review of literature will focus on
achievement motivation within the black population by both socio-economic and gender differences.

Blacks in the American Educational System - Separate and Unequal

As briefly mentioned in the statement of the problem, prior to the Civil War, blacks were denied equal educational opportunity. It was not until 1865 that freed blacks were allowed to legally receive elementary and secondary training quite often in the same classroom as whites. However, in 1896, educational progress was halted with the judicial decision on Plessy vs. Ferguson. This court case was important in that the separate, but equal doctrine was established and became the law of the land resulting in segregated classrooms or, in other words, a dual system of education.

According to some scholars, with the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision, a system of white supremacy was again established in mainstream America. According to Blackwell (1975), blacks in American educational institutions, after 1896, experienced inferior education due, in part, to inadequate funding. That pattern of limited funds persisted until the Supreme Court case of Brown vs. the Board of Education, where the separate-but-equal doctrine was struck down. Given this 58 year period of racial and educational separation, blacks were cast into a situation
of having to play catch up in the educational arena. Also, given inadequate funding, black schools were not in a position to offer advanced or college prep classes for their students. This institutionalized racism had serious implications for blacks in all aspects of society and, in particular, education.

The abolition of slavery, as has been shown, did not abolish the institutionalization of white dominance and black subordination (Blackwell, 1975). Slavery and racism went hand in hand. Racism was symbolized in legalized discrimination and segregation, which were key in the establishment of the boundary-maintenance systems. Blackwell also pointed to the Black Codes as one of the major forces in increasing white domination of blacks during slavery by reducing black men and women to property and denying them not only the right to trade, but to education as well.

By reassuring white superordination through legal sanctions, the codes were instrumental in creating a social-psychological state among most white Americans that is indelible and that has had far reaching implications - that is, the belief in the inherent inferiority of the black race and the natural superiority of white people. In time, many blacks internalized this view. It remains among a significant number of whites today, both as a deeply entrenched sense of group position and as an acceptance of the notion of biological superiority.

In a similar vein, Blauner (1969) postulates in "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt," that the relationship between blacks and whites in America today is
that of the colonizer and the colonized. Key elements of this theory include the concepts of exploitation, social oppression, and control. The internal colonialism model implies that blacks (the colonized) entered into the dominant (American) culture through force, which resulted in the loss of their original culture. Consequently, a system developed by which the colonized had to adopt and adapt to a system of values, beliefs and rules administered by the colonizers, who rationalized oppression and subordination through their belief in biological superiority. This state of affairs is evident in the overall educational, occupational and political state of blacks, every facet of which is controlled by external agents outside of the black community (Blackwell, 1975).

Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) support these assertions by suggesting that the residual psychological effects created by slavery consisted of several components: 1) low self-esteem; 2) subordination of original culture; 3) demolition of the family with specific emphasis on the dehumanizing of the black male and the "relative enhancement" of the black female; and 4) idealization of the white man, hence, the white power structure. Consequently, there was a lack of encouragement to achieve status, as there was in the majority culture. Therefore, "when status is frozen, one cannot successfully direct one's aspirations toward goals that are beyond the
possibility of attainment. Some inner peace can be achieved by ceasing to struggle for it" (Kardiner and Ovesey, 1951: 47).

It is difficult to judge how deeply this attitude is engrained in the collective psyche of black Americans in general and the black male in particular in the late 1980s. It is still prevalent, however, as indicated in the words of Newsweek reporter, Sylvester Monroe (1987). In tracing the lives of 11 friends, who had grown up with him in a Chicago ghetto, all in their mid-to-late thirties, Monroe found that although originally they all had the great American dream, some wound up in jail, some lived in the streets, some held the most menial of jobs, but some did succeed in the mainstream. "The majority would not," he stated. "The world they were born to, like the projects they lived in was too heavy with the expectations of their defeat" (Monroe, 1987: 60).

The preceding pages have pointed out that the black American's quest for education has been strewn with a series of hurdles. Granted, overt discrimination has diminished, but equality of education is still basically a myth. As the history of school desegregation has shown, there have always been those who opposed the ideal. When it appeared that educational institutions were making sincere efforts to integrate student bodies, an important test case arose. Allan Bakke accused the University of
California-Davis Medical School of discrimination against him based solely on his skin color. He was white. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Bakke and accused the University of California-Davis of having unconstitutional enrollment procedures. This case was not without precedent. In 1973, in the case of Defunis vs. Odegard, a white student—Defunis—sued the University of Washington Law School over reverse discrimination. However, by the time the case reached the Supreme Court, the argument was ruled moot because the school subsequently admitted him.

As these two cases indicate, blacks who have tried to achieve higher education have been confronted with a series of legal, economic and social obstacles. These problems cannot help but be carried over into the larger black community, thereby, affecting achievement as well as providing the seeds of self-degradation.

Research has shown that individuals who come into the classroom with a low sense of self-worth will not achieve at high levels. Other research has shown that family socio-economic status as well as teacher expectation have a tremendous impact on the extent to which a child will achieve academically. Given these issues of family life, teacher expectation and self-concept, the literature surrounding each as they impact on student achievement will be explored.
Family Life, Socio-Economic Background and Academic Achievement

Studies have shown that the process by which goals are established and achieved are affected by significant others, especially parents. Hence, as educational goals are a result of socialization and the family is a major component of primary socialization, it is expected that parents as well as parent's SES would have a significant effect on academic achievement. According to Eshleman (1988), the real significance of one's SES is its influence on early socialization, role expectations and projections, values and behavior. Additionally, class influences academic potential and growth as well as the motivation and means to get an education; test scores; grades; drop out rate; occupational aspirations and "almost any other factor related to education (Eshleman, 1988: 218).

In order to determine how family life and SES influences the educational aspirations and/or achievement motivation, it is important that the history of the black family in America be examined.

As a group the shaping of the Afro-American family is traced back to the more than 200 years spent in slavery. This peculiar institution, "a social system as coercive as any yet known and erected on the framework of the most implacable race consciousness yet observed in virtually any society" (Bennett, 1982: 86) was the single most important
factor in shaping the black American family.

Although some scholars (Ovesey and Kardiner, 1951; Blackwell, 1975) maintain that the establishment of the uterine or mother child family was the only family structure allowed to survive, others (Genovese, 1974; Gutman, 1976) suggest that despite the extraordinary oppressive nature of slavery, the slave community maintained normative family roles, including as much of their nuclear family as it was possible at the time and began the post-Civil War period with a relatively strong stable family foundation.

According to Frazier (1939), the most notable change in family life of the Negro since emancipation occurred around 1900 in what he termed, "the urbanization of the Negro population." This Northern and Western movement, which lasted until the end of World War II, took many blacks from Southern rural towns and cities to Northern industrial centers, seeking greater opportunities. This movement is said to have caused a great deal of family disorganization--increase in desertion, illegitimacy and juvenile delinquency, due in part, to the ghettoization of the Negro. In short, variations in sex and marital habits formed because of the pattern of societal prejudice and economic disparity, resulting from slavery. These variations, as summarized by Staples (1982: 2) are:
(1) the matriarchal character of the Black family whereby Black males are marginal, ineffective figures in the family constellation; (2) the instability of marital relations resulting from the lack of a legal basis for marriage during the period of slavery, which meant that marriage never acquired the position of a strong institution in Black life and casual sex relations were the prevailing norms; and (3) the dissolution caused by the process of urbanization of the family that existed among Black peasants in an agrarian society.

The widely disputed Moynihan Report (1965) attempted to confirm, statistically, Frazier's earlier findings, but shifted the burden of the black family's plight from the American social structure to the black family itself. Staples (1982) on the other hand contends that the reason for the increase in female-headed households is the black male's inability to find gainful employment. He suggests that by augmenting employment opportunities for black men, the black family can be made whole and remain whole.

Sewell, Haller and Strauss (1957) attempted to confirm findings that educational and occupational aspirations were directly related to intelligence and that intelligence was directly related to social class. "The democratic ethos notwithstanding, careful studies have shown that in general those of lower intelligence tend to be disproportionately concentrated in the lower social classes; and those of lower intelligence have been shown to have lower levels of educational and occupational aspirations" (Sewell, Haller
and Strauss, 1957). The implications of this study suggest that since blacks are disproportionately concentrated in the lower classes and blacks have lower achievement relative to educational and occupational pursuits than whites, blacks have lower intelligence. Several studies have shown that neither intelligence nor social class alone influences a child's educational and occupational aspirations and achievement, but a combination of factors within the family and external to it.

Although several studies (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Kerckhoff, 1974) have found that there is a direct relationship between SES of parents and children's academic aspirations and achievement, additional studies have gone a step further by attempting to not only measure economic background, but family structure, social interaction and child's ability as well. One such study (Boocock, 1972) suggests that although SES is the strongest predictor of academic performance, the correlation may be more complicated than some research indicates. Other background and attitudinal variables such as family size and value placed on education serve as intervening variables in the relationship between socio-economic status and academic aspirations and achievement.

Furthermore, Mercy and Steelman (1982) found that the relationship between SES and ability are interposed by environmental elements. Their research further indicated
that: a) a child may have potential intellectual ability, but parents may lack the time and financial resources to engage that child in activities that will stimulate that ability; b) mother's education had a stronger bearing on a child than father's education; c) older siblings enhance and younger children diminish the intellectual climate of the home; and d) educational level of parents affect the degree of intellectual stimulation in the home.

Clark's (1983) study found that although the influence of family SES on the educational achievement of black students (excluding achievement) was positive and significant, the strength of the relationship was somewhat weak. Instead, it was suggested that further research should be conducted on how families encourage their children to develop educational aspirations and expectations. In his study on why poor black children fail or succeed, Clark studied only lower class families and found that parents of high achievers were more aggressive in obtaining information concerning their children's academic performance, were more optimistic, and were better able to cope with societal pressures than lower class families with low achievers. This research indicates that it is not social class that will determine a child's educational competence, but the quality of family life within the home.

Billingsley's (1968) summation of black families in
America demonstrates how instrumental and expressive family functions have a strong bearing on a child's educational aspirations. Instrumental activities include providing such basic needs as food, clothing, housing, and health care for the family, and expressive functions include maintaining the social and psychological well-being of the family. Given the disadvantages that blacks face and have faced relative to access to economic parity, black families have more difficulty in carrying out these functions (Billingsley 1968).

Self-Image and Academic Achievement

A fundamental principal of social psychology is that an individual develops a sense of self, his identity and concept of worth through interactions with others (Eshleman, 1988). As the interaction of blacks in the mainstream is still, to some extent, resisted and as the black child interacts in a world that encourages feelings of low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority, it should be expected that the black child would not only believe, but act out, these societal messages (Eshleman, 1988).

Reitze and Murtran (1980) contend that an individual's background influences self concepts via role model exposure and prior socialization experiences. They also state that self-esteem influences expectations, behavior and plans. As previously stated, one of the residual psychological
effects of slavery and persistent racial discrimination is low self-esteem (Kardiner and Ovesey, 1951). Further, Merton (1938) suggested that any social group perpetually denied access to the attainment of goals that are their right should expect to suffer low self-esteem. Given the preceding assertions, one would indeed expect the self-esteem of blacks to be lower than that of whites as a social group. This, however, has not been the case as suggested by the following research.

Porter (1974) states that at specific socio-economic levels and among certain social groups, certain perspectives of self and the universe are more legitimate than others. The "origin position" (the SES of the child as passed along through the parents) demonstrates the general lifestyle from which aspirations are shaped (Porter, 1974). Ambition is an expression of what an individual senses is possible and achievable and both concepts are formed in a specific socio-economic environment. Porter (1974) further postulates that intelligence is partly an indicator of an individual's capability to symbolically transcend the restrictions of origin position. Further, he hypothesized in his study that the personality consists of motivation, needs and aspirations that help in explaining the type of action that an individual engages in. Personality also includes self-concept and character which serve to explain an individual's acceptability into certain roles, given his/
her ability and motivation to perform.

Soares and Soares (1969: 32) found in their study on culturally disadvantaged children and self-esteem that culturally disadvantaged children tend to internalize negative attitudes gleaned from others and "reflect the discrimination in their own negative self-images." Because of their socio-economic background and the environment in which they live, they are characterized by a) a denigration of their potential as an academically capable student and productive individual; b) by a non-belief in delayed gratification; and 3) by a low level of achievement motivation in the academic arena and a spirit of resignation (Havighurst and Moorefield, 1967; Tannenbaum, 1967). Two reasons given for the development of negative self-images in disadvantaged children include the possibility that they are not exposed to very many positive role models and that they are perpetually frustrated as a result of their socio-economic handicap. Consequently, how a child views himself will often have a direct impact on how he views school and how he will perform in the classroom (Soares and Soares, 1969). However, their study found that contrary to the above-mentioned variables, disadvantaged children do not necessarily experience a lower self-esteem than advantaged children. Indeed, their self-esteem may be as high as children from middle-class backgrounds. The ensuing association and challenges for
the disadvantaged have an effect upon the level of aspirations they hold for themselves—hence a positive self concept and reflected self (Soares and Soares, 1969).

Additionally, their findings concurred with the Coleman Report (1966) that found that black students who went to an integrated school had a lower self-esteem than black students who went to a segregated school. The Coleman Report further states that a:

...different set of predispositional factors operate to create low or high achievement for children from disadvantaged groups than for children from advantaged groups. For children from advantaged groups, achievement or lack of it appears closely related to their self-concept; what they believe about themselves. For children from disadvantaged groups, achievement or lack of achievement is closely related to what they believe about their environment.

Simmons et. al. (1978) also found that black children had a higher self-esteem than white children; that both black and white girls had a lower self-esteem than their counterparts and that black children from broken homes had a lower self-esteem in integrated schools. They also found that black students in segregated schools made higher marks than their peers in desegregated schools, but scored lower on standardized tests even when parents education and occupation were held constant. Further, Simmons et. al. (1978) found that blacks in segregated schools and environments had high-esteem, even though they tended to be
of a lower socio-economic background because they were isolated from "societal prejudice." However, in referencing Katz (1967) they postulated that high aspiration levels among the less privileged may be unrealistic but functional in establishing and maintaining high self-esteem.

Harris and Stokes (1978) in their study on race and self-evaluation stated, "because self-esteem is generally assumed to be a direct function of goal attainment and because it is recognized that blacks are differentially blocked from this achievement, the finding of higher self-esteem has been treated as anomalous." Furthermore, in citing James (1899) Harris and Stokes (1978) contend that self-image is significantly understood as a direct cause of "perceived achievement" relative to aspirations. Blacks may have a higher self-esteem because their subculture provides them with low aspirations, diverse aspirations or with the mechanism to define as successful what whites would call failure (Harris and Stokes, 1978).

Supporting Porters' contention that the personality (needs, motives, aspirations, character and self-concept) and one's SES are major contributors in shaping an individuals aspirations as well as one's sense of what is achievable is Kardiner and Ovesey's (1951) explorations in the personality of blacks. In plotting the personality differences among blacks against the known variations among
personalities of whites, they found that in light of social
discrimination, blacks were forced to live within the
confines of a caste system that not only restricted their
social mobility through class lines, but stifled effective
protest through the fear of hostile retaliation. They
further suggested that this type of oppression can only
leave a permanent mark on the Negros personality. Hence,
the expression of his/her personality is "strangled off" by
hindering achievement of goals which lie within his
potential (Kardiner and Ovesey, 1951).

The studies of Soares and Soares (1969); Simmons et.
al. (1978) and Harris and Stokes (1978) seem to subscribe
to certain reference group theories. Certain researchers,
as stated, found that significant others had a significant
effect on educational achievement motivation. As explained
by Merton (1949) individuals hold up significant others as
models for their own evaluation and self-appraisal. Hence,
an individual's self-evaluation will rest on the comparison
of one's situation to that of others perceived as being
similar. Another element of reference group theories
relate to the psychology of status, as studied by Hyman
(1942). As status is thought to parallel certain attitudes
and behavior, it affects an individual's social view
inasmuch as individuals in various social positions will
have different perspectives of social change. Therefore,
in order to understand social organization and the
relationship between culture and personality, one must study the concept of status. Hyman found that in the black community, as in the white community, social mobility is stressed in culture. In practice, however, social mobility is largely denied the black community. Further, Hyman (1942) states that when a black individual utilizes a high status white group as its reference group, the consequences (frustration) that results if mobility is denied is greater than if that individual had utilized (as his/her reference group) an intra-race or intra-class reference group. Referencing Sutherland (1942), Hyman wrote that the degree to which minority status is operative depends on the reconciliation to the assumed inferior status. Further, he states that the hopes of black youth are shaped by the Afro-American culture itself. The infliction of a white reference group is possibly a function of intermingling with whites and the degree of interaction is individual-specific.

**Teacher Expectation and Academic Achievement**

As noted, significant others, such as teachers have some influence on academic aspirations, achievement and, subsequently, attainment. Reitze and Mutran (1980) found that significant others, as named by the student respondents, had a direct and indirect influence on academic achievement and plans. However, "their effects are varied with certain significant others encouraging
achievement, others discouraging or hindering college performance and future educational plans" (1980: 31). In this regard, several studies have looked at the effects of teacher expectation on students' academic achievement and have found that teacher (as well as parental and peer) encouragement had a positive effect on whether or not a student planned to go to college. Students who had positive communications with teachers and counselors were likely to receive better direction and secure information on educational opportunities. However, the literature indicated that black males generally did not receive positive encouragement from teachers and counselors (Kerckhoff, 1977; Kerckhoff and Campbell, 1977).

According to Clark (1965), in several interviews with teachers in the New York public school system, numerous respondents indicated that black students should not be expected to learn as much as or as easily as white students because they are (were considered) inherently inferior. And, if they were taught as if they could learn, they would develop serious emotional problems. These beliefs led to suggestions that black children should be relegated to school that were basically custodial in nature rather than educational institutions. Though the above-stated sentiments were espoused in the the 1950s, one must wonder to what extent these beliefs are still communicated and internalized in black students and serve as self-fulfilling
Clark (1965) predicted that if students are treated as if they cannot learn, they will not learn. In the classic work, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that teachers form opinions and learning expectations almost immediately based on appearance, skin color, perceived or apparent affluence and background information. In other words, evidence suggests that on many occasions even before a teacher has witnessed a student perform academically, he/she was likely to have formed some preconceived expectations of the student's academic performance.

In their study, Rosenthal and Jacobson posed the question, does a teacher's expectation relative to her students intellectual performance "serve as an educational self-fulfilling prophecy?" To test their hypothesis, the researchers randomly selected a number of students who were presented to teachers as those testing high or demonstrating great academic potential. Several months later these same students showed greater intellectual progress than children not singled out for the study leading Rosenthal and Jacobson to conclude that the positive teacher expectations of these students led to their positive and significant intellectual gains.

On the other hand, Williams' (1975) found that teacher effect on a students educational ambition is minor, for the most part, and that the self-fulfilling prophecy relative
to the above is yet to be seen. In his follow-up study, Williams (1976) postulates that if teachers predicted that a student will do well or poorly in class, based on Merton's theory of self-fulfilling prophecy, then they will do just that. According to Williams, teacher expectations relative to student performance in school is based on two factors a) students ascribed characteristics, i.e. sex, skin color, physical appearance and b) attributes that students acquire as a result of their endeavors within the school that differ according to subpopulations (academic potential, academic performance, educational ambition, program of study and behavior conformity). The data utilized in Williams' (1976) study did not significantly support arguments indicating that teacher prophecies have a direct effect on students' learning. However, teacher expectations do effect how a teacher evaluate students' learning by adjusting the students' grades to fit their expectations which, in turn may affect further educational aspirations as well as occupational aspirations and attainment.

Race and Gender Differences

Two characteristics assigned to a child at birth are race and gender. Studies have shown that these attributes are related to the manner in which an individual perceives and plays the different societal roles (Boocock, 1972). Whether the differences are a result of natural or
biological differences, it is a given that blacks and whites, males and females have different patterns of academic performance and their interactions with others outside of the academic setting impacts on academic aspirations and achievement (Boocock, 1972).

Hout and Morgan (1975) found that black male and female differences in the causes of expected attainment of high school seniors lay in several areas. For example, peer groups had a significantly positive effect on expected educational attainment for black females and white males while peer group influence for black males was indicated only for occupational attainment. And, although the parental encouragement effect on expectations was significant for both black females and black males, this same variable had only a strong positive effect on the grades of black females and no effect on black males. However, the impact of grades on expectations had a more positive effect on black males than any other group in the study. They suggested that a possible explanation for this finding is that black males have a greater reluctance to adopt the "preferred student role" necessary for conventional classroom learning (Hout and Morgan, 1975).

In a similar vein, Staples suggested that the black male tended to succeed in areas that are rewarded by his peer group, i.e., sexual conquests, athletics and fighting, while black females were controlled more by their families.
Staples also found that black females had a higher level of education than their males counterpart in all categories except doctorates. In a general overview regarding the black male in America, Staples (1982) stated that sex role identity is essential to one's personality, lifestyle and values. Further, black men have always had to face the contradictions relative to the normative expectations connected with their being male in society and the restrictions on their behavior and achievement of goals. "They are the ones failing in school, losing ground in the labor market to whites and black women, filling up prisons and dying slowly through drugs, alcohol, violence and adventurism." Further referencing education, Staples stated that there are hundreds of thousands more black women enrolled in college than black men, with about double [sic] that number who will actually receive a degree. He concluded that these gender differences are not lower-class-specific as middle-class black male children also are not doing as well in public or private schools as black females.

In another comparison of black and white male students relative to academic achievement, Porter (1974) suggested that for blacks, educational attainment tended to be more directly related to conformity to middle class values rather than ambition. However, grades of black male students resulted more from ambition than conformity.
These factors, however, did not apply to the occupational attainment of black males. "It would appear that for blacks attitudinal conformity to white middle class norms is not rewarded in terms of SES the way it is rewarded in the educational system" (Porter, 1974).

Using Duncan's (1967) model as a foundation, Kerckhoff and Campbell (1977) indicated that blacks lagged behind whites in the attainment of education, prestigious occupations and income, even when parents SES, education and occupation were held constant. Kerckhoff (1977) suggested that these differences or inequities may have a "feedback effect" on blacks' judgement of the opportunity. In other words, although high levels of attainment are desirable, if an individual perceives that he/she does not have equal access to these goals, expectations for achieving these goals are severely decreased or negated altogether.

Additionally, Kerckhoff and Campbell (1977) found that black boys in general expected to go to either a business, vocational or technical school or a two-year college, while white boys in general expected to secure more than two years of college. Their research further revealed that when family structure was controlled, black children's ambition was significantly and positively correlated with mother's education (even when the father was present), whereas, Alwin and Hauser (1975) found that father's
education was significant for whites

Howell and Frese (1979) found that parental expectations in terms of academic aspirations were higher among blacks than among whites. Occupation aspirations, however, were higher among females. Further, whites showed a slightly higher relationship between academic ability and performance than for blacks, but, blacks were more influenced by their measured ability and performances in school. The researchers also found that lower SES males (black and white) were more influenced by mother's educational attainment. Further, the study showed that although blacks had a higher level of educational aspirations, after ability, parent effect and background were controlled, "being white had a significant positive effect on level of (attainment) aspirations" (Howell and Frese, 1979: 55). Howell and Frese (1979) also found that males aspired at a lower level than females relative to occupational pursuits, with black females demonstrating higher aspirations than white females in occupational pursuits, but lower aspiration levels in educational pursuits. Howell and Frese (1979), however, advised caution in interpreting these results.

Although riddled with contradictions, the literature does suggest that family life, socio-economic status, self-concept and teacher expectations as well as other social, psychological and cultural factors influence how a
child views himself, society and his future. Further, the literature indicates that although, for the most part, blacks experience high levels of self-esteem and exhibit high educational and occupational aspirations, actual achievement of these goals are not always in line with the levels of aspiration.

In light of the literature reviewed in the preceding pages, chapter 2 will present the theoretical orientation and conceptual framework of this study. Central features of the theoretical orientation will be the achievement motive, reference group and internal colonialism theories as they relate to the research hypotheses.
THEORETICAL ORIENTATION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In David McClellan's et. al. (1953) _The Achievement Motive_, several aspects of achievement motivation are discussed, one of which states that the achievement motive develops from growing expectations. In essence, an individual may develop expectations relative to a particular object, goal or circumstance, but may be unable to achieve them. The negative effect that may result may cause that individual to evoke what are called avoidance motives, which entails discontinuing efforts to realize that particular goal. In order to develop the motivation to achieve, the circumstances must provide opportunities for goal attainment and/or environmental mastery. If the means to a goal are restricted over a protracted period of time, the individual may experience frustration and lose interest in goal attainment. Hence McClellan (1953) suggests that "since a fairly narrow range of circumstances will conspire to yield a high achievement approach motive, it would not be surprising to discover that individuals or groups of individuals in different cultures differ widely in the amount of achievement motivation they develop" (McClellan, 1953:64).

As some achievement motive research indicates, aspiration are directly related to the expectation of attainment. In other words, an individual will aspire to a specific goal if 1) he/she sense's that the goal is
attainable and 2) if that goal will produce an anticipated pleasure or some other type of reward. If the goal becomes consequently inaccessible or unattainable, probable results could be frustration, which, in turn, could lead to anger and other negative feelings McClellan, 1953).

Other achievement motivation theorists (Atkinson, 1974; Jung, 1978) contend that if one's achievement or attainment of his/her specific goal is blocked or fraught with obstacles, then instead of ceasing to struggle for the goal, the individual will either revise his goal or redouble or redirect his/her efforts relative to achieving said objective. A good example of this type of behavior, according to Jung (1978), is found in infants when attempting to master certain tasks such as feeding themselves.

Despite frequent frustration and failure, the young infant generally persevered to achieve new levels of mastery... Even if parents did not offer encouragement or approval, for many parents do not, the infant will nevertheless pursue attainment of competence in mastering the complexities of coping with his or her environment (Jung, 1978: 136).

Merton (1938) in "Social Structure and Anomie" is in agreement with both perspectives. He states that in instances when frustration results from continued "inaccessibility of effective institutional means" for achieving one's goals, that individual will either resort to innovative (positive) or illegitimate (negative) means to attain these goals. And, if these alternate means are
unsuccessful, the individual may opt to eliminate or
discredit the goal, thus diminishing the importance of the
inaccessible means to achieve the goal, hence, a mitigation
of frustration or conflict.

A component of reference group theory, relative
deprivation (previously discussed in the literature review)
suggests that an individual's self-appraisal is based on
others of similar status, but when an individual begins to
compare their situation or status with that of another
individual in a higher status then a series of compli-
cations will arise (Merton, 1949). For example, if blacks
are aware that they lag behind whites in proportion to
their numbers in education, occupational and income levels
(Kerckhoff and Campbell, 1977), black individuals may opt
to use whites as its reference group. However, if social
mobility is denied, greater frustration will result than if
he/she had used a black sub-group as the reference group
(Hyman, 1942). Some researchers have implied that by using
blacks as a reference group, aspirations, expectations and
achievement levels would be lower and so would the level of
frustration if idealized goals are not achieved.

Blauner's internal colonialism model (1969) suggests
that due to the fact that blacks have not had equal access
to the same opportunities as whites, blacks, due to per-
petual oppression (whether latent or overt) will opt not
to aspire to certain goals, which if realized will result in a great deal of satisfaction, if these goals are proven or perceived to be beyond the realm of attainment. This passivity according to Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) is thought to promote an inner peace by not engaging in the struggle for attainment at all (Kardiner and Ovesey, 1951).

The internal colonialism or internal oppression models have self-esteem as a central component. According to Rosenberg (1965):

We suggest that the structure of the self-image is largely revealed by the classification of individuals in terms of these universal dimensions. Thus, if we can learn what the individual sees when he looks at himself (his social statuses, roles, physical characteristics, skills, traits and other facets of content); he has a favorable or unfavorable opinion of himself (direction); how strongly he feels about his self-attitudes (intensity); how important the self is, relative to other objects (importance); whether he spends a great deal of time thinking of what he is like—whether he is constantly conscious of what he is saying or doing—or whether he is more involved in tasks or other objects (salience); whether the elements of his self-picture are consistent or contradictory (consistency); whether he has self-attitudes which varies or shifts from day to day or moment to moment or whether, on the contrary, he has a firm, stable, rock-like self-attitude (stability); and whether he has a firm, definite picture of what he is like or a vague, hazy, blurred picture (clarity)—if we can characterize the individual's self-picture in terms of each of these dimensions, then we would have a good, if still incomplete, description of the structure of the self-image. And the same would be true of any other object in the world (Rosenberg, 1965: 7-8).

Key antecedents in the development of self-esteem and
achievement motivation also include composition of the family of origin, for example whether the individual comes from a one or a two-parent household. Research has shown that children from one-parent households were more likely to have low self-esteem, but not significantly so (Rosenberg, 1965). However, as Clark (1983) indicated, high or low self esteem is more dependent on the quality of life within the family and the interest and encouragement of the parent(s) whether or not the individual child comes from a broken or intact home or a high or low SES. Other factors in this regard include whether the parent(s) is indifferent, interested, punitive or non-punitive, authoritarian or non-authoritarian, supportive or non-supportive.

According to Adorno's (1950) study on The Authoritarian Personality, child development is mostly influenced by the family which in turn, is influenced by exogeneous social and economic factors. Not only do parents rear children in a similar manner to others in their social, ethnic and religious groups, but their economic status will directly affect how parents behave toward their children. "This means that broad changes in social conditions and institutions will have a direct bearing upon the kinds of personalities that develop in society" (Adorno, 1950: 6).

Although Adorno's (1950) study was concentrated in
the area of social discrimination, several areas of his study, particularly as it related to how parental personalities influence how a child views the world, which, in turn influences a child's behavior, could validly be applied to this study on aspiration levels, self-esteem and achievement motivation. For instance, Adorno (1950) found that highly prejudiced individuals came from households where discipline was harsher, more threatening and arbitrary than households of individuals who were low on ethnic prejudice. Highly prejudiced individuals were further characterized as coming from "dominant-submissive" households, which require subservience to the parents' dictates and suppression of impulses unacceptable to the parents. These households are also described as rigid with the parents manifesting an externalized set of values.

Adorno (1950) notes that low prejudice individuals come from households characterized by low anxiety, more independence, creativity, affection and tolerance. However, these individuals are more likely to and are more comfortable with expressing a difference of opinion with their parents as well as following the dictates of their mind as opposed to their parents'. Additionally, whether the household has a dominant mother or a dominant father will not only have a direct affect on the child, but will affect male and female children differently.

Rosen and D'Andrade (1959) drew similar conclusions
in their study. They found that father's of high achievers stressed independence training and mother's of high achievers stressed achievement training. They also found that the dominating father may crush his son's spirit, hence destroy his achievement motive, while the dominating mother has a lesser effect. Rosen et. al. (1959) stated that a dominant mother may have lesser negative impact on a son's personality than a dominant father because mother-son relationships are generally more secure and sons can accept higher levels of rejection and domination from their mother as opposed to their father without adverse affects on their achievement motive. Nuttal (1964) found that among Northern urban blacks, children with fathers present in the home were found to be high achievers and those with absent fathers, moderate achievers. Lindzey and Aronson (1985) quoted Kornadt, et. al. (1980) in this regard: "It must remain unsettled whether the father has a positive model role which is lost when he is absent or a negative role when he is excessively dominant and/or if this function depends on the age of the sons."

As stated previously, Sewell et. al. (1957) found that aspiration levels and achievement motivation were contingent on the educational and occupational values specific to the social class in which a child is raised. On the other hand, although Rosen and D'Andrade (1959) found differences in social class status on achievement
motivation, the differences were not significant.

Kerckhoff and Campbell's (1977) study concurred with Rosen et. al.'s (1959) relative to two-parent households, but, among mother-headed black households in general and lower-class white households, SES was a major explanatory variable in determining aspiration levels and achievement motivation. Additionally, Kerckhoff and Campbell (1977) found that parents' education had a more significant effect on academic achievement motivation relative to graduate or professional training for high SES white males than on low SES white males. As parent's education increased, so did the child's academic aspiration levels among middle and upper-class males, but lower class boys indicated no such tendency.

Just as Clark (1983) found that levels of high and low self-esteem transcended class lines, he also found that academic achievement motivation transcended class lines as well, maintaining that it is not the social class status that has the significant effect on self-esteem, aspiration levels/achievement motivation, but the quality of family life within the home. However, other researchers (Duncan, 1967, Staples, 1982) contend that financial burden that characterizes lower SES households diminishes the quality of life within these homes, particularly if it is a single-parent household.

Other studies (Alexander, Cook and McDill, 1978;
in this area relate ability to subsequent achievement, suggesting that achievement motivation and achievement is significantly related to ability and ability is a direct result of SES. As SES increases so does ability and achievement motivation.

In light of the preceding, this research will be addressed to two different sets of research questions representing two levels of analysis: family factors and individual factors related to aspirations to achieve, self-esteem and levels of achievement.

1) To what extent are family and parental characteristics associated with the development of high or low self-esteem, hence, aspiration levels? It is well known that parents and/or their surrogates are one of the most important components of child socialization. A part of this research will be addressed to developing new insights in this area.

a) Based upon previous research on the authoritarian personality, it is expected that students from homes with domineering parents or in which the head of the family is domineering will have lower levels of
self-esteem than senior from homes characterized by a democratic environment. Further is is expected that this finding will hold whether or not the family is headed by two parents.

b) It is also expected that children from democratic environments will show more independence in thought and higher levels of aspiration than their authoritarian counterparts.

2) To what extent do males and females with high self-esteem differ in levels of aspiration to achieve educational and occupational goals when compared with their low self-esteem counterparts.

a) Black high school seniors whose parents have negative self-images, based upon race, will have lower levels of self esteem and subsequent levels of aspirations.

3) To what extent do seniors from high SES households differ in levels of aspiration to achieve educational and occupational goals when compared with seniors from low SES households.
a) High school seniors (black and white) from low SES households will have lower aspiration levels than their counterparts from high SES households, but not necessarily lower self-images.

Further, this research will also seek to determine what other social, psychological, cultural and/or environmental factors influence academic achievement motivation.
METHODOLOGY

This study developed out of a desire to examine the aspiration levels and potential or projected achievement patterns of black and white, male and female, high SES and low SES seniors in high school. Analytically, the study focuses on the extent to which self-esteem and other factors are significantly related to academic aspirations and achievement levels.

Description of Population and Sampling Procedure

The study "High School and Beyond" first conducted in 1980 and followed up in 1982, 1984 and 1986, "was chosen as the vehicle for secondary data analysis. The general objective of "High School and Beyond" (a part of the National Education Longitudinal Studies program) is to study, over the long-term, the educational, occupational and personal growth of students and personal, social, environmental and cultural factors that may affect their growth and development.

The study used a highly-stratified national probability sample of more than 1,122 high schools (1,015 actually participated), where 36 seniors and 36 sophomores were selected. Schools were selected with probabilities proportionate to their estimated enrollment in the 10th and 12th grade. Further, the sampling rate was designed in order to select within each stratum the number of high schools required to meet study design criteria relative to the minimum sample size for certain schools. Consequently,
some schools had a very high probability for inclusion and some did not. More than 30,000 sophomores and 28,000 seniors were sampled from both private and public high schools and the study was divided into two segments--sophomore cohort and senior cohort; cohort defined as a specific group that is studied over a period of time. This study will utilize the senior cohort segment of the study as that population is the target group of the research, as indicated previously. The 1980 base study used a two-stage, highly-stratified sample design: schools were the first stage and students were the second.

The base year sampling of schools included: regular public (735); alternative public (45); Cuban public (11); other Hispanic public schools (102); regular Catholic (45); black Catholic (30); Cuban Catholic (9); high performance private (11); and other non-Catholic private (27).

Every student and school was given a weight equivalent to the number of students/schools in the universe they represented, which have demonstrated estimates reasonably close to those from alternative data sources.

Senior cohort samples selected in 1980 had a known non-zero chance to be selected for the subsequent follow-up studies. The follow-up sample consisted of 11,995 individuals from the 1980 probability sample including, but not limited to, the following:
Hispanic high achievement 659
Hispanic other 1,841
Asian 554
American Indian 208
Black high achievement 554
Black other 2,446
White low SES/high achievement 516
White other 4,116
Missing 400

Data Collection Instruments

In the "High School and Beyond" study, data was obtained from six primary components: school administrators, students, parents of students, teachers, high school records and post-secondary school records.

The primary focus of the parents' questionnaire was to ascertain whether they were able to finance post-secondary education for their child. Students were asked to fill out a questionnaire, student identification booklets as well as take a timed achievement test. Teachers were asked to fill out a questionnaire relative to students' behavior and characteristics. And, school administrators were asked to fill out a questionnaire requesting data on school characteristics, enrollment, proportions of students and faculty belonging to "policy-relevant" groups, per-
student expenditures, participation in federal programs, course offerings, etc. First, second and third follow-up were conducted in 1982, 1984 and 1986, respectively.

The student questionnaire consisted mainly of the students' experiences and behavior in the high school setting; educational and occupational aspirations (the focus of this writer's study); personal/family/environmental background; and personal beliefs and attitudes. The first follow-up questionnaire requested information on amount and type of post-secondary education completed; academic expectations and aspirations; education financing; other post-secondary training; participation in the labor force; occupational aspirations; military participation; financial status (dependent or independent); marital status; household composition; race; ethnicity and sex. The second follow-up contained basically the same questions as the first follow-up but the respondents were asked to update previous information. New questions related to computer literacy. The third follow-up also asked the respondents to update information on education, work experience, etc., with additional questions on participation in graduate programs and alcohol consumption. This survey used an "event history format" to record responses for work, marital, academic and unemployment histories.
Definitions and Operationalization of Variables

Key variables in this study include such demographic variables as race and gender; socioeconomic background variables such as father's occupation, father's and mother's education, family income, parental influence/encouragement; attitudinal variables such as self-concept and locus of control; and educational and occupational aspirations.

Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male.... Female....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>(Origin or descent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is your race?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SES/Background Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father's education</td>
<td>What was the highest level of education your father completed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's education</td>
<td>What was the highest level of education your mother completed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's occupation</td>
<td>Please describe the job most recently held by your father even if he is not working presently?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which of the categories below comes closest to describing that job?

**Variable:** Mother's occupation

**Measurement:** Please describe below the job most recently held by your mother even if she is not working at present.

Which of the categories below comes closest to describing that job?

**Variable:** Family/household income

**Measurement:** (How much do parents make annually.)

American families are divided below into three equal groups according to how much money the family makes a year. Mark the group which comes closest to the amount of money your family makes in a year.

This time families are divided into seven groups according to how much money they make in a year. Mark the group that comes closest to the amount of money your family makes in a year.

**Variable:** Parental influence/encouragement

**Measurement:** Are the following statements about your parents true or false.

  My mother keeps close track of how well I am doing in school.

  My father keeps close track of how well I am doing in school
My parents almost always know where I am and what I am doing.

How much has mother/father influenced your plans for after high school?

What does your mother/father think you ought to do after high school?

How far in school do you think your mother wants you to go?

**Attitudinal Variables**

**Variable:**

Self-esteem/locus of control

**Measurement:**

(How student views self; self-concept/how much control does one have over his/her life)

Whatever your plans do you think you have the ability to complete college?

How do you feel about each of the following statements?

I take a positive attitude toward myself.

I feel I am a person of worth on an equal plane with others.

I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Good luck is more important than hard work for success.

Every time I try to get ahead something or somebody stops me.

Planning only makes a person unhappy, since plans hardly ever work out anyway.
People who accept their condition in life are happier than those who try to change things.

On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

What happens to me is my own doing.

At times I think I am no good at all.

When I make plans, I am almost certain I can make them work.

I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

During the past month, have you felt so sad or had so many problems that you wondered if anything was worthwhile?

**Aspirational Variables**

**Variable:** Educational aspirations

**Measurement:**

(How far does individual want to go in school.)

As things stand now, how far do you think you will get?

What is the lowest level of education you will be satisfied with?

If you went to college, would it most likely be:

A four-year college/university

A two-year junior college

Do you plan to go to college at sometime in the future?
Have you applied to any college or university.

Indicate the field that comes closest to what you would most like to study in college.

Do you plan to go to any vocational or trade school after leaving high school?

What is the one thing that most likely will take the largest share of your time in the year after you leave high school?

- Working full time
- Entering an apprenticeship or on the job training program
- Going into the military
- Being a full-time homemaker
- Taking vocational or technical courses at a trade or business school full-time or part-time
- Taking academic courses at a junior or community college
- Attending a four-year college or university
- Working part-time, but not attending school or college
- Other

Variable: Occupational aspirations

Measurement: (What line of work individual plans to or wants to go into after finishing school.)
Write in the name of the job or occupation you expect or plan to have when you are 30 years old.

Clerical
Craftsman
Farmer, Farm manager
Homemaker or Housewife only
Laborer
Manager, Administrator
Military
Operative
Professional (i.e., accountant, engineer, politician, social worker)
Professional (i.e., dentist, lawyer, scientist professor)
Proprietor
Protective Service
Sales
School Teacher
Service
Technical
Not working

Gender, race and class are the independent variables; parental encouragement/influence is an intervening variable along with self-esteem and the dependent variables are educational and occupational.
Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study.

H₀₁ There are significant differences in academic aspiration levels among male and female students.

Hₐ₁ There are no significant differences in academic aspiration levels among male and female students.

H₀₂ There are significant differences in academic aspiration levels among black and white students.

Hₐ₂ There are no significant differences in academic aspiration levels among black and white students.

H₀₃ There are significant differences in academic aspiration levels among high SES and low SES students.

Hₐ₃ There are no significant differences in academic aspiration levels among high SES and low SES students.

Self concept will be used as an intervening variable to determine if self-esteem alone or along with other factors such as environmental, cultural, parental (personality characteristics, education, support, etc.) impact on aspiration levels.
Plans for Data Analysis

The analytical focus of this study will be divided into three areas: how background factors affect personality variables, which, subsequently, affect aspiration levels and subsequent achievement; how attitudinal factors affect personality variables, which, subsequently, affect levels of aspirations and achievement; and the relative effects of background and attitudinal factors on personality, aspirations and achievement.

Utilizing tables generated in from the study of "High School and Beyond" by the National Opinion Research Center, the stated variables will be pulled out and their relationship to academic achievement motivation analyzed.

Limitations of Research Design

Secondary data analysis is not always the most ideal way to go when trying to test one's hypothesis. According to Goode and Katt (1952), however, "secondary analysis is not only common, but necessary...even if it produces no more than plausible statements to serve as hypotheses to serve for subsequent verification in more stringent terms."

Further, Babbie (1975) states that secondary data analysis has become increasingly popular because it is both a time-saving and money-saving method. However, Babbie also states a major problem inherent in this particular approach is the attempt to achieve internal and external validity. The manner in which the original research was conducted may
not meet the requirements of the researcher doing secondary data analysis. In other words, as the study—"High School and Beyond"—being utilized for secondary data analysis was conducted for a broader purpose than this particular study, there is a possibility that the data collected may not precisely be in line with this study's objectives or projected findings.
FINDINGS

As stated previously, the purpose of this research is to determine race, gender and class differences in academic achievement motivation, utilizing self-esteem as the major intervening variable. (Table 1 shows the percentage of high school seniors by levels of post-secondary educational progress.) Additionally, this research also seeks to determine what other demographic and/or attitudinal factors or variables affect these differences.

Gender Differences

Hypothesis one stated that there are significant differences in academic achievement motivation among male and female high school seniors. The statistics generated from the study titled "High School and Beyond" that is being used for secondary data analysis revealed that 73 percent of the males and 75 percent of the females surveyed from the 1980 baseline study were enrolled in post-secondary education by 1986—the year of the third follow-up. Fifty percent of the total were enrolled in four-year institutions and approximately 35 percent male and 40 percent female were enrolled in other types of educational institutions.

Among the 1980 seniors who entered post-secondary education by the year 1984, 45 percent of the males and 46 percent of the females left school without receiving any type of degree.

Secondly, of the seniors who entered four-year
TABLE 1
PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS WITH DIFFERENT LEVELS
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
BY GENDER, RACE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NO H.S. DIPLOMA</th>
<th>H.S. DIPLOMA ONLY</th>
<th>SOME P-S EDUC.</th>
<th>VOC. CERT.</th>
<th>A.A. DEGREE</th>
<th>BA/BS DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>29.12</td>
<td>70.15</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>17.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>30.95</td>
<td>68.16</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>17.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>27.42</td>
<td>72.00</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>18.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>32.43</td>
<td>66.55</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>9.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>28.53</td>
<td>70.76</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>19.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>45.21</td>
<td>53.84</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>6.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med.-Low</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>35.54</td>
<td>64.19</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>10.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med.-High</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>22.85</td>
<td>77.03</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>19.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>90.85</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td>36.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: "High School and Beyond" A Descriptive Summary of 1980 High School Seniors Six Years Later, National Center For Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education
institutions by 1982 and left school without receiving a
four-year degree, 59 percent were women and 54 percent were
men. Finally, of the high school seniors who entered
post-secondary education by the year 1982, 30 percent of
the men and 29 percent of the women had earned a four-year
degree by the early 1986 follow-up.

Self-concept was measured in three of the four years
of the study, 1980, 1982 and 1986. During these years mean
self-concept scores for males were .06, .04 and .03,
respectively and mean self-concept scores for females were
-.06, -.04 and -.03. As evident, males scored higher in
this category than females in all three years. However,
significance levels could not be determined as the value of
t used to calculate the Students t was not given in the
study. (See table 2 for self-concept scores by sex and
race.)

In the "High School and Beyond" study, questions
relative to locus of control were scored so that a high
score meant that a student believed that he/she had a great
deal of influence over events that occurred in their lives
and a low score meant that the student believed that
external forces or individuals had more control over the
individual's fate. In the years 1980, 1982 and 1986,
females scored higher than males: -.06, -.04 and -.03 for
males and .05, .04, and .03, for females, respectively.
(See table 3 for locus of control scores by race and sex.)
### TABLE 2

**MEAN SELF-CONCEPT SCORES BY RACE AND SEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1986</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEX</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RACE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3

**MEAN LOCUS OF CONTROL SCORES BY RACE AND SEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1986</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEX</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RACE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparisons listed were based on Students t statistics in which the significance levels were calculated by the Student t values for the differences between the means and comparing them to published tables of significance levels for two-tailed hypothesis testing. The actual value of t was not available in this researcher's source material.
Except in the areas of self-concept and locus of control, there were very slight differences among male and female students relative to academic aspirations and attainment levels.

Race Differences

The second hypothesis stated that there are significant differences in academic achievement motivation among black and white students. In this regard, the statistics showed that in 1986, 71 percent of the white (4,300) and 67 percent of the black (2,100) students from the 1980 study of "High School and Beyond" had enrolled in post-secondary education. Of this total (6,400), 30 percent of the white and 30 percent of the black students had enrolled in other institutions (junior colleges or vocational schools) while 49 percent of the white and 40 percent of the black students had enrolled in four-year institutions. Of the students who entered post-secondary education by 1984, 60 percent of the black and 43 percent of the white had left school without receiving a degree.

Among the students who entered four-year institutions by 1982 and left school without degrees, 71 percent were black and 55 percent were white. Further, 18 percent of the black students and 33 percent of the white students who entered college by 1982 had earned bachelor's degrees by 1986. Overall, of the total 1980 black and white seniors
(6,400): 1 percent of the black and 1 percent of the white students had no high school diploma; 32 percent of the blacks and 29 percent of the whites had only a high school diploma; 67 percent of the black students and 71 percent of the white students had some post-secondary education; 6 percent of the blacks and 5 percent of the whites had a vocational certificate; 4 percent of the black students and 7 percent of the white students had an associate’s degree and 10 percent of the blacks and 20 percent of the whites had earned a bachelor’s degree by February of 1986.

The self-concept questions were scored to reflect the students’ view of his/her self-worth—low scores meant a low assessment of self-worth and high scores reflected a high assessment of self-worth. In this regard, in 1880, 1882 and 1986, black students scored .12, .02 and .07 and white students scored -.01, .00, and -.01, respectively. As evident, in all three years blacks consistently scored higher than whites. In comparison, locus of control scores showed that white students were more likely than black students to believe that they controlled their fates. In 1880, 1882 and 1986 black students’ scores were -.28, -.32 and -.28, while white students’ scores were .05, .06 and .06, respectively. (See tables 4 for mean self-concept scores by race and table 5 for mean locus of control scores by race.)
TABLE 4
MEAN SELF-CONCEPT SCORES BY RACE

Mean Score

1980  1982  1986

Whites  Ntv Amer

TABLE 5
MEAN LOCUS OF CONTROL SCORES BY RACE

Mean Score

1980  1982  1986

Hispanic  Ntv Amer  Asian  Black  White

Class Differences

The third hypothesis stated that there are significant differences in academic aspiration levels among high SES and low SES students. In the study of "High School and Beyond," SES was defined by four categories: low SES, medium-low SES, medium-high SES and high SES. Of those high school seniors from the 1980 study, 91 percent of the students defined as high SES; 77 percent of the students categorized as medium-high SES; 64 percent of the students classified as medium-low and 54 percent of the students defined as low SES were enrolled in post-secondary education. Of the high SES students, 74 percent were in four-year institutions and 33 percent were in other institutions; 50 percent medium-high SES students were in four-year institutions and 41 percent were in other institutions; 34 percent medium-low SES students attended four-year institutions and 39 percent attended other post-secondary institutions and 25 percent low SES students attended four-year institutions and 36 percent attended other institutions. Of those students who entered post-secondary education by 1984, 33 percent of the high SES students, 45 percent of the medium-high SES students, 50 percent of the medium-low SES students and 60 percent low SES had left school without earning a degree. And, of those students who entered four-year institutions and
left school without a degree, 41 percent were high SES, 58 percent were medium-high, 68 percent were medium-low and 86 percent were low SES. Of those students who entered four-year institutions by 1982, 43 percent high SES, 30 percent medium-high SES, 20 percent medium-low SES and 15 percent low SES students had earned degrees by 1986.

NOTE: No tables were generated by SES for self-concept and locus of control.

Summary of Findings

In the "High School and Beyond" study, significant and insignificant differences were found relative to gender, race and class in academic achievement motivation. Differences in total males and females were slight except for self-concept, whereby men scored relatively higher than women and in locus of control, whereby the opposite was found—women scored higher than men. (As stated, the value of t for the Students t calculated was not given, therefore, the significance level was not stated.)

Not surprisingly, the greatest differences were found in the race comparisons and SES comparisons. Although the rate for whites enrolled in post-secondary education was only slightly higher for whites than for blacks, the rate of black students leaving both post-secondary four-year and other institutions without any type of degree were notably higher than for white students: 60 percent blacks
and 43 percent whites in other institutions and 71 percent blacks as compared to 55 percent whites in four-year institutions. The rate of whites to blacks who earned bachelor's degrees was 2 to 1 or 20 percent of the white students to 10 percent of the black students.

Relative to self-concept, as indicated, blacks scored higher in this area than white students while the opposite was true of locus of control, where black students believed that external forces had more control over their destinies. By contrast, white students were significantly more likely to report individual or personal control over future outcomes for them.

Statistics for socio-economic status were generated for educational attainment only. Students from high SES categories scored much higher across the board in post-secondary educational participation than low SES students. High SES students were more likely to be enrolled in some form of post-secondary education; were more likely to be enrolled in four-year institutions; were three times more likely to have earned a bachelor's degree and less likely to have left school without a degree than their medium-low and low SES counterparts. The exact opposite was true for medium-low and low SES students. They were least likely to be enrolled in post-secondary institutions and twice as likely to have left school without a degree.
The statistics generated from the "High School and Beyond" study were basically in line with other studies conducted in this area. Due to a variety of factors (including the fact that high SES students are more likely to come from two-parent households and less likely to have to worry about finances), high SES students fared better in academic achievement or attainment than low SES students and whites fared better than blacks. The intervening variable, self-esteem, didn't seem to be a factor in achievement. Aspirations however, were related to high self-concept scores. The study found that those with high post-secondary aspirations had high self-concept scores. Those students who had no plans for post-secondary education had lower self-concept scores than those who had planned to further their education. However, 80 percent of the students surveyed had planned to further their education and 70 percent actually did in some form; inclusive in that figure is 67 percent of the black students.

As this study found that blacks had a higher self-concept than whites, but had similar educational aspirations and lower educational attainment, high or low self-concept is not shown to be significant in aspirations or attainment. As stated, blacks did score lower on locus of control—believing that external forces had more control over their fates—a factor that could be related to lower
levels of educational attainment for blacks.

Although the SES categories were not broken down separately into high to low SES among black students and white students, one can assume that a higher percentage of black students were in the medium-low and low SES categories. This assumption is an extrapolation from national statistics which show that blacks, in 1986, were disproportionately represented in low SES categories and had lower levels of educational attainment than whites.

As stated, the most consistent differences were found in the race and class categories—which concur with the findings of several researchers cited in the literature review (Kerckhoff and Campbell, 1977; Staples, 1982, Hout and Morgan, 1975, Porter, 1974). Black and lower-SES students had higher levels of academic aspirations, but lower levels of educational attainment. In this regard, self-esteem was not a factor in low educational attainment as blacks tested higher in self-esteem than did whites, but still achieved lower levels of education.

Although Eshleman (1988) stated that blacks live in a world that encourages feelings of low self-esteem and inferiority, Soares and Soares (1969) found that culturally disadvantaged children and Simmons (1978) found that black children in particular had a higher self-esteem than white children.
One explanation as to the reason blacks experienced lower levels of educational attainment, as stated, could be that in line with national statistics, blacks are disproportionately concentrated in the medium-low and low SES categories, in which case the lack of financial resources in whole or in part would be a major factor in restricting educational attainment. Supporting this contention was Duncan (1967) and Staples (1982) who found that the financial burden that characterizes lower SES households diminishes the quality of life within the home. Also, other researchers (Kerckhoff, 1970) suggest that achievement is directly related to ability and ability is a result of SES—as SES increases so does ability and achievement.

Another historical reason is discrimination. As Rosenthal and Jacobs (1968) and Williams (1975, 1976) found, teachers have pre-conceived expectations of students based on their ascribed characteristics (race, gender) and usually encourage or withhold encouragement accordingly. In this regard, Clark (1965); Kerckhoff and Campbell (1977) and Staples (1982) found that black students and, in particular, young black men did not generally receive the positive encouragement that their white counterparts did.

Although the statistics generated from the "High School and Beyond" study did not distinguish between black males and females and white males and females, the studies
of Porter (1974), Staples (1982), Hout and Morgan (1975) and Kerckhoff and Campbell (1977) found that blacks, and black males specifically, attained lower levels of education than white males and black and white females. According to Porter (1974), blacks also trailed whites significantly in prestigious occupations and income even when parents SES, education and occupation were held constant. Additionally, Howell and Frese (1979), controlling for ability, parental influence and SES, found that "being white" had a significant and positive effect on educational aspirations and attainment, as this research has found utilizing statistics and other data from the "High School and Beyond" study.

The fact that blacks across the board in this study had higher self-concept scores, but conversely, seemed to think that they lacked control of their destinies (low locus of control scores) could help to account for their high aspiration levels, but lower educational attainment. This outcome may be particularly likely if the individual found himself in discriminatory or financial or other circumstances that he/she felt were insurmountable. According to Kardiner and Ovesy (1951) and Merton (1938), rather than the individual continuing to struggle to maintain his current level of education, the individual may cease the struggle altogether, thus achieving an inner peace of sorts.
CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Although this study of academic achievement motivation found that there were no appreciable differences relative to gender, race nor class in educational aspiration levels, it did find that there were differences in educational progress or attainment—most notable among black and white students and high and low SES students. However, this study resulted in neither new nor significant findings that haven't been researched and tested repeatedly.

As this study had to rely on secondary data, the researcher was unable to generate new statistics from the study—specifically as it related to gender and class differences among African-Americans. Neither does the study provide any conclusions as to the reasons why black and lower SES students experienced lower levels of educational attainment, particularly as not all blacks were in the lower SES categories. The study did find that self-esteem was not a significant factor in academic achievement motivation.

The study also raised certain questions relative to its findings that there were not significant race, gender or class differences in academic achievement motivation, but were, in fact, significant race and class differences in educational achievement or attainment.

1) Are there significant intra-race differences—in other words, were there significant differences between black male and female students—in educational attainment and occupational attainment?
2) Are there significant differences in educational attainment among blacks who attended four-year historically black universities and pre-dominantly white colleges? ...gender?...class?

3) How does the fact that blacks tested higher in locus of control affect educational attainment?

4) What effect do significant others such as peer group impact on educational attainment?

As evident, the above-stated research questions all address academic attainment rather than academic achievement motivation or aspirations. As the "High School and Beyond" study indicated, aspirations levels for blacks and whites, males and females, higher and lower SES students were about equal, therefore, attainment levels should be the focal point of further studies as the differences found here are significant.

Education is undisputably the stepping stone to not only upward mobility but social change and advancement of equality in the black community. The fact that blacks continue to attain high levels of education at a much lower rate than whites, is and will continue to be a cause of concern for the black community. For how can the black community achieve parity in this country's financial, political, social and other arenas if there is not parity in educational attainment. Racism, lack of financial resources, lack of encouragement and other factors continue to be major obstacles. Not only is further study needed in
this area, but, steps need to be taken to alleviate the negative factors that restrict high educational attainment for black and low SES students. Not only does the black community need all of its citizens to be productive and progressive, but the community-at-large as well needs their productivity.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, T. W. et. al., The Authoritarian Personality, (New York, Norton & Company, Inc.: 1950)


Billingsley, Andrew, Black Families in White America (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968)


Blauner, Robert, "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt," Social Problems 16 (Spring 1969) 393–408


Clark, Reginald, Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed or Fail (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983)


Harris, Anthony and Stokes, Randall, "Race, Self Evaluation and the Protestant Ethic," Social Problems 216 (October 1978) 71-85


Kerckhoff, Alan, "Race and Social Status Differences in the Explanation of Educational Ambition" Social Forces 55 (March 1977) 701-714


McClelland, David et. al., The Achievement Motive (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc., 1953)

Merton, Robert K., "Social Structure and Anomie," American Sociological Review 3 (October 1938) 672-682


Porter, James, "Race, Socialization and Mobility in Educational and Early Occupational Attainment" American Sociological Review 39 (June 1974) 303-316


Schuman, H., Steeh, C., and Bobo, L., Racial Attitudes in America (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985)


Williams, Trevor, "Educational Ambition: Teacher and Students," *Sociology of Education* 48 (Fall 1975) 432-456

Williams, Trevor, "Teacher Prophecies and the Inheritance of Inequality" *Sociology of Education* 49 (July 1976) 223-236

Willie, Charles V., "The Inclining Significance of Race," *Society* 25 (July/August 1978)