BLACK MALES, MONEY AND MORE:

CONDUITS AND BARRIERS TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Much ink has been spent and theories proffered unpacking the societal, school and community factors that impact educational outcomes of Black male students in the United States. Employing the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), this dissertation seeks to add to this important discourse on academic achievement by contrasting the conduits and barriers to educational success for a nationally representative sample of Black males of low socioeconomic status versus Black males of not-low socioeconomic status across a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables.

The theoretical framework for this undertaking will include, but not be limited to, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Coleman), alienation thesis (Yancy), oppositional theory (Ogbu), and Black sexual politics (Collins).

This dissertation will conclude with micro (individual level) and macro (policy level) suggestions.

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I have thanked God countless times for privileging me with the parents I've been blessed with. My mother will quickly tell you they were not immigrants. Mom and Dad were born and raised in St. Croix, one of the U.S. Virgin Islands, so, she insists, they came to the mainland as young adults already American. Immigrant or not, Mom definitely possessed the so-called "immigrant mentality." In other words, education came before God. "You should go to church, but you *will* go to school" was the edict in the Edwards household. So my first "thank you" has to go to Mom, Ione Edwards, for being such a positive force in my life and for teaching me early the value of education. My second "thank you" goes to Dad, Clement Edwards, for instilling in my brother, sister and me, the strong work ethic that has paid dividends for all of us. I feel him smiling down on me from heaven, fully appreciating this accomplishment.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

If education can indeed be prescribed as the pathway to success, how does that journey look for the many Black[1] males not fortunate enough to bring to the table the socioeconomic status foundation of a Barack Obama? Given the systemic and community forces impacting Black males in the United States, how does higher education increase its appeal to that broad segment of society that seemingly does not believe, or trust, that the educational system works to its advantage (Ogbu, 2003; Wilson, 2009)? Further, what role does socioeconomic status play? More importantly, are there statistically significant differences in the relative impact of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables on educational outcomes for poor Black males versus their not poor counterparts?

The powerful impact socioeconomic status has on predicting educational, employment, and even health outcomes, has been well documented. In his influential report on *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, for example, Coleman (1966) cited socioeconomic status as a strong predictor of student achievement. The report, which provided the basis for the desegregation of southern schools in the civil rights acts of the

[1] Throughout this study, the term Black will be used to refer to people of the African Diaspora, and to such populations that reside within the United States. To some, African Americans are a subgroup within the larger Black community. Since this study purposely includes those who may be first-generation immigrants or who, for whatever reason, do not identify as African American, the term "Black" is employed. Furthermore, the term is capitalized to distinguish the racial category and related identity from color. Similarly, the word White is capitalized when referring to race.

1960s, asserted that the impact of student background on educational achievement was greater than academic environment. In another study, Payne and Biddle (1999) pointed out that data obtained from the Second International Mathematics Study (SIMS) indicated that if the United States[2] had been represented only by its school districts with low-level poverty, the country would have ranked second out of the 23 nations involved. With the inclusion of scores from high-poverty districts, the United States would have ranked 21st, besting only Nigeria and Swaziland.

Given the impact of socioeconomic status and the fact that most children cannot change their individual socioeconomic position, what can those charged with their well-being do to positively affect their educational outcomes? What can their parents do? What types of efforts can educators provide? What types of policies can policymakers develop? Do educators and policymakers need to develop separate and distinct approaches for Black male students of low socioeconomic status and Black male students of not low socioeconomic? This dissertation seeks to address these issues.

Research has shown that Black male students, when compared to other students by gender and race, consistently rank lowest in academic achievement (Ogbu, 2003), have the worst attendance records (Voelkle, Welte, & Wieczorek, 1999), are suspended and expelled the most often (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Roderick, 2003), are most likely to drop out of school, and most often fail to graduate from high school or earn a GED (Pinkney, 2000; Pollard, 1993). These imbalances persist despite well-intentioned efforts by educators and policymakers to develop and implement programs designed to increase the enrollment, retention and graduation rates of Black male students.

[2] Throughout this study, the terms United States and America are used interchangeably. As such, the term America refers only to the United States of America, and does not reference Canada and/or South America.

As a result of these many societal, academic, and community factors, enrollment of Black students in institutions of higher learning nationwide has traditionally lagged behind those of other groups (Alford, 2000; Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007). Enrollment of Black males, in particular, remains disproportionately low even at those institutions with formidable track records for implementing programs designed to attract diverse student populations (*Task Force on the City University of New York, Black Male Initiative*, 2005).

Additionally, the increasing numbers of interracial marriages between Hispanic immigrants and Whites and between Asian immigrants and Whites further exacerbate concerns about the plight of Black males. Many demographers predict that by 2050 the racial divide in America will no longer be Black and White; it will be Black and non-Black (Fletcher, 1998; Yancey, 2003). If these predictions prove correct, Black men will find themselves further marginalized, increasing the challenge for educators and policymakers seeking to develop education as a pathway to success for larger numbers of Black males.

Education, more than ever before, is a crucial determinant in career outcomes, social standing, and ability to provide children and families with improved social and cultural capital. That said, further exploration of the differences in attitudes toward education amongst Black males of low socioeconomic status and those of not-low socioeconomic status becomes equally crucial. Increased understanding brings about increased ability to develop and implement programs that better target these two groups by better identifying and exploiting attitudinal differences that may exist.

Background

Social scientists and policy makers have studied at length the Black-White academic achievement gap in American schools. Fewer studies, however, explore disparities in post-secondary academic success between low and not-low socioeconomic Black males. Although several existing studies have examined Black enrollment in post-secondary educational institutions and, consequently, post-secondary degree attainment (Coleman 2001; NCES, 2000; Roach 2001; Washington & Newman, 1991; Yeakey & Bennett, 1990), most tend to discuss Black males as a monolithic group. The lack of research focusing on poor Black males versus not-poor Black males raises an important research question: What are the differences in the conduits and barriers to academic success for low socioeconomic Black males and not-low socioeconomic Black males?

Existing research on academic achievement of Black males, as well as on other minority students, suggests four theoretical explanations for the achievement gap in postsecondary enrollment and degree attainment:(1) academic problems that often begin before Black males enter high school; (2) a lack of support from both parents and schools; (3) oppositional culture resulting in academic disengagement; and (4) future plans and/or expectations that minimize the importance of education as a pathway to upward economic mobility. It should be noted that these theoretical explanations have not been empirically tested, nor does any noted research examine whether these factors have a similar effect on postsecondary achievements of poor Black males and not-poor Black males.

This dissertation adds to this important discourse on academic achievement by employing the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS),

administered by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Studies (NCES). The dissertation draws from the study in order to contrast the conduits and barriers to educational success for a nationally representative sample of Black males of low socioeconomic status versus Black males of not-low socioeconomic status across a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables. NELS, a nationally representative panel study of eighth graders who attended American middle schools in 1988, tracked the same cohort of students throughout high school and into the 1990s. This dissertation uses hierarchical regression modeling to examine the variance between low and not-low Black male socioeconomic groups. Findings reveal which independent variables have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of low socioeconomic status and which have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of not-low socioeconomic status.

Although the disaggregated panel of Black males presents a smaller than ideal sample, the overall richness of information culled by NELS makes it an appropriate dataset for this study. Many researchers, for example, have utilized NELS data to disaggregate Black male and/or female students (Battle, 1998; Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007; Hawkins & Mulkey, 2005; Jeynes, 2005; Stewart, 2007). Additionally, while the small sample size afforded by NELS presents a potential area of concern for this study, the lack of research on large samples of children of color is a problem that has been raised by other researchers (Jeynes, 2005). Therefore, NELS remains the single most viable source of information for researchers interested in issues of race and education. Most importantly, NELS provides insight into questions critical to understanding how Black males utilize education as a pathway to success. What, for instance, have the

young Black men surveyed done with their lives? Moreover, how many have pursued college educations? How many have graduated from college? How many are now at the beginning stages of potentially successful careers? How many have started families and have joined the workforce to meet their mounting obligations? Finally, are there statistically tangible differences regarding the impact of variables on the educational pursuits of poor Black males versus their not poor counterparts? These constitute just a sample of the questions that can be answered through an in-depth study of the NELS data.

Attitudes of Black Males toward Education

The disparity between Black males and Black females enrolled in postsecondary institutions has been well documented. In 1976, the first year data by race/ethnicity and gender became available (Slater, 1994), enrollment of Black men in higher education already lagged significantly behind the enrollment of Black women. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the data showed that in 1976 Black males represented 45.7% and Black females 55.3% of Black undergraduate enrollment at two and four year institutions (NCES, 2002, Table, p. 208; Suazo-Garcia, 2005). Over the next twenty years, the Black gender difference jumped from a 9.6% gap in 1976 to a 25% gap in 1999. In 1999, Black males represented 37.3% and Black females 62.3% of Black students enrolled at the undergraduate level. As for those who attained a baccalaureate degree in 1999-2000, the gap was slightly larger with Black males accounting for 34.3% and Black females 65.7% (Suazo-Garcia, 2005). The gender gaps persist at the master's and doctoral levels (Slater, 1994).

Some consider the decrease of Black male enrollment in postsecondary institutions to be the "ominous gender gap in African-American Higher Education" *(Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 1999),* while others consider the Black gender gap in college to be a social inequity that threatens the future of Black Americans *(National Urban League, 2000).* Researchers anticipate this increasing decline of college educated Black males will adversely impact Black communities and households as educated Black females will have to look elsewhere for suitable mates (Kleinfeld, 1998; Porter, 1995; Wilson, 1987). Simultaneously, Black communities will have fewer examples of professional adults whose success can be directly attributed, at least in large part, to having received a college education (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan & Aber, 1997; Halpern-Felsher, *et al*., 1997; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn 2000). Add to that the sobering fact that in the year 2000 more Black males were incarcerated than were enrolled in colleges or universities (Butterfield, 2002) and the picture becomes even bleaker still.

Why do so many Black males refuse to acknowledge the value of a college education? Noted historian Carter G. Woodson perhaps answered this question best. In 1912 Woodson became the second Black American to earn a doctorate degree from Harvard University (W.E.B. DuBois being the first), and along with several associates, founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915. Convinced that the significant role Blacks played in American history was either being ignored or not properly studied and written about, Woodson was the driving force behind the first annual Black History Week in 1926, which later expanded to what is now Black History Month (Edwards, 2003).

Highly critical of the education Blacks received in American schools geared towards White students, Woodson, in 1933, published perhaps his most controversial book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, in which he wrote, "The so-called modern education... does others so much more good than it does the Negro, because it has been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker peoples."

Woodson further posited:

> The greatest indictment of such education as Negroes have received, however, is that they have thereby learned little as to making a living, the first essential in civilization... In business the role of education as a factor in the uplift of the Negro has been still less significant. The Negroes of today are unable to employ one another, and the whites are inclined to call on Negroes only when workers of their own race have been taken care of. For the solution of this problem the 'mis-educated' Negro has offered no remedy whatever... What Negroes are now being taught does not bring their minds into harmony with life as they must face it."

Bourdieu's and Coleman's theories on social and cultural capital are reflected in Woodson's assertion that "the Negroes of today are unable to employ one another." Woodson's assertion that modern education "has been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker peoples" speaks to Yancey's alienation thesis.

Woodson went on to write that "one of the most striking evidences of the failure of higher education among Negroes is their estrangement from the [Negro] masses, the very people upon whom they must eventually count for carrying out a program of

progress," a point that addresses rather poignantly Ogbu's oppositional theory. Woodson also believed that education had not served Black Americans well because "the Negro's mind has been brought under the control of his oppressor. The problem of holding the Negro down, therefore, is easily solved. When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and will stay in it." Here Woodson's thesis parallels, in many ways, that proffered by Collins' discourse on how racist media images are central to Black sexual politics.

Woodson's overarching frustration, however, was rooted in his belief that educated Blacks did not understand that the true purpose of education was to inspire and stimulate social and cultural networks that would work together to uplift the race. He argued, in fact, that "practically all of the successful Negroes in this country are of the uneducated type or of that of Negroes who have had no formal education at all." Furthermore, Woodson believed that "the large majority of the Negroes who have put on the finishing touches of our best colleges are all but worthless in the development of their people." Woodson's views continue to resonate throughout Black communities today. In hip-hop jargon, for instance, the uneducated Black man "is keeping it real." He also possesses "street credibility," a quality antithetical to the White man's classroom and supposedly essential to the reputation and honor of Black men in their own communities.

Social, Cultural and Economic Capital

The sociology of education has examined the significance of both social and cultural capital in education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu argued that the role

of sociology of education was realized with its establishment as the science of relations between cultural and social reproduction. This occurs when the contributions of the educational system impacts the reproduction of power and symbolic relationships between classes, along with the reproduction of cultural capital.

Bourdieu believed cultural capital theoretically explained differences in educational outcomes. As described by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), cultural capital embodies the forms of knowledge, skills, education, and social advantages that give an individual a higher status in society. Critical to the development of an individual's cultural capital is the amount of time his or her parents invest instilling and developing the habits, styles, and behaviors that prepare their children to learn and do well in school, to pursue a college education, and to ultimately attain a college degree.

Bourdieu (1986) contended that the role of education was to build the bridge between cultural reproduction and social reproduction, reproducing systems of power and relationships between classes. According to Bourdieu, the impact of education on individuals and society was tremendous, because the reproduction of cultural capital reflected the values and morals of the dominant class. Education neutralized those values and morals, acting as a common denominator for all who acquired it.

Coleman built upon Bourdieu's framework of social capital, defining it as a public resource enforcing the desired social norms and sanctions within families and communities. According to Coleman (1988), social capital within a family denoted the number of adults and the activities in which they and the family's children were engaged. Social capital within a community, on the other hand, referred to the relational ties among adults living in a given neighborhood or involved in a functional community, such as a

church or school. Productive social capital at the community level required parents knowing other parents in the community, either directly or indirectly. In the case of school, this network of social relations produced social capital that allowed the parents and the school to work together, enforcing acceptable academic and social behaviors among students to produce academic excellence.

Bourdieu described three types of capital: social, cultural and economic. These different forms of capital interacted, one often substituting for another. In his later work, Bourdieu defined social capital as the actual or potential resources evolving from a network of relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. While little empirical evidence supports the idea of social capital, social scientists and other researchers routinely apply the theory when examining the value of social relationships.

Although Bourdieu was primarily interested in the ways in which powerful elites retained their privilege, Coleman examined the interconnectedness of social disadvantage, community, and schooling. For Coleman, social capital was represented by the set of resources available to a group (i.e., a community-based organization or even an individual's family) that facilitated the actions, behaviors and thought processes of members of the group.

Akin to Social Capital is Cultural Capital, which Bourdieu broke down into three types: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1986:47). Embodied cultural capital consists of both the consciously acquired and the passively "inherited" properties of one's self. In this regard, cultural capital is not like a gift that can be easily transferred from one individual to another. Much to the contrary, cultural capital is acquired over time as it impresses itself upon one's habitués, or way of thinking. In turn,

it then becomes more attentive to or able to receive similar influences. Bourdieu cited linguistic capital (the mastery of and relation to language) as an example of embodied cultural capital because it represents a means of communication and self-presentation acquired from one's surrounding culture (Bourdieu, 1990:114).

Objectified cultural capital is represented by physical objects that are owned, such as works of art. Objectified cultural capital can be sold for economic profit and/or purchased for the purpose of "symbolically" conveying cultural capital. The latter point is important because while one can possess objectified cultural capital by purchasing a painting, for example, the individual can "consume" the painting -- that is, understand its cultural meaning -- only if he or she has the proper foundation of conceptual and/or historical cultural capital needed to properly process and accurately interpret its meaning.

Institutionalized cultural capital comprises institutional recognition, most often in the form of academic credentials or qualifications, of the cultural capital held by an individual. This concept is most prominently realized in the labor market, in which a large variety of cultural capital is expressed in a single qualitative and quantitative measurement (and compared against others' cultural capital similarly measured). The institutional recognition process thereby eases the conversion of cultural capital to economic capital by serving as a guideline that sellers can use to describe their capital and buyers can use to describe their needs for that capital.

Bourdieu linked all forms of capital to that of economic capital. In his writings, he often used some economic terms to analyze the processes of social and cultural reproduction, and as a way to better explain how these various forms of capital transfer from generation to generation. For Bourdieu, formal education represented the primary

example of this process. Educational success, according to Bourdieu, required a range of cultural behavior, extending, in theory, to non-academic features that include how one walks, talks, and dresses. Privileged children have learned this behavior, thereby fitting the pattern of behavior their teachers not only expect, but have been trained to deal with. Children of unprivileged backgrounds have not learned these non-academic features and are, therefore, found by their teachers to be difficult. Yet both the privileged and unprivileged students behave according to the norms and mores by which they were raised. Their economic capital thusly has a direct impact on the social capital they've gleaned from their parents and surrounding community. The parents' economic capital affords them the ability to equip their children with the social tools and thought processes needed to ensure educational success. Armed with the ability to succeed within the educational system, the children can then reproduce their parents' class position in the wider social system.

Capital, Black Males, and Education

In *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Woodson argued that education had destroyed Black Americans, because—rather than help them develop the social and cultural capital needed to acquire economic capital, as it had done for Whites—education had actually undermined the ability of Blacks to acquire such crucial capital. According to Woodson, in fact, "The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by

making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples. The Negro thus educated is a hopeless liability of the race."

Despite statistics citing average annual earnings of Black males with Bachelor's degrees eclipsing earnings of those with only a high school diploma by over $23,000 a year[3], the Black community often views those who aspire to higher education as individuals wanting to distance themselves from the community. While most non-Black communities view their educated members as assets, many in the Black community equate education with assimilation into the White world, and thus perceive education as incompatible with Black racial identity (Comer, 1997; DeSousa & Kuh, 1996; Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992; Taylor, Casten, Flickinger, Roberts & Fulmore, 1994). From this perspective, education drives a wedge between Black Americans, preventing the development of capital within the Black community..

The difficulty, Woodson asserted, is that:

> "the 'educated Negro' is compelled to live and move among his own people whom he has been taught to despise. As a rule, therefore, the 'educated Negro' prefers to buy his food from a white grocer because he has been taught that the Negro is not clean. It does not matter how often a Negro washes his hands, then, he cannot clean them, and it does not matter how often a white man uses his hands he cannot soil them. The educated Negro, moreover, is disinclined to take part in Negro business, because he has been taught in economics that Negroes cannot operate in this particular sphere. The 'educated Negro' gets less and less

[3] According to the *2010 Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Table 227), the Mean Earnings by Highest Degree Earned for Black males were: Not a high school graduate $19,705; High school graduate only $29,640; Some college, no degree $32,236; Associate's $38,921; Bachelor's $53,029; Master's $63,801. The base figure for Black males with Professional and/or Doctorate degrees was too small to meet statistical standards for reliability of a derived figure.

> pleasure out of the Negro church, not on account of its primitiveness and increasing corruption, but because of his preference for the seats of 'righteousness' controlled by his oppressor. This has been his education, and nothing else can be expected of him.
>
> "If the 'educated Negro' could go off and be white he might be happy, but only a mulatto now and then can do this. The large majority of this class, then, must go through life denouncing white people because they are trying to run away from the blacks and decrying the blacks because they are not white."

Ogbu discusses these attitudes toward education in the Black community in terms of "oppositional cultures." In more recent years, John McWhorter, an associate professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, popularized the phrase "cult of anti-intellectualism" to help explain this phenomenon. McWhorter's premise is that Black students shy away from academic achievement because they belong to a culture infected with an anti-intellectual strain that subtly but decisively teaches them from birth not to wholeheartedly embrace schoolwork (McWhorter 2000:100). Further, because Black students are "victims" of racism so intense and ingrained that no amount of individual effort can overcome the obstacles and barriers it creates, McWhorter argued that they viewed educational excellence not only as a White endeavor, but, even worse, as treachery. This attitude, he maintained, is pervasive amongst Black students, regardless of socioeconomic status, including the sons and daughters of middle and high income Blacks living in well-to-do neighborhoods attending good suburban schools (Williams 2000).

While the assertions of Woodson, Ogbu, and McWhorter are debatable, what cannot be argued is the dire state of Black male enrollment and graduation rates at America's postsecondary institutions. This dissertation asserts, however, that when we disaggregate low socioeconomic from not-low socioeconomic Black males, we see important differences between the two groups that need to be acknowledged by teachers, administrators, and policy-makers. With such acknowledgement comes the hope that improving enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of Black males can be realized.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter One, Introduction and Background, examined the impact of racism in America and its impact on the ways many Black Americans view education. Further, it explored the influence of social, cultural and economic capital on education in general, and on the education of males in particular. Chapter Two, Literature Review, contextualizes the vast literature surrounding the social forces that impact Black males' views on education and their experiences with education, as well as their ability to succeed academically. In particular, this chapter examines the research surrounding race and education, specifically social forces that have indelibly impacted the relationship between Black males and education as posited by Ogbu, Yancey and Collins.

Theoretical Framework

As discussed in Chapter One, Bourdieu believed cultural capital theoretically explained differences in educational outcomes. As described by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), cultural capital embodies the forms of knowledge, skills, education, and social advantages that give an individual a higher status in society. Critical to the development of an individual's cultural capital is the amount of time his or her parents invest instilling

and developing the habits, styles, and behaviors that prepare their children to learn and do well in school, to pursue a college education, and to ultimately attain a college degree.

In his writings on the sociology of education, Bourdieu (1986) posited the role of education was to build the bridge between cultural reproduction and social reproduction. This essential bridge is constructed when the educational system impacts the reproduction of power and relationships between classes. According to Bourdieu, the impact of education on individuals and society is tremendous because the reproduction of cultural capital reflects the values and morals of the dominant class and education neutralizes those values and morals because it acts as a common denominator for all who acquire it.

Coleman built upon Bourdieu's framework of social capital, defining it as a public resource serving to enforce the desired social norms and sanctions within families and communities. According to Coleman (1988), social capital within a family centers on the number of adults and the activities in which they and the children in the family are engaged. Concurrently, social capital within a community refers to the relational ties among adults living in a given neighborhood or involved in a functional community such as church or school. Productive social capital at the community level requires parents knowing other parents in the community either directly or indirectly. In the case of school, this network of social relations provides social capital that allows the parents and the school to work together. This teamwork results in the enforcing of acceptable academic and social behaviors among students to produce academic excellence. Does this premise, however logically sound, apply to disenfranchised Black males and what differences emerge when applied to poor Black males versus not poor Black males?

The notion of capital, in any and all of its various forms, provides a convenient umbrella under which many problems can be shoved. Reducing the many social forces impacting the academic choices of Black males to merely issues of capital, however, is akin to putting a small band aid on a huge and deep wound. While capital may ultimately represent the hub of a very complex societal wheel, there are many spokes connecting to it. This dissertation examines the impact on of three in particular: Ogbu's oppositional theory, Yancey's alienation thesis, and Collins' Black sexual politics

Literature Review

Existing research indicates Black students are not as prepared for the rigors of academia as White students (Hedges & Nowell, 1999; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Confronted with academic difficulties in their early years, their problems accelerate as they advance into high school (Farkas, 1996). Additionally, Black males are disproportionately placed in low academic tracks and special education classes, held back a grade, and suspended from school for academic and/or behavioral reasons (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Hudley, Bank & Hall, 1997). Of critical importance is the fact that Black males shy away from fulfilling the math requirements that have proven to be strong predictors of college enrollment (Adelman, 1999; Walker, 2001).

Research shows academic preparation acts as a strong deterrent to reduced college enrollment for at-risk students, especially when coupled with strong support from parents and other influential adults (Horn, 1997). Capital, however, has a great impact on even the best intentioned and supportive parents. Economic capital (wealth and income) allows parents to supply their children with the types of tools that promote academic

achievement, such as books, computers, and musical instruments, as well as extracurricular activities such as athletics, field trips to museums, concerts, art galleries and the like. Additionally, economic capital affords parents the ability to hire tutors if the children need additional support, send them to the better public schools often found in affluent neighborhoods, or enroll them in private schools if they so choose. Perhaps the biggest advantage of economic capital is its potential to transmit wealth from one generation to the next, thereby providing future generations a head-start in the accumulation of economic capital (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995), an area where Black families consistently lag far behind.

While there is a growing Black middle-class, in 2007 the average annual income of Black families was $40,143, the lowest of Whites, Blacks, Asians/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics.[4] Blacks were also the only race/ethnicity whose largest percentage of families, 18.5%, fell in the lowest annual income bracket (under $15,000).[5] As it relates to capital, the Black middle-class, although financially advantaged over poor Blacks, remains sorely disadvantaged when compared to Whites. Black males with a Bachelor's degree, for example, earned an average income of $53,029 in 2007. Their White counterparts earned an average of $73,477, an income disparity of over $20,000 annually.[6] Additionally, the Black middle-class consists largely of a relatively recent generation of professionals who tend to live in Black communities with subpar public schools, and generally tend to work in non-lucrative fields such as social services,

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[4] *2010 Statistical Abstract of the United States*, Table 680: Money Income of Families--Percent Distribution by Income Level in Constant (2007) Dollars: 1980 to 2007.
[5] *2010 Statistical Abstract of the United States*, Table 680: Money Income of Families--Percent Distribution by Income Level in Constant (2007) Dollars: 1980 to 2007.
[6] *2010 Statistical Abstract of the United States*, Table 277: Mean Earnings by Highest Degree Earned: 2007.

nursing, and education (Patillo-McCoy, 2000; Suazo-Garcia, 2005; Wilson & Allen, 1987). An added problem facing middle class Black parents is the residential segregation that forces many of them to live near, and often in, poor Black communities, making them subject to many of the same social ills negatively impacting the communities in which they reside (Patillo-McCoy, 2000).

The sobering reality is that Black parents, even middle-class professionals, likely do not possess the economic, social and cultural capital that affords them the broad range of resources, knowledge, and tastes inherited by multiple generations of middle and upper class White children and so crucial to academic success (DiMaggio, 1982; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996). Black parents, no matter how much they are concerned and invested in their children's academic success, do not possess the capital and wherewithal to be as effective as White parents in preparing their children for academia and, consequently, the career success that one expects as an outgrowth of a solid education.

A stark example of how this lack of parental capital disadvantages Black children is evident in the *New York Times* article, "To Get an Internship at City Hall, It's Not Always What You Know" (July 20, 2010: A1). The article discussed how "children and relatives of bold face names, like Lloyd C. Blankfein, the chief executive of Goldman Sachs; Peter G. Peterson, co-founder of the Blackstone Group; and Laurence A. Tisch, who was a hotel mogul and chief executive of CBS, landed coveted summer internships at New York's City Hall under Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg.

The article further pointed out that "it is not unusual for young people with connections to win choice internships in all kinds of workplaces. But the records offer a glimpse inside the social and power circles of the Bloomberg administration, which has

accommodated dozens of young people with connections to the mayor's friends, business associates and government appointees for the prestigious, if unpaid, slots." None of the 14 interns mentioned in the article were Black.

The societal, school, and communal factors that often result in negative educational outcomes for Black males were foregrounded within the context of Yancey's (2003) alienation thesis. Yancey explained that because race is not a biological creation, but a social one, American society could easily change how it defines majority group status. He asserted that previous racial minorities have experienced a definitional change, so that they are now seen as part of the majority. Consequently, they changed their own perceptions of American society. Supporting White Americans then became in their best interests. Yancey believed this shift in racial and societal perception should be acknowledged, or the size of future majority groups might consistently be underestimated.

This supposition is critical to Yancey's alienation thesis because Black Americans have suffered from "a qualitatively different level of alienation than did the two other major racial minority groups in American society: Latino and Asian Americans" (Yancey, 2003: 13). Yancey posited that, because of this unusually oppressive alienation, Blacks had not been able to experience the process of assimilation other racial groups have realized. Absent the ability to become part of the mainstream society, Blacks were destined to remain an outcast and marginalized race.

While Yancey did not discuss his thesis in relation to education, this dissertation asserts that his alienation thesis is essential to explaining the disengagement of Black men from the education process. Fundamental to the alienation thesis is the notion that

because Blacks are denied the relative freedom to assimilate that Latinos and Asians are afforded, "eventually the racial status of blacks will be the most inflexible racial designation in American society (Yancey, 2003: 156)." Because Latinos and Asians are intermarrying with Whites at much higher percentages than Blacks (U.S Census Bureau, 2004), demographers predict that by 2050 the color line will no longer separate Blacks from Whites, but Blacks from everyone else. "In the America of the middle of the [21st century] it might look like the race problem is a black problem and these other groups maybe followed some other kind of model into some kind of pluralistic acceptance" (Fletcher, 1998).

If we accept the premise that America's racial divide resembles a caste system in which Blacks occupy the lowest social positions and White Europeans the highest (Merton, 1941); and that Americans exist in a multilayered system of "color grading" in which there is a direct correlation between intensity of discrimination and darkness of one's complexion; (Geschwender, 1978; Metzger, 1971); the kind of alienation Yancey described may serve as a daunting deterrent to increased enrollment, retention and graduation rates of Black men.

Ogbu (2003) also argued that Black students shied away from education, often resorting to "dumbing themselves down" – putting on the appearance of being less intelligent and less academically capable than they actually were – to avoid being accused of "acting White" by their Black peers. If education, with its assumed expectation of proper classroom comportment and the ability to speak "proper" English, is perceived as acting White and, therefore, is defined as improper behavior within the cultural norms of the Black community, attaining a formal education is not a collectively

desirable goal. Indeed, oppositional theory suggests the more education Blacks receive, the more ostracized and disenfranchised they become in their own communities.

Ogbu further determined that discrimination in society and school elicited certain responses from Black Americans. Central to that response is what Ogbu labeled collective identity (or fictive kinship) and cultural frame of reference. Collective identity manifests itself in the way people sense who they are or, put another way, by their sense of belonging. Ogbu referred to emblems or cultural symbols used to express a community's attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and language or dialect. Cultural frame of reference works in conjunction with cultural identity. From Ogbu's perspective, cultural frame of reference referred to the correct way of behaving from the perspective of the disenfranchised Black American. Because acting White is perceived as a negative behavior, "contemporary Blacks adopt definite strategies to cope with the demand that they adopt certain 'White' attitudes and behaviors in White institutions and establishments" (Ogbu, 2003: 49).

While Ogbu's oppositional theory has been soundly challenged (Cook & Ludwig, 1998; Horvat & Lewis, 2003), so much so that Ogbu himself would later concede that the major points of contention remained unresolved (Ogbu, 2008), his theory still pertains to an analysis of black students and academic success.

Additionally, Patricia Hill Collins' theories of Black sexual politics add dynamic and vital elements to the discourse on Black men in higher education. Collins asserted that in the post-civil rights era, "gender… emerged as a prominent feature of what some call[ed] a 'new' racism… African American men and women both [were] affected by racism, but in gender-specific ways" (Collins, 2005:7). According to Collins, social

practices, shaped by gender, race and sexuality, informed not only the way Black men and women treated one another, but also the way they were perceived and treated by others. Collins believed that Black men were subjected to varying levels of verbal and physical violence by authority figures in all walks of life, including the authorities in school. As a result, Black men became fearful, angry, and, even worse, dangerous to others and to themselves.

That Black Americans confront struggles with sexual politics is not unique. Collins pointed out that many social groups, including White women, Latino men, gay and lesbian Asian immigrants, and others have encountered distinctive sexual politics. Black men, however, must live with the constant burden of media images portraying dominant society's ideas of Black masculinity. The impact of early and ongoing media images – from the portrayal of Black males as oversexed brutes lusting for White women in the 1915 landmark film, *The Birth Of A Nation* (Bogle, 1994), to representations of weak Black primitives in subjugation, to images of the wise and mighty White Tarzan in the Black man's own jungle – is critical not only to the relationship between Black males and mainstream society, but also to the ways Black males interact with Black women and with themselves (Collins, 2005).

Ogbu's Oppositional Identity, Black Males, and Education

In what ways do Black Sexual Politics influence Black males' perception of higher education as a viable pathway to success, and what differences, if any, emerge when class enters the model?

John Ogbu (1939-2003), a Nigerian-American scholar, co-authored (with Signithia Fordham) a 1986 study determining that many African American students did not aspire to achieve their full academic potential because they feared being accused of "acting White." Ogbu further explored this phenomenon in his 2003 book *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement*. Central to Ogbu's premise was his notion that American immigrants could be divided into two distinct groups: voluntary minorities and involuntary (or caste-like) minorities. Those falling into the former group were immigrants who chose to come to the United States--for example, Chinese, West Indians and Europeans; the latter group were descendants of groups brought to the United States and/or living under U.S. jurisdiction against their will, as in the case of African Americans. Ogbu argued that involuntary immigrants often adopted an "oppositional identity" to the mainstream culture. In the case of Black Americans, this "oppositional identity" was, in effect, a response to the glass ceiling imposed by the White mainstream limiting not only the career options available to Blacks, but also the level of success that could be achieved within those limited career options.

Oppositional identity is reliant on peer influence, since it is a group identity versus an individual one. The research on peer influence generally divides it into two areas: contextual and proximate. Contextual peer influence refers to the influence that a school's racial and socioeconomic make-up has on educational outcomes and focuses on the academic and social climate that schools promote as a result of their socioeconomic composition. Proximate peer influence, on the other hand, examines the attitudes and behaviors of students and their peers to determine the impact peer groups have on

academic outcomes (Suazo-Garcia, 2005). Ogbu's oppositional identity and subsequent studies fall within the latter, the general belief being that peers with similar attitudes towards education experience similar trajectories (Alvin & Atto, 1997; Falsey & Heyns, 1984; Kao 2001;).

Ogbu's oppositional identity, with its wealth of supporters and detractors, remains at the core of discussions of the impact of peer influence on racial disparities in education. The initial phase of Ogbu's focus was on the disparities in educational outcomes between involuntary minorities and a given society's dominant group. This aspect of Ogbu's studies focused on how the desires of the dominant group resulted in systemic discrimination against the involuntary immigrants. This is often evidenced in oppressive societies by the institutional discrimination derived through poorly educating involuntary minorities. A direct result of this inferior education is the lack of employment opportunities and upward mobility in the workforce.

The second phase of Ogbu's studies focused on responses to social and cultural conditions -- social forces -- that impact the integration, or lack thereof, of involuntary minorities into the White American mainstream. It is in this phase of his work that Ogbu stressed the impact the attitudes of peers have on attitudes toward education exhibited by historically oppressed and disadvantaged involuntary minorities (Ogbu & Simmons 1998; Fordham & Ogbu 1986). In this phase of his work, Ogbu posited that the resistance of Black students to academic success accounted, in large part, for the disparities in Black-White academic performance. Their lack of faith in education as a conduit to the same levels of job opportunities and career growth it afforded Whites, Ogbu maintained, explained the anti-academic sentiment found amongst Black students (Ogbu, 1978).

This resistance to academia is passed along via a peer culture that perceives academic achievement as "acting White" and "acting White" as rejection of Black culture and pride (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Suazo-Garcia, 2005). Acquiring the "acting White" label often results in Black students receiving unfavorable sanctions from their peers. To avoid being ostracized, then, Black students may choose to adhere to the norms and values of their peers, reject their peers by choosing not to associate with them, or participate in extracurricular activities that gain them popularity amongst Black peers without jeopardizing their in-class success. In order to do well in school and still be accepted by their peers, Black students must assume a "raceless" persona (Fordham,1988, 1996; Suazo-Garcia, 2005).

Because of this unique social phenomenon, Ogbu and his associates maintained that Black peer culture was the precursor to Black-White academic achievement differences. While Ogbu and his associates did not specifically examine differences between Black male and female students, Fordham (1996) suggested Black males struggled more than Black females when it came to successfully maintaining the balancing act between doing well in school and being socially accepted in the "fictive" kinship community of their fellow Black students.

It must be noted, however, that Ogbu's "acting White" thesis has had many detractors. While some studies have supported the oppositional theory (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Fordham, 1998; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998), detractors have pointed out that these studies are mostly qualitative and disproportionately produced by Ogbu and his associates (Suazo-Garcia, 2005). Several quantitative studies have been produced that challenge the notion that a monolithic anti-education peer culture disproportionately

accounts for lowered educational performance by Black students (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Cook & Ludwig, 1998; Downey & Ainsworth-Darnel, 2002). Additionally, ethnographic studies by Carter (2003) and O'Connor (1999), for example, have indicated that Blacks have multiple social identities and that these various social identities frame how they perceive their social world. Other studies have pointed to the diversity of friendships that Black students form, ranging from friends with whom they can share academic success to those with whom they "dumb down" to avoid negative peer sanctions, as further evidence that Ogbu's "acting White" thesis is an oversimplified and incomplete analysis (Horvat & Lewis, 2003). These bodies of research have suggested that an oppositional outlook towards academic success does not represent the majority of Black students.

Yancey's Alienation Thesis

Minority groups that assimilate do so because they are accepted by the mainstream culture. Yancey's alienation thesis argues that not only are Blacks less accepted than any other minority group by America's White mainstream culture, they face a unique form of non-acceptance because they cannot engage in the same level of assimilation as non-Black racial minorities. The result is, unlike Hispanic and Asian minority groups, Blacks have reduced social status and power because they are estranged from Whites. This estrangement, as posited by Yancey, "leads to a more accurate way of assessing the inability of African Americans to assimilate into the dominant society" (Yancey 2003: 13). Assessing this inability is the basis of his "alienation" thesis.

The alienation thesis is rooted in the supposition that Blacks have suffered a different, and more uniquely oppressive, form of alienation than have Latinos and Asians, the two other major racial minority groups in America. While these other groups have managed to find acceptance into the dominant group status, Blacks, because they have not, appear destined to remain an outcast race. For many, this alienation leads to the oppositional culture described by Ogbu. But those who want to assimilate into the mainstream find that the barriers or social forces they face do not allow them entry into the dominant culture.

Minority groups experiencing a great deal of acceptance by the mainstream culture are afforded the opportunity to assimilate. The majority group will be more open to accepting these individuals as neighbors and in-laws. This acceptance, because it ultimately can lead to the minority group enjoying many of the social advantages experienced by the dominant group, is embraced by the minority group members, who over time, begin to perceive of themselves as majority group members. Once their perception of self begins to change, they begin to share the racial attitudes of the dominant group.

This structural assimilation permits minority group members to develop primary group relationships with members of the dominant group, ultimately leading to an increased tolerance of marital assimilation by both. The ability to intermarry without social stigma must occur before a minority group can completely assimilate into the mainstream culture (Gordon, 1964; Yancey, 2003). A 1998 article in a *Washington Post* series on America's race relations reported that almost one-third of U.S.-born Hispanics ages 25 to 34 married non-Hispanic whites. Furthermore, 36% of young Asian Pacific

American men born in the United States married White women, and 45% of U.S.-born Asian Pacific American women married White men, while the vast majority of Native Americans married Whites. In harmony with Yancey's alienation thesis, the article stated that "some observers fear the emerging portrait [of race relations in America] points to a future where many African Americans will still find themselves on the other side of the color line. But rather than separating them from whites, this line could separate blacks from everyone else" (Fletcher, 1998).

The changing racial landscape in the United States is further evidenced by the fact that an analysis of 1990 census data indicated that almost one-third of children with a White father and Black mother identified themselves as White. The numbers represented close to a 50% increase over 1980 figures reporting that less than 25% identified as White. Analysis of the 1990 data also indicated half of the children with a White father and a Native American mother identified as White, while more than half of the children with a White father and Japanese or Chinese mother identified as White (Fletcher, 1998).

The statistics on interracial marriage and self-identification (Lewis, 1994; Lewis & Yancey, 1995; Spickard, 1989), support the two basic premises of Yancey's alienation thesis: First, that Blacks in America will continue to encounter alienation at a disproportionate level; and, second, that non-Black racial minorities will, over time, begin to claim dominant group status. These facts have led researchers to predict that Whites will not become a numerical minority group in the near future because of changing attitudes toward racial identification. Furthermore, as Latinos and Asians are accepted more than Blacks into the mainstream culture, and as they embrace their conjoined status with the White mainstream, Blacks, in this new Black/non-Black divide,

are destined to remain tethered to the bottom rungs of racial hierarchy in the United States (Glazer, 1993).

Furthermore, avoiding being labeled Black gives non-Black racial groups a distinct advantage over Blacks when it comes to assimilating into the mainstream culture. Being something other than Black affords non-Black racial groups the opportunity to eventually assume a White racial identity. Blacks, therefore, not only remain at the lowest level of social prestige in America, but their prospects for attaining a more level social status are slim, because it is in the social interests of every non-Black racial group to keep Blacks at the bottom (Yancey, 2003; Warren & Twine, 1997).

Yancey argued that as Latinos and Asians developed what he called "a thinner racial identity," moving towards acceptance of the majority group status, the White/non-White racial dichotomy that traditionally had been accepted in the United States would eventually be replaced by a Black/non-Black dichotomy. "Instead of evaluating the social acceptance of a group by how 'white' they are, it will be more important to assess the social rejection of a group by how 'black' they are" (Yancey, 2003: 15).

Can education intervene in the social forces driving Yancey's alienation thesis for Black males willing to succeed at school? Can it provide a pathway to success for Black males despite the enormous obstacles facing them? The lack of interest Black males exhibit in pursuing higher education strongly suggests they do not believe so.

Patricia Hill Collins and Black Sexual Politics

Sexual politics in general explore the ideas and social practices shaped by gender, race, and sexuality that frame the ways men and women treat each other, as well as how

men and women are perceived and treated by others. This is true of Black sexual politics as well (Collins, 2005). Patricia Collins asserted, however, that Black sexual politics is unique, because in order "to confront social inequality, African Americans need an analysis of Black masculinity and Black femininity that questions the links between prevailing Black sexual politics, their connection to Black gender ideology, and struggles for African American empowerment in response to the new racism" (Collins, 2005: 7).

Collins further pointed out that Black gender ideology is the basis upon which patterns of opportunity and discrimination impacting Black men and women in schools, jobs, government agencies, and other American social institutions are justified. Because of a much larger pattern of gender ideology specific to Black men, they are forced to endure on a daily basis an array of social challenges other groups do not. Such authority figures as school principals, police officers, and even lower level security guards, subject Black men to varying levels of verbal and physical violence, leaving Black men living with constant fear and anger, often resulting in their endangering others and themselves.

To make clear the impact of Black sexual politics on the collective psyches of Black males, Collins relied on Black popular culture and mass media as sources of evidence that race, gender and sexuality have ideological frameworks serving to organize social institutions. This dissertation focuses on Collins' analysis of mass media in relation to Black sexual politics and the impact mass media imagery of Black males has on their career choices and their lack of belief in education as a pathway to success.

From the beginnings of slavery in America, Black men have been portrayed as dangerous, savage, hypersexual brutes whose lust for White women was unquenchable. As evidenced by the lore of heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson, the advent of

mass media technologies that emerged around the outset of the twentieth century profoundly promulgated this stereotype. Johnson, a bruising boxer, had been denied the opportunity to fight for the championship. Blacks fought for championships in other weight divisions, but as the crown jewel of the sport, the world heavyweight championship was off limits to them.

Finally given the opportunity, Johnson won the world heavyweight title on December 26, 1908. That victory caused such racial animosity among Whites that outcries ensued for a "Great White Hope" to take the title away from Johnson. After beating a series of lesser contenders, Johnson, on July 4, 1910, fought former undefeated heavyweight champion James J. Jeffries. Coming out of retirement, Jeffries proclaimed, "I feel obligated to the sporting public at least to make an effort to reclaim the heavyweight championship for the white race. . . . I should step into the ring again and demonstrate that a white man is king of them all" (Hoffer, 2010; Roberts, 1983). Johnson pummeled him.

Johnson, arguably the first Black celebrity to benefit from modern mass media technologies, unfortunately fit the stereotype of the dangerous, Black brute who lusted for White women. Frequently photographed with White women -- Johnson had a taste for White prostitutes -- he, wittingly or not, fed into virtually all the fears Whites harbored for Black men. He drove fancy cars, dressed quite fashionably, and, most importantly of all, he openly flaunted the many White women he dated, slept with, and eventually married. He was, in essence, the epitome of the image of the brutal Black buck forcefully and fearfully brought to the big screen in the 1915 landmark film, *The Birth of a Nation* (Bogle, 1994).

Other images of Black males prevailed. Film historian Donald Bogle cited "the tom" (the socially acceptable Good Negro character) and "the coon" (Blacks as buffoonish amusement objects). But perhaps more so than any other, it was the image of the brutal Black buck and his unyielding appetite for White women, perpetuated for decades by the nation's White male controlled and dominated mass media machines, that most profoundly impacted not only the ways in which Whites viewed Black males, but also the ways in which everybody, including Blacks and other racial minorities, viewed and related to Black males. Images of the faithful and hapless "tom," the shiftless and lazy "coon," and the frighteningly savage brutal Black buck, portrayed in all forms of mass media, have had, and continue to have, a dramatic impact on Black cultural identity in the United States.

Contribution to the Field

Much has been written regarding the absence of Black men in higher education. A good deal of the existing literature, however, when suggesting policies and program initiatives designed to enroll, retain and graduate Black males, tends to discuss Black males as if they are a monolithic group. Speaking to that point, many social scientists have argued that most researchers speak of Blacks, but focus only on the underprivileged class (Jeynes, 2005; Muller, 1998; Peressini, 1998). This dissertation hopes to add another perspective by specifically determining what, if any, differences exist in the overall and relative impact of a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables on the educational outcomes of a nationally representative group of Black male

students when viewed through the comparative lens of low and not low socioeconomic status.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The preceding chapters explored the social forces impacting the attitudes of Black males toward education, as well as the sociological theories that provide a framework for analyzing such forces. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, Chapters One and Two also discussed this dissertation's interest in examining differences in educational conduits and barriers for low versus not-low socioeconomic Black males. Chapter Three explains the methodology utilized in this study.

This dissertation examines and contrasts the conduits and barriers to educational success for a nationally representative sample of Black males of low socioeconomic status versus Black males of not-low socioeconomic status across a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables. It draws from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS), a nationally representative panel study of American students that followed the same students from 1988, when they were eighth graders, through 2000, eight years after their scheduled high school graduation.

The dissertation uses hierarchical regression modeling to examine the variance between the low and not-low Black male socioeconomic groups. Hierarchical regression modeling allows for a demonstration of which independent variables have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of low socioeconomic status,

and which have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of not-low socioeconomic status.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section, *Dataset*, provides a detailed description of how NELS was designed, how respondents were selected, and the components included in the study. The second section, *Analytic Samples*, discusses how and why the analytical samples were constructed for analysis. The third section, *Measures*, describes the outcome variables and predictors used in the analysis. Also included is a discussion of the sample weights used and how the dissertation addresses NELS' non-random sample design and missing data. The last section, *Analytic Strategy*, describes the data analysis methods and strategy.

Dataset

The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS) is administered by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). It is a nationally representative panel study that followed a cohort of eighth graders for twelve years as they moved through high school and into post-secondary education or employment. NELS consists of a base year study and four follow-ups. The base year study utilized a two-stage stratified probability design to select a nationally representative sample of eighth graders attending American public and private schools in 1988. Schools constitute the first stage in sampling. Students within the sampled schools represent the second stage.

A random sample of students in each participating school produced a base year student sample of 24,599 eighth graders who attended 1,052 American public and private

middle schools, representing approximately 23 students per school sampled (Curtin *et al*, 2002). Subsequent follow-ups were conducted during high school and several years after the eighth graders were scheduled to complete high school. The first follow-up was in 1990 when the eighth graders were expected to be in the tenth grade. The second follow-up occurred in 1992 when the eighth graders were expected to be in the twelfth grade. The third follow-up took place in 1994, two years after the 1988 participants were expected to have completed high school. The fourth follow-up, referred to as the final wave, was in 2000, eight years after the 1988 eighth grade cohort was expected to have completed high school.

In addition to following the same cohort of 1988 eighth graders throughout the four follow-up years, NCES "freshened" the original sample in 1990 and 1992 by surveying a nationally representative sample of students who were not included in the previous waves of the study. An example of a 1990 "freshened" student is a student who, in 1990, was a tenth grader attending an American high school, but was not represented in the 1988 base year survey because he or she was not in the eighth grade or was in the eighth grade but not living in the United States in 1988. An example of a 1992 "freshened" student is a student who was neither an eighth grader attending an American middle school in 1988, nor a tenth grader attending an American high school in 1990, but who, in 1992, was a twelfth grader enrolled in an American high school.

The refreshing process allows for the 1990 and 1992 follow-ups to be nationally representative samples of American tenth and twelfth graders in their respective years, thus providing researchers the opportunity to conduct cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses on the eighth, tenth, or twelfth grade cohort. Put another way, the refreshing

process yields a representative pool of American middle school and high school students of diverse backgrounds and educational experiences by accounting for the influx of immigrants since 1965, particularly from Latin America and the Caribbean (Haslip-Viera, 1996; Kasinitz, 1992; Lopez, 2003; Portes, 1996) and the reality that many students do not progress in sequential grade order and therefore may be out of their model grade (Dawson, 1998; Hauser, 1999).

During the eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades, students completed surveys and curriculum-sensitive cognitive tests. The surveys provided information about the students' educational, vocational, and personal development. The surveys asked students about their academic experience, educational aspirations and expectations, future career and educational plans, peer relationships, extracurricular activities, student-teacher interactions, parental support and involvement, family formation, and work experience. The cognitive tests were designed to measure students' achievement and cognitive growth. NCES also conducted surveys of parents when students reached the eighth and twelfth grades, and obtained high school transcripts in the twelfth grade. These additional instruments augmented student responses to provide more accurate data on student demographics and academic performance.

Analytic Samples

The original sampling design of NELS involved a clustered stratified national probability sample of 1,052 American middle grade public and private schools from which 24,599 students were interviewed in the base year 1988. Most of those students

were re-interviewed in another four rounds of data collection in the years 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000.

To analyze the specific cognitive problem under investigation, this dissertation selected three out of five waves of data collection: Base-Year Study (NELS:88), Second Follow-up Study (NELS:88/1992), and Fourth Follow-up Study (NELS:88/2000). Subsequently, since the dissertation focuses on Black-Non Hispanic Male Students, a specific sub-sample was drawn. All the selected respondents included in this dissertation are those who responded to the questionnaires in all the chosen waves and, for this purpose, the most appropriate selector – 'Panel flag, member BY, F1, F2, F3, and F4 (F4PNFL)' – was used.

Weights were used to account for the unequal probability of students having been selected in the NELS sample. For example, Black-Non Hispanic Students were oversampled and the appropriate weight that ensured their national representativeness was 'Panel weight, BY, F1, F2, F3, and F4 (F4PNWT).' After the selection, the sub-sample totals 527 cases. Further drop in the sub-sample size is caused by missing data.

While the small sample size afforded by NELS presents a potential area of concern for this dissertation, the lack of research on large samples of children of color is a problem that has been raised by other researchers (Jeynes, 2005). Despite these concerns, many researchers have utilized NELS data to disaggregate Black male and/or female students. Amongst them, Carpenter & Ramirez (2007) used data from NELS to disaggregate racial groups in their examination of academic achievement gaps among Black, White, and Hispanic students. Hawkins & Mulkey (2005) relied on NELS to disaggregate Black males and Black females in their study of the impact of gender on the

association between sports participation and students' educational opportunities and outcomes. Jeynes (2005) utilized NELS to disaggregate Black students separated into four socioeconomic sub-groups in order to analyze the effects of parental involvement on the academic achievement of Black youth. Battle (1998) utilized NELS to disaggregate Black students of lower and higher socioeconomic status in his study of educational outcomes for Black students in single versus dual-parent households. Additionally, Stewart (2007) drew from NELS to disaggregate Black students while exploring the extent to which individual-level and school structural variables predicted academic achievement among a sample of tenth grade Black students.

Measures

What follows is the list of variables selected to conduct the study. After the dependent measures, the operational definitions of the independent predictors are presented according to the semantic area/domain of belonging.

Dependent Variables

1) 'Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1992' is a variable already existing in the NELS Dataset (F22XCOMP 'Standardized Test Composite, Reading, Math') measuring the score students had on the combined standardized test of reading and mathematics in the spring of 1992 (Second Follow-up).

2) 'Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000' is the logical combination of two original variables: 'Type of HS Diploma Received as of 2000' (F4HSTYPE = from 1, 'HS diploma,' to 4, 'no diploma or equivalent'), and 'Highest Post Secondary

Educational degree attained as of 2000' (F4HHDG ranges from 1 = 'some PSE no degree attained,' to 6 = 'Ph.D. or a professional degree'). The resulting outcome has, as a consequence, a range from: 0 = 'less than HS diploma/GED'; 1 = 'HS diploma/GED'; 2 = 'Some PSE, no degree attained'; 3 = 'Certificate/license'; 4 = 'Associates degree'; 5 = 'Bachelors degree'; 6 = 'Masters degree/equivalent'; 7 = 'PhD or a professional degree'.

Independent Variables

- Eighth Grade Control Variable:

'Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1988' is a variable already existing in the NELS Dataset (BY2XCOMP 'Standardized Test Composite, Reading, Math') measuring the score students had on the combined standardized test of reading and mathematics in the Spring of 1988 (Base Year). This predictor was chosen, on the one hand, to account for ceiling and floor effect on the first dependent variable, and, on the other hand, as an indicator of academic preparation on the second outcome.

- School Context and Background Characteristics:

'Private School' is a dummy variable indicating whether the school the respondent attended was private (coded 1) or public (coded 0). The original measure is G8CTRL 'School Control Composite.'

'Eighth Grade Total Enrollment' is an original ordinal item measuring the number of students enrolled in eighth grade in the school attended by the respondent. It ranges from 1 = '1-49 students,' through 6 = '400+ students.'

'Urban' (reference category) is a dummy variable indicating whether the school the respondent attended is from an urban area (coded 1) or not (coded 0). This dummy and the following two variables, result from the recoding of G8URBAN 'Urbanicity Composite.'

'Suburban' is a dummy variable indicating whether the school the respondent attended is from a suburban area (coded 1) or not (coded 0).

'Rural' is a dummy variable indicating whether the school the respondent attended is from a rural area (coded 1) or not (coded 0).

'Percent Minority in School' is a continuous variable taken from the original dataset (G8MINOR ranges from 0 = 'none,' to 7 = 91-100%) aimed to measure the percentage of students considered minority in the school attended by the respondent. The range runs from: 0 = '0%'; 1 = '1-5%'; 2 = '6-10%'; 3 = '11-20%'; 4 = '21-40%'; 5 = '41-60%'; 6 = '61-90%'; 7 = '91-100%'.

'Socio-Economic Status' (SES) is a composite variable consisting of both parents' educational levels, both parents' occupations, and family income; it was created by NCES. This variable varies in overall population from -2.88 through 2.56; however, its range in the specific sub-sample of Black-Non Hispanic Male Students runs from -2.04 through 1.76. One of the goals of the dissertation is to compare the multivariate influence that the selected independent variables have on both (dependent variables) school achievement in 1992, and school attainment in 2000, between students of lower and higher socio-economic status. Considering the need of having homogeneous groups in terms of socio-economic status with a comparable sample size, the sample of Black males is split in half by choosing as cutting point SES = -.408. After this operation, 49.0% (N_0 =

258) of the sample is identified as having ‘low SES,’ while the remaining 51.0% (N_1 = 269) is labeled as having a ‘not-low SES.’

'Respondent’s Age in Years in Eighth Grade' is a continuous variable calculated by subtracting the year of birth (F2BIRTHY ‘Birth Year Sample Member’) from 1988.

'Respondent Employment Status' has been conceptualized in terms of increasing time dedicated to a job outside the household. The original categorical variable (F2N11 ‘Respondent’s Current Employment Situation’) ranges from 1 = ‘working part-time,’ through 9 = ‘none of the above.’ The recoding produces a quasi-continuous measure ranging from: 0 = ‘not working’; 1 = ‘working part-time’; 2 = ‘working full-time.’

'Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One' is a dummy variable created by collapsing the values of the original item ‘Respondent Has any Children of His/Her Own’ (F2S76 ranges from 1 =‘yes, I do,’ to 3 = ‘no, but expecting’). It indicates whether the respondent already has or is expecting a child in short time (coded 1) or no child at all (coded 0).

'Family Size' (originally BYFAMSIZ), is a count measure of the component of the family with whom the respondent was living at the time of the interview in 1988.

'Respondent Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School' is a dummy variable created by collapsing the categories of F2N11 ‘# Respondent’s Siblings Left HS Before Graduation:’ from 0 = ‘none,’ to 5 = ‘two+ left school.’ The new predictor has a value of ‘0’ if the respondent does not have any sibling who left high school without graduating, and ‘1’ if this applies at least to one sibling.

'Objectified Cultural Capital in Household' is a scale obtained by summing up the (dichotomous) scores of a battery of 16 items. Taken in their original order, they are (NELS variable name and label):

1) BYS35A 'Respondent's Family Has Specific Place for Study;'
2) BYS35B 'Respondent's Family Has a Daily Newspaper;'
3) BYS35C 'Respondent's Family Has Regularly Received Magazine;'
4) BYS35D 'Respondent's Family Has an Encyclopedia;'
5) BYS35E 'Respondent's Family Has an Atlas;'
6) BYS35F 'Respondent's Family Has a Dictionary;'
7) BYS35G 'Respondent's Family Has a Typewriter;'
8) BYS35H 'Respondent's Family Has a Computer;'
9) BYS35I 'Respondent's Family Has an Electric Dishwasher;'
10) BYS35J 'Respondent's Family Has a Clothes Dryer;'
11) BYS35K 'Respondent's Family Has a Washing Machine;'
12) BYS35L 'Respondent's Family Has a Microwave Oven;'
13) BYS35M 'Respondent's Family Has more than 50 Books;'
14) BYS35N 'Respondent's Family Has a VCR;'
15) BYS35O 'Respondent's Family Has a Pocket Calculator;'
16) BYS35P 'Respondent Has Own Bedroom.'

The original scores of all 16 items (from 1 ='have,' to 2 ='do not have') have been rescaled into 0 = 'do not have,' and 1 ='have' before executing the sum-command.

- Attitudes towards Education (Parents and Respondent):

'Mother's Educational Aspiration' is an original variable (BYS48A 'How Far in School Respondent's Mother Wants Respondent to Go'). The range runs from: 1 ='did not finish high school'; 2 ='graduated from high school or equivalent (GED)'; 3 ='after graduating from high school, attended a vocational school, a junior college, a community college, or another type of two-year school'; 4 ='after graduating from high school, went to college but did not complete a four-year degree'; 5 ='graduated from college'; 6 ='Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced professional degree'.

'Locus of Control' is a composite measure created by NCES (BYLOCUS1 'Locus 1 Locus of Control') measuring the general attitude and control one has over own life.

'Self Concept' is a composite variable created by NCES (BYCNCPT1 'Self Concept 1') measuring the attitude towards oneself.

'Respondent's Educational Aspiration' is an original variable (BYS45 'How Far in School Do You Think You Will Get'). The range runs from: 1 = 'won't finish high school'; 2 = 'will graduate from high school, but won't go any further'; 3 = 'will go to vocational, trade, or business school after high school'; 4 = 'will attend college'; 5 =' will graduate from college'; 6 = 'will attend a higher level of school after graduating from college'.

'Respondent Plans To Go to School Right after High School' (F2S49) is a dummy variable having a value of 0 = 'no' and 1 = 'yes.'

'Frequency Respondent Discussed Going to College with Parents' is the rescaled version of the original ordinal variable 'Discussed Going to College with Parents' (F2S99F) whose range was from: 1 = 'never' through 3 ='often'. The range of the rescaled variable runs from: 0 = 'never'; 1 = 'sometimes'; 2 = 'often.'

- School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent):

'Parental Involvement' is a scale obtained by combining a set of four original variables aiming to assess whether or not (1 = yes, 2 = no) respondent's parents. Taken in their original order, these are:

1) BYS37A 'Attended a School Meeting;'
2) BYS37B 'Spoke to Teacher/Counselor;'
3) BYS37C 'Visited Respondent's Class;'
4) BYS37D 'Attended a School Event.'

Before adding the scores of those variables, the original coding was changed to '0 = no, 1 = yes'

'Academic Disengagement' is a continuous predictor which equals to the mean of a battery of 6 items; they are:

1) BYS55A 'Respondent Sent to Office for Misbehaving;'
2) BYS55B 'Respondent Sent to Office with School Work Problems;'
3) BYS55C 'Parents Received Warning about Attendance;'
4) BYS55D 'Parents Received Warning about Grades;'
5) BYS55E 'Parents Received Warning about Behavior;'
6) BYS55F 'Respondent Got into Fight with another Student.'

All items range from 0= 'never,' through 2= 'more than twice.' The index of reliability for this scale is $\alpha = .75$.

'Respondent Joined the Armed Forces or Plans To Do So' was created through dummy recoding of F2S48A 'Does Respondent Plans to Join Armed Forces,' assigning

the original categories from 2= ‘yes, joined,’ through 4= ‘yes, in future’ equal 1 and 0 ‘no’ otherwise.

'Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School,' originally from the NELS Dataset as F2N16, ‘Has Respondent Ever Been Held Back a Grade in School’ is a dummy variable with value 0 = ‘no’ and 1 = ‘yes.’

'Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities' is an original item (F2S31) measuring the total time that the respondent spends in a typical week in school sponsored extracurricular activities such as clubs, sports, and/or other activities. The range runs from: 0 = ‘none’; 1 = ‘less than one hour per week’; 2 = ‘one to four hours per week’; 3 = ‘five to nine hours per week’; 4 = ‘10-14 hours per week’; 5 = ‘15-19 hours per week’; 6 = ‘20-24 hours per week’; 7 = ‘25 hours or more per week’.

'Number of Tests Taken/Thought to Take for College Application' is a continuous measure equal the sum of 6 items:

1) F2S44A ‘Has Respondent Taken the Pre-SAT Test;’
2) F2S44B ‘Has Respondent Taken College Board SAT Test;’
3) F2S44C ‘Has Respondent Taken the ACT Test;’
4) F2S44D ‘Has Respondent Taken the Advancement Placement Test;’
5) F2S44E ‘Has Respondent Taken the ASVAB;’
6) F2S44F ‘Has R. Taken Other Admissions Test.’

Before executing the sum, all items were recoded such that the original categories 3 = ‘yes already took,’ and 4 = ‘yes plan to take’ become ‘1’ while the remaining ones are recoded ‘0.’

'Level of Research of Information on Financial Aid for College Education' is a continuous predictor created as a sum of seven original items:

1) F2S58A ‘Respondent Talked to Teacher/Counselor about Financial Aid;’
2) F2S58B ‘Respondent Talked to School Representative about Financial Aid;’
3) F2S58C ‘Respondent Talked to Loan Officer about Financial Aid;’
4) F2S58D ‘Respondent Read U.S. Department of Education Information on Financial Aid;’
5) F2S58E ‘Respondent Read Information from School on Financial Aid;’
6) F2S58F ‘Respondent Read about Financial Aid through Military;’
7) F2S58G ‘Respondent Talked to Adult about Financial Aid.’

The original coding (1 = ‘yes’ and 2 = ‘no’) is rescaled into 0 = ‘no’ and 1 = ‘yes’ before executing the sum-command.

'How Often Parents Limit Time Watching TV' is a variable obtained by flipping and rescaling the original variable, ‘How Often Parents Limit Time Watching TV’ (BYS38C = from 1= ‘often,’ to 4= ‘never’). This variable was flipped in order to have a semantic direction congruent with the increase of the numerical values; after that, since the lowest category was at this point ‘never,’ it seemed more appropriate to recode the variable in such a manner that the lowest category corresponded to ‘0’. The rescaled, flipped range runs from: 0 = ‘never’; 1 = ‘rarely’; 2 = ‘sometimes’; 4 = ‘often’.

Analytic Strategy

While NELS compared unweighted frequencies of ‘Low SES’ and ‘High SES’ subpopulations, researchers have utilized the data to further divide these socioeconomic

groups into quartiles (Jeynes, 2005). Preliminary analysis for this dissertation indicates half of the Black males surveyed fall into the lowest quartile and rank the lowest when compared to the socioeconomic status of their White male counterparts. Paying particular attention to the import of socioeconomic status, the goal of this dissertation is to examine the overall and relative impact of a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables on the educational outcomes of a nationally representative group of low socioeconomic Black male students and not-low socioeconomic Black male students.

To achieve this goal, hierarchical regression modeling is used. Hierarchical regression modeling ideally helps demonstrate which independent variables have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of low socioeconomic status and which have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of not-low socioeconomic status.

Model 1consists of the eighth grade control variable and standardized test scores.

Model 2 examines the impact of *School Context and Background Characteristics* variables. In the NELS data, this category includes variables such as 'Private School,' 'Percent of Minority in School' and 'Family Size.' Because these variables are a direct reflection of parental socioeconomic status, it is not surprising that existing research has shown them to be important. However, research also shows Black males, more so than many other groups, are often negatively impacted by inadequate adult support at both home and school (DiMaggio, 1982; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996). Entering the labor force and/or military after high school further reduces higher education as a viable option. Thus, Model 2, entrenched in socioeconomic status data, is expected to support this fairly bleak and well documented portrait of Black males in higher education.

In Model 3, variables from NELS cluster under the heading, "Attitudes toward Education (Parents and Respondents)," are added to the regression. These variables begin to construct a model in which variables less directly associated with socioeconomic status reveal their impact. How do the addition of attitudinal variables such as 'Mother's Educational Aspirations,' 'Respondent's Plan to Go to College Right after High School,' and 'Frequency Respondent Discussed Going to College with Parents' impact the overall regression model now that it is moving away from socioeconomic status related variables? Much of the existing research cites parental involvement as the most critical influence on the academic outcomes of youth (Christian, Morrison & Bryant, 1998; Hara, 1998; McBride & Lin, 1996). Model 3, therefore, becomes critical to this study as it potentially swings the pendulum to either hope or despair.

The hierarchical regression modeling utilized in this study continues with Model 4, which, under the NELS category, "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)," includes variables such as 'Parental Involvement,' 'Academic Disengagement,' 'Respondent Joined the Armed Forces or Plans to Do So,' 'Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities,' 'How Often Parents Limit Time Watching Television,' and so forth. These variables allow for further exploration of the relationship between parental and respondent attitudes in the household and towards educational progress.

Existing research has identified factors such as parent support, academic preparation, future outlooks, school support, and academic disengagement as key factors impacting a student's predisposition to pursue a college education. With the large percentage of Black males growing up in single family households in which the parent – usually the mother – has not gone to college, coupled with the high rate of absentee or

jailed fathers (Littles, M.J., Bowers, R., & Gilmer, M., 2008), of particular interest to this study is how these variables affect the educational choices made by these two groups of Black males.

Model 5 introduces the variable 'socioeconomic status.' 'Socioeconomic status,' as created by NCES and utilized by NELS, is a composite variable consisting of 'both parents' educational level and 'both parents'' occupations and family income.

One of the goals of this dissertation is to compare the multivariate influence that the selected independent variables have on the dependent variables – school achievement in 1992, and school attainment in 2000 – between Black male students of low socioeconomic status and Black male students of not-low socioeconomic status. To achieve this goal, the dissertation re-ran the entire hierarchical regression model disaggregating Black male students into two distinct socioeconomic categories: 'Low Socioeconomic Status' and 'Not-low Socioeconomic Status.' These newly created variables replace the dependent variables 'Standardized Test in 1992' and 'Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000' utilized in the first series of hierarchical regression models.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter explores the following research question: When controlling for the effect of socioeconomic status, are there statistically significant differences in the relative impact of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables contributing to educational outcomes for low socioeconomic Black males versus their not-low socioeconomic counterparts? To answer this question, this dissertation utilizes data from the nationally representative National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NELS allows for the tracking of a cohort from the eighth grade in 1988 to 12 years later, in 2000, when most had been out of high school for close to eight years. The base year, 1988, surveyed eighth grade students, as well as their parents and teachers.

What have the young Black men surveyed done with their lives? How many have pursued college educations? How many have graduated from college? How many are at the beginning stages of potentially successful careers? How many have started families and have joined the workforce to meet their mounting obligations? Are there statistically tangible differences regarding the impact of variables on the educational pursuits of low socioeconomic Black males versus their not-low socioeconomic counterparts? NELS provides insight into these and other questions, all critical to understanding how Black males do or do not utilize education as a pathway to success.

The data selected from NELS to facilitate this dissertation focuses on 527 Non-Hispanic Black male students in three out of five waves of the collected data: Base-Year Study (NELS:88), Second Follow-up Study (NELS:88/1992), and Fourth Follow-up Study (NELS:88/2000). To better analyze the conduits and barriers to academic success, hierarchical regression modeling helps demonstrate which independent variables have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of low socioeconomic status and which have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of not-low socioeconomic status.

Throughout this chapter, the term Black males refers to the 527 Black Non-Hispanic males who participated in the NELS survey and, therefore, are the population discussed. When less than the full 527 responded to a particular question, the number of respondents is noted by n=.

Univariate Analysis

Table 4.1 presents descriptive statistics of weighted means, standard deviations, ranges, and descriptions of variables for Black Non-Hispanic males. This table allows for univariate analysis of the distribution of single variables. Table 4.1 provides a synopsis of the 527 Black Non-Hispanic males analyzed in this dissertation.

Dependent Variables

Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1992: Test scores ranged from 27.86 through 67.09 on the standardized composite reading and math test taken by the 1988 cohort expected to be high school seniors in 1992. The average score for Black

males (n=387) was 45.12, indicating that on average Black males scored in the mid-range of overall scores.

Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000: By 2000, eight years after the 1988 cohort's expected graduation from high school, Black males on average had attained some post-secondary education, but no college degree.

Eighth Grade Control Variable

In 1988, when the test was first given, the range of test scores was slightly higher at 32.66 through 72.97. Black males (n=485), however, were constant with an average score of 45.01.

School Context and Background Characteristics

- Private School: 7% of Black males attended private school.
- Eighth Grade Total Enrollment: On average, Black male students attended schools with eighth grade enrollments of approximately 265 students.
- Urban School: 52% of Black males attended schools in urban neighborhoods.
- Suburban School: 30% of Black males attended schools in the suburbs.
- Rural School: 18% of Black males attended schools in rural areas.
- Percent Minority in School: On a scale of 1-7, the average ranking for Black males (n=516) was 5.32. This indicates that the average Black male attended schools with at least a 41% minority population and as much as 90% minority population.

- Respondent's Age in Years in eighth Grade: Ages for eighth graders when the cohort began in 1988 ranged from 13 through 16. The average age of Black males (n=523) in the eighth grade was 14.58, well within the norm of the expected age of an eighth grader.
- Respondent Employment Status: On a scale of 0-2, the average ranking for Black males (n=484) in 2000, eight years after the cohort's expected graduation from high school, was 1.36. This indicates the average Black male was working at least part-time, with a smaller number working full-time.
- Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One: 7% of Black males (n=464) responded yes.
- Family Size: On a scale of 2-10, the average ranking for Black males (n=519) was 4.55 family members.
- Respondent Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School: 15% of Black males (n=422) responded yes.
- Objectified Capital in Household: This variable is a sum of 16 items. On a scale of 3-16, the relative mean for Black males (n=431) was 10.81. This indicates that, on average, the families of these Black male students have 10.81 of the 16 items at home.

  Socio-Economic Status: SES response scale ranged from -2.04 through 1.76. Black males average38. This indicates that, on average, the families of these Black male students made slightly above the national average income.

Attitudes towards Education (Parents and Respondents)

- Mother's Educational Aspirations: On a scale of 1-6, the average ranking for Black males (n=444) was 4.90. This indicates that mothers of the average Black male attended college and many graduated from college.
- Locus of Control: The scale for Locus of Control ranged from -2.20 through 1.24. As created by NCES, higher scores (highest quartile) means greater internal control and lower scores (lowest quartile) means greater external control. The average score for Black males (n=511) was -.12. This negative mean could indicate that on average Black male students feel the 'locus of control' is external to them. Therefore, they believe they do not have control over the events that happen to them.
- Self Concept: The scale for Locus of Control ranged from -2.20 through 1.24. The average mean for Black males (n=513) was .29. This positive mean could indicate that, on average, Black male students have a somewhat healthy perception of themselves..
- Respondent's Educational Aspirations: On a scale of 1-6, the average ranking for Black males (n=513) was 4.33. This indicates the average Black male planned to attend college and, to a lesser degree, graduate from college.
- Respondent Plans to Go to School Right after High School: 78% of Black males (n=392) responded yes.
- Frequency Respondent Discussed Going to College with Parents: On a scale of 0-2, the average ranking for Black males (n=380) was 1.09. This indicates that

the average Black male discussed going to college with his parents sometimes and to a much lesser degree, often.

School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)

- Parental Involvement: As created by NCES, 'parental involvement' is a scale obtained by combining a set of four original variables aiming to assess whether or not respondent's parents 'attended a school meeting,' 'spoke to teacher/counselor,' 'visited respondent's class,' and/or 'attended a school event.' The average mean for Black males (n=392) was 2.03. This indicates that, on average, parents of Black male students participated in two of the four.
- Academic Disengagement: As created by NCES, 'academic disengagement' is a continuous predictor which equals to the mean of a battery of six items, such as, 'respondent sent to office for misbehaving,' 'respondent sent to office with school work problems,' and 'parents received warning about attendance.' On a scale of .00-2.00, the average mean for Black males (n=491) was .45. This indicates that, on average, Black male students exhibited less than one of these negative behaviors.
- Respondent Joined the Armed Forces or Plans to Do So: 19% of Black males (n=450) responded yes.
- Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School: 31% of Black males (n=428) responded yes.

- Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities: On a scale of 0-7, the average ranking for Black males (n=452) was 2.00. This indicates that the average Black male spent 1-4 hours per week on extracurricular activities.
- Number of Tests Taken/Thought to Take for College Application: On a scale of 0-6, the average ranking for Black males (n=466) was .90. This indicates that, on average, Black males took only the Pre-SAT exam.
- Level of Research Information on Financial Aid for College Education: On a scale of 0-7, the average ranking for Black males (n=411) was 2.76. This indicates that, on average, Black males minimally talked to a school representative about financial aid and almost as frequently talked to a Loan Officer about financial aid.
- How Often Parents Limit Time Watching Television: On a scale of 0-4, the average ranking for Black males (n=495) was 1.17. This indicates that, on average, parents of Black males rarely limited the amount of time their children watched television.

Table 4.1. Weighted Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges and Description of Variables for Black-Non Hispanic Males

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Range	Description, NELS Variable NAME and Label
			Dependent Variables		
Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1992	387	45.12	8.52	27.86 – 67.09	F22XCOMP 'F2 Standardized Test Composite (Reading, Math)'
Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000	527	2.20	1.45	0 – 7	Logical Combination of: F4HSTYPE 'Type of HS Diploma Received as of 2000' and F4HHDG 'Highest PSE degree attained as of 2000'
			8th Grade Control Variable		
Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1988	485	45.01	8.46	32.66 - 72.97	BY2XCOMP 'Standardized Test Composite (Reading, Math)'
			School Context and Background Characteristics		
Private School	527	.07	.26	0 - 1	G8CTRL'School Control Composite' = 1
8th Grade Total Enrollment	527	3.90	1.53	1 - 6	G8ENROL '8th Grade Enrollment Composite'
Urban School	527	.52	.50	0 - 1	G8URBAN 'Urbanicity Composite' = 1 [Reference Category]
Suburban School	527	.30	.46	0 - 1	G8URBAN 'Urbanicity Composite' = 2
Rural School	527	.18	.38	0 - 1	G8URBAN 'Urbanicity Composite' = 3

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Range	Description, NELS Variable NAME and Label
Percent Minority in School	516	5.32	1.66	0 - 7	G8MINOR 'Percent Minority in School'
Socio-Economic Status	527	-.38	.725	-2.04 - 1.76	BYSES 'Socio-Economic Status Composite'
Respondent's Age in Years in 8th Grade	523	14.58	.75	13 - 16	1988 – F2BIRTHY 'Birth Year of Sample Member'
Respondent Employment Status	484	1.36	.88	0 - 2	Recoding of F2P11A 'Respondent's Current Employment Situation'
Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One	464	.07	.26	0 - 1	F2S76 'Respondent Has Any Children of His/[Her] Own' = 1 'yes' and 3 'no, but expecting'
Family Size	519	4.55	1.70	2 - 10	BYFAMSIZ 'Family Size'
Respondent Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School	422	.15	.35	0 - 1	F2N11 '# R^S Siblings Left Hs Before Grad' = 4 'one left school' and 5 'Two+ Left School'
Objectified Cultural Capital n Household	431	10.81	2.70	3 - 16	Sum of 16 Items: from BYS35A 'Respondent's Family Has Specific Place for Study' thru BYS35P 'Respondent Has Own Bedroom'
Attitudes towards Education (Parents and Respondent)					
Mother's Educational Aspirations	444	4.90	1.26	1 - 6	BYS48A 'How Far in School Respondent's Mother Wants Respondent To Go'
Locus Of Control	511	-.12	.70	-2.20 - 1.24	BYLOCUS1 'Locus1 Locus of Control 1'

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Range	Description, NELS Variable NAME and Label
Self Concept	513	.29	.62	-2.35 - 1.15	BYCNCPT1 'Self Concept 1'
Respondent's Educational Aspirations	513	4.33	1.34	1 - 6	BYS45 'How Far in School Do You Think You Will Get'
Respondent Plan To Go to School Right After High School	392	.78	.41	0 - 1	F2S49 'Respondent Plans To Go to School Right After High School'
Frequency Respondent Discussed Going To College With Parents	380	1.09	.66	0 - 2	Rescaled Version of F2S99F 'Discussed Going to College with Parents' = from 1 'never' thru 3 'often'
	School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)				
Parental Involvement	392	2.03	1.30	0 - 4	Sum of 4 Items: from BYS37A 'Respondent's Parents Attended a School Meeting' thru BYS37D 'Respondent's Parents Attended a School Event'
Academic Disengagement	491	.45	.459	.00 - 2.00	Mean of 6 Items: from BYS55A 'Respondent Sent to Office for Misbehaving' thru BYS55F 'Respondent Got into Fight with Another Student'
Respondent Joined The Armed Forces or Plan To Do So	450	.19	.39	0 - 1	F2S48A 'Does Respondent Plan to Join Armed Forces' = from 2 'yes, joined' thru 4 'yes, in future'
Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School	428	.31	.46	0 - 1	F2N16 'Has Respondent ever Been Held Back a Grade in School'
Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities	452	2.00	1.93	0 - 7	F2S31 'Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities' [from 0 'none' thru 7 '25 Hours+/Week']
Number of Tests Taken/Thought To Take for College Application	466	.90	.99	0 - 6	Sum of 6 Items: from F2S44A 'Has Resp. Taken the Pre-SAT Test' thru F2S44F 'Has R. Taken Other Admissions Test' [3 'yes already took' and 4 'yes plan

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Range	Description, NELS Variable NAME and Label
Level of Research Information on Financial Aid for College Education	411	2.76	1.88	0 - 7	Sum of 7 Items: from F2S58A 'Respondent Talked to Teacher/Counselor about Financial Aid' thru F2S58G 'Respondent Talked to Adult about Financial Aid'
How Often Parents Limit Time Watching TV	495	1.17	1.04	0 - 3	Flipped and Rescaled Version of: BYS38C 'How Often Parents Limit Time Watching TV' = from 1 'often' thru 4 'never'

Bivariate Analysis

Table 4.2 presents weighted comparison of means on dependent variables by independent. This table allows for bivariate analysis of the relationship between two or more variables. In this case, T-tests performed on dummy variables in Table 4.1 revealed their statistical significance on the dependent variables 'Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1992' and 'Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000'. As it relates to the population of Black Non-Hispanic males analyzed in this study, the bivariate analysis reveals the following:

- Private School: Attending private school proved to have a positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on both dependent variables. This indicates that, on average, Black males who attended private schools did much better on the standardized test in 1992, and had attained higher levels of education in 2000.
- Urban School: For Black males, attending a school in an urban neighborhood revealed no statistically significant difference on either of the dependent variables.
- Suburban School: Attending school in the suburbs had a positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on both dependent variables. This indicates that, on average, Black males who attended suburban schools did much better on the standardized test in 1992, and had attained higher levels of education in 2000.
- Rural School: Attending school in rural areas had a positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on the standardized test in 1992, but a much

less impressive positive statistically significant impact at only the .05 level on education attained in 2000.

- Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One: Not having a dependent child or expecting had a positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on the standardized test in 1992, but a less impressive positive statistically significant impact at only the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Respondent Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School: Having one or more siblings who left high school had a positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on the standardized test in 1992, but no statistical impact at all on education attained in 2000.
- Respondent Plans to Go to School Right after High School: Planning to go to school right after high school had a positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on both dependent variables. This indicates that, on average, Black males who planned to go to school right after high school did much better on the standardized test in 1992, and had attained higher levels of education in 2000.
- Respondent Joined the Armed Forces or Plans to Do So: Joining or planning to join the armed forces had a negative statistically significant impact at the .001 level on both dependent variables. This indicates that, on average, Black males who joined the armed forces or planned to do so did not do as well as on the standardized test in 1992, and had not attained higher levels of education in 2000.
- Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School: Being held back a grade in school had no statistically significant impact on test scores, but a positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on educational attainment in 2000.

Table 4.2. Weighted Comparison of Means on Dependent Variables by Independent Variables

Independent Variables	**Standardized Test (Compos. Reading, Math) in 1992 (n_i in parentheses)**	**Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000 (n_i in parentheses)**
Private School		
No	44.78*** (363)	2.07*** (487)
Yes	50.30 (23)	3.85 (40)
Urban School		
No	45.09 (191)	2.33 (251)
Yes	45.14 (196)	2.09 (276)
Suburban School		
No	44.30*** (272)	2.04*** (369)
Yes	47.04 (115)	2.58 (158)
Rural School		
No	45.84*** (311)	2.27* (434)
Yes	42.14 (76)	1.90 (93)
Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One		
No	45.91*** (336)	2.39** (430)
Yes	40.88 (25)	1.74 (35)
Resp. Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School		
No	45.53*** (261)	2.24 (360)
Yes	40.94 (50)	2.00 (62)
Resp. Plan To Go to School Right After High School		
No	39.99*** (71)	1.76*** (85)
Yes	47.63 (242)	2.60 (306)
Respondent Joined The Armed Forces or Plan To Do So		
No	46.24*** (294)	2.46*** (366)

Independent Variables	**Standardized Test (Compos. Reading, Math) in 1992 (n_i in parentheses)**	**Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000 (n_i in parentheses)**
Yes	41.99 (65)	1.77 (84)
Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School		
No	45.95 (216)	2.53*** (295)
Yes	44.83 (105)	1.85 (134)

* p = .05 ** p = .01 *** p = .001

Note: Within each predictor on both dependent variables, the level of statistical significance is placed just on one of the two categories. The compared means within each predictor without a superscript do not differ from each other at any of the levels of statistical significance considered.

Regarding the continuous variables in Table 4.1, Table 4.3 presents Pearson's Correlations that were performed to analyze their statistical significance on the dependent variables 'Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1992' and 'Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000'. While Pearson's *r*, or the correlation coefficient, measures the association between interval-ratio variables, that measurement is an estimate of the positive or negative linear relationship a given independent variable has with the dependent variable. As it relates to the population of Black Non-Hispanic males analyzed in this study, the Pearson's Correlations revealed the following:

- Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1988. Test scores for eighth grade Black males in 1988 had a positive statistically significant impact at the .01 level on Standardized Test scores in 1992 and the Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000.
- Eighth Grade Enrollment. The number of eighth graders enrolled in the cohort's school in 1988 had no statistical significance on Standardized Test scores in 1992, but had a weak negative statistically significant impact at the .01 level on the Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000.
- Percent Minority in School. The percent of minorities negatively impacted Black males both in their performance on Standardized Test in 1992 and the Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000. While the impact was relatively weak, the impact on both variables was at the .01 level.
- Respondent's Age in Years in eighth Grade. The age of Black males in the eighth grade had a negative statistically significant impact at the .01 level Standardized Test scores in 1992 and the Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000. While

the impact was moderate to weak, it suggests further analysis is required that examines the impact of this variable in conjunction with school related behavioral variables such as Academic Disengagement and Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade.

- Respondent Employment Status. Employment status for Black males had no statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a weak positive impact at the .05 level on education attained in 2000.
- Family Size. The family size of Black males had no statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a weak positive impact at the .05 level on education attained in 2000.
- Objectified Cultural Capital in Household had a positive, but weak, statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a weak positive impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Mother's Educational Aspiration had a positive, but weak, statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a weak positive impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Locus of Control had a positive, but weak, statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a weak positive impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Self Concept. Self Concept, or the way one viewed one's self, had no statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a weak negative impact at the .05 level on education attained in 2000.

- Respondent's Educational Aspirations had no statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a moderate to weak positive impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Frequency Respondent Discussed Going to College with Parents had no statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a moderate to weak positive impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Parental Involvement surprisingly had no statistically significant impact on either test scores in 1992 or education attained in 2000.
- Academic Disengagement had no statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a weak negative impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities had no statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a weak positive impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Number of Tests Taken/Thought to Take for College Application had a weak positive impact at the .01 level on test scores in 1992, and a moderate to weak positive impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- Level of Research Information on Financial Aid for College Education Activities had no statistically significant impact on test scores in 1992, and a moderate to weak positive impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000.
- How Often Parents Limit Time Watching Television had a weak negative impact at the .05 level on test scores in 1992, and no statistically significant impact on education attained in 2000.

Table 4.3. Pearson's Correlations

Variables	Standardized Test (Compos. Reading, Math) in 1992	Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000
(1) Standardized Test (Compos. Reading, Math) in 1992	---	---
(2) Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000	.348**	---
Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1988	.614**	349**
8th Grade Total Enrollment	.060	-.130**
Percent Minority in School	-.160**	-.237**
Socio-Economic Status	.470**	.338**
Respondent's Age in Years in 8th Grade	-.160**	-.247**
Respondent Employment Status	-.018	.103*
Family Size	-.024	-.124**
Objectified Cultural Capital In Household	.176**	.212**
Mother's Educational Aspirations	.281**	.187**
Locus Of Control	.182**	.136**
Self Concept	.066	-.104*
Respondent's Educational Aspirations	.022	.336**
Frequency R. Discussed Going To College with Parents	.062	.311**
Parental Involvement	.017	.059
Academic Disengagement	-.038	-.261**
Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities	-.062	.155**
# of Tests Taken/Thought To Take for Colg Application	.214**	.360**
Level of Research Info on Fin. Aid for College Educat.	-.052	.346**
How Often Parents Limit Time Watching TV	-.107*	-.023

* p = .05 ** p = .01

Multivariate Analysis

NELS compares unweighted frequencies of 'Low SES' and 'High SES' subpopulations, with half of the Black males surveyed falling into the lowest quartile, and ranking the lowest when compared to the socioeconomic status of their White male counterparts. Paying particular attention to the import of socioeconomic status, this dissertation examines the overall and relative impact of a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables on the educational outcomes of a nationally representative group of low socioeconomic Black male students and not-low socioeconomic Black male students.

To achieve this goal, hierarchical regression modeling was employed to help demonstrate which independent variables have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of low socioeconomic status, and which have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of not-low socioeconomic status.

Model 1 is the eighth grade control variable and standardized test scores.

Model 2 examines the impact of *School Context and Background Characteristics* variables. In the NELS data, this category includes variables such as 'Private School,' 'Percent of Minority in School,' and 'Family Size.'

In the Model 3, variables from NELS clustered under the heading *Attitudes Toward Education (Parents and Respondents)* are added to the regression. These variables begin to construct a model in which variables less directly associated with socioeconomic status reveal their impact. Model 3, therefore, becomes critical to this study as it potentially swings the pendulum to either hope or despair. The hierarchical

regression modeling utilized in this study continues with Model 4, which, under the NELS category *School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent),* includes variables such as 'Parental Involvement,' 'Academic Disengagement,' 'Respondent Joined the Armed Forces or Plans to Do So,' 'Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities,' 'How Often Parents Limit Time Watching Television,' and so forth. These variables allow for further exploration of the relationship between parental and respondent attitudes in the household and educational progress.

Model 5 introduces the variable 'socioeconomic status.' Socioeconomic status, as created by NCES and utilized by NELS, is a composite variable consisting of both parents' educational level, both parents' occupations and family income.

One of the goals of this dissertation is to compare the multivariate influence that the selected independent variables have on the dependent variables – school achievement in 1992, and school attainment in 2000 – between Black male students of low socioeconomic status and Black male students of not-low socioeconomic status. To achieve this goal, the entire hierarchical regression model is re-analyzed, disaggregating Black male students into two distinct socioeconomic categories: 'Low Socioeconomic Status' and 'Not-low Socioeconomic Status.' These newly created variables replace the dependent variables 'Standardized Test in 1992' and 'Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000,' utilized in the first series of hierarchical regression models.

Table 4.4 presents Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for the dependant variables 'Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1992 (N=286)' and 'Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000 (N=286)'.

Table 4.5 presents Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for ‘Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1992’ in ‘Low SES’ and ‘Not-Low SES’ respondents.

Table 4.6 presents Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for ‘Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000’ in ‘Low SES’ and ‘Not-Low SES’ respondents.

Eighth Grade Control Variable

Controlling for all other variables in the model, ‘Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1988’ had a positive statistically significant impact on the test scores in 1992 of both low and not-low socioeconomic Black males, but no impact on highest level of education attained eight years after graduating high school for low socioeconomic Black males. However, standardized test scores in eighth grade have a weak, but positive, impact on education attained eight years after graduating high school by not-low socioeconomic Black males until "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables are added to the regression. At that point (see Table 6, Model 23), 1988 test scores had no statistical impact on education attained eight years after graduating high school by not-low Black males.

School Context and Background Characteristics

Controlling for all other variables in the model, with one exception, attending ‘Private School,’ bore no statistical significance on either twelfth grade test scores or level of education attained eight years after graduating high school. The lone exception is regression Model 17 (see Table 5), which indicates a strong positive impact at the .001

level on twelfth grade test scores for not-low Black males when "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables are added to the regression.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Eighth Grade Total Enrollment' had a moderate positive impact on eighth grade test scores of all Black male participants. When disaggregating low from not-low socioeconomic Black males, however, there is a stark contrast. The 1988 test scores bear no statistical significance on the twelfth grade test scores of low socioeconomic Black males; and, conversely, a strong positive impact at the .001 level on the twelfth grade test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males.

Additionally, eighth grade total enrollment had no statistically significant impact on education attained in 2000 for low socioeconomic Black males, and a weak negative impact on not-low socioeconomic Black males only when "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables are added to the regression.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, attending a 'Suburban School' had no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores or education attained eight years after high school graduation for Black males overall. When disaggregating low from not-low socioeconomic Black males, however, there is a stark contrast. Attending a suburban school had a strong positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores of poor Black males. Conversely, attending school in the suburbs had a strong negative impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males. The negative impact on not-low socioeconomic Black males weakened somewhat and its significance is lowered to the .01 level when "Attitudes toward Education (Parents and Respondent)" variables were added to the regression.

Attending a suburban school had no statistically significant impact on education attained in 2000 for either low socioeconomic Black males or not-low socioeconomic Black males.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, attending a 'Rural School' had no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores or education attained eight years after high school graduation for Black males overall. When disaggregating low from not-low socioeconomic Black males, however, there is a stark contrast. Attending a rural school had a strong positive statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores of low socioeconomic Black males at the .05 level in Model 11, and at the .01 level models 12 and 13 (see Table 5). Conversely, attending a rural school had a strong negative impact on twelfth grade test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males at the .001 level in Models 15 and 17 (see Table 5). The statistical significance was lowered to the .01 level when "Attitudes toward Education (Parents and Respondent)" variables were added to the regression.

Attending a suburban school had no statistically significant impact on education attained in 2000 for either low socio economic Black males or not-low socio economic Black males.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, the 'Percent of Minority in School' had a strong to moderate negative statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores of all Black males at the .05 level in Model 2, and at the .001 level in Models 3-5 (see Table 4). Of note, however, percent of minorities in school bore no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade reading tests for low socioeconomic Black males; nor for not-low socioeconomic Black males, with the exception of Model 17 (Table 5), when

the addition of "Attitudes Toward Education (Parents and Respondent)" variables results in a weak negative impact at the .001 level.

As it relates to education attained eight years after graduating high school, the percent of minorities in school had no statistically significant impact on low socioeconomic Black males in Model 18 (Table 6). The addition of "Attitudes toward Education (Parents and Respondent)" variables resulted in a weak negative impact at the .05 level, which again became statistically insignificant when "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables are added in Model 19.

Somewhat similar findings occurred for not low socioeconomic Black males. The percent of minorities in school had a weak negative impact at the .01 level in Model 21, and a weak negative impact at the .05 level in Model 22 when "Attitudes toward Education (Parents and Respondent)" variables were added. As with low socioeconomic Black males, the impact of the percent of minorities in school on education attained in 2000 became statistically insignificant when "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables were added in Model 23.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Respondent's Age in Years in eighth Grade' bore no statistically significant impact on standardized test scores in twelfth grade as it relates to all Black males respondents. Disaggregating low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic Black males, however, produces quite different results. For low socioeconomic Black males, age in eighth grade had a strong negative impact at the .001 level on test scores in twelfth grade when controlling for "School Context and Background Characteristics" variables in Model 11. The addition of all other variables, however, resulted in no statistically significant impact. Not-low

socioeconomic Black males, on the other hand, bore very different results as age in eighth grade had a strong positive impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores.

Regarding the impact of age in eighth grade on education attained eight years after their expected graduation from high school, results were similar. Low socioeconomic Black males and not-low socioeconomic Black males were moderately to weakly negatively impacted, at the .01 and .05 levels respectively, when controlling for "School Context and Background Characteristics" variables. The addition of all remaining variables resulted in no statistically significant impact for either group.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One' had no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores for Black males generally, and low socioeconomic Black males specifically. While this held true for not-low socioeconomic Black males when controlling for "School Context and Background Characteristics" variables, the addition of the remaining variables resulted in a strong positive impact at the .001 level for this group.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Family Size' had a moderate positive statistically significant impact at the .05 level on twelfth grade test scores for poor Black males. Conversely, family size bore no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores for Black males except when "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables were added to the regression. At that point, a weak but positive statistical significance at the .001 level was revealed.

There was no statistically significant impact of family size on education attained in 2000 by poor Black males. This held true for not-low Black males until Model 23,

when the addition of "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables resulted in a weak negative impact at the .05 level.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Respondent Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School' produced no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall. Disaggregating low and not-low socioeconomic Black males, however, produced contrasting results. For low socioeconomic Black males, having one or more siblings who left high school bore no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores in Models 11 and 12. In Model 13, however, the addition of "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables resulted in a strong positive impact at the .05 level. By contrast, for not-low socioeconomic Black males, having one or more siblings who left high school had a strong negative statistically significant impact at the .001 level on test scores in twelfth grade when controlling for "School Context and Background Characteristics" variables in Model 11. The addition of all other variables, however, resulted in no statistically significant impact. Not-low socioeconomic Black males, on the other hand, bore very different results as age in eighth grade had a strong positive impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores.

Having one or more siblings who left high school had no statistically significant impact on the level of education attained in 2000 by poor Black males. This held true for not-low socioeconomic Black males until Model 23, when the addition of "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables resulted in a strong positive impact at the .05 level.

Controlling for all other variables in the Model, 'Objectified Cultural Capital in Household,' which refers to a type of cultural capital consisting of physical objects

owned, such as scientific instruments or works of art, had varying levels of statistical significance on both standardized test scores in 1992 and highest level of education attained in 2000 for Black males overall. As it relates to low socioeconomic Black males, however, objectified capital in the household had no statistical impact on test scores or level of education. While objectified capital in household also had no statistical impact on twelfth grade test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males when controlling for "School Context and Background Characteristics" variables, the addition of the remaining variables resulted in a weak positive statistical significance at the .001 level.

As it relates to education attained in 2000 by not-poor Black males, the objectified capital variable had a weak positive statistically significant at the .01 level impact when controlling for "School Context and Background Characteristics" variables. The addition of *Attitudes toward Education (Parents and Respondent)* variables negated objectified capital's statistical significance. That significance, however, was restored at a weak positive .05 level when the final category of "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" were added to the regression.

Attitudes towards Education (Parents and Respondent)

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Mother's Educational Aspirations' had a strong positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall. That impact remained consistent when Black males were disaggregated into low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic groups. When first introduced to the low socioeconomic Black male regression model,

however, the statistical significance was at the .01 level. It increased to the .001 with the addition of the "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables.

Conversely, ‘Mother’s Educational Aspirations’ had no statistically significant impact on level of education eight years after their expected graduation from high school for either group.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, ‘Locus of Control,’ which refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them, had a strong positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall. There was some variance, however, when Black males are disaggregated into low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic groups. When first introduced to the low socioeconomic Black male regression model, the statistical significance remained positive, but at the .01 level and there was no statistical significance when "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables were added to the regression. For not-low socioeconomic Black males, ‘Locus of Control’ reflected the strong positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall.

As with ‘Mother’s Educational Aspirations,’ the variable ‘Locus of Control’ had no statistically significant impact on level of education 8 years after their expected graduation from high school for either group.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, ‘Self Concept,’ which refers to an individual's perception of "self" in relation to any number of characteristics (i.e., racial identity, gender roles and academics), bore a strong negative statistically significant

impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males. On all other regression models, there was no statistical significance.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Respondent's Educational Aspirations' had a strong negative statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall and an even stronger negative impact, also at the .001 level, on twelfth grade test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males. There is no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores for low socioeconomic Black males.

Regarding level of education attained in 2000, when first introduced to the regression for Black male participants overall the respondent's educational aspiration had a weak positive statistically significant impact at the .01 level. The addition of the remaining variables – "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" and "Socioeconomic Status" – negated any statistical significance. Disaggregating Black males into the low and not-low socioeconomic groups, however, produced very different results. While the respondent's educational aspiration bore no statistical significance on education attained in 2000 for low socioeconomic Black males, it bore a strong negative statistically significant impact at the .001 level for not-low socioeconomic Black males.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Respondent Plans to Go to School Right After High School' also impacted low and not-low socioeconomic Black males differently. While having a strong positive statistically significant impacts at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall, it had a similar impact on low socioeconomic Black males, but only when first introduced to the regression in Model 12. The addition of "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)"

variables negated any statistical significance. Conversely, with not-low socioeconomic Black males there was no statistical significance when the variable was first introduced to the regression in model 16. The addition of "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" variables, however, resulted in respondent's plan to go to school right after high school having a moderate positive statistically significant impact at the .01 level.

As it relates to education attained eight years after their expected graduation from high school, the variable 'Respondent Plans to Go to School Right after High School' bore no statistical significance for either group.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Frequency Respondent Discussed Going to College with Parents' had no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores of Black males overall or of low socioeconomic Black males. Conversely, those discussions had the opposite effect on not-low socioeconomic Black males. Regression Models 16 and 17 indicate discussing college with parents had a strong positive statistically significant impact at the .01 and .001 levels, respectively, for not-low socioeconomic Black males.

Regarding level of education attained in 2000, when first introduced to the regression for Black male participants overall the 'Frequency Respondent Discussed Going to College with Parents' had a moderate positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level. The addition, however, of the remaining variables – "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" and "Socioeconomic Status" – negated any statistical significance. Disaggregating Black males into the low and not-low socioeconomic groups produced somewhat different results.

For low socioeconomic Black males, discussing college with their parents had a moderate to weak positive statistically significant impact at the .001 and .05 level in Models 19 and 20, respectively. For not-low socioeconomic Black males, the introduction of college discussions with parents in Model 22 revealed a moderate to weak positive statistically significant impact at the .01 level on education attained in 2000. The addition of "School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)" in Model 23, however, negated any statistical significance.

School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Parental Involvement' had no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores for Black males generally, and low socioeconomic Black males specifically. Parental involvement for not-low socioeconomic Black males resulted in a weak negative statistically significant impact at the .01 level on twelfth grade test scores.

As it relates to education attained in 2000, when introduced to the regression in Model 8 'Parental Involvement' had a weak negative statistically significant impact at the .01 level on Black males overall. It remained weak and negative, but at the .001 level, when "Socio-Economic Status" was added to the regression in Model 9. When disaggregating low and not-low socioeconomic Black males, parental involvement bore no statistically significant impact on low socioeconomic Black males and a moderate negative impact at the .001 level on not-low socioeconomic Black males.

With the exception of a strong positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males, the variable

‘Academic Disengagement’ bore no statistically significant impact on test scores or education attained by Black males.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, ‘Respondent Joined the Armed Forces or Plans to Do So’ had no statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall. For low socioeconomic Black males, however, joining or planning to join the armed forces had a strong negative statistically significant impact at the .05 level on twelfth grade test scores. Conversely, for not-low socioeconomic Black males, joining the armed forces or planning to do so had a weak positive statistically significant impact at the .05 level on twelfth grade test scores.

Regarding education level attained in 2000, joining or planning to join the armed forces had a strong to moderate negative statistically significant impact at the .05 level on not-low socioeconomic Black males and no statistically significant impact on low socioeconomic Black males or Black males overall.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, ‘Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School’ bore no statistically significant impact on test scores or education attained by Black males, the lone exception being a strong negative statistically significant impact at the .001 level on the twelfth grade test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, ‘Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities’ had a strong to moderate negative statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall, and a moderate to weak negative statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Time spent on extracurricular activities bore no

statistically significant impact on twelfth grade test scores for low socioeconomic Black males or on education attained in 2000 for Black males across the board.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, the 'Number of Test Taken/Thought to Take for College Application' had a strong positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall. The impact remained, but at the .01 level, with the addition of *Socio-Economic Status* in Model 5. When disaggregating Black males into low and not-low socioeconomic groups, this variable had no statistically significant impact on either group.

As it relates to education attained in 2000, when introduced in Model 8, the 'Number of Tests Taken/Thought to Take for College Application' had a weak positive statistically significant impact at the .05 level for Black males overall. The impact became statistically insignificant with the addition of *Socio-Economic Status* in Model 9. When disaggregating Black males into low and not-low socioeconomic groups, this variable had no statistically significant impact on either one.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'Level of Research Information on Financial Aid for College Education' had a moderate negative statistically significant impact at the .01 level on twelfth grade test scores for Black males overall. When disaggregated into low not-low socioeconomic Black males, there was a moderate negative statistically significant impact at the .05 level for the former and a weak negative statistically significant impact at the .001 level for the latter.

Regarding education level attained eight years after their expected graduation from high school, the level of research on financial aid had a weak positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on Black males overall. When disaggregated into low

and not-low socioeconomic Black males, however, there was a weak positive statistically significant impact at the .01 level for poor Black males and no statistically significant impact on not-poor Black males.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'How Often Parents Limit Time Watching Television' bore no statistically significant impact on test scores or education attained by Black males, except for a strong positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on twelfth grade test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males.

Socioeconomic Status

The goal of this dissertation is to examine differences in the conduits and barriers to academic success for low socio-economic Black males and not-low socio-economic Black males, thus accounting for Tables 5 and 6, which disaggregate Black males into low and not-low socio-economic groups. As such, the variable 'SES' is found only in Table 5 which offers a snapshot of the overall Black male participant in the NELS survey.

Controlling for all other variables in the model, 'SES' had a strong positive statistically significant impact at the .001 level on standardized test scores in the twelfth grade. Regarding education level attained in 2000 by Black males, 'SES' had a moderate to weak statistically significant impact at the .01 level.

Table 4.4. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (Beta in parentheses) for Dependent Variables

	Standardized Test (Compos. Reading, Math) in 1992 (N = 286)[a]					Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000 (N = 286)[a]			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
8th Grade Control Variable									
Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1988	.618*** (.614)	.576*** (.572)	.685*** (.680)	.714*** (.709)	.663*** (.659)	.035*** (.202)	.038*** (.222)	.028** (.161)	.021* (.125)
School Context and Background Characteristics									
Private School	---	.136 (.004)	-.581 (-.018)	-.679 (-.021)	-.832 (-.026)	.769* (.140)	.516 (.094)	.370 (.067)	.351 (.064)
8th Grade Total Enrollment	---	.664* (.120)	.612** (.110)	.398 (.072)	.255 (.046)	-.057 (-.061)	-.056 (-.059)	-.074 (-.078)	-.091 (-.097)
Suburban School	---	.027 (.001)	.655 (.035)	.331 (.018)	.331 (.018)	.029 (.009)	.000 (.000)	.023 (.007)	.023 (.007)
Rural School	---	-2.215 (-.099)	-.876 (.039)	-.690 (-.031)	-.131 (-.006)	-.339 (-.089)	-.252 (-.066)	-.185 (-.049)	-.116 (-.030)
Percent Minority in School	---	-.608* (-.119)	-.674*** (-.131)	-.694*** (-.135)	-.708*** (-.138)	-.174*** (-.200)	-.156*** (-.179)	-.119** (-.136)	-.121** (-.138)
Respondent's Age in Years in 8th Grade	---	-.825 (-.073)	.362 (.032)	.364 (.032)	.569 (.050)	-.400*** (-.207)	-.156 (-.081)	-.276 (-.143)	-.251 (-.130)
Respondent Employment Status	---	-1.448*** (-.150)	-1.207*** (-.125)	-1.243*** (-.129)	-1.754*** (-.182)	.037 (.022)	-.104 (-.063)	-.055 (-.034)	-.119 (-.072)
Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One	---	-1.468 (-.045)	-.143 (-.004)	.680 (.021)	.763 (.024)	-.598* (.108)	-.564 (-.102)	-.618* (-.112)	-.608* (-.110)
Family Size	---	.193 (.039)	.412* (.082)	.529*** (.105)	.574*** (.114)	-.056 (-.066)	-.098* (-.115)	-.118** (-.138)	-.112** (-.131)
Respondent Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School	---	-1.910 (-.079)	.283 (.012)	.295 (.012)	.889 (.037)	.131 (.032)	.387 (.094)	.383 (.093)	.456* (.111)

	Standardized Test (Compos. Reading, Math) in 1992 (N = 286)[a]					Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000 (N = 286)[a]			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Objectified Cultural Capital in Household	---	.506*** (.161)	.252* (.080)	.276* (.088)	.014 (.004)	.093*** (173)	.079** (.147)	.106*** (198)	.074* (137)
Attitudes towards Education (Parents and Respond.) Mother's Educational Aspirations	---	---	2.686*** (.397)	2.255*** (.333)	2.140*** (.316)	---	.076 (.066)	.150* (.130)	.136 (.118)
Locus Of Control	---	---	1.751*** (.143)	1.559*** (.128)	1.826*** (.150)	---	.029 (.014)	-.003 (-.001)	.030 (.015)
Self Concept	---	---	.308 (.022)	.672 (.049)	.907 (.066)	---	.039 (.017)	.083 (.036)	.112 (.048)
Respondent's Educational Aspirations	---	---	-2.039*** (-.319)	-1.856*** (-.291)	-1.623*** (-.254)	---	.162** (.149)	.061 (.056)	.089 (.082)
Respondent Plan To Go to School Right After High School	---	---	5.518*** (.268)	5.230*** (.254)	4.750*** (.230)	---	.319 (.091)	.184 (.052)	.125 (.035)
Frequency Respondent Discussed Going To College With Parents	---	---	.037 (.003)	.782 (.060)	.436 (.034)	---	.445*** (.201)	.252 (.114)	.210 (.095)
School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent) Parental Involvement	---	---	---	-.315 (-.048)	-.441 (-.067)	---	---	-.180** (-.161)	-.195*** (-.175)
Academic Disengagement	---	---	---	.764 (.041)	.816 (.044)	---	---	-.144 (-.046)	-.138 (-.044)
Respondent Joined The Armed Forces or Plan To Do So	---	---	---	-.418 (-.019)	-.152 (-.007)	---	---	-.307 (-.083)	-.275 (-.074)
Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School	---	---	---	-.152 (-.008)	.073 (.004)	---	---	.135 (.043)	.163 (.052)

	Standardized Test (Compos. Reading, Math) in 1992 (N = 286)[a]					Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000 (N = 286)[a]			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities	---	---	---	-.717*** (-.163)	-.697*** (-.158)	---	---	.002 (.002)	.004 (.006)
Number of Tests Taken/Thought To Take for College Application	---	---	---	1.084*** (.127)	.894** (.104)	---	---	.166* (.114)	.142 (.098)
Level of Research Information on Financial Aid for College Education	---	---	---	-.504** (-.111)	-.441** (-.097)	---	---	.162*** (.210)	.170*** (.220)
How Often Parents Limit Time Watching TV	---	---	---	-.301 (-.037)	-.060 (-.007)	---	---	-.057 (-.041)	-.028 (-.020)
Socio-Economic Status SES	---	---	---	---	2.530*** (.215)	---	---	---	.312** (.156)
Constant	17.309***	28.244***	-1.342	.746	4.829	6.841***	1.711	3.826	4.330
Adjusted R^2	.375	.436	.674	.704	.726	.259	.339	.388	.398

[a] Information above is based on a pairwise deletion of cases.

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Table 4.5. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (Beta in parentheses) for 'Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1992' in 'Low SES' and 'Not-Low SES' Respondents

	Low Socio-Economic Status (from -2.039 thru -.408), N = 128[a]				Not-Low Socio-Economic Status (from -.404 thru 1.757), N = 143[a]			
	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17
8th Grade Control Variable								
Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1988	.382*** (.433)	.414*** (.470)	.568*** (.645)	.623*** (.707)	.710*** (.748)	.915*** (.964)	.927*** (.977)	.967*** (.1.019)
School Context and Background Characteristics								
Private School	---	5.765 (.135)	2.479 (.058)	2.410 (.057)	---	-1.819 (-.075)	.661 (.027)	1.132*** (.047)
8th Grade Total Enrollment	---	-.265 (-.051)	-.169 (-.033)	-.453 (-.087)	---	.853*** (.182)	1.117*** (.239)	1.199*** (.256)
Suburban School	---	5.474*** (.348)	5.555*** (.353)	5.090*** (.324)	---	-2.624*** (-.156)	-.987* (-.059)	-1.222*** (-.073)
Rural School	---	2.840* (.182)	3.488** (.224)	3.409** (.219)	---	-4.295*** (-.144)	-1.921** (-.064)	-.789*** (-.026)
Percent Minority in School	---	-.360 (-.084)	-.404 (-.094)	-.343 (-.080)	---	.032 (.007)	-.155 (-.033)	-.169*** (-.036)
Respondent's Age in Years in 8th Grade	---	-2.551*** (-.295)	-1.070 (-.124)	-.529 (-.061)	---	3.812*** (.317)	3.150*** (.262)	4.068*** (.338)
Respondent Employment Status	---	-1.292** (-.170)	-1.507*** (-.199)	-1.718*** (-.226)	---	-2.188*** (-.211)	-1.582*** (-.152)	-1.287*** (-.124)
Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One	---	1.573 (.072)	-.199 (-.009)	1.085 (.050)	---	1.558 (.038)	3.248*** (.080)	2.800*** (.069)
Family Size	---	.576* (.138)	.538* (.129)	.740** (.178)	---	-.139 (-.030)	.172 (.037)	.108*** (.023)

	Low Socio-Economic Status (from -2.039 thru -.408), N = 128[a]				Not-Low Socio-Economic Status (from -.404 thru 1.757), N = 143[a]			
	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17
Respondent Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School	---	-.128 (-.008)	1.081 (.064)	2.747* (.162)	---	-4.884*** (-.156)	-3.825*** (-.122)	-3.800*** (-.122)
Objectified Cultural Capital In Household	---	-.111 (-.036)	-.131 (-.042)	-.172 (-.055)	---	.173 (.060)	.261*** (.091)	.234*** (.082)
Attitudes towards Education (Parents and Respond.) Mother's Educational Aspirations	---	---	1.071** (.228)	1.330*** (.283)	---	---	.794*** (.091)	.408*** (.047)
Locus Of Control	---	---	1.545** (.154)	1.119 (.112)	---	---	1.229*** (.109)	1.824*** (.161)
Self Concept	---	---	1.035 (.097)	1.052 (.099)	---	---	1.948*** (.143)	1.717*** (.126)
Respondent's Educational Aspirations	---	---	.202 (.036)	-.005 (-.001)	---	---	-2.716*** (-.477)	-1.966*** (-.345)
Respondent Plan To Go to School Right After High School	---	---	3.064** (.211)	1.780 (.123)	---	---	.337 (.013)	.661*** (.026)
Frequency Respondent Discussed Going To College With Parents	---	---	-.858 (-.072)	.073 (.006)	---	---	.748** (.066)	1.030*** (.091)
School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent) Parental Involvement	---	---	---	.191 (.032)	---	---	---	-.137** (-.023)
Academic Disengagement	---	---	---	-1.691 (-.097)	---	---	---	4.257*** (.272)
Respondent Joined The Armed Forces or Plan To Do So	---	---	---	-2.623* (-.164)	---	---	---	.384* (.016)

	Low Socio-Economic Status (from -2.039 thru -.408), N = 128[a]				Not-Low Socio-Economic Status (from -.404 thru 1.757), N = 143[a]			
	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17
Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School	---	---	---	-1.709 (-.117)	---	---	---	-2.509*** (-.141)
Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities	---	---	---	-.358 (-.105)	---	---	---	-.347*** (-.080)
Number of Tests Taken/Thought To Take for College Application	---	---	---	.515 (.063)	---	---	---	.018 (.002)
Level of Research Information on Financial Aid for College Education	---	---	---	-.699* (-.196)	---	---	---	-.243*** (-.056)
How Often Parents Limit Time Watching TV	---	---	---	-.323 (-.048)	---	---	---	.743*** (.097)
Constant	24.621***	60.904***	25.917**	19.567	15.478***	-49.077***	-38.166***	-55.680***
Adjusted R^2	.181	.434	.591	.616	.556	.822	.941	.996

[a] Information above is based on a pairwise deletion of cases.

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Table 4.6. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (Beta in parentheses) for 'Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000' in 'Low SES' and 'Not-Low SES' Respondents

	Low Socio-Economic Status (from -2.039 thru -.408), N = 128[a]			Not-Low Socio-Economic Status (from -.404 thru 1.757), N = 153[a]		
	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21	Model 22	Model 23
8th Grade Control Variable						
Standardized Test (Composite Reading, Math) in 1988	.020 (.137)	.025 (.174)	.008 (.053)	.039** (.213)	.035* (.188)	.008 (.045)
School Context and Background Characteristics						
Private School	1.181 (.167)	.660 (.093)	.564 (.080)	.668 (.143)	.394 (.084)	-.086 (-.018)
8th Grade Total Enrollment	-.113 (-.131)	-.066 (-.076)	.059 (.068)	-.023 (-.025)	-.060 (-.066)	-.206* (-.228)
Suburban School	-.238 (-.091)	-.330 (-.126)	-.338 (-.129)	.279 (.086)	.221 (.068)	.394 (.122)
Rural School	-.538 (-.207)	-.511 (-.197)	-.438 (-.169)	.603 (.105)	.334 (.058)	.470 (.082)
Percent Minority in School	-.147 (-.207)	-.168* (-.236)	-.124 (-.174)	-.198** (-.219)	-.162* (-.180)	-.129 (-.142)
Respondent's Age in Years in 8th Grade	-.322** (-.224)	-.132 (-.092)	-.334 (-.233)	-.419* (-.181)	-.169 (-.073)	-.096 (-.041)
Respondent Employment Status	.064 (.051)	-.013 (-.010)	.115 (.091)	-.225 (-.112)	-.362* (-.181)	-.371* (-.185)
Respondent Has a Dependent Child or Expecting One	-.289 (-.080)	-454 (-.125)	-.810* (-.223)	-1.096* (-.140)	-.682 (-.087)	-.690 (-.088)
Family Size	-.036 (-.052)	-.029 (-.042)	-.066 (-.95)	.008 (.009)	-.110 (-.122)	-.161* (-.179)

	Low Socio-Economic Status (from -2.039 thru -.408), N = 128[a]			Not-Low Socio-Economic Status (from -.404 thru 1.757), N = 153[a]		
	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21	Model 22	Model 23
Respondent Has One or More Siblings Who Left High School	.258 (.092)	.328 (.117)	.236 (.084)	.343 (.057)	.427 (.071)	.869* (.144)
Objectified Cultural Capital In Household	-.002 (-.004)	-.009 (-.018)	-.005 (-.011)	.118** (.212)	.079 (.142)	.105* (.189)
Attitudes towards Education (Parents and Respond.)						
Mother's Educational Aspirations	---	.063 (.080)	.031 (.040)	---	-.048 (-.028)	.339 (.201)
Locus Of Control	---	.070 (.042)	-.018 (-.011)	---	-.099 (-.045)	-.081 (-.037)
Self Concept	---	.250 (.141)	.188 (.106)	---	-.034 (-.013)	-.164 (-.063)
Respondent's Educational Aspirations	---	.165 (.176)	.109 (.117)	---	.221* (.201)	.043 (.039)
Respondent Plan To Go to School Right After High School	---	-.120 (-.050)	-.295 (-.122)	---	.601 (.121)	.607 (.122)
Frequency Respondent Discussed Going To College With Parents	---	.523*** (.264)	.359* (.181)	---	.445* (.203)	.057 (.026)
School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)						
Parental Involvement	---	---	.095 (.097)	---	---	-.442*** (-.391)
Academic Disengagement	---	---	-.434 (-.149)	---	---	-.319 (-.106)
Respondent Joined The Armed Forces or Plan To Do So	---	---	-.237 (-.089)	---	---	-.757* (-.166)

	Low Socio-Economic Status (from -2.039 thru -.408), N = 128[a]			Not-Low Socio-Economic Status (from -.404 thru 1.757), N = 153[a]		
	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21	Model 22	Model 23
Respondent Has Been Held Back a Grade in School	---	---	.338 (.139)	---	---	-.839 (-.244)
Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities	---	---	.027 (.047)	---	---	.122 (.145)
Number of Tests Taken/Thought To Take for College Application	---	---	.247 (.183)	---	---	.048 (.033)
Level of Research Information on Financial Aid for College Education	---	---	.176** (.297)	---	---	.113 (.134)
How Often Parents Limit Time Watching TV	---	---	.024 (.021)	---	---	.050 (.034)
Constant	7.073***	2.676	5.674	6.790*	2.772	3.310
Adjusted R^2	.065	.180	.271	.263	.307	.395

[a] Information above is based on a pairwise deletion of cases.

* p = .05 ** p = .01 *** p = .001

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This dissertation examines and contrasts the conduits and barriers to educational success for a nationally representative sample of Black males of low socioeconomic status versus Black males of not-low socioeconomic status across a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables The dissertation draws from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS), a nationally representative panel study of American students tracking the same cohort of students from 1988, when they were eighth graders, through 2000, eight years after their scheduled high school graduation.

In this dissertation, hierarchical regression modeling was used to examine the variance between the low socioeconomic and not-low Black male socioeconomic groups. Hierarchical regression modeling helps demonstrate which independent variables have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of low socioeconomic status, and which have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of not-low socioeconomic status.

Chapter Four detailed the overall findings of the hierarchical regression modeling. This chapter focuses on specific tables and models of the regression. Table 4, Model 5 reveals how standardized composite reading and math test scores in 1992 of twelfth grade Black males are impacted by the inclusion of the NELS variables utilized in this study.

Table 4, Model 9 reveals how the highest level of education attained by Black males in 2000, eight years after their expected graduation from high school, are impacted by the inclusion of the NELS variables utilized in this study. Table 5 disaggregates low socio-economic status Black males and not-low socio-economic status Black males. Table 5, model 13 reveals how standardized composite reading and math test scores in 1992 of 12th grade Black males in the low SES group are impacted by the inclusion of the NELS variables utilized in this study. Table 5, Model 17 reveals how standardized composite reading and math test scores in 1992 of twelfth grade Black males in the not-low socioeconomic group are impacted by the inclusion of the NELS variables utilized in this study. Table 6 also disaggregates low socio-economic status Black males and not-low socio-economic status Black males. Table 6, Model 20 reveals how the highest level of education attained by Black males in the low socioeconomic group in 2000, eight years after their expected graduation from high school, is impacted by the inclusion of the NELS variables utilized in this study. Table 6, Model 23 reveals how the highest level of education attained by Black males in the not-low socioeconomic group in 2000, eight years after their expected graduation from high school, is impacted by the inclusion of the NELS variables utilized in this study.

Additionally, this chapter explores and suggests ways that low and not-low socioeconomic Black male students can improve their chances at academic success; how parents of low and not-low socioeconomic Black male students can improve their children's chances for academic success; how teachers of low and not-low socioeconomic Black male students can improve their students' chances for academic success; and lastly, how administrators and/or policy makers charged with the educational wellbeing of low

and not-low socioeconomic Black male students can increase these students' opportunities for academic success.

The following variables are included in the regressions for all of the abovementioned tables and models:

School Context and Background Characteristics

1. Private school;
2. Eighth grade total enrollment;
3. Suburban school;
4. Rural school;
5. Percent minority in school;
6. Respondent's age in years in eighth grade;
7. Respondent employment status;
8. Family size;
9. Respondent has one or more siblings who left high school;
10. Objectified cultural capital in household.

Attitudes toward Education (Parents and Respondent)

1. Mother's educational aspirations;
2. Locus of control;
3. Self concept;
4. Respondent's educational aspirations;
5. Respondent plan to go to school right after high school;
6. Frequency respondent discussed going to college with parents.

School Related Behaviors (Parents and Respondent)

1. Parental involvement;
2. Academic disengagement;
3. Respondent joined the armed forces or plan to do so;
4. Respondent has been held back a grade in school;
5. Time spent on extracurricular activities;
6. Number of tests taken/thought to take for college application;
7. Level of research information on financial aid for college education;
8. How often parents limit time watching television.

Socio-Economic Status

1. SES.

Conduits and Barriers

Completing high school and enrolling in college are not only key milestones in an individual's schooling, but also major benchmarks with the capacity of impacting one's social and economic advancement throughout life. Sadly, however, the national graduation rate in America's public high schools is a disappointing 68%, meaning nearly one-third of all public high school students fail to graduate. Even more discouraging, according to the most recent Schott Foundation study,[7] students from historically disadvantaged minority groups (Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans) have little more than a fifty-fifty chance of graduating from high school. By comparison, national high school graduation rates for Whites and Asians are 75% and 77%, respectively.

[7] References to the Schott Foundation are citing the research report "Yes We Can: The 2010 Schott 50 State Report on Black Males in Public Education" (www.blackboysreport.org), the fourth biennial report released by the Schott Foundation for Public Education (www.schottfoundation.org).

New York City, a district with the highest enrollment of Black high school students in the country, graduates only 32% of Black males on schedule in 2006 (Hentoff, 2010). The same New York City public school system manages to graduate 57% of White males, which, while still well below the national average of 75 %, speaks to the ongoing persistence of the well-documented Black/White achievement gap (Hentoff, 2010; Paige & Witty, 2010; McWhorter 2000). Furthermore, such statistics validate Schott Foundation research that finds graduation rates for students who attend school in high poverty, racially segregated, and urban school districts lag in the neighborhood of 15% to 18% behind their peers.

Similarly, scores from New York State's 2010 standardized tests reveal that among New York City's third to eighth graders, only 40% of Black students meet state standards in math and a mere 33% meet state standards in English. Comparatively, 75% of Whites and 82% of Asians meet the math standards, while 64% of Whites and Asians meet the English standards (Otterman & Gebeloff, 2010).

This dissertation offers recommendations to students, parents, teachers and administrators that can, ideally, improve the odds of Black males achieving academic success. By running a series of hierarchal regression models, the dissertation determines which variables act as conduits, driving Black males toward academic success, and which act as barriers, driving them away from a successful and meaningful educational experience.

All of that said, the question most relevant to this dissertation remains: Are there differences in the variables that impact the conduits and barriers to academic success for low socioeconomic Black males versus not-low socioeconomic Black males?

Before disaggregating the two, an examination of Table 4 provides important data about Black males overall. Of the twenty-five variables utilized in this study, six prove to be statistically significant conduits to Black males achieving acceptable grades in 1992's national standardized test scores (see Table 4, Model 5). Based on the strength of their betas, they are, respectively, (1) 'mother's educational aspirations,' (2) 'respondent plan to go to school right after high school,' (3) 'socio-economic status,' (4) 'locus of control,' (5) 'family size,' and (6) 'number of tests taken/thought to take for college application.'

Of these twenty-five variables, five prove to be statistically significant barriers to Black males achieving acceptable grades in 1992's national standardized test scores. In order, they are (1) 'respondent's educational aspirations,' (2) 'respondent's employment status,' (3) 'time spent on extracurricular activities,' (4) 'percent minority in school,' and (5) 'level of research information on financial aid for college education.'

Four of the twenty-five variables prove to be statistically significant conduits when examining the highest level of education attained by Black male respondents in 2000, eight years after their expected graduation from high school (see Table 4, Model 9). In order, they are (1) 'level of research information on financial aid for college education,' (2) 'socio-economic status,' (3) 'objectified cultural capital in household,' and (4) 'respondent has one or more siblings who left high school.'

Conversely, four of the twenty-five variables prove to be statistically significant barriers when examining the highest level of education attained by Black male respondents in 2000, eight years after their expected graduation from high school. In

order, they are (1) 'parental involvement,' (2) 'percent minority in school,' (3) 'family size,' and (4) 'respondent has a dependent child or expecting one.'

The primary purpose of this dissertation, however, is to contrast the conduits and barriers to academic success for low versus not-low socioeconomic Black males. To accomplish that task, the two groups are disaggregated and hierarchal regressions utilizing the same variables are run on both. The results provide for interesting analysis, in part because very few impact the outcomes, positively or negatively, of low socioeconomic Black males. This is unfortunate, as the overriding implication is that, if a student is poor, Black, and male, the picture is indeed a bleak one as it relates to potential academic success.

Of the twenty-five variables, five prove to be statistically significant conduits to low socioeconomic Black males achieving acceptable grades in 1992's twelfth grade national standardized test scores. In order, they are (1) 'suburban school,' (2) 'mother's educational aspirations,' (3) 'rural school,' (4) 'family size,' and (5) 'respondent has one or more siblings who left high school.' Three of the variables emerge as statistically significant barriers to poor Black males achieving acceptable grades in 1992's national standardized test scores. In order, they are (1) 'respondent employment status,' (2) 'level of research information on financial aid for college education,' and (3) 'respondent joined the armed forces or plan to do so' (see Table 5, Model 13).

However, of the same twenty-five variables, ten prove to be statistically significant conduits to not-low socioeconomic Black males achieving acceptable grades in 1992's national standardized test scores. In order, they are (1) 'respondent's age in years in eighth grade,' (2) 'academic disengagement,' (3) 'eighth grade total enrollment,'

(4) 'locus of control,' (5) 'self concept,' (6) 'how often parents limit time watching television,' (7) 'frequency respondent discussed going to college with parents,' (8) 'time spent on extracurricular activities,' (9) respondent has a dependent child or expecting one,' and (10) 'level of research information on financial aid for college education.'

Eight of the variables emerge as statistically significant barriers to not-low socioeconomic Black males achieving acceptable grades in 1992's national standardized test scores. In order, they are (1) 'respondent's educational aspirations,' (2) 'respondent has been held back a grade,' (3) 'respondent employment status,' (4) 'respondent has one or more siblings who left high school,' (5) 'suburban school,' (6) 'percent minority in school,' (7) 'rural school,' and (8) 'parental involvement' (see Table 5, Model 17).

Of the twenty-five variables, two prove to be statistically significant conduits to the level of education low socioeconomic Black males attained in 2000, eight years after their anticipated completion of high school. In order, they are (1) 'level of research information on financial aid for college education,' and (2) 'frequency respondent discussed going to college with parents.'

Only one variable reveals itself as a statistically significant barrier to the level of education low socioeconomic Black males attained in 2000, eight years after their anticipated completion of high school. This variable is 'respondent has a dependent child or expecting one' (see Table 6, Model 20).

As with low socioeconomic Black males, only two of the twenty-five variables prove to be statistically significant conduits to the level of education not-low socioeconomic Black males attained in 2000, eight years after their anticipated

completion of high school. In order, they are (1) 'objectified cultural capital in household,' and (2) 'respondent has one or more siblings who left high school.'

Five of the variables emerge as statistically significant barriers to the level of education not-low socioeconomic Black males attained in 2000, eight years after their anticipated completion of high school. In order, they are (1) 'parental involvement,' (2) 'eighth grade total enrollment,' (3) 'respondent employment status,' (4) 'family size,' and (5) 'respondent joined the armed forces or plan to do so' (see Table 6, Model 23).

Implications for Black Males

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine what differences exist in the conduits and barriers to academic success for low socioeconomic Black males versus not-low socioeconomic Black males. This is accomplished by examining a series of hierarchal regression models utilizing variables from the NELS:88 study. While the dissertation did not initially intend to pinpoint the reasons behind the differences, the findings beg for some analysis. Based on sociological theories, existing research, and reasonable conjecture, this dissertation contextualizes its findings within a framework conducive to explaining the current plight of Black males and their educational pursuits.

When controlling for *Standardized Test (Composite Reading and Math) in 1992*, this dissertation finds 'mother's educational aspirations' has the most positive impact on the standardized test scores of all twelfth grade Black male respondents. One can assume this result stems from an environment in which the mother values education and thus encourages her children to do well. 'Respondent plan to go to school right after high school' and 'socio-economic status' also prove to be significant conduits to positive test

results. The fact that the respondent planned to attend college immediately likely indicates, once again, the presence of a mother in the student's life who emphasizes the value of education and who creates a home environment in which the pursuit of higher education is the expectation. That 'socio-economic status' has a positive impact is not surprising, although the fact that it is not the most prevailing determinant raises questions as to why and why not.

'Locus of control' ranks fourth amongst the six variables proving to be conduits to successful results on the standardized test scores of all twelfth grade Black male respondents. People with a high internal locus of control believe they control their own destinies through their own behaviors and actions. Thus, that 'locus of control' has such a positive impact may be a hopeful sign, indicating as it does that Black males have a healthy level of self respect and esteem despite the severely adverse social conditions they endure on a daily basis.

'Family Size' and 'number of tests taken/thought to take for college application' rank, respectively, as the fifth, sixth, and seventh variables serving as conduits to improving Black male respondents achieving acceptable scores on the 1992 standardized tests. The positive impact of both of these variables seems to be rather self-explanatory and expected. Chapter Four of this dissertation indicated that, on average, the family size of Black male respondents totals 4.5 members. This finding logically suggests that a Black male with only one or two siblings has a better chance of academic success than someone from a larger family. There may be a number of reasons for this, the most important being less need for students to supplement their families' incomes, and the presence of a home atmosphere conducive to doing homework and studying. 'Number of

tests taken/thought to take for college application' may suggest a correlation between this variable and one's interest in going to college.

When examining Black males overall, five of the variables work against their success on 1992's standardized test scores. Of those five, the first, 'respondent's educational aspirations,' is most surprising. On the surface, it would seem that one's educational aspirations might serve as a tremendous boost to studying hard and doing well. Perhaps, however, it has the opposite effect. The educational aspirations of Black males may serve as a barrier, because, as they get closer to graduating high school, the reality of being underprepared for the academic rigors of college may curb their enthusiasm. The perception that higher education may be out of reach might result in their educational aspirations undermining their prospects for academic success.

'Respondent's employment status,' the second strongest barrier, speaks for itself. If a young man must work, it stands to reason that his employment will be prohibitive to a successful academic career. Even if he attends college, the challenge of balancing employment and academics will likely prevent him from attaining and/or maintaining grades that make him a solid candidate for graduate school, or a competitive one when seeking employment.

'Time spent on extracurricular activities' ranks third in barriers for Black male respondents achieving good scores on standardized tests in the twelfth grade. Chapter Four, indicated, that on average, Black male respondents spent one to four hours per week on extracurricular activities. Possible responses range from 0 to 25 or more hours per week. Research indicates participation in school sponsored extracurricular activities, such as clubs, sports, and other activities, has a positive impact on academic engagement,

school spirit, and grades. Whether due to family demands, employment responsibilities, or simply a lack of interest in being connected to the school beyond required attendance, the lack of participation in extracurricular school activities can diminish the odds of achieving successful academic outcomes.

'Percent minority in school,' the fourth ranked barrier to standardized test success for Black males overall, is another variable that speaks for itself. Chapter Four indicated that, on average, Black male respondents attend schools with anywhere from 41% to 90% minority populations. Existing research indicates students attending majority minority schools receive inferior educations due to negative social conditions, including lack of parental involvement, under-resourced schools, unwelcoming learning environments, and the presumption by many teachers and administrators that Black males are neither interested in, nor intellectually capable of, grasping the material.

Similarly, while 'respondent's educational aspirations' has a somewhat surprising negative impact, so does 'level of research information on financial aid for college education,' the fifth and final variable proving to be a statistically significant barrier to Black male respondents doing well on twelfth grade standardized tests. On the surface, it would seem logical that researching information on financial aid would indicate an interest in going to college. On the other hand, researching financial aid might also expose young Black males to some sobering realities that may discourage them from pursuing a college education. Perhaps the family is in need of immediate income, compelling the young Black man to make employment a priority over education. If employment is not a critical issue, the prospect of repaying thousands of dollars in student loans likely presents a burden neither parent(s) nor student is willing to assume.

This dilemma speaks to the lack of faith many Black males have that education will ultimately yield them the same employment and financial opportunities as it does Whites and others.

Interestingly, when controlling for *Highest Level of Education Attained in 2000*, this dissertation finds 'level of research information on financial aid for college education' is the strongest for Black male respondents. This is surprising given its negative impact on standardized test scores. Also, much of the existing literature suggests socio-economic status, which ranks second, would have the strongest impact. Perhaps, although 'level of research information on financial aid for college education' is a barrier to successful twelfth grade test scores, its positive impact on education attained indicates that Black males who meet the challenge of paying college tuition are more prone to view college as a viable option.

'Socio-economic status' and 'objectified cultural capital in household,' rank second and third, respectively, as conduits to education attained in 2000 by Black males. Logically they go hand-in-hand. SES, as created by NCES, is a composite variable consisting of both parents' occupations and family income. 'Objectified cultural capital in household,' as presented in this dissertation, is a scale obtained by summing up the dichotomous scores of sixteen items, including variables such as 'respondent's family has specific place to study,' 'respondent's family has a computer,' and 'respondent's family has more than 50 books,' amongst others. 'SES' and 'cultural capital in household,' respectively, speak to the availability of financial and physical resources. One can assume that, in tandem, these two variables might serve as conduits to academic success for anyone, including Black males.

The fourth and final variable having a statistically significant positive impact on highest level of education in 2000 for Black male respondents is 'respondent has one or more siblings who left high school.' It's difficult to say why this variable serves as a conduit to academic success. Perhaps with one child already failing academically, the mother and/or father places added pressure on the other siblings to do well. Or, given the impact of 'locus of control' on twelfth grade test scores, it is possible that self-motivation and/or the desire to not be like his siblings and further disappoint the family drives some Black males toward academic success.

Of the four variables that prove to be statistically significant barriers to Black males pursuing higher education, three make sense. It stands to reason, for example, that 'percent minority in school,' 'family size,' and 'respondent has a dependent child or expecting one' are barriers to academic achievement. As with its negative impact on twelfth grade test scores, 'percent minority in school' likely means students are attending poorly resourced schools with administrators and faculty members who are not particularly invested in student success. Add to these social ills the high probability of these schools serving neighborhoods with poorly resourced homes that lack the 'SES' and 'objectified cultural capital' vital to academic success and it becomes clear why 'percent minority in school' serves as a deterrent to Black males furthering their educations.

Although 'family size' emerges as a conduit to positive twelfth grade test scores, this dissertation argues that the lack of 'SES' and 'objectified cultural capital in the household' make 'family size' prohibitive to pursuing education once it is no longer free . 'Respondent has a dependent child or expecting one' is fairly self-explanatory as a barrier to achieving academic success. If a young man has a child, his priority, quite

understandably, shifts from long-term educational goals to the short-term goal of earning immediate income.

The fourth variable that reveals itself as a statistically significant barrier to pursuing higher education is surprising. 'Parental involvement' is not only a barrier; it is the strongest deterrent -- a revelation given the vast literature citing 'parental involvement' as being critical to academic success. For the purposes of this dissertation, the variable 'parental involvement' combines a set of four original variables aiming to assess whether or not respondent's parents 'attended a school meeting,' 'spoke to teacher/counselor,' 'visited respondent's class,' and/or 'attended a school event.' On average, Black male respondents indicate their parents participated in two of the four.

There are many reasons Black males may react adversely to their parents being involved in their educations. Perhaps these young Black men feel so alienated from the educational process that they are simply numb to any encouragement, even from parents. Perhaps they have lost so much faith in "the system" that any pathway to success reeking of what they perceive to be White tradition will not be embraced or even given much consideration. Perhaps they feel their parents are out of touch with today's reality if those parents believe that education results in employment and/or financial opportunities commensurate with those of Whites and others. Perhaps they feel so academically underprepared that they don't have the confidence or the belief that they can be successful in a higher academic setting. Perhaps they look around them and see that the educated models in their communities have not attained enough financially or materially to convince these young Black men that pursuing an education is a worthwhile use of their time. Perhaps they have been so inundated with media images suggesting that formal

education lacks value that it loses not only its appeal, but also its relevance for them. If any combination of these feelings and/or beliefs exists, 'parental involvement,' however well intentioned, may be the tipping point that drives the final wedge between a young Black man and his education.

The Plight of Low Socioeconomic Black Males

When disaggregating low socioeconomic Black males and not-low socioeconomic Black males, interesting variances are revealed. Sadly, what emerges most prominently is the fact that, when it comes to successful educational outcomes, low socioeconomic Black males are in serious trouble. Given the findings of this dissertation, very few elements promise favorable educational attainment for them. A conundrum of social forces much too complex for any well-intentioned individuals to quick-fix -- be they parents, teachers, administrators, policy-makers, or especially the children themselves -- results in a perfect storm of anti-education negativity far too pervasive amongst these young Black males.

While five of the variables prove to be statistically significant conduits to low socioeconomic Black males achieving acceptable twelfth grade test scores, little else impacts either test scores or highest level of education attained. The variable that has the strongest positive impact on standardized test scores for twelfth grade Black male respondents is 'suburban school.' The third strongest conduit is 'rural school.' These two variables basically reduce the number of conduits from five to four because, in tandem, they are effectively one conduit. The harsh reality is that these variables indicate that attending an urban school is a barrier to academic success. This does not bode well for

the one half of the Black male respondents attending urban schools, most with high percentages of minority students, another barrier to academic success. So, in effect, two of the five conduits to successful test scores represent more of a lethal blow than a measure of hope. Thus, from the outset, low socioeconomic Black males are at a disadvantage even when conduits to academic success are taken into consideration.

The variable 'mother's educational aspirations' is the second strongest conduit to acceptable scores on standardized tests for poor Black males. That low socioeconomic Black mothers so greatly influence their sons is a positive fact. A negative fact, of course, is that the strong influence of the mother is, in large part, due to the disproportionately high rate of absentee fathers in poor Black households. While minimizing the mother's impact would be unfair, it is a sad commentary that the impact of the father's educational aspirations is not even a consideration.

The fourth strongest conduit for low socioeconomic Black males achieving passing scores on twelfth grade standardized tests is 'family size.' The average family size of Black male respondents is 4.5 family members. This indicates that Black male respondents have, on average, two siblings in a single parent household and one in a dual parent household. Since low socioeconomic Black male respondents are likely to be raised by mothers in single parent households, these mothers may encourage their children to help each other with their studies. Perhaps if the mothers are employed, they make sure their children participate in after school programs requiring the completion of homework and some studying done before the fun activities. Maybe the mothers themselves are able to oversee their children’s school work, since the family is not too large to prevent them from doing so.

The fifth and final variable that has a statistically significant positive impact on twelfth grade test scores of low socioeconomic Black males is 'respondent has one or more siblings who left high school.' This likely reflects the determination of the mother/and or father to make sure at least one of their children achieve some measure of academic success. Additionally, having witnessed a sibling already fall short of family expectations, the Black male respondent may feel it is his responsibility to be the child who delivers.

Three variables prove to be statistically significant barriers to low socioeconomic Black males achieving passing grades on standardized tests. 'Respondent employment status' has the most impact. This is not surprising, given the need for low socioeconomic Black males to work and the well-documented negative impact time spent working has on time spent on homework, studying, and general academic preparation.

'Level of research information on financial aid for college education' is the second strongest barrier to standardized test scores for low socioeconomic Black males. As discussed earlier, it is likely that researching financial aid opportunities forces low socioeconomic Black males to confront the inability and/or unwillingness of their families to support their academic pursuits, accepting as their only option the burden of loan payments for an education that may or may not yield dividends.

The third and final variable that emerges as a statistically significant barrier to acceptable scores on twelfth grade standardized tests for low socioeconomic Black males is 'respondent joined the armed forces or plan to do so.' This likely reflects earning immediate income as a priority for low socioeconomic Black males, who are reluctant to accrue debt and invest time and resources in educational pursuits.

Regarding highest level of education attained in 2000, eight years after their expected graduation from high school, only two variables prove to be statistically significant conduits for low socioeconomic Black males. The first is 'level of research information on financial aid for college education.' The second is 'frequency respondent discussed going to college with parents.' As mentioned earlier, however, 'level of research information on financial aid for college education' proves to be a barrier to these same students achieving successful standardized test scores in the twelfth grade. Perhaps while the financial challenges of attending college discourages low socioeconomic Black males from pursuing higher education, the influence of an attentive parent, particularly a mother who has attended college, can help mitigate daunting financial worries. As it relates to their education, low socioeconomic Black males may welcome and respond well to their mothers' involvement.

The one variable that reveals itself to be a statistically significant barrier to educational attainment of low socioeconomic Black males is 'respondent has a dependent child or expecting one.' This is fairly self-explanatory, as the responsibility of providing for a child makes taking on debt in order to attend college a much lower priority than finding gainful employment.

The fact that very few variables impact the educational outcomes of low socioeconomic Black males may reasonably be viewed as an asset.. After all, if only two variables serve as conduits to attaining higher education and only one serves as a barrier, the implication may be that the possibilities are endless as far as creating programs and learning environments that will make attaining education a more attractive option for low socioeconomic Black males. However, the lack of impactful variables also signifies that

students, parents, educators, and administrators have little to work with, leaving small hope for even the most ardent optimist of eradicating the educational challenges low socioeconomic Black males face..

Contrasting Low and Not-Low Socioeconomic Black Males

The regression modeling utilized in this study indicates that when it comes to not-low socioeconomic Black males, an increased number of statistically significant variables suggests increased possibilities of improving educational outcomes. Interestingly, however, none of the ten variables proven to be statistically significant conduits to positive test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males are amongst the five conduits for their low socioeconomic peers. The strongest conduit for not-low socioeconomic Black males is 'respondent's age in years in eighth grade.' This suggests that a not-low socioeconomic Black male who starts school on time, and who by eighth grade has never been held back a grade, is well on his way towards a successful high school career.

'Academic disengagement,' the second strongest conduit for twelfth grade test scores of not-poor Black males, is a continuous predictor comprised of six negative behaviors indicating that the student is neither suitably engaged nor making the effort to engage in the educational process. The behaviors include 'respondent sent to office for misbehaving,' 'respondent sent to office with school work problems,' 'parents received warning about attendance,' 'parents received warning about grades,' 'parents received warning about behavior,' and 'respondent got into fight with another student.' The implication here is that not-low socioeconomic Black males are much less academically disengaged than their low socioeconomic peers. Better stated, not-low socioeconomic

Black males are engaged at a much higher level than low socioeconomic Black males, and, therefore, are better prepared for standardized tests.

The third strongest conduit for twelfth grade test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males is ‘eighth grade total enrollment.’ An original ordinal item measuring the number of students enrolled in eighth grade in the school attended by the respondent, the strength of this variable suggests that not-low socioeconomic Black males benefit from attending schools with smaller eighth grade enrollments. The advantage, of course, is a better student to teacher ratio that allows for more focused high school preparation. The impact of 'eighth grade total enrollment' and 'respondent's age in years in eighth grade,' signifies that for not-low socioeconomic Black males a successful run to and through the eighth grade could be a critical tipping point towards positive outcomes in high school.

'Locus of control’ and ‘self concept,’ the fourth and fifth strongest conduits, speak to the likelihood that not-low socioeconomic Black males possess a level of confidence and self-esteem that serves them well in their academic pursuits.

It is logical that the sixth variable, ‘how often parents limit time watching television,’ advantages not-low socioeconomic Black males who are more likely than low socioeconomic Black males to grow up in two-parent households in which television does not become the surrogate parent. Also, if mothers and/or fathers are home at any given point in the day, reinforcing limits on watching television is more easily and consistently done. Correlating with ‘how often parents limit time watching television,’ not-low socioeconomic Black males are more likely to benefit from ‘time spent on extracurricular activities,’ the eighth strongest variable impacting their positive standardized test scores.

The seventh variable, ‘frequency respondent discussed going to college with parents,’ and the tenth, ‘level of research information on financial aid for college education,’ refer to the amount of time and interest parents of not-low socioeconomic Black males dedicate to preparing for college life. The ninth variable, ‘respondent has a dependent child or expecting one,’ is somewhat surprising given the logical assumption that having or expecting a child might serve as a deterrent to pursuing higher education. Perhaps, however, it points to a middle-class value system instilled in not-low socioeconomic Black males that encourages them to take responsibility for their children, and to strive to do what they must to best provide for them.

Just as there is a marked increase in variables serving as conduits to successful standardized test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males when compared to their low socioeconomic peers, a similar increase is noted in the variables proven to be barriers for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Despite an increase from three to eight, only one variable proves to be a barrier in both groups.

The strongest barrier, ‘respondent’s educational aspirations,’ may indicate the disillusionment of not-low socioeconomic Black males as they realize that they may not have the academic and/or financial wherewithal to attend elite institutions. Additionally, the realization that they lack the social capital often critical to paving the way for acceptance to more prestigious institutions may further discourage not-low socioeconomic Black males from pursuing higher education. After all, these young men were likely the cream of the crop in their local high schools. In a White college setting, however, they often feel academically indistinguishable from their peers.

The second, third and fourth variables revealed to be barriers to twelfth grade test results for not-low socioeconomic Black males are ‘respondent has been held back a grade,’ ‘respondent employment status’ and ‘respondent has one or more siblings who left high school,’ respectively. All seem fairly self-explanatory, as does the sixth variable, ‘percent minority in school.’ As it relates to test scores, ‘respondent employment status’ is the only variable proven to be a barrier for both low and not-low socioeconomic Black males.

The remaining variables, however, are somewhat unexpected. One might reasonably assume that attending ‘suburban school’ and ‘rural school,’ the fifth and seventh variables respectively, might have a positive impact on test outcomes. Yet, for not-low socioeconomic Black males, they are barriers. Perhaps feeling disconnected from the mainstream majority contributes to low test scores for these students. Their sense of alienation could impact them in other ways as well. Perhaps these young Black males are not invited to participate in study groups. They may not feel included, or may feel uncomfortable when included, in school related extracurricular activities that could foster a healthier, more inclusive social life. Perhaps as realizations about their disadvantaged positions regarding social capital and networks come into play, Black male students become discouraged and put less effort into their academics.

Furthering the problem may be the fact that their parents are likely also alienated. The impact of parental alienation could potentially be damaging to a child's ability to succeed, because parents not involved with their children’s schools may lack important information when making critical decisions. If parents of not-low socioeconomic Black males are not involved in discussions other parents have about the pros and cons of the

schools their children attend, about particular teachers, about informal events or get-togethers, about key initiatives that may be on the horizon, and so forth, they cannot steer their children in the same ways other parents can. Therefore, although suburban and rural schools may offer better overall learning environments, not-low socioeconomic Black males and their parents may generally respond better when surrounded by other Black students and parents, notwithstanding socio-economic status. Additionally, in such environments their parents can be pro-active leaders instead of neglected bystanders.

Equally surprising is the negative impact of 'parental involvement,' the eighth and final variable, on standardized test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males. This could speak to the rebellious spirit of young Black males evoked by the pressure of attaining an education they do not believe will prove to be a pathway to success. If the examples they see in the household and/or the broader community suggest attaining higher education does not provide the same employment and/or financial advantages it affords others, pursuing success through other avenues becomes more attractive. Perhaps the more involved well-intentioned parents infused with middle-class values become, the more determined not-low socioeconomic Black male students are to forge their own paths and prove their parents wrong.

Two variables have a statistically significant positive impact on the educational attainment of not-low socioeconomic Black males eight years after their expected graduation from high school. 'Objectified cultural capital in household' suggests that reflecting middle class values in the household – through books, artwork, or higher-brow music genres, for example – creates an environment in which education is valued and perhaps even implicit by the very nature of the student's surroundings.

The second variable, ‘respondent has one or more siblings who left high school,’ likely signals the added pressure placed on the respondent by parents eager to see at least one of their children achieve academic success. Additionally, if a young Black male has seen the negative impact of dropping out of high school on the employment and financial trajectory of his sibling or siblings, he is more likely to embrace higher education as a pathway to success.

Unlike low socioeconomic Black males who have only one variable that serves as a barrier to educational attainment, not-low socioeconomic Black males have five. 'Parental involvement' proves to be the strongest. The same reasons put forth in the earlier discussion of this variable as a barrier to achieving decent scores on twelfth grade standardized tests may hold true here as well.

The second strongest barrier is 'eighth grade total enrollment.' Perhaps above average enrollments, and the inability to receive one-on-one attention from teachers, tutors and/or counselors in the eighth grade, have a long term negative impact on educational outcomes for not-low socioeconomic Black males. This finding is in conflict, however, with 'eighth grade total enrollment' emerging as the third strongest conduit to successful twelfth grade standardized test scores for these same Black male respondents.

'Respondent employment status' and 'respondent joined the armed forces or plan to do so,' the third and fifth strongest barriers to academic success, respectively, for not-low socioeconomic Black males are both self-explanatory. Despite whatever economic advantages not-low socioeconomic Black males have over low socioeconomic Black males, the need or desire to join the workforce and earn an immediate income still often

takes priority over furthering one's education, particularly if education is perceived as offering few short-term rewards.

Such thinking could logically lead to the armed forces being a more attractive option. Joining the armed forces promises many achievements for young not-low socioeconomic Black males: (1) they might continue advancing their education while making immediate money; (2) they might leave their parents' household and, with that, also leave behind the pressure of having to pursue higher education; (3) they might travel and experience different cultures and lifestyles; and (4) they might do all of the above with little overhead. In short, joining the armed forces might be perceived as the perfect solution to satisfying the parents' desire for their children to continue their academic pursuits, and the children's desire to gain financial independence.

'Family size' is the fourth ranked barrier to educational attainment for not-low socioeconomic Black males. On average, Black male respondents to the NELS:88 study come from small families. One could logically assume that this would serve as an advantage. If, however, 'parental involvement' serves as a deterrent to academic success for not-low socioeconomic Black males, coming from a small family might be detrimental, because parents may focus all their attention and energy on only one or two children.

Surprise Findings

The findings of this dissertation reveal a few surprises, some offering rays of hope, others painting images of despair. By far the most alarming, however, is the lack of variables impacting educational outcomes of low socioeconomic Black males. Only

two variables, ‘level of research information on financial aid for college education’ and ‘frequency respondent discussed going to college with parents,' serve as conduits, and these are so closely aligned they essentially can be collapsed into one. Compounding matters, only one variable, ‘respondent has a dependent child or expecting one,’ emerges as a barrier. Logic dictates that if a low socioeconomic Black male can overcome a single barrier, his pathway to academic success becomes infinitely more manageable. This study posits the exact opposite.

Utilizing the findings of this dissertation as a guide, how do parents, educators, administrators, and policy-makers improve the odds for low socioeconomic Black males achieving academic success with nothing to work with or build upon? Perhaps that's why well-thought out and well-intentioned programs such as City University of New York's Black Male Initiative and University System of Georgia’s African-American Male Initiative have struggled to achieve even limited success, despite sufficient funding.

Offering a ray of hope for low socioeconomic Black males is the finding that ‘level of research information on financial aid for college education’ and ‘frequency respondent discussed going to college with parents’ are the two variables that function as conduits to educational attainment for poor Black males. The implication here is that parental involvement has a positive impact on the educational pursuits of low socioeconomic Black males. This is surprising, given the negative impact parental involvement has on the academic success of not-low socioeconomic Black males. Despite the disproportionate number of single parent households and absentee fathers in poor Black households, this dissertation’s findings suggest that, if a mother has the will

and the stamina to stay involved in her son's schooling and guide him accordingly, his chances for academic success improve.

Equally surprising is the difference between the number of variables impacting not-low socioeconomic Black males and those impacting their low socioeconomic peers. Ten variables prove to be conduits to successful standardized test performance for not-low socioeconomic Black males, versus five for low socioeconomic Black males. As far as barriers to acceptable test scores, the number jumps from three for low socioeconomic Black males to eight for not-low socioeconomic Black males. While only two variables perform as conduits for both groups when it comes to educational attainment eight years after expected graduation from high school, the number of barriers increases from one for low socioeconomic Black males to five for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Overall, the difference is twenty-five conduits and barriers potentially factoring into the development of programs and policies aimed at creating better learning environments for not-low socioeconomic Black males, versus only eleven for low socioeconomic Black males -- a variance of 100%.

The finding that ‘respondent has a dependent child or expecting one’ serves as a conduit to twelfth grade standardized test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males is also surprising, especially since this variable emerges as the single barrier to educational attainment for low socioeconomic Black males. The logical assumption is that the positive impact of having or expecting a child has on not-low socioeconomic Black males signifies the difference in value systems between middle-class and poor families.

Another unforeseen finding is the negative impact attending suburban and rural schools has on the twelfth grade standardized test scores of not-low socioeconomic Black males, reflecting the downside of being a Black minority in a majority White school. While better resources and more invested teachers and administrators allow these schools to provide young Black males with better educational opportunities, the alienation both Black students and their parents experience in these schools has an adverse effect on them.

Most revealing, however, is the negative impact parental involvement has on not-low socioeconomic Black males, which again counters what the literature and existing research asserts as true. Is this a phenomenon specific to not-low socioeconomic Black males in particular, or one that plays out with other not-low socioeconomic males as well?

Theories Supported and Refuted

This dissertation examines the differences between conduits and barriers to academic success for low socioeconomic Black males versus not-low socioeconomic Black males through the lens of specific sociological theories. On the macro level, the theories refer to social and cultural capital as posited by Bourdieu and Coleman. The middle range theories employed in this study include Ogbu's oppositional identity theory, Yancey's alienation thesis, and Collins' Black sexual politics.

Chapters One and Two of this dissertation discussed Bourdieu’s views on cultural capital, thus theoretically explaining differences in educational outcomes between low and not-low socioeconomic Black males. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) described

cultural capital as embodying the forms of knowledge, skills, education, and social advantages that give an individual a higher status in society. They maintained that of utmost importance to the development of an individual's cultural capital was the time his or her parents invested in instilling and cultivating the habits, styles, and behaviors that prepared their children to do well in school, and to ultimately attain their college degrees.

Additionally, Bourdieu (1986) argued that the role of education was to build a bridge between cultural reproduction and social reproduction. This vital bridge is constructed when the educational system impacted the reproduction of power and relationships between classes. Bourdieu further asserted that the impact of education on individuals and society was crucial, because the reproduction of cultural capital reflected the values and morals of the dominant class, and education neutralized those values and morals by acting as a common denominator for all who acquired it.

Building upon Bourdieu's arguments, Coleman (1988) defined social capital as a public resource enforcing the desired social norms and sanctions within families and communities. According to Coleman, social capital within a family revolved around the number of adults and the activities in which they and the children in the family were engaged. Social capital within a community referred to the relational ties among adults living in a given neighborhood or involved in such functional communities as church and school. Productive social capital at the community level requires parents knowing other parents in the community either directly or indirectly. This network of social relations provides the social capital that allows parents and schools to work together. Such teamwork results in the enforcing of acceptable academic and social behaviors among students to produce academic excellence.

Ogbu's oppositional identity theory has sparked much controversy and remains at the center of many sociological debates about the impact of peer influence on racial disparities in education. Ogbu's work initially focused on the disparities in educational outcomes between involuntary minorities and a given society's dominant group, investigating, in short, how the desires of the dominant group resulted in systemic discrimination against involuntary immigrants. Ogbu declared that this kind of discrimination could often be found in oppressive societies, practiced by institutions that poorly educated involuntary minorities. This inferior education resulted in the lack of employment opportunities and upward mobility for such minorities.

Ogbu's later studies focused on responses to the social forces negatively affecting the integration of involuntary minorities into the White American mainstream. Ogbu theorized that the attitudes of peers toward education accounted for the resistance of Black students to academic success, and, in large part, for the disparities in Black-White academic performance. Furthermore, Ogbu determined that this resistance to academia has been traditionally passed along via a peer culture that perceives academic achievement as "acting White," and therefore rejecting Black culture and pride (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Suazo-Garcia, 2005). A Black student who acquires the "acting White" label is virtually assured of receiving unfavorable sanctions from his or her peers. To do well in school and still be accepted by his or her peers, the Black student has to assume a "raceless" persona (Fordham, 1988, 1996 ; Suazo-Garcia, 2005).

While Ogbu and his associates did not examine differences between the academic success of Black males and Black females, Fordham (1996) suggested that Black males

struggled more than Black females between doing well in school and being socially accepted within the "fictive" kinship community of their fellow Black students.

Yancey's alienation thesis argued that Blacks were the least accepted of any minority group by America's White mainstream culture. Consequently, Blacks faced a unique form of non-acceptance because they did not have the opportunities to engage in the same level of assimilation as non-Black racial minorities. Unlike Hispanic and Asian minority groups, Blacks possessed reduced social status and power because they were estranged from Whites. Assessing this inability to assimilate was the basis of Yancey's alienation thesis (Yancey, 2003).

The alienation thesis presupposed that Blacks had suffered a uniquely oppressive form of alienation that Latinos and Asians, the two other major racial groups in America, had not. Latinos and Asians, therefore, had found a measure of acceptance by the dominant group. Blacks, on the other hand, appeared destined to remain an outcast race. For many, this alienation led to the oppositional culture that Ogbu described. Even those who wanted to assimilate into the mainstream found that the barriers or social forces they faced did not allow them entry into the dominant culture.

Because acceptance into the mainstream resulted in particular minority groups enjoying many of the social advantages experienced by the dominant group, it became imperative for those minority groups to perceive themselves as dominant group members. Once that transition occurred, they began to share the racial attitudes of the dominant group.

Being something other than Black afforded non-Black minority groups the opportunity to eventually adopt a White racial identity. Blacks, therefore, not only

remained at the lowest level of America's social ladder, but faced the daunting reality that their prospects for moving up were slim, because it was in the social interests of every non-Black racial group to keep Blacks at the bottom (Yancey, 2003,Warren & Twine, 1997). This social phenomenon has led social scientists and demographers to predict that by the year 2050, the racial divide in America will no longer exist between Black and White, but rather between Black and non-Black.

According to Collins (2005), Black sexual politics consisted of a set of ideas and social practices shaped by gender, race, and sexuality that framed Black men's and women's treatment of each other, as well as how they were perceived and treated by others. Collins asserted that Black gender ideology provided the foundation upon which patterns of opportunity and discrimination impacting Black men and women in schools, jobs, government agencies, and other American social institutions were not only built, but justified. Based on a much larger pattern of specific gender ideology, Black men were compelled to endure an array of daily social challenges that other groups did not. Authority figures ranging from school principals to security guards subjected Black men to verbal and physical abuse and violence. This treatment resulted in Black men living with constant fear and anger, often becoming dangers to themselves, to their families, and to loved ones.

Collins viewed Black popular culture and mass media as proof that race, gender, and sexuality consisted of ideological frameworks serving to organize social institutions and perceptions. Supporting Collins' theories of Black sexual politics and media images of Black males, film historian Donald Bogle cited "the tom" (the socially acceptable Good Negro character) and "the coon" (Blacks as buffoonish amusement objects) as

examples of Black male caricatures promoted by mass media. But perhaps more than any other, according to Bogle (1994), the image of the brutal Black buck with his lust for White women had the most profound impact on how Black males were perceived in America.

Regarding education, this dissertation's findings support Bourdieu's and Coleman's theories of social and cultural capital. Severely lacking both sorts of capital, low socioeconomic Black males are unlikely to achieve academic success. Conversely, not-low socioeconomic Black males benefit from having high levels of objectified cultural capital in the household. This speaks directly to the parental influence that both Bourdieu and Coleman have cited as being critical to academic success, as well as to the fact that not-low socioeconomic Black males benefit from discussing going to college with their parents, researching financial aid (which likely involves parents), and having parents who limit the time their children watch television. It is also highly likely that parental involvement has a hand in not-low socioeconomic Black males benefitting from participating in extracurricular school related activities. While the dissertation's findings reveal the challenges of encouraging low socioeconomic Black males to attain higher education, the two existing conduits, 'level or research on financial aid' and 'discussing college with parents' both signify parental involvement, thus further supporting theories of social and cultural capital.

When examining the conduits to low socioeconomic Black males achieving passing scores on twelfth grade standardized tests, the strongest is attending 'suburban school,' with 'rural school' being third. The positive impact of these variables on the educational performance of low socioeconomic Black males supports Ogbu's

oppositional identity theory. Ogbu's theory described how Black students "dumbed themselves down" to avoid appearing academically inclined and thus "uncool" to their peers, who might view being smart and attaining good grades as "acting White." Conversely, the dissertation's findings suggest that, when placed in suburban and rural environments most likely absent of strong Black peer pressure, low socioeconomic Black males do better academically, so lending credence to Ogbu's theory.

The opposite, however, is found with not-low socioeconomic Black males. This dissertation indicates that attending suburban and rural schools are barriers for these students when it comes to twelfth grade standardized test scores. These students may, in fact, do better academically by attending urban schools with higher minority enrollments. This might refute Ogbu's theory, suggesting that not-low socioeconomic Black males do not appear to succumb readily to their Black peers who may equate academic achievement with "acting White." This may also be attributed to the social and cultural capital these students carry with them to school, instilling in them a level of respect for education that low socioeconomic Black males may not have. Still, the ability of not-low socioeconomic Black males to thrive in urban school environments implies that Ogbu's oppositional identity theory is applicable to them, but not necessarily to their low socioeconomic Black male peers.

The implication that not-low socioeconomic Black males perform best among their low socioeconomic peers supports Yancey's alienation thesis, which argues that sharing similar middle-class backgrounds with fellow students does not mitigate the impact of what Yancey described as a unique form of non-acceptance of Blacks in America. Such non-acceptance likely results in these students feeling alienated at school,

and may therefore be at the heart of the "dumbing down" process Ogbu described in his discussion of oppositional identity. Black students exert peer pressure in order to undermine the academic accomplishments of other Black students, because they feel rejected and defensive when marginalized by White mainstream culture. Not "acting White" becomes a front for not acquiescing to a system they view suspiciously and perceive as untrustworthy.

These feelings are further exacerbated when they see Latinos and Asians embracing the racial identities of non-Black, or non-people of color. That students relatively new to America's cultural landscape realize academic, employment, and financial opportunities still not afforded to Blacks fuels the defensive mindset of Black students. When they see Latinos and Asians enjoying their ability not so much to be White as to be non-Black, young Blacks become disillusioned and discouraged. If the decks are stacked against an individual, why should he or she even play the game?

The pop culture media images Collins referred to in her Black sexual politics exacerbate the situation. To the credit of various mass media, images abound of successful Black males. This, of course, is a welcomed change from even just a decade ago. The problem is that the overwhelming majority of these images are of virile athletes and other entertainers rather than of Black male intellectuals. Collins asserted that pop culture images are largely the foundation upon which patterns of treatment of Black males by Black males, Black females, and others are constructed. Are the images of successful athletes, rappers, and the like advancing the social status of Black males? Are these images helping to create a social climate in which Black males feel less alienated?

Are media images making education a more attractive option, since the odds of becoming a millionaire athlete or successful rapper are slim at best? Not likely.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the image of the brutal Black buck promulgated in the early years of film in America has shaped irreparably damaging perceptions of Black males. One hundred years later, images of athletes and other entertainers adored and beloved by White mainstream culture abound. However, while basketball superstar LeBron James may draw big television ratings and sell massive amounts of commercial time and products, Whites watching from the safety of their couches are highly unlikely to welcome a hulking, 6'8", chiseled, virile, physically imposing Black man like James into their homes.

The damage these images have inflicted upon the collective psyches of Black males, however, may be even more deleterious than it first seems. LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, and so many others, have become wealthy-beyond-belief superstars without ever stepping into a college classroom. Add Lil Wayne, T-Pain, and a host of other blinged out performers to the list and the challenge to make education an attractive option to young Black males grows exponentially. Rapper T.I.'s credibility took a hit when he was arrested for drug possession two weeks after being released from prison for purchasing machine guns and other weapons. The "cool thing," at least to many of his young Black male fans, was that, even though carrying drugs while only two weeks removed from prison was stupid, he was driving a $450,000 Maybach at the time of his arrest. It may have been unclear whether the car was actually his or not, but one thing that was unquestionably clear was that most folks with college degrees did not drive Maybachs.

Fighting these mass media images, whether real or illusory, is an enormous battle for parents, educators and administrators. It's hard to argue with the logic of an eighteen year old who, upon seeing how hard the educated adults in his community work just to pay bills, decides that just one good entrepreneurial idea will allow him to bypass the struggles of his educated neighbors and make him the next Maybach cruising millionaire. He's not thinking about health insurance, investment funds, retirement plans, college accounts for his children, or the ability to begin building social and cultural capital so his children will have a better head start in life than he had. In short, he's clueless to all the tangibles and intangibles acquiring an education brings, because those acquisitions are not sexy enough for television to waste time showing. His parents may have told him repeatedly that there's no such thing as fast money, but media images have convinced him that money is not only fast, it's easy too.

Recommendations for Improving the Odds

Given the impact of social and cultural capital (or the lack thereof), oppositional identity theory, alienation thesis, and Black sexual politics, making recommendations geared to improving educational outcomes of Black males may seem a fruitless enterprise. This dissertation, however, proposes to do exactly that. The findings of this study allow for recommendations based upon a better understanding of the conduits and barriers to academic success for low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic Black males. The good news is that all is not hopeless.

This dissertation’s findings suggest that low socioeconomic Black male students need to get involved with extracurricular school-related activities. Extracurricular

activities cut down on the amount of time spent watching television. Another crucial benefit of many of these activities is that students must complete their homework before participating in the activities themselves.

Household circumstances often dictate that poor Black males have to work. Since employment is the strongest barrier to students doing well on standardized tests, low socioeconomic Black male students should work only the minimal amount of hours necessary. If working ten hours per week meets the needs of the household, they should not sign on for twenty hours. This requires the support of the parent(s). Spending time together working out a budget to determine how much the child actually has to work would not only be helpful in this regard, it would also further develop the family's social and cultural capital. Young Black males should begin speaking with loan officers, bank officials, guidance counselors and others as early as ninth and tenth grade. This would hopefully alleviate the fear of figuring out how to pay tuition. This is also another project that the student can do with his parent(s), once again furthering the family's social and cultural capital. Lastly, having a child or expecting one is the one barrier to educational attainment found in this dissertation. The final recommendation to low socioeconomic Black males is simple and doable. Wear condoms.

This dissertation’s findings indicate that attending 'suburban school' is the strongest conduit to successful test scores for low socioeconomic Black males. Unfortunately, enrolling their children in a suburban school is not an option available to many low socioeconomic Black parents. On a good note, findings indicate that low socioeconomic mothers wield a good deal of influence on their children’s educational outlook. With this in mind, such parents should take advantage of, and begin using, that

influence earlier rather than later. In addition to talking about school and its importance, the parent(s) can also create an education-friendly household. Reading to the child is beneficial, but equally important is to let the child see his parent(s) read. Occasionally turning off the television and reading a book, newspaper, or magazine should enhance the child's interest in reading.

Accompanying the child to meetings with loan officers, bank officials and guidance counselors can show the child that his parent(s) is/are supportive of his efforts to pursue a college education. Low socioeconomic parents should also ask the school guidance counselor about scholarship opportunities. Again, this process should begin in the ninth or tenth grade. Lastly, the parent(s) needs to discuss safe sex and the consequences of young pregnancies. If the parent is uncomfortable, a family member, friend, clergy, or someone who is knowledgeable and credible can initiate these conversations.

This dissertation's findings indicate that, by virtue of the social and cultural capital that accompanies their middle-class values, not-low socioeconomic Black males are better prepared for academic success. This comes as no surprise. Two of the ten conduits to twelfth grade test scores for not-poor Black males are 'locus of control' and 'self concept,' an indication that these students are self-assured and fairly comfortable with the rigors of academia. Moreover, the findings suggest that what not-low socioeconomic students need to do, first and foremost, is simply behave. Also, talking with their parents about college and exploring financial aid and scholarship opportunities would be helpful as well. As with low socioeconomic Black males, recommendations for not-low socioeconomic Black males also include working only the minimal hours

necessary and participating in extracurricular activities. In a nutshell, the recommendations for both low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic Black male students are essentially the same. The advantage not-low socioeconomic Black males have is that their financial situations make the goals of these recommendations easily achievable.

Based on the findings of this dissertation, not-low socioeconomic Black parents can do many things to enhance the academic prospects of their male children. Crucial to these students doing well on twelfth grade standardized tests is starting kindergarten on time and staying on track through the eighth grade. Enrolling them in schools with a small eighth grade class is also helpful. Since 'locus of control' and 'self concept' suggest parents have already raised their children in a way that engenders self-respect and pride, another key is simply continuing on that path. As with low socioeconomic Black parents, not-low socioeconomic Black parents need to limit the time their children watch television and explore with their children opportunities for financial aid and scholarships.

The strongest barrier to educational attainment for not-low socioeconomic Black males is 'parental involvement,' which is also a barrier to twelfth grade standardized test scores. This presents an interesting challenge to not-low socioeconomic parents, as they need to find a balance between being involved and being overly involved to the point that their children tune them out. Another issue for not-low socioeconomic Black families living in non-urban neighborhoods is the finding that indicates attending 'suburban school' and 'rural school' is a barrier to twelfth grade test scores. One solution might be to enroll their children in a school with higher minority enrollment. It may not be the

best school overall, but it may be the best school for their children to improve their educational outcomes.

Another challenge for not-low socioeconomic parents is 'respondent's educational aspirations' functioning as the strongest barrier to passing scores on twelfth grade standardized tests. As discussed earlier, this could suggest deflated dreams when not-low socioeconomic Black male students are confronted by the reality that their social and cultural capital does not quite measure up to that of their White classmates. This, of course, limits the opportunities available to not-low socioeconomic Black males. One possible solution for parents of these students would be to manage their children's expectations. If they understand from an early age that there are excellent second-tier schools they should consider as well, the sting of learning what they lack may not be as severe.

Of paramount importance, not-low socioeconomic Black parents must be prepared to socialize with White parents in the school. Probably the most harm they can do to their children would be to isolate themselves. Whether they are made to feel welcome or not, at the very least not-low socioeconomic Black parents must attend PTA meetings and other school-related functions. It is crucial for them to be in the flow of information.

A key challenge for teachers and administrators, especially those in urban schools with high minority enrollment, is to always be mindful that Black males are not a monolithic group. As findings of this study indicate, low socioeconomic Black males and not-low socioeconomic Black males have their own unique concerns and must be approached differently if each group is to have an opportunity to fulfill its academic

potential. For example, based on the findings of this dissertation, a teacher should actively solicit the support of a low socioeconomic Black male's mother, as she likely wields a great influence over her son's educational outlook. That same teacher may want to deal more directly with not-low socioeconomic Black males because, in their case, parental involvement is a barrier to success.

On the other hand, teachers and administrators in suburban schools need to understand that their learning environment is a conduit for academic achievement by low socioeconomic Black males, but a barrier for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Based on the findings of this study, a teacher should encourage not-low socioeconomic Black males to socialize with low socioeconomic Black males. While this could easily be viewed as discriminatory, this dissertation indicates that not-low socioeconomic Black male students do better when they can socialize with other Blacks, regardless of socio-economic status.

Researching financial aid is a conduit to educational attainment for low socioeconomic Black males and a conduit to twelfth grade test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Encouraging both groups to research information on financial aid serves both groups well, even if for very different reasons. Interestingly, however, researching financial aid is also a barrier to twelfth grade test scores of low socioeconomic Black males. This means encouraging such students to research financial aid requires some conversation to allay whatever fears the research conjures up, impacting test results.

From an administrative/policy standpoint, suburban school districts should aggressively pursue Black male teachers. If not-low socioeconomic Black males do

better when there is a sizable Black population, it stands to reason that they might do even better with Black instructors. Additionally, if low socioeconomic Black males do better in suburban schools, administrators at the local urban schools should lobby for resources that would allow them to mirror some of the programs effective with low socioeconomic Black males in suburban schools. Programs that bring parents, particularly mothers, into the school should be developed. If young Black males respond well to their mothers' involvement, the mothers should be involved.

Aside from recommendations drawn directly from the research, low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic Black males need programs to help them better understand the value of education. Administrators might consider annual orientation for all grade levels at the beginning of each school year. Orientation could include a panel of locally successful and educated community members to speak with students about the impact of education on their success. Life skills sessions that address dining etiquette, dressing for job interviews, and the like could be offered during orientation. If the school has access to a successful alumnus or alumna, he or she should be invited to address the students as well.

This dissertation intends not so much to solve as to shed light on problems in order to promote the development of new thoughts, new approaches, and new hope.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Introduction

Regarding education as a pathway to success for Black males, low socioeconomic Black males have major obstacles to overcome. Not-low socioeconomic Black males are primed for success but have themselves to overcome. As it relates to low socioeconomic Black males, the findings of this study indicate that very few variables impact their educational attainment. This is not encouraging news. Fewer variables translate to fewer options to correct what's wrong. Conversely, the findings of this study indicate a significant number of variables impact educational outcomes of not-low socioeconomic Black males. Both groups, however, need to be sold on education as a pathway to success.

Summary of Findings

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to add to the discourse on academic achievement by contrasting the conduits and barriers to educational success for a nationally representative sample of Black males of low socioeconomic status versus Black males of not-low socioeconomic status across a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables. To that end, this dissertation is successful, as it reveals differences in conduits and barriers for both groups of Black males with several variables.

The most discouraging finding of this study is the sobering fact that only two variables, ‘level of research information on financial aid for college education’ and ‘frequency respondent discussed going to college with parents,' function as conduits to educational attainment for poor Black males. As discussed in Chapter Five, parents, educators, administrators, and policy-makers face enormous challenges when attempting to improve the odds for low socioeconomic Black males attaining positive educational outcomes, because they have so little to work with.

The difference between the number of variables impacting not-low socioeconomic Black males and those impacting low socioeconomic Black males is formidable. Utilizing data from the NELS:88 study, twenty-five conduits and barriers are identified for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Only eleven are identified for low socioeconomic Black males. Ten variables function as conduits to successful standardized test performance for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Only five function in the same way for low socioeconomic Black males. Three variables are barriers to positive standardized test results for low socioeconomic Black males. There are eight barriers for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Both groups have only two conduits to educational attainment eight years after expected graduation from high school. A marked discrepancy exists, however, between the one barrier to educational attainment for low socioeconomic Black males and the five barriers for not-low socioeconomic Black males.

Surprisingly, 'parental involvement' has a negative impact on both twelfth grade test scores and educational attainment of not-low socioeconomic Black males. This is unexpected given the existing research that points to 'parental involvement' as a key

component to academic success. In this regard, the dissertation's findings on low socioeconomic Black males are more supportive of that research. They indicate that with this group, the mother's influence on educational outcomes is strong.

Regarding twelfth grade standardized test scores, attending suburban schools is a conduit for low socioeconomic Black males, but proves to be a barrier for not-low socioeconomic Black males. Another finding that merits further examination is the fact that 'respondent has a dependent child or expecting one' is a barrier to educational attainment for low socioeconomic Black males. That result could logically have been anticipated. That 'respondent has a dependent child or expecting one' emerges as a conduit to passing scores on twelfth grade standardized tests for not-low socioeconomic Black males is unexpected.

'Level of research information on financial aid for college education' is another variable that begs for further analysis. As it relates to low socioeconomic Black males, researching financial aid is a barrier to scores on standardized tests. For not-low socioeconomic Black males, however, financial aid research proves to be a conduit to scores on standardized tests. Conversely, researching financial aid is also a conduit to educational attainment for low socioeconomic Black males.

Similarly, 'respondent has one or more siblings who left high school' is another variable requiring further analysis. For low socioeconomic Black males, having a sibling who left high school is a conduit to positive test scores. For not-low socioeconomic Black males, however, having a sibling who left high school is a barrier to test scores, but a conduit to educational attainment.

Another discrepancy is found with 'family size.' This variable proves to be a conduit to positive scores on twelfth grade standardized tests for low socioeconomic Black males. Yet it is a barrier to educational attainment for not-low socioeconomic Black males.

Not unexpectedly, 'respondent employment status' and 'respondent joined the armed forces or plan to do so' are barriers for both low and not-low socioeconomic Black males. Worth noting, however, is that for low socioeconomic Black males, these variables are barriers to improving twelfth grade standardized test scores. For not-low socioeconomic Black males, they have no impact on test scores but are barriers to educational attainment. Lastly, somewhat surprising was 'respondent's educational aspirations' as a barrier to test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males. This variable has no statistically significant impact on low socioeconomic Black males.

The theoretical framework for this dissertation includes the idea of social and cultural capital, oppositional identity theory, alienation thesis, and Black sexual politics. This dissertation's findings support Bourdieu's and Coleman's theories of social and cultural capital, as well as Yancey's alienation thesis and Collins' Black sexual politics. There are, however, conflicting findings regarding Ogbu's oppositional identity theory. This is not shocking, given the long standing arguments amongst social scientists regarding the validity of Ogbu's theory.

Oppositional identity theory argues that Black students capable of getting good grades intentionally do not do well academically because of peer pressure that equates academic achievement with acting White. Findings of this dissertation suggest that, when placed in suburban and rural schools absent of strong Black peer pressure, low

socioeconomic Black males do better academically. This lends credence to Ogbu's theory. The opposite, however, is found with not-low socioeconomic Black males. The dissertations findings indicate that attending suburban and rural schools is a barrier to twelfth grade standardized test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males. The implication is that not-low socioeconomic Black males who attend White suburban schools do better academically when they attend urban schools with high minority enrollments. This would refute Ogbu's theory.

Summary of Recommendations

This dissertation's findings suggest low socioeconomic Black male students need to get involved with extracurricular school-related activities, as such involvement cuts down on the amount of time spent watching television. As employment is the strongest barrier to the success of low socioeconomic students on standardized tests, this dissertation recommends that such students work only the minimal amount of hours necessary. Young Black males need to speak with loan officers, bank officials, and guidance counselors as early as ninth and tenth grade in order to better strategize options for paying college tuition. Ideally, this could be done in partnership with parent(s). Given the fact that having/expecting a child is the lone barrier to educational attainment, low socioeconomic Black males need early sex education and should be encouraged to wear condoms.

Since low socioeconomic mothers wield a good deal of influence on their children's educational outlook, these mothers should create an education-friendly household by not only, for example, reading to their children at bedtime, but also reading

themselves when their children are awake. Something as simple as this may have a lasting impact on the educational attainment of students. Low socioeconomic parents should also go with their children to meetings with loan officers, bank officials, and guidance counselors. These parents also need to discuss with their children safe sex practices and the consequences of young pregnancies.

This dissertation's findings suggest that not-low socioeconomic students are on the right track if they simply behave in school. Additionally, talking with their parents about college and exploring financial aid and scholarship opportunities is recommended, as is working only the minimal hours necessary and participating in extracurricular activities.

The strongest barrier to educational attainment for not-low socioeconomic Black males is 'parental involvement.' Parents always need to be involved, but not-low socioeconomic parents must refrain from over involvement. Because findings indicate attending 'suburban school' and 'rural school' are barriers to improving twelfth grade test scores for not-low socioeconomic Black males, parents should consider enrolling them in schools with sizable minority populations. Not-low socioeconomic Black parents also need to promote the idea of their children attending excellent second-tier colleges with higher minority enrollments. Lastly, these parents must socialize with White parents and attend PTA meetings and other school-related functions, as it is critical for them to remain in the flow of information.

Teachers and administrators in urban schools must not treat Black males as a monolithic group. Based on the findings of this dissertation, teachers should reach out to mothers of low socioeconomic Black males, given the influence they have on their sons'

educational outlooks. Conversely, teachers may also want to deal more directly with not-low socioeconomic Black males, rather than dealing solely with their parents, since 'parental involvement' is a barrier to success for them.

Because this dissertation finds that not-low socioeconomic Black male students do better when they can socialize with other Blacks, regardless of socio-economic status, teachers in suburban schools should encourage these students to associate with low socioeconomic Black males.

Researching financial aid is a conduit to educational attainment for low socioeconomic Black males and a conduit to improving twelfth grade test scores for not-poor Black males. Administrators should encourage students and parents of both groups to research information on financial aid and scholarships. Additionally, administrators in suburban school districts should aggressively pursue Black male teachers. Since the findings in this dissertation suggest low socioeconomic Black males do better in suburban schools, administrators at the local urban schools should mirror some of the programs utilized in suburban schools. Programs that bring parents, particularly mothers, into the school should be developed. If young Black males respond well to their mothers' involvement, the mothers should be involved.

Lastly, low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic Black males need annual orientation programs to help them better understand the value of education.

Limitations of Study and Directions for Future Research

This dissertation represents a first step in studying the ways a series of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables impact educational outcomes of low

socioeconomic versus not-low socioeconomic Black males. Hierarchical regression modeling is used to examine the variance between the low and not-low socioeconomic Black male groups. This modeling allows for a demonstration of which independent variables have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of low socioeconomic status, and which have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of Black male students of not low socioeconomic status.

A major limitation of this dissertation, however, is its completely quantitative approach. The dissertation describes how the variables impact the two socioeconomic groups, but, absent a qualitative analysis, it cannot explain why they have the impact they do. Given the variances between variables serving as conduits and barriers to academic success for low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic Black males, future research needs to incorporate their voices. We need to hear, for example, not-low socioeconomic Black male students explain why 'parental involvement' is a barrier to educational attainment, and if there are factors impacting low socioeconomic Black males beyond the few revealed in this study. Perhaps the students' perspectives themselves can add a much needed dimension to these findings. Also, what about the perspective of those who interact with low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic Black male students? Presumably the input of neighborhood peers, parents, teachers, coaches, principals, and politicians would add perspective as well. Further, the quantitative analysis is limited in that it only reflects the impact of variables utilized in the NELS:88 study, which draws from only a small sample of Black male students. A larger sample not only would be more representative, but would also allow for a better defined demarcation between low and not-low socioeconomic status.

In addition to a much needed qualitative component, future research might include data from other studies, as well as a survey instrument created specifically for this dissertation. Such research might also examine various subsets. Do the same variances hold steady for low socioeconomic Black females versus not-low socioeconomic Black females? Are there regional differences in the ways the variables impact low socioeconomic and not-low socioeconomic Black males? How does the impact of these variables differ when examining low socioeconomic White males and not-low socioeconomic Black males? Low socioeconomic Latinos and Asians and not-low socioeconomic Latinos and Asians?

Conclusion

Some scholars may view this dissertation as yet another research project focused on the failing educational outcomes of Black males. In contrast to prior studies, however, the dissertation is driven by the recognition that a college education continues to provide pathways to employment and financial opportunities that exceed those realized by high school graduates. Further, it is fueled by the belief that an examination of the demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal differences relative to the educational outcomes of low socioeconomic versus not-low socioeconomic Black males will promote the development of new educational strategies that serve both groups well. This dissertation will serve as the catalyst for other studies as they investigate and refine the dissertation's findings with the goal of enhancing the educational outcomes of Black male students as a whole.

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