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Educated African American Women: Educational Expectations and Outcomes

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Educated African American Women: Educational Expectations and Outcomes

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to depict the personal narrative of African American women as central to understanding how life experiences, gender, race and culture intersect to impact their educational expectations. To establish context, the broader purpose of this study is to understand the belief system and ideologies African Americans as a cultural group associate with education. Cultural group beliefs are important to address as these beliefs may factor into the motivation, efficacy and human agency of African American women who attain graduate degrees.

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Chapter 1

Occupational choices are of considerable import because they structure a major part of people's everyday reality, provide them with a source of personal identity and determine whether their work life is repetitively boring, burdensome and distressing, or lastingly challenging and fulfilling (Bandura, 1999, p. 31).

Overview: African American Women and Education

Education is considered a fundamental factor for self-improvement, change and empowerment among African Americans (Collins, 1990). Historically, education-related issues for both African American women and men have been issues of access. Access to education was universally addressed with The Civil Rights Act of 1964, specifically with Title VII that prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, or disability. Legislative efforts specific to access to education were the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender at educational institutions that received federal funds. The impact of these legislative efforts and other historical and societal factors is evidenced in the college graduation rates of African Americans over time; approximately 2% of the African American population graduated from college in 1940 and by 2000 over 14% were college graduates (Diamond, 2006). For African American women, educational advancements and legislative supports for educational access do not equate to equitable salary compensation based on educational experience (NCES, 2000-2008; Census, 1990; Census, 2000; Census 2010; Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2012).

African American women continue to obtain advanced degrees, despite earning less than their counterparts with the same education across occupational fields (Mickelson, 1990; Hackett

and Byars 1996; NCES, 2000-2008; Census, 1990; Census, 2000; Census 2010; Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2012). In addition, African American women have the highest unemployment percentages among all female racial minorities and compared to white women (Table 1). This research functions on the presumption that a basic tenet of educational pursuits among all persons is future stability and opportunity. Whether or not this is satisfactorily achieved among educated African American women is absent from current literature and outlines the need for this research. Quantitative evidence of disproportionate salary compensation (Table. 2) (NCES, 2000-2008; Census, 1990; Census 2010; Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2012) does not address expectations associated with the decision to pursue an advanced degree.

Table 1
Unemployment Rate Percentages: African American and White Women

Women 20 Years and Older	October 2011	November 2011	December 2011	January 2012	February 2012
White	7.0	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.8
African American	12.6	13.0	13.9	12.6	12.4

(U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics,

Table 2
Mean Earnings by Highest Degree Earned 2009

Women	Masters	Professional	Doctorate
White	\$58,036	\$89,526	\$85,682
African American	\$54,523	(B)	(B)

(B) Base figure too small to meet statistical standards for reliability of a derived figure. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

Although there is a void in the literature regarding the expectations of African American women who attain postgraduate degrees, there are related studies that provide perspective; Daire, LaMothe and Fuller (2007), Hossler and Gallagher (1987), Hackett and Byars (1996), Cheng and Starks (2002) and Alfred (2001).

Daire, LaMothe and Fuller (2007) surveyed 155 African American and white college students to understand influences on high school completion, decision to attend college and eventual career choice. Their study suggests that future income and status have the greatest influence on career choice among African American college students. Similarly, the research of Freeman (2005) suggests economic expectations as a factor in college choice and presented a theoretical framework of “predetermination” or “predisposition” among African Americans to aspire to attend college based on the work of Hossler and Gallagher (1987). Economic expectations were also identified by Hackett and Byars (1996) with their discussion of career development among African American women. Hackett and Byars (1996) posit that African American women in white male dominated professions identified economic benefits as the reason for their choice.

Cheng and Starks (2002) suggest that there are inherent sociocultural differences among minority groups compared to whites. They identify interpersonal relationships and interactions as the influence of ‘significant others’ having primary influence on the decision to pursue higher education. Regarding the role of sociocultural aspects, Alfred (2001) conducted a qualitative study of five African American tenured professors to understand their career development within predominantly white institutions. Alfred’s (2001) study is significant in understanding educational expectations and outcomes, in that her theoretical framework uses race and gender as the primary lens to examine influence on outcomes. For this study, social cognitive theory is the

chosen theoretical frame, as it highlights the mechanisms that produce expectations. Grounded theory is the chosen research method as it allows for the integration of concepts that can provide theoretical explanation of social phenomena (Corbin and Strauss, 1990) and parallels the chosen theoretical frame positioning the experiences of the individual as central.

Problem Statement

Educational expectations of African American women holding postgraduate degrees have not been studied. Qualitative studies that focus on the individual experiences and expectations among the members of this group are needed to explore connections between education, expectations and whether or not expectations are met. Current literature lends itself to a disproportionate number of quantitative research describing rates of increased attendance of African American women in all forms of postsecondary education, including postgraduate studies. In general, the data show that African American women are the largest minority group enrolled in colleges and universities, as well as having the largest graduation rates among minority groups (NCES, 2000-2008; Kaba, 2005; U.S. Census 2007).

College educated African American women ages 30-79 represent college attendance across important eras in United States social history and legitimize their position as a research worthy group for this study. The age range of this group allows for the experiences of individual participants to be placed within specific socio political historical contexts that correlate with their individual life experiences. Historical context is a significant factor in educational and career decision making and will guide this research toward a discussion of possible future educational and career development trends among African American women.

The issue of educational achievement in the absence of correlating income compensation is rationally positioned within social cognitive theory and its tenet of human agency. Social cognitive theory places the experiences of the individual as central. Human agency may provide explanation for the continued educational achievement of African American women. Human agency is defined as the ability of the individual to influence one's ability to function and life circumstances (Bandura, 2006). Human agency occurs either in spite of or as the result of one's experiences within their environment and sociocultural identifiers. A disconnect between continued educational achievement and salary compensation in comparison to other groups with identical educational attainment establishes the need for this study and the need to understand expectations of education among African American women.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to depict the personal narrative of African American women as central to understanding how life experiences, gender, race and culture intersect to impact their educational expectations. To establish context, the broader purpose of this study is to understand the belief system and ideologies African Americans as a cultural group associate with education. Cultural group beliefs are important to address as these beliefs may factor into the motivation, efficacy and human agency of African American women who attain graduate degrees.

Research Questions

This research was conducted using grounded theory as the research design. Grounded theory is both a process and a product of research.

1. What are the expectations of education among African American women with postgraduate degrees?
2. Does the social, economic climate or social consciousness in the decade of attendance influence expectations of postgraduate degrees among African American women?
3. How do personal factors, behavior, and the environment affect African American women's educational expectations?
4. What contexts (personal, career, financial) does this group position and define their expectations of education?
5. What strategies does this group utilize to fulfill their expectations of education?
6. How does this group define success and what are the factors (internal and external) that influence this group's definition?

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Race, Culture, Education and Career

Understanding education and its position within African American culture is significant to this study, as it provides additional context for the educational expectations of African American women with graduate degrees. A general expectation of a college degree is to make an individual employable, more specifically, for the individual to gain employment in the field in which the degree was earned and establish an eventual career. For highly educated African American women, career development is not a linear trajectory; instead it is fraught with issues of race, gender, culture, identity and psychological pressures (Alfred, 2001; Foad and Byars-Winston, 2005). In addition, Hackett and Byars (1996, p. 326) support this assertion with their research on the career development of African American women in which they state that “a broader societal example of differential standards encountered by African American women is that in the United States ethnic minorities and women do not receive the same wages, jobs, and promotions as do middle-class White men, despite having similar educational backgrounds”. In these forces, Alfred (2001) interprets race, gender, culture, identity and psychological constructs as being fluid and varying based on the individuals’ immediate environment. In addition, the inclusion of immediate environment, gender and psychological constructs in understanding individuals’ decisions is the rationale for social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) as the theoretical frame for this research.

Alfred (2001) conducted a qualitative study of five African American tenured professors to understand their career development within predominantly white institutions. One reason

Alfred's (2001) study is significant in understanding educational expectations and outcomes as her theoretical framework uses race and gender as the primary lens to examine influences on outcomes. Alfred's (2001) study is also important to this dissertation study because the participant group has similar qualifiers; African American women with professional and or terminal degrees.

There is a collectiveness of the shared experience of being Black, while the group consists of individuals with specific experiences. The individual develops a group identity and an individual identity (Alfred, 2001). Dubios' (1903) double consciousness theory, suggests that the experiences of Blacks and Black culture exist within the dominant white culture with no acceptance or validation, which is the basis of Alfred's (2001) bi-cultural theory. Although race and culture impact an individual's life decisions, neither has a significant impact on career aspirations (Foaud and Byars-Winston, 2005); however, race and gender influence college choice, degree expectations and subsequent salary (Carter, 1999; Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006; McClough and Benedict, 2010).

Motivation

Regardless of the task, motivation is multi-faceted and includes internal and external factors. In addition, motivation can be the result of expectations (Bandura, 1999). Motivation is considered both a cognitive process and a result of internal and external factors (Bandura, 1999; Freeman, 2005). In the context of an individual's career, Bandura (1999) suggests that motivation is based on personal standards and involves the cognitive process between standards and performance attainments. Freeman's (2005) study on influences of African American's college choice posits motivation as a tenet of outcome expectations and uses the term *channeling* to describe the source of African American reasoning to attend college.

Influences that affect college choice are important to this study as the type of institution one attends impact educational expectations and salary (Carter, 1999; Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006). Freeman (2005) defines *channeling* as the environmental forces (institutions, individuals or circumstances) that influence the direction of post-secondary choices. Channeling is parallel to the triadic reciprocal causation model (Bandura, 1994; 1999; 2006) within social cognitive theory, which posits that the integration of environments and sociocultural aspects impact behavior, self-efficacy and subsequent motivation. Channeling also encompasses socioeconomic status, family and social modeling, each of which are aspects within social cognitive theory.

College Choice

College choice is significant to this study because the college an individual attends becomes a part of their environment, which is significant to the triadic reciprocal causation model of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1996; Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006). In addition, college choice is important as the type of institution or reputation of an institution can affect efficacy and expectations of the education received (McClough and Benedict, 2010; Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006). Higher education has a significant social role that has changed and evolved in accordance to relevant societal issues of a particular time, such as political, racial, economic and gender issues. It is the issues of today and recent history that are indicative of the need to examine the connection between educational expectations, attainment and outcomes of African American women.

Social, political and institutional influences impact the college choice process. The evolution of college choice is necessary to understand its position as a research worthy topic. Hossler et al. (2004), suggest that the decision making process to attend college is susceptible to

the socio-political climate of any given era. Socio-political issues alter college demographics, postsecondary recruit and the amount and source of funding. An overview of recent history is helpful to establish the role of societal contexts on education choices including institutions, degree type and subsequent expectations. During the 1960s American society was inundated with issues of civil rights and social justice, which raised new awareness and interests of societal issues among college and university students of the time (Baird, 2001). During the 1970s these issues became eminent and interests became institutionalized discussions demanded by university and college students. Baird (2001, p. 123) describes the 1980s collegiate atmosphere as, “depicted less often as special unique places and more often as social units that needed to demonstrate their value”. The 1990s ushered a wave of technological progress and disillusionment that questioned the economic impact and validity of higher education (Baird, 2001).

Most research in the college choice field is conducted with the contributions of Hossler and Gallagher (1987) as the foundation. In the context of research, college choice is defined as the process a student experiences as they transition from high school to college (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Hossler et al., 1989). College choice occurs in three phases; predisposition, search and the choice stage. The first phase—*predisposition*, is signaled when an individual develops aspirations to attend college. The second stage of the college choice process—*search*, occurs when the individual investigates institutional requirements and evaluates the logistical possibilities of attending college. The third phase—*choice stage*, occurs once an individual has made a decision to attend college and has processed the alternatives to that decision (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987).

According to Hossler et al. (2004), during the 1920s and 30s college choice was weighted toward students' life experience and essentially a choice for the affluent only. The choice of the institution itself, not the more general choice to merely attend college, was the focus of the college choice process. College choice in the 1920s and 30s was considered the precursor to placing a student on a particular career path and a place to meet a life partner (Hossler et al., 2004).

College choice in the 1940s and 50s, was the beginning of postsecondary education's overt responsiveness to social and political factors. For example, post WWII and the GI Bill gave access to individuals previously excluded from the "choice" discussion based on socioeconomic status. In addition, the Cold War and subsequent U.S. competition with Russia in all societal issues were significant in increased college enrollment. Hossler et al. (2004) state political initiatives, such as the GI Bill, National Defense Education Act and *Brown v. the Board of Education* increased enrollment and established a permanent demographic change of enrollees. Influences on college choice during the 1940s and 50s were in response to increased access as a result of socio-political factors (Hossler et al., 2004).

The 1960s and 70s era of college choice was connected to access as in the previous decades; however, the expansion of access was specific to race, gender and the admissions process (Hossler et al. 2004). The Civil Rights and Women's Rights movements resulted in the implementation of affirmative action programs, which prohibited colleges and universities from denying enrollment on the basis of gender or race. In addition, the implementation of TRIO programs-Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Support Services, intersected race and socioeconomic status for the first time. The significance of this period for African Americans is summarized by Hossler et al. (2004):

African-American student enrollments increased more than threefold at predominantly white institutions and rose by a third at HBCUs. Federal financial assistance programs and these legal circumstances increased traditionally underrepresented students' exposure to college, facilitated their enrollment via additional financial aid and expanded their choice of postsecondary options — as a result, enrollment of African-American college students nearly tripled between 1966 and the late 1970s (p. 17).

The permanency of race and gender within college choice was established in this period. The 1960s and 70s were the impetus of African American female college students' access, choice and the subsequent reason this study is a possibility.

According to Hossler et al. (2004) some of the most notable developments within college choice during the mid-1970s and 80s were marketing strategies, increased competition among applicants and the widespread use of student loans. Institutions adopted business model marketing tools to mass market *product* to potential students or *consumers*. These strategies included business techniques, marketing research and enrollment forecasting models (Hossler et al. 2004). In addition, colleges and universities recruited potential students through in-person visits to high schools, not done until this era. Competition among applicants was a result of previously implemented federal programs that increased the applicant pool, and the dependence on standardized tests for admission. The use of standardized test scores in the admissions process allowed institutions to raise standards and limited the number of seats at prestigious colleges and universities (Hossler et al. 2004). The combination resulted in the name and type of institution having greater importance than in previous decades.

College choice from the 1990s to the present day is marked with decreased funding to institutions from state and local governments and an overt shift away from support for diversity

and affirmative action policies (Hossler et al. 2004). This era also criticizes the legitimacy of higher education as a result of the increased number of remedial courses across institution type (Hossler et al. 2004). Regarding African Americans and college choice, Hossler et al. (2004) state that “the elimination of college advising in most public high schools denied many low-income students the information needed to make an appropriate, informed decision” (p. 38). Although overall African American enrollment fluctuates in this era compared to the last, participation in TRIO programs increased. According to Hossler et al. (2004), this was likely in response to these students not having significant support within their college choice process and subsequent college attendance. It should be noted that the economic returns of college attendance are connected to the college choice discussion with emphasis on college major and subsequent career field (Thomas, 2000; Dale and Krueger, 2002; Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008)

Influences on College Choice Among African Americans

Influences on college choice for African Americans is significant to this study, as African Americans have higher job level, social and financial status expectations compared to the educational expectations of other races (Cheng and Starks, 2002; Daire, LaMothe, & Fuller, 2007; Immerwahr 2000; Williams and Destin, 2009). In addition, African Americans tend to have greater educational aspirations compared to other races (Cheng and Starks, 2002; Daire, LaMothe, & Fuller, 2007; Immerwahr, 2000; Hwang, Echols, & Vrongistinos, 2002; Lewis and Collins, 2001; Hochschild, 1995). First, it is necessary to point out that much of the literature that explores African American educational aspirations, outcomes and expectations also encompasses other minority groups with significant population representation in the United States. While all minority groups, with the exception of Hispanic Americans, have higher

educational aspirations and expectations when compared to their white counterparts, African Americans have the highest educational aspirations and expectations among minorities and when compared to whites (Cheng and Starks, 2002; Daire, LaMothe, & Fuller, 2007; Immerwahr, 2000; Hwang, Echols, & Vrongistinos, 2002; Lewis and Collins, 2001; Hochschild, 1995).

A study conducted by Daire, LaMothe and Fuller (2007) surveyed 155 African American and white college students to understand influences on high school completion, decision to attend college and eventual career choice. Their study suggests that future income and status have the greatest influence on career choice among African American college students. However, future income and status were not influential in the decision to complete high school and attend college among the African American college students surveyed (Daire, LaMothe and Fuller, 2007). In part, their study infers that there is an implicit expectation of educational outcomes on one's life as career *choice* is based on educational attainment and according to the study career *choice* is made as a result of college education. This inference provides an opening for understanding the effect of other possible influences on African American educational expectations, aspirations and outcomes that may include psychological, social and cultural influences.

In contrast to Daire, LaMothe and Fuller (2007), Cheng and Starks (2002) posit that there are inherent sociocultural differences among minority groups compared to whites. They identify interpersonal relationships and interactions as the influence of 'significant others' having primary influence on the decision to pursue higher education. Significant others are categorized as parents, teachers, close relatives and peers. Cheng and Starks (2002) suggest that one cultural norm shared by racial minorities is the fundamental significance placed on social supports. Addressing this issue, Immerwahr's (2000) study specifically focused on the views of African

American and Hispanic American parents of high school students regarding the perceived value of college education.

Cheng and Starks (2002) were inclusive of many minority groups and distinguished a difference in the degree of impact of interpersonal relationships within each minority group as compared to whites. The most notable aspects of the discussions of Daire, LaMothe and Fuller (2007), Cheng and Starks (2002) and Immerwahr (2000) is the suggestion that all persons have interpersonal relationships that have some level of influence, either as a deterrent or impetus to educational pursuits, but for minorities it is the intensity of these influences that determines their educational outcomes.

College Choice Among African Americans

As stated in the literature, African Americans do not receive the same benefits of a college degree compared to whites (Census, 1990; NSCG, 1993; NSCG, 2003; NCES, 2000-2008; Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006; Census 2010; McClough and Benedict, 2010; Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2012). Dickerson and Jacobs (2006) suggest that the influence of the status of the college or university an individual receives their degree is a factor in the return of earnings from a college education. Dickerson and Jacobs (2006) investigated the influence of particular institutional characteristics of the schools individuals attend. They suggest that institutional characteristics explain why individuals choose the schools they attend and that particular characteristics explain the gap between African Americans and whites.

In a study of white and African American students at two and four year institutions, Carter (1999) found that in addition to institutional characteristics, positive personal interaction with faculty impact degree expectations and completion, which supports the perspective of social

cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; 1989; 1994; 1997; 1999; 2006). Conversely, the study found that tuition cost and peer interaction had the greatest impact on educational expectations of whites. Gushue and Whitson (2006) examined the career decision self-efficacy and educational outcome expectations of 104 African American ninth graders from a social cognitive perspective. The findings of Gushue and Whitson (2006) support the research of Carter (1999), Dickerson and Jacobs (2006) and state, “teacher support is positively related to career decision self-efficacy and career outcome expectations”.

Overall, college choice literature suggests that institutional characteristics impact educational outcomes including salary. However, it appears that there are additional social and psychological influences in the context of the selected institution that are additional factors for African Americans’ educational outcomes (Carter, 1999; Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006) and lends explanation to the need for this research.

Educational Expectations and Race

Understanding educational expectations and race is significant to this study as it provides context for the experiences and educational expectations of African American women with graduate degrees. Literature related to educational expectations uses the terms expectations, plans, and aspirations interchangeably, although some describe distinct differences. The term aspiration represents an abstract, ideological goal or hope and expectation represents a concrete or realistic plan (Smith, 1991). Generally, expectations are discussed as whether or not an individual plans to attend and or graduate from college. For the purpose of this study, the term expectations will be defined as anticipated benefits of educational achievement.

Morgan (1998) presented educational expectations from the perspective of social background (family and significant others), resource constraint (education cost) and labor market incentives. Of specific interest to this study is the inclusion of labor market incentives on educational expectations, considering comparative disproportionate earnings of African American women with graduate degrees. Morgan (1998) posits that the educational expectations of African American students are higher than that of white students (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Mickelson, 1990; Hacket and Byars, 1996; Morgan, 1996; Freeman, 2005). Furthermore, Morgan (1998) offers a general opinion presented in earlier literature on educational expectations among African Americans and whites and cites Hoelter (1982) as the leading voice of this perspective stating:

“The standard ad hoc explanation for this consistent finding is that white male students are inherently more rational, perhaps because they are provided with the best information on the high direct costs of post-secondary education. By implication, other students are prone to fantasy, simply because they do not have enough information to temper their wishful thinking.”

For African Americans, interpersonal relationships are significant within postsecondary education participation (Cheng and Starks, 2002; Daire, LaMothe, & Fuller, 2007; Immerwahr, 2000) and these relationships affect the college choice process. Freeman (2005) contributes to college choice and educational expectations literature supporting the assertion that interpersonal relationships influence postsecondary education decisions (Cheng and Starks, 2002; Daire, LaMothe, & Fuller, 2007; Immerwahr, 2000; Hwang, Echols, & Vrongistinos, 2002; Lewis and Collins, 2001; Hochschild, 1995; Mickelson, 1990) and further identifies economic expectations as the leading factor in the *decision* to attend college. Freeman (2005) conducted a study of

African American 10th, 11th and 12th graders, in five major metropolitan U.S. cities with large African American populations, to address issues within college choice. Freeman's (2005) research not only uncovered economic expectations as a factor in college choice, but presented a theoretical framework of "predetermination" or "predisposition" among African Americans to aspire to attend college based on the work of Hossler and Gallagher (1987). This predisposition perspective within college choice is notable as it was present among study participants regardless of socioeconomic status. An additional significant finding of Freeman's (2005) study is that economic expectations were identified as the leading factor among all participants who stated their choice was to attend college.

Economic expectations as the leading factor in the decision to attend college are precarious, as it positions educational decisions and outcomes within the fluctuations and uncertainties of the economic market. Freeman's (2005) study indicates that within economic expectations is a focus on wealth and comfort, not college major and subsequent occupation. According to Freeman (2005), interpersonal relationships with family and friends influence the decision making process, while economic expectations influence the direction in which an individual will choose. Connected to these influences is the fact that many African Americans continue to enter college as first-generation college students. The absence of an immediate context for college education outcomes leaves these individuals to focus on assumptions and external influences; economic expectations, teachers and counselors (Freeman, 2005). Among the schools Freeman (2005) conducted the study; it was the schools with counseling programs that had the largest number of students planning to attend college. Teachers' impact on African Americans' choice to attend college proved just as significant as the pragmatic use of guidance counselors (Freeman, 2005). Students in Freeman's (2005) study suggested that teachers with

strong efficacies in students' abilities increased their interest to attend college. Freeman's (2005) study results infer the existence of sociocultural and or psychosocial components in the choice to attend college among African Americans. According to the literature, economic outcomes are continually ill matched with economic expectations, considering college educated African Americans earn less than college educated of other races (Table 3).

Table 3 <i>Average Earnings of College Graduates(Combined Degree Types)</i>				
Race/ Ethnicity	White	Asian	African American	Hispanic
Annual Earnings	\$77,203.30	\$77,214.20	\$59,018.77	\$62,864.60

(National Survey of College Graduates, 2003)

Economic expectations were identified by Hackett and Byars (1996) with their discussion, from a social cognitive perspective, of career development among African American women. Hackett and Byars (1996) posit that African American women in white male dominated professions identified economic benefits as the reason for their choice. Furthermore, the Hackett and Byars' (1996) discussion states that African American women have higher educational aspirations than white women and this may be a function of "overpreparing" in an effort to ensure occupational payoffs. The difference of educational aspirations between African American and white women lends itself to the triadic reciprocal causation model of social cognitive theory as it combines environment, socioeconomic status and family structure. This difference suggests that gender role socialization is not a linear experience for African American females and that educational attainment and career choice are not stifled based on gender; "African American girls often experience more crossover between traditionally male and female roles and duties in the household, because every member of the family has to do whatever it takes to survive" (Hackett and Byars, 1996).

Economic Expectations

Influences on Salary

According to the literature, an economic expectation of education is the leading expectation among African Americans (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Freeman, 2005; Hackett and Byars, 1996). It is generally accepted that generations attain and expect more of education than previous generations (McClelland, 1990; Smith, 1991; Hauser and Anderson, 1991; Jaeger and Page, 1996; Morris and Western, 1999; Reynolds et al., 2006). In addition, educational expectations have risen over time, just as educational attainment has risen for men and women of all races (Goyette, 2008). It is logical to presuppose that occupational expectations affect educational expectations since the type of career and desired career level influence the type of degree sought. However, with the exception of Reynolds et al, (2006) the literature generally addresses the relationship between occupational expectations and education as an issue of educational attainment, not educational expectations.

Economic returns are an expectation of education among all races (at varied levels based on race) and are the most significant expectation among African Americans (Freeman, 2005; Hackett and Byars, 1996). In the context of the job market, the association of education and economic returns is commonly referred to as the “sheepskin effect”. The sheepskin effect is the importance an employer places on an individual’s education independent from the individual’s skill set (Jaeger and Page, 1996; Elman and O’Rand, 2004). The sheepskin effect is addressed in this discussion of educational expectations among African American women as it impacts salary, an identified expectation of education among African Americans.

There are three perspectives commonly discussed in the literature as having influence on an individual's salary and are part of the sheepskin effect; ascriptive stratification, status attainment and human capital. Ascriptive stratification identifies differences in career development and ultimately salary as the result of gender and racial discrimination (Diamond, 2006; Hackett and Byars 1996; Hauser and Andersen, 1991; Mickelson, 1990; Monks, 1997; Monks, 2000; Morgan, 1996; Morgan, 1998). Generally, ascriptive stratification is accepted as valid because there is significant data to support the disparity between education level and salary among races (Benedict and McClough, 2010; Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006; NCES, 2000-2008; Census, 1990; Census, 2000; Census 2010; NSCG, 1993; NSCG, 2003; NCES, 2000-2008; McClough and Benedict, 2010; Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2012). Status attainment, also referred to as the Wisconsin model, suggests that familial advantages and socioeconomic status are the leading factors in salary determination and educational attainment is only one factor to sustain an individual's status (Cheng and Starks, 2002; Elman and O'Rand, 2004). Lastly, human capital is the most commonly used perspective in wage determination and refers to attributes measured by the number of years of education, institution or through credentials valued by employers (Elman and O'Rand, 2004; Monks, 2000; Reynolds et al., 2006).

Salary

Rouse (2004) supports the correlation between education and salary addressed in the literature and states, "a first step in understanding income expectations is to understand educational expectations, since education is an important component of earnings". Rouse (2004) conducted one of few studies to address economic expectations associated with educational expectations among minorities. The study compared low income minority students from Baltimore, Maryland to high income white students from Madison, Wisconsin and data from the

NELS88. Although the study sample was specific to minorities with low socioeconomic status, it is pertinent to this study as it offers perspective to the salary expectations of non-whites.

Rouse (2004) asked participants in both Baltimore and Wisconsin to estimate their salary at age 30. Female participants in both Baltimore and Wisconsin had similar salary estimates of approximately \$35,000. However, there was significant difference in future salary estimates among male participants in Rouse's (2004) study. Low income racial minority males in Baltimore had an estimated salary of \$60,000 by age 30 and high income white males in Wisconsin estimated a \$43,000 salary. This study of salary expectations is significant when examined in the context of literature that discusses disconnect between plans to attend college and actual attendance (Freeman, 2005; Hacket and Byars, 1996; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Mickelson, 1990; Morgan, 1996; Rouse, 2004; Smith, 1991). If it is true that many African American youths do not have a clear understanding of the steps to take to get into college although they have plans to (Freeman, 2005), a logical inference is that these youths may have unrealistic views on the associated benefits of a college education, including salary level.

Overall, Rouse (2004) found that the salary expectations associated with educational expectations is independent from the socioeconomic background of individuals. Interestingly, students of both socioeconomic classes were disappointed with the market realities of salary after degree completion. Convexly, the study also disproved the hypothesis that individuals of low socioeconomic status have low salary expectations associated with education (Rouse, 2004).

Occupational Expectations and Salary

A study conducted by Benedict and McClough (2010) used the 2003 National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG) to examine the relationship between education, occupational choices

and earnings based on race. The purpose of the study was to examine whether or not education had the potential to close the racial earnings gap. Although this study lends perspective to apparent salary disparities by race, it is limited to the occupations included in the National Survey of College Graduates. The NSCG, conducted every ten years by the U.S. Census Bureau for the National Science Foundation (NSF), surveys individuals educated in the fields of science, engineering and health.

The McClough and Benedict (2010) study found that educated African Americans earn substantially less than other racial groups included in the NSCG sample. This study also noted that African Americans had a higher proportion of women in the sample, which supports the literature on the increased educational attainment of African American women (Table 5; Table 6) (Diamond, 2006; Mickelson, 1990; Hackett and Byars 1996; NCES, 2000-2008; Census, 1990; Census, 2000; Census 2010; Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2012). McClough and Benedict (2010) found that education essentially closed the earnings gap for Asians compared to the earnings of white college graduates, but not for Hispanics or African Americans. This finding was ascribed to the choice of college major and subsequent occupation. For example, the fields of science and engineering have the highest occupational earnings and the majority of college graduates in those fields are white and Asian. McClough and Benedict (2010) state, “Blacks appear to receive negative returns for many of their degrees” (Table 5; Table 6) and suggest that only some science related fields result in higher average returns. In addition to college major, McClough and Benedict (2010) suggest that school type (liberal arts, doctorate granting and research institutions) have an impact on earnings and cite the research of Dickerson and Jacobs (2006) and Long (2010) as support. In closing the earnings gap McClough and Benedict (2010) posit that the most plausible role education could have in salary equity

would occur *if* education improves access to occupations with higher earnings and state, “education has been the great equalizer for Asians, but not for Blacks and Hispanics.” In addition to lower salaries compared to counterparts with the same education, career level and occupation illustrate additional inequalities (Table 4).

Table 4 <i>Management, Professional, and Related Occupations: 2010</i>		
	White	African American
Median usual weekly earnings full-time wage and salary	\$932	\$812
Percent of management, professional and related occupations	41.5	33.8

(US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010)

Table 5*Gender, Age, Race and Educational Attainment: Monthly Earnings*

Characteristic	Highest level completed									
	Elementary	Some high school	High school graduate	Some college	Vocational certificate*	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Professional degree	Doctorate degree
TOTAL	\$2,136	\$2,434	\$3,179	\$3,598	\$3,538	\$4,166	\$5,445	\$6,731	\$11,927	\$8,434
Sex										
Men	\$2,381	\$2,660	\$3,580	\$4,136	\$4,106	\$4,967	\$6,266	\$7,992	\$13,781	\$9,355
Women	\$1,540	\$2,023	\$2,590	\$2,964	\$2,798	\$3,408	\$4,436	\$5,439	\$8,502	\$6,659
Age										
18 to 29	\$1,893	\$1,802	\$2,390	\$2,545	\$2,769	\$2,865	\$3,903	\$4,518	B	B
30 to 49	\$2,148	\$2,495	\$3,409	\$3,840	\$3,537	\$4,165	\$5,828	\$6,878	\$12,740	\$8,083
50 & over	\$2,236	\$2,895	\$3,351	\$4,258	\$3,855	\$4,828	\$5,839	\$7,090	\$12,076	\$9,198
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	\$2,169	\$2,509	\$3,312	\$3,699	\$3,661	\$4,284	\$5,589	\$6,833	\$12,349	\$8,558
Non-Hispanic										
Hispanic	\$2,519	\$2,816	\$3,451	\$3,830	\$3,761	\$4,309	\$5,673	\$6,906	\$12,587	\$8,653
Black	B	\$2,083	\$2,475	\$3,117	\$3,029	\$3,336	\$4,445	\$5,792	B	B
Hispanic (of any race)	\$2,068	\$2,102	\$2,689	\$2,985	\$3,111	\$4,020	\$4,424	\$5,757	B	B

(B) Derived measure not shown when base is less than 200,000

(US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2008)

Table 6*Gender, Age, Race and Educational Attainment*

Characteristic	Highest level completed									
	Elementary	Some high school	High school graduate	Some college	Vocational certificate*	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Professional degree	Doctorate degree
TOTAL	12,002	18,260	57,880	35,337	24,709	18,429	38,782	15,132	3,232	2,486
Sex										
Men	6,152	9,143	28,290	16,595	12,105	7,962	18,500	6,957	1,939	1,597
Women	5,851	9,118	29,590	18,742	12,604	10,468	20,282	8,175	1,293	889
Age										
18 to 24	658	4,617	8,133	9,841	1,498	1,497	2,387	169	30	9
25 to 34	1,704	2,999	9,477	6,533	3,599	3,620	8,920	2,480	501	306
35 to 44	2,049	2,482	9,287	5,195	4,971	4,134	8,599	3,302	709	480
45 to 54	2,065	2,651	11,233	5,448	5,846	4,195	8,143	3,316	789	558
55 to 64	1,783	1,934	8,221	4,177	4,395	2,957	6,059	3,326	705	593
65 & over	3,745	3,578	11,529	4,143	4,401	2,026	4,675	2,539	499	541
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	9,749	13,760	47,148	28,723	19,303	15,321	32,373	12,746	2,726	2,012
Non-Hispanic										
Hispanic	3,890	9,544	39,668	25,284	16,697	13,767	30,272	12,159	2,585	1,943
Men	2,033	4,768	19,011	11,963	8,474	5,910	14,772	5,639	1,585	1,246
Women	1,857	4,775	20,657	13,322	8,223	7,857	15,500	6,519	1,000	697
Black	1,151	3,362	7,500	4,344	3,847	1,990	3,006	1,075	199	177
Men	569	1,580	3,685	1,838	1,651	791	1,213	402	91	87
Women	582	1,782	3,815	2,507	2,196	1,199	1,793	674	109	90
Hispanic (of any race)	6,334	4,721	8,287	3,749	2,930	1,702	2,307	630	151	69

(US Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2008)

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory within the career development field includes gender, personality, outcome expectations and contextual influences to understand career development behaviors (Feldt and Woelfel, 2009). It seeks to connect intangibles, such as thoughts and beliefs with expectations and outcomes. In other words, social cognitive theory places the individual as central to expectations and allows for understanding the role of external influences (i.e., racism, sexism) on expectations. Social cognitive theory is an appropriate theoretical frame to understand reasoning and affective processes involved in educational expectations, as its multi-layered approach positions the individual's experiences as central in importance (Fig. 1).

Social cognitive theory is founded on the social learning concept developed by Miller and Dollard (1941) who posit human behavior as a depiction of the observed behaviors of others. Bandura (1986) expanded social learning theory to develop social cognitive theory in which the individual is the actor and product of their environment, also referred to as triadic reciprocal causation. Social cognitive theory has three important tenets; internal factors (cognitive, affective and biological), behaviors and environment, each interacts and influences the other. These interactions impact the behaviors, efficacy and motivation of the individual; therefore, impacting goal setting and goal achievement (Bandura, 1999; Bandura, 2006; Hackett and Byars, 1996, Bussey and Bandura, 1999; Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons, 1992).

Environment

Within triadic reciprocal causation is environment, which also has three structures that affect the individual. These structures include the *imposed* environment, *selected* environment and *structured* environment (Bandura, 1989; 1997; 1999). According to Bandura (1999), each of

these environments force the individual to exercise their ability to adapt or change to suit a particular circumstance, therefore establishing the individual's overall self efficacy and motivation.

The imposed environment consists of physical and social structures, neither of which are the choice of the individual (Bandura, 1989; 1997; 1999; 2006). The selected environment is the individual's choice of associates and activities (Bandura, 1989; 1997; 1999; 2006) and is of particular theoretical importance to understand the educational achievement of African American women despite inequitable compensation. The selected environment, within the context of this research, includes the choice of university, college major and interpersonal relationships established during college. Lastly, the constructed environment is significant to all individuals since it exists as a result of the imposed environment and the process of constructing the selected environment (Bandura, 1989; 1997; 1999; 2006).

Triadic Reciprocal Causation

The triadic reciprocal causation model within social cognitive theory integrates environments and sociocultural aspects such as family structure and socioeconomic status (Bandura, 1999). Social cognitive theory does not explicitly address race; however, race influences family structure, socioeconomic status, personal experiences and impacts the environments of the individual (Hackett and Byars, 1996). Therefore, a logical inference is that race is situated within the sociocultural aspect of the triadic reciprocal causation model. Triadic reciprocal causation posits that the integration of environments and sociocultural aspects result in attitudes that affect behavior and self-efficacy, thus impacting motivation (Bandura, 1999; 2006). Conversely, within triadic reciprocal causation there are "affective and environmental factors

that impact gender development and functioning” (Bussey and Bandura, 1999), which is important to consider in the educational achievement and occupational choices of African American women.

Human Agency (Agenic Perspective)

Within social cognitive theory is the aspect of human agency, defined as the ability of the individual to influence one’s functioning and life circumstances (Bandura, 2006). Human agency occurs either in spite of or as the result of one’s experiences within their environment and sociocultural identifiers. Bandura (1999; 2006) positions *human agency* as the result of interactions within *triadic reciprocal causation*, (integration of environments and sociocultural aspects that impact behavior, self-efficacy and subsequent motivation).

Human agency has four components: *intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness*. Intentionality includes action plans and strategies for goal achievement, while forethought is the cognitive representation of goal achievement and is the motivator of behavior (Bandura, 2006). Self-reactiveness is the ability to develop and regulate appropriate action plans for goal achievement, while self-reflectiveness occurs when the individual considers if their thoughts, actions and efficacy are aligned with goal achievement (Bandura, 2006). Human agency is essentially the contributions of the individual to the processes involved with goal setting and achievement.

There are three identified modes of agency: *individual, proxy and collective*, the combination of which is present in all human functioning (Bandura, 2006). A person influences their environment and personal functioning within individual agency, conversely with proxy

agency the individual influences others to act on their behalf. Within collective agency, a group of individuals act on behalf of group interests or the collective (Bandura, 2006).

Self Efficacy

Efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and to influence events that impact their lives (Bandura, 1994). Efficacy is a key component to the overall cognitive processes involved in daily activities (Bussey and Bandura, 1999; Bandura, 1994; 1999; 2006). Educational attainment among African American women can be rationalized as a result of human agency, in which the foundation is self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1999; Bussey and Bandura, 1999; Bandura, 2006). The experiences of African American women across all contexts is unique considering overarching ideas of femininity, gender roles and racism and the impact of each in goal setting, achievement and overall affect.

Bandura (1998) suggests that the efficacy component within social cognitive theory is correlated to the intensity of the task and that, "the stronger the perceived efficacy, the higher the goals people set for themselves and the firmer the commitment to them" (Bandura, 1998, p. 58). When applying the self efficacy perspective of social cognitive theory to educational attainment and salary compensation, it is plausible that African American women who complete advanced degrees set and accomplish the goal because of strong perceived efficacy. Supporting this hypothesis, Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons (1992, p. 674) have stated that, "perceived efficacy to achieve motivates academic attainment both directly and indirectly by influencing personal goal setting" and that "self efficacy and goals in combination contribute to subsequent academic attainments."

Gender is an aspect of human development that impacts all aspects of life experience (triadic reciprocal causation), thus impacting self efficacy and efficacious behaviors including career development. From a social cognitive perspective, gender, career development and the role of personal efficacy merge to produce career choices (Bussey and Bandura, 1999). Women have high self efficacy among traditionally female occupations; conversely, women have low self efficacy in relation to education requirements and job responsibilities of traditionally male occupations, although verbal and quantitative ability is equal (Betz and Hackett, 1981). The notion of overall equal ability is significant as Bussey and Bandura (1999) suggest that efficacy contributes more to career preferences than to potential benefits (financial compensation) of a career choice.

Self efficacy is formed as a result of four influences in an individual's life experience; mastery experiences, social models, social persuasion and emotional states (Bandura, 1994). Mastery experiences are generally those experiences one has in early life that build positive efficacy self perceptions. Mastery experiences are those experiences one can easily master and build efficacious beliefs in their ability as a result of successful completion of a task or goal. Social models, a concept from the social learning foundation of social cognitive theory, develops self efficacy as an individual observes similar people succeed and accomplish goals. Although mastery experiences and social models are necessary to build self efficacy, each is vulnerable to having the reverse effect on an individual (Bandura, 1994). If an individual has too many mastery experiences and believes accomplishing goals to be unproblematic, accomplishing a goal through adversity may prove too difficult and create low self efficacy. Conversely, if an individual observes a social model struggle to accomplish goals or fail, low self efficacy could develop. In the development of self efficacy, social models also impact coping strategies of the

observer (Bandura, 1999). This is of particular importance in the efficacy development of African American women, as their efficacy development occurs amid the social realities of race and gender. This suggests that the types of coping strategies may be unique to the group. Coping strategies and the impact on motivation and goal achievement will be discussed further in the literature review of this research, specifically those issues among educated African American women.

The third aspect within the development of positive self efficacy is social persuasion, which is essentially the verbal encouragement an individual receives during tasks. Social persuasion helps to build positive self efficacy, but does not sustain high levels of efficacy alone. Once an individual either fails or has difficulty accomplishing a goal, words are not enough to sustain efficacious beliefs or behaviors. Lastly, an individual's emotional state and subsequent mood is essential within the development of self efficacy, as mood impacts the cognitive processes involved in decision making and goal setting (Bandura, 1989; 1994). Thought patterns affect self efficacy beliefs as cognitive processes and particular thought patterns can be self-aiding or self-hindering to motivation and goal setting (Bandura, 1989).

Summary

Educational goals impact affect and persistence as goals increase the cognitive reactions to performance outcomes and define personal requirements for success (Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons, 1992). Educational expectations are the result of cognitive reactions and influence academic performance and educational attainment (Hackett and Betz, 2005; Lent and Hackett, 2009).

The self-efficacy and triadic reciprocal causation components of social cognitive theory are significant to this study (Fig. 1). Self-efficacy is the belief in one's abilities to organize and execute actions to achieve goals (Bandura, 1997). Within the self-efficacy aspect of social cognitive theory of career development is the influence of affect which impacts motivation, academic achievement, goal setting, choice and decision making (Lent, Brown and Hackett 1994).

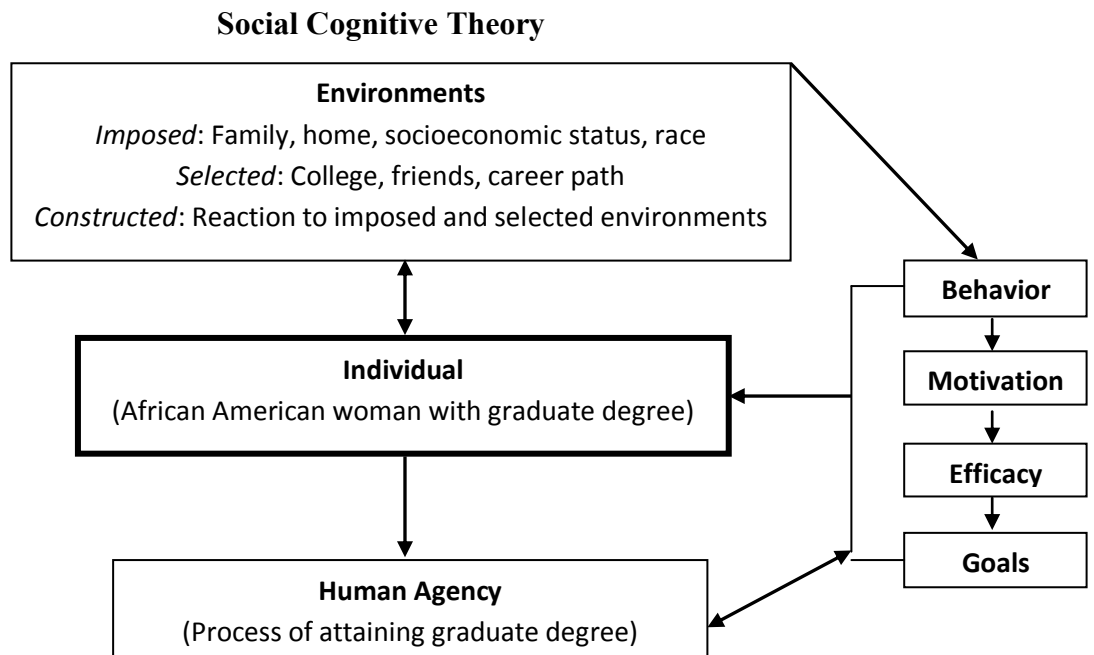
Career development, educational pursuits and the influence of institutions and significant others on expectations are uniquely personal in nature. Social cognitive theory encompasses all aspects of an individual's experiences, with the concept of triadic reciprocal causation, environments and sociocultural factors that impact cognitive processes (Bandura, 1999; 2006). Within triadic reciprocal causation are three identified environments: *imposed* (family and sociocultural), *selected* (associates and activities), *structured* (interpersonal relationships and college choice) and *constructed* (amalgam of all environments and the present environment of the individual) (Bandura, 1994).

Human agency, or the agenic perspective, within social cognitive theory addresses goals and motivational factors within the human experience. Human agency is defined as the ability to influence life circumstances (Bandura, 2006). There are four aspects of human agency: *intentionality* (goal action plans), *forethought* (cognitive process of goals), *self reactivity* (regulation of goal action plans) and *self reflectiveness* (consideration of the appropriateness of goal action plans) (Bandura, 1989; 2006).

Self efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their abilities, is considered the foundation of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989; 1994; 1997; 1999; 1999; 2006). Bandura

states, “Self efficacy beliefs function as an important set of proximal determinants of human motivation, affect, and action” and “they operate on action through motivational, cognitive, and affective intervening processes” (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). Self efficacy develops from four main sources: mastery experiences (successes), *social models* (observing similar people succeed), *social persuasion* (verbal persuasion) and *emotional state* (mood and stress reactions). Self efficacy within career development is considered to have a greater impact on the career success of an individual than the mastery of job-related technical skills and the higher one’s self efficacy, the better the occupational functioning (Bandura, 1999).

Fig. 1
Illustration of Social Cognitive Theory



Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to depict the personal narratives of several African American women with regard to their understanding how their life experiences, gender, race and culture impacted their educational expectations. The broader purpose of this study was to understand the belief system and ideological perspectives that African Americans as a group associate with education. This chapter describes the research procedures utilized to collect data, including sampling, and the theoretical and conceptual framework of the selected methodology.

Research Inquiry

This study is significant because it addresses the expectations of African American women as told from their perspective, instead of a deficit model (i.e., poor socioeconomic status, first generation college attendance, etc.) which is commonly used. Qualitative studies that focus on the individual experiences and expectations among the members of this group are needed to explore connections between education, expectations and whether or not expectations are met. The age range of this group (30-79) allows for the life experiences of individual participants to be placed within specific socio-political historical contexts.

Qualitative Inquiry

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was developed by Barney Glaser and Anslem Strauss during the 1960s as a part of a sociological hospital research program (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The initial goal of Glaser and Strauss was to discover a theory that would emerge from the data, fit the data and be applicable in the real world (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In 1990, a divide between Glaser and Strauss occurred from conflicting opinions about data analysis within grounded theory, specifically, the differences between the coding processes, with Strauss' process having additional steps compared to the original grounded theory approach. For the purpose of this research, the approach put forth by Strauss and Corbin (1990) was selected because it allows for greater detail and helps link process to structure (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The narrative of African American women's educational expectations has not been explored and the detailed coding process within the Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach allows for more in-depth analysis and understanding of the group's experiences.

Grounded theory allows for the integration of concepts that can provide theoretical explanation of social phenomena (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). In addition, grounded theory is the chosen research method as it parallels the chosen theoretical frame and social cognitive theory, each giving the experiences of the individual central positioning. Considering the literature is void of research about the expectations and related issues of African American women with postgraduate degrees, the use of grounded theory will provide a path to build a theory that is directly correlated to the data. A purpose of grounded theory and its purpose in this research are

to analyze micro-level events as the foundation for a macro-level explanation (Neuman, 2000) and to make associations by comparing social situations.

Two specific components of grounded theory are pertinent to this study and to qualitative research in general. The first, grounded theory is intended to be a method that permits change as the phenomena experienced by participants are viewed as ever-evolving. This aspect is important as human beings and the contexts in which they live change over time. The second component is that individuals are believed to hold the power to control their destinies. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), this is based on how individuals interpret and utilize their surroundings and experiences. This aspect of grounded theory illustrates its ability to work with the social cognitive perspective, as each take into account the significance of environmental influences on perception and affect (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Bandura 2006).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework links various concepts and serves as the foundation of theory formulation (Seibold, 2002). Based on the literature, general theoretical explanations of factors involved in postgraduate degree attainment are both internal and external. The conceptual framework of this study is *expectations of graduate degree* and *development of educational expectations*. Identified themes within the conceptual framework are *overall dissatisfaction* and *experiences*. Supporting concepts are identified as *career satisfaction*, *personal satisfaction*, *life experiences* and *family value of education*. Two core concepts, *race not gender* and *life experiences and family value of education* are the basis of theory development. Each of the identified concepts served as references within the possibilities of theory building.

Theoretical Framework

Social cognitive theory places the experiences of the individual as central. Human agency, a tenet within social cognitive theory, may provide explanation for the continued educational attainment of African American women. Human agency is defined as the ability to influence one's ability to function and one's life circumstances (Bandura, 2006). Human agency occurs either in spite of or as the result of one's experiences within the environment. For African Americans, influences on the decisions for educational attainment are more connected to interpersonal relationships as compared to whites (Hackett and Byars, 1996; Daire, LaMothe and Fuller, 2007; Cheng and Starks 2002; Immerwahr, 2000) and weighted toward family, significant others and immediate environment. Social cognitive theory specifically addresses the role of family, significant others, culture and environment on the cognitive process, motivations and decisions of the individual.

Sampling

Research participants were chosen based on theoretical sampling (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002) however; participants had to meet the following criteria:

1. Must be an African American woman.
2. Must have earned a Master's degree or above in educational attainment.
3. Must be between the age of 30 and 79.

A recruitment email (Appendix C) was sent to casual acquaintances (classmates, church members and co-workers) without prior knowledge of their fulfillment of study criteria. The email invited recipients' participation provided they fit the criteria. In addition, the email invitation included a request for recipients to forward the invitation if they did not meet study criteria or declined participation. This sampling method was used for 4 of 5 participants. There

was an exception with selection of the participant who represented the 70-79 age group. A participant for this group did not emerge via the email invitation; as a result, this participant was a casual acquaintance invited via telephone. As recipients responded to the email and agreed to participation, they were accepted on a “first come” basis. Two of five participants knew one another and only one participant (70-79 age group participant) knew the researcher.

Interviews

The first interview was analyzed with careful attention to emergent topics within interview responses. In other words, once a concept earned its way into the study through its demonstration of its relationship to the study purpose, its indicators were sought in all subsequent interviews (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

There were a total of five participants, and one interview was conducted with an interview participant in each selected age range (Table 7). This was done to provide representation of each age range decade within the 30 to 79 age range outlined in the study sample. Further reasoning for one interview participant per age range was to uncover whether societal factors impact expectations of postgraduate education. According to Baird (2001), higher education and educational attainment are positioned within the social and economic issues of any time period. Additional characteristics of participants included their degree level; 2 MBA's (Master's of Business Administration), 1 MSW (Master's of Social Work), 1 MLS (Master's of Library Science and PhD candidate) and 1 EdD (Doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Development in Nursing).

Table 7
Participant Sample Ages

<u>Sample Age Range</u>	<u>Age of Participant</u>
30-39	36
40-49	46
50-59	58
60-69	62
70-79	74

Data Collection: Interviews

The purpose of the interview was to understand the relationship between experiences and the social framework in which they occurred. Narrative inquiry was used to focus on the individual experiences and expectations, and to illustrate possible connections between education, expectations and whether expectations are met. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe the process of narrative inquiry interview by saying, “interviews are conducted between researcher and participant, transcripts are made, the meetings are made available for further discussion, and they become part of the ongoing narrative record”. The narrative inquiry process for interviews is the chosen data collection tool as it parallels the fundamental tenet of grounded theory, which is to allow the data to guide the direction of data collection and analysis.

This study used an interview guide (Appendix A) that allowed for both structured and unstructured interviewing with a conversational approach. The use of a semi-structured interview is to allow participants to elaborate on experiences, provide opportunity for concepts to emerge (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Follow-up questions were asked when appropriate and respondents spoke freely about related topics. In addition, the interview guide was essential to data analysis as it organized the data as it was collected.

The interview guide consisted of 16 questions in addition to demographic qualifiers (age, type of degree, year degree was received and name of institution). Four questions

addressed educational expectations, two questions addressed the social and economic climate of the time period of attendance, two questions addressed personal definitions of success and five questions addressed behavior and environment that impact educational expectations (Appendix A).

Each interview was approximately one hour and a half in length and was recorded with the use of a digital voice recorder. Interviews were conducted in person at a location chosen by the participant, with the exception of the interview with Terry, which was conducted via telephone. Interviews were conducted over a six week period. To maintain the methodological perspective of grounded theory, data analysis of individual interviews occurred immediately after each interview (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Immediate data analysis also helped reduce researcher bias, as “constant comparisons” of emerging concepts and grouping of data was continual (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Data Analysis

The raw data generated from the five respondents consisted of 65 pages of transcribed text, which were coded and organized based on grounded theory methodology as described by Corbin and Strauss (1990). This process involved reading through text to identify categories and themes within the categories. Similar data concepts that emerged from multiple interview data sources were identified, grouped and coded as data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously. There were three concepts that emerged from the data related to graduate degree expectations not being met (outcomes): career dissatisfaction, personal dissatisfaction and high self-efficacy. The core concept within this aspect of the data is identified as issues of race, not gender, as the greatest factor within career and personal dissatisfaction. Additionally, two

concepts emerged from the data related to educational expectations: life experiences and family value of education. The core concept within this aspect of the data is identified as high self-efficacy.

Within grounded theory are three types of coding: open, axial and selective (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Although each coding type is not necessarily used in succession of another, each coding type is beneficial to the study. Initial similarities among interview data were open coded. That data was labeled, placed into a category based on characteristics of that particular data, and subcategories were identified. Axial coding is the process of relating subcategories to categories and testing that relationship against the data (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Axial coding was used to “rebuild” the data divided into categories with open coding and illustrate the connections among the data. Lastly, selective coding integrates all categories and forms one core category (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). This one core category is the basis of a newly developed theoretical framework.

In conjunction with the coding process is the writing of memos. Grounded theory generally consists of three types of memos: code, theoretical and operational (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Code memos were written during the process of categorizing data with open coding. Theoretical memos were written during the process of conceptualizing relationships between subcategories and categories with axial and selective coding. Theoretical memos support the development of a theoretical frame and are the integral part of grounded theory research methodology (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Operational memos were written to address issues within research design, specifically the usefulness of particular interview questions in generating levels of data. The use of a particular type of memo writing was not determined until

coding began; however, memos began at the start of the coding process and continued throughout data collection and final analysis.

To assist data analysis and further limit researcher bias and subjectivity, a database was developed. The database organized collected data to more easily identify patterns among concepts. Database software allows the researcher to test a variety of data once all data has been input (Fetterman, 2010). Dedoose combined with Microsoft Excel were the chosen databases. Considering qualitative data is fluid and emergent in nature, it was understood that preplanned ways for interview data analysis were subject to change. In general, the intent was to provide a thematic analysis of interview data. Findings are reported in both aggregate form (study results and interview data themes/ concepts) and individually (excerpts from interviews) with study related identifiers.

Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Corbin and Strauss, 1990), in which line, sentences and paragraph segments were reviewed to understand which codes fit emergent data concepts.

Equipment

1. Hand held digital audio recorder.
2. Laptop

Dependability of Data

Interviews were the primary source of data collection. In an effort to ensure a truthful depiction of respondents' narratives, follow-up phone calls (member checks) were placed to each participant for accuracy of facts (Creswell, 1998). An additional purpose of the follow-up phone calls was to provide respondents with an overview of findings and ask if the interpretation of

their responses were accurate. To attempt verification of common experiences and common interview responses among participants, negative case analysis was used. Negative case analysis is the process of noting elements in the data that do not support or contradict emerged patterns (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). After initial data analysis, it was evident emergent themes were common among all data sources and that characteristics of themes were applicable to all respondents.

Ethical Considerations

Interview participant data was labeled with the use of pseudonyms on both the digital voice recorder and the transcribed interviews. There were no personal identifiers associated with the labeling or within the transcription. Transcribed data was stored on the laptop computer of the researcher and all transcription files were password protected. In addition, the researcher's laptop was password secured. Recorded interviews were deleted from the digital recording device after completion of the study. There were no identifiers linking participant's personal identity to the information or responses they provided. All collected data will remain anonymous.

Chapter 4

Findings of the study of Educated African American Women: Educational Expectations and Outcomes

Introduction

This study was designed to present the personal experiences of African American women with graduate degrees and their expectations of those degrees. Research participants for this study were chosen based on theoretical sampling (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Data collection was completed through interview to understand the relationship between experiences and the social framework in which they occur. There were five participants and each met the following criteria: African American woman, an earned a master's degree or above, and between the ages of 30 and 79. The data analysis method was grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and the theoretical framework was social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2006).

Data analysis was conducted with the combined use of grounded theory as a methodological tool and social cognitive theory as a theoretical frame to provide the richest data given the small sample size. Grounded theory builds upon itself allowing for constant comparison of emergent concepts, and social cognitive theory allows for the experiences of the individual to remain central. Social cognitive theory addresses a broader audience than African American women; however, it places importance on interpersonal relationships and the impact that the sociocultural environment has on cognitive processes and decisions. This is important because for African Americans interpersonal relationships have greater influence on the decisions for educational attainment compared to whites (Hackett and Byars, 1996; Daire, LaMothe and Fuller, 2007; Cheng and Starks 2002; Immerwahr, 2000). The literature is void of research about the expectations and related issues of African American women with postgraduate

degrees. The use of grounded theory provided a path to build a theory directly correlated to the data. Social cognitive theory streamlined the data to specifically reflect the individual's expectations and the processes involved that created those expectations.

In this study, overall dissatisfaction with educational expectations is evident; however, the perceived source of the dissatisfaction may be misguided. It is unclear if educational expectations not being met are truly a result of racial discrimination, as respondents suggest. Issues of goal attainment behaviors, coping strategies, life experiences, employment status (Table 8 and Table 9) and family influence each influence the development and execution of the women's educational expectations.

Participant Characteristics

Participant Profiles

Thelma

Thelma is a 74-year old mother of three and a retired registered nurse with a doctorate in counseling education (EdD) (Table 9). She worked a number of years as a nurse and retired from nursing in a management position. She expressed a strong belief in her intellectual and leadership abilities and believed she could contribute better to the field of nursing as a teacher and scholar. After receiving her doctorate, Thelma became a full-time faculty member in a nursing education program at an institution located in the Midwest. Thelma's socioeconomic background was upper-class and she married into a family of high socioeconomic status. Her initial motivation for educational attainment was the result of a desire to please her mother and later to meet the perceived expectations of her husband's family. Her husband was a medical doctor and completed his certifications when she began her doctoral program, which she

considered an additional motivation for educational attainment. In addition, Thelma's sister-in-law earned a doctorate and was tenured faculty at the same university where Thelma earned her doctorate and became a tenured faculty member. Thelma's life experiences differed significantly from the other respondents and will be isolated and discussed later in this chapter.

Juliette

Juliette is a 62-year old divorced mother of three from a working class socioeconomic background. She has a Master's of Business Administration degree (MBA) and is "all but dissertation" (ABD) in a library sciences doctoral program (Table 9). Her father was a sanitation worker, and although illiterate, was the first person to expose her to literacy. He brought her books and magazines from the trash cans he emptied on his route and encouraged her to read everything, regardless of the content. Juliette has a home filled with books and entered into library sciences as a passion, not just as a career change. She stated a desire to be involved in the literacy of African Americans through changing the "exclusionary culture of the public library system to include the literacy needs and experiences of African Americans". Prior to her career change, she worked for twenty years at a large corporation and expressed extreme dissatisfaction in that position. Her former employer paid for both her Bachelor of Arts degree and MBA. Juliette purposefully changed career fields and accepted a lower salary.

Kay

Kay is a 46-year old married mother of three with a Master's of Business Administration degree (MBA) (Table 9). Her socioeconomic background was middle-class. She worked as a computer programmer at a prominent corporation for fifteen years prior to a layoff. Her educational background and career field differed from the respondent group and from the

norm of chosen career fields among African American women; Kay's undergraduate degree is in computer science with a minor in math. Kay stated that her academic abilities defined her personality and educational expectations. Kay's mother's life experiences were her motivation to achieve academically.

Shana

Shana is a 36-year old single mother of one with a Master's of Social Work degree (MSW). She has been a single mother throughout her undergraduate and graduate education (Table 9). Her family socioeconomic status was middle-class and both parents have college degrees. Shana expressed that she has never felt financially secure; and although she and her son "have never been without" she has emotional struggles with being a single parent. She considered her child to be the significant influence in the decision to attain a graduate degree.

Terry

Terry is a 58-year old single mother with a Master's of Professional Leadership degree (MPL) (Table 9). She became a mother at sixteen and has been a single mother throughout her high school, undergraduate and graduate education. Her family socioeconomic background was working lower-class. No one in Terry's immediate family encouraged or valued education. Specifically, she discussed the discouragement of her family to her attainment of any level of education. Terry recalled telling her family that she planned to get a graduate degree and their response, "Why do you want to go back to school? You already have a job".

Research Questions

1. What are the expectations of education among African American women with postgraduate degrees?
2. Does the social, economic climate or social consciousness in the decade of attendance influence expectations of postgraduate degrees among African American women?
3. How do personal factors, behavior, and the environment affect African American women's educational expectations?
4. What contexts (personal, career, financial) does this group position and define their expectations of education?
5. What strategies does this group utilize to fulfill their expectations of education?
6. How does this group define success and what are the factors (internal and external) that influence this group's definition?

Identified Themes and Concepts

Two major themes were identified: *expectations of graduate degree* and *development of educational expectations*. There are three concepts within expectations of graduate degree: *career dissatisfaction*, *personal dissatisfaction* and *high academic self efficacy*. There are two concepts within development of educational expectations: *life experiences* and *family perception of race and value of education*. From these themes and related concepts, two core concepts framed the findings; expectations of a graduate degree are affected by *issues of race, not gender* and development of educational expectations is a result of *life experiences*; Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 depict the conceptualization of themes and concepts.

Fig. 2 Conceptual Framework: Expectations of Graduate Degree: Outcomes

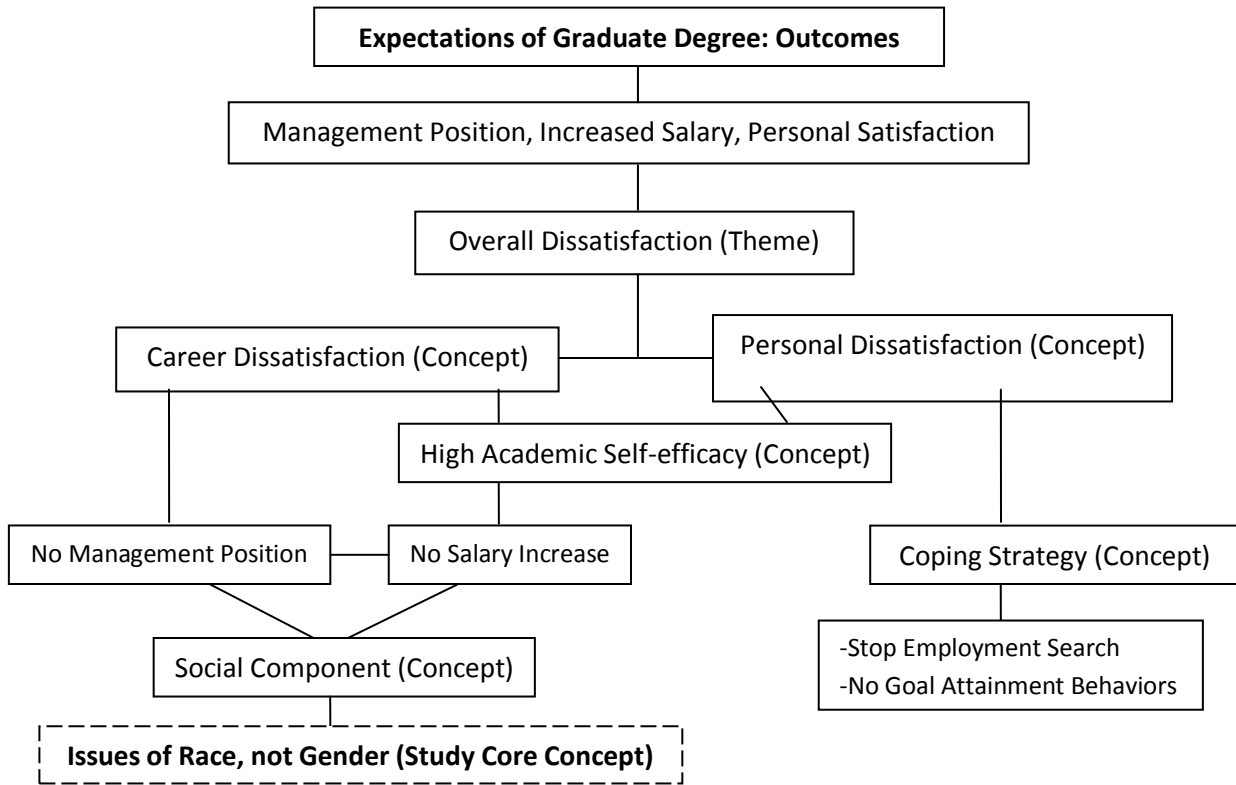
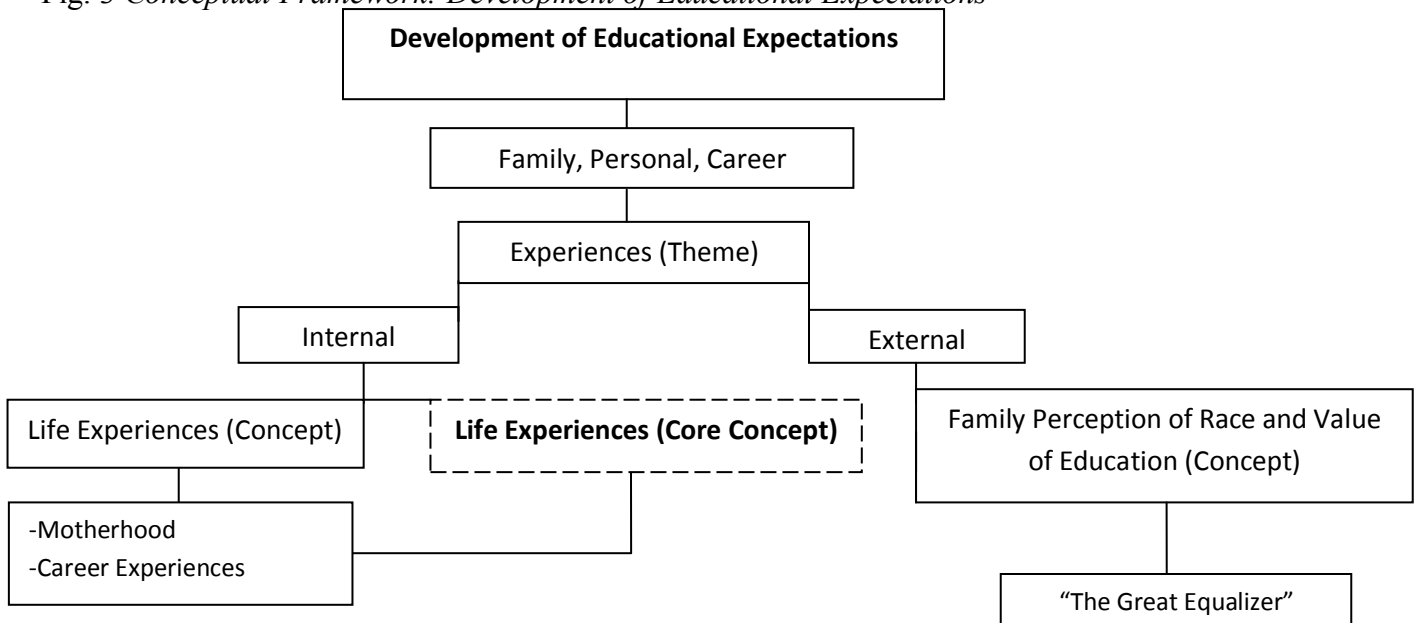


Fig. 3 Conceptual Framework: Development of Educational Expectations



Analysis

Expectations of Graduate Degree

(Research Question 1) What are the expectations of education among African American women with postgraduate degrees?

As stated previously, for the purpose of this study the term expectations will be defined as anticipated benefits of educational achievement. Although there was variation among specific expectations, each of the women positioned their expectations within the context of their careers. Differences among expectations may be attributed to participant age, life experiences and career experiences. Overall, participants discussed educational expectations that included increased salary, career mobility, career opportunities, and respect.

Primary Expectation: Salary Increase

Four of five women (Juliette, Kay, Shana and Terry) expected a salary increase as a result of graduate degree attainment *only*, which is discussed in further detail within this chapter. Increased salary was the *primary* expectation among three of those four women (Kay, Shana and Terry). Concerning career advancement and increased salary as the primary expectation of her graduate degree, Kay stated:

I used to tell people that the ultimate goal was to make enough money to hire a nanny for my kids.

Kay also stated:

My plan was to obviously move up the corporate ladder and to make more money. I thought [a graduate degree] would help me in my career and I thought in some point in time, I would be in management. I just wanted...hopefully that would help me to get there.

Education is an important component of earnings, and salary expectations are independent from socioeconomic background (Rouse, 2004). Although the literature supports this assertion, it is difficult to apply to the findings of this study. Within this study, only participants from middle-class and poor socioeconomic backgrounds positioned salary as their primary expectation of educational attainment. Thelma, the only participant from an upper-class socioeconomic background is the only respondent to suggest salary as inconsequential within her expectations. Shana also expressed an expectation of increased salary based on graduate degree attainment only. When asked to describe her educational expectations, Shana stated:

I expected to get paid. To get paid a decent amount of money. I expected that my skills and background would...help...or show that I was worth pay a competitive salary too.

Secondary Expectation: Career Mobility and Career Opportunities

Each of the five women discussed career mobility and career opportunities as an expectation of their graduate degree. However, the term expectation did not fully represent the sentiment of Thelma's perspective. For example, concerning expectations of her graduate degree Thelma stated:

I don't think I can say that I *expected*...I believe that I took the necessary steps educationally...professionally and I believed I was *earning* my way to what I wanted for myself. I was aware of the requirements for the career I desired and therefore I completed those requirements.

Thelma's rationale of her expectations represents her engagement within human agency, the intentional influence to change life circumstances (Bandura, 1999; 2006). In addition, Thelma's responses, career experiences, life experiences and educational outcomes differed significantly from the other four women; she believed her educational expectations were met and was satisfied with her career. Differences among Thelma's responses compared to the other participants may be attributed to her age (74), socioeconomic status or personal access to networking within her profession.

Each of the women expected career mobility and corresponding salary increase as a result of their graduate degree; however, reasoning associated with the expectation of increased salary varied. Salary increase was discussed as both independent from career mobility and as a result of career mobility. Career mobility and career opportunities were specifically discussed in regard to acquiring a management position or job promotion. Four of five women identified acquiring a management position as an expected outcome of their graduate degree. Juliette identified career mobility and career opportunities as expectations of her graduate degree and stated:

I expected my graduate degree would provide career opportunities that would take my life in different directions....that I would be better as a result of possibility. Many things are bigger....more important than dollars and cents or prestige.

Juliette's statement suggests that there was an overall desire within her expectations for improvement to her quality of life. This expectation was in addition to her expectations of a management position. Similarly, Shana connected her expectations of career mobility and opportunities to an overall improvement to her quality of life. Shana primarily defined her expectation of career mobility and career opportunities as a job promotion with a salary increase; however, she also indicated an expectation of a management position. The issue of improvement to one's quality of life as a result of career mobility and career opportunities was evidenced in Shana's statement:

Well, I think that...if I had at least a promotion...the money might allow me to do more. To give my son more. I wouldn't have to work the long hours I do now. I expected to get that...a higher position...a promotion.

(Research Question 2) Does the social, economic climate or social consciousness in the decade of attendance influence expectations of postgraduate degrees among African American women?

Age: Expectation of Respect

Respondents did not discuss the social, economic climate and social consciousness in the decade of attendance as having a direct impact on their educational expectations. For example, concerning the influence of the decade of attendance, Thelma stated:

Nothing in the world at that point impacted my educational expectations. No, because I think it has been within really more recent years that African American women really have paid attention to the wide, wide world out there and where

they fit into the world. We had our own little nucleus groups. And I think that this is something that as the world broadened that we then became a part of that enlargement. So, no we didn't...we were not focused on that [social, economic climate and social consciousness] in my day. [Laughter].

Thelma attained each of her graduate degrees in the 1970s, Juliette in the 1990s and Terry in the 2000s. The decade of attendance for graduate degree attainment did not emerge as significant. However, the decades of attendance for primary and secondary school influenced the women's educational expectations and established respect as an expectation. Thelma and Juliette addressed the time period in which their expectations developed and stated:

Thelma

I suspect that my expectations were likely set long before I attended college or received my doctorate for that matter. There was an understanding that getting an education was expected of you, especially among African Americans.

Juliette

Well, I can go back before [graduate degree attainment]. During the period I was growing up. Education was viewed as something very positive. More than positive, it was deemed a necessity to get from point A to point B. That was my generation. People who went to college were admired and respected. So many things were about respect in those days.

The expectation of respect was not expanded upon throughout the interview as were issues of career mobility and salary; however, respect emerged among three of five women

within their initial description of educational expectations. One commonality among the three respondents was their age and relative decades they attended primary and secondary school. Thelma (age 74), Juliette (age 62) and Terry (age 57) represent the oldest participants in the sample and attended primary and secondary school at the height of the Civil Rights Movement.

Thelma, Juliette and Terry identified respect as an educational expectation and positioned it within issues of race. Based upon their ages, it is plausible that the three women experienced or witnessed racism in manners other participants did not. These experiences may have established respect and its connection to equality as an expectation of education. Thelma, Juliette and Terry discussed respect from white colleagues as an expectation of their graduate degree. Regarding the issue of respect from colleagues, Thelma stated:

I think that I wanted to be the best person I could be educationally. And I, of course, expected and wanted to make sure I received the respect I deserved [from colleagues]. And I also will tell you that I wanted to keep up with my colleagues since I was the only Black person on the nursing faculty.

Juliette also stated respect from others as an educational expectation. In addition, she stated that she expected her graduate education to lead to career advancement. It is important to note that Juliette's rationale for entering the library science profession was not related to salary.

Concerning her expectations of graduate education, Juliette stated:

My expectations were...that I would gain knowledge. To attain knowledge. I also expected that my degree would place importance on my opinions from the perspective of others.

It is interpreted that Juliette's reference to "career opportunities" was not grounded in salary expectations as were the expectations of the other three women. In addition, throughout the interview Juliette consistently mentioned that salary was not the most important aspect of her educational or career expectations.

Concerning the expectation of respect as a result of graduate degree attainment, Terry stated:

My expectation was that I would get a promotion and my other expectation was that I would make a substantial amount...more money. That's what I wanted. More money. Also, respect from my peers. Especially my white peers.

Relating educational expectations to one's career is not uncommon among African Americans since African Americans relate educational attainment to salary more than any other racial group (Rouse, 2004; Freeman, 2005). In addition, from the perspective of the sheepskin effect model (Jaeger and Page, 1996; Elman and O'Rand, 2004) anticipated benefits of graduate education may not have a direct correlation to educational attainment. The sheepskin effect and literature concerning salary expectations among African Americans frame the discussion of expectations of a graduate degree and related outcomes.

Development of Educational Expectations

(Research Question 3) How do personal factors, behavior, and the environment affect African American women's educational expectations?

Family Perception of Race and Value of Education

Family perception of race and value of education informed educational expectations of each of the women. This concept emerged as significant because issues of race were woven throughout many interview responses and these responses were often connected to family perceptions of the role of race in one's life. To that end, the value of education was often discussed in the same context. Perceptions of race and family value of education encompassed the issue of gender and positioned it within race in the context of educational attainment.

Although all five women discussed their family's perception of race and value of education throughout their interviews, none of the women mentioned if goal attainment behaviors were a component of their family's expressed beliefs. It is plausible that goal attainment behaviors were not included in family discussions of race and value of education. This could explain the absence of those behaviors in the women's career experiences and subsequent dissatisfaction with expectations of their graduate degree. Overall, beliefs about the value of education and perceptions of race were conveyed through family modeling, storytelling, shared experiences of elders and creation of specific mantras. Kay, Shana and Juliette each discussed their family's perception of race, value of education and how each was conveyed to them.

Kay

My mom wanted to be a teacher and she couldn't. She would say, 'you just don't know the opportunity you have. I couldn't go here or there, or in the movie theatre. You can go anywhere'. It was almost like, you have to be crazy not go. Not to take advantage of the opportunity. I was always taught that education was 'the great equalizer'.

Shana

My dad always said that ‘without an education a Black person, especially a Black woman didn’t have many options’. He always said that ‘Black people needed an education and white people didn’t’. That ‘Blacks *had* to have education just to get in the door and white people don’t’.

Juliette

My father taught me math with a plastic fork...I don’t know where he got them. So, my father- he worked on the garbage truck and I remember he would pick up all these magazines and he would pick up books that people had discarded. My father said if you knew how to read it, you could read it, so that was it...that was my ticket. He’d say, ‘This is your ticket. You’re smart. Get an education- you can do anything’. My father gave me my first books- they came out of the trash.

Terry was the only respondent whose immediate family did not value education, however she had the influence of significant others’ perceptions of race and value of education. The family of her child modeled themselves as cautionary examples for her to achieve beyond their socioeconomic status and educational attainment. Terry discussed an ultimatum presented to her by her child’s great uncle, which became the foundation of her educational expectations:

Terry

‘You’re about to graduate from high school’, see I had to do that if I wanted to move in there...he said, ‘what are you planning to do next?’ I said, “I don’t plan

on doing anything”. He said, ‘well, you won’t be living here, you have to have some type of higher education or you’ll be scrubbing toilets like I am’.

Age and Life Experiences

Life experiences emerged as factors that impact the development of educational expectations. Life experiences are connected to one’s age; reasoning for the age range of participants was their having reached adulthood during different decades. This encompassed historical and social contexts in which to position their experiences. Each woman expanded on internal and external factors that guided her expectations. Those responses developed the *life experiences* concept and proposed theoretical explanation discussed later.

Four of five respondents specifically addressed motherhood and the personal impact of career experiences as the foundation for development of their educational expectations. In addition, they suggested that motherhood and career experiences superseded the influence of *family value of education*. A logical inference is that each of the women attained their graduate degree between the ages of 30 and 50 and had many life experiences between the immediacy of family influence and personally identified influences.

Some aspects within the *life experiences* concept re-address concepts within the *expectations of graduate degree* theme from a different perspective. For example, within the *life experiences concept* three of five women connected career mobility and salary to the life experience of motherhood. Just as race was a push factor among all five women in the *attainment of a graduate degree* theme, motherhood was an additional push factor for three of five women.

Each of the five respondents are mothers, with three of five being single mothers throughout their educational career. The experience of single motherhood and the potential for becoming a single parent was a significant factor for the women; they expected that their graduate degree would help them financially provide for their children. Shana and Terry discussed their life experiences related to salary, motherhood, education and career mobility and stated:

Shana

I was too afraid not to go as far as I could with my education. I struggled financially and didn't expect to, so I thought getting a master's would help. Help me provide the things I wanted for myself and my child. I really...well, I didn't know what else could help. I had already tried changing jobs...so, I expected my master's would help...would give me opportunity to provide better.

Terry (became a single parent at 16)

What happened to me was I ended up being a teen parent and moved in with an aunt and uncle of the baby's dad. I always tell people getting pregnant saved my life. Since I moved in with my aunt and uncle....see I wouldn't have gotten that kind of encouragement to educate myself. I could have gotten into all kinds of trouble I'm sure [laughing].

Although Thelma was not a single parent at the time of her graduate degree attainment, motherhood, specifically the possibility of single parenthood, was a factor in her decision to attain a graduate degree.

I think I've always felt that...um if anything happened to significant others around me- I could always, I could always move right along in lock step. If something happened to my husband I would be able to keep on moving and I think that was what he wanted. And in essence that was what happened. I didn't...I was not one of those women where if your husband died you had to go back to school...and I was encouraged by him.

Motherhood was a push factor for Juliette in a different manner as she stated that the timing of her educational pursuits was based on her children's independence (the youngest was fifteen years old). Kay stated that motherhood repositioned her educational expectations of having a high salary to career stability; she was in year ten of her fifteen year tenure with her former employer when she had her first child.

Each of the women demonstrated a succinct and practical rationalization of motherhood within the context of *development of educational expectations*, unlike the discussion of four of five women concerning the influences of race and gender. All five women expected their graduate degree to help them provide financially for their children. Each discussed the desire for their education level to serve as inspiration for their children's educational pursuits. This is precarious considering four of five women did not feel their educational expectations were met. Perhaps the desire to have education serve as inspiration is a symptom of the disconnect they experienced with expectations and outcomes. In addition, this desire could transfer the same overall dissatisfaction with education if goal attainment behaviors are not specified in conjunction with educational expectations.

Among four of five women, negative career experiences were significant within the development of educational expectations. These negative experiences were also the impetus of avoidance, utilization of coping strategies and the concern to behave against race-gender stereotypes. The negative experiences had a cyclical affect as the coping strategies were a hindrance to educational expectations being met. Negative career experiences could have been utilized as an opportunity for self advocacy, however it seemed as though the experience was internalized and added to the overall dissatisfaction with graduate degree attainment. Shana discussed a negative career experience and stated:

I had a Black woman as my boss once and there was this inept white girl in the same position. My old boss told her about another opportunity in another department. By the time I knew about it- she was hired. Everyone in my office said, 'You would have been perfect for that, why didn't you go for it?' I was pissed. And a little hurt. That white girl didn't need help getting her foot in the door, but I did...I had excellent reviews, had got all raises based on performance reviews...so, I think race....see, not necessarily racism...but, race. I think it can...or has made me...invisible.

After receiving her MBA, Kay discussed the career experience that was that changed her expectations from management with a high salary to acceptance in her position as "a regular working Joe".

They gave me a nice celebration. Well eventually I became a team leader. But it wasn't a recognized position. You had the responsibility, but it wasn't a pay scale kind of thing. It was just a title and I still had a manager who was really the boss.

Thelma- Contrast in Experiences

There were a number of differences in the interview responses of Thelma in comparison to the other 4 respondents. The only data concepts Thelma had in common with the other 4 women were the concepts of high academic self efficacy and life experiences. The difference in interview responses is likely attributed to the differences in family background, related life experiences and goal attainment behaviors. A notable difference is the socioeconomic status of Thelma compared to the other women. She was from a high socioeconomic background, married into an affluent family of high social status and was surrounded by individuals with high academic achievement. The experiences of Thelma support the literature that suggests familial advantages and socioeconomic status are leading factors in salary determination and educational attainment and sustain an individual's status (Cheng and Starks, 2002; Elman and O'Rand, 2004). Supporting this assertion, Thelma stated:

Marrying someone who had high educational goals himself. I think that helped. I think, just being around people who had um... attained higher degrees in education- not just education in it of itself, but in their own educational experience. I mean that was my in-group. There was always that subtle I suppose need to be a part of the equation in that family. So...so, being a part of that that...family...everybody around... seems to have had to strive, but not knowingly- it seems that there was an expectation.

Thelma achieved a career position as tenured faculty at a large university and suggested indifference to salary level. This was unique compared to the other 4 respondents' feelings about salary and career level and may be attributed to Thelma's high socioeconomic status. It is

important to note that the personal dissatisfaction the other respondents discussed was directly correlated to career dissatisfaction, i.e. salary. Thelma did not express any dissatisfaction, which may be a result of feeling her educational expectations were met. Concerning salary and career level Thelma stated:

The salary was never something that I looked at. Of course, I wanted to be sufficiently rewarded [laughing]. But, it was never something that I was striving for. In terms of faculty, nursing faculty- was as high as I could go.

The *development of educational expectations* encompassed internal and external factors based on the experiences of the individual. These factors were *life experiences* and *family perceptions of race and value of education* (Fig. 3), which are also a representation of the triadic reciprocal causation model of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989; 1997; 1999; 2006).

Proposed Theoretical Explanation of Development of Educational Expectations and Impact

Perceptions of race and family value of education represent portions of the triadic reciprocal causation (TRC) model of social cognitive theory (Fig. 1). TRC addresses the influence of environment (family, significant others and culture) on an individual's cognitive processes. Perceptions of race and value of education, as taught to these women during formative years, became a part of their cognitive processing. This informed all related educational decisions and expectations.

It is plausible that African American women attain high levels of education as factor of their human agency, the intentional influence to change life circumstances (Bandura, 1999; 2006). However, as previously discussed, the absence of goal attainment behaviors may not allow for the realization of educational expectations. Human agency involves becoming an agent for oneself. Four of five women who stated their educational expectations had not been met did not expand the human agency model to include actions that support goal attainment.

Expectations of Graduate Degree: Outcomes

(Research Question 4) What contexts (personal, career, financial) does this group position and define their expectations of education?

Career Dissatisfaction

Four of five women consistently discussed *career dissatisfaction* throughout the course of the interview. Generally, career dissatisfaction was related to inadequate salary and career level mobility (Fig. 2; Table 9). Each of the women stated that career mobility and a management position were expected outcomes of their graduate education; however, only one of the five women discussed any efforts toward achieving that goal. There was no mention of what the women would need to *do* for their expectations to be met. The only effort discussed was the attainment of education and the possibility of changing employers, as observed in the comments made by two of the participants:

Shana

I think I also expected things to be easier. Getting jobs or moving up the ladder. I thought my master's would open doors.

Kay

I think I realized that unless somebody died or something, I was probably not going to be the manager... I think there did become a point in time that I realized I would probably have to go somewhere else if I wanted to be in management.

Although all five women expected career opportunities, only one of the five discussed engaging in related behaviors of the expectation; such as applying for management positions, networking or establishing necessary relationships. Concerning networking and relationships, Thelma stated:

In the educational environment it was still that...still that need to... be sufficiently amalgamated in the nursing society as a whole because I did belong to the Nursing Research Society and so...to be a part of that, I had to... I felt that I had to strive.

Thelma exhibited related behaviors of goal attainment; she belonged to a professional organization throughout her career and actively applied for her desired career position after completing her master's and doctorate degrees. Thelma specifically addressed her process of meeting her expectations and goals:

In terms of faculty, nursing faculty- was as high as I could go. With the educational, from the educational... realm of it. I applied for my desired position, earned the position and I got what I wanted...what I worked for.

Thelma's data differed significantly from the other respondents; the specifics of her data will be isolated and discussed later.

A related issue within *career dissatisfaction* was the issue of career status; whether the individual was employed or not. While employment status was not a direct interview or research question, it emerged significant to the career dissatisfaction concept among four of five respondents (Table 8; Table 9). Three of five respondents, Juliette, Shana and Terry, are unemployed; Kay is underemployed as a contractor and Thelma is retired. Unemployment emerged as a significant factor within career dissatisfaction, specifically the length of time of one's unemployed. Length of unemployment as the result of race can be observed in the following two comments:

Terry

I know there are white people who can't get jobs....but for African Americans in this country who can't get jobs it's not just a cold, its pneumonia. That's the way it works. I've had white counterparts....the same thing happened to them [lay-off]. They lost their jobs too, but they got jobs quickly. In the same age group and everything.

Juliette

There was no expectation that I would ever not be working. Neither my expectation nor the expectation of other Black women that I have known has been that we won't work. You know like- pretty much forever [not working is traditionally not a choice for African American women].

It is important to note that each of the four dissatisfied respondents was unemployed as a result of layoffs. It is unknown whether career level was a factor within their layoffs (Table 9); however, generally non-management positions are the first to succumb to downsizing (Datta, et al, 2010). The women may have increased the probability to become management had they engaged in goal attainment behaviors. These behaviors could have met their salary expectation and either prevented or lessened feelings of career dissatisfaction. Thelma was the only respondent satisfied with her educational expectations and was also the only individual to exhibit goal attainment behaviors. Issues of career mobility, unemployment and underemployment affected the women personally and seem to be the catalyst for the formation of a shared coping strategy.

(Research Question 5) What strategies does this group utilize to fulfill their expectations of education?

Coping Strategies

Four of five women in this study exercised coping strategies that may be detrimental to their educational expectations regarding career mobility and salary; expectations of salary and career mobility were not fully established until the decision to attain a graduate degree. Avoidance and a concern with behavior contrary to gender-race stereotypes are the identified coping strategies. Avoidance as a coping strategy is defined as the aversion to behaviors that could facilitate educational expectations of career mobility and salary to be met. The coping strategy of concern is defined as consistent worry with the perception of one's behaviors by others, that may be perceived as similar to African American female stereotypes (i.e., aggressive

and angry). These strategies were evident in the absence of goal attainment behaviors associated with career mobility, job seeking and behaving in manners the women assumed employers desired.

The women who utilized these coping strategies did not apply for desired positions and considered ceasing the search for employment (avoidance). In addition, in an effort to not appear aggressive or as an African American female stereotype, the women did not verbally express themselves or their expectations of career mobility (concern). The following is a statement by Juliette that detailed behavior the women deemed helpful in career mobility and is an example of the utilization of coping strategies:

I think for me, I don't know where I got this from... this was later on... the expectation of a Black woman was that she was a bitch, very hard to get along, cuss you out and I think that made me pull back. I'm very sorry that I did.

Although the issue of coping strategies emerged among four of five respondents, Kay's notion of "self-preservation" is the overarching theme of the women's rationalization of coping behaviors. Their behaviors are in direct contrast to their stated educational expectations.

Avoidance and concern with behavior contrary to race-gender stereotypes appear to be a hindrance to educational expectations. For example, Kay discussed the desire for a management position; however, she never applied for a management position during 15 years of employment at the same employer. Instead she focused behaviors toward social interactions to make peers and managers "comfortable" with her race and gender:

Kay

You learn...self preservation...you learn to be the non-threatening Negro in order to hopefully move up. You're probably not going to make CEO, but it will hopefully get you raises and help give you a steady career.

Shana never applied for a management position, yet stated that she feels "invisible".

That white girl didn't need help getting her foot in the door, but I did...I had excellent reviews, had got all raises based on performance reviews...so, I think race....see, not necessarily racism...but, race. I think it can...or has made me...invisible.

Terry slowed down her job seeking behaviors (avoidance) and stated:

They hire their own [whites]. Right now...I've almost stopped looking. It has just discouraged me so much.

Salary

Four of five women (Juliette, Kay, Shana and Terry) discussed salary as an issue within their educational expectations not being met. Of all five women, only Kay worked in a career field traditionally associated with higher salaries (computer science). Just as the women did not discuss goal attainment behaviors regarding career mobility, they did not discuss any associated behaviors of obtaining a salary increase. Salary increases generally occur simply if the individual asks (Moss-Racusin and Rudman, 2010) and women are more likely to expect recognition for hard work, rather than ask for it (Babcock and Laschever, 2007). Four of five women did not directly ask for a salary increase and expressed the expectation of it being given to them based on merit. Shana addressed the salary expectation and stated:

I expected to get paid. To get paid a decent amount of money. I expected that my skills and background would...help...or show that I was worth paying a competitive salary too... I thought I'd be promoted. So, I don't...I didn't expect to get a pay increase and keep the same job title. I thought my position would change and then my pay would increase.

Although she did not choose the library science profession for the salary, she expected a “reasonable compensation” to sustain herself. Juliette had the lowest salary of all respondents (Table 11) and one of the highest educational levels (ABD-PhD). She discussed her actions to combat her salary dissatisfaction and stated:

Every job that I had...when I was working in Nashville at Fisk. I also had a part-time job...I had a part-time job at the Nashville Public Library after a day's work at Fisk.

Only one of five women entered into a career field that traditionally pays a high salary. The other women entered into professions that are not considered high paying career fields; nursing, social services, and library science. The reality of salaries and career field choices combined with the absence of self advocacy (i.e., asking for salary increase) has a significant role in salary expectations not being met.

Social Component

The social component data was not in direct response to research or interview questions; however it is deemed important because it was addressed by four of five respondents. Networking, work-relationships, and goal attainment behaviors have a fundamental social component. Women tend to be on the periphery or isolated from established networks (Babcock

and Laschever, 2007) and for African American women this experience has the added layer of race, which includes combating racial stereotypes, racial discrimination and the internalization of racial stereotypes. It seemed difficult for these women to identify the source of their dissatisfaction with career experiences in the context of race, gender or additional sources. This difficulty could be an explanation for their uneasiness with the social component within career mobility.

Four of five women addressed “opportunity” as something that is given to an individual and each related a perceived social component within opportunity that is intertwined with race. These women identified this phenomenon as a factor in their expectations not being met. It was clear that the women could not pinpoint the source of their dissatisfaction and attributed it to several factors such as fear of comparison to racial stereotypes and social interaction. The effect of racial stereotypes in thoughts and behaviors is noted in the following comments of Kay:

You come to a point when you realize that yes; some of it is intelligence, capabilities and hard work. But some of it is also social. The boss is afraid of you. The boss doesn't like you.... ‘she’s one of those radical Negroes.’ You know? You have to get along. So, I’m going to be the chummy. It will be clear that I’m also doing my work, but I’m going to go to lunch over at Sue’s Bakery- while I’m thinking what the heck do I want to go for.... ‘Sure, Sally. What time are we leaving?’ I’m not going to say yes every day, but I realize it’s a game and you have to play it. I see the people that don’t play the game, who are moody or who come off as ‘that Negro that won’t ever go to lunch’ with them, who won’t ever go eat the cake. Who’s angry...if there’s an opportunity, they’ll be gotten rid of. And so, you learn....self preservation.

Although Kay discussed her social interactions as advantageous to her career, it is important to note that she remained at her job for fifteen years; seven before her MBA and eight after, without a promotion or salary increase. There is a logical inference from Kay's experiences compared to the experiences of Thelma, whose expectations were met. This inference is important because it suggests that for educational expectations to be met, one has to engage in goal attainment behaviors across contexts. In other words, goal attainment behaviors must go beyond attainment of educational credentials. There must be actions within one's work environment (applying for promotions, requesting salary increase) for career development to occur. Thelma is the only respondent to engage in goal attainment behaviors and is also the only respondent to *not* suggest the presence of a social component within career mobility. This does not suggest that *not* perceiving the presence of a social component is a prerequisite for advancement. However, it is another example of the differences noted within Thelma's perceptions.

According to Babcock and Laschever (2007) it is common among women to not receive promotions and salary increases because women merely expect to be recognized for hard work and receive associated benefits as a result. This largely removes the personal responsibility one has in fulfilling their goals and expectations because it removes the necessary action of asking. For the women in this study, it is perhaps the phenomenon of not asking for what they want that has led to stagnant career levels, inadequate salary and the overall dissatisfaction related to their educational expectations. Shana alludes to knowledge that something in addition to education is needed for her expectations to be met, but states she does not know what those things are:

I saw that it was more personal and my work and work ethic...education didn't matter as much as other things did. [Sarcastically] Whatever those things are...

Although the women perceived their difficulty within the social component, career level and salary concepts as an issue of *race, not gender*, it is fair to argue that issues of gender were indeed a factor in their educational expectations not being met. This will be discussed later in further detail.

High Academic Self Efficacy

Each of the five women spoke about high self efficacy in their academic, intellectual and leadership skills. However, the examples provided by four of five women only indicate their efficacy in pursuing academic tasks; there was no mention of examples that illustrated their confidence in performing leadership skills or skills needed in management positions (i.e., decision making, dissemination of responsibilities and problem solving).

Although all five women discussed high efficacious academic beliefs, Kay was consistently the most poignant in her efficacious assertions.

I never questioned my academic- not to sound arrogant, but that's one thing I was confident in. When I was in high school, I was a nerd. I was a square. I wasn't treated well. But, I always knew I was smart. I graduated second in my class. So, by the time I went for my master's I never had any hesitations or thinking I wouldn't be able to do it or that I wasn't smart enough. I think my confidence in my abilities was part of what influenced me to go for my master's.

Kay also illustrated the most significant example of the absence of goal achievement behaviors. She stated that her primary expectation of her graduate degree was to earn a high salary and to be promoted to a management position. However, Kay worked for fifteen years at the same company without receiving a promotion and the only salary increases she received were cost-of-

living raises after yearly performance reviews. She indicated that she remained at the company out of “loyalty” and did not attempt to get her expectations met elsewhere. Kay is an example of high academic performance, attainment and efficacy not translating to behavior that would enable her to meet her educational expectations with regard to career advancement. Instead she illustrates the necessity of self advocacy concerning career and salary level. There is not definitive proof that self-advocacy would have led to career advancement, only conjecture of the possibility of less dissatisfaction with outcomes if self advocacy was attempted.

Terry’s self efficacy for academic goal attainment and career goal attainment were equivalent which differed slightly compared to the other respondents. This might be attributed to type of graduate degree, which was specific to the job she held at the time of attainment.

Concerning the influence of her academic abilities in her decision to attain a graduate degree, Terry stated:

Well, a lot because some of the description of what we were learning in the program I already knew. I was using a lot of those things in my current job. Trainings...I was a program coordinator and trained volunteers and board members and so, I just thought it was an easy fit. And I thought I had the skill set needed to get through.

Juliette taught graduate-level classes for five years. Throughout her interview, she mentioned her belief in her high intellect as contributing to her educational attainment and dissatisfaction. She believed that her abilities were underutilized and that belief added to her overall dissatisfaction. However, her actual statements concerning intelligence were specific to self

efficacy regarding her academic abilities. Juliette elaborated on her high academic efficacy; she stated that there was one critical factor:

If I had to identify one factor in my efficacy.... I'd say intelligence. I would say intelligence. I knew that I could. I had done very well in high school.

Juliette also referred to her perception of other's intelligence, specifically the graduate students she taught. She grounded her opinion in their academic abilities and did not associate intelligence to the wide range of cognitive abilities, such as logic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, etc, (Gardener, 1983).

I was in class with them and they didn't strike me as any balls of fire. So, I think that in my....opinion and this is very subjective...okay, white people will proceed with confidence on the dingiest stuff. Nothing praiseworthy, but they will proceed with confidence. I've seen it. When I was at the University of Pittsburgh, I was a teaching fellow and I would be grading papers and that was a shock to me and I was....shocked! Exactly, these were graduate students and my gosh! Somebody let them in! And that was a surprise... they really thought that they were truly good.

Statements of the women suggest that academic abilities and self efficacy do not automatically equate to their educational expectations being met. Issues of career mobility and becoming management require skills that may not have any connection to academic ability (i.e., decision making, advocacy and communication skills). In addition, there are factors such as racial and gender discrimination and lack of access that are plausible explanations of disconnect between academic efficacy and fulfillment of educational expectations.

Personal Dissatisfaction

Personal dissatisfaction was expressed by four of five women and the source of their dissatisfaction was rooted within their career dissatisfaction (Fig. 2). *Personal dissatisfaction* included the impact of unfulfilled educational expectations on feelings of self worth, the decision to attain a graduate degree, respect and validation. Considering the women did not engage in goal attainment behaviors, the absence of these behaviors likely facilitated their personal dissatisfaction. The four women who expressed personal dissatisfaction internalized the lack of career mobility without acknowledgment of their role (absence of goal attainment behavior) in their circumstances and feelings.

Shana specifically spoke to the manner, in which her educational expectations not being met impacted her personally.

I didn't think I would like...feel bad about my education. I can't say that I'm proud of the accomplishment, or that it's made a big difference in my life- me and my son...I have family that didn't go to college and are working factory jobs making more money than I do. You know...like what exactly should I feel good about or proud of? In some ways I feel like a failure because I never even thought about other options other than going to college.

Four of five women seemed to expect personal validation from their professional experiences. It is understood that the chosen career field of any individual is a personal choice and therefore can create emotional responses. However, significant to these 4 women was the personal validation they sought from other individuals (i.e., managers and co-workers). In other words, the personal dissatisfaction they felt as a result of career dissatisfaction was exacerbated

by their expectations of professional relationships to provide personal validation. The responses of Kay and Juliette illustrate this imbalance.

Kay

You know...I thought that I would be respected...in what then was a predominately white corporate thing. That was my expectation. That I would be an equal. I realized very quickly that was not the case....that was hard for me. When I realized that in some instances that I was just the Black girl and that it didn't matter about my degrees.

Juliette

My expectations around higher education in general were that people would be fair. That it would be different. A step above business. A higher social level. A higher level of ethics. Not just business as usual and I didn't see that. I don't see that.

Shana

I saw someone less qualified get a promotion. I expected to be treated fairly at first, but I changed my thinking after that.

(Research Question 6) How does this group define success and what are the factors (internal and external) that influence this group's definition?

Personal Definition of Success

Respondents identified personal satisfaction, doing for others and motherhood as components within their personal definition of success. Salary and career were at the forefront

of four of five respondent's educational expectations; however, none of the respondents equated salary or career with success. Each participant's definition of success was independent from their educational expectations. Juliette and Terry defined success in terms of their role in helping others and stated:

Juliette

I think having the wherewithal to take care of things, to provide for you and yourself and your family and provide the means to value themselves and their surroundings. Because I very much believe that it's not a success if I'm the only one personally affected.

Terry

Definitely feeling good about myself and also helping others. That's the kind of work that I do. I like non-profit work. Those are the things I look for in success.

Kay and Shana expressed their educational expectations of salary and career mobility, more poignantly than any other respondents. Their definitions of success were independent from salary and career mobility and were evident in the following statements:

Kay

Success for me would just be able to balance it all. That I could be a career woman and not feel like I was slighting my kids. To build a balance. Using my skills and talents that I have and also being a good mother would be a success for me.

Shana

I don't think it's about my education or job. Um...success...to prove that no matter what happens in your life, you can keep going on. To show my child that even if you struggle trying to accomplish a goal or dream, that it's possible to achieve it. Yeah...I think success is showing your child how to be a success.

Although four of five women did not feel their educational expectations were met, none of the women defined themselves or their experiences as failures. Four of five women were dissatisfied with their educational outcomes, however it appears that there was achievement within their efforts toward success (i.e., being a good mother and helping others). Thelma, the one respondent who stated her educational expectations were met equated success with personal satisfaction and defined success in the following statement:

Thelma

To feel comfortable with me in the environment in which I functioned. That was my measurement.

Race, not Gender (Core Concept)

Four of the five women spoke of combating stereotypes that were not just rooted in race, but also gender stereotypes of African American women. *Race, not gender* is the core concept that emerged in the discussion pertaining to why educational expectations were not met. Race was considered a negative factor in career level dissatisfaction, salary dissatisfaction and employment status. Although respondents directly stated that gender was not a factor in their educational expectations not being met, many of their statements suggested otherwise.

Kay

I think the whole race and gender thing....I don't think in the eyes of people who are racist or sexist or both, that one is worse than the other! [Laughing.] You never know if that's because I'm Black or if that's because I'm a woman. Either way, you're valued less.

Although Kay asserts that gender is not significant to her educational expectations being met, she goes on to suggest that gender is quite significant in her experiences.

I don't know if being a Black woman makes me valued less....I don't know. Whether it's because you're Black or female...you have to prove yourself. I hear Black people say a lot that you have to work twice as hard and it's true. It really is. Maybe if you're a Black female you have to work three times as hard.

The inconsistency demonstrated by Kay in her perception of the influence of race and gender on expectations is apparent among four of five respondents. Throughout the interview, each of the women discussed race as having an impact on all things related to their expectations. However, when questioned about the role of race compared to gender; each woman immediately dismissed gender as an influence only to inadvertently identify it as a factor.

Juliette

I don't think that gender has played a part....maybe I don't get the signals... So, with gender that would be it. Is it because white men know that they are great and don't need reassurance from anybody and white women are trying to fill this presumptuous...whatever? So, uh...gender didn't affect me.

Juliette goes on to provide an example of a gender related experience, however she rationalized her experience as an example of a cultural “tradition” rather than a matter of gender.

I don't know if it was just my experience with HBCUs or if it's just a stereotype I'm putting on it or if it was because it was a Southern campus, there was a sense of uh...I found sexism there...but there was a sense of old style protection. They'd be if you were coming in early...just little bitty things like that. It was very much traditional...I thought.

Juliette's denial of gender as a factor was of particular interest because of the context in which the actions occurred. She discussed specific incidents at her place of employment, yet did not connect the perspective of gender that raised those “traditional” actions as an influence on career mobility, salary or educational expectations.

Interestingly, each of the five respondents considered race as the “push” factor for the perceived need for graduate degree attainment.

Shana

Well, I think I got my master's because I'm Black...you know? I don't think I would have felt the need to if I were white. I can't be for sure...but, I do think that certain opportunities didn't come my way because I'm Black. Like, I wasn't in the right place at the right time or something.

Thelma

I wanted to keep up with my colleagues since I was the only Black person on... a nursing faculty. I wanted to also keep up with some of them who were getting

their master's. So I felt that I had to have equal credentials. No, race- certainly. Otherwise, I wouldn't have felt that I needed to excel equally as well as those around me because of my race.

In contradiction to race identified as the push factor for graduate degree attainment, four of five respondents also viewed race as a hindrance to educational expectations being met. While it is not the intention of this study to dismiss the role of race in the career and life experiences of African American women, it is important to note that race has not emerged as an issue that directly affected educational expectations. Without goal attainment behaviors, it is difficult to assert race as the fundamental cause of educational expectations not being met. In addition, the women did not frame race as an issue of those in positions that could affect career mobility and salary. Although four of five respondents discussed race as the primary factor in expectations not being met, the interpretation of the data does not support their assertion.

Proposed Theoretical Explanation of Educational Expectations Not Being Met

Race was identified as a hindrance to educational expectations among four of five respondents and established itself as a multi-layered concept.

1. These women functioned from an assumption that it was necessary to suppress aspects of their personality if their educational expectations were to be met. Primarily, this suppression pertained to silencing their outspoken nature, which may have negatively influenced goal attainment behaviors (i.e., asking for salary increase and applying for career advancement positions).

2. A concern with racial and gender stereotypes. This created behaviors in their professional life that were contrary to their expectations being met; absence of goal attainment behaviors and self-advocacy.

3. Perspectives of race are initially formed with the influence of significant others' experiences and perspectives of race. Those perspectives may not have been applicable to the professional realities and educational expectations of these women, yet those perspectives were not challenged.

4. Life experiences influence how each layer is applied to educational expectations. The combination of these layers has caused an imbalance evidenced in the simultaneous denial and admission of gender as a factor in expectations, the absence of goal attainment behaviors and identified coping strategies of avoidance and concern with behaving against racial and gender stereotypes.

Educational Expectations Not Met: Explanations

This study applied the human agency perspective of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1999; 2006) as part of its theoretical frame to explain why educational expectations were not met; however, additional factors likely contributed to the four respondent's belief that their expectations were not met. These additional factors are ascriptive and include issues of racism, sexism, the work environment and career choice.

Ascriptive explanations of career development are generally described as nuances that cannot be quantified, proven or disproven to explain career development disparities such as career level and salary (Benedict and McClough, 2010; Diamond, 2006). Ascriptive

stratification is considered valid because there is significant data to support the disparity between education level, career level and salary among races (Dickerson and Jacobs, 2006; NCES, 2000-2008; Census, 1990; Census, 2000; Census 2010; NSCG, 1993; NCSG, 2003; Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2012). Four of five participants discussed race as a significant factor in their educational expectations not being met; however, race was not restricted to racism. Instead, race was discussed as a factor that contributed to internal struggles that in turn negatively affected career development. Juliette and Terry addressed race and its impact and stated:

Terry

Oh....I think it has played a key part in some of the decisions that I make. I think that race may have played a role in some of my early career decisions. I took opportunities that were given to me as opposed to seeking out or creating my own opportunities. That came later with age, confidence and more education.

Juliette

I think that race, not just racism though...Black people...we are almost hyper-critical of ourselves. About everything and nothing simultaneously. I believe that I've experienced some of that or done that to myself and to some extent I believe it hindered my progress. What does it do? What does it do to us?

Although Terry and Juliette described an internal impact of race, it is plausible that racism had a role in their educational expectations not being met and had a negative impact on the work environment. An example of racism and its impact on the work environment is evidenced in Kay's statement:

I had a co-worker email me a racist joke...what's that...the one about Obama running and catching the elevator? That was probably the only time in my career that I thought, "Now that's just plain racist!" I had to debate. You know, there were times before where they [whites] would get to asking you about your hair...how often do you wash it? Or having to be the spokesperson for all Black people based on a story they saw on the news. It makes the workplace unnecessarily uncomfortable.

Kay also made the following statement about an example of direct racism and her personal and professional struggle with handling the situation:

Well, I had to debate addressing this co-worker [about racist joke] because she was in middle management in a different division...there were rumors of lay-offs and I wasn't sure how to handle my feelings about the joke. The "get along" part of me thought about not wanting to be that "radical Negro", who can't take a joke. I sat on it for a day, but I couldn't let it go. I talked to her about it and told her I found it offensive and I thought she was going to cry. I mean, really....cry.

Racism in the work environment creates a dichotomy between comfort within one's self or reckoning with the possibility of employment loss (Hall, Everett and Hamilton-Mason, 2011). Kay's experiences exemplify the significance of the work environment as a force within career development and educational expectations.

In addition to race and racism, another component of ascriptive stratification is sexism. Gender discrimination in career development is often difficult to identify as illustrated by participant responses that suggested sexism did not impact their career development, however

they provided examples to the contrary. There are multiple ways in which African American women are discriminated against (i.e., race and class) and gender may be a less apparent division around which consciousness of inequality is distinguished (Collins, 1990). Similar to racism, it is plausible that sexism affected career development and created dissatisfaction with educational expectations among study participants. Within gender discrimination is the issue of motherhood and its impact on career development and educational expectations. Shana provided an example of sexism related to motherhood; however she equated her experience to racism and dismissed the role of gender discrimination.

There's been a few times, all with whites, that I've felt invisible...passed up for a promotion. With white men and women. There was one time that there was a job opening and they were only hiring from within...there were three of us: a white man, a white woman and me. He and I were the only serious candidates...the white man got it and I heard that it was because the job required some travel and he was single...no kids. I think it was race, though. I was passed up before for positions that didn't have any travel.

An additional explanation for educational expectations not met, specifically issues of career mobility and salary, is the career choice of the individual. Each of the respondents expected career mobility and corresponding salary as a result of their education; however it is plausible that their chosen career field was not conducive for their expectations to be met. Salary (approximately \$50,000 per year) was identified as a primary expectation of a graduate degree among four of five participants. However, the chosen career fields of three of the four respondents who stated their expectations were not met were employed in fields with lower

earnings (social services and library science) (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2012). Concerning career type and its connection to educational expectations, Shana stated:

Now that I've been in this career for so long and changed jobs for opportunity... I see that maybe it's not the job, but social services in general. I've been thinking about changing professions, but...I don't know, really.

Each of the five women expressed high self efficacy and it is difficult to understand disconnect between their efficacy and subsequent career related experiences. Ascriptive stratification explains the gap between efficacy, expectations and outcomes. Independent from human agency, the impact of racism, gender discrimination and career field choices each influence educational outcomes and related expectations.

Research Questions: Related Themes and Concepts

(Research Question 1) What are the expectations of education among African American women with postgraduate degrees?

There were several associated themes that emerged, which included: *expectations of graduate degree and development of educational expectations*. The *expectations of graduate degree* theme included career and personal dissatisfaction as factors in an overall dissatisfaction within educational expectations. The *development of educational expectations* theme encompassed internal and external factors based on the experiences of the individual. These

factors were the concepts of *life experiences* and *family perceptions of race and value of education*.

(*Research Question 2*) Does the social, economic climate or social consciousness in the decade of attendance influence expectations of postgraduate degrees among African American women?

The age decade of the individual was a greater factor in expectations than the decade of graduate school attendance. However, respect was discussed as an expectation among the oldest respondents of the group. Educational expectations were not fully developed until after the women completed their degrees, continued their careers and did not experience career mobility or salary increase. Related literature on sociocultural influences within the decision to attend college is discussed by: Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Hossler et al., 1989, Hossler et al., 2004.

(*Research Question 3*) How do personal factors, behavior, and the environment affect African American women's educational expectations?

From this question, a supplemental theme of *experiences* emerged. Associated concepts emerged from the *experiences* theme, which included the concepts: *life experiences*, *high academic self efficacy*, *family perceptions of race and value of education* and *race, not gender*. *Life experiences* were also the core concept within the *experiences* theme and included the influence of motherhood and career related experiences (i.e., lack of career mobility) on educational expectations.

High academic self efficacy was a concept that emerged from each participant and was framed as an indicator of managerial skills and merited career mobility from their perspective. *Family perceptions of race and value of education* were connected to the women's family perceptions of the role of race in one's life. *Perceptions of race and family value of education*

encompassed the issue of gender and repositioned it within race in the context of educational attainment. *Race, not gender* emerged as the core concept of the *experiences* theme. Race was considered a negative factor in career level dissatisfaction, salary dissatisfaction and employment status. Personal factors such as family, race and cultural influences on educational expectations are discussed by: Hackett and Byars, 1996; Daire, LaMothe and Fuller, 2007; Cheng and Starks 2002; Immerwahr, 2000.

(Research Question 4) What contexts (personal, career, financial) does this group position and define their expectations of education?

Themes and concepts of *expectation of graduate degree, development of educational expectations, life experiences and family perceptions of race and value of education* are a representation of the triadic reciprocal causation model of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989). Social cognitive theory and related literature is primarily the work of Bandura (1997; 1999; 2006). Literature pertaining to African Americans' job level and salary expectations compared to the educational expectations of other races includes: Cheng and Starks, 2002; Daire, LaMothe, & Fuller, 2007; Immerwahr 2000; Williams and Destin, 2009.

(Research Question 5) What strategies does this group utilize to fulfill their expectations of education?

The concept of *career dissatisfaction* also included strategies utilized by the majority of participants to fulfill their educational expectations. These strategies included *coping strategies* of avoidance and a change of behavior in an effort to not appear aggressive or as an African American female stereotype. Literature concerning coping strategies of African American women is discussed by Greer (2011).

(Research Question 6) How does this group define success and what are the factors (internal and external) that influence this group's definition?

A personal definition of success was included components of personal satisfaction, motherhood and helping others. This research question was also an interview question and responses helped develop the *life experiences* core concept, which supported development of the proposed theoretical explanation.

A supplemental factor within *life experiences* and the personal definition of success were the experiences of single motherhood and the potential for becoming a single parent. Experiences within *career mobility* (also a concept within the *expectations of graduate degree* theme) were identified as a stagnant career level. Among each of the women, a management position was the expected outcome of their graduate degree. Literature about African Americans' educational expectations and the idea of success is discussed by: Morgan, 1988; Rouse, 2004; Freeman, 2005.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 Summary

Problem Statement

Educational expectations of African American women with postgraduate degrees have not been studied. Qualitative studies that focus on the individual experiences and expectations among the members of this group are needed to explore connections between education, expectations and whether or not expectations are met. Current literature lends itself to a disproportionate number of quantitative research describing rates of increased attendance of African American women in all forms of postsecondary education, including postgraduate studies.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to depict the personal narrative of African American women as central to understanding how life experiences, gender, race and culture intersect to impact their educational expectations. To establish context, the broader purpose of this study is to understand the belief system and ideologies African Americans as a cultural group associate with education.

Chapter 2 Summary

There are several related studies that provide perspective on the literature review and related topics of educational expectations; Daire, LaMothe and Fuller (2007), Hossler and Gallagher (1987), Hackett and Byars (1996), Cheng and Starks (2002) and Alfred (2001).

Daire, LaMothe and Fuller (2007) surveyed 155 African American and white college students to understand influences on high school completion, decision to attend college and eventual career choice. Their study suggests that future income and status have the greatest influence on career choice among African American college students. Similarly, the research of Freeman (2005) suggests economic expectations as a factor in college choice and presented a theoretical framework of “predetermination” or “predisposition” among African Americans to aspire to attend college based on the work of Hossler and Gallagher (1987). Economic expectations of were also identified by Hackett and Byars (1996) with their discussion of career development among African American women. Hackett and Byars (1996) posit that African American women in white male dominated professions identified economic benefits as the reason for their choice.

Social cognitive theory was the chosen theoretical frame, as it highlights the mechanisms that produce expectations. Educational goals impact affect and persistence as goals increase the cognitive reactions to performance outcomes and define personal requirements for success (Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons, 1992). Educational expectations are the result of cognitive reactions and influence academic performance and educational attainment (Hackett and Betz, 2005; Lent and Hackett, 2009). The self-efficacy and triadic reciprocal causation components of social cognitive theory are significant to this study. Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s abilities to organize and execute actions to achieve goals (Bandura, 1997). Within the self-efficacy aspect of social cognitive theory of career development is the influence of affect which impacts motivation, academic achievement, goal setting, choice and decision making (Lent, Brown and Hackett 1994).

Chapter 3 Summary

Grounded theory was the utilized methodology and was chosen because it allows for the integration of concepts that can provide theoretical explanation of social phenomena (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). There were five interview participants chosen with theoretical sampling (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002) and the purpose of the interview is to understand the relationship between experiences and the social framework in which they occurred. This study used an interview guide (Appendix A) that consisted of sixteen questions in addition to demographic qualifiers (age, type of degree, year degree was received and name of institution). Four questions addressed educational expectations, two questions addressed the social and economic climate of the time period of attendance, two questions address personal definitions of success and 5 questions address behavior and environment that impact educational expectations.

The conceptual framework of this study is *expectations of graduate degree* and *development of educational expectations*. Identified themes within the conceptual framework are *overall dissatisfaction* and *experiences*. Supporting concepts are identified as *career satisfaction, personal satisfaction, life experiences and family value of education*. Two core concepts, *race not gender* and *life experiences and family value of education* are the basis of theory development.

Chapter 4 Summary

Respondents identified career and personal dissatisfaction as factors in their overall dissatisfaction with unfulfilled educational expectations. Avoidance and concern with behavior contrary to gender-race stereotypes were the identified coping strategies. Salary was also an issue within the belief that educational expectations were not met within the theme of

expectations of graduate degree. The social component data was not in direct response to research or interview questions, it included networking, work-relationships and goal attainment behaviors. An additional concept within *expectations of graduate degree* was high self efficacy in their academic, intellectual and leadership skills.

Personal dissatisfaction was expressed as the source of dissatisfaction that was rooted within career dissatisfaction. Personal dissatisfaction included the impact of unfulfilled educational expectations on feelings of self worth, the decision to attain a graduate degree, respect and validation. Respondents also discussed combating stereotypes that were not just rooted in race, but also gender stereotypes of African American women.

The *development of educational expectations* encompassed internal and external factors based on the experiences of the individual. These factors were *life experiences* and *family perceptions of race and value of education*, which are also a representation of the triadic reciprocal causation model of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989; 1997; 1999; 2006). *Life experiences* emerged as factors that impact the development of educational expectations. These experiences included motherhood and the personal impact of career experiences as the foundation for development of their educational expectations.

Family perception of race and value of education informed educational expectations of each of the women. This concept emerged as significant because issues of race were woven throughout many interview responses and these responses were often connected to the women's family's perceptions of the role of race in one's life. To that manner, the value of education was often discussed in the same context. Perceptions of race and family value of education

encompassed the issue of gender and positioned it within race in the context of educational attainment.

Findings Summary (Tables 10-13)

The African American women in this study were from affluent, middle class and poor socioeconomic backgrounds with diverse graduate degrees (EdD, PhD (ABD), MBA, MSW and MPL) and career paths. Each of the respondents was employed in their chosen career field prior to attaining a graduate degree. Each of the five women had children, with three of five being single mothers throughout their undergraduate and graduate level educational experiences. Motherhood, identified in the life experience concept, was discussed as the rationale for educational attainment particularly for respondents identified as single mothers.

An identified factor within expectations of a graduate degree and an identified push factor for educational attainment was race. Each of the five respondents posited race as the reason for the “need” for graduate level education. Each woman believed they had to exceed the qualifications of their white peers to obtain their desired career level and salary. Conversely, race was also identified as the reason for stagnant salary and career level mobility among four of five respondents. These four respondents initially believed their stagnant career and salary level were the result of not having enough education and attained a graduate degree as a result of this belief. Race was identified as the most significant factor in educational expectations not being met. It is unclear if educational expectations not being met are truly a result of racial discrimination as respondents suggest. Goal attainment behaviors, coping strategies, life experiences and family influence each influence the development and execution of the women’s educational expectations.

An additional identified expectation of a graduate degree was career mobility (Table 12) and associated benefits. Each of the five women stated the most significant expectation of their graduate degree was to receive an increase in salary and career level (Table 11). Four of five respondent's educational expectations changed shortly after attaining the degree and continuing their career without increased salary or career level. These four women identified prolonged unemployment and underemployment as explanations for the change in educational expectations of their graduate degree; three women are unemployed, one is a contractor and one is retired (Table 13).

The social and economic climate of the decade of attendance was insignificant in the context of degree expectations. Instead, it was the age decade of the individual that was a factor in expectations. Each of the women attained their graduate degree between the ages of 30 and 50 and had many life experiences between the immediacy of family influence and development of personally identified influences on educational expectations. For four of five women, educational expectations were not fully developed until after they completed their degree, continued their careers and did not experience career mobility or salary increase. Respondents identified career mobility and increased salary as leading expectations of their graduate degree, however four of five did not engage in related goal attainment behaviors (applying for promotions and self advocacy).

Interestingly, and not established within the research or interview questions, four of five women identified a social component within the work environment as having an impact on career level mobility and salary. The following are examples of this social component: not being invited to social gatherings of co-workers, not having informal lunches or conversations with management or persons in key positions and being a non-smoker as many career related alliances

were believed to have formed during smoke-breaks. None of the respondents identified gender as a factor in career mobility or salary level, however contradictions within their responses suggested otherwise.

The development of educational expectations was identified as the result of life experiences among all respondents. Each of the women stated that their family’s value of education influenced their educational expectations; however those values did not supersede their life experiences. Each of the women consistently stated a high belief in their intellectual, academic and leadership abilities and expressed high self efficacy across academic and career contexts. Based on salary and career level, four of five women did not feel their educational expectations were met, as seen in Table 10, Table 11 and Table 12. In addition, job status (unemployed or employed) was a factor in career dissatisfaction because employment was an expectation of their graduate degree (Table 13).

Table 10
Overall Expectations

	Overall Expectations Changed Over Time	Overall Expectations Were Met
Thelma	No	Yes
Juliette	Yes	No
Kay	Yes	No
Shana	Yes	No
Terry	Yes	No

Table 11*Salary Expectations*

	Salary Before Degree	Salary After Degree	Salary Expectations
Thelma	No data provided	No data provided	No data provided
Juliette	\$41,000-\$50,000	\$31,000-\$40,000	\$51,000-\$60,000
Kay	\$51,000-\$60,000	\$51,000-\$60,000	\$61,000-\$70,000
Shana	\$31,000-\$40,000	\$31,000-\$40,000	\$41,000-\$50,000
Terry	\$41,000-\$50,000	\$41,000-\$50,000	\$51,000-\$60,000

Table 12*Career Level Expectations*

	Career Level Before Degree	Career Level After Degree	Career Level Expectations
Thelma	Mid-level	Entry Level	Management
Juliette	Mid-level	Mid-level	Management
Kay	Mid-level	Mid-level	Management
Shana	Mid-level	Mid-level	Management
Terry	Mid-level	Mid-level	Management

Table 13*Job Status Expectations*

	Employment Status Before Degree	Current Employment Status	Employment Status Expectations
Thelma	Employed	Retired	Employed Full-time
Juliette	Employed	Unemployed	Employed Full-time
Kay	Employed	Employed	Employed Full-time
Shana	Employed	Unemployed	Employed Full-time
Terry	Employed	Unemployed	Employed Full-time

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Research of goal attainment behaviors and self advocacy specific to African American pertains to salary and career level mobility.
2. Research that includes all degree levels (associates, bachelors, masters, doctorate and professional degrees) to better understand if expectations differ among career levels.

3. A study of the influence of mentoring on African American women's educational expectations.
4. Research of the social interactions of educated African American women within the workplace to understand personal effects of these interactions on the development of expectations.

Study Limitations

The most significant limitation of this study is the sample size, which does not allow for generalizability. In addition, this study did not include all degree levels (associates, bachelors, masters, doctorate and professional degrees). This could have been useful to understand goal attainment behaviors based on the level of educational attainment. An additional limitation was the absence of observation and supplemental data. Observing individuals in their work environment or having access to items such as performance evaluations could have been beneficial for establishing connections among the researcher's perspective, the employer's perspective and the participant's experiences. Lastly, there was a limitation in degree type (i.e., Ph.D in Psychology compared to a Ph.D in Engineering). Factors such as employment status, career and personal satisfaction may be unique when the type of degree is controlled for.

Conclusion

The emergent theory of this study combines the core concepts of *family perception of race and value of education* in the development of educational expectations and *race, not gender* in whether or not expectations are met. These concepts are built upon the triadic reciprocal causation model of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989; 1997; 1999; 2006). The results of this study illustrate a change in cognitive process. Respondents experienced personal

dissatisfaction when educational expectations were not met. This dissatisfaction established avoidance as a coping strategy and lack of goal attainment behaviors combined with the absence of self advocacy. Each was a hindrance to the actualization of educational expectations being met.

Appendix A

Interview Question Guide

Name of Institution: _____ Age at Time of Degree: _____

Current Age: _____ Type of Degree: _____

Year(s) Received: _____

Job Level (Entry Level, Mid-level, Management): _____

1. What were your expectations of a postgraduate education prior to degree attainment?
2. Did your expectations change over time? If so, why?
3. Consider your initial expectations of postgraduate education. Do you believe your expectations were met?
4. What was your expected salary upon graduation (from your graduate program) based on your graduate/ professional degree?
 - a. \$20,000-\$30,000
 - b. \$31,000-\$40,000
 - c. \$41,000-\$50,000
 - d. \$51,000-\$60,000
 - e. \$61,000-\$70,000
 - f. \$71,000 and above
5. Did (does) your salary meet or exceed your expectations?
6. How did your college choice factor into expectations of your graduate degree? (School name, school history, reputation, perception)
7. How old were you when you received your graduate degree?
8. What social and economic climate influenced your expectations? (Recession, Civil Rights Movement, positive or negative influence, high or low expectations.)
9. What is your definition of success? (Personal satisfaction, career, salary, helping others, family or personal life.)
10. What internal or external factors influenced your level of educational expectations? (Personality, family, schooling, teachers, religious institution, mentors, peers.)

11. How much did your belief in your academic abilities factor into your decision to pursue a graduate or professional degree?
12. How, if at all, did your family or home environment influence your educational expectations?
(Family perception/ value of education, parents' education level, family financial situation.)
13. How, if at all, has race or ethnicity played a role in your career development and related decisions?
(Career path, salary, job title.)
14. How, if at all, has your gender played a role in your career development and related decisions?
(Career path, salary, job title.)
15. Overall, what do you feel has been the most important factor contributing to your career development success or lack of success?

Appendix B

Adult Consent Form for Research

University of Cincinnati

Department: Educational Studies

Principal Investigator: Yhana Williams

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Vanessa Allen-Brown

Information Sheet

Title of Study:

Educated African American Women: Outlook on Educational Outcomes

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?

The person in charge of this research study is Yhana Williams, a PhD candidate at the University of Cincinnati (UC) Department of Educational Studies.

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is to depict the personal narrative of African American women as central to understanding how life experiences, gender, race and culture intersect to impact their educational expectations.

Who will be in this research study?

About 5 people will take part in this study. You may be in this study if you meet the following requirements:

4. Must be an African American woman.
5. Must have earned a Master's degree or above in educational attainment.
6. Must be between the age of 30 and 70.
- 7.

What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. It will take about 1 hour. The research will take place at a location of your choice. The interview will be recorded with a digital audio recorder.

Are there any risks to being in this research study?

There are no known risks. Minimal risks associated with recalling educational expectations.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

There are no immediate personal benefits.

What will you get because of being in this research study?

There is no compensation for participating in this research.

Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?

If you do not want to take part in this research study you can decline participation.

How will your research information be kept confidential?

Information about you will be kept private. Your name will not be associated with your interview responses. Only Yhana Williams will have access to your interview responses.

Your information will be kept confidential indefinitely.

Agents of the University of Cincinnati may inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

What are your legal rights in this research study?

Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

What if you have questions about this research study?

If you have any questions or s about this research study, you should contact Yhana at _____ (The UC Institutional Review Board reviews all research projects that involve

human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the UC IRB at (513) 558-5259. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?

No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have. You may start and then change your mind and stop at any time. To stop being in the study, you should tell Yhana as soon as you change your mind.

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

Subject: Educated African American Women Research Study

Yhana Williams, a PhD candidate in Educational Studies at the University of Cincinnati, is looking for participants for her research study. You are receiving this email because you are an African American woman with a graduate degree between the ages of 30 and 70.

Your email address was provided to me by _____ as a possible interview participant.

The purpose of this study is to depict the personal narrative of African American women as central to understanding how life experiences, gender, race and culture intersect to impact educational expectations.

If you take part in this study, you would be asked to participate in a one hour interview. If interested, please reply to this email and indicate your agreement. In addition, I have attached an information sheet to this email that provides additional information about the study. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to call me at (intentionally blank) or email me at (intentionally blank).

Thank you,

Yhana

Appendix D

Glossary of Terms

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1994)

Affective Processes: Process regulating emotional states and elicitation of emotional reactions.

Cognitive Processes: Thinking processes involved in the acquisition, organization and use of information.

Motivation: Activation to action. Level of motivation is reflected in choice of courses of action, and in the intensity and persistence of effort.

Perceived Self Efficacy: People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects.

Self Regulation: Exercise of influence over one's own motivation, thought processes, emotional states and patterns of behavior.

Appendix D

Table 8

Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

	Age at Time of Degree	Current Age	Type of Degree	Year Received	Job Level	Current Employment Status
Thelma	36	74	EdD	1975	Management	Retired
Juliette	43	62	MBA, PhD (ABD)	1993	Mid-level	Unemployed
Kay	30	46	MBA	1995	Mid-level	Contractor
Shana	32	36	MSW	2007	Mid-level	Unemployed
Terry	53	58	MPL	2006	Mid-level	Unemployed

Table 9

Family Background, Degree Purpose and Employment Details

	Family Background	Purpose of Graduate Degree Attainment	Current Employment Status Details
Thelma	High socioeconomic status, married into a high socioeconomic status family, husband was a medical doctor	Increase salary and career level To be at the same education level as white colleagues	Retired
Juliette	Low socioeconomic status, family emphasized positive beliefs about education	Increase salary and career level Personal and professional satisfaction	Unemployed for 14 months, actively seeking employment
Kay	Middle-class socioeconomic status, family continually referred to education as the “great equalizer”, father attained bachelor’s degree at 62 and was a role model	Increase salary and career level	Unemployed for 14 months before employment as a contractor making ¼ of the salary of her previous position, actively seeking employment
Shana	Middle-class socioeconomic status, both parents have bachelor’s degrees, has been a single mother throughout her educational career	Increase salary and career level Lead to career path that would help provide for her son	Unemployed 8 months, actively seeking employment
Terry	Low socioeconomic status, family did not value nor encourage educational achievement, single mother throughout educational career	Increase salary and career level	Unemployed 19 months, actively seeking employment

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