

Student Work

---

5-7-2004

**The impact of social structures on educational aspirations among African American high school students.**

Tanya Lawrence  
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork>  
Please take our feedback survey at: [https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE](https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE)

---

**Recommended Citation**

Lawrence, Tanya, "The impact of social structures on educational aspirations among African American high school students." (2004). *Student Work*. 2715.  
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork/2715>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Work by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

The Impact of Social Structures on Educational Aspirations Among African  
American High School Students.

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Sociology

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Sociology

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Tanya Lawrence

May 7, 2004

UMI Number: EP74259

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP74259

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Sociology,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

AMJ - WJH  
Mary Ann Powell  
\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson William T. Clute  
Date April 15, 2004

The Impact of Social Structures on Educational Aspirations among African  
American High School Students

Tanya Lawrence, MA

University of Nebraska, 2004

Advisor: William Thomas Clute, Ph.D.

This study examines the impact of family, self-concept, school and peer group on educational aspirations. The persistent need for academic improvement of African Americans is the reason for this study. This research attempts to offer a different approach than most studies in this area. I use the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 88) to conduct a cross-sectional analysis of the effect of social structures on educational aspirations (N=785). Ordinary least squares regression was used to test the hypotheses.

Habitus theory provides the theoretical framework for the analysis. This theory suggests that individuals create aspirations and goals based on their environment. This study focuses on the individuals' perception of values among social structures in order to develop education aspirations. The analysis concentrates on particular aspects within each social structure that aid in educational aspiration development.

The results show that *high school counselors, mothers, and socio-economic status* have the biggest impact on educational aspirations while *school location race relations,*

*self-concept and college expenses* have little impact. This study presents an understanding of indicators within social structures that determine educational aspirations, as well as suggests implications for future research.

## Table of Contents

Introduction . . . . .	1
Theoretical Foundation. . . . .	4
Literature Review. . . . .	7
Family . . . . .	7
Self concept. . . . .	10
Schools. . . . .	12
Peer Group . . . . .	13
Hypotheses. . . . .	15
Methods. . . . .	17
Limitations of Study . . . . .	18
Variables. . . . .	19
Weighting. . . . .	24
Missing Data. . . . .	24
Analytical Method. . . . .	25
Descriptive Results. . . . .	25
Means and Standard Deviations. . . . .	25
Correlations . . . . .	27
Regression Analysis. . . . .	29
Discussion and Conclusions. . . . .	32
Implications for Future Research . . . . .	36
References . . . . .	37

Appendix

Table I: Means and Standard Deviations . . . . .	43
Table II : Zero-Order Correlations . . . . .	44
Table III: Regression Model for Educational Aspirations on Self-concept, Family, School and Peer Group . . . . .	48



## Introduction

“Education is the passport to the future; without it you’re not going anywhere (Malcolm X 1964).”

In the United States higher education is a primary method of upward mobility to improve social class, status, and earnings. Fifteen million people enrolled in colleges and universities in 2000 (US census 2002:285). Despite the high numbers of enrollment all races are not represented proportionately. Although higher education is an opportunity to overcome social status inconsistencies, it is not available to or attainable for everyone. Achieving higher education can be challenging. Some students have financial difficulties while others are unprepared for the college classroom.

Research has shown there is a connection between ethnicity, poverty, and academic outcomes such as measures of achievement and college completion (Farmer 2001; Wilson 1987). African American students seem to be at the center of this research. They are less likely to enroll and complete college than white students. African Americans have struggled in the process of attaining the higher education necessary to improve their social mobility and status. They have faced discrimination, segregation, and inequality within the educational system. Because of this African American students on average are the weakest at all ages and in all subjects regardless of class level (McWhorter 2000; Wilson 1987).

Since the Supreme Court decision of Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education, which desegregated schools, there has been an increase in effort to assess the educational

aspirations and attainment of African Americans students (Wilson 1987). Although schools became integrated not all African Americans had access to good schools.

Sociologist William Julius Wilson (1987) suggests that desegregation has helped improve the academic standing of African Americans.

Changes in population distribution and community resources around the United States have also affected the academic development of African Americans. In the late 1970s through 1990s, school systems and neighborhoods entered a pseudo system of segregation. This new defacto form of segregation was due to the exodus of white families to suburban outskirts of the metropolitan areas (Wilson 1987). Included in the exodus were also businesses, jobs, and educational resources. Currently, urban centers are among the poorest communities in the United States, and most African Americans reside in these communities thus exposing their children to some of the poorest educational systems in the nation. African American families would like to send their children to better schools but lack the recourses to do so (Wilson 1987).

Today, several studies show that African American students still perform academically lower than white students in high school and college (Sampson 2002 and Thompson 2002). In the classroom, African American students are more likely than any other student to be corrected for grammar, sent to detention, or suspended from school (Anyon 1997). Jean Anyon argues that administrators and teachers are preconditioned to expect African Americans to have disciplinary problems and be less intelligent. Anyon goes further to say that these preconceived notions could possibly create barriers between students and teachers. In Anyon's field research, she describes an example of an African

American student who is sent to the office, after the first twenty minutes of class. The teacher commented that this particular student had always “acted up.” This could be a valid disciplinary action or an example of a teacher who has preconceived notions of African American students (Anyon 1997).

The majority of students in the United States experience some form segregation in the classroom due to educational tracking systems (Wilson 1987). Tracking systems are predetermined courses that prepare students for specific educational or professional outcomes. Black students are over represented in special educational and vocational classes whereas white students are greatly represented in college preparatory and or honors classes (Farmer 2001).

Research attributes poor academic performance among African American students to broken families, poverty, racism, poor schools, and inadequate teachers (Sampson 2002; Mc Whorter 2000; Wilson 1987). Although the struggle is clear, education is still a key method of social status improvement for African Americans. There has been an overwhelming effort to improve educational outcomes and aspirations. Mandatory bussing, tracking systems, recruitment of better teachers, and after school programs have instituted over the past few decades for African American students with little success (McWhorter 2000; Wilson 1987). The most recent approach is the “No Child Left Behind Act”. The Act was proposed in response to achievement gaps among students along the lines of ethnicity, income and race (Department of Education 2002). The Act would fund and sponsor student vouchers that allow students the opportunity to attend better schools that would have been unavailable to them before. The Act would

also hold schools accountable for the academic performance of every student. Schools would be at risk to lose federal money if governmental guidelines are not met. The Act is currently being piloted in select states (Department of Education 2002).

It is clear and should be noted, that not all African American students perform poorly. There are many who perform well above average. They pursue and attain college degrees despite their poor social conditions and other difficulties. Research suggests that social structures and environments shape how students view the world around them, as well as shape their aspirations (Sampson 2002; Jenkins 1992; Calhoun and LiPuma 1993). The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of academic self-concept, family, peer group, and school on educational aspirations among African American high school students. Which social structure has the biggest impact?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Several theories explore the development of aspirations and attainment among high school students. Educational aspirations for this study will be defined as; “what the student strives to accomplish in the future academically” (Inoue 1999). Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus provides as the theoretical foundation.

Bourdieu explains habitus as a form of socialization. Habitus is a sociological theory that examines how society impacts the individual. Habitus is a set of acquired thoughts, behaviors, norms, and values within a particular social structure that becomes internalized by the individual. Social structures are patterned social relationships (Marshall 1999). Example of social structures include the family, religion, education,

peer groups, and government. Bourdieu identifies family and peer group as being most influential to the individual. The individual develops aspirations, goals, norms and values by combining what is learned from different structures together.

Since US society is socially stratified, ideas and values differ by class level (Marshall 1999). Higher or more dominant social classes have the power to construct the habitus of schools and other government controlled structures. These particular social structures pass on dominant values onto the entire society. Lower classes have little influence or power in society. As a result, lower classes have to take on dominant ideas and values.

Lower classes usually differ mostly from higher classes due to inadequate distribution of resources and segregation in society. Segregation in neighborhoods, schools and the work place are the most segregated prevalent (Wilson 1986). African American students, who are predominately among the impoverished classes, usually encounter a great level of segregation. They face conflicting ideas of aspirations, goals, norms and values on a grand scale once they enter the school system. The reason for this is that minority ways of life are observed by government controlled social structures (Marshall 1999). African Americans have to take on norms and values different from their own which slows down their overall learning process. It is not to say that one habitus is above another but the way in which one group operates may not be the same as the next. African American students growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods may not observe the world in the same way as students that are more affluent. Disadvantaged students may not understand what is available to them, if there is anything at all, and lack

the resources to find out. Bourdieu proposes that this cultural alienation leads to lower achievement and attainment among lower class students (Marshall 1999; Wilson 1987).

An extension of Bourdieu's theory of habitus is John Ogbu's Caste Theory of Educational Attainment. Ogbu's theory states that academic achievement and aspirations in pluralistic societies are influenced by the beliefs of social status and mobility held by particular racial, ethnic and class groups (Farmer 2001). Ogbu believes that students view themselves from their current social context and establish goals and aspirations based on the probability of success. Ogbu's theory acknowledges inequality in societies stemming from discrimination, racism, and prejudice, which can hinder the development of aspirations. Each individual creates his or her own habitus and aspirations but creates them within the limitations that the dominant group places on a particular racial, ethnic, or class group. Social class is extremely difficult to change. As a result, education is not necessarily a method of social mobility, but a method of maintaining the status quo. Each social class reproduces itself.

The premise of both theories is that opportunity, position, and resources that are available in society affect a person's outlook and aspirations. Students succeed when they are exposed to the most favorable environment. However, stratification of class, race, and sex makes it difficult for everyone to have an equal opportunity. Habitus theory, for the context of this paper, shows that each social structure has its own method in which it functions that contributes to the development of aspirations. As stated earlier not all minority groups and social classes are familiar with the dominant cultural way of life. They are cut off from main society by class, ethnicity and neighborhood. They develop

culture within the context of the resources and opportunities that are available to them. This theory explains how individuals create their aspirations and goals based on what is available to them.

## **Literature Review**

Educational aspirations have been previously studied through social structures that contribute to the development of the student such as family, schools, and peer groups (Powell and Arriola 2003; Sampson 2002; Farmer 2001; Henry 2000; McWhorter 2000; Inoue 1999; Calhoun and LiPuma 1993; Wilson 1987; Staples 1985). Each social structure becomes more influential to the student at different points throughout their life (Henry 2000).

### **Family**

Family provides the primary level of socialization. The family transfers wealth behavior, norms, values, and social status (Schaefer and Lamm 1995). Several research studies explain family as the quintessential structure for producing the best outcome for student aspirations and achievement (Sampson 2002; McWhorter 2000). The main elements of transfer are status and wealth. The family structure that is most likely to contribute to high educational aspirations and achievement is the two parent family. They tend to offer dual income, more parental support, and more parent participation in school more than any other structure (Sampson 2002; Staples 1985).

Two parent families, according to the US Census (2002), are considered to be two parents living together that are married. Parents do not have to be biological; step or adoptive parents are also regarded. However, research suggests that stepfamilies

experience difficulties with integration, adjustment and loyalty roles (US Bureau of the Census 2002:2). These difficulties cause conflict and hinder continuity (Ram 2003).

Two-parent families are best for students when parents are not in constant marital conflict; actually the student may be better off in supportive single parent families despite their negative connotations. However, two-parent families are attributed with being the ideal way to ensure better outcomes for the student (Sampson et al. 2002).

Single parent families, according to the US Census Bureau (2002), are defined as a parent who is not married and is currently living separate from the spouse. The parent can be the mother or father. Single parent families are thought of as having the most difficulty due to economic strain (Sampson 2002, et al). Students of single parent households are thought to experience the most academic, behavioral, and emotional problems (Ram 2003). Single parents are less involved with the students' academic affairs such as it is helping with homework or participating in school functions.

Although most research emphasizes the importance of two parent families, the normative definition of an ideal family structure does not accurately describe all families in the United States. In 2002, 69 percent of all children lived with two parents, 23 percent lived with their mother only, 5 percent lived with father only, and 4 percent lived in a household without either parent (US Bureau of the Census 2002:2). Children living in single parent households suffer from lack of parental and economical support (US Bureau of the Census 2002).

Majority of African American families experience a very different type of family structure. They are usually described as deviant from the *norm*, or not being able to



provide primary skills (Sampson 2002). It has also been suggested that African American students perform poorly because of breakdown within the family structure. Research shows that only 33 percent of African American children live with both parents compared to 75 percent of white children. Of the children living with single parents, 90.2 percent of them live with the mother only. It is also important to point out that African American children are more likely to live in poverty for longer periods of time than are white children (Taylor and Jackson 1997). These poor social conditions are likely to hinder students from being academically successful. In most research, income was the primary factor followed by family structure in determining academic success. However, on average, African American students still do poorly even when they are in two parent families with good economic standing (McWhorter 2000; Wilson 1987).

A recent study of single-parent African American families explores families from different angle (Sampson 2002). The study was an in-depth focus on the importance of educational achievement within the family based on interviews and surveys. Sampson concluded that students from single-parent families are not necessarily destined to academic failure but often had high academic achievement. Single-parent family member roles and positions changed, but students often strived for success in nontraditional ways. They were more likely to learn, at an earlier age, responsibilities and independence, which are important characteristics for success in education (Sampson 2002; Thompson 2002; Wilson 1987).

As stated earlier, a number of African American students are still able to succeed in spite of poor social conditions. They have prevailed over their social situation and have

acquired from other social structures means to be successful (Sampson 2002; McWhorter 2000). Some research that examines the trend, credits the success to affirmative action, personal drive, or good fortune (McWhorter 2000). However, not all students are able to succeed. It is not clear in previous research what should be done to address these problems.

Since African American children are likely to live in single parent families, more research is needed to address this type of family composition. What does this type family structure offer the student? Are there non traditional ways that are not recognized by researchers as legitimate? Does the parent in this family structure encourage students to go to college or are there other focuses?

### **Self-Concept**

Self-concept is also a factor in determining educational aspirations. Several theorists believe that it is the individual's perception of his or her self that is a defining factor of success (Rosenberg and Simmons 1971). The term self-concept is difficult to understand because it is often times used interchangeably with self-esteem (Rosenberg and Simmons 1971). Morris Rosenberg, a social psychologist, defines self-concept as the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to him or herself as an object (Rosenberg 1979). Many theorists and studies use this definition to operationalize the term. I have chosen Epstein's definition, which is more suited for the purposes of this paper. Self-concept is developed as the person is experiencing, functioning, and being in interaction with the world (Epstein 1979). This definition considers values and social norms that are important to society and the individual. Epstein's definition of self-

concept support's the sociological framework of Bourdieu's habitus theory in which the individual forms a concept of him or herself through social structures.

Few studies on African American self-concept take in the consideration of past experiences to explore the present condition. Researcher Richard Allen suggests that African Americans may generally have lower self-concept due to past and current social injustices, such as slavery, segregation and racism. As stated by Allen (2001):

For nearly four hundred years, the slave trade, colonization, segregation, and racism - highly sophisticated systematic strategies of oppression have been the massive political and economic forces operating on African American people. These forces have influenced the culture, the socialization process, and the very consciousness of African American people. (P.17)

Allen suggests that these past experiences hinder African Americans still today. They affect the consciousness of African Americans, putting them on unequal starting points of development. As Bourdieu stated earlier, school systems further the ideology of the dominant class. African American students have to work through many hindrances before developing a positive or high self-concept that would then lead to high educational aspirations. African American students develop their self-concept from experiencing, functioning and being in interaction with the world (Epstein 1979). However, society in the United States has not created the ideal conditions to naturally develop high self-concept among African Americans.

## **Schools**

School as a social structure is important in the student's formation of aspirations and attainment (Sampson 2002; Thompson 2002; McWhorter 2000; Anyon 1997; Calhoun and LiPuma 1993; Wilson 1987). Bourdieu suggests that habitus of the school, which is a dominant controlled social structure, overrides primary socialization of family. Individuals who are affected the most are those of non-dominant classes. The educational development and success of non-dominant class students stagnate when they enter the school system because their values and ways of interacting are suppressed in order to learn dominant principles.

Research suggests that a schools' success is also based on its economic condition. Schools with more resources can offer students better teachers and curriculum than schools with less (Thompson 2000; Hubbard 1999; Wilson 1987). School location, classroom size, tutorial help, and safety are also important (Wilson 1987).

Researchers propose that tracking systems and advance placement courses act as social stratification within the school (Thompson 2002; McWhorter 2000; Anyon 1999; Breton 1970). Student aspirations and attainment may be predicted by a students' placement within the tracking system (Breton 1970). Raymond Breton's survey on high school students (1970), which studied students at different levels within tracking systems, concluded that students placed within higher levels of tracking systems had higher aspirations and expectations of themselves than students that were not. As stated earlier tracking systems are predetermined courses that prepare students for specific educational and professional outcomes. The students' placement in the tracking system can also

affect how their peers, teachers, and school counselors perceive them. Students that are tracked within higher systems are thought of as achievers and college bound students and vice versa with lower tracked students are not (Thompson 2002; Wilson 1987).

Financial capacities of the school system can affect student development. The student's access to tutors, computers, and college recruiters are very important in determining college aspirations (Thompson 2002; Hubbard 1999). In Thompson's study on student high school experiences, some students reported they did not know about financial aid, had not talked to school counselors about college or ever seen a college recruiter on campus. Access to these services is an essential part in preparing for college. However, not all schools are financially capable of providing these needs for student development.

Some researchers do not believe that improving the school is the answer to the problem (Sampson 2002; McWhorter 2000). Traub (2002) of the New York Times states:

Though over the past 35 years we have poured billions of dollars into inner-city schools, and fiddled with practically everything you could think to fiddle with, we have done almost nothing to raise the trajectory of ghetto children. (P. 52)

This statement implies that the problem of educational attainment and aspirations among minority students does not lie within the school system. And perhaps the real answer is still unknown and the right questions are not being asked.

### **Peer Groups**

Another influence on educational aspirations is the impact of peer groups. Peer groups are a method of motivation and engagement (Ryan 2000). They are generally

composed of individuals of the same age and interest. Peer groups are an important step in influencing school success or failure (Henry 2000; Ryan 2000).

Students form the majority of their peer groups within the context of the school. Peer groups are most important in determining drug use, delinquency, and school failure. Conversely, peer groups are also important for determining school success (Thompson 2002; Henry 2000). Thompson suggests that students who perform well in school and have high aspirations about the future are usually involved in peer groups that exhibit the same qualities.

African American students belonging to racially mixed peer groups tend to do better academically than those belonging to racially homogenous groups (Thompson 2002; Henry 2000; Helm 1990). Helm, a leading researcher on peer groups, has developed a model on peer group formation. Helm suggested that most students make active decisions when forming peer groups. Peer group formation is also determined by the racial composition of the school (Wade and Okesola 2002). Wade and Okesola has redefined Helm's Peer Group Formation Model with the consideration of racial composition of the school. Helm's New Peer Group Formation Model is as follows:

1. Pre-encounter - A white racial group orientation and rejection of blacks as such and obliviousness to socioracial concerns.
2. Encounter - Ambivalence and confusion regarding racial identity and repression of anxiety provoking racial information.
3. Immersion/Emersion - A black racial reference group orientation and rejection of whites, an externally defined racial identity, and hyper vigilance toward racial stimuli
4. Internalization - A black reference group orientation without rejection of whites, internally defined racial identity and flexibility and objectivity regarding racial information
5. Integrative Awareness - Valuing of one's own collective identities and empathy and collaboration with other oppressed racial groups. (P. 97)

Race is certainly an issue for peer group formation because over fifty percent of African American students attend racially segregated schools or are in segregated classrooms. African American and white students miss the opportunity to learn from each other, which may be a key component for success for all students. The Peer Group Model represents peer group formation in schools that are ethnically diverse. Helm states that students are more likely to interact with students of the same race regardless of racial composition of the school. However, students also make purposefully driven decisions based on benefits and consequences. Students may select peer groups outside of racial lines based on academic or extracurricular interest. African American students wanting to join predominately white peer groups may have doubts because of real or perceived opposition from whites or other African Americans. They may choose to stay within racial lines to avoid harassment. In a recent study on peer group formation among Latino students, Gilberto Conchas (2001) surveyed Latino students who were in honors classes and had white peers. They perceived other Latino students negatively, suggesting, "They were unwilling to learn or trouble makers". This same perception may be the case for other minority groups as well.

### **Hypotheses**

There are many pieces of research that focus on educational aspirations and attainment. Usually the research focuses on one particular social structure at a time. In this study I plan to study three of the main social structures simultaneously along with self-concept in order to determine the one that is most influential. Based on the literature,

this study explores the main aspects of social structure and self-concept on educational aspirations. My hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Respondents from lower socio-economic status families have lower educational aspirations.

H2: Respondents from two parent families have higher educational aspirations than those from other family structures.

H3: Single parent and nontraditional families have a negative effect on educational aspirations.

H4: Respondents who discuss school activities and grades with parents have higher educational aspirations.

H5: Respondents with lower self concept have lower educational aspirations.

H5: Schools located in suburban areas will produce students with higher educational aspirations.

H6: Respondents who have friends who dropped out of high school will have lower educational aspirations.

H7: Respondents who have friends who encourage them to go to college will have higher educational aspirations.

Other relationships discussed in the literature may also appear in this study. These may include: students who have counselors and teachers who encourage them will have higher educational aspirations; students who have classmates or peers who help with home work will increase educational aspirations; students who have friends with no plans for college will have lower educational aspirations



## Methods

In this study I use the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 88) to examine educational aspirations among African American high school students. The NELS: 88 is an extensive longitudinal study that examines high school students. The main focus of the study was to examine changes in young people lives' and promote positive life outcomes by measuring school experiences, activities, attitudes, plans, and select background characteristics. Data was collected from students, parents, schools, and teachers, with student information matched to their secondary and postsecondary transcripts. The study was conducted by National Center For Education Statistics for the U.S. Department of Education. The study was a clustered, stratified national probability sample which included 8<sup>th</sup> graders who attended 1,052 high schools across the United States. The study began with 8<sup>th</sup> graders as a premeasure of achievement and status. The initial number of students totaled 24,599 who were surveyed in the spring 1988. Follow-up studies occurred in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2000. The study also surveyed students who dropped out of high school as well as "freshened" students who were included in the study to replace students who could not be located. The NELS: 1988 is a public data set that is accessible by contacting the National Center For Education Statistics or logging on to <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nels88/>.

The sample used in this study was the second follow up of NELS: 1988. This sample represented 1992 seniors. The sample size was 20,923. This sample included 279 "freshened" students who were not in the original sample during the base year or first

follow up study. The students completed a questionnaire and several cognitive tests. The questionnaire addressed academic achievement, perceptions and feelings about school curriculum, school, family structure, social relations and aspirations.

The sample was restricted further to currently enrolled high school seniors, which excluded dropouts. This reduced the sample size to 17,192. Limiting the sample further, I restricted the data to only African American students. The final sample size was 1,515 respondents. The unit of analysis in this study is students.

A problem with studies on aspirations is that most respondents tend to answer aspirational questions in a positive manner regardless of whether they disagree with the question. One solution to the problem is for questions regarding aspirations should reflect actions being taken to ensure that the goals will be met (Mc Whorter 2000). For example, if high school seniors were asked if they are going to college, the “correct answer” or the “expected answer” is always yes. To prevent a guided answer I use multiple indicators to predict aspirations instead of one that is generic and directional. Wilson states that educational aspirations should reflect more than one indicator.

### **Limitations of Study**

In this study, I was not able to include indicators based the school financial capacities as the information was not available in the NEL: 88 data set. Also, I was not able to include indicators to measure school program affect on educational aspirations School program did not show consistency with the dependent variable when using

Cronbach's reliability test. In order to measure racial group interaction I used a variable that measured racial tension between different racial groups as NEL: 88 did not allow a direct measure of the extent of racial mixed peer groups.

## **Variables**

### **Dependent variable**

*Educational Aspirations.* In this study educational aspirations was measured using an index of aspirations created from the NELS survey.

The respondents received points on the index as follows: They received one point if they have taken a College Board test (including the ACT, the SAT or other test); one point was assigned if the respondent answered yes, 0 otherwise; one point was assigned if the respondent requested help with a college application; one point was assigned if the respondent requested help with financial aid; one point was assigned if the respondent talked to counselors and/ or teachers about financial aid.

They received points for actually applying to colleges as follows: one point for one school, two points for two schools, three or more schools were given three points. One point was given if the respondent answered they had a fifty percent chance of going to college and two points were assigned if answered very high. The range of possible points varied from 0 to 9.

The questions selected for the index reflect topics that were presented in earlier in the literature review. I selected them because of their importance to measure college aspirations. I used multiple indicators both to ask if the respondent planned to go

to college but to also measure if the respondent had taken the appropriate steps of a high school senior with plans to go to college. It should be noted that the questionnaire was administered during spring (March 1992) of the respondents' senior year of high school. By that time inquired about college and financial aid along with completion of college applications should have been handled by this time. Discussion of educational aspirations will be observed by "steps" taken to go to college. The final index had an internal consistency reliability of Cronbach's alpha = .69, which is considered acceptable for a multi-item index.

### **Control variable**

*Gender* was used as a control variable for this study. Gender was recoded into a dichotomous dummy variable, **Female** = 1 and Male = 0. The variable allowed a comparison between men and women in educational aspirations, and controlled for gender effects in the equation.

### **Independent Variables**

*Family.* The variables used to represent family indicators were as follows:

**Socio-economic status**, an already coded measure designed by the NELS 88 Study. It included an index of parents' education, income, and occupation. The indicator was then divided into four quartiles, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest. This permits a comparison of educational aspirations of students with different socio-economic levels.

Adult composition of household was also an indicator. The responses for the indicator were: "mother and father," "mother and male guardian," "father and female guardian," "other adult members in family," "adult female only," "adult male only," and

“living independently.” The responses were transformed into polychotomous dummy variables in order to contrast the effects of students living in different type of family structures. Three categories were created for the contrast. “Mother and father” was changed into **two-parent family**, “Mother and male guardian” and “father and female guardian” were combined to create **stepfamily**. “Adult female only” and “adult male only” were combined to create **single parent family**. “Living independently” and “living with other adult members in family” were combined to create **non traditional family**. These categories were compared to two-parent families, which served as a contrast the reference category.

Other indicators were how far father wants the respondent to go in school and how far mother wants the respondent to go in school. The responses for these variables were “less than high school,” “high school only,” “less than 2 years of school,” “more than two years of school,” “trade school,” “less than 2 years of college,” “more than 2 years of college,” “finish college,” “master’s degree,” and “P.H.D.”. The responses were transformed into dichotomous dummy variable in order to contrast the variation among students whose parents wanted them to finish college and those who did not. Responses for “Finish college,” “master’s degree,” and “P.H.D.”, were combined. The rest of the responses were used as the reference categories.

Three indicators of family of parental involvement with school that appear in the NELS: 88 include; respondent discusses activities with parents, respondent discusses grades with parents, and respondent discusses going to college with parents. These were combined into one variable; **Respondent discusses school related activities with**

**parents**, as they are very similar in content. How important are **college expenses** was also used. Responses were “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “agree,” “strongly agree”.

*Self-concept.* The **Self-concept** measure was comprised of an already constructed index created by the NELS: 88 study. It included measures of : I feel good about myself; I have control over myself; good luck is more important than hard work; I am able to do things as well as others; things hardly work out; I am satisfied with myself; I feel useless at times; and at times I feel no good at all. A Likert Scale format was used to determine the range. The variable was then divided into four quartiles, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest.

*Schools.* The variables used to represent school indicators were as follows: **School location** was coded into polychotomous dummy variables “**suburban**,” “**rural**,” or “**urban**,” in order to contrast differences in educational aspirations between school locations. In the regression analysis urban was used as the reference category. Other indicators were: Are the **teachers are interested in students**. Responses were “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree”. What is your **school counselors’ desire for you after high school**.” Responses were: “go to college,” “get a full time job,” “enter trade school,” enter the military,” “get married,” “do what I want,” “they don’t care,” and “I do not know”. The responses were transformed into dichotomous dummy variable in order to contrast differences between “go to college” and the other responses of the variable. This was coded 1 = go to college and 0 = other.

*Peer groups.* The indicators used to construct the peer group variable were: **Friend helped with homework**. Responses to this question were coded 1= yes, and 0 =

no. Friend helped with homework was transformed into a dichotomous dummy variable in order to assess whether or not peers helping with home work is a factor. Response “no” was used as the reference category. Respondents’ **friends who have no plans for college** was used as an indicator and the responses were “none of them,” “a few of them,” “some of them,” “most of them,” and “all of them.” These responses were transformed into a dichotomous dummy variable. Responses “a few of them,” “some of them,” “most of them,” and “all of them” were combined in order to contrast with students with friends who planned to go to college,(coded 0) to those who had no friends who planned to go to college ( coded 1).

Respondents’ **friends who dropped out**, included responses were “none of them,” “a few of them,” “some of them,” “most of them,” and “all of them” These responses were transformed into dichotomous dummy variable. I combined responses that indicated having any friends who dropped out of high school. Responses “a few of them,” “some of them,” “most of them,” and “all of them” were combined (coded 1) in order to contrast with students who did not have friends who dropped out of school (coded 0). Another indicator was Students **friendly with other racial groups**. Responses to this question were either yes = 1 or no = 0. **Friends’ desire for respondent after school** responses were ; “go to college,” “get a full time job,” “enter trade school,” “enter the military,” “get married,” “do what I want,” “they don’t care,” and “I do not know”. The responses were transformed into dichotomous dummy variables in order to contrast differences between “go to college” (coded 1) and the other responses of the variable (coded 0).

### **Weighting**

The purpose of weighting is to adjust for unequal probabilities of the selection into the sample. Weighting the variables adjusts for race, sex, grade level, and no response. Therefore, I followed the guidelines of the National Center for Educational Statistics and use a cross sectional weight to generalize to the population of 1992 twelfth graders. The National Center for Educational Statistics strongly suggests using their provided weights for any NELS: 88 analyses. A preliminary analysis revealed similar results weighted or non-weighted.

### **Missing data**

The dependent variable had no missing data. All of the independent variables from the restricted sample (N = 1515), had missing data, in Family, *Socio-economic status*, (1.2 of the respondents), family composition (18 percent of the respondents), *how far father wants respondent to go* (20 percent of the respondents), *how far mother wants the respondent to go* (20 percent of the respondents), college expenses (10 percent of the respondents), *Discuss* (18 percent of the respondents), *Self-concept* (13.2 percent of the respondents), *School location* (1.7 percent of the respondents), *teachers interested* (2 percent of the respondents), *counselors' desire for student after high school* (10 percent of the respondents), *friends with no plans for college* (18 percent of the respondents) *friends who dropped out* (18 percent of the respondents), *friendly with other racial groups* (2 percents of the respondents), *friends desire for respondent after high school* (12 percent of the respondents). Listwise deletions of missing data resulted in a final N of 785.



### **Analytical Method**

In this study Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was used to observe the relationship between family, self-concept, school, peer group, and educational aspirations. The variables were entered together at one time in order to assess the importance of each variable on the dependent variable. The indicators were grouped according to social structure.

## **Descriptive Results**

In this section, I present the findings regarding the affects of family, self-concept, school, and peer group on educational aspirations. First, I discuss the means and standard deviations of all of the variables. Then, I describe the correlations of the independent variables with the dependent variable. In the final section, I describe the regression analysis.

### **Means and Standard Deviations**

The means and standard deviations are presented in Table I (see Appendix). The dependent variable, educational aspirations, has a mean of 4.82 units on a scale of 0 to 9 with a standard deviation of 2.4. This indicates that on average the respondents in this study have taken nearly five steps toward college attendance based on the items in the index. Females represent 56 percent of the sample while male respondents represent 44 percent.

With regard to family structure of nearly 42 percent of the respondents lived in a two parent households, 16 percent lived in a step parent family, 40 percent lived in single family arrangement, and 2 percent lived in non traditional, arrangements including with other family members or independently. Socio-economic status has a mean of 2.23. On average, respondent's socio-economic status is between the second and third quartile. The socio-economic status of the respondents deviates from the mean about one quartile (s.d. = 1.05). Seventy-five percent of respondents had mothers who wanted them to attend college and 41% had fathers wanting respondents to attend college. Respondents who discussed school related issues with parents had a mean of 2.23 on a scale of 1 to 4. This suggest that students discussed school related issues between sometimes and often (s.d. = .50). Respondents who thought college expenses were important had a mean of 1.70 on a scale of 1 to 4. This suggest that on average college expenses were between not important to somewhat important (s.d. = .71).

Self-concept has a mean of 2.91. On average, respondents' self-concept nears the third quartile. Respondents in this study have high self-concept. Self-concept of the respondents' deviates from about one quartile (s.d. = 1.05).

With regard to school, school location was divided into three categories, suburban, rural and urban. Suburban schools were attended by of 28 percent of the respondents. Rural schools were attended by 23 percent. Urban schools were attended by 49 percent of the respondents. The proportions of students attending suburban and rural schools may seem low however; based on the literature, African American students primarily reside in urban areas. The mean frequency for teachers are interested in

students was 2.85 on a scale of 1 to 4, suggesting that students believe that teachers are interested in them (s.d. = .59). The percentage of respondents who knew that their counselors wanted them to go to college was 81 percent, a clear majority.

Only 21 percent of the respondents report that they received help with homework from a friend or classmate. While, over half (51%) of the respondents report they had friends who dropped out of high school. Seventy-five percent of respondents have friends who have no plans for college. The mean for respondents getting along with other racial groups is 3.04 on a scale of 1 to 4. This suggest that respondents agree that they perceive other students get along with other racial groups (s.d. = .60). Respondents' who have friends who want them to attend college after high school was 57%.

### **Correlations**

Bivariate correlations for all variables included in the regression are presented in Table II: Zero-Order Correlations (see Appendix). Socio-economic status has a strong positive correlation with educational aspiration ( $r = .286$ ). This offers preliminary support for my hypothesis that lower income respondents are less likely to pursue college than respondents who are from higher income families. Fathers expectations for the respondent to attend college has a strong positive correlation with educational aspirations ( $r = .166$ ). Also, mothers who expect the respondent to attend college has a very strong positive association with educational aspirations ( $r = .304$ ). Respondents who discuss college, grades and school activities with parents also have higher educational aspirations ( $r = .220$ ). This gives tentative support to my hypothesis that respondents who discuss

school activities with parents have higher educational aspirations than respondents who do not.

Self-concept has a fairly weak correlation with educational aspirations ( $r = .082$ ). This does not provide strong support my hypothesis; respondents with higher self-concept are more likely to have higher educational aspirations.

The measure of teachers who are interested in students has a moderately strong correlation with educational aspirations ( $r = .124$ ). This gives preliminary support to the idea that teachers who encourage and are interested in students create students who pursue college more than students who do not have support. There is a strong association between counselors who suggest respondents go to college and educational aspirations ( $r = .337$ ). This gives support to the literature; counselors who are concerned with students' influence them to pursue college.

The measure indicating peers who help each other with homework is negatively correlated with educational aspirations ( $r = -.143$ ). This may seem contradictory to the literature and logic. This correlation conflicts with most literature. Generally, classmates and peers help students do better in school and pursue college. However, this result is likely due to other variables in the equation that are associated with educational aspirations. Respondents who have friends with no plans for college has a moderately strong negative relationship and educational aspirations ( $r = -.181$ ). There is tentative support for my hypothesis that respondents who have friends with no plans for college are less likely to take steps to go to college. There is a moderately strong negative relationship between having friends who dropped out of school and educational

aspirations ( $r = -.178$ ). This tentatively supports my hypothesis that respondents who have friends who drop out of high school are less likely to take steps to pursue college. Having friends who provide encouragement to respondents to go to college is strongly related with educational aspirations ( $r = .223$ ). This supports the idea that peer groups influence educational aspirations and decisions about college.

Additional relationships were discovered from the findings in the bivariate correlations. Students whose mother wanted them to go to college had a strong relationship with students whose father wanted them to go to college ( $r = .328$ ). This relationship is important because it supports literature that parental encouragement helps to prepare students for college. Socio-economic status was strongly related with students whose mother wanted them to go to college ( $r = .226$ ).

### **Regression Analysis**

Regression results are presented in Table III: Regression Model for Educational Aspirations on Family, Self-concept, School, and Peer Group (see Appendix). Recall that educational aspirations range from 0 to 9 and have an average of 4.82. Also, discussion of educational aspirations will be observed by “steps” taken to go to college.

Based on this model, educational aspirations increase over one half step when the respondent is female ( $b = .573$ ). Higher levels of socio-economic status are associated with higher educational aspirations ( $b = .381$ ). Students whose fathers want them to go to college have nearly one-third more aspirational indicators. ( $b = .318$ ). Mothers are even more influential. Students whose mother wants them to go to college nearly one full step more aspirations indicators ( $b = .830$ ). This supports the literature as well as my

hypothesis that parental involvement increases educational aspirations. Respondents who discuss college, grades, and school activities with their parents take, on average 1/3 of purposeful action toward college. ( $b = .366$ ). This supports my hypothesis that students who talk with parents about college are more likely to have higher educational aspirations.

Surprisingly, higher self-concept does not significantly predict educational aspirations ( $b = .010$ ). Recall that the bivariate correlation between self-concept and educational aspirations was significant but weak, which accounts for the associations we commonly believe may exist between them. However, this association is likely due to other variables in the equation that are associated with self-concept.

School location is a significant predictor of educational aspirations. Whether a student attended an urban, a rural, or a suburban school showed that the set was significant in predicting educational aspirations. An  $F$  test was conducted on the set of dummy variables representing school location, with an  $F = 3.893$ . Compared to respondents in urban schools, those who attend schools in rural areas took almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  fewer steps ( $b = -.442$ ). There was no significant difference in aspirations between suburban and urban respondents.

Teachers' interest in students is positively related to educational aspirations ( $b = .216$ ), as is having counselors who encourage respondents to go to college ( $b = 1.448$ ). The respondent is apt to take one and a half more steps towards college if they perceive counselors as supportive than if they do not believe their counselors want them

to go to college. This supports my hypothesis that schools that give encouragement and have support for students produce students with higher educational aspirations.

Among peer groups indicators respondents that have classmates help with homework have lower educational aspiration ( $b = -.386$ ). This may suggest that students who have higher educational aspirations may not need help with homework from friends. Respondents who have friends who dropped out of high school take almost one half fewer steps ( $b = -.431$ ). Respondents who have any friends with no plans for college have lower educational aspirations ( $b = -.290$ ) than those whose friends are planning college. Respondents with friends who encourage them to go to college have higher educational aspirations ( $b = .390$ ), than those who receive no such encouragement. These findings support my hypothesis that peer groups influence educational aspirations and student attitude toward college.

An examination of the standardized regression coefficients reveals that the strongest predictor of educational aspirations in the regression model was counselors who encouraged students to go to college indicator ( $\beta = .236$ ). This indicator probably stands out as most important because high school counselors are a main source of information pertaining to college. Family variables were also important, with socio-economic being the second strongest indicator ( $\beta = .168$ ). The third strongest indicator of educational aspirations was having a mother who wanted the respondent to go to college ( $\beta = .151$ ). Being female was also important ( $\beta = .119$ ).

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

In this section I will discuss a summary of the regression analysis in terms of my hypotheses, compare findings with previous literature, and conclude the study. The initial interest of this study was to determine which social structure, along with self-concept, had the most impact on educational aspirations. The result of this study did not show one individual social structure having principal influence. Instead, each social structure had contributions that were important to educational aspirations.

The results of this study showed that respondents from lower socio-economic families have lower educational aspirations. Respondents who discuss school activities and grades with their parents have higher educational aspirations, according to this study. My hypotheses regarding peer group influence, respondents who have friends who dropped out of high school have lower educational aspirations. Also, respondents with friends who encouraged them to go to college had higher educational aspirations, was supported in this study. Respondents who attended schools located in suburban areas had higher educational aspirations supported my hypothesis.

Many of my hypotheses were not supported by these findings. There was no significant indication that family structure mattered in predicting educational aspirations. There was no substantiating support that respondents with lower self-concept have lower educational aspirations.

Previous literature describes family as being the most important variable in developing educational aspirations (Sampson 2002; Mc Whorter 2000). Supportive two parent households are described as being most favorable. This family structure tends to



offer dual income, more parental support, and more parental involvement in various aspects regarding school. The majority of African American students live in female headed households (US Bureau of the Census 2002:2). Surprisingly, however, family composition was not a factor that determined educational aspirations whereas parental involvement was important. Students having mothers' spoken position, that attending college was important was the second strongest factor in the entire study. Families that have open discussion on college, grades, and school activities also produce students who have higher educational aspirations. From this study, one can conclude that parents who value and express the importance of education, at school and at home, have students who take on the same values. It is often expressed, by parents and students that education is important, but it is the families who put it into practice whose students who have high aspirations.

Previous literature suggested that African Americans may generally have lower self-concept due to past and current social injustices. In this study self-concept hardly made an impact on educational aspirations. There may be still other factors not accounted for such as the way students' self-concept in comparison to white students and how students relate to past and present social injustices.

Schools are important in preparing students for college and shaping aspirations. In the literature, students get access to important information pertaining to college and how to get there through school. The success of the school is also based on its economic condition. Schools with more resources can offer students better teachers and curriculum than schools with less (Thompson 2000; Hubbard 1999; Wilson 1987). In previous

literature, suburban schools are considered to have more resources while urban and rural schools have little. School location was related to educational aspirations while those in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged in terms of steps taken toward college. This research shows no difference between those in urban and suburban schools. This may be due to the weighting of the variables in this sample. However, the most important factors were that students felt that teachers were interested in them and if the students had counselors who encouraged them to go to college. This suggests that particular components within the school structure are more important than school location or economic condition. It is imperative for school systems to ensure that they have engaging teachers that express the importance of higher education with students. Key efforts should be geared towards ensuring college information is accessible to everyone.

Peer groups can be a way of encouragement and motivation. This study was consistent with earlier literature that peer groups can influence educational aspirations. Students who had friends who dropped out of school or friends with no plans for college had lower educational aspirations. Previous literature suggests that racially mixed peer groups do better academically. In this study, it was not an important factor in determining educational aspirations. Educational aspirations were mostly influenced by friends who encouraged them to go to college. This may reflect that peer groups are formed based on having similar values and not necessarily based on race. So, if peer groups value education then it will more likely be a characteristic of the entire group. In order for students to stay focused and be successful their peer groups have to reflect the same

positions. In this study, students who had friends that encouraged them to go to college were very likely to have higher educational aspirations.

In this study, not one social structure in particular stood out as the most important. In fact, certain aspects of each social structure that was significant. A reoccurring theme throughout the analysis is “what is valued.” If the social structure valued higher education, then the student was more likely to respond accordingly. Pierre Bourdieu described in the theory of habitus that individuals develop aspirations, goals, norms and values by combining what is learned from different social structures together. In order for students to aspire to go to college, education needs to be a value to the student, family, school and peer group.

Bourdieu also states that students from lower social classes experience cultural alienation that leads to lower achievement. This study, however, can not refute the theory but can suggest that students develop higher educational aspirations when they are guided to do so regardless of class or race. From this study, it is important that education is a consistent value and action throughout all social structures to produce the best outcome for all students.

**Implications for future research**

This study could be improved by finding a better way of measuring self concept to account for students' perception of past social issues and how it affects them today. Also, this study could better measure racially mixed peer group and the affect on educational aspirations. Missing data in this study could have been created into a variable in order to compare and contrast with the rest of the sample. The final sample could be considered potentially bias due to the large number of missing data in the family composition indicator. It is possible that those with missing data were more likely to be in single-parent families as some of the questions required information regarding both parents.

Based on the results of this study, future research in this area should investigate how social structures can work together to improve African American college attendance. The findings did not show one particular social structure as being better than the other in predicating educational aspirations. However, it does show that students need support from all structures to succeed.

## References

- Abell, Ellen. 1996. "Parenting Values, Attitudes, Behaviors, and Goals of African American Mothers from Low-income." *Journal of Family Issues*. 17:593.
- Allen, Richard. 2001. *The Concept of Self. A Study of Black Identity and Self-esteem*. Michigan: Wayne State University Press
- Anyon, Jean. 1997. *Ghetto Schooling*. New York: Teachers Press.
- Asamen, Barry. 1989. *Black Students*. California: Sage Publications.
- Battle, Jaun. 2002. "Longitudinal Analysis of Academic Achievement among a Nationwide Sample of Hispanic Students in One Versus Dual-Parent Households" *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 24:3 430-447.
- Breton, Raymond. 1970. "Academic Stratification in Secondary Schools and the Educational Plans of Students" *Sociology and Anthropology* 7:17.
- Burd, Stephen. 2002. "Bridging the Gap." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 8:9.
- Calhoun, Craig and Edward LiPuma. 1993. *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Collison, Michelle. 1999 "Raising the Bar for Middle-Class Blacks" *Black Issues in Higher Education* 19:17.
- Conchas, Gilberto Q. 2001. "Structuring Failure and Success: Understanding the Variability in Latino School Engagement." *Harvard Educational Review* 71:3 475-504.
- Farmer, Lawrence G. 2001. "Longitudinal Exploration of the Caste Theory of Educational Aspirations." *Children and Schools* 23:3.

- Gregory, Sheila T. 2000. *The Academic Achievement of Minority Students*. Maryland: University Press of America.
- Gecas, Viktor. 1982. "The Self-Concept" *Annual Sociological Review* 8:1 1-33.
- Helm, J.E. 1990. *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory and Research and Practice*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Henry, David B. 2000. "Peer Groups, Families, and School Failure Among Urban Children: Elements of Risk and Successful Interventions." *Preventing School Failure* 44:97.
- Hubbard, Lea. 1999. "College Aspirations Among Low-Income African American High School Students: Gendered Strategies for Success." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 30:3 363-383.
- Inoue, Yukiko. 1999. *The Educational and Occupational Attainment Process: The Role of Status Aspirations*. Maryland: University Press of America.
- Jenkins, Richard. 1992. *Pierre Bourdieu*. New York: Routledge.
- Lopez, Elias S. 1996. "Social Capital and the Educational Performance of Latino and Non-Latino Youth." Working paper No. 11, Cal Poly University of San Luis Obispo, California.
- Lowell, Lindsey and Roberto Suro. 2002. *The Improving Educational Profile of Latino Immigrants*. Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center.
- Malcolm X. 1964. "By Any Means Necessary" From the Militant Labor Forum.

- Massey, Douglas S. and Nancy Denton. 1989. "Hypersegregation in US Metropolitan Areas; Black and Hispanic Segregation Along Five Dimensions." *Demography*.26:77.
- Marshall, Gordon. 1999. *Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Oxford Press
- McWhorter, John. 2000. *Losing the Race Self Sabotage in Black America*. New York: The Free Press.
- National Center for Education Statistics. 1994. *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: Second Follow Up*. U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Oates, Gary. Forthcoming. "Teacher-Student Racial congruence, Teacher Perceptions, and Test Performance." *Social Science Quarterly*.
- Ogbu, John. 1994. "Racial Stratification and Education in the United States: Why Inequality Persist" *Teacher College Record* 96:2 264.
- Osterland, Steven J. 1997. *A National Review of Scholastic Achievement in General Education*. Washington D.C.: George Washington University.
- Phillips, Emile.2001. "Latent Models of Family Processes in African American Families: Relationships to Child Competence, Achievement, and Problem Behavior." *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 63:14.
- Powell, Cecil. and Jacob Arriola. 2003. "Relationship Between Psychosocial Factors and Academic Achievement Among African American Students." *Journal of Educational Research*. 96:175.

- Ram, Bali and Hou Feng. 2003. "Changes in Family Structure and Child Outcomes: Roles of Economic and Familial Resources" *Policy Studies Journal* 31:3.
- Rosenberg, Morris and Roberta Simmons. 1971. *Black and White Self-Esteem: the Urban School Child*. Washington DC: American Sociological Association.
- Rosenberg, Morris. 1979. *Conceiving the Self*. New York: Basis Book Publishers.
- Rosenberg, Morris. 1982. *Social Psychology of the Self-Concept*. Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson.
- Rothman, Robert. 1999. *Inequality and Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender*. New Jersey: Person Education.
- Ryan, Alison M. 2000. "Peer Groups as a Context for the Socialization of Adolescents' Motivation, Engagement, and Achievement in School." *Educational Psychologists* 35:101.
- Sampson, William A. 2002. *Black Student Achievement. How Much Do Family and School Really Matter?* Maryland: Scarecrow Press.
- Schaefer, Robert T and Robert Lamm. 1995. *Sociology*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Staples, Robert. 1985. "Changes in the Black Family Structure: The Conflict Between Family Ideology and Structural Conditions." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 85:11.
- Swigart, Theodore and Patricia Murrell. 2001. "Factors Influencing Estimates of Gains Made Among African American and Caucasian Community College Students." *Community College Journal of Research* 25:4.



- Taylor, Robert and James Jackson. 1997. *Family Life in Black America*. California: Sage Publications.
- Thompson, Gail. 2002. *African American Teens Discuss Their Schooling Experiences*. New York: Bergin and Garvey
- Tienda, Marta and Ding-Tzann Lii. 1987. "Minority Concentration and Earnings Inequality: Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians Compared." *American Journal of Sociology*. 50:32.
- Traub, J. 2002. "Schools are not the Answer". *New York Times Magazine*, January, 16, pp16.
- Wade, Jay and Oloyiwola Olesola. 2002. "Racial Peer Group Selection in African American High School Students." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*. 30:97.
- Walker, Katrina and Tammy Satterwhite. 2002. "Academic Performance Among African American And Caucasian College Students: Is the Family Still Important?" *College Student Journal*. 36:1.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2002. *Annual Demographic Survey*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2003. *Children Living Arrangements*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Education. 2002. *Digest of Education Statistics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wilson, William J. 1986. *When Work Disappears*. New York: Vintage Books.

Wilson, William J 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Appendix

**Table I: Means and Standard Deviations (n = 785)**

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Educational Aspirations	4.82	2.40
Female	56.00	-
Family Indicators		
Socio-Economic Quartile	2.23	1.058
Family Structure		
Two Parent Family	41.88	
Step Family	16.43	-
Single Family	39.47	-
Non Traditional	2.2	-
Father wants to attend college	40.87	.491
Mother wants to attend college	74.72	.4348
Discuss School Related Activities	2.23	.491
How important are college expenses	1.704	.7224
Self-concept	2.91	1.064
School Indicators		
School Location		
%Suburban	27.57	-
% Rural	23.43	-
%Urban	49.00	-
Teachers are interested in students	2.855	.592
Counselors who want respondents to go college	81.25	.390
Peer Group Indicators		
%Classmates help with homework	21.23	.4092
%Respondents with who dropped out of high school	51.72	.50
%Respondents with friends with no plans for college	75.07	-
%Friendly with other racial group	3.04	.60
%Friends who want respondents to go to college	56.64	.495

\*Standard Deviations were not entered for Dummy Variables

**Table II: Zero-Order Correlations, Part 1**

	<i>Aspirations</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Socio- econ</i>	<i>Two Parent</i>	<i>Step parent</i>	<i>Sing Parent</i>
Educational Aspirations	1					
Female	0.164*	1				
Family Indicators						
Socio-economic	0.286*	-0.041	1			
Family Structure						
Two Parent Family	0.062	-0.046	0.218	1		
Step Parent Family	-0.017	-0.015	-0.04	-0.376	1.	
Single Parent Family	-0.048	0.091*	-0.186*	-0.686*	-0.358*	1
Non traditional Family	-0.005	-0.111*	-0.013	-0.128	-0.067*	-0.122*
Father wants to attend college	0.166*	-0.074*	0.17*	0.219	-0.087*	-0.137*
Mother wants to attend college	0.304*	0.074*	0.226*	-0.019	-0.017	0.051
Discuss School Related Activities	0.22*	0.132*	0.129*	0.025	0.018	-0.023
How Important are College Expenses	0.028	0.04	0.11	0.087	-0.07	-0.043
Self-concept	0.082*	-0.037	0.078*	-0.04	0.079*	-0.039
School Indicators						
School Location						
Rural	-0.151*	0.05	-0.22*	-0.044	-0.059	0.065*
Suburban	0.071*	-0.034	0.142*	0.073	-0.034	-0.031
Urban	0.064	-0.012	0.06*	-0.027	0.08	-0.028
Teachers are Interested in Students	0.124*	0.033	0.039	0.022	0.04*	-0.038
Counselors who want Respondent to go to College	0.337*	0.07*	0.062*	0.05	-0.04	-0.027
Peer Group Indicators						
Classmate Help with Homework	-0.143*	-0.159*	-0.032	0.004	0.01	-0.03
Respondents w/ Friends with no Plans	-0.178*	-0.156*	-0.183*	-0.024	-0.005	0.014
Respondents w/ Friends who Dropped	-0.181*	-0.154*	-0.11*	-0.002*	0.015	-0.02
Friendly with other Racial Groups	0.003	0.068*	0.009	-0.074	-0.001	0.067*
Friends want respondent to go to Coll	0.223*	-0.069*	0.101*	0.043	-0.013	-0.028

\*Significant  $P \leq .05$  (one-tailed)

**Table II: Zero-Order Correlations, Part 2**

	Non Trad	How far father	How far mother	Discuss	Coll. Expenses	Self-concept
Educational Aspirations						
Female						
Family Indicators						
Socio-economic						
Family Structure						
Two Parent Family						
Step Parent Family						
Single Parent Family						
Non traditional Family	1					
Father wants to attend college	-0.061*	1				
Mother wants to attend college	-0.064*	0.328*	1			
Discuss School Related Activities	-0.053	0.076*	0.212*	1		
How Important are College Expenses	0.027	-0.076	-0.042	-0.015	1	
Self-concept	0.064*	-0.014	0.105*	0.162*	0.033	1
School Indicators						
School Location						
Rural	0.079*	-0.026	-0.083*	0.014	0.002	-0.091*
Suburban	-0.056*	-0.042	0.013	-0.03	0.077*	0.037
Urban	-0.017	0.059	0.059*	0.014	-0.071*	0.044
Teachers are Interested in Students	-0.051	-0.013	0.049	0.196*	-0.003	0.16*
Counselors who want Respondents to go to College	0.021	0.087*	0.122*	0.132*	0.041	0.041
Peer Group Indicators						
Classmate Help with Homework	0.06*	-0.031	-0.085*	-0.165*	0.08*	0.027
Respondents with Friends with no Plans	0.046	-0.065*	-0.115*	-0.084*	-0.061*	-0.05
Respondents with Friends who Dropped	0.035	-0.004	-0.091*	-0.066*	-0.047	-0.077*
Friendly with other Racial Groups	0.025	-0.016	-0.069*	0.055	0.038	0.163*
Friends want respondent to go to Coll	-0.017	0.022	0.176*	0.137*	0.008	0.048

\*Significant  $P \leq .05$  (one-tailed)

**Table II: Zero-Order Correlations, Part 3**

	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Suburban</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Teachers Interested</i>	<i>Counselor to College</i>	<i>Classmate Help</i>
Educational Aspirations						
Female						
Family Indicators						
Socio-economic						
Family Structure						
Two Parent Family						
Step Parent Family						
Single Parent Family						
Non traditional Family						
Father wants to attend college						
Mother wants to attend college						
Discuss School Related Activities						
How Important are College Expenses						
Self-concept						
School Indicators						
School Location						
Rural	1					
Suburban	-0.341*	1				
Urban	-0.542*	-0.605*	1			
Teachers are Interested in Students	-0.015	-0.028	0.037	1		
Counselors who want Respondent to go to College	-0.099*	-0.001	0.085	0.077*	1	
Peer Group Indicators						
Classmate Help with Homework	-0.08*	0.032	0.04	-0.11*	-0.08	1
Respondents Friends w/ n Plans	0.008	-0.058	0.045	-0.07*	0.004	0.034*
Respondents Friends w/ Dropped	0.001	-0.083*	0.074	-0.018	-0.038	0.051
Friendly with other Racial Groups	0.062*	-0.008	-0.045	0.145*	-0.046	-0.071
Friends want respondent to go to Coll	-0.042	-0.017	0.05	0.092	0.337	-0.05*

\*Significant  $P \leq .05$  (one-tailed)

**Table II: Zero-Order Correlations, Part 4**

	<i>Friends w/n plans</i>	<i>Friends dropped</i>	<i>friendly w/other racial groups</i>	<i>Friends want respod. to college</i>
Educational Aspirations				
Female				
Family Indicators				
Socio-economic				
Family Structure				
Two Parent Family				
Step Parent Family				
Single Parent Family				
Non traditional Family				
Father wants to attend college				
Mother wants to attend college				
Discuss School Related Activities				
How Important are College Expenses				
Self-concept				
School Indicators				
School Location				
Rural				
Suburban				
Urban				
Teachers are Interested in Students				
Counselors who want Respondents to go to College				
Peer Group Indicators				
Classmate Help with Homework				
Respondents with Friends with no Plans	1			
Respondents with Friends who Dropped	0.397	1		
Friendly with other Racial Groups	-0.026*	0.007	1	
Friends want respondent to go to Coll	-0.089*	-0.009	-0.036	1

\*Significant  $P \leq .05$  (one-tailed)

**Table III: Regression Model for Educational Aspirations on Family, Self-concept, School and Peer Group (n = 785)**

	B (s.e)	$\beta$
Female	.573* (.157)	.119
<b>Family Indicators</b>		
Socio-Economic Quartile	.381* (.077)	.168
<b>Family Structure</b>		
Two Parent Family	-	-
Step Family	.038 (.219)	.006
Single Family	-.017 (.171)	-.003
Non Traditional	.705 (.514)	.043
Father wants to attend college	.318 (.165)	.065
Mother wants to attend college	.830* (.191)	.151
How important are college expenses	.008 (.104)	.003
Self-concept	.010 (.072)	.004
<b>School Indicators</b>		
<b>School Location</b>		
Suburban	.127 (.176)	.024
Rural	-.442* (.191)	-.078
Urban	-	-
Teachers are interested in students	.216 (.129)	.053
Counselors who want respondents to go coll	1.448* (.203)	.236

\*Significant  $P \leq .05$  (one-tailed test)

<sup>1</sup> Family composition dummies are not significant as a group

<sup>2</sup> School location dummies are statistically significant as a group,  $F = 3.893$ ;  $P = .05$



**Table III: Regression Model for Educational Aspirations on Self-concept, Family, School and Peer Group Part 2 (n = 785)**

	<i>B</i> ( <i>s.e</i> )	$\beta$
Peer Group Indicators		
Classmates help with homework	-.386* (.185)	-.066
Respondents with who dropped out	-.431* (.161)	-.090
Respondents with friends with no plans	-.290 (.189)	-.052
Friendly with other racial group	.018 (.126)	.005
Friends who want respondents to go to coll	.390* (.161)	.081
Constant	.547 (.666)	
R <sup>2</sup>	.294	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.276	
Standard Error of the Estimate	2.0391	

\*Significant  $P \leq .05$  (one-tailed test)

<sup>1</sup> Family composition dummies are not significant as a group

<sup>2</sup> School location dummies are statistically significant as a group,  $F = 3.893$ ;  $P = .05$