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Selected academic motivators of selected black high school males

Williams, James Arthur, Sr., Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1991

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SELECTED ACADEMIC MOTIVATORS OF SELECTED BLACK HIGH SCHOOL MALES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1991

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Walter G. Hack
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College of Education
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1991
To My Mother
and
Margaret Beatrice Butcher - A Principal
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One does not live to be fifty years old without many people touching their life. This acknowledgement is to just a few of the many who have made a difference in my life. I express sincere appreciation to Dr. Walter Hack for his guidance and support through many years. Thanks to other members of my advisory committee, Drs. William Moore, William W. Wayson, and Virgil Blanke for their encouragement and comments. A special thanks to members of my generals committee, Drs. Luverne Cunningham, Leonard Hawes, and Lonnie Wagstaff. Thanks Lonnie H. Wagstaff, you have been a major influence in my life. Bertha Padgett, thank you. To Dr. Martina Matthews, at last. To my children, Algenia, James, and Byron, thank you for understanding. Thank you former teachers, Mrs. Miles, Mrs. Beckley, Mr. Burke, Mr. Campbell, and Dr. Brown. They taught me to strive for excellence. Dr. Evelyn Young, your assistance was invaluable. Ella, your nephew made it. Grandma, I miss you—this is to the glory of God. To my Englewood High School family, I love you. Betty and Juliette, you taught me more than you will ever know. Finally, I thank the Administration of the Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Florida for providing me an opportunity to continue learning. Finally, thanks Jewellyn DeSello.
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Studies in Organizational Communications
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

"The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people" (Gardner, 1983, p.5). This statement is directed, in general, toward primary and secondary education in the United States. It does not reflect that scores on national standardized tests are improving for blacks at a rate faster than that of whites. Notwithstanding, the performance gap that remains between the scores of black and white students threatens the social and economic future of America (Gibbs, 1988), generally, and black Americans, specifically. In addition, the performance gap may, if one chooses, provide justification for a belief in the cognitive inferiority of blacks. It also may influence feelings of self-doubt in some blacks.

1 The term "academic performance gap" is primarily used in this study to refer to the racial differences in scores on standardized test, e.g., Florida State Student Assessment Test, Stanford Achievement Test, Scholastic Aptitude, and the American College Test. It is not the purpose of this study to question whether the tests are biased or not, as important as that might be.
If the social and economic prospects of black Americans are to improve, then, "the development of the mind holds the greatest promise for the advancement of black people. If the mind is educationally undernourished, the person is underdeveloped" (Alexander & Royster, 1984, p.5). If the person is underdeveloped, then s/he may be unable to contribute to society. American society has evolved into a highly specialized technological society "in which positions...[are] awarded on demonstrated competency and merit....[A] highly qualified meritocracy" (Gibbs, 1988, p. 27). Given a highly technological society, Gibbs (1988) says that the young black male will either contribute to the economy and revitalization of the cities or its decay and chaos.

If development of the mind is important to the individual and the society, and the student's behavior is related to the development of the mind, then studying what seems related to what students do academically might be fruitful. In other words, the student's motivators may be related to their academic behavior (McClelland, 1987). Understanding, identifying, and describing what the academic motivators are from the student's perspective might enable educators to design settings to increase student academic motivators. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is the qualitative identification and description of selected academic motivators within the school environment that seem
related to the academic behavior of ten black male high school students.

**Black Student Academic Performance**

From a black historical perspective, "rising tide of mediocrity" is not an appropriate metaphor. According to the Bureau of the Census (1979), in 1890, for example, only 33% of the total 5 to 20 years old black population attended school, whereas, 58% of the white population attended. By 1975, the percentages for persons 5 to 19 were 76 and 75 (p. 89), respectively. The illiteracy rate of blacks 14 years old and over, in 1890, was 61% and whites 8%. By 1969, the black rate was 4% and the white rate was 1% (p. 91).

The academic performance of black secondary high school students has improved considerably during the past ten years (Rothman, 1988). Data from The National Assessment of Educational Progress show improved science and mathematics scores. Between 1976 and 1987, black students Scholastic Aptitude Verbal Test scores increased by 21% and their math scores increased by 20% (College Entrance Examination Board, 1987). During this comparable time, white scores either decreased by 1% (verbal) or remained the same (mathematics). An additional example of black student standardized test score improvement is at a senior high school in Jacksonville, Florida. At Jean Ribault Senior High School with a 99.9% black enrollment, between the school years 1982-83 and 1986-
The American College Test student composite score improved from 12.2 to 15.7. Although the rank of the school's composite score improved from 4%ile to 7%ile,\(^2\) it is still less than the average white composite percentile scores.

Despite the improvements in test scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, The Stanford Achievement Test, and the Florida State Student Assessment Test, blacks' standardized test scores remain behind both white and Asian American test scores. A study conducted by the California Post-secondary Education Commission found that, "only 5 percent of Hispanic high-school graduates and 4.5 percent of black graduates met the University of California's minimum requirement, compared with 33 percent of Asian and 16 percent of white graduates" (Education Week, 18 May 1988, p.2).

The state of Florida uses an extensive testing program from primary school through college. Smith, Miller, and Joy (1988) have found that the failure rate for blacks across all tests is disproportionate. For prospective minority teachers, the tests pose additional problems. "During 1984-85 only 452 (12.0%) of the 3,761 Black SAT test-takers and 409 (17.4%) ACT test-takers made the State University System (SUS) cutoffs" (p. 46).

Florida requires community college students to pass the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) prior to becoming

\(^2\) Letter from the American College Test Assessment Program to the principal, Jean Ribault Senior High School, Jacksonville, Florida.
a junior. To become teachers, students must have a Scholastic Aptitude Test score of 835 or an American College Test score of 17.

Of the 1,200 Black students who pass the CLAST [approximately 15,000-16,000 black high school graduates attend a community college], only 900 black students per year in the entire state are able to meet this standard. Most of those students plan to pursue careers outside education, thus, only 200 Black teachers a year will qualify for a provisional teaching certificate.

(Smith, Miller, & Joy, 1988, p. 52).

In 1987, the average white score on the verbal section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test was 447, Asian-Americans scored 405, while blacks scored 351. On the math section of the test, whites scored 489, Asian-Americans 521, and blacks 377. Also, 1987 results on Advanced Placement Tests show that there were 10,443 black students taking the tests with a mean grade of 2.34. There were 32,770 Oriental/Asian American students with a mean grade of 3.22, and 245,413 white students with a mean grade of 3.06 (College Entrance Examination Board, 1987a).

After controlling for parent education and family income, the difference in test scores remains. The lowest family income white student's composite scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test are higher than the highest family income black student (Ramist & Arbeiter, 1985, pp. 47 & 77). In 1983, the Citizen's Minority Relations Monitoring Committee of The Montgomery County, Maryland Board of Education and The Montgomery County Public Schools for 1982-83 stated that although reading and math scores had improved, education for blacks and Hispanics was still risky because, "black students
tested at the very bottom of the entire student population, in every subject area for every grade level" (Montgomery County Public Schools, 1983, p. 7).

**Statement of the Problem**

Although the academic performance of black students has improved, there is still a significant performance gap between blacks and whites, and blacks and Asian-Americans. The performance gap has negative consequences for most African-Americans (Loury, 1985). McClelland (1987) states that motives are one determinant of behavior. Houston (1986) suggests that motivation influences performance. The major purpose of this study is to identify and describe selected academic motivators that seem related to the academic behavior of ten black high school male students. Additionally, how do significant others motivate the student? Is that motivation related to the student's perception of control over the classroom environment? If so, how? Although the primary focus of the study is on academic motivators, if there appears to be a strong influence of work habits, ability, or skill on the ten students' academic behavior, it will be noted.

**Specific Problem**

The specific problem of this study is to identify and describe selected motivators within the school environment that seem related to the black male students' engagement in
successful academic behaviors. The motivators will be identified and described using student interviews triangulated with teacher comments, group reality checks, student records, and non-participant classroom observation of the respondents as the major protocol.

**Major Research Questions**

The major research questions are:

A. What are the academic motivators that seem related to the academic behavior of the ten black high school male students in this study?

B. How do ten black high school male students account for their academic behavior?

C. How do significant others motivate the student? Is that motivation related to the student's perception of control over the classroom environment?

D. How does the perception of probable success or failure act as a motivator?

**Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study is the inferential nature of the construct motivation. In other words, people generally infer motives from observable behavior. For example, a class of equal ability students is assigned ten of twenty-five algebra problems for homework. If one student does three, one might deduce that s/he is less motivated. On the other hand,
if another student does all twenty-five, fifteen above the requirement, one might deduce that s/he is more motivated. In this study, the students' expressed words about the reasons for their academic behavior will be triangulated with observations of their classroom behavior. Teacher comments, where appropriate, and school records will also be used.

Second, if one accepts the notion that the dominant motivational tendency expresses itself in action (Atkinson & Birch, 1978), then there are no longitudinal observations from which to establish a linear correlation with behavioral change and changes in motivation. If the strength of a tendency to act results from probabilities of success or failure, then motivation is "learned." If this is so, then at what point does the perception of success or failure become a motivator or demotivator?

Third, studying the unconscious component of the student's behavior to relate what the respondent says to subconscious motivational forces is beyond the parameters of this research.

Fourth, it is not the purpose of this study to establish or test a causal relationship between motivation and academic performance.

Fifth, nine of the ten students in this study are bussed to the school as a result of a desegregation order. What impact might bussing have on students' perception of control of the environment? Unfortunately, that question is not within
the purview of this study.

Sixth, this study is designed to look at the school environment through the eyes of the student. Although there is a triangulation of the data, the focus is still through the eyes of the student. There is the possibility that in the attempt to look at academic motivators through the eyes of the student, researcher bias colored the interpretation of the data. Researcher as variable is addressed in chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

**Selected Motivator** = that phenomena, as expressed by respondents or as determined from the triangulation of data, which either encourages or discourages the students from engaging in academic behaviors, i.e., reading, studying, discussing, listening, questioning, doing homework, or actively participating in classwork.

**Academic Performance** = the respondent's course grades including the completion of homework, classwork, and achievement scores on standardized tests.

**Significant others** = those persons perceived by the student or implied by the data as influencing the student's academic behavior.

Significance of the Study

There is an academic performance gap between the standardized test scores of black and white students. If those tests accurately measure academic skills, then the results
might forecast ceilings on job and career aspirations of a large number of African-Americans in what is predicted to be a highly specialized technological society. The findings of this study about the academic motivators of the ten black students in this study might be transferable. Additional findings about how significant others, perceptions of control of environment, the probability of success and failure relate to academic behavior may be transferable for the structuring of school environments, e.g., educator-student interaction, for optimum student academic motivation.

Summary

Although the scores of black high school students are improving at a higher rate than that of other ethnic groups, an average score difference of a hundred points or more on standardized tests still exist between black and white students. This gap seems to hold despite family educational or economic background. Yet, there appears to be a relationship between student attitudes, e.g., perceived control of environment and their motivation as expressed through academic effort, and academic performance. This study does not establish or test causality between academic motivation and academic performance. As we shall see in chapter II, the link is weak.

The purpose of the study is to identify and describe, from the respondents' point of view, selected motivators related to academic behavior in hope of understanding how the
students view their academic effort. The interviews will be triangulated with school records, classroom observations, and teacher comments. "Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (Blumer, 1969, p.2). The respondents bring with them multiple realities which interact with their settings, therefore, in order to understand these realities, a qualitative methodology is used.
'Encore! Encore!' Sixty thousand people stomping their feet, flooding the aisles...The man focuses the microphone before his powerful lungs. But there is no song. 'Here I am, Kathy. The pimple-faced boy who sat behind you in seventh grade....Here I am. Neil - who wasn't good enough to kiss you after class...the class frog....Well, your frog has turned into a prince, Kathy. Kathy wherever you are - they're eating out of my hands, Kathy...eat your heart out now, Kathy...eat your heart out...wherever you are....' (Farrell, 1987, p. 113)

Is that theory true which would have us believe that man is no more than a product of many conditional and environmental factors - be they of a biological, psychological or sociological nature....They [who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread] may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms--to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. (Frankl, 1959, pp. 74-75)

Introduction

What accounts for the gap in the high school academic performance between blacks and whites, or between blacks and Asian-Americans? There are many beliefs. Howard and Hammond
(1985) believe, "The performance gap is largely a behavioral problem. It is the result of a remedial tendency (of blacks) to avoid intellectual engagement and competition [emphasis added]. Avoidance is rooted in the fears and self-doubt engendered by a major legacy of American racism: the strong negative stereotypes about black intellectual capabilities" (p. 17).

On the other hand, it appears as if the academic success of Asian-American students is attributable to their intellectual engagement, i.e., effort. Fox Butterfield (1987) after reviewing research on Asian-Americans states, "they [the researchers] find that Asian-American parents are able to instill in their children a much greater motivation to work hard ... Asian-Americans spent an average of 12 hours a week doing homework" (p. 88-89).

Allison Davis (1944) suggests that the individual's reality differs according to their social class. "The example of his own kin, however, is the crucial determinant of his behavior" (p. 210). It is Davis's thesis that the values of lower-class culture are antithetical to school success. Ginsburg and Hanson (1985) established a correlation between greater academic success and traditional values, i.e., work ethic and good grades, held by the student, her/his parents, and friends. Loury (1985) states, "As the gap in academic achievement between black and white youngsters persists at intolerably high levels, very little can be heard from black
leadership (with a few noteworthy exceptions) regarding the extent to which this performance gap is the result of the behavior and values of black children and their parents" (p. 16).

Mimi Warshaw (1985) doesn't believe that it is all the students' fault. She likens school to a board game:

So the game goes on. Run by nobody, it deals a stacked deck of losing cards, requires the player to move around the board in half the time, and uses only dice which are loaded three grade levels too high for all of us non-participants, but it's the losing players who take the blame. 'Bad luck,' we say to them, or you're not a very good player.' But luck and skill have nothing to do with a rigged game (p.265).

Wayson, Mitchell, Pinnell, and Landis (1988) state, "In too many schools, tracking, special education placements, grading policies, and promotion and retention policies all are used to justify the belief that some children cannot learn" (p. 113).

Perhaps, it is as Carter G. Woodson said in 1933, "[T]he Negro has never been educated...to develop in him the power to do for himself what his oppressors will never do to elevate him to the level of others" (p. 14). Further:

We have very few teachers because most of those with whom we are afflicted know nothing about the children whom they teach or about their parents who influence the pupils more than the teachers themselves. When a boy comes to school without knowing his lesson he
should be studied instead of being punished. The boy who does well in the beginning of the year and lags behind near the end of the term should not always be censured or ridiculed. As a rule, such children are not responsible for their failures. Their parents and their social status account mainly for these shortcomings. The Negro teacher, then, must treat the disease rather than its symptoms (p. 145).

Carter G. Woodson's assertions are similar to those expressed forty-six years later by Ronald Edmonds (1979). Edmonds (1979) states, "We can whenever, and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us....Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far" (p. 32). Arthur Jensen (1969) believes that most students, including blacks, can learn basic scholastic skills (p. 117). The question is, "Are we only concerned with basic scholastic skills?"

Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York (1966) concluded that three variables relate to the academic achievement of blacks: a sense of control over environment, good teachers, and attitudes of the student's peers (pp. 23, 289, 302).

The special importance of a sense of control over the environment for achievement of minority-group children and perhaps for disadvantaged whites as well suggests a different set of predispositional factors operating to create low or high achievement for children from disadvantaged groups than for children from advantaged groups (p. 320).
Some students attribute their poor performance to themselves: usually, citing poor study habits. Loftus (1983) in an investigation among 186 second, fourth, and sixth grade students found that in the late elementary grades, students attribute failure to lack of effort. The researcher discussed with students at Jean Ribault High School why they didn't do homework or attain better grades. Students, when asked why they didn't do their homework, often said that they didn't know. They usually blamed themselves for their poor academic performance. Their comments were similar to those of one respondent in Fordham's (1986) study, "I don't excel in all my classes like I should be—that's another reason...I couldn't blame it on the environment. I have come to blame it on myself — for partaking in the environment" (p. 188). Thus, there seems to be a tendency for the underachieving blacks, in the studies cited, to blame themselves for their academic behaviors.

Academic Performance

Houston (1986) states that performance = learning x motivation. "Performance cannot always be taken as a measure of how much learning has occurred....When we try to infer how much learning has occurred by looking at performance, we must be aware of the fact that motivation as well as learning determines performance" (p. 5). Motivation and cognitive activity usually go hand-in-hand. "Motivation for learning
will be empty if substantive cognitive abilities are not developed, and the cognitive abilities will remain unused if the disposition to thinking is not developed" (Resnick, 1987, p. 50).

The purpose of this research is to focus on the motivation aspect of the performance component. This will be done by identifying and describing selected academic motivators as determined through a qualitative study of ten black male high school students.

Significant Other and Control of the Environment

What influence might a "significant other," i.e., relative, educator or peer, have on a student's academic motivation and subsequent perceptions of control over the environment? A significant other may influence a student by encouraging, challenging, and providing the necessary support to help the student gain confidence and determination to persist when doubting self or experiencing a negative environment (Sullivan, 1940, p. 39-40):

Come to the edge.
No, we will fall.
Come to the edge.
No, we will fall.
They came to the edge.
He pushed them, and they flew.
Guillaume Apollinaire
(Siegel, 1986, p.204)

[S]ome not-easily-forgotten teacher you had somewhere along the way in school?
The one who demanded you do your best.
The one who got more out of you than anyone else (Bennett, 1988, p. 10A).
Saltiel (1986), in a study of 152 high school students in a small rural western town, found that, "The influence of most significant others is specific to either educational or occupational ambitions suggesting that these are fairly distinct realms for adolescents" (p. 615). Shade (1983) found that among black youth, the mother was the most significant other with extended family members, e.g., aunts, uncles, and grandparents, a close second. Blyth, Hill, and Thiel (1982) found that, among 2800 seventh through tenth grade students in a suburban midwestern public school district, parents were significant, but same sex-nonrelated young persons ranked third behind siblings.

Greenberg, Siegel, and Leitch (1983), in a study involving 213 junior and senior high school students in Tacoma, Washington, found that, "An adolescent's relationship to both parents and peers were related to his/her perceived self-esteem and life satisfaction" (p. 382).

Galbo (1984) in a review of the research on adults viewed as significant by adolescents concluded that, "Teachers were not influential in the lives of most youth. In general, youths did not seek them out for assistance or guidance beyond what was required for school assignments" (p. 967). All of the studies cited derived their data from survey questionnaires. A qualitative study in which an inductive approach is used, might clarify the role of teachers and others as it relates to academic motivators.
It is possible that a significant other may provide the challenge, encouragement, and support necessary for a student to do better or worse than their ability might suggest. Data by Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York (1966) seems, indirectly, to support such assertion. For example, blacks in his sample evidenced lower perceptions of environmental control, seemed more influenced by other students, and were therefore, more sensitive to school variations (p. 302). If that significant other enabled the student to perceive greater control over environment through an improvement in skills, then that person might function as an academic motivator.

The influence of significant other is not always positive. It can be negative. The inference of the term "peer group pressure" is often negative. For example, a student capable of making high grades, but concerned about alienation from the group, may not perform to his/her ability. The peer group sanctioning power is a result of the attractiveness of the group to the individual. Festinger, Torrey, and Willerman (1954) found that, "Anything which increases the importance of the group as a general reference or comparison group will increase the pressure towards uniformity" (p. 162).

Fordham (1986) says some blacks "discourage their peers, perhaps unconsciously, from emulating whites in academic striving, i.e., from 'acting white'" (p. 177). "Individuals 'resist' striving to do well academically partly out of fear
of peer responses and partly to avoid affective dissonance" (p. 183)³ "School is perceived by Black people, especially by Black adolescents, as learning to act white, as acting white, or as trying to cross cultural boundaries" (p.605).

Discrepancies between Word and Deed

Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York (1966) found it difficult to reconcile the data which show the high level of college-oriented motivation for black students with the lower college-going rate (p. 280). The researchers further stated that some blacks [are] "even more interested in learning than white[s],...but whose reported interest is not translated through effective action into achievement" (p. 320). It is possible that some black students have been told of the necessity for education so often that they automatically verbalize the socially acceptable answer to maintain self-esteem, but do not have the desire or self-discipline or know-how to follow the words with disciplined effective action.

³ Comments made to the researcher during a 1989 visit to a nationally recognized predominantly white high school in a mid-western city, seemed to support Fordham's statement. The vice-principal said that there is tremendous pressure placed on black students by other black students to not appear academically-oriented. He further stated that black students leaving school with their textbooks were teased and criticized.
Legacy of Racism

There are some who believe that the avoiding of intellectual engagement and competition by Blacks are the legacy of racism. Fordham & Ogubu (1986), believe that one legacy of racism, fictive kinship, continues to impact negatively on the academic performance of African-American students. There are others who believe that poverty and social class values are major contributing influences. Recent Census Bureau figures show that 40% of the nation's poor last year were 18 or younger. One out of two children is poor (USA Today, 1988). This could have an affect on one's perception of control of the environment because of the power of poverty and racism.

William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs (1968) believe that the historical treatment of blacks in American society has influenced the educational attitudes of blacks. For the black female, education was a way to escape being a domestic and, as a domestic, being constantly on guard against sexual exploitation by the white male. On the other hand, white racists, according to the authors, believed the educated black male posed a potential social threat because he might become "uppity" and forget "his place." Besides facing discriminatory hiring practices, the black intellectual sometimes experiences alienation from within her/his ethnic group for not holding to ethnic values, i.e., "perceived as acting white." "Such are the profound influences of American racism on the black man's
involvement in education....It is a greater source of wonder
that black children choose to learn at all" (p. 149).

Perhaps, it is as Matthew (a character in *Dark Princess*)
stated:

I was firm in my Hampton training; desert and hard
work were bound to tell. Prejudice was a miasma
that character burned away. I believed this
thoroughly. I had literally pounded my triumphant
way through school and life. Of course I had met
insult and rebuff here and there, but I ignored
them, laughed at them, and went my way. Those
black people who cringed and cowered, complained of
failure and 'no chance,' I despised--weaklings,
cowards, fools! Go to work! Make a way! Compel
recognition!

* * *

Then the blow fell. Seemingly, during the
summer the trustees had decided gradually to
exclude Negroes from the college...I ran away
(DuBois, 1928, p. 13-14).

In summary, there are many hypotheses about the cause or
causes of the academic performance gap between blacks and
whites. One determiner of behavior (McClelland, 1987) is
motive. Motivation is deemed important in most behavior.

* * *

Elements of Motivation

The quotations at the beginning of the chapter symbolize
individuals having different motivators: one, anger from
rejection and the other, self-determination in spite of
circumstances. There are different theories of motivation.
All tend to focus on one or more of the elements of
motivation: one, as an energizer of behavior; two, direction;
three, amplitude or vigor of response; or four, the
persistence of motivation in multiple-option situations.

Need Theories of Motivation

Need theories of motivation tend to focus on the energizing and directional elements of motivation, however, if the need is strong enough, then it also can affect the persistence element. Murray et al. (1938) were among the first to study systematically need as a motivator of behavior. At the Harvard Psychological Clinic, they researched the emotional and behavioral reactions of fifty-one male subjects over a two year period. Their research is significant in that it has influenced much of the subsequent research that identifies needs as motivators.

One of Murray et al. conclusions was that the personality is a whole, but different situations bring different parts of the personality to the fore. Thus, each person's biography may be seen "as an historic route of themas" (p.43). Themas are repetitive and consistent within the person and used historically to make sense of the present. "Some of the past is always alive in the present" (p.44) as one looks toward the future.

Murray et al. defined need as:

"a construct (a convenient fiction or hypothetical concept) which stands for a force (the physico-chemical nature of which is

4 During the analysis of respondents' statements, there will be occasional reference to parts of the student, e.g., one part of the student desires good grades while another part does not wish to exercise the self-discipline necessary to attain good grades.
unknown) in the brain region, a force which organizes perception, apperception, intellection, conation and action in such a way as to transform in a certain direction an existing, unsatisfying situation" (p. 123-124).

It is not a physiological occurrence. As in all behavioral constructs, the construct cannot be seen, therefore, to account for overt behavior, researchers usually speak of constructs as if they exist.

"A need [construct/force] does not usually become a dominant element of personality if there is no obstruction to its satisfaction" (p.79). Additional needs may conflict with each other forcing the organism not only to make a choice, but to account for the choice in a way which reduces dissonance.

Needs may be classified as viscerogenic, e.g., air, food, water, etc. and psychogenic, e.g., mental or emotional. Need is a force (disequilibrium) of desire associated with images "representing movements, agencies, pathways, and goal objects" (p.64). For Murray et al., the notion of images was very important. It implied that one could analyze behavior using fantasies and dreams, particularly, since they believed that a person may repress their conscious awareness of specific needs.

Needs may be positive/approach needs or negative/avoidance needs. Needs may be fused or subsidiated, i.e., one need used to serve another. Associated with needs are affections or pleasures of which there are three: (1) activity pleasure, (2) achievement pleasure, and (3) effect
pleasure.

Murray et al. believed that objects in the environment could be perceptually classified as harming or benefiting needs, i.e., their press directional tendency. Cathected objects have a press. Thus, it is possible for students to develop and classify meanings, consciously or unconsciously, about their environment. The classification is based on the instrumental effectiveness of objects in that environment in meeting the particular student's needs. Each object can have a different classification. For example, a student might enjoy school for the opportunity to socialize with one's friends, but dislike the academic pressures they perceive as leading to low academic self-esteem.

Maslow suggests that needs may be altered by learning or the prepotency of a need can be affected by the degree of need satisfaction in childhood. Therefore, it is difficult to decide from observable behavior which need is prepotent or altered by learning. The prepotency, i.e., the most deprived need, dominates one's present and future direction. After the satisfaction of each hierarchical need, the next higher need emerges and presses for satisfaction. Thus, "basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency."

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5 Adler (1973, p.25) states, "The patient's attitudes and anomalies dating from early childhood...can always be shown as dominated by the relation of the child to his environment, by his erroneous and in the main generalized evaluation (of himself), by his obstinate and deep-rooted feeling of inferiority and by his striving after power."
Finally, after satisfying most needs, a person then desires to fulfill her/his inner capabilities - to self-actualize. "What a man can be, he must be" (p.382).

Maslow believes that behavior has many determinants and that motivation based on needs is only one. Additionally, a need only presages what a person wants and is, therefore, not a conclusive predictor of how a person will act.

The Need for Self-Esteem

"The basic law of human life is the urge to self-esteem" (Becker, 1971, p. 66 paraphrasing Adler). "Almost all of one's inner life, when he is not absorbed in some active task, is a traffic in images of self-worth....We run what I like to call an 'inner-newsreel' that passes in constant review the symbols that give self-esteem, make us feel important and good" (Becker, 1971, p. 68). Alfred Adler's (1956) earlier writings focused on man's striving for superiority. He based perceptions on his experiences as a psychiatrist working with neurotic patients. He believed that the neurotic individual is constantly striving to overcome feelings of inferiority by striving for feelings of superiority over others. This may constitute a need to feel important and might explain the loud and aggressive behavior of some urban youth. "The origin of humanity and the ever-repeated beginning of infant life impresses with every psychological act: 'Achieve! Arise! Conquer!' (Adler, 1956, p. 103).
As Adler related his ideas to the normal individual, he defined it as a "striving for perfection." In other words, humankind is always striving to be better than s/he is; striving for perfection of her/himself and her/his group. Thus, Adler's writings suggest that one is always striving to be better, the difference is the degree of feelings of inferiority from which one starts. The greater the feelings of inferiority, the more the need to feel superior to others as opposed to striving for personal and group perfection. "But whatever name we give it, we shall always find in human beings this great line of activity --this struggle to rise from an inferior to a superior position, from defeat to victory, from below to above. It begins in earliest childhood and continues to the end of our lives" (Adler, 1956, p. 104).

The Need for Meaning and Competence

Humankind seems to have an inborn need to be competent, to derive meaning from experiences which are used to master or control one's environment. Maslow postulated "a basic desire to know, to be aware of reality, to get the facts, to satisfy curiosity...to understand, to systematize, to organize, to analyze, to look for relations and meanings" (p.385). Others (Maddi, 1970; Frankl, 1959; Frankl, 1978; and Becker, 1971) have defined this desire for meaning as a search for meaning. White (1959) expanded the idea of curiosity to hypothesize an effectance or competence motive.
Aristotle (980) said, "All men by nature desire to know." White (1959) would support that statement. In Robert White's (1959) classic and engaging paper, he posits the idea that effectance or competence motivation is an undifferentiated general motivation that is inborn. White believed there was a need for an explanation of behavior that could not be explained by drives and instincts. He cited studies of human and animal behavior that showed exploratory behavior that seemed driven by an "urge that makes for competency" (p. 305). "Boredom, the unpleasantness of monotony, the attraction of novelty, the tendency to vary behavior rather than repeating it rigidly, and the seeking of stimulation and mild excitement stand as inescapable facts of human experience...." (p. 315). This exploratory, novelty-seeking behavior has for its motive the goal of competence in "effective interaction with the environment...." (p. 317). White asserts that humans and animals derive pleasure from moderate challenges which has as its by-product, learning.

Susan Harter (1978) extended White's argument. She shows that how those motives become specific depends on the quantity and quality of reinforcement by significant socializing agents in the child's history, to attempts by the child to master the environment. Harter's findings suggest that teachers', if one assumes that teachers are significant socializing agents, interaction with students and the reinforcement of students' academic behaviors may have a role in students' perception of
control of the environment.

Gurin, Gurin, Lao, and Beattie (1978) in discussing Rotter's Internal-External Control scale state, "An internal response reflecting acceptance of blame for one's failures, which might be considered 'normal' in the typical middle-class experience, may be extreme and intrapunitive for a Negro youngster growing up in poverty in the ghetto" (p. 32). The authors' contention is that the attempt by blacks to control and make sense of their environment may be misinterpreted using the Internality-Externality Scale. The response can be both personal and systemic. In other words, one can believe personally in controlling their individual environment and still believe in an external system-wide barrier of discrimination which prevents blacks from controlling their environment.

Further, the authors question Rotter's bases of external control - skill versus chance. The authors contention is that if a black perceives discrimination as an external cause of failure, that might be a realistic assessment of the situation; however, the scoring of the instrument and the underlying theory suggest the subject is external in orientation, i.e., ascribing failure to chance or luck. The subject, therefore, has only two choice areas as determiners of success and failure: Skill, ability, effort or lack thereof and luck or chance.
The Need for Achievement

McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1953) were influenced by Murray's research on needs, particularly, the need for achievement. In an experiment in 1948, McClelland and Atkinson found that Navy men deprived of food for one, four, and sixteen hours, when directed to look at a series of pictures from Thematic Apperception Test, wrote stories containing themes of food and eating. The greater the deprivation, the more food and eating were mentioned in the stories. The experiment confirmed for McClelland and Atkinson that the dominant motive could be determined by analyzing cue directed fantasies. A motive could be experimentally induced and then tested for intensity. Motive is only one of three determinants of behavior. Situation and habit are the other two. After refining the instrument to measure levels of motivation, McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell used the data gathered to develop a theory of achievement motivation.

Need for achievement (n Ach) is defined as a relatively stable internal disposition/need for "competition with some standard of excellence" (p. 110), thus, according to this definition, the term competitiveness is a synonym for need for achievement. Since motives are learned, then McClelland et al. believe that the n Ach is also learned as a child in a family which sets high standards of excellence and insists that the child performs independently. The child's "actions will then interact with those expectations in ways which will
yield positive or negative affect" (p. 330), the antecedent of motive arousal.

Additional findings were that, "There is no necessary connection between high achievement motivation and more efficient performance" (p. 80). Although in several experiments, a correlation was found between n Ach and performance, "high achievement motivation tends to lead subjects to overestimate their actual or expected performance" (p. 248). What is interesting is the implication that there might be a difference between the cognitive state of n Ach and actual performance, i.e., behaviors. This is interesting given Coleman's (1966) concern about the discrepancy between the stated desires of some of the black students in his research and their behavior. Actual work habits might have a strong influence on performance. McClelland's theory of achievement motivation has influenced much subsequent research.

Atkinson & Litwin (1960) in a study of 49 male subjects found that persons whose motivation to achieve success was higher than their motivation to avoid failure selected tasks of moderate difficulty, persisted longer on the tasks, and generally performed better on their final examinations. The artificial dichotomizing of a continuous variable, i.e., achievement motive, into low and high does raise a methodological concern. An additional finding was that "different methods of assessing human motives do not yield comparable results" (p. 60).
Raynor (1969) found that the motive to achieve success or avoid failure was related to the person's perception of the importance of being successful on immediate tasks (instrumentality) as prerequisites to future success. The theory, however, only applies "when an individual has sufficient ability [intelligence] to have acquired well-articulated cognitive expectations concerning the long-term implications of immediate activities" (p. 609).

Ruhland & Feld (1977) studied racial differences in achievement motivation. They tested black and white children at the end of 1st and 4th grades and one year later at the end of the 2nd and 5th grades. The students were directed to write stories in response to four verbal cues, one of which was, "Tell me a story about a person who is sitting at a desk thinking about something" (p. 1364). For level of aspiration, students were asked to select one of three tasks defined only in terms of difficulty level for their age group. The social comparison score was determined by whether the student selected a task described as moderately difficult for his/her peers.

The results indicated no racial differences in autonomous achievement motivation, but racial differences in social comparison achievement motivation. The authors attribute the differences in social comparison scores to the classroom teacher indicating that students should be shown areas in which they excel, are average or deficient. Is it possible
that black youth have learned to dislike academic social comparisons with white youth because of the negative results?

In another study of achievement motivation, Wagner, Powers, and Irwin (1985) "found the best single predictor of achievement motivation to be the attribution of school success to ability" (p. 597). Using a different measurement instrument, Myers (1965) Achievement Motivation Scale, Douglas, Cool, & Gose, Jr., (1985) found that in a sample of 110 high school students, there was a correlation of .42 (p<.01) between high achievement motivation and attribution of success to effort. On the other hand, "The attribution of failure to lack of effort was negatively correlated -.22 (p < .05) with achievement motivation" (p. 752-753). Thus, it is easy to understand how a belief in success being the result of effort might be related to higher motivation.

Additional research in the area of achievement motivation has had conflicting results. For example, Willis (1985) found no significant relationship between student motivation for schooling and academic achievement among students in grades six and ten. Sullivan (1986) randomly assigned 81 high school students to four groups. Students, in one group given achievement motivation training did not increase their achievement motivation. All four groups, including the control group, did significantly improved their grade point average. This finding seems contradictory.
Han (1987) found "upward mobility" had a greater influence on performance than achievement motivation among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Caucasian adolescents. Lee (1986) in a study of 237 eighth grade Korean students, found that achievement motivation had an indirect effect on learning achievement, whereas, prior achievement was the greater predictor of learning achievement. "Success begets success."

Kestenbaum (1983) found that achievement motivation was not predictive of procrastinatory behavior. Oliver (1986) determined that achievement motivation was only predictive of achievement for some levels of science students, but not all. Finally, Hagerman - Muller (1985) found no difference in achievement motivation between nine students having difficulty with their dissertations and eight students progressing satisfactorily. How achievement motivation is defined might be a part of the problem.

Summary
To summarize the literature, there are several hypotheses about black academic motivation and its related behaviors. It was stated that blacks avoid intellectual engagement because of the legacy of racism, the examples of their kin, and their class values which, as implied, does not include a valuing of hard work and academic effort.

An inference can be made from the literature that school policies and procedures also are related to black students'
academic motivation. It is stated by writers from Woodson (1933) to Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York (1966) that good teachers are a variable which is related to the academic behaviors of blacks.

Needs as motivators are discussed. These needs include the need for achievement, mastery and control over one's environment, meaning and competency as well as self-esteem. Significant others can influence one's sense of control over the environment. The selection of the difficulty level of the task is also a function of one's motivation.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Design

The concern about the performance gap between black and white students has focused on both cognitive and motivational factors. Howard and Hammonds (1985), believe the academic performance gap is a behavioral problem, i.e. avoiding intellectual engagement and competition, which has its roots in slavery. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe motivators related to the academic behavior of ten black male students. The respondents represent multiple realities and there is need for the researcher to understand those realities in order to identify and describe motives. Thus, the methodology selected for this study is qualitative, i.e., naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with symbolic interactionism as the major philosophical approach.

Fordham (1987) states, "the [low achieving] students eschew academic effort because (1) there is very little

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6 Lewin (1942) distinguished learning as a change in cognitive structure from learning as a change in motivation. "Change in structure...is the differentiation of previously undifferentiated regions" (p. 237) whereas "change in motivation deals either with a change in needs or a change in the means of their satisfaction" (p. 238).
evidence that they will be adequately rewarded for draconian efforts in the school context when they become adult workers in the society, and (2) negative sanctions are enforced when peers seek to 'escape' the boundary." (p. 499). The attitude of the achieving student is different: "The overriding characteristic common to...high-achieving students is their unanimous sense of hope and myopic belief that if they work hard and do well in school, they will be successful" (p. 392). Why does one look at the world and see hope, while another looks at the world and sees despair? Possibly, because of the attitude with which the student views the present and future. If so, then understanding that attitude might be fruitful as educators attempt to improve performance for black students.

Symbolic interactionism, the philosophical base of this study has three premises:

(1) "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them";
(2) "The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows";
(3) "These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).
Questionnaires pose a problem relative to this study because several studies question the validity of interpretations made of black responses to two instruments used in achievement motivation research. For example, Gurin, Gurin, Lao, and Beattie's (19) concern about Rotter's Internality-Externality Scale has been mentioned. Similar concerns have been raised about the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), used by McClelland, Atkinson, and others to determine need for achievement, affiliation, and/or power. The TAT uses a series of pictures and asks the subject to write fantasy stories about a picture. The content is then analyzed and a determination made about the level and type of need, i.e., achievement, affiliation, or power. Maehr (1974) and Sewell, Farley, Manni, and Hunt (1982) have questioned the cross-cultural applicability of the TAT to lower-class black children and "the adequacy of personality measures to effectively predict school performance of lower-class black children" (p. 654).

In other words, data on a questionnaire may provide means and correlation coefficients, but what does a subject's response mean in terms of that subject's phenomenology. For example, one hundred black urban high school students, with grade point averages ranging from .43 to 4.02 (median= 2.1950; S.D. = .7939), were randomly selected and requested to respond to several questions. In response to the question, "Do you feel that when good things happen, they happen because of hard
work?", eighty-nine students said, "yes" (Williams, 1988). What does their response tell us except that most of the students believe good things happen when one works hard? It does not tell us what the students' responses mean in terms of their behavior or what preconditions or assumptions underlie their response. If the researcher is looking for "facts," the data do provide responses which can be statistically treated. If the researcher is looking for understanding and meaning from the actor's perspective, particularly when discrepancies exist between verbal responses and actual behavior, then a qualitative approach can be useful. "In order to grasp the meanings of a person's behavior, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 14). This study is designed to look at selected motivators as they relate to academic behavior from the point of view of ten black high school students.

Last, there is a charge that qualitative research is not generalizable. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p. 124) suggest using the term transferability. Transferability occurs when results are used to guide research or practice. The use is based upon similarity of contexts. The consumer of the research makes the determination about similarity based upon the description provided by the researcher. Thus, the findings from a qualitative study can be used as data or background information when doing additional research in the same area.
For example, Fordham's (1987) research was conducted among black high school students in the Washington, D.C. Public Schools. The findings from her study were used as background information for this study.

Additionally, Robert Donmoyer (1988) makes a salient point: when using data to arrive at conclusions regarding the aggregate, the traditional notion of generalizability may be useful. However, when the concern focuses on developing meaningful programs for the individual, then the "traditional way of talking and thinking about generalizability is no longer useful" (p. 32). This research may assist in developing meaningful programs for individuals who are like the ones questioned in this study.

**Major Research Questions**

The major research questions are:

A. What are the academic motivators that seem related to the academic behavior of the ten black high school male students in this study?

B. How do ten black high school male students account for their academic behavior?

C. How do significant others motivate the student? Is that motivation related to the student's perception of control over the classroom environment?

D. How does the perception of probable success or failure act as a motivator?
Although four major research questions are listed, should other questions emerge which appear related to selected motivators, they will be asked. "To enter a setting with a set of specific hypotheses is to impose preconceptions and perhaps misconceptions on the setting" (Bogdan & Taylor, p.27).

**Selection of Research Site**

An area supervisor in the office of a mid-western urban school district was asked by the researcher for assistance in gaining entry to a high school. The researcher wanted a high school having an economically and racially mixed student composition. The nature of the study, an intent to gather data about the academic behavior and motivation of black high school students, was explained. The cooperation and approval of the principal was requested to have a group of teachers select students the teachers believe capable of doing high school classwork. The students were to be differentiated as follows: three highly motivated academically, three average motivated, and three with low academic motivation as determined by the teachers and based on students grades, attendance, class participation and, if applicable, discipline records. The principal was further requested not to tell the researcher which students were in which categories. The purpose was to maintain researcher "blindness" during the initial interviews. The administrator gave the researcher the name of a school and its principal. The researcher lacked
knowledge of the principal, the students, or the research setting.

Selection of Subjects

The researcher informed the principal that he was concerned about improving the receptivity of black high school students to schooling and course work. Would s/he ask several teachers to nominate ten black students based on the following: three students whose academic performance and class and school participation might suggest that they are fulfilling their "potential," three who are passing, but in the opinion of the teachers could do better, and three students who are barely passing, but the teachers believe can do better. The last three could be students the teachers find very frustrating because of their perceived ability, but lack of effort. The teachers did not identify the students by perceived motivation level to lessen the likelihood of researcher bias during the initial interviews.

Procedures

I. The research proposal was approved by The Ohio State University Human Subject Review Committee.

7 The original design of the research indicated that both male and female students would be used in the research, however, only male students returned permission forms signed by their parents.
II. The researcher asked the principal for permission to meet with the students in order to explain the project. The students' initial reaction when they came to the meeting room next to the cafeteria was, "What did I do? "What's this about?" The researcher assured them they had done nothing wrong. There was some laughter and expressed relief when they found out they were not in trouble. The students came in three groups: five, four, and two. There were nine males and three females. All were mannerly and articulate. The researcher read the script to each group and asked for their consent which they gave. The students signed the consent form and took it home to a parent or guardian for their signed approval. Students were told that their parents would be called for permission. They said O.K. In the first group, one young lady asked about the length of the interviews. "About one hour or less for each of three interviews," said the researcher. She smiled and said, "or less" suggesting that she wanted them to last less. When students were told that their grades would be analyzed in relation to their interview comments, they looked at Steadman and laughed. Students were told that all information would be confidential.

In the second group there were no questions. Each indicated a desire to participate. The researcher asked for their telephone numbers, requested the students to sign the form, and then carry it home for parent/guardian's signature. The third group responded as the first group had. The reason
for three separate groups was related to students' individual schedules. The researcher did not want to keep them out of class longer than necessary.

The researcher called the parents between 7:15 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to explain the study and ask for their approval to interview their son/daughter, to observe them in class, and to look at their school records for their class grades. The parents with whom the researcher spoke were mostly mothers. Only one father answered the phone. Their comments were: "O.K."; "this will not interfere with his classes, will it?"; "It's fine with me if it's fine with him"; "Yes, we talked about it."; "He told me about it."; "Oh, you have my permission."; and "yes." One mother said, "Does she know you? I don't know, I'll have to talk to her and see what's going on." One father said he was going to church and would talk to his son about it.

At no point did the principal or researcher offer any inducement for participation or imply punishment for student non-participation. Additionally, students were told they could withdraw at any time without prejudice.

None of the female students returned their permission slips although the parents had given permission on the telephone. Therefore, what started as an intent to study selected motivators of black students in general, became a study of ten high school black males, specifically. Because of the lack of a high performing black male in the eleventh
grade, the researcher added a tenth grade student because he was the most academically oriented black male student in the school and a twelfth grade student was also added because teachers believed he was not working to his potential. He scored higher on the American College Test Score than suggested by his past performance. Thus, the researcher had a convenience sampling of ten black male high school students. There was enough variation to meet the purposes of the study: the identification and description of academic motivators for a select group of black male students. As the result of the school district's desegregation court order, nine of the ten respondents were bussed to the school from the attendance boundary of a previously predominantly black high school. The tenth student, Matthew, lives on the northside of the city in a predominantly white apartment complex.

II. The researcher conducted the initial interviews based upon several exploratory questions developed from preliminary reading of research related to academic achievement and human motivation. The questions, probing in nature, attempted to provide answers to the major research questions. At the same time, the researcher, conscious of the elements of motivation and theories of motivation from the research literature, wanted, through interviewing and triangulation of data, to understand first, and then identify and describe academic motivators deductively from students' responses. After the
understanding, identification, and description, only then did
the researcher attempt to make sense of the responses in
support or contradiction of the review of literature. Miles
& Huberman (1984) have stated, "Formulating more than a couple
of dozen general questions is looking for trouble."
The initial questions sought to establish rapport. The
subsequent questions were for understanding, identification,
and description.
The initial questions were:
A. Tell me about yourself; who are you? (Researcher
smiling and emphasizing "you.")
B. What do you think of school?
Responses, verbally and non-verbally, determined the next
questions.

III. Establishing rapport and building trust while maintaining
professionalism was the initial objective. The researcher
told students the following:
A. Pseudonyms will be used to protect student identity
and confidentiality;
B. Written notes will be taken during the interview
process; whenever possible the initial interview will be
recorded on cassette tape because the interviewer does
not want to miss anything;
C. The researcher will visit their classes, with
permission, to observe them in the classroom setting and
to take notes; and
D. Subsequent or spot-check interviews will be held, as necessary, to clarify words, symbols, behaviors or themes as heard and interpreted by the researcher as a check to ensure "correctness" of interpretation. Spot-check interviews, designed to answer only question or to clarify an observation may be conducted in the halls or a classroom whenever needed.

IV. The researcher maintained written field notes that included descriptions of the students (appearance, gestures, expressions, side comments, facial grimaces, and any other non-verbal behavior that could be documented by a video camera), events, and conversations. Also, the researcher kept notes on his feelings, opinions, questions, and on-going working hypotheses.

Researcher as Variable

The researcher is a black male, 49, with eleven years of secondary school experience including the principalship in two urban areas (100,000+ students in each) and one suburban area (3,000+ students). He has additional administrative experienced as General Director for Special Projects in an urban district central office and as a consultant at a Mid­west state department of education. The researcher is personally and professionally concerned about the general
The researcher was conscious of identifying with only a portion of the experiences of the respondents. He identified with Matthew in the sense of having a strong mother whose word was law. There was no father in the house. He identified with Earl in the sense of being lazy in some of his classes. He desired to be an athlete and popular with the females. He perceived himself as neither, therefore, he studied by default. Finally, he identified with Chuck in the sense of being transferred during his third grade year to another school. He remembers being very lonely and crying when the principal of the school, Margaret Beatrice Butcher, took his hand and let him walk around with her until he became comfortable in the school. His grades improved considerably in comparison with the previous school. In fact, he was chosen to give the commencement address at his elementary school.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an on-going process of noting and categorizing themes, identifying and describing motivators, comparing and contrasting those motivators between and among respondents, and returning to the setting to ask questions as needed. The total number of interviews varied from two to five interviews per respondent. The difference was based on whether additional questions needed to be asked following the preceding interview. After the initial in-depth interview,
subsequent interviews sometimes consisted of a single question to clarify a point. Explanations were continuously refined. Student responses were triangulated with school grade records, classroom observations, and teacher comments.

The use of ten respondents for this study provides a sufficient and manageable number of respondents to interview to identify and describe selected motivators. The purpose of the study is to understand what motivators are related to these students' academic behavior, thus, the qualitative design. The respondents are all males; this resulted when the females initially contacted did not return their permission letters. Given the nature of the study, unwilling respondents would not have been acceptable. The researcher was unable to determine why the female students did not return their permission letters. Each time the researcher asked the female students about the forms, they said they had forgotten to bring them to school. After asking the female students several times to return their permission letters, the researcher chose to stop asking rather than risk having the students think they were being forced to participate. It is unlikely that a respondent forced to participate would be open or candid. The result was to remove gender as a variable.

Summary

The protocols of qualitative methodology was used for this study because it provides a means for understanding the respondents' behavior and their multiple realities.
CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents data which answers the question, "How do students account for their academic behavior?" The collection of data from the respondents focuses on their statements about what they believe to be the motivators related to their academic behavior. The respondents' interviews are triangulated with individual student school records, specifically, the cumulative records of standardized test scores, class grades, and observations of respondents' classroom behaviors. Additionally, teacher comments are cited when the comments appear to clarify, contradict a respondent's statement, or establish the teacher's philosophical base undergirding the class climate. Interviews were conducted prior to analyzing school records, talking to teachers or observing the students in class. In other words, the foci is selective. It is designed to identify and describe the academic motivators which seem related to the respondents' academic behavior.
Data Collection

The collection of data began with an appointment with the principal, a brief explanation of the researcher's background, and the nature of the study. One school administrator said s/he thought the students, in the study, would improve their grades because of the attention they would receive. S/he also related to me an experience of entering a classroom and observing a black male student. He was whispering to other students the answers to the teacher's questions. He never directly gave the answers to the teacher himself. When the administrative assistant asked the student, "Why?" He responded, "not cool."

The administrator said that many black students including the young man previously mentioned, live in a government housing project. When the administrator transports other students home who do not live in the housing project, they are quick to emphasize that they do not live in that project.

The school's enrollment is about 700 students in grades 9-12. The school is in the northern section of a large midwestern city. The area's population is predominantly white and upper-middle class. All the students interviewed, except one, live within five blocks of each other and ride the school bus to school from the core city because of a desegregation decree. For most of the students, the possibility exists that being bussed into a setting away from their community may have a subtle influence on the students' perception of control of
the environment. Earl (see interview) seems particularly sensitive to the actions and words of white students and teachers in a predominantly white environment. Chuck and Matthew seem unaffected by the environment.

During my visits to the school, the students seemed relaxed. There were no loud outbursts. The cafeteria was usually quiet during the lunch periods with most of the students playing volleyball or basketball in the gymnasium. One administrator said that during lunch, the gym has a free period.

None of the original eight black male students grade point average was above a "C." The researcher was told that the only black in the school who had above a C average was a tenth grader. After asking the student if he wish to participate and getting guardian approval, Chuck was added to the study. Additionally, an underachieving twelfth grade student was recommended by the principal as having ability, but not using it. School administrators did not believe he was putting forth maximum effort. All students said they knew each other and occasionally socialized after school, but it is difficult at this point to determine what influence they may have on each other.
The Setting

The setting for the initial interviews was an office located in the complex of offices called the main office. The complex has a teachers' workroom, principal's and assistant principal's offices. There is an office for the psychologist or speech pathologist to work with students and a large outer office housing the reception area staffed by two secretaries. The office in which the interviews were held is also the school nurse's office. She is in the school periodically. The interviews were interrupted on three different occasions: once by the nurse, once by a male teacher who wanted to use the scale, and once by a white female teacher who walked into the closed room and started using the telephone without excusing herself or asking if she was interrupting anything. The researcher told her he was conducting an interview and that he would be finished in about five minutes. She apologized for the interruption and left the office.

Organization and Triangulation of Data

The data is organized in the following order: interviews, teacher comments, school records, and observations. Where appropriate, the actual dialogue is shown. The dialogue between the researcher and student provides the reader an opportunity to evaluate the researcher's analysis of the data as well as determine discrepancies or agreement between verbal responses and actual behavior. The reader must also determine
transferability of findings.

Most of the respondents' articulateness, diction, and expressed interest in attending college, impressed the researcher during the initial questions. Researcher "blindness" during the initial interviews proved to be important in terms of the direction the questions took. Initially, if he were to have guessed the grade point averages of the students, he would have said 2.0 or higher for most of the respondents.

Following the initial interview which usually lasted about fifty minutes, the researcher observed the respondent in at least one class lasting fifty minutes, but usually three to four classes. During this time second and third interviews would be held lasting between three minutes and fifty minutes depending upon the degree of clarification needed. The students' school records were examined during this time, from December 1988 to May 1989, as well to further clarify and/or understand the students' academic motivators in terms of the related academic behaviors. The researcher continuously moved from one data source to the other to understand the classroom academic environment through the eyes of the student.

The researcher consciously focused on understanding, identifying and describing the motivators through the eyes of the students before making internal or external judgements about the "rightness" or "wrongness" of the student's perceptions.
RESPONDENTS

HARRY

Harry is a tall (6') handsome sixteen year old young man who appears to enjoy life. He was casually dressed and seemed eager to talk to the researcher. During the initial interview, he was asked, "What do you think about school?" Harry said, "I like school, it's better than not going to school and being out on the street and everything because I got friends here and a lot of my teachers are friends. It will get me ready for life and going to college. My friend is in college. He's majoring in psychology and wants me to go. I want to major in psychology."

Harry believes that school is very important, although it's importance to him seems to stem from the opportunity to play football.

"If I didn't go to school, I wouldn't be able to play football. Without that it wouldn't be nothing."

Harry said that he believes football "is life." When asked to describe what he meant by life, he said, "It just is." One year later, during a follow-up telephone conversation, he said he did not think that football was life. He made all-conference in football during his senior year, but still received an F in Geometry and attributed it to his study habits. Harry's attribution of poor grades to his lack of effort and similar comments by most of the respondents substantiate the findings of Loftus (1983) at the elementary
level, that students attributed failure to lack of effort.

During the initial interview, Harry said that school is "fun at times - boring at times. I know it's good for me."

The fun times were "when we have a sub and it's Friday-not much work." School is boring when he has a "test or when a teacher is upset at a student or the class for doing something wrong ...assigns a lot of work and you want to help out a friend."

Harry thought school was boring in the 6th grade. "It's not so boring now because when I come to school, I know I have to get my work done." Harry stated that in the sixth grade, the amount of school work increased. The work was also different from elementary school. "I was used to being able to have fun. I like doing a lot of work." He described the difference in school work being boring and just work as follows: "Sometimes, if they give us a lot of work, if we concentrate on the work, it would be work; sometimes you work and you can't talk to your friend and still don't want to do the work and can't talk. So you just sit there and be bored."

When asked, "Is there anything about the work itself that makes you not want to do it?" Harry responded, "Yea, Don't make sense; [in] Speech Survey he gave us work...when we had speeches in the beginning, we understood then, he had us get information on certain topics and it's like the work had no meaning. It just didn't make sense."

"What would make sense?"
"About life or just real. He had us looking back on something and then when we did it, he wouldn't have us turn it in...like OK."

Harry received a "D" in Speech Survey, but he also received "D"'s in three other courses, which suggest there may be additional reasons for not performing well.

Harry was asked what were his earliest memories of school? He said, "Being on the honor roll and taking a nap. They [kindergarten teachers] played the Nutcracker Suite and you could sleep. I was on the honor roll through elementary and in the 7th and 8th grade." When asked, "What happened afterward?" Harry stated, "Bad study habits. Now soon as I come home, I take a nap. I won't do no homework....Then soon as I wake up I eat something, go out and lift, come back in and talk on the phone, and most nights when something happens and I don't go out and lift or talk on the telephone, that's when I do homework. I put that before I do my homework. Now I'm starting to get out of that and do my homework."

Later observations of Harry would reveal that he is waiting until the last moment to do homework.

Harry was asked, "How important are good grades?" He responded, "Very, very important." Harry verbalizes the importance of good grades, but his behavior is counterproductive to earning good grades. "I try to maintain a C average." "Right now I want a 3. Just don't like C's and D's. I want A's and B's now, try highering my level. I can
do better than a C. A C is just a two point. If I didn't play football or wasn't in other sports besides, I think maybe I could get higher than a 3 point—maybe 4 point."

Harry doubts there is any way he can organize his schedule to play sports and still get a "4 point." Harry states that he and his friends talk mostly about what they are going to do when they get out of school. "Most want to go to college." Harry doesn't seem to have sufficient experience or insight "to have acquired a well-articulated cognitive expectation concerning the long-term implications of immediate activities." (Raynor, 1969, p. 609)

Harry was asked whether he thought that some students were smarter than him. He said, "No, some just have better study habits...like girls, they [girls] don't have much to do. Most girls get better grades than guys. With guys, a friend will call and say let's go to a party they're having. Girls stay home and help mom. Some of the girls who play basketball get good grades." Harry's belief that girls don't have much to do may be viewed as sexist. The researcher attributes the comments more to immaturity than sexism.

He does not think the teachers are against him. His parents and friends "definitely" expect him to go to college. He said that his mother talks about college, "twice a week; all my uncles expect me to go. They messed up somewhere, so they want me to go." He believes that most of the teachers and all the football coaches expect him to go to college. "Yea,
I think all the teachers expect me to go." The expectations of relatives, teachers, and coaches have not translated into effective academic behaviors for Harry.

In response to the question, "Do you think the cards are stacked against you in life?" Harry responded, "Kinda. Higher class students, they have money to get into a good college, most likely better grades. Most of my friends try to get scholarships to get into college. If I don't get a scholarship and my grades are pretty good, my mom will see that I go."

The researcher asked Harry, "If you could get any award you wanted at graduation, what would it be?" He said, "I don't know....[pause] I guess to finish first in my class or get at least in the top 10 or 20."

"Which would you prefer, to be the most popular or valedictorian?"

"Valedictorian." He did not hesitate in responding.

Again, Harry voices the acceptable goal. Whatever his intent, his behavior is counterproductive. During a subsequent interview with Harry in study hall, he again talked about the importance of grades, but seemed lethargic. He had forgotten his comment, "Now...I'm starting to do my homework" made during his initial interview. He showed no outward effort at trying to understand the class assignment. He spent more time looking for someone who had done the assignment then actually working on the assignment. The researcher asked him about it.
He said, "I was too busy to do the work." The assignment was a list of ten words. Harry was attempting to do the assignment in study hall, just before class. He spent most of the study hall time stretching and laying his head down. He was using someone else's paper for spelling and definitions. Harry's attempting to do something may suggest that he wants to do his homework, but just doesn't have the work habits or interest, so he turns off. Again, he talked about his study habits.

Harry's administrators describe him as very capable, but "very playful and somewhat immature." Teachers described Harry as a good athlete, capable, but playful. One teacher stated, "Harry is very intelligent, but very playful."

Harry's school records show the following test scores: California Test Basic Skills, grade 7.7, National Percentile in Total Reading 67% and Total Mathematics 31%. In grade 9.7, his reading score was 77% and mathematics 30%.

In the 1st grade, his grades showed that he was successful; the 2nd grade satisfactory; the 3rd grade, he received mostly C's. In the 4th and 5th, mostly B's. Figure 1 shows his grades.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Courses</th>
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<tr>
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<td>7th</td>
<td>absent 8</td>
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<td>2nd Semester Absent 8.0 Days</td>
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<td>French D</td>
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<td>Art B</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Food Nutrition C</td>
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**FIGURE 1.** Harry's Course Grades.
In observations of Harry in class, he usually was one of the first to complete his classwork. Sometimes when he hadn't completed an assignment, he would ask several questions about the assignment that seemed designed to impress the researcher. Often, he answered questions with what seemed little effort. The researcher believes Harry has the ability to be an A or B student, but his attitude toward studying and work habits need improving. During the first classroom observation, the teacher asked him about his writing folder. Harry said it was home. The teacher responded, "Bring your writing folder to class, it can't be at home."

During another classroom observation, Harry and Matthew were playful. The teacher reprimanded them twice for talking. Harry turned in homework, wrote responses quickly, and during the check of classwork asked "what's the last one?" He threw his arms up as if saying, "I got that one wrong, but should have known it." When the teacher asked students to write a paragraph about the paper they had written using a computer, he said, "What if you don't have a paper on computer?" The teacher responded, "You were told two days, Monday and Tuesday and also Wednesday and Thursday." Apparently, Harry did not do the assignment. He seems unconcerned about what's going on. There were no papers on his desk, neither did he attempt to do the class work. He laughed and talked with Matthew about his courses.
The pattern of behavior shown by Harry is similar to most of the underachieving students in this study. Verbal statements suggest a desire to achieve academically, but his habitual physical behaviors are not consistent, disciplined, or effective enough to accomplish the stated goal. His academic behavior is counterproductive to what he says he wants. Harry's academic motivator, at this time, is the knowledge that he has to do some work in class. That motivator lacks the energizing, vigor of response, and persistence elements as it relates to academic behavior.

Harry's motivators are football, friends, and things that, to him, have meaning. His "significant others" are mother, uncles, friends, coaches and teachers. Friends seem most related to academic motivation and behavior. His academic self-concept is difficult to describe because he seems more concerned about having fun and playing football than studying. Harry's grade point average does match what his uncles and coaches tell him about the importance of school. Harry voices a need for achievement but acknowledges that he has poor study habits which account for his below average grades. Harry says he wants to get good grades and go to college, but doesn't execute the self-disciplined effective actions necessary for either. He views school as instrumental for college, a place to play football and have fun. He believes he will get into college through earning a football scholarship.
BOB

Bob is a slim student about 5'8" tall. His manner is easy-going. He seemed very relaxed and smiled frequently during our initial interview. His responses were forthright, and in contrast to Harry, he seemed unconcerned about impressing the researcher. When asked, "What do you think of school?" he responded, "All right, got to come." He said that if he didn't have to come, he would "Get a job...construction, a physical job. Don't want to wear a suit or nothing like that."

Bob believes school is, "fun; it's off and on; it's two sides – good and bad."

"When did you first feel that way?"

"Ninth grade. I'd never flunked a grade, had to go to summer school [student got an F in 2nd semester English –first F on his record, although he had received a D in Social Studies and Science]....Used to get honor roll all the time in elementary and middle school. I got badges and good citizenship awards."

When Bob said he flunked a class in the ninth grade, he slightly altered his head and his facial expression changed as he said, "that really hurt me."

He talked about some of his successes in school. Bob made a desk in wood shop that won him an award in the county contest.
"How did you feel when you made that desk [which was in the school's display case]?

"I felt all right 'cause I made a desk last year—big old oak desk. I made a decision to make a dresser. I'm going to enter it into all those woodshop shows they have at the mall."

"How would you feel if you won first place?"

"I'd be happy, but I wouldn't be real excited. I deserved to win because I got a 1st place certificate and ribbon last year off my desk, but people think the dresser is better than the desk, but I thought the desk was better than the dresser so I'm expecting some kind of high award."

"What is the difference between the Woods class and your other classes?"

"In wood, I ain't got to sit there and just listen to somebody. I just challenge myself. I draw something and end up making it. It's like a challenge. If you can draw this, make out all the diagrams, do some art work, make some measurements, and then you end up building that project. I feel you have accomplish something. Like in English or chemistry or something like that...like my English class, I flunked that. If a teacher don't pressure me to do no work or don't pressure nobody else to do nothing, it doesn't excite you to do it, like my English teacher, he just hand you something or tell you to do something and then just lets you go, sometimes you don't hear the assignments in the class. In wood, he takes attendance and lets you go to work."
"If you challenge yourself in Woods, why don't you do that in English? Say, 'I'm going to write a paper on such and such a thing' and do it."

"I don't know, it ain't like I'm no dummy or something. On an individual test like an English or math test, I'd probably flunk one of those. I like to take one big test. I took a PSAT and got a 22 on that and didn't even finish it. I don't take the time to get into it [individual tests]. I wonder if I take this test, I wonder what I get --everyone else talking about high and low scores....My administrators called me down, told me to come pick it up....I wasn't surprised I got the score I got even though I didn't finish it. I probably would have gotten a higher score. I wasn't surprised or nothing, I knew I could do it."

"Was anyone else shocked?"

"It wasn't no shocking thing to me. The administrators said what did you get on that test. I said, 'a twenty-two.' I didn't know what the scoring system was...then the word got passed along and everyone was asking me to see it. They were acting surprised, I didn't pay any attention to them. It wasn't no big deal."

The administrators enrolled Bob in a Chemistry class after receiving his test scores. Earl criticized school officials (unspecified) for not informing black students about college preparatory course. Bob, however, is an example of the principal trying to get black students to take college
preparatory classes. Bob withdrew from the chemistry class after getting poor grades. Additionally, the motivator for Bob in Woods is the sense of accomplishment he receives from his work being praised. He feels important.

"Why did you drop Chemistry?"

"At the beginning of the year, it was all right then. I think I missed one test. They tell you to keep reviewing, but you can't make up the test. That turned me off right there if I can't make up the test even if I have an excuse. I couldn't go on, if I had taken the first test I can't say whether I would have passed or not, but if I can't go on, I couldn't go on to next step because I wasn't sure. I felt I was lost. I was behind...lagged back. I tried to get out of the class. They told me to stay in there. Teacher told me to get out. Teacher told me I wasn't doing no work."

"Was that true?"

"Yeah, I didn't do no work, I mean I didn't do every assignment. I did off and on work. Some of the stuff I ain't know how to do. I could have done it if I had sat down. It wasn't interesting or didn't excite me."

A pattern is evident in Bob's responses. In each instance in which he says that work is boring or unexciting, he usually precedes or follows it with the statement that he doesn't understand the work.

"How could the class have been presented so that it would have been more interesting?"
"If she had a regular routine like other teachers, if you bring in an excused absence, you can make up the test. By me not taking the test, I fell behind [because I didn't know what I knew and what I didn't]. Chemistry was new to me. I never had it before. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't use anything from my old Biology class. I stayed after school to get it."

Bob states that the classwork didn't excite him, but he was willing to stay after school to learn it.

"What other classes interest you?"

"Math used to be one of my subjects."

One very insightful point during the interview occurred when Bob spoke of the difference in high school which affected his grades. Again he mentioned failing a class in the ninth grade. He said half of his teachers are good, but the other half of your classes, the teachers are bad, "They ain't no t.v. teachers...going to each student, trying to make you do no work or nothing."

"When did you first feel that way?"

"When I got to the ninth grade and flunked that class, it nearly killed me...no, it didn't kill me."

"You felt bad about that?"

"Yeah, [his voice increased in volume and pitch] 'cause I never flunked a class before. That was the first time I did it....That teacher, he was different from all the rest of the teachers I'd ever had. He give you work. I thought...you know."
My mom used to tell me all the time, 'when you go to college those teachers ain't going to be with you all the time. You know you paying them. They give you some work....They tell you one time and you got to learn how to do it when they tell you. If you want some private help, you have to go and get a tutor or something. I didn't know it was going to be like that in high school. I thought elementary, middle, and high school [Bob was tapping the table emphasizing each point he was making]...I thought it suppose to be a thing they make sure you know how to do this before you go into graduate....Whatever your class is...make sure you know how to do it. In college I expected them to pass you the work, then challenge yourself to do it on your own. In high school, I didn't know it would be like that...not high school."

"Why not look at it like a challenge and say, 'O.K., I'm going to prove to you that I can do it. I'm going to find someone to explain it to me. I'm going to show you I can do it.' Why not look at it that way?"

"I don't know. Teacher look at you like bad guys when you don't do any work for a couple of days....You a bad guy....Tell everybody that you bad....One room you might do all your work and like the teacher might associate with another teacher and they tell them, they might be shocked That used to happen to me all the time last year. One English teacher said, 'I heard so much stuff about you. I can't believe it.' I tell her, I say, 'that ain't true.' Teachers,
they do it so slick...putting the word out on people."

To figure out Bob's study habits, the researcher asked him to describe what he did on a typical afternoon. "I Go home...I do some...like homework, do a couple papers I think need to be done. I won't do it right away...as soon as I get home. I go home, watch tv, eat, end up falling asleep, or some of my friends might come over or they might call and I'll go over their house...and just hang out....Go to the rec center...shoot some basketball and then I'll probably come home and do the work. If I do it before that no telling what time I might do the work. Some time I don't do it at all...just come to school in the morning and do it."

"Do you have enough time in the morning to do it?"

"Yeah."

At another point in the interview, Bob said if he wasn't in school, "can't be with your friends or you can do is sleep all day or hang out with grown-ups."

Bob was asked what could he do to improve his grades. He said, "adjust to these teachers' ways...if they are doing something wrong, I don't pay no attention to it." He said it wouldn't be hard, but sometimes he feels like saying, "forget it." He says that since he flunked chemistry and geometry, he's not going to get a college preparatory diploma.

"Teachers think I cheat when I pass a test because I don't turn in homework. I can just look at stuff."

"Why don't you turn in homework?"
"I don't know...just don't have any study habits like people say you should have. I just do what I want to do. I do it in school, just forget about it."

"How long would it take you to get the habits."

"I used to do it all the time....Then I started slacking up because it was in a class I was flunking.

With the exception of a "D," Bob was relatively successful in Spanish. The other respondents said that the Spanish teachers are, as a group, good teachers. The researcher asked a Spanish teacher about Bob. She said that once she established her expectations for him, he did his classwork. Two Spanish teachers were together and told the researcher their philosophy which has had positive results for Bob in their classes. They stated, "[We] try hard to prove our belief that all kids can learn." "If you do the things I ask you to do, you will be successful." They believe that attendance is a problem and the school should look at the relationship between attendance and performance.

Additionally, the teachers believe in "deal[ing] with students on a very personal basis and insist[ing] that they do their work....I hear your excuse, now do the work. I'll help you work out your problems, but I want you to be successful. I don't expect anyone to fail. We'll do whatever is necessary to help you be successful in this course." The teacher say they probably have the highest percentage of success in the system. They do a "lot of reteaching. The only ones who fail
are those who don't come to school or simply don't do anything." The researcher described the philosophy of the Spanish teachers because it seems that the climate established by the teachers is a motivator for Bob.

School records (see Figure 2) show that in elementary and middle school Bob received mostly A's, B's, and C's. His ninth grade California Test of Basic Skills scores show a National Profile grade level score of 8.7. A total reading score of 44%ile and a total mathematics score of 63%ile. His standardized test scores suggest that Bob is capable of much higher grades. The difference in Bob's grades between the eighth and ninth grade underscores his comments about the affect of an F in English. The difference in grades suggest several possible explanations. The teachers were more supportive in the eighth grade or "gave" easier grades. On the other hand, Bob's standardized test scores in the eighth grade suggest he is capable of average to above average grades.
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<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
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**FIGURE 2.** Bob's Course Grades.
During a visit to one of Bob's classes to give him a copy of the survey to answer, he was sleep. The researcher asked the teacher if he could speak to Bob for a few minutes. The teacher loudly said, "All right, I hate to wake him up. He's having an awfully good nap." Bob woke up and came to the door, handing the teacher a sheet of paper. The teacher said, "Oh, you finished it?" Bob said, "I told you I would." Later, when asked about the incident, Bob said, "The teacher is always clowning like that, but I don't pay him any attention."

His major academic motivator seems to be teacher behavior with responses focusing on "class is boring"; "teacher and atmosphere"; "the way it was presented was boring"; "[teacher] should make sure you understand before you go on....You might think you're right, show me"; "[the good teacher] made sure each student knew what they were during; I would teach my students the way I wanted to be taught."

Bob is another respondent whose behavior is counterproductive to what he says he want. The researcher believes Bob says he doesn't care to maintain self-esteem. As one listens to Bob talk, his poor grades seem partly attributable to poor study skills and teacher behavior. When he fails, he stops putting forth effort when he perceives the teacher doesn't show concern. Thus, for Bob, meaning arises out of his interaction with his teachers.
MELVIN

Melvin is 16 years old. He is about 6'1" in height, slim and athletic. He plays football, basketball, and runs track. He led the football team in interceptions during the 1988-89 school year and made the All-City Football Team in 1990. During our initial interview, he said that school is fun. "I like it. I'm not taking it in the right way. I've been on a slow track. I look forward to college, that's why I need school. I like sports, need grades to be eligible."

"You say, you're not taking it in the right way?"

"I get this lecture, it's a good lecture. I'm a smart person everybody knows it. I'm the type of person who ain't using it."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I have to do what I've started this semester [studying]."

Melvin says that he started getting in trouble in 8th grade. "Seems like that's when it all began - can't speak your rights even when you do, you're still wrong." His voice became quieter.

Melvin believes that if he got all A's, his friends "would say it's good but would get mad. They would get jealous. I do things now that they can't do. Things they are ineligible for, I can do. They get bad attitudes. A guy started a fight with me - he got jealous. There are people in this school like that, they have two personalities. They be
good with you and the next [minute] they try to start a fight."

Melvin said that he has started studying because he "noticed I'm a junior. I have one year left to go. I need my grades up for college when scouts and recruiters come in. SAT test scores need to be high, so when I take the test, I can pass."

"Why didn't you think about that in the 10th grade?"
"I was sort of acting lazy. I slacked down in homework assignments. I get in trouble in school cutting class - getting Saturday school - make my record real bad."
"Why cut class?"
"I don't know - just did it."

Melvin seems very responsive to emotions. When asked about elementary school he responded, "Elementary school - alternative school - taught us a lot - moving around - better education - I liked it because it made me feel like I was in a smart group - in with all the smart people."

The researcher noticed that Melvin seemed reluctant when the interview began, however, at the end of the interview it seemed as if he didn't want to leave. He offered reasons why he could return the same day for subsequent observations.

After one class, the researcher asked him, "If you are as smart as you say, is it smart not to do class assignments, particularly since you say you want to go to college?" He said, "No." Additionally, he had said during the interview
that he wouldn't let his friends bring him down. He made the honor roll during the first grading period of his 10th grade year (2.455). After teasing by his friends, his grade point average dropped to a 1.000 the next grading period. Melvin is eschewing academic effort because of friends. His grades have been low since. Wasn't he, in fact, concerned about what his friends said. At first he said, "No," but then said, "You're right."

On another occasion, the researcher asked him during a study period, "How are you going to college with poor grades?" He said, "Oh, I'm going on a scholarship."

"What kind?"

"Football."

He did not answer the question, "What will you do if you don't meet Proposition 48?"

"Do you perceive getting good grades as 'acting white'?"

He said, "no" without hesitation.

During another interview, the researcher raised the issue of 'acting white.' "Is getting good grades perceived as 'acting white.'" Again, he said no. When told that the researcher could not find one black male at the 11th grade who had a 3.0 average, he said, "yes," implying that the researcher was correct [there are no 11th grade black males with a 3.0 average]. He thought about the 12th grade and said there were none there either, but then said there was one in the 10th grade. The researcher asked, "who?" He said Chuck.
He was asked if Chuck lived near him. He said on the next street over. "What do you think of Chuck?" He said he thought that is great that Chuck gets good grades. No one puts Chuck down. He was happy for him. "Is he [Chuck] respected?"

"Yes."

The researcher asked him again why he wasn't getting his act together [doing his classwork and homework]. He said he didn't know.

One of Melvin's teachers said that he is very smart, but wants the teacher's approval. During his first semester as a sophomore, he made the honor roll (2.455), but did absolutely nothing the 2nd and failed. S/he believes it was because of pressure from his friends. He seems very concerned about the perceptions of his friends. The teacher described Melvin as argumentative. The teacher said that he will dominate a class discussion and when the teacher becomes disturbed, will ask the teacher after class if she still loves him.

School records show that his California Test of Basic Skill scores in the ninth grade were 27%ile in Total Reading and 41%ile in total mathematics. His Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Scores at the 03%ile in Verbal and 33%ile in Mathematics. In elementary school, his grades were satisfactory, but he received unsatisfactory grades in Personal Growth. In the fifth grade, his course grades were satisfactory and he received an outstanding in Work Habits. His records show he was in a special academic program during
grades three through five. In Figure 3, Melvin's school records show that he was an A, B, C student through the seventh grade. In the eighth grade, he received D's and an F. His grades dropped below a C average in the second semester of his 10th grade year. According to interview data and teacher comments, this was a period in which Melvin was criticized by his peers because of his previous semester's grades.
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Courses</th>
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| 6th   | 12       | Language Arts C Art B  
Reading C Music B  
Social Study B Home Economics B  
Mathematics B Industrial Arts B  
Health C Physical Education B  
Science C |
| 7th   | 14       | English A Art C  
Reading C Chorus C  
Social Study C Home Economics B  
Mathematics B Industrial Arts A  
Health B Physical Education A  
Science B |
| 8th   | 34.5     | Language Arts D Art F  
Reading D Chorus B  
Social Study C Home Economics C  
Language Survey C Industrial Arts A  
Mathematics C Physical Education C  
Life Science C |
| 9th   |          | 1st Semester  
Absent 17.5 Days  
English D  
Life Skills C  
German C  
Pre-Algebra C  
Physical Science C  
World Business C  
Keyboard D  
2nd Semester  
Absent 12 Days  
English C  
German C  
Pre-Algebra D  
Physical Science D  
World Business C  
Physical Education B |
| 10th  |          | Absent 5.5 Days  
English A  
Ethnic Heritage C  
Spanish B  
Algebra C  
Biology D  
Physical Education B  
Absen 17 Days  
English C  
Ethnic Insight D  
Spanish F  
Algebra D  
Biology D  
Health F  
Speech Survey C |
| 11th  |          | Absent 14 Days  
English D  
Media D  
USA Nation F  
Spanish C  
Algebra D  
Health D |

FIGURE 3. Melvin's Course Grades.
During observations of Melvin playing basketball, he is the leader on the basketball court. He plays point guard on offense and the wing position in zone defense. He ranks in the top ten in the city in assists. He is not a selfish player in terms of trying to do all the scoring. He usually passes the ball to his teammates for scoring. During the several games I watched, he did not score many points. On one occasion, the researcher observed Melvin playing basketball in a non-school recreational area. He played with skill, but was somewhat quiet. He did not talk very much. He did not get under the basket for rebounds, almost as if he didn't like the physical roughness. One of his teachers said that he will dominate a class discussion. If he observes that the teacher has become disturbed, he will ask afterward, "you still love me, don't you." She thinks that he needs to have the approval of the teacher. Based on the data, it seems he also needs the approval of peers.

During the period of this study, Melvin was frequently absent from his classes. The researcher asked him about his attendance, but he offered no explanation saying, "I don't know why."

Melvin's academic self-concept appears mixed. He says he has the ability to be academically successful, but realizes that he isn't putting forth the effort to be successful. He seems unsure as to why he isn't. He says that teachers say he is smart, but he may not believe it. His behavior is
counterproductive to what he says he wants. There seems to be a conflict between his need for approval and acceptance from teachers and peers accompanied by wanting to be independent, i.e., "Can't speak your own mind." The behaviors required of him to be academically successful seem to conflict with what another part of him wants: peer acceptance.

Melvin's motivators are the perceptions of friends and teachers. His affiliation needs, i.e., the need to be liked by his friends, the teachers, and even the researcher results in conflict. He is in conflict between the demands of friends and the demands of school.
CHUCK

Chuck is a tenth grade student. He has the highest grade point average of any black male in the school. The other respondents in this study seem to respect him. Chuck says that he likes school a lot. "I like to learn...to learn new stuff that goes on in the world." He did not begin to enjoy learning until the sixth grade. "I didn't know how to read, once I learned to read, everything opened up. I got on the honor roll. It's a big thing in school."

Chuck was asked if he had any idea why he didn't learn?

"Teachers didn't care, I guess."

"Did the teachers recommend you for exceptional education?"

"They put me in slow reading and then SLD\(^8\). Teachers taught me the basics."

"Is there a particular teacher who helped you?"

"There were three teachers in SLD; they taught me the basics...told me I could do it if I kept trying. They would give me something for doing it. They told me not to get frustrated and never give up. They said I was their son. They wanted me to be a lawyer or doctor...strive for something like that." Chuck's response shows that his teachers' behaviors are symbols that gave him self-esteem, making him feel important.

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\(^8\) SLD is an acronym for Specific Learning Disability. It is a category within Exceptional Education for students of average intelligence, but who are hampered by a specific skill deficiency.
and good (Becker, 1971).

"Do you have friends who would tease you if you were on the honor roll?"

"Probably call me a nerd...I take being called a nerd as a joke. I understand it. When I was in elementary, I called kids a nerd. I understand the other side; now I just take it as a joke. They feel uncomfortable...think it's not cool."

"Do you think that deep inside, they're really jealous?"

"Yes."

"Did you have anyone to push you?"

"My mom...she would ask me what the problem was. I said nothing. She said something's wrong and started to talk to the teachers."

"Describe typically what you do when you leave school?"

"I have track practice until 5:30; do homework until 9:30 and then eat and shower, iron my clothes and go to sleep."

"You spend three to four hours doing homework, what do you do when you don't have homework?"

"Plain studying if I don't have homework. I like learning...trying to get ahead of other students in class."

"Why do you think the other guys don't do their homework?"

"They think they're too cool and hang around other friends who don't study. They keep grades up high enough to play sports. They let peer pressure get to them. I accept it as it is. They don't realize what they are doing to
Chuck's responses plus school records and classroom observations show that Chuck's major academic motivator is his attitude toward learning and friends. His attitude provides all four elements of motivation: direction, energy, vigor of response, and persistence.

"What would you like to do when you finish school?"

"Go to college...take up architecture or be a lawyer ... doctor."

"Do you find some teachers like to embarrass students?"

"I haven't found it."

Chuck says of his three junior high exceptional education teachers, "They pushed me...took time with me." He also identified one of his high school teachers as a good teacher. When asked, "Why?" He said, "her knowledge. Her class is interesting. It is so intense that if you weren't prepared, you would be left out. She knew if you weren't prepared. She is driving us, pushing - making us do. You would sit up straight, she's tough....Fear....Whether she liked you or not, if you hadn't read, she got on you." A smile, almost a beaming, would come over Chuck's face when talking about school or the teachers he described as good teachers. He "likes teachers who motivate you and say you can do it or if you don't get it done then I like to be pressured if you don't understand they'll take time with you on their own time. I like teachers like that." He just likes to learn "all that
In another interview, Chuck said that he likes being popular, but he doesn't let peer pressure get to him. He just "accepts it as it is." He knows that if he doesn't get his work, then he won't get a scholarship. He wants to attend college and study architecture or become a doctor or lawyer.

The researcher went to the middle school and talked to the three Exceptional Education teachers to whom Chuck gives credit for his academic success. The teachers spoke admiringly of him. When he entered the sixth grade, the Specific Learning Disability teacher told him he had to do his homework. He would receive no bad grades, but she had to see him do the work. If he had any problem, just ask. They told him he could do. The motivation was there. He started being competitive with male and female cousins who lived with him. When he was in the sixth grade, just before Christmas he moved to his aunt's house. He had a place to study. He was "constantly making up for lost time. He definitely had a quest for knowledge....His temper helped get him through. It provided the energy. He now goes out to do well. He is very achievement oriented...very determined." Chuck's behavior conforms to McClelland's n Ach.

School records show Chuck's California Test Basic Skills' scores in grade 8 as 3%ile in total reading and total Mathematics National Percentile score of 21%ile. By testing time grade 9.7, his total reading score was at the 27%ile and
his total mathematics score was at the 99%ile. Figure 4 shows Chuck's grades to be A or B in mathematics since the sixth grade. He had a higher grade point average in the ninth grade than the tenth. His highest grades remain in what are normally the toughest subjects: algebra, Spanish, and biology.

Chuck is all the more remarkable when one considers that three of his teachers say that he could not read or write his name when he was promoted to the 6th grade. Now, according to school records, his first semester 10th grade point average is 2.857.
FIGURE 4. Chuck's Course Grades.

The researcher observed Chuck in his science class. He was quiet, but his eyes and facial expression expressed amazement at the ideas and facts presented by the teacher. His attention seemed totally focused on the class work. The interpretation of his facial expression as amazement was
confirmed by Chuck during a group-reality check.

Chuck's motivators are his "thirst" for knowledge and his belief that he can do it. His academic self-concept is high in comparison with other black males at the school. He defines school as fun, but his fun comes through learning as opposed to socializing. His definition of school affects his academic motivation. He views himself as self-determining. He does not suggest that his blackness or the legacy of racism is responsible for students not learning.

His "significant others" are his mother, an aunt, and three teachers in middle school. He values his friends, but not to the extent that their approval is more important than learning. Additionally, all the comments made by the other respondents about Chuck were very positive. Chuck is the only respondent of whom it can be said that he is intrinsically motivated to learn.
RALPH

Ralph, 17, is medium height, muscular and well-dressed. He was soft-spoken, but gave no hint of being shy or nervous. During the initial interview, he stated that he likes to play football, lift weights, and works part-time at McDonald's. He wants to own his business.

Ralph believes that school is "something to help you get where you want to go." He was planning to be a plumber, but now plans to go to college. During the interview, he said that he "messed up" in two classes. He says he needs help in Algebra and English.

"I just can't do that Algebra. It's too hard for me right now."

He hasn't ask his teacher for help because he 'likes to fuss too much...Treat you like a little kid. I don't feel like going through all that. English I could have passed that, I didn't do one of the final papers...suppose to do this typing paper. I didn't do it and that flunked me."

"Why didn't you do the final paper?"

"I can't type...I mean I can type, but really I didn't understand what we had to do. We had to do it over the Christmas vacation. Turn it in when we got back."

"Before you left to go out on the vacation, did you know then that you didn't know how to do the paper?"

"Yes, those teachers like to embarrass you and stuff. I don't like to be embarrassed, so I don't ask any questions. I
ask the students."

Class failure and teacher behavior has become a demotivator for Ralph. He acts toward his class on the basis of that class's meaning for him: a place of embarrassment and fussing.

"What kinds of things do they do that's embarrassing? Give me an example."

"Like they just talk all loud to you in front of the whole class so the whole class can hear. Mr____, he says some dumb stuff. I really don't pay him no attention...Take you all the way back to the first grade and say you learn this in the first grade. Try to make you feel down....Most of the people don't pay no attention to him....Just ignore what he saying."

"Like a put down?"

"He say he do that every year to try to help you. He just do it."

"Have you told him that rather than that helping you, it just makes you feel like not doing the work?"

"No."

On the other hand, he likes his Spanish class because it's fun and the teacher "helps you a lot. She helps you whenever you need it. Tell you to come in whenever you need it."

"What perception do you get when a teacher helps you as opposed to a teacher who doesn't really help you and likes to embarrass you?"
"I haven't thought about it. I just tell them thank you for the help. I just tell them if I need some more help, I will come back."

"Are you willing to work more for the teacher that helps you."

"Yes" [Ralph responds without hesitation].

Ralph describes his typical day as follows: he either goes to work or to the community recreational center and lifts weights. When asked what is the difference between the satisfaction gained in lifting weights and attending Algebra, he said, "Sitting in an Algebra class is frustrating...I know I can't do the work and teachers yelling all the time. I just walk out of class. Weights you don't have to worry about it...feel good doing it...cause you want to do it."

Ralph says that the reason he lifts weights is he wants "to be named something in football - All-City or District." He is trying to get "bigger and stronger."

I asked Ralph what does he want from teachers. He said, "Slow down; don't fuss all the time." Ralph was asked if he felt dumb when the teacher fusses always. He said, "No, 'cause I know I'm not dumb. You can only go so high at doing things...and maybe I already went as high as I can go at doing that math unless I get another teacher and see how they work maybe I could push it up a little more."

"Have you always had these feelings about school?"
"No, not until this year. Last year I didn't have any problems....Didn't have no bad grades. This my first year getting bad grades."

"What would you say about your study habits?"

"I usually study mostly every day. Now I don't....This year I haven't been studying....Well first semester I been studying...first nine weeks...the second nine weeks I slacked up studying because I couldn't do the math. That's mainly what I was working on the first nine weeks. I usually study when test time....I only really study when I know I have a test or something coming up. I don't sit down and study unless I know I have something coming up that I have to study for."

"Would it be a fair statement of what you feel to say that when you are doing schoolwork and you can't do it and you don't understand it and the teacher doesn't help you with it, then you stop putting forth any effort or you stop trying to do it?"

"Well, not really. This has never happened to me until now. He'll help you. I just don't feel like getting fussed at all the time....So in his class I stop putting effort in trying to do it. That's the only class....All the other classes, I put effort in. All the other teachers help you. They don't fuss at you really like he do. He's the main teacher that fuss at you."

Ralph is in a Catch-22 situation: he experiences failure and embarrassment. He stops putting forth effort which leads
to more failure and embarrassment eschewing academic effort because of perceived teacher behaviors.

"Do you think if you started doing more work, he would stop fussing?"

"It's not the work. It's the tests and stuff like that... He really don't count the homework. He just wants to see how you do on a test. When he ask you questions in class... if you don't know how to answer, he thinks you ain't been paying attention and that's when he starts doing the funny talking."

"How important are good grades to your friends?"

"Most of my friends are into sports and they know they need the good grades to go to college because half my friends want to go to college. Some of them act dumb, but they ain't dumb. They know when it's time for them to get it together, they'll get it together, but other than that they mess around."

"What would your friends say if you got all A's on you report card?"

"Really nothing.... They appreciate it.... Say good job or something."

"They wouldn't say, 'Man you trying to be cute or something, sitting in class getting all those good grades?'"

"No."

"Do your parents expect you to go to college?"
"If I go, I be the first one in my family to go to college. That's why they want me to go head and go through with it."

"Do you think the cards in life are stacked against you?"
"No."

"Do you think you are having any problems in life because you're black that you wouldn't have otherwise?"
"No."

"If you could change one thing about school that would help you to do better, what would you change?"

"I'd get some tutors in here. They never said nothing about any tutors. If you need help, there'd be tutors after school or something. They need a couple of them....Get those teachers out of here that want to just fuss at you and make you feel dumb all the time....fuss a little bit, but not like doing all that talking....Asking you if you're dumb or something like that when you know you ain't....That's the kind of teacher make you want to say something to them."

"If you got a tutor after school, wouldn't that interfere with your sports?"

"Not like if thirty minutes after school probably wouldn't hurt. It wouldn't interfere that much...just set your time up a little more for your activities. You would be an hour short on your activities."

"What is the one thing you would change about yourself
"Learn to study more and if you can't do it, just keep on trying to do it, no matter if you can't do it."

One of Ralph's teachers stated that Ralph used to be mannerly, attentive, very neat in work, but something changed a year ago. "He's still neat in appearance, but doesn't take as much time with homework." The researcher asked about teacher perceptions that he no longer spent as much time on his homework. He believes that the change is the result of teachers fussing all the time.

School records show that Ralph scored at the 14%ile in total reading and at the 40%ile on total mathematics on the California Test of Basic Skills. He took the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test and scored at the 0%ile on the verbal section and at the 08%ile in mathematics. He won two awards in middle school: "Citizen of the Month - Science" in the seventh grade and "Citizen of the Month - Essay Contest" in the eighth grade. His grades are as follows:
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**FIGURE 5.** Ralph's Course Grades.
Listening and observing Ralph in class, one concludes that his academic self-concept is below average. His perceptions of negative teachers' comments reinforces his low academic self-esteem. "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas, 1928). Ralph seems very slow when doing classwork. He looks at the assignment several times before starting to do what is asked. In Spanish, he seems to respond to the teacher's directions and explanations much better than in his other classes. His grades support this observation.

Although Ralph goes to the same recreational center as the other respondents, it's difficult to figure out the influence of his peers on him. Academically, teachers are "significant others." Some for good, but most having a negative influence. The combination of "perceived" poor teaching and his insecurity seems to be the strongest factors related to his academic motivators. He identified one teacher as providing academic support. The support of the one teacher has been insufficient to overcome his academic insecurities. Lifting weights seems to provide him a sense of accomplishment that, at this time, school doesn't.

Ralph's academic motivators are teacher behavior and his attitude toward his academic ability. Ralph's behavior is counterproductive; his studying and learning skills are deficient. It is easy to understand his frustration.
STEADMAN

Steadman is 5'2 and weighs about 160 lbs. He thinks school is a "nice place for getting an education. I like it." The image he has of school is "people sitting in class willing to learn." He says that he has a B or C average. If he doesn't graduate or go to college, it will be bad for his future. He plans to go into the U.S. Navy for 4-8 years and attend college to study engineering or electronics. His hobby is lifting weights. He really felt his best in school "back in the middle school, 8th grade Honor Roll, I was surprised, but knew I had done good." He says he would like to be on the Honor Roll, but doesn't know why he isn't on it now.

When asked to describe a typical afternoon, he said, "I go home, put on[cook] food, watch t.v., do my homework, and go to the center." He further states that he does his homework, "most of the time." The difference in his performance between the eighth grade and now is that, "I was taking my classes more seriously. I wanted to learn."

Steadman had received, comparatively speaking, good grades. His friends "called him a teacher's pet and said that was how I got my grade, by being the teacher's pet, but I got my grade 'cause I was doing my work." Following those comments, Steadman put forth little effort and his grades reflected his lack of effort. One wonders if his perception of his height might contribute to his dislike of the term "teacher's pet?" The researcher did not think to ask.
"I felt like I was with the teacher. It's like I was suppose to be more cooler with teachers than my friends. I like to see my friends doing good. They mean a lot to me." He believed if he started studying again, his friends would call him a teacher's pet again. "No one wants to be called a teacher's pet. I don't...It's like I'm his or her little kid or something."

"What if there was a way you could get on the honor roll, but because of an agreement with the teacher, no one would know. Would you start taking your classes seriously?"

He quietly said, "Yes." The researcher noticed that as the questions became more probing, Steadman continued to smile, but his voice started to crack and he seemed nervous.

It appears from Steadman's statement and his school behavior that the most important influence on him is his peer group and their values. They are the "significant other" for him at this time.

Steadman believes that the most difficult part about school for him is when he is "in class trying to learn and people are making noise." He doesn't believe that others are smarter than he is, they try harder than he does. "I don't put myself down."

Steadman was asked to talk about his classes. He felt that his Computer teacher can teach pretty good. "She sits down and talks...helps you learn and gives you time. She doesn't embarrass you - she explains. She's very nice. She
gives us the work and tells us what to do." His History teacher expects "you are supposed to know. She gives pop quizzes, has a snotty attitude (wants to get smart-says you can't learn. She likes to crack [a derogatory comment] on you - called one of my friends "Ewat" [cartoon character] - always making fun of you. "She makes fun of another friend of mine."

When Steadman was asked if he thought other students were smarter than he, he said no. He didn't put himself down.

"Why do some of them get better grades than you?"

"Maybe some of them try harder or understand better."

Steadman was asked if he had more teachers like his computer teacher, would he get his work even at the expense of being called a teacher's pet. He nodded his head up and down, indicating yes.

He said that given a choice, he would prefer having his father proud of him even if that meant having his friends call him a teacher's pet. He would like his graduation award to be "Academic Student of the Year." He was asked why he wasn't doing it. He smiled.

Steadman believes that white teachers act funny toward black females and males, but the teacher identified by him as his best teacher is white. This was in response to the question, "Was he having problems because he is black?"

"Do you really believe that whether you get good grades or not is up to you?"

"Yes."
The one thing he would like to change about himself is to "take school more seriously."

"Why aren't you taking any college preparatory class?"

"I just follow my schedule."

School records show that Steadman's ninth grade scores on the California Test of Basic Skills were 27%ile in total reading and the 38% in total mathematics. Steadman's grades decreased a first semester ninth grade average of 1.923 to a .667 after the first semester of his tenth grade year. The semester before the interviews and observations, his grade point average was .714, not a B or C as he said during his initial interview. Figure 6 shows, in a dramatic fashion, the deterioration of Steadman's grades. His grades through the ninth grade were passable with a C to C- average. However, after his ninth grade report card, his friends started calling him a teacher's pet. From the first semester of his tenth grade to the present, his grades have dropped to failing in almost every subject. The exceptions are his reading grades from the teacher he called the best teacher in the school and in physical education.
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**FIGURE 6.** Steadman's Course Grades.
More than once, the researcher saw Steadman in the halls. Most of the time he was laughing and did not look as if he was going to class. The researcher went to one of Steadman's classes to see if he was there. He wasn't and the teacher said she had not seen him.

The computer teacher of whom he said, "she helps you learn," teaches his Developmental Reading class. Observing Steadman, he came into the room, sat at the computer terminal and began working. Throughout the period, Steadman worked steadily at the terminal and when he had completed the classwork, he asked the researcher to look at it. He smiled as he pointed to his work with what appeared to be great pride.

To get a sense of the type of environment this teacher wanted to create, she was asked, "What is most important to you in teaching?" She responded, "Issues of personal respect. My goal is to give success and teach that the literacy of the streets is not literacy of the school."

The students had initially entered her class talking and playing. The teacher, in a quiet way, told the students to begin working. A few continued to play until she quietly said, "Do it now." At a distance of ten feet, I could barely hear her voice. Immediately, they begin to work. Teacher further stated that a small class helps, but other teachers may only have two acting out students per period, but she may have nine. She said she does not believe in teaching from
behind the desk. She moves and evidences the self-conviction that she can teach students to learn. She has a different philosophy toward teaching: she tries hard to prove her belief that all kids can learn.

After talking with the teacher, the researcher noticed that Steadman was still working. He received a B in this class the first semester and was absent only ten times, the fewest of any of his other classes. The most number of recorded absences in any class was 28. This does suggest that he skipped classes often, but also suggests that one teacher was making a difference with him...at least in her class.

The motivators most related to Steadman's academic behavior are his need for his friends approval and the characteristics of the classroom teacher. The data suggest that Steadman is a student in conflict. A conflict between wanting academic success and, apparently, capable of earning good grades. He does not want to be called a teacher's pet and, therefore, does not engage in the behaviors that might result in his being called a teacher's pet. One wonders whether his height is related to his sensitivity to being called teacher's pet.
LARRY

Larry is a stocky 6'1" student. During the initial interview, he was mannerly and soft-spoken. More than any other respondent, his answers to the researcher's questions suggest contradictions between what he says he can do and his actual academic performance. Larry says he wants to be an engineer. He likes working with his hands, i.e., working on trucks, tractors and engines. He wants to open an engine repair shop. It "shows that you are working and not sitting around pushing a couple of buttons and answering telephones. I don't like easy work...like hard work." He has not decided about going to college. He plans to go in the Marines or Army for four years and save money, as the recruiter told him, and open his shop. Additionally, four years in the military would help him get certified.

"What would you like to be?"

"Go to college for engineering...work on anything with engines."

"Why do you like working on engines?"

"That's what my father started doing, now he is working in communications. I can do the same thing, but I'd rather be a mechanic instead."

"Why would you rather be a mechanic?"

"Shows that you are really working and not just sitting around pushing a couple of buttons."

"It's important to you to show that you can work?"
"It's not that it's important. I just don't like easy work."

"Do you feel that same way about work in school? Are you taking college prep classes now?"

"No, not now."

"Why?"

"Cause I just didn't sign up for them. I really haven't made up my mind whether or not to go to college. As soon as this year is over, I'll have my certificate in auto mechanics. Get in the Marines or Army. If I go there for four years. I'll have enough money [to open business]. They'll help me get certified."

"In other words you might not go to college for engineering, you might just go into the service?"

"Yes."

"What will make the difference whether you go to college or the service?"

"If I go to college, I might not have the money to go college. That's why I have not decided to take any classes because I don't have any money to go....If I go straight to the Army, he [U.S. Army Recruiter] told me I would be in there for about four years. They would help me certify. They would pay me money. I would travel and have some experience."

When asked what he thought of school, he said it "was kind of easy...kind of hard." He describes school activities as "boring." "There is no school spirit." Larry said work in
elementary school was too easy, he would "brush right through homework."

"What does a teacher do that you would say it's a hard teacher?"

"The way she grades."
"Lower than you think you earn?"
"Yes."
"And an easy teacher?"
"Depends."
"How did you like elementary school?"
"It was too easy."
"In what way was it too easy?"
"When they give you homework you could go right through it."

"What about middle school?"
"Everything but Science."
"Tell me about science?"
"It was really kind of easy, but I couldn't understand the teacher. He would give you assignments, but wouldn't really explain it."

"When something is hard and the teacher doesn't explain it, how do you feel?"
"Kind of frustrated because you have to read it over and over to understand it."
"And what do you do when you feel frustrated?"
"Nothing, just go ahead and read."
"What if you don't pick it up?"

"You don't have any choice, but to pick it up."

"What do you do then to learn it? When you are frustrated and the person is not explaining it, what do you do? Can you remember a time when that has happened?"

"Yes."

"In middle school, I had a science teacher, he...I don't know, for some reason when we got into his class we started talking. He got quiet. He was in a bad mood. He said the assignment is on the board...read...do all the questions. It was a new chapter. He didn't explain anything because he was in a bad mood. You had to just sit down and read it."

"What did you do when you found you still didn't understand it?"

" Tried to go up to him, but he didn't want to talk to anybody."

"What grade did you get on that assignment?"

"D."

His grades do not show that middle school was easy. Of the nineteen grades he received between the sixth and eighth grades, twelve were "D."

Larry doesn't think his parents expect him to go to college although they say that he can. He says that his parents don't want him to have to go through the same thing they had to, i.e., hard work and low pay. He doesn't attribute any of his academic problems to being black. He
thinks he could get an A in every class, "if I put my mind to it." He was asked what needed to be done in order for him to "put his mind to it."

"Just sit down and do it."

"If you could change one thing about school that would help you do a better job, what would it be?" Taking a few seconds to answer, he said, "School activities. No one is into activities...no school spirit."

"If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?"

"My personality."

"Do you think there is something wrong with your personality?"

"Just not doing what I know I can do...I know I can do better...just don't try."

"Why don't you try?"

"Sometimes, I don't have the time...don't try."

"What would it take for you to try?"

"More time."

"What do you do with your time?"

"What do you do when you leave school?"

"Go home get something out of the refrigerator...do my homework...friend come by...go riding."

"When you sit down to do your homework, do you have any problems?"
"When I go directly home. If I don't go directly home, it won't get done."
"Where do you go when you don't go directly home?"
"To the Mall."
"If you know that when you don't go directly home, you don't do your homework, then why do you go to the mall?"
"Cause...to hang out with some friends."
"So at that time, being with your friends is more important than homework?"
"It's not more important, just do it, don't really think about it just go."
"Is it a habit?"
"No, it's not a habit."

In comparing Larry's academic performance with his responses, one thinks of Adler's (1979) assertion, "the inferiority feeling presses constantly towards its own resolution (p. 58)."

School records show his grades from the first through the fourth grade were C's and Satisfactory's. In the fifth grade, he received an F in Arithmetic and Language and a D in Social Studies and Science. Larry's scores on the California Test of Basic Skills in the ninth grade were 18%ile on total reading and 4%ile on total mathematics. In elementary school, school records show that he was successful in the first through the fourth grade. In the fifth grade he received F's in Arithmetic and Language. He received a C in Reading and Writing, and D's
in Social Studies and Science. Figure 7 shows that Larry's grades reflect years of poor grades. Larry repeated the ninth grade. His first semester grade point average was .462 and .929 for the second semester.

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FIGURE 7. Larry's Course Grades.

Observing Larry in class, he was very quiet and did not ask or answer any questions. The researcher became a
participant observer in one class after the teacher asked him to participate in a discussion. In several other classes, the researcher noticed that Larry's motions seem almost robotic, i.e., without enthusiasm or emotion—a sort of ennui. He was always well-mannered and never disruptive, but he did not actively participate in classroom discussions. It was like watching a person who has given up, but is required to return daily to their place of failure. In other words, Larry's classroom non-participation matched his verbalized dislike of school.

Larry's low academic motivation seems related to inadequate skill development compounded by his perception that teachers don't explain the work so that he can understand. Larry's frustration seems to match the frustration experienced by several other respondents with the most frequent comment being the "teacher doesn't explain."

MATTHEW

Matthew is a tall, slim, handsome, very mannerly and friendly young man who works part-time, plays basketball, likes to "rap", and drives around a lot. His mom cut back on his part-time job because she believed he needed more time for school work.

During our initial interview, Matthew defined school as a "place where children go from the ages 5 - 20 to gain
knowledge to survive in life. It's not bad. And I know you encounter so much in life that you don't learn in school, but at this point you have to go, but I say it's not bad. As I grow older, I wish I had learned more when I played around in school, I wish I had learned more. Now I'm trying to crack down on my work and learn because I know I'll be graduating soon and I want to graduate as high on the roster as I can. My mom tells me I have to go to school and do good, but I'm not doing it for her, it's for me because it's going to follow me all of my life. Most people will tell you do your best in school, but the person that they are telling has to decide that on their own. You'll only do something if you want to do it. The courses that I'm taking...I take college preparatory courses and everybody says how hard they are so if you do bad in them, it's O.K., but if you really keep up with your work and study and do your homework, it's not that hard because you'll know the stuff. It'll come to you eventually."

"How are you able to keep up with your homework?"

"It is hard to keep up with it because I take eight classes a day. As soon as I get home, I don't go out until I do my homework."

"Why do you think that you are able to go and do your homework, but someone else will go home take a nap, go out, and by the time they get home, it's too late to do it?"

"I know I use to do that I'd go home and maybe go outside...talk on the phone and I'd do more and more stuff
...as I would talk on the phone, people would have more and more stuff to do. When I'd get home, I wouldn't get anything done because it was too late or I'd be tired or whatever. I've been in situations like that and now it's something I really want to do. Other people may not have strong influences at home because my mom she did good. She influences me more than anybody else I really listen to her. And another thing is that I want to and other people may let them do their homework later or not at all."

"If you decided not to do your homework, what would your mother say?"

"Well, she doesn't really check my homework, but...if I told her I did when I didn't, it would catch up with me later. I would probably be on punishment...restricted from the phone, couldn't use her car or go out to parties."

"They use to have a commercial on television. It is a stock brokerage house, 'When E.F. Hutton speaks, everyone listens.' "Do you remember that commercial?"

"Yes."

"Would you describe that as your relationship with your mother: 'When my mom speaks, everyone listens'?"

"Yes, definitely. I grew up in another city. Me and my mom are close. I'll tell my mom things, I won't tell anyone else....Yeah, when my mom talks, I listen. I guess it will be that way until I move out of her house. That's another thing, as long as I'm in her house, I will follow her rules."
Mike said that his friends know him and understand his mother's rules, therefore, they don't push him to go out before he completes his school work. "All my friends have met my mom, and they have respect for her, too - once you meet my mom, you'll have respect for her. I'm not really pressured into too many situations."

Matthew says that he didn't always enjoy school. He moved to this city from another one, but here, he found that "teachers really care, they talk to you, call your parents. When they showed they cared for me, I started to work harder." In the school system from where he transferred, he said he attended three or four different schools. The schools were "rowdy."

He says that most of his friends are planning to go to college.

Most of Matthew's teachers are very complimentary of him. The teachers comments and his articulateness suggested to the researcher that Matthew was performing at a high academic level. Classroom observations of Matthew plus records of his grades suggest a student with academic skill deficiencies. Matthew's attitude and effort seem to stem from the emotional support received and academic expectations held for him by his mother and teachers. He also seems accepted by his peers. Although he does not live near Melvin and Harry or any of the other respondents, he socializes with them.
Matthew, when asked if he had encountered any problems because of his blackness, thought for a few seconds and said, "I'm kinda shaky on that because I know in the work field, I've already had problems and situations to come up...not too much in school or with my grades. I can't say whether I have or not in school." He related the following incident. He noticed that the black young men, at the store where he worked, were frequently asked to stay after their regular hours to return shopping carts from the parking lot to the store. He noticed that it was happening everyday. He said that the white workers were never asked to stay. One day, there were several incidents, two of which he described. First, he was accused of having taken an hour for lunch. He told his manager to check the time clock. He was only gone thirty-five minutes; five minutes more than the prescribed lunch period. He was accused of not doing his job. He had people who could attest to his work. He told the manager to check with the cashier. He said they liked him because he was the best bagger\(^9\) they had.

Later that day, he was bagging groceries and the white male student employees were assigned to bring the carts into the store. At the end of his shift, he and three other black males were asked to remain behind and clean the parking lot as well as bring in the carts. The white young men who had

\(^9\) A bagger is a person who puts the customers' groceries in a bag.
originally been assigned the job, were permitted to go home. He went to the lot and, in five minutes, "got my side cleared." He went to get his coat and his manager asked him where he was going. He replied that he was leaving because he had finished his job. He said a manager told him if he left, it would cost him his job. He said if it cost him his job, so be it. He said he was a good worker which the other supervisors who knew him confirmed. He liked his job and didn't really want to continue to go through those type incidents. He said as he was preparing to leave, the manager asked him to remain. He was not fired. Matthew's relating of this situation shows that he is conscious of overt discriminatory actions when he encounters them. One wonders whether Earl, who perceives discriminatory behavior in the school, is more perceptive or whether he sees things which don't exist, i.e., paranoid. The researcher's observation of one particular incident (see Earl's interview) does not support the paranoia notion.

Most of the teachers and administrators say they admire Matthew because of his manners and his effort at school. They are aware of the behavior his mother demands of him. Except for Chuck, Matthew received more compliments than any of the other respondents. Yet, his grades are mostly C's and D's. School records show that Matthew's total reading score was 52%ile, when he took the California Test of Basic Skills in the eighth grade. His mathematics score was 43%ile. In the
ninth grade, his scores were 62%ile and 34%ile, respectively. He scored 27 (9%ile) on the verbal section of the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test and 34 (16%ile) on the mathematics section. Based on Matthew's articulateness during the interview and his standardized test scores, one would expect better course grades. Figure 8 shows Matthew's grades are in contrast to his professed focus and study habits. His grades suggest possible skill deficiencies. He received a D in the first semester of the eleventh grade from one of the teachers who complimented him most.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Courses</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2nd Semester Absent 11.5 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>English Media D, Speech Survey C, USA Nation D, Geometry D, Biology F, Wood Technology C, Driver's Education P</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 8.** Matthew's Course Grades.
During the first classroom observation of Matthew, he did his classwork at a slower pace than Harry. The teacher said Matthew went over his work more carefully. During a second observation, Matthew and Harry were very playful and had to be reprimanded twice by the teacher. During a third visit, Matthew was steadily working on a quiz, but still he misspelled more words than Harry (ecclesiastics and derivative). After he finished the quiz, he joined in the talking with Harry about a non-class related discussion. He did have a sheet of paper on his desk with which to do class assignment. The teacher commented about his sitting and talking and not doing work. She asked him, "Why do you like your paper? Say it on paper."

Matthew's motivator is his attitude based on the belief that he is responsible for his future. He believes he can accomplish anything in life to which he sets his mind because that's how his mother reared him. The additional support, direction, and expectations of his mother is related to the effort he makes in school. He is sociable and participates in most of the activities expected of someone his age. There appears to be fewer incidents of conflict, contradictions, and counterproductive behavior with what he says he wants. However, his course grades do not complement his interview comments. The researcher believes the discrepancy to be a skill deficiency.
EARL

Earl is a stocky young man. Approximately 5'7 or 8' tall. During our initial interview, he was casually dressed, friendly, and well-mannered. He spoke softly, but was very articulate. He believes that he is intelligent, but lazy. He says that in middle school he was a good student. He "just got lazy. It wasn't peer pressure problems. If I don't have to work, [I] go home, sit down, watch t.v., sleep, wake up at six - might do a little - [if I don't] I'll get it done in study hall. I don't like homework." When asked, "what about homework doesn't he like," he said, "It bores me. Other things distract me. If something is interesting on t.v., I don't do it."

"It's just the point of starting. I get distracted too easily. My grandmother tells me I'm too nosey. I want to hear everything that everyone is saying like if something is funny, I want to hear. If I get started I will do it. I'll listen to the radio a lot. If I go somewhere and close the door, I'll take the radio."

Earl is taking college preparatory classes, because he is planning to go to college. He said that, "another reason I really don't get involved in the classes I take is that there are a minimum number of black kids. I think that was a factor [for his better performance at another high school - it had more black students]. There has been a steady decline in Earl's grade point average from 2.714 after the first semester
in the ninth grade to 1.500 for the end of the first semester eleventh grade.

"Last year, I didn't know anybody. Other students don't care. I got caught up in peer pressure and I want to talk. It's like I said, 'I get distracted.'"

"When I do my work and just get it over, I do feel better. They [white students] look at me like I'm not supposed to get A's. The way I act in class would make someone think I'm not smart. I fall to sleep in class. At home, I would watch t.v. and keep putting off the homework." The themes of being lazy and easily distracted figures prominently in the several interviews I had with Earl.

Earl says that his aunt really encourages him a lot and gets disappointed when he gets bad grades. "She knows I'm not stupid." "I want to pay attention to what other people are doing rather than taking notes. Whatever work I'm doing is not exciting enough. I can put it off until tomorrow. That's my attitude."

His exciting classes are art and algebra. "[Art] is a challenge and in art I get to be creative. My art teacher says I have got good ideas. I'm slower [finishing my art work], I want it to be right the first time. If I don't get it right the first time, I don't want to do it. I have a tendency to make excuses a lot. If I don't get something done, I'll settle for that...I'll settle for a C rather than trying harder. That's getting to be a problem. The problem of getting
started. I wanted to lose weight. I didn't like the way I looked, so I had to do something about it. Getting started."

When asked what his friends would do if he got all A's, he replied, "Tease me and would say, 'You big nerd'." "I think I can do it. I think they would look up to me - envy me because I was smart. It would feel good."

"My aunt wants me to go to college. My aunt really wants me to succeed. She's really smart...she's wise...usually when she tells me something it's right. My mother encourages me to do whatever I want to." Up to this point, his aunt's encouragement has not been enough to get him to change. He said that he tries to get his brother to stop "clowning" in school and do his work.

Earl's academic self-concept seems good on the surface, but he is sensitive to how whites perceive him. Earl describes class work as boring, but also related the excitement of watching a game show, not knowing the answer, but he felt challenged to search for the answer.

School records show that when Earl took the California Test of Basic Skills in the seventh grade, his national percentile total reading score was 97 and his mathematics score was 95. When he took the test in the ninth grade, his total reading score was 66 and his mathematics score was 89. Figure 9 shows that most of Earl's middle school grades were A's and B's, but D's and F's in college preparatory courses.
### Grade Attendance Course

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<td>Absent 2 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**6th**  
Grade: 6th  
**Attendance:** 2  
**Course:**  
- General Language Arts: B  
- Reading: B  
- Social Study: C  
- Mathematics: B  
- Health: C  
- Industrial Arts: A  

**7th**  
Grade: 7th  
**Attendance:** 4  
**Course:**  
- Language Arts: B  
- Reading: A  
- Social Study: A  
- Mathematics: A  
- Health: C  
- Science: C  

**8th**  
Grade: 8th  
**Attendance:** 2  
**Course:**  
- Language Arts: A  
- Reading: A  
- Social Study: A  
- Language Survey: B  
- Mathematics: A  
- Life Science: A  

**9th**  
**1st Semester**  
- English: C  
- Life Skill: A  
- Spanish: B  
- Algebra: D  
- Physical Science: C  
- Keyboard: A  
- Home Economics: B  

**2nd Semester**  
- English: D  
- Spanish: B  
- Geometry: C  
- Biology: D  
- Art Survey: B  
- Physical Education: B  

**10th**  
**Absent 3 Days**  
- English: C  
- Global Studies: D  
- Spanish: B  
- Geometry: C  
- Biology: D  
- Art Survey: B  
- Physical Education: B  

**11th**  
**Absent 4 Days**  
- English: D  
- USA Nation: D  
- Spanish: C  
- Algebra: D  
- Chemistry: F  
- Art: A

**FIGURE 9.** Earl's Course Grades.
During a classroom observation of Earl, an incident occurred that seemed to exemplify his feelings of class prejudice. The class read a story from Edgar Lee Masters Spoon River Anthology. Additionally, there were several terms for the class to know: alliteration, allusion, assonance, blank verse couplet, free verse, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, simile, symbol, irony, meter. He was very quiet, but occasionally said something to a white male student next to him. He and the other black student sat next to each other in the back of the room at almost a 30 degree angle from the teacher. During the class, an incident occurred: the black student sitting next to Earl was sleeping. The teacher walked to the student and quietly said something, at which point he sat up. During a discussion of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, the teacher, in an attempt to clarify the idea of "smug," asked if anyone had been to Los Angeles. A white student responded, "I won't drive in Los Angeles." A four minute discussion followed about the air and driving conditions in Los Angeles. A student unfamiliar with Los Angeles would have lacked the experience needed to contribute to the discussion.

As the class continued, the subject of time and watches was discussed with the teacher asking, "Who can afford a Rolex?" The black male student sitting next to Earl said, "I got a Rolex. I put it in lay-a-way. It only cost $2500.00." The teacher said, "Who would want to spend that amount of money when a Timex will do as well." It seems to the observer
that given the previous discussion about Los Angeles, the student wanted to feel important. His comments resulted in mild ridicule. Later, the teacher asked for a volunteer to read, the black male student volunteered to read. At that point a white male student who had been answering most of the teacher's questions and engaging in a humorous bantering back and forth with the teacher said, "Go, [student's name]." Most of the white students laughed, as if they were making fun of the student's attempt to participate in class. After class, the researcher asked Earl if that is what he was referring to when he said, "They [white students] look at me like I'm not supposed to get A's. The way I act in class would make someone think I'm not smart. I fall to sleep in class," during our initial interview. He said, "yeah" while shaking his head up and down and smiling.

During another observation in a Chemistry class, he was taking a quiz. The teacher said that there was a maximum total of 700 points for classroom participation, he had 365 points, 52.14285 percent of the total possible points. After class I asked him, "Why?" He said there were times when, "I don't want to do the work. [The work] looks hard, so I don't want to do it." "One day I'm tired and sleepy [so I don't pay attention] and the next day, I'm lost. I feel lost and don't want to do. I watch t.v. [until late] and don't get any sleep and the things I have to do come after t.v."
GARY

Gary is about 5'10" tall, slim, and within two months of being eighteen. He arrived for his initial interview appearing self confident. He enrolled in career center because he wants to go into accounting and needs to improve his grades. He states that his grades in middle school were B's and C's. His grades in high school have become worse. He said his grades have suffered because he is popular at school. "Most of my time is spent socializing." Later in the interview and during subsequent interviews, he said he didn't like people. He believes that school is average, but doesn't "like how it works. We get here at 7:15; classes doesn't start until 7:45. We could have been in class much earlier."

When asked to give examples of good classes, he cited a history teacher who, incidentally, was named by the other respondents as a good teacher. She is a "very good teacher...hands me the work and I do most of the work by myself." "Most of my teachers like me and have been on my back...they try to push me to do it." He believes that as he has talked to his teachers, they have become aware of what he can do and have started to "push him to do it."

"How would your friends react to your good grades?"

"The reaction now is 'you're not spending anytime with us.' You're mostly just sitting in the house and going to work. It doesn't bother me."
Gary explains that although he is popular, he really isn't comfortable with people. He wants the teacher to explain the work to him by himself and then leave him alone to do it.

Most of his comments focused on his need to be left alone. He says that wherever he moves in the class, students have a tendency to gravitate toward him. Gary says he, "never really liked people...always wanted to be by myself and if I could get teachers to understand that, things would be much better. Ms. __, I really like her, she tries to understand. I had this whole side of the room to myself."

The family influence seems great. "My whole family has money. They have worked and worked and come out on top....In my family, you have to do good....If I don't get a job that's really paying anything, I will amount to nothing in the eyes of my family."

He doesn't believe that many students are smarter than he is, but "you could have students in here who have like B average where mine is like D - F. I put forth no effort, but when I do...really put my head to it, it's always A or A-B...But, I have problems. My major problem is I can read something and hear something and talk to you and tell you everything I read or heard, but I can't write. I'll forget when I'm writing and I'm not allowed to use notes. That's why my test scores are so bad. One of my teachers was surprised and wanted to know why I was in the room because I was able to
answer everything she said." "It's like if I read it, I know it. I don't have to write it down or if I hear it, I'll know it and I can sit here and talk to you about it, but I can't...if I start to write it down everything becomes mixed up and I'm lost. I can't do it."

"What I really need in class...in my old school, I've always had trouble working in a class full of people. It's always bugged me. But if a teacher pulls me aside...my old math teacher use to do that...pull me aside and like I'd come in after school and my grades just shot up. She'd come in and just explain it and then she'd leave and I do and put it on her desk and then I'd leave. It's that one on one contact without someone saying how about this."

"What kind of thoughts go through your mind when you're in a class full of people?"

"I wish I was by myself....Even though I'm really popular, I've always spent all of my time by myself. People will call and I'll say I'm doing something. I like to spend time by myself. It helps me think."

"Does it feel like information overload?"

"Yes. I just don't feel comfortable with a lot of people around. It's like peoplephobia."

"Since most of your life, unless you become a writer or an accountant where you can close a door, most of your learning will have to take place in a class of people...."
"I can handle a class with fewer people. All of my classes are overfull...thirty-two people in every class. If they were to see me in the hall and come out and explain the work to me individually and my grades would improve. A teacher could explain the work to me and set me off in some place like the library and my grades would improve dramatically."

Gary indicated that his attendance was good. He received a letter at home that he had missed twenty-three days. He checked, but had missed only four or five. He did not go to homeroom because he thought it was so stupid. Daily attendance is taken during the homeroom period.

"With the exception of the teacher mentioned before, do you think any of your teachers has taken the time to get to know you, to understand these things about you?"

"Ms C---, I really like her...she's nice...she really seems to understand a lot, but in a way she doesn't. She doesn't understand that problem, she may have noticed it in the last couple of days because I had this whole side of the room to myself in the class. Everyone sat over here [physically demonstrating the class desk placements], I sat in the corner by myself, there were two rows separating me from the whole class...O.K. like fine. Everybody moved over in my corner in the last three days...everybody was sitting over here. I pulled my desk right next to hers and then everyone was around me and I was going nuts...'get out of my corner.'"
"Who would you say is responsible for the poor grades you have gotten?"

"It's really my fault for not telling my teachers my problem in working with people."

"What kind of study habits do you have?"

When Gary goes home, he reads from 3:30 to 4:30. He likes to read *The Hobitt* and play fantasy role playing games like Dungeon and the Dragon which he plays all day on Saturdays. He works part-time in a restaurant. He posts material on the bulletin board and does paperwork "like accounting." The award he would like to win is, "Most improved." He said that he is trying. "I really want to go into accounting. I like numbers a lot." With the exception of one ninth grade mathematics class, all of his grades in mathematics have been either "D" or "F." "I just don't like my math teacher. I didn't like him. He talks about people too much. He puts them down. I mean he talks about you...talks about you. I told him I didn't like him. I told him, 'I want to get out of your class.' 'He says well you can't get out of my class until the second nine weeks.' So I sat there for the entire nine weeks and did nothing."

"Because you didn't like him?"

"Right. I couldn't work with him. If they put me on a one-on-one basis with him...ugh."

"Seem like a smartie to you?"
"That's exactly what he is. When you have to talk to him, it's like, 'Yo, Yo. What's up cutty...hahaha. How's the boys? You guys rob anything lately?"

"That's a put-down."

"Yeah, I was walking in the hall today and he said, 'Gary, the welfare line's at the other end of the hall."

"Is he white or black?"

"White."

"How do you interpret that?"

"Being silly. I mean he's not doing it to be racial. He does it to everybody. He's just silly....Just no way to work with him. You can ask anybody in his class."

School records show that Gary's standardized test (California Test of Basic Skills) scores in the seventh grade were 34%ile in total reading and 20%ile in total mathematics. In the ninth grade, his total reading was 41%ile, while his total mathematics was 2%ile. When asked what happened, he said he forgot. He believes he can do A work, but the time left before he graduates is not sufficient for him to increase significantly his grade point average. His grades from the first through third grade were mostly C's with a D in Arithmetic. In the fourth grade, he received an F in Arithmetic. In the fifth grade, he received D's in Arithmetic, Reading, and Spelling and Unsatisfactory in Work Habits. In Figure 10, Gary's grades in mathematics does not reflect his professed liking for numbers.
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<td>11th</td>
<td>Absent 28.5 Days English F Speech Survey D USA Nation F Algebra F Art 3x C Art 3 extx C</td>
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**FIGURE 10.** Gary's Course Grades.
The researcher's observation of Gary in class shows that he works well alone. Students tended to gravitate around him wherever he moved. In one class, Gary was sitting by himself. He made an A on the assignment, finishing before everyone else. He seemed proud. He also showed me his previous six grades in the class which were mostly A's and B's. He pointed to each place in the room where he had sat. He believes that no one will just leave him alone. When he moves to a place in the room, many students follow him. All students were involved in the class assignment.

Gary's academic motivators are teacher behavior and his own attitude of determination when he chooses to exercise it academically.

**Group Reality-Check**

The researcher met with Chuck, Harry, and Earl to determine if the themes that emerged during the interviews and classroom observations were what the respondents meant. Additionally, the researcher wanted reactions form the respondents as the themes were discussed.

The researcher summarized the reasons given by students for their academic behavior, i.e., either doing or not doing schoolwork. They were asked if there were other reasons why black male students might or might not do schoolwork. For the students who did their classwork, school work was their number one priority. Additionally, from the students' perspective,
when they did well in their classwork, the person most instrumental was a teacher or teachers who really "turned them on to working." Earl stated, "The way the teacher teaches is part of the problem because they can really put you to sleep." The students were asked who was really responsible for whether they learned or not? The students said they themselves were responsible.

"Is there a way to turn the class around to a point where it would be interesting for you?"

"I think the way you think about it. For example simple things, if you watch a game show and you want to know the answer, you go look it up for the sake of knowing the answer." Earl, who says he is lazy when it comes to doing his school work, is saying that if the classwork is as meaningful as a game show is to him, then he will be motivated to seek the answers.

The students were asked who are the best teachers in the school and why. The students identified only a few teachers. Harry said, "They don't have any sense." "Ms. C_, she's a good teacher. She's a walking encyclopedia." Another student said, "She is addicted to knowledge." The students felt that even if you didn't do your work in her class, you still learned something because she "talks all period." "Some days she strikes up a good conversation and you learn a lot" (Harry).

The students stated that the good teacher would make sure you understand something before going on. "Ms. N___ is a good
teacher. She divides the work into three sections and gives you an opportunity to make it up."

"Chuck, what were the characteristics of your middle school teachers that made them good teachers?"

"They pushed me."

"That continues to come up over and over again. Is it important that a teacher combination of pushing you, but also taking the time...."

"Taking the time to make sure you understand. Everybody doesn't understand on the same level. Some will get it quick and others will take some time"(Earl).

The students' comments further underscore the necessity for "good teachers" (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York, 1966) especially for students having academic difficulty.

"Is there any one or two things that you believe are important for anyone to know about motivating black male high school students to perform in school?"

"They could like explain to them what they need, because when we came in we didn't have any knowledge about credits or what your grade point average had to be to get into college or anything" (Harry).

"What can they [the teachers and administrators] do to make you not only want to come to school to see your friends, but to do academic work [learn your classwork] while you're here?"
"Have like a Wendy's in school" (Harry) [Chuck and Earl laughed].

"They should have more pep rallies" (Chuck).

"They should have like a program with tutors for classes" (Harry).

"I think they need to push more black students towards the college prep classes, because like I said [there are few black students in my classes]."

"Is it because the black students didn't know about the classes or didn't take the classes?"

Earl responded that his brother who isn't dumb, but is lazy like he is, "they are trying to put him in low level math classes and he's smarter than that. I try to tell him he should take algebra." Chuck said that the students are afraid to take the classes. "They need to push you towards more higher level classes." This statement is interesting. During my conversations with school administrators, they frequently stated the difficulty of getting black students to enroll in college preparatory courses or once enrolled, to put forth the effort to succeed.

"Why do you think black students are afraid to take the classes?"

"The challenge" (Harry).

"Intimidation" (Earl).

Chuck said that "most of the black students are scared to take them." When asked, "Why?" he agreed with Harry, saying
that the students were afraid of the challenge. This statement seems to support Howard and Hammond's (1985) assertion that many blacks are avoiding intellectual engagement and challenge. One would conclude that the avenue to high self-esteem among many black students at this school, as perceived by the respondents, is not through the classroom. It may described as, "the avoidance of failure." If that avoidance is rooted in fears about black intellectual capabilities (Howard & Hammond, 1985), then the need for academic support and encouragement while academically challenging these black males is apparent.

"What do you think the school or a teacher can do to get the black students to try?"

"Explain things...how simple they are. They look at it and its complex, they don't understand what the bits and pieces make up...so they look at it and say 'this is a mess' and don't even try" (Earl).

As the session came to an end, Harry said that there should be more freedom in the class. Chuck and Earl, shaking their heads from side to side, quickly said, "No." They were concerned that disruptive behavior would become the norm. Harry stated that he didn't mean freedom in that sense, but more individual studying.
Summary

From the students' perspectives, success in school was attributed to an especially effective and concerned teacher or teachers. Teachers who explained the classwork, made sure the student understood, and challenged/pressured them without "hollering" or embarrassing them. As Apollinaire said, "He pushed them, and they flew" (Siegel, 1986, p.204). When students were unsuccessful, they usually blamed themselves for having poor study habits or lack of effort, i.e., being lazy.

Most of the students noticed a difference, positive or negative, in their perception of school during the middle grades, usually the seventh or eighth grade. Their memories of middle school suggest those grades are as important for academic success as the elementary grades. For these students, the middle school grades seem more important since most of their negative memories are traced to middle school.

To summarize, the themes that emerged from the data are:
1. When students perceive they aren't learning because of the teacher, the following teacher behaviors are noted:
   a. Doesn't explain - I get frustrated;
   b. Work is boring or without meaning;
   c. Embarrasses, yells at students;
   d. Doesn't collect homework, so I stopped doing;
   e. Teacher doesn't pressure me to do; and
   f. Make sure you understand before going on.
2. When students blame themselves, they say:
   a. Poor study habits;
   b. Don't know why I don't do as I'm suppose to;
   c. Don't use time well;
   d. When I go home, if I do something else, then homework doesn't get done; and
   e. Don't take school seriously.

3. The influence of friends:
   a. When they call, I go; and
   b. Don't want to be called a nerd.

Most of the respondents' interview data suggest a powerlessness within the school that seems related to teacher behavior. The following statements suggest a perception of lack of control over the classroom environment: Bob's statement that he didn't know high school "would be like this"; Melvin's statement, "You can't speak your mind; Earl's perception that black students are not counseled into the academically challenging courses; Larry's frustration at not understanding: "Tried to go up to him, but he didn't want to talk to anybody"; and Ralph's saying, "Maybe I have gone as high as I can go" or "Get those teachers out of here that want to just fuss at you and make you feel dumb all the time."

The structuring of the classroom task is an important motivator related to the academic behavior of the respondents. The task must be relatively difficult. Difficult enough to be challenging, but not difficult enough to be frustrating or
damaging to self-esteem. The researcher hypothesizes a strong relationship between task structuring, teacher behavior and students' academic motivation. The teacher's behavior must convey the message that "I challenge you because I know you can do it. I'm willing to spend as much time as it takes to explain the work to you. I want you to understand. I will accept no less than your best." It seems evident from the respondents' statements and beliefs, that the climate established by such a teacher often moderates peer group sanctioning power.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

"Is that theory true which would have us believe that man is no more than a product of many conditional and environmental factors—be they of a biological, psychological or sociological nature....We can answer these questions from experience as well as on principle....Man does have a choice of action...everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Frankl, 1984, pp 74-75.

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to understand and then identify and describe selected motivators as they relate to the academic behavior of ten black male high school students. Qualitative methodology was selected because it best takes into account the assumed multiple realities of the respondents. In this chapter, the findings and conclusions, based on a triangulation of the data, are presented.

Academic Motivators

The academic motivators for the black high school male students in this study are complex and multi-dimensional. Although most of the respondent's grades are similar, they are very different individuals. All of the respondents say they
want to make good grades (A's and B's), but only two begin or maintain the effective habitual behaviors necessary for academic success. For eight of the ten respondents, their behavior is counterproductive to good grades. When comparing or contrasting the interviews with teacher comments, academic records, and classroom observations, what emerges are pictures of students with internal conflicts. One part, verbal, of the student expresses an ambition for good grades, academic honors, i.e., valedictorian or most improved, and to go to college. Another part, action, of the student seems inept at implementing habitually effective learning and studying behaviors. It is as if the self-defeating behaviors have become habits. Sometimes, seemingly beyond the awareness of the respondents. Thus, their behavior is counterproductive. Gurin, Gurin, Lao, & Beattie suggest that black students, as members of this society, are voicing a cultural belief about academic achievement, but express behaviorally "less certainty that they can control their own lives" (p. 42).

Klinger (1977) makes a distinction between incentives and goals. Klinger asserts that incentives are "objects or events that an organism values," whereas, goals are "those [objects or events] that the organism is committed to striving for...." (p. 14). Thus, students may verbalize the desirability of good grades, but not value good grades as an incentive or commit themselves to the behaviors necessary for good grades.
On the other hand, respondents' comments suggest that some do value good grades, i.e., being perceived as "smart." Neither Gary, Steadman, Ralph, or Earl believes other students are smarter than they are. Earl is concerned that he be seen as smart, "I think they would look up to me ... because I was smart." Melvin was happy in the alternative elementary school, "I liked it because it made me feel like I was in the smart group." This shows the conflict within the respondents: wanting to be considered smart, concerned about what one's friends may say, feeling frustrated at not understanding the classwork or having it adequately explained and realizing that one's work habits are counterproductive to being "smart." An additional observation is that feeling "smart" gives one a sense of control over the environment.

The first area of conflict for the underachieving students in this study is between wanting good grades and activating the necessary behaviors to achieve good grades. The researcher referred earlier to Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York's (1966) data. They found it difficult to reconcile the data which show the high level of college-oriented motivation for black students with the lower college-going rate (p. 280).

Fordham's (1987) observations that the inconsistency between verbal and behavioral responses of underachieving students is most salient "in their almost total lack of effort in school" (p. 493). For the underachieving students in this
study, they blamed themselves for their grades. The remedy: they needed "to take school more seriously," i.e., put forth more effort. Hare (1987) suggests that the societal structure itself is causal for many of the black student outcomes. "The fact that the schools simultaneously homogenize attitudes while differentiating skills increases the probability that the youngsters themselves will accept their outcomes as the consequence of their own attributes or deficiencies" (Hare, 1987, p. 108).

Interviews and observations of the respondents in this study showed that all the respondents put forth some effort in one or more classes, but without sustained focus or discipline. One or more conflicts seem to underlie their academic motivators. Chuck does not evidence the conflict of the other respondents. He seems to have a perception of personal control of his environment. Chuck's profile agrees with Fordham's (1987) finding about high-achieving students, "The overriding characteristic common to all of these high-achieving students is their unanimous sense of hope and myopic belief that if they work hard and do well in school, they will be successful" (p. 392).

Significant Others

How do significant others motivate the student? Is that motivation related to the student's perception of control over the classroom environment? In this section and the next two on
Peer Influence and Teacher Behavior and Student Self-Esteem, the role of significant other will be discussed. In listening to the respondents, almost all cited relatives or teachers or coaches who talked to them about the value of education and good grades. For most, the words of relatives, teachers, or coaches have not translated into sustained and persistent academically oriented behaviors by the respondents. Matthew's behavior seems most in keeping with what his mother wants. Action by Chuck's mother resulted in his being placed in a Specific Learning Disabilities class. Gary indicates that his family places a high premium on having a good job, but none of the other respondents show a positive relation between the values and words of relatives and their academic behaviors.

**Peer Influence**

What keeps the respondents from activating the necessary behaviors are the need to avoid negative peer sanctions, e.g., being teased or physically threatened, which follows the attainment of grades C and above. Steadman, Larry, and Melvin have a need to be accepted by and have the approval of their friends. Additionally, Melvin wants to be liked by his teachers. He cannot please both. His friends win; he loses. The researcher observed that once the interview had begun, Melvin seemed reluctant to leave. Thus, it appears that the conflict is even stronger for Melvin.
The respondents' need for peer acceptance seem almost as strong as the physiological needs of hunger and thirst. Fordham (1987) noted the power of peer sanctions to influence behavior. Hare (1987) theorizes "that as black children age and progressively lose in school evaluations, they may shift toward peer evaluations in search of higher possibilities of success and ego enhancement" (p. 108). In other words, as the sense of control over environment lessens, more apt is the attractiveness of the group to increase. However, as Hare (1987) points out, although the black youth peer culture may offer temporary ego enhancement, "It offers little hope of long-term legitimate success" (p. 109).

When there is an agreement in values between the individual, the peer group, and society, then the sanctioning power of the group can have a socially approved positive outcome. For example, if the group to which one looks for approval and acceptance places a high value on acceptance at elite private universities, then one's behavior will usually be directed toward accomplishing those things perceived as instrumental for gaining admission to such institutions. The acceptance represents success relative to group values. Thus, peer group pressure is deemed positive. This in no way eliminates the possibility of experiencing subsequent failure in the classes or social settings of that university or even later mismatches between the career for which one has prepared and one's individual personality.
Teacher Behavior and Student Self-Esteem

Another area of conflict is the relationship between teacher behavior and self-esteem. Teacher behavior acts as a motivator for most of the respondents. When teacher behavior, according to the respondents' perceptions, challenges or pressures the student to excel and takes the time to explain classwork making sure the student understands, that teacher's behavior is a motivator. As seen through the eyes of the students in this study, teacher behavior as a motivator cannot be emphasized too much. On the other hand, teacher behavior can also be a demotivator. When the teacher "hollers" at students, embarrasses students, criticizes a student in a manner that results in loss of self-esteem, fails to explain classwork to the point where the student understands, or assigns "meaningless" work, the students do not put forth the effort to learn. When through the teacher's behavior, the student has the perception that the teacher doesn't care about them or is "silly," then the student doesn't try even when it is self-defeating.

An important finding is the degree to which teacher behavior can moderate peer sanctions. Effective teachers, as perceived by the respondents, can get them to put forth more effort. The teachers helped Chuck to overcome six years of academic failure. He became academically successful. It appears as if Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York (1966) are correct. The degree of perceived
control over one's environment, one's peer group values and sanctions, and the quality of the teachers with whom the student interacts are related to academic behavior.

The unstated "thematic web" in the respondents' statements is what Ernest Becker (1971) defines as Adler's seeing and proclaiming "that the basic law of human life is the urge to self-esteem" (p. 66). It seems as if each respondent is saying, "I want to be important." From the responses of the students, it seems as if they are asking teachers to "make me feel important." "Almost all one's inner life, when he is not absorbed in some active task, is a traffic in images of self-worth....We run what I like to call an 'inner-newsreel' that passes in constant review the symbols that give self-esteem, make us feel important and good" (Becker, 1971, p. 68).

The search for significance through what White (1959) defined as "effectance" motivation is evident in all the activities cited by the respondents as "fun." They are activities through which the students' self-esteem grows by experiencing success. The avenues through which self-esteem is enhanced are Chuck's enjoyment of learning new things, Harry's football, Bob's making furniture, Ralph's lifting weights, and even Larry's certificate in auto mechanics. "Decisive for his behavior is the individual's opinion of himself and his environment with which he has to cope...the individual's striving for success in the solution of his..."
problems, this striving being anchored in the very structure of life. But the judgement of what constitutes success is again left to the opinion of the individual." (Adler, 1964, p. 24)

The respondents in this study said that school is fun because of the opportunity to socialize and be with friends. Only Chuck said it was fun because of the joy of learning. For Larry, school is a place to leave as soon as possible. Whatever perception students have of school, that perception seems related to the students' academic behavior. For Harry, satisfaction comes from playing football which has meaning while Earl's satisfaction comes from "being nosey." Steadman's and Melvin's sense of satisfaction is derived from peer acceptance and approval. Thus, choice becomes a strong factor. The students in this study choose those activities from which they derive satisfaction and success. To paraphrase Izard (1985), they become excited by that in which they are interested and, from the data in this study, are successful.

The third area of conflict is the classroom. Most of the underachieving respondents describe their classes as boring and meaningless. Some of the boredom seems to arise from not knowing or understanding the assignments. Frankl (1959) when writing of his experiences in a concentration camp says, "any attempt to restore a man's inner strength in the camp had first to succeed in showing him some future goal. Nietzsche's words, 'He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any
'how,' could be the guiding motto for all psychotherapeutic and psychohygienic efforts regarding prisoners" (p. 84). The 'why' is the meaning and, for too many respondents in this study, classwork lacks meaning – no why. Except for Chuck, Matthew, and possibly Gary, the student's in this study have not expressed an inner goal related to classroom work. The classroom is an environment over which the students in this study have little or no control. After a point, the students seem to experience a certain ennui. The law requires students to come to school until they are eighteen and, in one sense, they are psychological "prisoners" waiting for their day of liberation.

Control Over the Environment

The thread of a sense of control over environment runs through most of the other variables including the motivating influence of significant others. Briefly, the data also suggest an additional hypothesis regarding the relation of significant other to the student's perceived control over the environment and self-esteem. Simplistically speaking, the concept of internal-external control (Gurin, Gurin, Lao, Beattie, 1978) states that one who attributes success to skill or effort is defined as internal. One who attributes success or failure to luck, chance, or an external agent is defined as external. The teacher, an external agent, can affect an improvement in the student's skill which can result in a sense
of greater personal control (internal) over the environment and a heightened sense of personal causation equalling improved self-esteem.

**Probability of Success or Failure**

Does the perception of probable success or failure act as a motivator? Perceptions and experiences of personal success seem to have an additive affect. Usually, as the respondents experienced academic success they seemed willing to attempt more until the sum of the failures equalled more than the successes. As Chuck experienced success, he was willing to try more. As Bob experienced success on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test, he was willing to try chemistry. The initial student success must have an educator follow-up if it is to be a building block. When the students perceive that teachers either would not or could not provide support, encouragement, and patience in explaining, then the students' academic effort lessened. Although students say they want to avoid failure, their reduced effort results in the very failure they want to avoid. They become entangled in webs of frustration and self-defeating behavior.

Based on the data, a definitive answer cannot be given to the question, "Are perceptions regarding the probability of success or failure related to academic behavior?" Melvin has experienced some academic success. However, his success is not followed by sustained and effective academic behaviors. He
is told by others that he is "smart." His academic behavior is still counterproductive. Harry experiences success when he puts forth effort in football, something that has meaning to him. His academic behaviors are counterproductive. The real question ought to be, "How do they define success?" For one student, good grades equates with academic success. For another student, good grades means alienation from friends. In that instance, success might be defined as poor grades, but having friends' approval. It is difficult to generate that interest when to be successful would result in a high level of affective dissonance, i.e., alienation from one's friends. However one defines success, when it is experienced frequently enough to have pleasure associated with it, then, according to Solomon (1980), it becomes addictive.

"In every case of acquired motivation, affective or hedonic processes are involved; whenever one identifies an acquired motive, one can, in every case I have found, describe or measure three affective or hedonic phenomena. These are (a) affective or hedonic contrast, (b) affective or hedonic habituation (tolerance), and (c) affective or hedonic withdrawal (abstinence) syndromes. (Solomon, 1980, p. 692)

Perceptions of impending failure may have an initial shock. For example Bob's first "F" seemed to produce a lasting emotional pain that was evident in facial and voice changes during the interview. As most students related how and when their grades changed, usually between the sixth and ninth
grade, there were visible changes in their countenance. Ralph and Larry seem most affected by the cumulative failure. Seligman (1975) termed the emotional result "learned helplessness." As one perceives less personal control over outcomes in the situation, then learning and performance decrease.

Klinger (1977) states that once an incentive becomes a commitment and is then lost, the person's behavior goes through a sequence of four events. The events are: (1) they try harder and if that fails, (2) they become angry and more aggressive, then (3) they become frustrated and depressed and finally, (4) they accept the loss (p. 318). The acceptance of the loss leads to an alienated individual. "They feel not only dissatisfied with the alienated aspect of their lives, but also that it is futile and meaningless [then]...people dissociate themselves from the alienating situation as much as possible" (Klinger, 1977, p. 311).

Thus, failure and success are relative. Success is only important if it is in those areas respondents identify as meaningful. Thus, each emotion is programmed into the brain, "each reporting that something has gone well or has gone badly in a particular way with respect to some incentive object: It has been enjoyed, attained, lost, blocked or spoiled, or it constitutes a threat" (Klinger, 1977, p. 95) to be avoided.
Work Habits

Although the purpose of the study was not to examine work habits, the influence of work habits is too obvious not to be stated. Most of the underachieving students in this study lack the studying and learning skills required for academic success. Larry, Ralph, Steadman, Bob, Earl, Gary, and even Matthew evidence reading skill deficiencies. Gary has difficulty transferring what he has read to paper. Most of the respondents, while not necessarily avoiding intellectual engagement (Howard & Hammond, 1985), put forth minuscule effort. It is difficult to determine to what extent poor learning skills and the lack of academic self-discipline are related to sustained effort. One wonders whether improvement in learning and studying skills and then experiencing academic success would lead to students' attempting more. It did for Chuck. Success might beget success which might lessen some of the conflict.

Conclusions

The factors that affect the academic motivation of the respondents in this study are multi-dimensional and complex. There are several themes which emerge. First, the need for peer acceptance and approval can be a negative academic motivator when the peer group's value system (Loury, 1985) is antithetical to the values of the classroom and the larger society. Conversely, when peer group values, academically, are
in accord with values fostered in the classroom, then peer pressure can have positive outcomes.

Second, the affect of a "good teacher," i.e., one who challenges, explains until the student understands, and shows respect toward the student is related to the academic behavior, i.e., effort, of the students in this study. When students perceive that a teacher is not patient in explaining, disrespects the student by hollering at them or embarrassing them, or does not pressure the student to work, the students in this study are unwilling to work for that teacher. Students seem to like "nice" teachers, i.e., those who give easy grades and do not challenge the student, but rarely did the students in this study perform to their maximum ability.

Third, the extent to which these students viewed themselves as self-determining and less reliant on peers for approval and acceptance, i.e., "to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (Frankl, 1959, p. 75), was the most important motivator related to positive academic behaviors. Self-determination seems to enable one to derive meaning from most situations in which one finds oneself: either the meaning is in the task itself or the meaning is in the goal. Completing the task is instrumental toward achieving the goal.

Fourth, students mentioned the affect of assignment relevancy or meaning within a course as the reason they were not academically motivated. If academic behaviors are to be
improved, the relation between skills or content learned in
the class and life success must be shown.

Fifth, most of the students demonstrated poor study
skills. It was obvious that the lack of effort was often the
result of frustration in not managing time, using learning
skills, or even having the necessary cognitive skills
(Resnick, 1987).

Sixth, a sense of mastery or control over the environment
is related to the other variables. The sense of mastery or
control seems to affect the self-confidence of the respondents
in the classroom as they relate to teachers and other
students, particularly for Earl as he relates to white
students.

Finally, accepting that students must be responsible for
their own behavior, there are factors the educator can
influence that can function as academic motivators. This
statement suggests a transferability of the findings of this
study. The similarity in the findings of several researchers
including Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood,
Weinfeld, & York (1966) and Fordham (1987), derived from
different populations, suggest support for the statement.
Additionally, using the accumulated findings to develop
meaningful programs for the individual justifies the
generalization (Donmoyer, 1988).
Implications for Educational Administration

"The future of the American economy and the American city is inextricably tied to the fate of young Black males. If they cannot contribute to the economy, they will drain more of its resources."

(Gibbs, 1988, p. 28)

The purpose of this research is to (a) understand academic motivators from the students' perspective and (b) identify and describe the academic motivators of ten black male students. The long range objective is to understand the relationship between their academic motivators and its relation to their academic behaviors. The sample is ten black males which is a convenience sampling. Given the status of young black males in this society, the focus is needed.

In Jacksonville, Florida during the past two years, on average, a young black male has been killed almost every two weeks by another black male. In the public schools, their grade point average is the lowest of all racial groups. Black males suspension rate is highly disproportionate to the percentage of black males in the school population. These statistics would apply to almost every major urban area in the United States. It is easy to blame white racism for the problem. Racism cannot and should not shoulder all the blame. To do that, would relieve the young black male of his responsibility for affecting his outcomes.

Researchers (Loury, 1985; Howard & Hammond, 1985; and Davis, 1944) cited earlier in this study make salient points.
The tendency to avoid intellectual engagement and effort must be changed. From one point of view, the problem of the young black male is a societal problem. From another perspective, it is an educational and personal problem.

What can educators do?

Data from this study offer several suggestions:

(1) The peer group has sanction power for those students with a strong need for peer acceptance. Educators need to structure more cooperative group activities with one purpose being to develop a value for academic achievement. Programs need to be designed which uses the sanctioning power of the group in a positive way.

(2) The teacher can be a major significant other, therefore, the role of the teacher as an academic motivator needs to be considered in hiring, in-servicing, coaching, and evaluating teachers. Special attention needs to be given to the teacher's pedagogical skills, i.e., the ability to explain material in various ways until the student understands. To do this, suggests using the concepts of mastery learning. It cannot be emphasized too much that educators must not embarrass students or address negative comments to students. Additionally, the respondents in this study wanted teachers to pressure, i.e., challenge, them to get their work in a way that suggests the teacher cares whether they learn or not.

Recognizing the frustrations that teachers experience in the classroom, administrators must provide encouragement and
support. However, policy makers must also start with a clean slate in terms of what actually acts as motivators for different students in different situations. The implications for teacher preparation are many, e.g., in addition to conceptual knowledge, prospective teachers must demonstrate the skills of explaining, challenging, and encouraging students from diverse populations who may have different motivational and learning styles.

(3) Curriculum developers ought to focus on making course content and instructional methods more meaningful, not less challenging. Students' natural curiosity, effectance motivation (White, 1959), and ego needs ought to be considered when structuring both the task and the presentation of coursework.

(4) Local school districts must start disaggregating the achievement and discipline data of its students. It is hard to substantiate a problem without hard data. The data ought not be used to embarrass a segment of the population, but to show that there is a problem. Classroom instruction must be qualitatively analyzed. The entire professional staff in each school must be held accountable for excellent instruction for all students. Black male students or any student must not be permitted to sit in the back of the room and do nothing as long as they aren't disruptive. The student is mentally vegetating. White educators must hold black students to the same educational and behavioral standards they hold white
students even when such demands result in charges of racism.

(5) Colleges of Education must ensure that the prospective teachers graduating from their institutions have the pedagogical skills, sensitivity to diverse cultural perceptions, and temperament to explain concepts and challenge students academically without denigrating the student's self-esteem.

(6) Policy makers must realize that the establishment of state and national goals, requiring more courses, or a longer school year will not, in and of itself, improve the quality of student learning. The history of educational reforms and fads ought to be an example. If the quality of education is to improve, it must be done in the classroom with the classroom teacher. All resources need to be directed toward that end.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study suggest several questions for further research:

1. If self-esteem is situational, what is the relation between the level of self-esteem and the degree of perceived control over specific situational environments?

2. What are the selected teaching motivators related to teacher behaviors as seen through the eyes of the teacher? How do those motivators compare and/or contrast with student academic motivators?
3. Longitudinally, what is the relationship between academic behaviors and subsequent success in one's career and personal life?

4. If teachers are potentially major significant others, how ought that influence administrator preparation programs?

5. The students in this study did not sense that doing school work was synonymous with "acting white." What variables are related to black students' perception of academic behavior as acting white versus not acting white?

6. Are there differences in the dynamics of peer pressure between a white student in an upper income school and a minority student in a low income urban school?

Finally, the researcher closes with two statements previously made. Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York (1966) determined that three variables relate to the academic achievement of blacks: a sense of control over environment, good teachers, and attitudes of the student's peers (pp. 23, 289, 302).

"We have very few teachers because most of those with whom we are afflicted know nothing about the children whom they teach or about their parents who influence the pupils more than the teachers themselves. When a boy comes to school without knowing his lesson he should be studied instead of being punished" (Woodson, 1933, p.14).
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