A Dissertation

Entitled

Urban African American Male High School Students’ Educational Aspirations for College and the Influence of Family, School, and Peers

By

Kimberly A. Grieve

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for The Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Higher Education

Advisor: Anne Hornak, Ph.D.

Committee member: Svetlana Beltyukova, Ph.D.

Committee member: Deborah R. Schwartz, Ph.D.

Committee member: Dale Snauwaert, Ph.D.

Judith Herb College of Education

College of Graduate Studies

The University of Toledo

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An Abstract of

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This quantitative study examined the influence of family, school, and peers on the educational aspirations of 60 urban African American male high school students attending two high schools in the Midwest. Participants completed an in-class survey that included demographic information as well as survey questions regarding educational aspirations, family, school, and peers.

Three significant factors relating to educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students were discovered. The results of the regression analyses revealed that financial support and support from teachers, counselors, and peers were the significant predictors of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students.
Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my husband, Denny, and my children, Katharine, David, and Kelly for their love, patience, and support.
Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank my intelligent and talented committee, Dr. Anne Hornak, Dr. Svetlana Beltyukova, Dr. Deborah Schwartz, and Dr. Dale Snauwaert, for sharing their expertise and for providing guidance and encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

If the United States is going to continue to be an economic leader in a global society, it is important to college educate an increasing percentage of young Americans, including the growing population of urban African American male high school students. To do so requires initially an understanding of the barriers affecting African American male high school students’ educational achievement. The gap between their achievement level and that of all other groups has long established roots in American history.

Roots of this problem date back to slavery, which created long-lasting social inequalities, including disparities in educational opportunities. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, African Americans faced de facto and de jure exclusion from public schools and experienced much lower quality education than White students; this disparity continues today as urban minority high schools often have few textbooks, computers, qualified teachers, or course offerings (Moore III, Henfield & Owen, 2008; Smedley & Jenkins, 2007). Today, urban high schools are often in poor repair, suspension and dropout rates are high, and graduation rates are low.

Fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education, gaps in educational achievement between White and minority students continue, and the differences in educational opportunities are increasing. Given this rapid and continuing trend, it is important to
understand the factors affecting African American males’ educational aspirations and achievement. Currently, research on African American males is both “limited and disjointed” (Jackson & Moore III, 2006). The goal of this research is to explore the influence of family, school, and peer factors on educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students in order to inform secondary administrators and policy makers of possible solutions to meet the challenge of increasing their graduation rates and postsecondary attendance.

Statement of the Problem

Since 1974, according to National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the rate of participation in postsecondary education has increased for both men and women (2005). However, since 2003, the rate of participation of women has outpaced that of men; 51% of women in the United States have entered or completed postsecondary education compared to 41% of men (NCES, 2005), and this trend is continuing. The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) estimated that between 2005 and 2016, enrollment will increase 22% for women and only 10% for men.

Today, 42% of the degrees presented at four-year institutions are awarded to males and 58% to females (NCES, 2007). This disparity is due in part to differences in high school graduation rates. According to Greene and Winters (2006), nationally, 72% of high school graduates are females, and 65% are males; for minority students, the gender gap is even larger: 48% of African American males and 59% of African American females earn a diploma. In general, African American males have significantly lower high school graduation rates, college attendance and graduation rates than White male
students and are still accounting for 14.7% of all high school dropouts, which is twice the rate of White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

A future productive society relies on the education and success of both men and women. As Tom Mortensen, Senior Scholar for the Pell Institute Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, explained, “Gone or rapidly disappearing are goods-producing industrial segments of the American economy that once employed almost entirely men. Today, unemployment rates fluctuate the most for males with the least education and fluctuate the least for males with the most education” (personal interview, September 6, 2007). To begin to address this issue, it is important to examine the forces that keep men from attending college at the same rate as women. Over the last decade the number of men, especially African American men, is lagging behind women in high school graduation and postsecondary attendance. Secondary school administrators and policymakers must address this issue as they strive to meet the challenges of high school graduation and postsecondary participation rates for urban African American male high school students.

**Purpose Statement**

The key factors researchers have identified as influencing educational aspirations, defined as a student’s perception of his or her intention to pursue an advanced education beyond high school, are family, school, and peers. This study examines how these factors influence the educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high school students. While there is a body of literature on factors influencing educational aspirations (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; King, 2006; National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007) and a body of literature on
factors influencing urban education and minority students’ education (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2001; Kao & Tienda, 1988; Jackson & Moore, 2008), little research has been done on how educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students are influenced by family, school, and peer factors. According to Jackson and Moore (2006), “More research is needed to inform policy and practice to improve the conditions of education for African American males” (p.203).

Significance of the Study

Higher education researchers and the public are noting the disturbing decline in the percentage of males attending college relative to females (Green & Winters, 2006; King, 2006; Mortenson, 2006), and the trend is even more disturbing for urban minority male students, who are not attending college at the same rate as other males (Freeman, 1997; Howard, 2003; Hurtado, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997; NCES, 2005). The educational plight of African American males is troubling to American society, including the educational system, criminal justice system, and the economy (Jackson & Moore III, 2008). Since educating the growing population of African American males for active participation in the twenty-first century workforce is important for the country’s future, research on the factors that influence urban African American male high school students’ postsecondary aspirations is important.

The college choice process for high school students is complicated and interwoven by factors such as the family, school, and peers. While much is known about the choice process, there is a gap in the research regarding African American students’, especially males’, decision-making concerning postsecondary education. Little attention has been given to African American males for solving educational problems; most of the
attention has simply documented the fact that there is a problem (McGuire, 2005). Few studies have focused on minority students and their decisions to acquire a postsecondary education (Hossler & Stage, 1992); and, as Smith and Fleming (2006) pointed out, the college choice frameworks that scholars have developed to describe high school students are from the perspective of White students. Hossler, Schmidt, and Vesper (1999) agreed “special attention may need to be given to African American males because the factors that influence their aspirations are less certain” (p. 29). Previous researchers who have examined urban African American males have admitted that they have not been successful in predicting the factors that influence their postsecondary aspirations.

Education is the key for improving our country’s future. Policy changes at the federal and state levels must take place so that urban African American male students are retained and prepared in high school and given the opportunity to participate in postsecondary education. A better understanding of the factors that influence educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students will assist in establishing more appropriate policies and practices that will increase their attendance in institutions of higher education. This research study extends the very limited research that focuses on the college choice process for urban African American male high school students.

With this in mind, this study was designed to explore the influence of family, school, and peer factors on educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. The study addresses the following research questions:

Research question 1: Do family variables (such as maternal and paternal encouragement for higher education, financial support, family involvement, and access to
technology) influence the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students? If so, which family variables influence educational aspirations the most?

Research question 2: Do academic/school variables (such as school involvement, high school environment, support from teachers and counselors, academic performance, and school suspensions) influence the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students? If so, which academic/school variables influence educational aspirations the most?

Research question 3: Does the peer variable (support and encouragement) influence the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students?

Research question 4: Of the significant predictors of educational aspirations from each group of variables (family, school, and peers), which has the strongest influence on educational aspirations?

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were used:

College:

Refers to a four-year postsecondary institution.

Educational aspirations:

Refers to a student’s view and perception of his or her intention to pursue an advanced education, beyond high school, in the future (Campbell, 1983).

African American:

A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups.
College choice model:

A complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university, or institution of advanced vocational training (Hossler & Stage, 1992).

Predisposition stage of the college choice model:

Refers to a student’s decision or aspiration to continue his/her formal education after high school (Hossler & Stage, 1992, p. 427).

Overview of the Following Chapters

Chapter One of this dissertation provided a short overview of the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the research, research questions and key terms. Chapter Two of this dissertation presents a review of the literature, beginning with an historical perspective of college attendance and then presenting the conceptual framework and background information on the variables included in the study. Chapter Three includes the research questions, hypotheses, variables, research design, and analyses used in the study. Chapter Four examines the results of this study, including the most significant predictors of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. Finally, Chapter Five presents the summary of findings, implications, limitations of the study, and directions for further research.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter includes an extensive review of the literature relevant to the issue of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. Chapter II is organized into 3 sections: (1) a historical perspective of educational aspirations of African Americans; (2) existing research on factors influencing educational aspirations; and (3) a discussion of the conceptual framework for the study.

Historical Perspective on Educational Aspirations

To understand issues currently impacting college enrollment of African American males, it is important to look at the history of educational aspirations. In American higher education, the student demographics have changed over the years. Originally, students who attended college were White, elitist, male, and single (Thelin, 2004). The first three centuries of American higher education could, in fact, be described as predominantly private and Protestant, but the rise of public institutions from the mid 19th century on documented an increase in enrollment of students from all backgrounds, especially since World War II (Kuh & Gonyea, 2005).

After the Civil War (1861-1865), the Jim Crow laws, which mandated “separate but equal” status for African Americans, were put into effect in the South. These laws legalized segregation in all public entities, including schools and universities. From
1861 -1870, the American Missionary Association founded seven Black colleges and 13 Normal Schools. These were the first Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Although this was seen as progress, HBCUs were originally neglected and ill equipped (Thelin, 2004), and continue to be today.

In 1941-45, during World War II, enrollment in college decreased in the United States, and after Pearl Harbor, male college students melted away, but not for long. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (The GI Bill) opened the door for men and women who would not have had the opportunity to go to college. The GI Bill, signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 22, 1944, provided education and training, loan guaranty for homes, farms, or businesses, and unemployment pay (Greenberg, 2004). This Bill allowed for African American veterans to attend college.

In the 1950’s, the federal government gave $300 million for long-term loans for institutions to build dormitories due to the increase in students after the wars (Bernal-Miller & Poulson, 2004). In 1954, Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka was intended to provide equitable access to the advancement of education and social mobility for African Americans, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 extended the Brown vs. Board of Education legislation to colleges. This Act prohibited schools that practiced racial discrimination from receiving federal funds.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 was “enacted to strengthen the educational resources of our colleges and universities and to provide financial assistance to students in postsecondary and higher education” (United States Congress, 1965). This Act demonstrated our nation’s commitment to providing educational opportunities for all Americans regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstance. The
Truman Commission was instrumental in supporting access for students traditionally underserved by higher education (Thelin, 2004).

In the 1970’s, enrollments continued to increase, but not as fast as they did in the 1950-1960’s. In 1972, the Education Amendment was passed by the federal government, which established more need-based aid, thereby allowing even more traditionally underserved students the opportunity to participate in higher education. At this time, changes in access included major enrollment gains for racial minorities, which led Clark Kerr to refer to this period as the “great transformation in higher education” (Thelin, 2004).

Since 2003, however, the rate of participation of women in higher education has outpaced that of men, and the college-going rate of male minority students is the lowest of any group (King, 2006). To continue this trend would be detrimental to American society, since an educated workforce is necessary for economic stability and growth. We need educated citizens who participate and contribute to the well-being of our democracy and economy. Today, more than ever, this participation in the workforce requires a college education.

Factors Influencing College Aspirations

Gender

Research on the effect of gender on aspirations for higher education has produced varying results. Two studies (Hossler & Stage, 1987; Stage & Hossler, 1992) found women were more likely to go to college than males, but they did not have their families’ support. Other researchers (Carpenter & Fleishman, 1987; Elsworth, 1982; Tuttle, 1981) found that gender had no impact on educational aspirations. Smith and Flemings (2006),
who studied African American students, found that parents encourage their daughters more often than their sons to consider college, and in African American families, the mothers are the most important influence on educational aspirations of high school students. Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman and Smith (2000) found that mothers are the most supportive of college attendance and student success, according to the African American students they interviewed.

The largest gender imbalance in college attendance is between African American females and males. Smith and Fleming (2006) acknowledge that a “clear majority of the African American college students are now female” (p.71). According to the American Council on Higher Education (2008), in 2006, African American women (81%) completed high school at a higher rate than African American male students (72%). The gender gap has increased the most since 2000 for low-income, traditional-aged students due to media influence, slower maturation rates for boys, who thus have difficulty meeting school requirements, and attention deficit disorder (King, 2006). Smith and Fleming (2006) note that very little research has explored parents and their roles in this gender enrollment gap.

A recent Canadian study by Frenette and Zeman (2007) found that the reason for the gender gap in college may be that girls outperform boys on standardized tests, in grade-point averages, and in time spent on homework, and that parents encourage girls more than boys. Cho (2007) found that over the past 30 years, women have outperformed men on test scores and the number of math and science courses completed; therefore, women are better prepared to capitalize on the educational aspiration of attending college. King (2006) also found that girls are more likely to take a rigorous high school
curriculum. Conversely, Hanson and Litten (1981) found that men and women differ in self-esteem and self-assessment, concluding that men are more self-confident, which positively influences their educational aspirations.

Although recent college-going rates suggest a problem for males, some argue that we do not have a boys’ issue. According to Sax (2007), “Rather than worrying about whether one gender is winning or losing the race, we need to worry about the fact that some members of both genders face serious obstacles in reaching their personal, educational, and professional potential” (p.3). In a recent Newsweek article, “Admittedly Unequal,” the author raised another concern regarding the boys’ issue: to reject more female applicants than male just to try to maintain equilibrium is not acceptable. Several colleges have made changes to attract male students, such as starting engineering programs, which often attract males, and changing admission standards and materials to attract more men (Wilson, 2007). However, the men not going to college tend to be low-income and minorities, so maybe the discrepancy in college-going rates between the sexes is more about race and class than gender. Certainly, we need to increase the attendance of low-income and minorities; the goal, however, is to educate as many Americans as possible.

Ethnicity

Since the number of ethnic minority students will dramatically increase over the next several decades, studying how ethnicity influences educational aspirations is important. There is not a generalized educational crisis among men, but there are areas of real problems. In particular, “African-American, Hispanic, and low-income males lag behind their female peers in terms of educational attainment and are far outpaced by
White, Asian-American, and middle-class men and women” (King, 2006, p.2). King (2006) acknowledged that females outnumber males across all racial groups, but the imbalance is most pronounced for African Americans. Even wealthy African American males lag behind academically in high school (McGuire, 2005; Moore III, Henfield & Owens, 2008). Ogbu (2003) pointed out that the low performance of African American students in high school has been due to inferior school resources and a lack of parent involvement.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) noted that due to past discriminatory practices and limited educational resources, some African American students develop an “oppositional” culture to academic achievement. In addition, “The combination of race and gender may constitute a ‘double jeopardy’ of sorts, further imposing barriers to the academic success of many African American males (Uwah, McMahon, & Furlow, 2008, p.297). Holzman (2006) noted that Black male students usually attend racially segregated high schools, earn lower scores on national assessments, are suspended and expelled more often than White males, and are assigned to special education courses at higher rates than White males; therefore, Black male students are unlikely to attend college. When successful Black students were interviewed, they acknowledged that their success was due to a strong college preparatory curriculum, high expectations for all students, discipline polices that were clear and fair to all students, a respect between teachers and students, and clean well-equipped schools (Holzman, 2006). Pitre (2006) found that African American and White students have similar educational aspirations to attend college even though African American students feel that they have lower levels of academic preparation.
Other researchers have found the opposite to be true; their research has indicated that African American students perceive many barriers to higher education (Paulsen, 1990; Tuttle, 1981). Freeman (1997), in her qualitative research, found that when asked about their perceptions of barriers to participation in higher education, African American students included economic barriers—not being able to finance college and the fear of not being able to find a job that pays appropriately after completing college—as well as psychological barriers, which included college not being presented as an option, hopelessness, and feeling intimidated. Additionally, in Freeman’s (1997) research, students offered the following suggestions to increase African American participation in college: “improve school conditions, provide interested teachers and active counselors, instill possibilities early and expand cultural awareness” (p. 530).

Although many high school students report that they want to attend college, there is still a large gap between students based on gender and ethnicity. According to the American Council on Education (2005), when broken down by race/ethnicity and gender, 56% White women, and 44% White males, 64% African American women, and 36% African American men, 59% Hispanic women, and 41% Hispanic men, 54% Asian American women and 46% Asian American men, 63% American Indian women, and 37% American Indian men attend college (p.5).

Parental Educational Attainment

Research suggests a positive relationship between parental education and educational aspirations of high school students. Hossler, Schmidt, and Vesper (1999) believed the reason for this was that parents who were college educated probably valued education more and passed the values on to their children. Kao and Tienda (1998) and
Tierney (2002) also found that parents’ education has a strong influence on the educational aspirations of high school minority youth. Litten (1982) reported that parental education lessens the reliance on high school counselors; students with educated parents rely on their parents for information about college. Litten (1982) concluded that parental education does influence the college choice process more than race or gender, primarily in the way college information is presented. During the predisposition stage of the college choice process, parents with postsecondary education degrees send a stronger message to their children about the importance of going to college and make sure that their children are enrolled in a college preparatory curriculum (Smith & Fleming, 2006).

Socioeconomic Status

Substantial differences in the patterns of college choice emerge when one takes into account Socioeconomic Status (SES). Hossler and Stage (1992) found SES “positively associated with a predisposition to attend a postsecondary institution” (p. 428). Later, Hossler, Schmidt, and Vesper (1999) found that parental SES does not affect the predisposition stage; however, parents’ educational level does. Kao and Tienda (1998) found that SES was an important factor for predicting eighth-grade educational aspirations and the continued interest in college through high school. Seventy-one percent of the lowest SES students do not obtain the academic qualifications necessary to support college. According to Cabrera and LaNasa (2001), based on the National Educational Longitudinal Study (1988), 71% of low socioeconomic status students fail to meet college qualifications.
Financial Support

Another issue affecting college attendance of minority students is the lack of knowledge about how to finance their college education. As Lake (2008) claimed, “Obtaining financial aid from parents can be especially difficult for first-generation, low-income students because of the cultural differences and parents’ lack of knowledge about the financial aid process” (p.1). Obtaining financial aid can be a barrier for urban African American male high school students, since their parents do not understand the financial aid process. Engle, Bermeo, and O’Brien (2006) have found that parents of first-generation students often lack knowledge about the process for preparing, applying to, and paying for postsecondary education. Unfortunately, many high schools do not teach students how to apply for financial aid or provide financial literacy. Test preparation and academics get most of the attention, with little attention being paid to teaching students strategies to finance their education (Venegas, 2008).

Parental Encouragement

Parental support is another important factor in encouraging educational aspirations of high school students. Flint (1992) acknowledged the strong relationship between socioeconomic variables and educational aspirations for high school students; he found that parents’ degree aspirations for their children were vital, stating that “more is better” (p. 704). Engle, Bermeo, and O’Brien (2006) posited that several factors negatively influence the likelihood that first generation students will attend college, including “lower levels of academic preparation, lower educational aspirations and less encouragement and support to attend college, particularly from parents” (p. 14). Parental education and
aspirations for their children may, in fact, be two of the most significant predictors of student educational aspirations (Hossler & Stage, 1992). Previous research has concluded that parents have a strong influence in preparing and promoting college attendance (Cabrera & LaNasa 2000 & 2001; Cooper & Liou, 2007; Flint, 1992; Stage & Hossler, 1989; Tierney 2002).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), female-only households represent 31% of the White, 44% of the Black, and 47% of the Hispanic households. Therefore, there may be cultural and ethnic differences in decision-making for college attendance among high school students. Parents of low-income students often place more emphasis on economics than academics (Miller, 2002).

Family Involvement

Parental encouragement is a two-fold process, according to Cabrera and LaNasa (2000) and Stage and Hossler (1989). First parents need to have high educational expectations, and they must participate in school functions and discuss the importance of college attendance with their children. To understand the influence of parents on current students, it is necessary to discuss the millennial generation. Parents of the millennial generation are said to be aggressively protective of their students, playing an active role in their children’s experience. Members of the millennial generation have what are characterized as “helicopter parents” (Elam, Stratton & Gibson, 2007). According to Elam, Stratton, and Gibson (2007) “helicopter parents” hover over their children and are protective advocates of their children’s success, including college preparation. However, urban low-income students often do not fit some of the profile of the millennial generation; they do not necessarily have “helicopter parents” looking out for their best
interest and preparing them for college. A recent study conducted by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute as part of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) found that minority students reported that their parents were not involved enough in choosing a college (Higher Education Research Institute, 2008).

Access to Technology

Technology is rapidly changing and is of critical importance in the global economy. If schools do not have computers and updated software, their students will not be prepared for the 21st century. Sadly, many urban high schools have very few computers and are graduating students with poor technology skills. Tettegah and Mayo (2005) have pointed out that technology is especially important for educational communities and urban students’ success. Hess and Leal (2001) found that districts with higher percentages of African American students had fewer computers available to students. The implication of unequal educational technology for minority students is a concern, since minority and low-income students already have other serious disadvantages.

Academic/School

One barrier to success for low-income students is the lack of acquiring skills and knowledge to qualify for or be successful in college. It is imperative that both students and parents are aware of the need to enroll in a rigorous high school curriculum beginning in junior high in order to be prepared for college. Urban high school students often have the same educational aspirations for college as others, but they often lack the rigorous academic curriculum in high school. According to Cabrera and LaNasa (2001), during middle school, students need to make plans to attend college and then follow
through with a rigorous academic curriculum, graduate from high school, and apply for college. When these tasks were accomplished, they found that 81% of the students who were attending the eighth grade in 1988 enrolled in college by 1994 (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2001). Additionally, urban high schools need better facilities, resources, qualified teachers, and access to a high quality curriculum (Smedley & Jenkins, 2007). However, urban school facilities are often dilapidated and unsafe, their teachers are poorly trained, and their counselors are unable to provide adequate college guidance (Klugman & Butler, 2006).

Hossler, Schmidt, and Vesper (1999) found that a student’s academic ability and the school environment and resources that are available are factors that affect the predisposition stage. Likewise, Way and Robinson (2003) found that for minority, low SES students, the school’s influence, academic achievement, goals, and psychological well-being is more important than family or friends in increasing educational aspirations. In his study of African American and White student aspirations for college, Pitre (2006) found that both African American students and White students have similar educational aspirations to attend college; students who feel that they are unprepared for college or do not know if they are prepared for college are much more unlikely to have educational aspirations for college; and the academic achievement of African American students is lower when compared to their peers.

School Involvement

Few studies have included this factor in their research, but research has suggested high school involvement may increase educational aspirations during the predisposition stage (Hossler & Stage, 1992). Girls are now considerably better prepared for college
than they were in the past on many levels, including engagement in school activities.

Yazzie-Mintz’s (2006) report on findings from the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) suggested that girls are more engaged than boys across academic (academic investment and strategies for learning), behavioral (participation in extracurricular and non-academic school activities) and emotional (student feelings of connection to school) levels. The report also noted that students with a high socioeconomic status report higher levels of engagement in all three dimensions. Another finding was that ethnicity made a difference on the level of engagement: White and Asian students report being more engaged than students of other races.

A personal email from Yazzie-Mintz (10/12/2007), a researcher and project director of the HSSSE survey, provided this researcher more information on the differences of engagement between boys and girls during high school:

Sixty-four percent female students report spending 2+ hours on homework in a typical seven-day week and 51% of males report the same. Additionally, 54% of female students reported that written homework was very important or a top priority and 37% of males agreed. 52% female students spent 2+ hours reading/studying for class and 37% of the males agreed. 49% of females found reading/studying for class to be very important or a top priority. 53% of females spent 2+ hours practicing a sport/musical instrument and 63% of males agreed. 87% of females spent 2+ hours socializing with friends outside of school and 85% of males. Sixty-five percent of women felt that socializing with friends outside of school was very important or a top priority and 58% of males agreed. 71% of females reported talking on the phone 2+ hours or more 49% of males.
54% of females reported surfing/chatting online 2+ hours or more and 51% of males.

Yassie-Mintz’s research with the HSSSE institute has clearly revealed that female students are more engaged in the high school experience on almost every level.

School Environment

Schools and families need to work together to make college a reality for their students. This reality is possible if the school environment is conducive to learning and supported by teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents. When parents and teachers hold high expectations for African American students, they have higher educational aspirations (Flowers, Milner & Moore III, 2003). African American students depend on support from teachers and parents to increase academic achievement (Douglas, 2006). Additionally, according to Hrabowski, Maton, and Grief (1998), “A student’s academic performance is influenced by teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of that student’s ability and the expectations they convey” (p.11). Often students that are low-income are negatively labeled as disadvantaged and low achieving (Cooper & Lio, 2007).

Low-income schools in America receive limited resources to challenge and engage students. African American males “are more likely to attend schools with fewer educational resources and are more likely to be educated by the least trained educators” (Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008, p. 911). Obidah, Christie, and McDonough (2004) concluded that this is the picture of urban schools across the nation. Engle, Bermeo, and O’Brien (2006) agreed that first-generation students, many of whom are from urban schools, are less prepared academically “due to the lack of rigorous coursework, low
teacher expectations and limited resources in the urban and rural school systems they attended” (p. 6).

If some schools are plagued by violence, many more are afflicted with passive, bored students. According to Macionis (2003), “Some of the blame for passivity can be placed on television (which now consumes more of young people’s time than school), on parents (who are not involved enough with their children), and on the students themselves” (p. 530). But schools also play a part. Macionis (2003) has claimed our educational system itself generates student passivity.

School Suspensions

Another issue affecting the success of African American males is the rate of suspensions from school. African American males are more likely to be suspended from school than any other group (Meier, Stewart, & England, 1998). Suspensions lead to poor academic performance and disengagement from school. Thus, African American males lag academically behind Caucasian males and African American females (Jackson & Moore III, 2008).

Support from Teachers and Counselors

According to Cooper and Liou (2007), it is critical for all students to have access to information regarding college access by the end of ninth grade so that they develop the skills and knowledge to pursue a college education and realize their career dreams.

In their study of the college choice process, Hossler and Stage (1992) found the number of minority students relying on high school counselors is below 50% and concluded that overall teachers and counselors are not influential during the predisposition stage.
Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, and Nora (1996) stated that first-generation students have less counseling than non first-generation students and their parents spend less time discussing their educational aspirations with their teachers in high school. The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (2007) noted that students from higher SES families relied more on their families for information and less on counselors for college information. The opposite is true for lower SES families. King (1996) found that low-income students need college counseling and information to increase college aspirations. Similarly, Cabrera and La Nasa (2001) found that the lowest SES students are the most reliant on high school counselors to provide information regarding going to college.

Other researchers have also noted that low SES students rely more on high school counselors and teachers to provide information about college (Tierney, 2002). Students in the predisposition phase of the college choice process, especially low SES students, expect to receive their information regarding college attendance from high school counselors. Perna (2000) found that “higher percentages of African Americans and Hispanics than Whites receive help from school personnel” (p. 6). However, during 7th through 9th grade (predisposition stage), counselors spend very little, if any, time with students discussing college. Therefore, counselors are not getting college information to students early enough. Many students do not receive college information until their junior year, which is clearly too late. If students do not receive information early, they may not have the academic preparation to attend college later.
Academic Performance

Another barrier for urban African American male high school students is that many do not graduate from high school. Currently, in the United States, there is an epidemic of high school drop outs. According to Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006), nearly half of Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans fail to graduate from public high schools with their class (p.i). Researchers have reported that 14.7% of all dropouts are African American students; this is twice the rate of White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). However, King (2006) noted that there is no national consensus on the best practice to calculate high school graduation rates and those that are calculated are overstated.

Kao and Tienda (1998) found that if Black and Hispanic students persist in high school, they are optimistic about their educational aspirations. However, even if Blacks and Hispanics graduate from high school, they graduate with lower test scores and academic ability than White students (Perna, 2000). Also, Perna (2000) found 48% of African Americans, 47% of Hispanics, and 21% of the White students graduate from urban high schools. Students from urban low-income high schools are also at a higher risk for academic failure. Conversely, students attending affluent high schools are not at high risk for failure. This achievement gap continues to widen regarding postsecondary educational aspirations.

School Curriculum

A rigorous high school curriculum has a positive influence on the predisposition phase (Hossler & Stage, 1992). According to Cabrera and LaNasa (2001), the most important preconditions of college attendance are receiving the academic skills necessary
to meet college qualifications and graduating from high school. Literature discusses the academic rigor of the high school curriculum as one of the best predictors of success in college (Adelman, 2006; King, 2006; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). Academic rigor, according to the U.S. Department of Education, is at least four years of high school English; three years of high school math, including Algebra 1 and another higher level math course; three years of high school science, which must include two years of biology, chemistry, or physics; three years of high school social studies; and one year of high school language other than English. Very few states require Algebra II for graduation, yet an understanding of Algebra II has been shown to be a large predictor for college student success (Adelman, 2006). In 2003, fewer African American eighth-grade students took algebra courses than their White and Latina/o peers (Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008). In order for students to have educational aspirations for college, they must take a rigorous curriculum. As stated by Adelman (2006), academic achievement is related to a rigorous and challenging high school curriculum.

Peer Support and Encouragement

Hossler and Stage (1992) reported that peers influence college aspirations, but “peer support is not strongly associated with the predisposition” for college (p. 433). However, urban students are more likely to be raised in single-parent homes or by other family members who often do not have the time or the resources to increase the educational aspirations of their children. Therefore, it is important to explore whether peers have more influence on urban high school students’ college aspirations than parents do. Much of the previous literature concentrates on parents’ influence, but not peers of urban students. Kern-Kelpe (2000) found that minority students attending urban schools
did not report that peers influenced their college decision, but Wentzel, Caldwell, and Barry (2004) found that friends of minority students and their impact on academic adjustment in large urban inner-city schools had not been well researched.

According to Ryan (2000), researchers 20 years ago found that peers of adolescents affected college aspirations. Ryan (2000) notes that further research needs to take place to discover and understand the influence of adolescent peer groups on motivation, engagement, and achievement. Likewise, Sokatch (2006) agreed that the influence of peers on educational aspirations to attend college is not well understood. However, further research by Sokatch (2006) found that “friends’ plans are found to be the single best predictor of 4-year college enrollment for low-income urban minority students, even when controlling for variables traditionally assumed to affect college going” (p.128).

Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999), in their longitudinal study of eight high school students, found that family support was not enough; friends were also important in the decision to attend college, but not important in the predisposition stage. Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) agreed that peers do influence college aspirations, but are not strongly associated with the predisposition stage. Berndt (1999) discovered that friends influence school adjustment; however, the strength of the influence is unclear. Hanson and Litten (1982) found that friends play an important role for gathering information in the college decision process. Singham (2003) found that peers can have a negative influence on educational aspirations, and Ogbu (2003) discussed how African American male students often disengage from school in order to gain acceptance from peers.
Conversely, Perna (2000) reported that peer encouragement is not related to college enrollment for African Americans, Hispanic, or White students. Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman and Smith (2006), in their study of 22 high achieving African American students, found that peers can have positive and negative effects on academic achievement; although peers may be supportive of peer success, they may also serve as a distraction, as they may take too much time and can be involved in activities that would prevent academic success.

Hossler and Stage’s College Choice Model

Hossler and Stage (1992) developed a model of the predisposition stage of the college choice process which has become well known in the field of higher education (see Figure 1). The model is based on the literature of college student choice and Hossler and Stage’s work with sociologists who studied attainment. Hossler and Stage’s model is explored in this section of the dissertation, since it provides the basis upon which this study’s conceptual framework was developed.

The college choice model by Hossler and Stage (1992) has three stages: predisposition, search, and choice. According to Hossler and Stage (1992), the predisposition stage is when students determine whether they will continue their education past high school graduation. This stage is synonymous with developing college aspirations. The search stage is when students begin to gather information about colleges and decide on a “choice set” of colleges to which they will apply; and the choice stage is deciding on the actual college the student will attend.

Significant factors of the model include: family background characteristics (socioeconomic and demographic characteristics), parents/peer expectations and
encouragement, student ability, and high school experiences (high school quality, high school curriculum track, and high school involvement) (Hossler & Stage, 1992). According to Hossler and Stage (1992), “each of these factors was reviewed in detail and then used to build a causal model” (p.428).

![Figure 1 Hossler and Stage’s Predisposition Stage of the College Choice Model.](image)


In their study, Hossler and Stage (1992) studied the effect of mother’s education, father’s education, family income, ethnicity, gender, parents’ expectations, high school ability, and high school experiences on student aspirations. Mother’s and father’s education were measured using a seven point scale ranging from 1 (completion of grade school), to 7 (a post-graduate degree). Family income were measured on a ten point scale
from 1 (< $10,000) to 10 ($50,000 plus). Ethnicity was coded as 0 (minority) and 1
(nonminority) and gender was reported as 1 (male) and 2 (female). Parents’ expectations
were measured on a six point scale, with 1 being high school diploma or uncertain and 6
being professional degree. High school achievement was measured on a five point scale
of grade point average from 1 (A+) to 5 (F). High school activities were measured by
totaling responses from a series of activity items measured with on a four point scale
from very active (1) to not active (4).

In their study, Hossler and Stage found that socioeconomic status, student ability
and student achievement were positively associated with aspirations for college. They
noted that parental education was a strong predictor of educational aspirations, and when
combined with parents’ expectations and encouragement, was a stronger influence than
SES or student ability. School quality and academic track were also positively correlated
with being predisposed to going to college. Conversely, peer encouragement and support,
support from teachers and counselors, and high school activities did not strongly
influence college aspirations. Additionally, gender and ethnicity were not major factors in
the predisposition stage of student college choice.

Hossler and Stage (1992) admitted that their existing college choice model may
have been inadequate for Black students and that more research on the college choice
process for minority groups was needed. Previous research, including Hossler and
Stage’s, has focused on White students and not the experiences and challenges of
minority, low-income, and urban students (Hossler & Stage, 1992; Kao & Tienda, 1998;
further research should be conducted to ascertain whether the development of
predisposition toward college is different for minority and majority students. Allen, Bonous-Hammarth, and Suh (2002), when looking at Gates Millennial Scholars, found that “urban, low-income students of color encounter unique challenges gaining access to rigorous academic courses, adequate educational resources, quality instruction, early college counseling and other college prerequisites” (p. 2). Therefore, more research on the college choice model for other ethnic groups is necessary.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The Hossler and Stage model served as a guide for the conceptual framework for the present study. However, variables were operationalized differently, and additional variables were added based on current literature, which discusses the importance of financial support, support from teachers counselors and peers, technology skills, and, for urban African American students, suspensions (see Figure 2).

The family dimension of the framework includes the variables of mother’s encouragement, father’s encouragement, family involvement, financial support, and access to technology. Mother’s encouragement, father’s encouragement and family are based on Hossler and Stage’s model. Financial support was included because current literature posits that financial support influences educational aspirations, especially for minority students. Obtaining financial aid can be a barrier for urban African American male high school students, since their parents do not understand the financial aid process (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Engle, Bermeo, and O’Brien, 2006; Lake, 2008; McDonough & Calderone, 2006). Access to technology was also included because a lack of technological skills is a barrier to postsecondary education and the workforce (Tettegah & Mayo, 2005; Hess & Leal, 2001). In 1992, when Hossler and Stage planned their
study, access to technology was not a barrier to postsecondary education as it is today. However, the digital divide between wealthy schools and urban schools has widened over time and continues today as does the lack of technology in homes of low income students.

Figure 2 Conceptual Framework for the Present Study

The school dimension of the framework includes school involvement, school environment, academic performance, school support and suspensions. School involvement, school environment and academic performance were included in Hossler and Stage’s model. Hossler and Stage found that support from teachers and counselors did not influence the predisposition phase (and chose not to include them in their model), but the millennial generation and African American students view this support from a
different lens; therefore, support from teachers and counselors was explored in this study. School suspensions are not a large problem at suburban, mostly White schools, but are a large problem at urban minority schools. African American males are suspended from school more often than any other group (Meier, Stewart, & England, 1998; Jackson & Moore III, 2008). Therefore, in this study, school suspension was included as a variable.

The third dimension of the present study framework included peer encouragement and support. Again, Hossler and Stage found that peers did not affect the college choice process, but this variable was included in this study since the study was with a different population, and other researchers have found that peers influence urban African American male high school students.

The present study did not include socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, or parents’ education as did Hossler and Stage. Socioeconomic status was not explored, since most of the students in the study were from a low socioeconomic background. Ethnicity and gender were not explored because all of the students were black and male. Likewise, most students’ parents did not attend college.

Summary

As suggested by the foregoing review, many researchers have documented why urban students have not been successful; however, this study will focus on multiple factors and their influence on urban male African American students’ educational aspirations. Understanding the issues affecting urban African American males attending college and graduating is important, particularly since researchers are predicting that this trend of low high school graduation rates and college attendance for urban African American male high school students will continue.
Using Hossler and Stage’s model as a guide, a new conceptual framework and survey were developed for this study. The study includes the variables examined by Hossler and Stage (parental encouragement, family involvement, school involvement, school environment, support for teachers and counselors, academic performance and peer encouragement) as a starting point but includes three additional variables (financial support, access to technology, and school suspensions) based on current research on college aspirations. To better understand the significance of these variables on educational aspirations for urban African American male high school students, this study addresses the research questions presented in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the influence of family, school, and peer factors on the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. This chapter presents research questions and hypotheses, and details the research design and data analysis methods used to derive this understanding.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

To fulfill the purpose of the study, four research questions were pursued. For each research question, separate hypotheses were developed for the overall question as well as for individual variables within that question. More specifically, the following questions were researched and hypotheses tested:

Research question 1. Do family variables (maternal and paternal encouragement for higher education, financial support, family involvement, and access to technology) when taken together and separately influence the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students? If so, which family variables influence educational aspirations the most?
Research Hypothesis 1. The family variable model consisting of five predictors (maternal and paternal encouragement for higher education, financial support, family involvement, and access to technology) is a significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students.

Research Hypothesis 2. Maternal encouragement is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the family model.

Research Hypothesis 3. Paternal encouragement is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the family model.

Research Hypothesis 4. Financial support is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the family model.

Research Hypothesis 5. Family involvement is a positive significant predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the family model.
*Research Hypothesis 6.* Access to technology is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the family model.

*Research question 2.* Do academic/school variables (school involvement, high school environment, support from teachers and counselors, academic performance, and school suspensions) when taken together and separately influence the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students? If so, which academic/school variables influence educational aspirations the most?

*Research Hypothesis 7.* The school variable model (school involvement, high school environment, support from teachers and counselors, academic performance, and school suspensions) is a significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students.

*Research Hypothesis 8.* School involvement is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the school model.

*Research Hypothesis 9.* High school environment is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the school model.
Research Hypothesis 10. Support from teachers and counselors is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the school model.

Research Hypothesis 11. Academic performance is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the school model.

Research Hypothesis 12. School suspension is a significant negative predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students above and beyond all other variables in the school model.

Research question 3. Does the peer variable (support and encouragement) when taken alone influence the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students?

Research Hypothesis 13. Peer support and encouragement is a significant positive predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students.
Research question 4. Of all the significant predictors of educational aspirations from the three models mentioned above, which has the strongest influence on educational aspirations?

Research Hypothesis 14. Of the significant predictors, maternal support is the strongest predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban male African American high school students above and beyond all other variables in the model.

Research Design

To answer the research questions and test the hypotheses, this study used quantitative methodology that allowed for examining the relationship between educational aspirations (the dependent criterion variable) and 11 independent variables (predictors) relating to family, school, and peers. Quantitative methodology is useful for describing trends and explaining the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2005).

This study utilized a non-experimental survey research design. The characteristics that make this research non-experimental include lack of manipulation of any independent variables, studying what naturally occurs or has already occurred, and how variables are related (Creswell, 2005). The survey method of data collection was chosen because of the advantages of this method, such as the ability to ask many questions about several issues, relative inexpensiveness, usefulness in exploring trends, and gathering information from participants at different sites. More specifically, this study used a cross-sectional survey research design in that the study examined 9th and 10th grade students at
the same time. This study could have been longitudinal, but due to time restraints, it was carried out as a cross-sectional study.

Participants and Site

The population of interest for this study was 9th and 10th grade urban African American male high school students. The target population was 588 African American male 9th and 10th grade students from two urban high schools in the Midwest. The students attending the first school were 97.4% African American and 70.8% economically disadvantaged. This school itself was on Academic Watch, meaning the school did not meet its Adequate Yearly Progress. The school did not meet its proficiency goals or its goal for attendance and graduation, reporting an average attendance rate of 85.9 percent (state requirement is 93%) and a graduation rate of 70% (state requirement is 90%) for the 2005-06 school year, as reported on the Ohio Department of Education website.

At the second school, 67% of the students were African American and 61.2% economically disadvantaged, and the school was also on Academic Watch. The school did not meet its proficiency, attendance or graduation goals. The average attendance rate for the 2005-06 school year was 85.7% (state requirement 90%), and the graduation rate was 84.1% (state requirement 90%), as reported on the Ohio Department of Education website.

A convenience non-probability sampling method using teachers as an intermediate unit was employed to obtain a sample of students from these two urban high schools. Although noted for its limitations, this sampling method was chosen over other methods in this study because the students were available, convenient and shared the
same characteristics of the population to be studied. Although the sample may not be representative of the population, the sample can provide useful information for answering questions and testing hypotheses.

To obtain this sample, the following process was used. First, permission was received from the school district and principal of each school to conduct the study. Second, two teachers (one from each school) volunteered to allow their students to be surveyed. Third, these teachers handed out the cover letter and consent form (see Appendix A) to their students and asked them to discuss participating in the study with their parent(s) and return the signed consent form if their parents agreed to their participation. As a result, a total of 60 students returned their signed consent forms and constituted the study sample.

The profile of this sample is presented in Table 1. As seen in Table 1, 48% of the participants were in the ninth grade and 52% in the tenth grade. Sixty-three percent of the participants self-reported that they qualified for a free and reduced lunch, and 80% reported living with their mother. Only 28% reported that they lived with their father, and 22% lived with both their mother and father. Only 25% of mothers or fathers of the participants and 36% of their siblings had attended or graduated from college. Only 26% of the participants reported having a GPA above a 3.0.

The demographic information included in Table 1 was collected using the survey instrument provided in Appendix B. Socioeconomic status was assessed from two dichotomous (yes/no) survey items asking the students if they qualified for a free or reduced lunch and if their family received public assistance. Family residence was determined from four dichotomous (yes/no) survey items asking if the students lived with
their mother, father, another family member or a non-family member. Family education was reported using student responses to three dichotomous (yes/no) survey items: mother graduated from a 4-year college, father graduated from a 4-year college, brother or sister is attending or has graduated from college. Grade point average was described with five possible responses: 3.5 or higher, 3.5-3.0, 3.0-2.5, 2.5-2.0, below 2.0, and grade level was reported with 2 possible responses: 9th and 10th.
Table 1

Self-reported Demographic Information of Study Participants (n=60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Percent reported agreeing</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified for free and reduced lunch</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families received public assistance</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived with their mother</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived with their father</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived with mother and father</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived with another family member</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived with a non-family member</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Education
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother graduated from a 4-year college</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father graduated from a 4-year college</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother or sister are attending or graduated from college</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grade Point Average (GPA)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA &gt; 3.5</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA between 3.5 and 3.0</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA between 3.0 and 2.5</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA between 2.5 and 2.0</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA &lt; 2.0</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grade level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ninth grade</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth grade</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variables

The selection of variables for this study was guided by the findings from a thorough literature review, Hossler and Stage’s (1992) college choice framework and the conceptual framework for this study. The dependent variable in the study was educational aspirations. The dependent variable, educational aspirations, was created with Rasch Model analysis using the Winsteps (Linacre, 2008) application software program. This analysis allowed for empirical testing of whether a continuous dependent variable measuring educational aspirations could be constructed from 10 survey items. The Rasch analysis indicated that educational aspirations were quantifiable in this study, so one dependent variable was formed. The Rating Scale Rasch Model was used to accommodate the Likert-type data collected for this research. The Rasch analysis reported which survey items were the easiest for the students to agree with and which were the most difficult for them to agree with, thus helping us understand the meaning of the variable “educational aspirations.”

Using the Rasch model, ordinal ratings were converted into interval data to get a framework for putting these ratings on a common metric obtaining meaningful units to understand both the ratings and the meaning elicited by each survey question (Beltyukova & Fox, 2008). Rasch analysis converted ordinal data into interval data, thus yielding a truly continuous dependent variable.

The independent variables for this study were formed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 17). Seven survey items were used to create the five family variables that formed the first model for this study. Four independent
variables of maternal encouragement, paternal encouragement, family involvement and access to technology were each formed from one survey item; and the variable, financial support, was formed as the average of three survey items, which included if their parents were willing to pay for college, if they were willing to take a loan, and if they thought college was cost prohibitive (see survey items #10 - #16 on the survey in Appendix B).

Nineteen survey items were used to create five academic/school independent variables. The first academic/school variable, school involvement, was formed as the average of four survey items, which included survey items about involvement in school activities, participation in tutoring and classroom discussions, and involvement in after school activities. The high school environment variable was formed as the average of four survey items, which included questions about feeling safe, computer use, and if the student found school boring. The third academic/school variable support from teachers and counselors, was formed as the average of responses to four questions, which included questions about teachers discussing the importance of college, if students asked for help with academic work from teachers, if students felt respected by their teachers, and if students discussed courses that would prepare them for college with their counselors. The academic performance variable was formed as the average of six survey items, which included survey items about struggling with academic work, grades, motivation to study, time spent on homework, if they were confident that they would pass the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT), and if they planned to take algebra II. Finally, the suspended from school variable was formed from one survey item that asked students if they had been suspended from school. The survey items were #17 - #32 and #34 - 36 on the survey (see Appendix B). These five school variables formed the second model for this study.
The peer variable that formed the third model for this study was formed as the average of four survey items. The students were asked if it was important to discuss going to college with friends, if their friends wanted them to go to college, if their friends encouraged them to get good grades and if students helped each other study (see survey items #37 - #40 on the survey instrument in Appendix A).

Instrumentation

To examine the influence family, academic/school and peer variables have on educational aspirations of urban male African American high school students, as perceived by those students, a 53-item survey instrument was developed. This survey consisted of 13 demographic items as described in the previous section and 40 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, and 4=strongly disagree).

Ten of the 40 rating scale items asked students about their educational aspirations and thus were used to create the dependent variable. More specifically, these items asked students if they planned to go to college, knew what they want to study and planned to take the ACT and preparatory courses. Students were also asked if they had talked to their parents, teachers, counselors, or peers about attending college. Finally, the last two questions regarding educational aspirations asked students if they thought they knew enough about college to decide whether they should attend, and if they thought they had enough money to attend college. These were survey items #1-9 and #33 on the survey instrument (see Appendix B).

The remaining 30 items provided information about the independent variables. As already explained, 7 items were regarding family, 19 items were regarding school and 4
items were regarding peers. (See the earlier discussion of variables for details of how these survey questions were used to create the independent variables.) A complete copy of the survey is included in Appendix B.

A test-retest reliability could not be established because the researcher did not have an opportunity to retest the participants to see if the scores were stable and consistent with the same individuals measured under the same conditions. To check for internal reliability, a Cronbach’s alpha test was conducted. The analysis found a reliability score of .60 indicating that at least 60% of the total score variance was due to true score variance. As a rule of thumb, most professionals require a reliability of .70 or higher. Therefore, the internal reliability of the survey is a limitation of this study, and the results should be interpreted with caution.

Data Collection Procedures

As previously explained, a survey was given to the participants who returned their parental consent form and signed an assent form during a class period at two urban high schools. The survey was developed and piloted with 9th and 10th grade students from the same high schools during an after school study session to make sure that questions were clear and unambiguous. A correction to one survey item was made from the feedback received from the students. Specifically, the students were not clear what public assistance meant. As a result, as suggested by the students, public assistance was clarified in parentheses as referring to welfare and food stamps.

Prior to collecting the data, the researcher completed the Institutional Review Board training (see Appendix C) and received the Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix D). Additionally, approval was received from the Board of Education in
the district of the two urban high schools where the study took place, and written permission was received from the principals to administer the survey to 9th and 10th grade urban male African American students in a science or English course. English and science courses were chosen because all freshmen and sophomores were taking these classes. The teacher explained the survey to the students and gave them a letter discussing the purpose of the study, the importance of the study, an assurance of confidentiality, the investigator’s contact information, a timeline of the study, and the need for their parents’ consent to their participation by signing the consent form. The teacher asked the students to take the letter and the consent form home to discuss with their parents and to have the consent form signed by their parents and returned to their teacher before the day the survey would take place (see Appendix A).

On the day scheduled for the survey administration, students that returned a signed consent form were reminded of the purpose of the study and survey and that their participation was voluntary. Students were asked to sign an assent form if they agreed to participate in the study (see Appendix E). Safeguards, such as confidentiality and requiring no names or other identifying information, were in place to protect the students and their privacy. Students were also given the investigator’s name and contact information to contact with any questions or concerns about the study. The investigator administered the survey to 60 students in a room next door to their classroom. Students who did not return their consent form and did not participate in the survey stayed in the classroom with their teacher.
Data Management

Being non-experimental in nature, this study did not attempt to establish causation (cause and effect), but help predict which family, school, and peer factors influenced educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. Prior to the data analysis, descriptive statistics were examined, including the means and standard deviations. These were used to describe student responses to the questions and examine overall trends and distribution of the data. Descriptive statistics run on the demographic questions were presented earlier in this chapter to create the profile of the study participants (see Table 1 for details). As a result of reviewing the descriptive statistics, several variables needed recoding. This is discussed next.

Recoding of Survey Items

Examination of the descriptive statistics revealed that several survey items needed to be recoded. These were questions #10, #11, and #16. More specifically, they were dichotomized. Question #10 was dichotomized into 0 = Agree and 1 = Strongly Agree, because only 6% of the students disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed with this survey item, and at least 10% is needed to include a category into the analysis. Question #11 and #16 were also dichotomized but into 0 = Disagree and 1 = Agree because of the uneven distribution of students agreeing with the survey item. Table 2 displays the recoded variables. As shown in Table 2, most survey items were examined using a 4-pt Likert scale where Strongly disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3, Strongly Agree = 4. In addition, negatively worded items were reverse coded so that a higher agreement with a
survey item would consistently mean more of the desired outcome across all survey items. Reversed survey items included: #12, #22, #25, #30, #31 and #33.

Table 2

Recoded Survey Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Analysis Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recoded to dichotomous questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My mother encourages me to go to college</td>
<td>0=Agree, 1=Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My father encourages me to go to college</td>
<td>0=Disagree, 1=Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have computer with internet access in my home</td>
<td>0=Disagree, 1=Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverse coded questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The cost of college may prevent me from going to college</td>
<td>1=Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I have been bullied or harassed in high school</td>
<td>1=Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I struggle with my academic work</td>
<td>1=Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. I find school boring
1=Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree

31. I find it difficult to get myself motivated to study
1=Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree

33. I don’t know enough about college to decide
1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree , 4=Strongly Disagree

Data Screening

Data screening was performed to check the accuracy of the data entry and any missing values. Minimum and maximum values were checked to ensure that all values for each variable were between 1 and 4 since a 4-point Likert scale was used. Next, casewise diagnostics were run to check for outliers. A value was considered an outlier if it was 3 or more standard deviations above or below the mean.

Assumptions of Regression

To make sure that the results of the multiple regression analysis were accurate, the major assumptions that needed to be met for this analysis were tested. These included the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Normality refers to a distribution based on a normal curve. Linearity refers to a straight line relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, and homoscedasticity is the assumption that in regression, the standard deviations of all conditional distributions are equal.
To check if the family, school, and peer variables were normally distributed, histograms were constructed, and normal probability plot tests were also examined. To check for normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of the family, school, and peer variables, a residuals scatterplot was also considered. The assumption of normality is met if the variables have a small deviation from the bell curve in a histogram or when the values closely line up along the diagonal line from lower left to upper right in a normal probability plot. Normality, linearity and homoscedasticity assumptions are also met if the scatterplot is rectangular in shape and centered around the zero value of the residuals. This “rectangularity” within the residuals output indicates that the residuals are normally distributed among the predicted dependent variable scores (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). However, a violation of the assumption of homoscedasticity does not invalidate the regression; it only weakens it.

Collinearity diagnostics outputs were also examined for the family, school, and significant predictor models. To check for collinearity, tolerance statistics were examined. The Tolerance level needed to be larger than .01, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) less than 10, and the Condition Index less than 30.

Data Analysis Procedures

To answer the research questions, several regression models were considered at the data analysis stage. The four models represented by eleven independent variables were the family model (consisting of the variables of maternal and paternal encouragement for higher education, financial support, family involvement and access to technology), the academic/school model (consisting of the variables of school involvement, high school environment, support from teachers and counselors, academic
performance and school suspensions), the peer model (consisting of the variables of support and encouragement) and the model represented by the significant predictors from the first three analyses.

The first research question looking at family factors, the second research question examining school factors and the fourth research question looking at the most significant factors predicting educational aspirations were each analyzed using a multiple regression analysis. The third research question regarding peers was analyzed using a simple regression analysis. In all multiple regression analyses, the independent variables were entered in a single step, so that the variables could be examined for their combined effect in addition to being examined separately.

Regression analysis was the appropriate statistical method to answer the four research questions for the following reasons: there was one dependent variable and one or more independent variables; the independent variables were categorical or continuous, and the dependent variable was continuous; and the four research questions were prediction questions looking to determine if educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students could be predicted from the family, school, and peer variables. Research questions with the purpose of predicting the independent variable(s)’ influence on the dependent variable are appropriate questions for regression analysis, which enables researchers to determine the degree and direction of the influence of the one or more independent variables on the dependent variable and to assess the statistical significance of the relationship (Alreck & Settle, 2004).
Significance level

The significance level for this study was set at alpha level .05 for all regression analyses. The significance of each test statistic was determined by examining the p value and comparing it to alpha. The significance level (or alpha level) is a probability level that reflects the maximum risk that a researcher is willing to take that any observed differences are due to chance. Within the social sciences, a significance level of .05 is usually considered the standard for what is acceptable.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology used in this study. A locally developed survey instrument was administered to 60 urban African American male high school students to assess the influence of family, school, and peer variables on their educational aspirations. The dependent variable was created from survey items using the Rasch Model, and relationships among variables were examined using multiple and simple regression analyses. The following chapter presents the results of the study.
CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted to test the hypotheses for each of the four research questions guiding this study. The first research question examined if family variables significantly influenced educational aspirations and if so, which family variables influenced educational aspirations the most. The second research question examined if academic/school variables significantly influenced educational aspirations and, if so, which academic/school variables influenced educational aspirations the most. The third research question examined if the peer variable significantly influenced educational aspirations. Finally, the fourth research question examined which of the significant predictors of educational aspirations from each model (family, academic/school and peers) had the strongest influence on educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students.

First, descriptive statistics are presented followed by the results of Rasch Analysis used to measure the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics summarize, organize and simplify data. Descriptive statistics are examined first to see if the data are normally distributed by examining the frequency distribution of scores. Then the results are organized by the four research questions and related hypotheses.
Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of the independent and dependent variables for this study measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, and 4= strongly agree). As seen in Table 3, in most cases, ratings for the variables were between 2 and 3, indicating that participants had a range of responses generally from 2 (disagree) to 3 (agree), with agreement being more prevalent. The higher mean (3.1) for school support indicates that more participants agreed with the survey items related to school support than they did with items related to the other variables.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Educational Aspirations and Family, School, and Peer Variables (N = 60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational aspirations</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family involvement</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School involvement</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School support  3.1  .51
Academic performance  2.6  .45
Peer support  2.9  .58

The descriptive statistics for the four dichotomous variables (i.e., maternal encouragement, paternal encouragement, access to technology, and suspension from high school) are presented in Table 4. Table 4 illustrates the number, frequency and percentage of respondents who agree with the questions regarding maternal support, paternal support, access to technology, and suspensions from school. These variables are reported in this manner since responses were recoded as the dichotomous variables, agree and disagree, due to the uneven weight distribution of participants agreeing with survey items. As Table 4 shows, the distributions were skewed toward strongly agree and agree. That is, most participants agreed or strongly agreed that their mother and father encouraged them to go to college and that they had internet access in their home.

Suspension status is also included in Table 4, since it was a dichotomous yes/no question. Sixty-five percent of the students surveyed reported having been suspended from school. Mom’s encouragement was recoded as strongly agree and agree, since only 6% of the participants disagreed (none of the participants strongly disagreed) and 10% is needed for inclusion in the analysis.
Table 4

Frequency of Agreement Table of Recoded Variables (N = 60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal support</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal support</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of the Rasch Analysis

The results of the Rasch analysis applied to the survey items intended to measure the dependent variable showed that a continuous dependent variable measuring educational aspirations could be constructed from the 10 survey items. An examination using the Rasch model found that survey item 1, plan to go to college, was the easiest for the student to agree with; followed by survey item 5, talked to my parent about attending college; and survey item 3, I plan to take the ACT. The most difficult survey items to answer were survey item 7, I have talked to my counselor about attending college; survey item 9, I will have enough money to go to college, and survey item 33, I don’t know enough about college to decide whether I should go. This means that students were more
confident in answering the questions that were easier to agree with (survey items # 1, 5 and 3) and less confident in answering the questions that were harder to agree with (survey items #7, 9 and 33).

Results of Data Screening for the Family Variables and Educational Aspirations

One outlier for the family model with a value of 3.1 was found using casewise routine diagnostics and was eliminated from the model. Multicollinearity indicating a high intercorrelation between independent variables was not present in the data, as shown in Table 5. The collinearity diagnostics condition index was less than 30 for all variables, confirming that multicollinearity did not exist between independent variables in the family model.
Table 5
Collinearity Diagnostics for the Family Model\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>Condition Index</th>
<th>Variance Proportions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>IV2 q2: dad encour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.818</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>8.110</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>9.161</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>10.948</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>20.655</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Dependent Variable: college aspirations

Histograms and normal probability plots obtained for the dependent variable of college aspirations (see Figures 3 and 4) revealed that this variable was normally distributed and thus could be used in the regression analyses to answer the research questions. A normal bell curve imposed on the family model histogram shown in Figure 3 makes it visually apparent that the family model histogram had a fairly normal distribution.
The probability plot in Figure 4 shows once again that the dependent variable was fairly normally distributed. Most of the data points fall along the line, which is a good indicator that the variable of college aspirations was normally distributed.
Figure 4 Probability plot for family variables and educational aspirations

Figure 5 shows the results of the test of the homoscedasticity assumption. The scatterplot for the family variables and educational aspirations in Figure 5, although not perfect, shows that most of the points fall along the line. There is no apparent pattern in the scatterplot that would indicate violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity in the data. The scatterplot output is rectangular in shape and the dots center around the zero value of the residuals with no funnel-shaped residual. The rectangularity within the residuals output indicates that the residuals are normally distributed.
distributed among the predicted dependent variable scores (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Therefore, the assumption of homoscedasticity was met.

Figure 5 Scatterplot for family variables and educational aspirations

The Relationship between Family Variables and Educational Aspirations

The results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to determine the relationship between family variables and educational aspirations are summarized in Table 6. The overall five predictor model of the family variables (maternal encouragement, paternal encouragement, family involvement, financial support, and internet access in their home) was significant in predicting educational aspirations of
Table 6

Regression Analysis for Family Variables Predicting Educational Aspirations (N=59)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal support</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal support</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to technology</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.34*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family involvement</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $R^2 = .24$ * p < .05.

urban African American male high school students (p <.05). Therefore, Research Hypothesis 1, which stated that the family variable model was a significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students was supported, and the corresponding null hypothesis was rejected. The R for the model that contains family variables as predictors of educational aspirations was .48, which is a moderate correlation between the family variables and educational aspirations. The $R^2$ is
.24; thus, the family variables can explain 24% of the variability of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students.

As shown in Table 6, financial support was the only significant (p < .01) variable predicting educational aspirations. According to an examination of the Beta weights, the coefficients that indicate the magnitude of predictions for a variable, the strongest predictor in the family model of increased educational aspirations is financial support. Since the un-standardized coefficient is positive (.16), it indicates that as financial support increases, the educational aspirations of the urban African American male high school student participants increases. Thus, Research Hypothesis 3 (financial support is a significant predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high school students) was supported, and the corresponding null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Hypothesis 2, which stated that maternal encouragement and Research Hypothesis 3, which stated that paternal encouragement was a positive significant predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high students, were not supported. Likewise, Research Hypothesis 5, which stated that family involvement and Research Hypothesis 6, which stated that access to technology was a positive significant predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban African American male high school students, were not supported. Research Hypothesis 14, which stated that, of the significant predictors, maternal support will be the strongest predictor of educational aspirations for college of urban male African American high school students above and beyond all other variables in the model was also not supported.
Since financial support was significantly related to educational aspirations, this variable was later included in the model used to determine which variable had the strongest influence on educational aspirations for Research Question 4.

Results of the Data Screening for the School Model and Educational Aspirations

Two outliers with the values of 3.0 and 3.1 were found using the casewise diagnostics routine and eliminated from the school model. The coefficients table and the collinearity diagnostic output were examined for the school model to check for issues of multicollinearity. Multicollinearity was not present in the data, as evidenced by Table 7. The collinearity diagnostics condition index was less than 30 for all variables in the school model.

Table 7

Collinearity Diagnostics Table for the School Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensio</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>Condition Index</th>
<th>IV1 q2: school involme</th>
<th>IV2 q2: school environm</th>
<th>IV3 q2: school support</th>
<th>IV q2: suspensi</th>
<th>IV4 q2: academ</th>
<th>Variance Proportions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>5.784</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>6.763</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>11.970</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>15.985</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>18.323</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 6</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>24.582</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: college aspirations
Histograms and normal probability plots obtained for the dependent variable of college aspirations (see Figures 6 and 7) revealed that this variable was normally distributed and thus could be used in the regression analyses to answer the research questions. As shown in Figure 6, the histogram for the school variables and educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students in this study was a fairly normal distribution.

Figure 6 Histogram for school variables and educational aspirations
The probability plot shown in Figure 7 confirms that the data values of the school model were fairly normally distributed since most of the points fall along the straight line, and the closer the circles are to the line, the more normally the data is distributed.

![Dependent Variable: college aspirations](image)

Figure 7 Probability plot for school variables and educational aspirations.

As shown in Figure 8, the residual plot for the school variables met the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity because the residual plot was rectangular, with a concentration of points along the center.
Figure 8 Scatterplot for school variables and educational aspirations

The Relationship between School Variables and Educational Aspirations

Table 8 shows the results of the second regression analysis conducted to examine the relationship between school variables and educational aspirations. The five predictor model consisting of school involvement, high school environment, support from teachers and counselors, academic performance, and school suspensions, was significant in
predicting educational aspirations for urban African American male high school students (p<.01). The model summary table showed that the R for the model was .62, which is a

Table 8

Regression Analysis for School Variables Predicting Educational Aspirations (N=58)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School involvement</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school environment</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School support</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic performance</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School suspensions</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. R² = .39. **p < .01.

moderate correlation between the school variables and educational aspirations. The R² is .39. Thus, the model explains 39% of the variability in educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. Therefore, Research Hypothesis 7, the school variable model is a significant predictor of urban African American male high school students’ educational aspirations was supported, and the corresponding null hypothesis was rejected. Support from counselors and teachers was the only significant predictor of educational aspirations (p<.01). Examining the Beta weights shows that the strongest predictor of educational aspirations in the school model is support from counselors. Research Hypothesis 10, support from teachers and counselors is a significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students
was supported, and the corresponding null hypothesis was rejected. Since support from teachers and counselors was significantly related to educational aspirations, this variable was included in the model used to determine which variable has the strongest influence on educational aspirations to answer research question 4.

School involvement, high school environment, academic performance, and school suspensions did not make a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of educational aspirations. Therefore, Research Hypothesis 8 (school involvement is a significant predictor), Research Hypothesis 9 (high school environment is a significant predictor) and Research Hypothesis 11 (academic performance was the most significant predictor in the school model of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students) were not supported. Research Hypothesis 12, school suspension is a negative significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students, was not supported either.

Results of the Data for the Peer Variable and Educational Aspirations

One outlier with a value of 3.0 was found using casewise diagnostics and eliminated from the peer model. In the social sciences, many researchers think of their quantitative variables as being normally distributed. However, the variables are almost never normally distributed. By imposing the normal curve of the histogram, visually the degree to which there is a normal distribution can be assessed. As seen in Figure 9, the peer model histogram was fairly normally distributed.
Figure 9 Histogram for peer variables and educational aspirations

As shown in Figure 10, the probability plot for the peer model was fairly normal, as the values are very close to the line.
Figure 10 Probability plot for peer variables and educational aspiration

As shown in Figure 11, a scatterplot was constructed for the peer model. The scatterplot output was rectangular in shape, centered around the zero value of the residuals with no funnel-shaped residual. Therefore, the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity have been met.
The Relationship between the Peer Variable and Educational Aspirations

The results of the simple regression analysis conducted to determine the relationship between the peer variable and educational aspirations are summarized in Table 9. The peer model included one variable: peer support. As shown in Table 9, the peer variable was a significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students (p<.01). For this model, the R is .450, which reveals...
a moderate correlation between the peer variable and educational aspirations. The $R^2$ is .20.

Table 9

Regression Analysis for Peer Variables Predicting Education Aspirations (N = 59)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.45**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $R^2 = .20$ **p< .01

That is, peer variables can account for 20% of the variability of educational aspirations.

The independent variable, peer support, significantly contributed to the prediction of educational aspirations. Research Hypothesis 13, peers are a significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students, was supported, and the corresponding null hypothesis was rejected. Since peer support was significantly related to the educational aspirations, this variable was included in the model used to determine which variable has the strongest influence on educational aspirations (question 4).

The Significant Variables for Predicting Educational Aspirations

Finally, the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to determine which of the three significant predictors from the previous analyses was the strongest predictor of educational aspirations are summarized in Table 10. An examination of the Beta weights, the coefficients that indicate the magnitude of predictions for a variable,
show that the strongest predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students was school support (support from teachers and counselors), with the highest Beta weight of .427. The second strongest predictor of educational
Regression Analysis for Significant Variables Predicting Educational Aspirations (n=60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.245*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.249*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School support</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.427**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $R^2 = .44$

*p < .05. ** p < .01.

The most significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students was peer support, with a Beta weight of .249, and the third significant predictor of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students was financial support, with a Beta weight of .245. School support correlated with urban African American male high school students’ educational aspirations at $p<.01$, while financial and peer support correlated with urban African American male high school student’s educational
aspirations at p<.05. Peer support, financial support and school support were all positive predictors. In other words, more peer, financial and school support is associated with higher educational aspirations. Research Hypothesis 14—of the significant predictors, maternal support has the strongest positive influence on educational aspirations for college of urban male African American high school students—is not supported.

The entire model has an R of .66, which is a moderate multiple correlation between the school variables and educational aspirations. The SMC is .44; thus, 44% of the variability of educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students can be accounted for by peer support, school support from teachers and counselors, and financial support. This is a large effect size which makes the results of this analysis not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the study from four regression analyses testing thirteen research hypotheses. The findings suggest that a significant relationship exists between educational aspirations and financial support, support from teachers and counselors, and peer support. These findings may be important for understanding educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. The next chapter discusses their implications for practice and further research.
CHAPTER V

Analysis and Implications of the Study

Although researchers have been discussing the decline in high school graduation and post secondary enrollment rates for urban African American males, little research investigating why they are falling behind and what can be done to increase their educational aspirations exists. This study was designed to investigate the influence of family, school, and peer factors on the college aspirations of urban African American male high school students. The research questions for this study were formulated from the conceptual framework grounding this study. Hossler and Stage (1992) demonstrated that college choice is most influenced by family background characteristics, parents’/peer educational expectations, and high school experiences. The conceptual framework for this study built upon the Hossler and Stage college choice model, but operationalized the variables differently and added additional variables (financial support, support from teachers counselors and peers, access to technology and school suspensions) that are discussed by researchers in current literature as affecting educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students.

This chapter includes an analysis based on the four research questions, implications for policy and practice, a new proposed conceptual framework based on the results of the study, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.
The findings of this research did not mirror the results of previous studies of educational aspirations done with mostly White students by Hossler and Stage (1992); instead, the study adds an alternative perspective on the predisposition stage with African American male students.

To examine the factors that influence college educational aspirations of urban male African American high school students, this study addressed four research questions. The four research questions generated four regression models to test the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, educational aspirations. Model 1 included family variables, model 2 was school variables, model 3 was a peer support variable, and model 4 tested the strongest predictor from the family, school, and peer models. The regression analyses have yielded insight into the factors that appear to influence the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. The findings suggest that the statistically significant variables are teachers and counselors, peers, and financial support.

Family Support

The financial support variable was the only variable that was significant in the family model. The financial support variable in the family model was a composite of measures of the prohibitive effect of the cost of college, willingness to take a loan and parents’ willingness to help pay for college. Financial support had a significant positive relationship with educational aspirations in this study: an increase in financial support positively influenced educational aspirations.

This is not a surprising finding, since most research on educational aspirations shows that increased financial support increases educational aspirations. Therefore, 9th
and 10th grade students need to have an understanding of the cost of college and how to finance a college education. Most of the students in this study thought their parents would help them pay for college but reported their family was on welfare. This finding may be explained by the lack of knowledge of how to apply for and receive financial aid or the expected cost of a college education. According to the Pell Institute Study and the Council for Opportunity in Education, Blacks lack the knowledge regarding their options for financing college (Lake, 2008). This is due to cultural differences and the lack of family awareness about the financial aid process.

The other family variables (maternal support, paternal support, and internet access) were not significant predictors of educational aspirations for urban African American male high school students. This finding is not congruent with the findings of previous studies. Most of the literature indicates that parental support and involvement is the most significant predictor of educational aspirations for high school students (Hossler & Stage, 1992; Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999; Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000). As stated previously, most of the studies have involved very few minority students. This study indicates that perhaps parental support is not a significant factor for predicting educational aspirations of urban African American males. Although African American parents have high educational aspirations for their students, they often do not have the knowledge or experience to maneuver the college-going process. Additionally, parents may have high educational aspirations for their student; however, the student may not share these aspirations or have the skills to be accepted or successful in college. In this study, only 26% of the students reported that they have earned a grade point average of a 3.0 or above.
This study found that 93% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that their mother encouraged them to go to college, but reporting this encouragement did not correlate with the students’ educational aspirations. The results of the study would suggest that the idea of “helicopter parents,” discussed in the current literature on the millennial generation, may not apply to urban African American male high school students’ lived experience. Continued engagement with parents during the predisposition stage of the college choice process is important to increase educational aspirations.

School Support

Hossler and Stage (1992) suggested that counselors and teachers have very little influence upon the predisposition stage of most high school students. Hossler and Stage (1992) found that among minority students, less than 50% relied on high school counselors. Other researchers found that there is a lack of support for college aspirations by teachers and counselors for African American students (Moore III, Henfield, & Owens, 2008). However, African American students who thought that teachers and counselors had higher expectations for them had increased educational aspirations (Flowers, Milner, & Moore, 1993). The findings of this study suggest that school support from teachers and counselors is very important for increasing the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. This makes sense, since most of the participants were from homes where they would be the first to go to college; family members would not understand how to assist them in completing the college-going process, so they would need to rely more on school support. School involvement, school environment, academic performance, and school suspensions were not significant in predicting educational aspirations of urban African American high school students. This
finding may be explained due to the lack of information urban African American male high school students receive in junior high school regarding the importance of school involvement and academic performance for college acceptance.

Peer Support

Hossler and Stage (1992) reported that, overall, peers were not strongly associated with the predisposition stage, and some researchers have found that African American males who are academically talented and have high educational aspirations often endure negative peer interactions (Ogbu, 2003). Ford (1996) reported that African American males often purposely underachieve to be accepted by Black peer groups. Hrboroski, Muton, and Grief (1998) suggested that urban youth often encounter issues at school because the street skills they have developed for survival in their neighborhood, such as fighting and being “cool,” are not the behaviors accepted at school but are the behaviors that meet peer approval. In this study, peers were associated with increasing educational aspirations during the predisposition stage, a finding that may be explained by the fact that most of the students in the study lived with their mother only (80%); students might, therefore, rely on peers for support. In this study 50% of the participants reported that they discussed the importance of college with their peers and 85% reported that their friends wanted them to go to college.
Strongest Predictor

As stated previously, this research does not mirror the results of research with predominantly White students. Previous research found that parents had the most influence on educational aspirations of high school students, followed by student achievement and student involvement in school (Hossler & Stage, 1992). This study suggests that urban African American male high school students rely on teacher, counselor and peer support for information to master the college-going process, since many of them come from homes where no one has attended college.

Results of the multiple regression analysis of the strongest predictors of educational aspirations suggest that support from teachers and counselors is the strongest predictor of urban African American high school students’ educational aspirations ($\beta = .427$), followed by peers ($\beta = .249$), and financial support ($\beta = .245$).

Suggested Conceptual Framework Based on Findings

The conceptual framework for this study examined three models: the family model (maternal and paternal encouragement for higher education, financial support, family involvement, and access to technology), the school model (school involvement, high school environment, support from teachers and counselors, academic performance, and school suspensions) and the peer model (support and encouragement) to find the most significant predictors for increasing educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. Given the findings of this study that support from counselors and teachers, peer support and financial support are the most significant
factors for increasing educational aspirations of urban African American high school students, the following modified conceptual framework is suggested:

![Diagram of Modified Conceptual Framework]

Figure 12 Modified Conceptual Framework Based on the Results of the Study.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Given the finding in this study that financial support is a significant predictor of educational aspirations, it is important to increase the knowledge of financial aid and college costs among urban African American male high school students. We must dissolve the financial barriers to attending college to increase the educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. Knowledge of the financial aid process and access to scholarships for parents and students should be the goal for high school counselors and teachers. Since many urban students are low-income and first generation students (students whose parents did not graduate from college), they have
little knowledge about the process of financing a college degree (McDonough & Calderone, 2006), and minority parents are not often involved in college decision making (Pryor et al., 2008). In urban high schools, many counseling offices are too busy to provide substantive discussion regarding college opportunities and financial aid. According to Klugman and Butler (2006), “because of inadequate college advising, some students are unaware of financial aid options and the college application process or have unrealistic expectations about the college admissions process” (p. 5).

Students need lessons in financial aid education beginning late in junior high and early in high school. Financial aid information is often not taught until students are juniors or seniors (Hossler & Stage, 1992). This is clearly too late. Understanding the financial aid process is critical to a student’s success in college. Additionally, students may not understand the worthwhile investment a college education will provide over their lifetime. The finding of the importance of financial support in this study suggests that if students were given more detailed information regarding financing college, the advantages of obtaining a degree and the options that are available as early as junior high school, their educational aspirations may increase positively.

Given the finding that support from counselors and teachers is the most significant variable in predicting educational aspirations, it may prove advantageous to provide support to counselors and teachers to increase educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students. Teachers need to be not only experts in their fields, but also able to respond to students in a way that makes them feel valued and respected. Teachers should have an understanding of, and be responsive to, urban African American male high school students, since relationships with teachers are important to
the success of students. Teachers should try to develop a sense of community in their classrooms to increase educational aspirations. As Flowers and Flowers (2008) stated, “Teachers should seek to increase a sense of community in the classroom to encourage academic achievement and mitigate notions of inferiority” (p. 164).

Teacher education programs should incorporate an understanding of the barriers that urban African American male high school students face that restrict their educational aspirations. Training should include boys’ identity development and multicultural awareness. According to some researchers, teachers in urban high schools often are culturally, racially, and ethnically incompetent (Flowers, Milner, & Moore III, 2003). Creating a culture where urban African American male high schools students feel supported, recognized, and encouraged is important for increasing educational aspirations and retention in high school. If these competencies are integrated into training for teachers, they will be better equipped to help African American males to understand the importance of academic performance and future career success (Flowers, Milner, & Moore III, 2003). Flowers and Moore III (2003) suggested that if teachers and counselors develop the multicultural knowledge and skills needed to work with African American males, the students’ educational aspirations will improve significantly. This connection will increase positive racial and male identification necessary to increase educational aspirations.

A school environment where students are provided guidance is more likely to have students with higher educational aspirations. Teachers should hold all African American students to the same academic standards as their White student counterparts. African American students who feel their teachers have high expectations of them have
higher expectations for themselves (Flowers, Milner & Moore III, 2003). Many African American males are not challenged enough in high school, thus they are unprepared academically for college. One of the most significant challenges for students is the absence of a rigorous curriculum in junior and high school that prepares students for college success (Klugman & Butler, 2006). Students who have high academic aspirations in junior high are more likely to be engaged in educational activities that lead to attending college.

The availability of high school counselors to discuss the possibility and requirements of college attendance and college information distributed as early as junior high school by counselors are key predictors of increasing educational aspirations. Administrators should consider different ways of structuring counselors’ job duties to allow more time for college counseling beginning in junior high school. In a study of Cooper and Liou’s (2007), 43% of students reported that they had spoken with a counselor in the eighth grade, but only 15% indicated that they had discussed college plans with a counselor during their freshman year. Counselors in urban areas often deal with 1,000 students or more when professional norms are 250 students per counselor (College Board, 2008).

To assist urban African American male high school students, educators, including teachers and counselors, need to be educated to acknowledge the barriers regarding postsecondary education and to provide interventions to prepare all students for higher education (Reid & Moore, 2008). Often low-income students are advised not to borrow money and attend part-time or go to a community college. These strategies may lower the possibility of graduating (Cunningham & Santiago, 2008). Therefore, training and
professional development for counselors regarding financial aid and student loans is essential. For urban African American male students to be successful in school and progress towards college, counselor guidance is essential. Scheduling classes continues to be the main reason students meet with a high school counselor. Counselors may want to form small groups where male students would meet to encourage each other to be successful in school, to increase their sense of belonging and to receive support from counselors and peers together. It is also important that counselors encourage students to become involved in school activities and community organizations (Uwah, McMahon, & Furlow 2008).

This study found that peers were important for increasing educational aspirations. The tremendous power of peer pressure can sometimes have a negative impact on academic achievement; however, with interventions by teachers and counselors, peer pressure may be reduced, or even begin to have a positive influence on educational aspirations. Individual, peer, and group counseling may assist students in feeling more comfortable in discussing personal information. Peer mentoring in high schools between lower classmen and upper classmen with high educational aspirations may be effective.

Another way to involve peers in supporting one another would be to engage students in youth participatory action research: “research conducted ‘with’ as opposed to ‘on’ youth, around the issues they find most important in their lives” (Cammorota & Fine, 2008, p.2). This type of research allows students the opportunity to determine actions for solving problems in school and their community. Urban African American male high school students would benefit from this type of a strong peer support system, creating a “college-going culture.”
As discussed above, there are several strategies that can be implemented to increase the support from teachers, counselors, and peers and to enhance financial support and understanding. The goal is to improve high school graduation rates and postsecondary attendance, which will benefit the nation’s workforce, welfare, and citizenry. This effort will take the collaboration of parents, schools, policymakers, and communities. Communication and collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions is critical to increasing the educational aspirations of high school students. Moving toward a seamless and transparent K-16 model is important to increase educational aspirations in the future. Establishing partnerships with universities and communities is critical for recruiting low-income, minority college applicants. We must be willing to go to the students, find them early, and work with minority families through schools, churches, and community centers (College Board, 2008).

Increasing educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students will not only increase their quality of life, but will also provide public benefits. College graduates are less likely to be unemployed, without health coverage, or incarcerated, and they contribute to society and their communities by paying taxes. The value of educating one high school graduate is $256,700; the public benefits include additional tax revenues, reductions in public health costs, and reductions in crime amounts (Levin, Belfield, Muenning, & Rouse, 2007).

Despite the intended outcomes of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, urban public schools are still in poor repair, have limited current resources, low graduation rates, low academic achievement, and poor attendance when compared to suburban schools (Klugman & Butler, 2006). Additionally, urban high schools often have less qualified
teachers (Smedley & Jenkins, 2007; Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008). As Moore, Henfield, and Owens (2008) observed, “More than 50 years after Brown vs. Board of Education (1954), it is unfortunate that African American males continue to experience educational inequalities and inconsistencies in public school systems all around the country” (p. 909). It is time for policy makers to get serious about changing this trend so that all Americans can have a fair opportunity to prosper.

This exploratory study provided insightful information regarding urban African American male high school students and the influence of family, school, and peers. Urban African American male high school students face a variety of challenges on their pathway to college. The college-going process needs to be demystified for urban African American male high school students. With increased support from teachers, counselors, and peers, this pathway to college may become successfully navigated.

Limitations of the Study

The results observed herein should be interpreted with caution due to the limitations of this study. First, cross-sectional research design has a limitation of providing only a onetime “snap shot” of the data as opposed to a longitudinal study which looks at the same individuals over time. Second, reliability was not documented, since there was no availability for test-retest of the survey. Third, the Crombach Alpha test measuring the internal reliability was .60. Most professionals agree that a reliability of .70 or higher is necessary to know that reliability is met.

Potential Internal and External Validity Threats

Several validity threats related to the choice of the research design may be present in this study. Since validity is a matter of degree, these potential threats do not invalidate
the study and are discussed in this section to create a context for future interpretation of
the study findings. The validity of this study was increased by piloting the survey and
verifying that the questions were clearly written, and did not contain negative or
misleading words. Questions were also checked to be balanced and free of jargon and
mismatches.

There are three types of errors in survey research that might affect the validity of
this study. The first type of error in survey research which might have affected the
internal validity of this study is measurement error. Since students self-reported, they
may have answered inaccurately because they were embarrassed, or they did not know
and just made up an answer or wanted to answer in a socially accepted way. The second
type of error which may have affected the external validity is coverage error, which is a
discrepancy between target population and survey population. Students may have been
excluded from the survey since only 60 out of 588 (10%) students from two high schools
were surveyed, and they might have differed with respect to characteristics important to
the study. The third type of error in survey research which may have affected the external
validity is sampling error, which was possible due to using a convenience sample. The
student sample was a convenience sample and may not be representative of all urban
male African American high school students in these schools or nationwide, since the
student sample was from only two urban high schools within the same geographic area
and did not include all African American students at these schools. For this study, less
than 20% of the African American male 9th and 10th graders at the two high schools
responded to the survey. However, in this study, with a level 5 predictor model, the
power level is 60% for the sample size of 60, which means the sample size is acceptable.
Although this was a good sample of African American urban male high school students, the findings may not apply to all urban African American male high school students. However, this study provides useful information that may inform school educators, postsecondary educators, policy makers, and educational researchers. As pointed out in the literature review, more research is needed to better understand the plight of urban African American male high school students and to validate the new conceptual framework presented.

Directions for Further Research

This study was conducted using survey research methodology. Future research should also be directed toward replicating this study using a larger sample with geographic diversity to test the findings of this study and validity of the conceptual framework presented. To understand students’ responses to particular questions and to probe deeper into the relationship between family, school, and peer variables and educational aspirations, additional research employing qualitative methods would also be useful. Asking 9th and 10th grade African American urban students to discuss their school experiences, aspirations, and ideas for intervention to increase their success would provide more specific information to help policymakers and educators develop effective interventions to increase educational aspirations.

As educators, we must continue to research interventions to close the Black-White and gender gaps in educational achievement. Strong positive effects of teacher, counselor, and peer support during the predisposition stage for college suggest that further studies should examine how teacher, counselor, and peer support can be fostered. Counselors and teachers should be interviewed to see what professional development and
support is needed to assist them in increasing educational aspirations of African American male high school students and their parents.

**Conclusion**

To summarize, this study examined educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students and the influence of family, school, and peers. This research may assist educational policy makers, researchers, and practitioners to better serve African American males. Education regarding financial aid, and support from teachers, counselors, and peers for increasing educational aspirations should begin as early as junior high. African American male students, if nurtured to meet their academic potential, will assist the nation in meeting the goal of producing a more qualified and talented workforce (Moore, 2006) and adults able to participate fully in a democracy.

This research contributes to our understanding of the issues affecting educational aspirations in the vulnerable population of urban African American male high school students. Together with existing research, the findings of this study can influence and serve as a catalyst for change. We urgently need to design and implement programs that are culturally responsive and designed to meet the unique needs of the African American male high school student population. Such programs are of greater value when teachers, counselors, and administrators understand the value and philosophy of the culturally appropriate teaching approach.

Further education to meet the needs of this population will require the collaboration and efforts of teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, peers, professors, and policymakers. It is important that we advance from theory to practice to develop a vision for the future and understand the value not only for the individual, but
for society as a whole. The educational advancement and well being of an individual African American male influences not only himself, but the family, the peer group, and the community. Working with students, families, schools, and communities is essential for opening the doors and paving the way to high school graduation and college access. The key to success and increasing educational aspirations of urban African American male high school students is education and collaboration.
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aspirations, and academic self-efficacy among African American male high


Appendix A

Dear Parent:

Your student has been invited to participate in a study during their _____ class at _____ High School. The study will involve the investigation of educational aspirations for college and the influence of family, school, and peers. Students will be asked to complete a survey which will take approximately 30 minutes. If at anytime your student decides that they do not want to participate, they may stop the survey. No names or other identifying information will be collected on the survey. The goal of this study is to inform secondary administrators and policy makers of necessary changes to meet the challenges of high school graduation and postsecondary attendance.

The research finding will be published in the Student Investigator’s dissertation and other articles/publications and in presentations. Please feel free to contact me or Dr. Anne Hornak with any questions.

Thanks for your consideration.

Kimberly A. Grieve
Student Investigator
419-XXX-XXXX
Dr. Anne Hornak
Principal Investigator
419-XXX-XXXX
Parental/Guardian - INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The effect of family, school and peers on urban high school student’s educational aspirations.

**Principal Investigator:** Anne Hornak, PhD, Assistant Professor, Educational Foundations and Leadership Department, 419-XXX-XXXX

Kimberly A. Grieve, M.Ed, graduate student, 419-XXX-XXXX

**Purpose:** Your child is invited to participate in the research project entitled, The effect of family, school and peers on urban high school students educational aspirations which is being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of Dr. Anne Hornak and Kimberly A. Grieve. The purpose of this study is to look at family, school and peer variables and see how they affect educational aspirations for college of African American males.

**Description of Procedures:** This research will take place in Toledo Public Schools. Ninth and 10th grade students will be asked to complete a survey during one of their classes. Students will be asked demographic questions and questions regarding
educational aspirations for college, family, school and peers. Your child’s participation will take about 30 minutes. By participating in the survey, students will be missing out on scheduled classroom time.

After your child has completed their participation, the research team will debrief them about the data, theory and research area under study and answer any questions they may have about the research.

**Potential Risks:** There are minimal risks to participation in this study, including loss of confidentiality and your child feeling uncomfortable. Answering the surveys might cause your child to feel upset or anxious. If so, your child may stop at any time.

**Potential Benefits:** The only direct benefit to your child if they participate in this research may be that they will learn about college aspirations and the affect of family, school and peers. Others may benefit by learning about the results of this research. Hopefully, the results of this study will inform secondary administrators and policy makers of necessary changes to meet the challenges of high school graduation and postsecondary attendance.

**Confidentiality:** The researchers will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that your child provided this information, or what that information is. The consent forms with signatures will be kept separate from responses, which will not include names and which will be presented to others only when combined with other responses. Although we will make every effort to protect your confidentiality, there is a low risk that this might be breached.
Voluntary Participation: Your child’s refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled and will not affect your relationship with The University of Toledo or any of your child’s classes. In addition, your child may discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

Contact Information: Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in this study, you may ask any questions that you might have. If you have any questions at any time before, during or after your participation or experience any physical or psychological distress as a result of this research you should contact a member of the research team Anne Hornak, PhD, Principal Investigator, 419-XXX-XXXX and Kimberly Grieve, 419-XXX-XXXX. If you have questions beyond those answered by the research team or your rights as a research subject or research-related injuries, please feel free to contact the Chairperson of the SBE Institutional Review Board, Dr. Barbara Chesney, in the Office of Research on the main campus at 419- XXX-XXXX.

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you. You may take as much time as necessary to think it over.

You are making a decision whether or not to have your child participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, you have had all your questions answered, and you have decided to allow your child to take part in this research.

The date you sign this document to enroll in this study, that is, today's date must fall between the dates indicated at the bottom of the page.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of Subject (please print)</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Parent/Guardian (please print)</td>
<td>Signature</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Person Obtaining Consent</td>
<td>Signature</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Survey

School: ___________________

Ethnicity (primary)

☐ White  ☐ Hispanic  ☐ Black  ☐ Other

Gender

☐ Male  ☐ Female

Socioeconomic status

I qualify for a free or reduced lunch

☐ Yes  ☐ No

My family receives public assistance (welfare or food stamps)

☐ Yes  ☐ No
I live with:

a. Mother □ Yes  □ No

b. Father □ Yes  □ No

c. Another family member □ Yes  □ No

d. A non-family member □ Yes  □ No

Family Education

My mother graduated from a 4- year college □ Yes  □ No

My father graduated from a 4-year college □ Yes  □ No

My brother or sister are attending or graduated from college □ Yes  □ No

Grade-point average

□ 3.5 or higher  □ 3.5-3.0  □ 3.0-2.5  □ 2.5-2.0  □ below 2.0

Grade level

□ 9th  □ 10th
Please rate each of the following statements about your educational plans.

1. I plan to go to college

   □ strongly agree   □ agree   □ disagree   □ strongly disagree

2. I know what I would like to study in college

   □ strongly agree   □ agree   □ disagree   □ strongly disagree

3. I plan to take the ACT

   □ strongly agree   □ agree   □ disagree   □ strongly disagree

4. I will take college prep courses (4 years of English, three years of math, three years of science, three years of social studies, one year of foreign language)

   □ strongly agree   □ agree   □ disagree   □ strongly disagree

5. I have talked to my parents about attending college

   □ strongly agree   □ agree   □ disagree   □ strongly disagree
6. I have talked to my teachers about attending college

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

7. I have talked to my counselors about attending college

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

8. I have talked to my peers about attending college

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

9. I will have enough money to go to college

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

Please rate each of the following statements about your family.

10. My mother encourages me to go to college

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

11. My father encourages me to go to college
12. The cost of college may prevent me from going to college

13. I am willing to take a loan that I would have to pay back to go to college

14. My parents attend my school activities

15. My parents will help me pay for college

16. I have a computer with internet access in my home

Please rate each of the following statements about your school.
17. I am involved in school activities (such as yearbook, the school magazine, student government)

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

18. I feel respected by my teachers most of the time

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

19. I feel safe at my high school most of the time

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

20. My high school counselors or teachers discuss the importance of college with me

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

21. I ask for help with my academic school work from a teacher

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree

22. I have been bullied or harassed in high school

□ strongly agree □ agree □ disagree □ strongly disagree
23. My high school counselor discusses with me the courses that I need to take in high school in order to prepare for college

- [ ] strongly agree
- [ ] agree
- [ ] disagree
- [ ] strongly disagree

24. I use a computer daily in the classrooms at the high school

- [ ] strongly agree
- [ ] agree
- [ ] disagree
- [ ] strongly disagree

25. I struggle with my academic work

- [ ] strongly agree
- [ ] agree
- [ ] disagree
- [ ] strongly disagree

26. I participate in classroom discussions

- [ ] strongly agree
- [ ] agree
- [ ] disagree
- [ ] strongly disagree

27. I participate in tutoring

- [ ] strongly agree
- [ ] agree
- [ ] disagree
- [ ] strongly disagree
28. I am involved in after school activities (such as sports, band, drama…)

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

29. I received mostly A’s and B’s in junior high school

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

30. I find school boring

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

31. I find it difficult to get myself motivated to study

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

32. I spend more than 3 hours per night working on homework

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

33. I don’t know enough about college to decide whether I should go

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

34. I feel confident that I will pass all sections of Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT)
35. I will take Algebra 2 in high school

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

36. Have you been suspended from high school?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Please rate the following statements about your peers.

37. My friends and I discuss the importance of going to college

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

38. My friends want me to go to college

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

39. My friends and I encourage each other to get good grades

☐ strongly agree  ☐ agree  ☐ disagree  ☐ strongly disagree

40. My friends and I help each other study
☐ strongly agree   ☐ agree   ☐ disagree   ☐ strongly disagree

Thanks for participating in this survey!
Human Subjects Research Training & Education Form

The University of Toledo requires ALL study personnel engaged in human subject research (including research using information and specimens from human subjects) complete the training/education listed below and submit a hard copy of all training and education certificates to the Office of Research prior to engaging in any human subject research.

Researchers involved with patients and private health information must be compliant with the Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information ("Privacy Rule") issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to implement a requirement of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ("HIPAA"). Researchers who have access to PHI should stop here and complete the Training & Education Form on the Biomedical IRB web page.

Training and education in the area of human research subject protection is a federal requirement for all investigators involved in human subjects research sponsored by federal grants/contracts, for all IRB members and is highly suggested for institutional officials who have oversight of this research and the IRB.

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Kimberly A. Grieve</th>
<th>Rocket ID #:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title and/or Position:</td>
<td>Doctoral Student</td>
<td>Department/ Program: Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Information:</td>
<td>Phone #: 419-824-3834</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:kgrieve@ourdes.edu">kgrieve@ourdes.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE

☑️ UT Human Research Assurance [http://www.mco.edu/research/human_assurance.html] (All UT researchers IRB members and institutional officials involved with human subject research must read this.)

Date Completed: 11/3/07

### THE BELMONT REPORT

☑️ The Belmont Report - [http://www.nihtraining.com/ethics/guidelines/belmont.html] (All UT researchers, IRB members and institutional officials involved with human subject research must read this.)

Date Completed: 11/3/07

### NIH OHSR ONLINE TRAINING MODULES

☑️ Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams - [http://cme.cancer.gov/clinical/atis/learning/humanparticipantprotections.asp] (All UT researchers involved with human subject research must complete this and attach Certificate of Completion to this form and submit to the Office of Research.)

Date Completed: 11/3/07

My signature below verifies that I have completed the above referenced required training in Human Research Subject Protection and that I have submitted all of the required certificates of completion to the Office of Research.

Signature: 

Date: 11/3/07

Training & Education Form Page 1 of 1 09/13/07
TO: Anne Hornak, Ph.D. and Kimberly Grieve
Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

FROM: Barbara K. Chesney Ph.D., Chair
Social, Behavioral and Educational Institutional Review Board

DATE: April 8, 2008

SUBJECT: IRB #105997 – African American Male Urban Student’s Educational Aspirations for College and the Influence of Family, School and Peers

PROTOCOL APPROVAL DATE: 04/08/2008 EXPIRATION DATE: 04/07/2009
NUMBER OF SUBJECTS APPROVED: 100

The above research protocol was reviewed and approved by the University of Toledo Social, Behavioral & Educational IRB. Approval of this protocol is in effect until the expiration date listed above, unless the IRB notifies you otherwise.

Two months prior to your expiration date, if your project is not complete; you must submit a request for a continuing review and a progress report in order to continue the project beyond that date. When your project has been completed, please fill out and send me the enclosed Social, Behavioral & Educational Final Report Form. As the Primary Investigator, once this project is completed, you will not be able to receive additional protocol approvals until this report is received.

This approval for the use of human subjects is contingent upon your following the research plans presented in your submitted proposal. You are not permitted to undertake any actions involving human subjects that are not a specific part of that proposal. If it becomes necessary to amend your protocol, you must submit an amendment application for review and inclusion in your project file. Without such review, this authorization is void and you are not permitted to use human subjects in your research.

If any adverse events occur in the course of your research on human subjects, you must suspend the project temporarily and notify me immediately.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Jeff Busch 419-530-2416.

Sincerely,

B. K. Chesney

Barbara K. Chesney Ph.D., Chair
Social, Behavioral & Educational
Institutional Review Board

cc: RSP Office SBE IRB File
CHILD RESEARCH SUBJECT ASSENT FORM

Title of study: African American male urban student’s educational aspirations for college and the influence of family, school and peers

Principal Investigator: Anne Hornak, PhD

Kimberly A. Grieve, M.Ed., graduate student,

419-XXX-XXXX

• You are being asked to be in a study to help understand high school students’ educational aspirations for college.

• You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind to participate in the study, which will be a survey asking questions about your family, school and peers. You can think about it and discuss it with your family or friends before you decide.

• It is okay to say “No” if you don’t want to be in the study. If you say “Yes” you can change your mind and then quit the study at any time without getting in trouble.
We are doing a research study about the effect of family, school and peers on urban high school student’s educational aspirations. A research study is a way to learn more about people. If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to complete a survey which will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

There are minimal risks to you since there will be no names or other identifying information collected. If you would feel uncomfortable answering the questions, you can stop taking the survey at any time with no penalty.

Not everyone who takes part in this study will benefit. A benefit means that something good happens to you. We think the benefits of this study might be to better understand the issues affecting high school student’s college educational aspirations and the disparity in college-going rates.

When I am finished with this study I will write a report about what I learned. This report will not include your name or say that you were in the study.

If you have any questions about the study, you can ask Anne Hornak or Kimberly Grieve whose information is listed at the top of this page, or you have a question later you can contact us as well.

If you decide to be in this study, please print and sign your name below.

I, _________________________________, want to be in this research study.

(Print your name here)
Sign your Name:

_______________________________ Date: _____________________