UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MAKING SENSE OF MOTIVATION: STORIES OF HIGH-ACHIEVING AFRICAN AMERICAN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Frederick D. Hammond, III
Norman, Oklahoma
2006

Downloaded from SHAREOK. Persistent Handle URL: https://hdl.handle.net/11244/1060

UMI Number: 3219842

Copyright 2006 by
Hammond, Frederick D., III

All rights reserved.



UMI Microform 3219842
Copyright 2006 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

MAKING SENSE OF MOTIVATION:
STORIES OF HIGH-ACHIEVING AFRICAN AMERICAN
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
GRADUATE COLLEGE

By

_____
Rosa Cintron, Ph.D., Chair

_____
Charles Butler, Ph.D.

_____
George Henderson, Ph.D.

_____
Jeffrey Maiden, Ph.D.

_____
Tom Owens, Ph.D.

© Copyright by Frederick D. Hammond, III 2006
All Rights Reserved

Dedication

It has been said that the true measure of a man is determined by the achievements, wealth, and success of his grandchildren.

I dedicate this project to my paternal grandparents, who dedicated their lives to the education of children,

who pursued advanced degrees of education at a time when some institutions of higher learning did not openly welcome their aspirations, yet they never took no for an answer.

Nana and Grandpa, your drive, determination, perseverance, and will to motivate others to seek a more fruitful life through education, still carries on. And through your seeds, it will continue.

I miss you!

Pineapple

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the making sense of motivation, as defined by African American middle school high-achieving students in a faith-based private school in Europe. These high-achievers were active duty military dependants of enlisted men, voluntarily enrolled at a private Christian academy. The data were collected using a survey and observations during one face-to-face collective group interview, utilizing open-ended questions in a structured format. There were three participants in this research project. While it was not the original focus of the project, the faith-based beliefs and scripturally referenced style of parenting and teacher cooperation may have contributed significantly to the findings. The participants were sixth and eighth grades, two were female and one male. Content analysis was used to determine rich, thick descriptions of the data. This study was significant because it extends descriptions of current motivation theories to illustrate how high-academic achievers may not be autonomously driven by intrinsic motivation, but may more realistically integrate various orientations of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to optimize their goals. The salient results of this qualitative phenomenology will assist future educational researchers in understanding the student perspective on the aforementioned constructs: motivation and academic achievement.

The outcomes of this study will exhibit students maintaining high-academic achievements are equally intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Their meaning making is synonymous with that of the literature, as the students' stories are consistent with the constructs of internal and external control, as well as locus of causality. The faith-based

descriptions or reasons for achievement were unanticipated findings, yet significant to the purposely selected sample population included.

Recommendations for future study include a dire need for more in-depth, uni-cultural phenomenological studies, versus multicultural contrasts and comparisons. Additionally, the students suggest student ownership of their classrooms to achieve a class-total desire for academic achievement. Lastly, in a faith-based educational environment, synonymous teacher/faculty-student beliefs are more important than that of the staffs' educational accomplishment when fostering caring, productive intrinsically driven classrooms of excellence producing significant educational achievements.

Acknowledgements

To The Christ, our Lord and Savior, from whom all blessings come. I give You the praise, the glory, and the honor. I thank You, for it is not my will, wisdom, strength, or perseverance that has made this accomplishment, but Yours. My mouth shall be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all the day!

Professor Rosa Cintron and the Committee from Heaven, I thank you all for your unwavering time, patience, support, and guidance. My plans for future endeavors are now even more possible because you believed in me. Specifically Dr. Cintron, you have brought me to realize and accept the more we know, the more we really don't know. With that, I thank you most for your consistency and leadership style. I will cherish this learning experience until the end of time. Thank you!

Mom and Dad, thank you for living out Proverbs 22:6 and Deut 6:7. Your love for each other and your children is a model from which the world can learn. Thank you for life and for continuously speaking life over me.

To the erudite Cohort III: the times we shared were equally as fulfilling as they were learning experiences. I love you all and pray God's blessing on each of you and your families. Most specifically Barbara, as we shared the same committee chair. Having you to take this walk with me made it tolerable. Thank you!

Agape Christian Faith Center and Agape International Academy: Bishop Neal- you, and your organization taught me how to walk by faith and truly live to serve in His excellence. I pray God's continued blessing on the collective hearts of your organization.

Stephanie, Danny, the Covington and Reddick Families: Psalm 150:3-6!

Last but never least, my teammate and loving wife, Trina, without whom on this earth I would be nothing. I love you twice as much today as I did yesterday, yet only half as much as I will tomorrow. Words can never express how much I adore you, for what you are to, and with me. You complete me! Honey, through this time we have experienced many emotional upheavals. I am thankful to have a true and pure treasure-a good thing-as you stood arm-in-arm with me through this journey, from its inception to completion. You never once complained about the journey, and always supported me. As you have served our country faithfully, through various duty locations around the world, your prayers, emails, and letters of support has immensely help carry me to the completion of this educational journey. Thank you for teaching me. I thank you most for your intercessory spirit. I thank God for you! May the Lord continue to bless you, and us through you, as this stepping stone is laid in concrete for our seeds. I love you, Honey!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	iv
Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Table of Contents	ix
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xiii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Significance of the Study	5
Research Questions	7
Limitations to the Study	8
Definitions of Key Terms	8
Conceptual Framework	10
Disclosure of Personal Interest	12
Summary	16
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	17
Overview	17
Attribution Theory	30
Locus of Control	32
Locus of Causality	34
Intrinsic Motivation	36
Extrinsic Motivation	39
Academic Achievement and Motivation	40
Connectedness and Engagement	42
Theory Specific to Topic	48
Summary	52
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	53
Specific Procedures	55
Selection of Participants	58
Selection Criteria and Process	59
Data Collection	61
Instrumentation	62
Interviews	63
Observations	63

Data Analysis 65
Qualitative Analysis 66
An Introduction to the Participants 67
Jessica 68
Xavier 69
Kaela 70
Risks of Involvement 71
Summary 72

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS 73

The Schema of the Study 73
Pre Interview Context 74
The Interview Phase I: Written Responses 75
Responses 76
Written Meaning Making of Academic Achievement 78
Written Meaning Making of Motivation 84
Written Closing Questions 87
The Interview Phase II: Oral Discussion 91
Meaning Making of Academic Achievement 93
Meaning Making of Motivation 95
Themes of Connectivity 103
College and Career Focus 104
Teacher-Student Interactions 106
If I Were the Teacher 107
Summary 110

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION 111

Discussion 111
Conceptual Underpinnings 112
Research Critique 116
Lessons Learned 117
Implications for Educators 120
Recommendations for Future Research 121
Conclusion 123

REFERENCES 125

APPENDICES
Appendix A: IRB Authorization 141
Appendix B: Interview Protocol 143

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate 146
Appendix D: Response Letter Form School 148
Appendix E: Parent Letter of Consent 150
Appendix F: Student Letter of Consent 154
Appendix G: Debriefing Script 157

List of Tables

Table 1
Notable Contemporary Scholars and Motivation Constructs 23

Table 2
Demographics of Participants 76

Table 3
Written Making Meaning of Academic Achievement 78

Table 4
Written Making Meaning of Motivation 84

Table 5
Closing Questions 87

Table 6
If I Were the Teacher 106

List of Figures

Figure 1
Key Terms Relevant to Academic Achievement and Motivation 25

Figure 2
Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation as a Continuum of PLOC 36

Figure 3
Middle School Student Connectedness and Engagement 43

Figure 4
Motivation and Academic Achievement Interaction Matrix 101

Chapter 1. Introduction

"Without an education, life is meaningless. Without some kind of motivation, reaching true achievement is impossible. If I'm not working hard to get somewhere meaningful, what's the point?" Jessica (2006)

Background

These words, taken verbatim from one of the research participants, are pertinent to the discussion of this investigation because they communicate the student's understanding of the importance of education. Additionally, the statement asserts her understanding of the motivation behind seeking formal approval in society and the world of education through academic achievement.

As the literature consistently reports, students of color—African Americans, to be specific—are consistently academically behind other ethnicities (Cross & Applebaum, 1998; Haycock, 2001; Latham, 1997; Pino & Smith, 2004; Ruhland & Feld, 1977; Taylor, 2003). Statistically, African American students have been portrayed as academically inferior by grades earned, standardized test score results, high school completion rates, college entry numbers, and college completion rates. For example, the National Urban League's *Annual State of Black America* (2005) reported, "Only half of African American youth (50.2%) graduate with a diploma from high school—42.8% of males and 56.2% of females. Additionally, on a national scale, only 32% of Special Education students, disproportionately black and brown, graduate" (p. 1). Haycock (2001) asserted, "Young African Americans are only about half as likely as white students to earn a bachelor's degree by age 29" (p. 7).

It was the intent of this research project to further the understanding and the meaning of motivation, as determined by the students. That definition will drive the sub-questions in this study, which intended to illustrate that one form of motivation alone is not the answer. Educators who truly desire to effectively reach children must indeed find alternative means to connect and engage with them, thus increasing the possibilities of student engagement and increasing knowledge, grades, test scores, and ultimately reducing the statistical academic achievement gap.

Statement of the Problem

Student motivation for learning has been major concern of most educators, but especially teachers of low-achieving or at-risk students, whose numbers are on the rise (Hodgkinson, 1985). In today's classrooms, motivational inequity prevails. Some students persist and work on their own for their own intrinsic interest, while others work because they are required to and do not believe their success or failure has any correlation with their actions (Nicholls, 1979, as cited in Alderman, 1990). Much of the early research on student achievement and learning separated cognitive and motivational factors and pursued very distinct lines of research that did not integrate these constructs. However, since the 1980s, ongoing research has focused on how motivational and cognitive factors interact and jointly influence student learning and achievement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). For more than a generation, educators have focused on improving the education of poor minority students. Not surprisingly, real gains have been evident among K–12 education students. Between 1970 and 1988, the achievement gap between African American and white students was cut in half, and the gap separating Latinos and whites declined by one third. That progress came to a halt around 1988,

however, and since that time, the gaps have widened (Haycock, 2001). To date, the question "why did the progress come to a halt?" remains unanswered.

The educational achievement gap is hardly news. It is a well-studied and well-established fact that using almost any measure, black students nationwide do not perform as well as do whites (Singham, 1998). Why is it that the African American students are not performing as well? Is it due to the approach or methods of the instructor? Is it due to the internal drive or desire of the students? This research stresses the motivational forces, as understood by African American students. The forces of motivation pushing or pulling African American middle school students should be understood to be, but are not limited to, the following (Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002, pp. 371–372):

- Family factors (e.g., family interaction; parenting practices and involvement; and more specifically, consistent discipline in the home environment)
- Social factors (e.g., the child's connection to peers; friends; feeling loved, cared for, or valued; self-esteem)
- Psychological development and awareness

Psychological development and awareness, as described by Piaget's theory of cognitive development, includes the *formal operational stage,* which "commences at about 12 years of age and continues into adulthood. It is characterized by acquisition of the ability to think abstractly and draw conclusions from the information available" (Berk, 2000, p. 22).

Although motivation is the focus of much theory and research, we know very little about motivation from a student's perspective (Hynd, Holschuh, & Nist, 2000, p. 24). With the understanding that motivation is a two-fold process (i.e., goals toward a

desired level of productivity and payoffs, and incentives for these achieved goals), there must be contributing or stifling effects to the levels of motivational forces pushing or pulling these children. The incentives for students are the opportunities to be cared for and to become competent (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 151). Educational research on the attribution of motivation, which has its roots in social psychology, is concerned with understanding or measuring the causes of academic success and failures. Attributions generally have three dimensions: locus, stability, and controllability (Flowers, Milner, & Moore, 2003).

The current research on motivation reveals an emerging consensus regarding definitions, questions, and the range of the domain. Researchers have learned how to conceptualize and study motivation in a systematic and rationally defensible fashion (Maehr & Meyer, 1997, p. 386).

Another recent innovation in this inquiry is locus of control. Locus of control, developed by Julian Rotter (1956), has brought about the most intriguing line of research in regard to motivation. Locus of control is a personality construct that refers to an individual's perception of the locus of events, as determined internally by his or her own behavior versus fate, luck, or external circumstances. McCombs (1991) suggested that the following:

> What underlies the internal locus of control is the concept of "self as agent." This means that our thoughts control our actions and that when we realize this executive function of thinking we can positively affect our beliefs, motivation, and academic performance. The self as agent can consciously or unconsciously direct, select, and regulate the use of all knowledge structures and intellectual

> processes in support of personal goals, intentions, and choices. The degree to which one chooses to be self-determining is a function of one's realization of the source of agency and personal control. In other words, we can say to ourselves, I choose to direct my thoughts and energies toward accomplishment. I choose not to be daunted by my anxieties or feelings of inadequacy. (pp. 6–7)

Significance of the Study

A student's total motivation is most often a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students are intrinsically motivated when learning or performing at a school is a goal in itself. They are extrinsically motivated when the activity is done for the sake of material or other rewards that are not intrinsically related to school learning (Husman & Lens, 1999, p. 113). Weiner (1990) noted that interest in individual difference variables (e.g., need for achievement and locus of control) was decreasing because of a lack of cross-situational generality. Instead, increasing emphasis continues to find its place on the role of environmental variables in enhancing or diminishing students' motivation to learn (Ames, 1992; Pintrich, 1994). Environmental variables can be described as those variables directly affecting the motivation of the student, yet uncontrollable by the student; the school itself; the teachers or staff of the school; peer groups; wider society as a whole; and possibly even parents. In the past, much research has been rather piecemeal in its concentration to one or another aspect of teachers' instructional strategies or classroom methods (i.e., one of the most important environmental variables). A more in-depth discussion on this matter will ensue in chapter 2, under connectedness and engagement. A broad or diversified theoretical framework has been lacking within which to illuminate findings.

As professional educators, we must continually seek more contemporary, or at least more successful, means of educating children. The responsibility for reaching excellence in education lies with parents and educators, hand-in-hand in a team effort. We must examine our priorities and methods and then restructure the educational system to build on the strengths of students and a democratic society (Collins, 1992, p. 246). Students, regardless of ethnicity or age, will not learn without some form of motivation. The value of this study rested in understanding how the meaning making of motivation and possible academic achievement connections, specifically as it relates to the African American middle school student, were to be understood.

Educational theorists generally believe learning is not a unitary process that happens inside an individual, but rather a construction that takes place in as a result of the individual interacting with his or her context (Akande, 1990). This exchange in context is driven by the intrinsic motivation of the learner's perceptions of the behavior or attitude displayed by the leader or teacher (Northouse, 2004). To further elaborate, this context is in reference to House's path-goal theory, which assumed a classroom environment wherein the teacher is the *leader* and the students are the *workers.* House's path-goal theory maintains four leadership behaviors that drive subordinate and task characteristics, thus affecting motivation. "It predicts that directive leadership is effective with ambiguous tasks, supportive leadership is effective for repetitive tasks, participative leadership is most effective when tasks are unclear and subordinates are autonomous, and achievement-oriented leadership is effective for challenging tasks" (p. 144). The leaders' attitude, deportment, or approach maintains a direct link between the results achieved by

the workers. Although motivation is the focus of much theory and research, we know very little about motivation from a student's perspective (Hynd, Holschuh, & Nist, 2000).

Research Questions

The research questions directing this inquiry were as follows:

- How do African American students make meaning or define motivation and academic achievement?
- How do the narratives of these students mention notions related to locus of control (e.g., external control, internal control, locus of causality)?

As a first step toward understanding the complexity of African American students' motivational modes, this study examined African American middle school high-achievers' potential motivational modes and the pathways among the potential motivational factors affecting their academic pursuits, their perceptions of education, and their reasons for studying. The findings from this study indicated that high-achieving African American students tend to address various types of motivation and multiple goals related to their educational values and reasons for studying. In contrast to previous studies about learning and motivation (Ames, 1992; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Nicholls, 1984; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Pintrich & Garcia, 1991), the high-academic achievers' intentions and goals in this study maintained a combination of intrinsic, extrinsic, personal, social needs, and future goal orientations.

This line of current literature has brought about the paramount topic of discussion for this document. By delving into how motivation works differently for diverse

cultures—more specifically, the African American culture—we can begin to find insight into this perilous problem of academic inequity plaguing our society.

Limitations to the Study

This study had a few limitations. The study took place in an American private Christian school on German soil, and therefore was limited by the interpretations from the interviews and responses from the students there. It was also limited by the research methods used because the summaries, or findings, may not reflect a true picture of related school environments. Lastly, it is the researcher's belief that due to him holding one group interview instead of facilitating private individual interviews, the data may be skewed in that the students were privileged to each others responses thus possibly changing the focus of an individual response.

While this research aimed to tell the stories of the African American middle school high achiever, the number of participants involved may not portray a true picture of the average student of this sort. This study included three students: two female and one male, in which the females are sister.

Definitions of Terms

Academic achievement: verifiable learning and mastery of skills

Adolescence: the ages spanning from 11 to about 19 years; students in middle school are considered to be young adolescents and range in age from 10 to 14 (Guido, 2003)

African American: an American predominantly, or at least partially, of African descent; a black American

Basic subjects: core curriculum (e.g., reading, writing, arithmetic, social studies, and science)

External LOC: the belief or perception that fate, destiny, or other environmental factors determine what happens to an individual; the individual's free will or self-determination have little or no impact on what happens (Rotter, 1966)

Extrinsic motivation: when one engages in activities or performs behaviors to receive a reward (Rotter, 1966)

GPA: grade point average; all grades for a term added and divided by the sum of the grades, using a 4.0 scale whereby 4.0 = A, 3.0 = B, 2.0 = C, 1.0 = D, and F = zero

High achiever: one who succeeds in combining numerous roles or activities with apparent ease; one who tends to raise or exceed the standard of normality, often referred to as an outlier; most often determined by a GPA of 3.8 or greater and 89th percentile or greater on standardized test scores.

Internal LOC: the perception of positive or negative events being a consequence of one's own actions, and thereby under one's personal control (Rotter, 1966)

Intrinsic motivation: engaging in an activity for its own sake

Locus of causality: the source of an attribution, which can be either internal or external to the individual

Locus on control (LOC): a concept describing whether people feel control over their lives rests in their own hands or in the hands of others; that is, internal or external LOC, respectively (Rotter, 1966)

Motivation: the stable or unstable state that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior through choice, duration, persistence, intensity, or emotional response

Self-determination: the degree to which people engage in actions with a full sense of choice (Deci & Ryan, 1985)

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework developed for this research outlined possible courses of action and presented a preferred approach to this system analysis project. The framework was built from a set of concepts, linked to a planned or existing system of methods, behaviors, functions, relationships, and objects**.** Because this research was driven by three subcomponents (i.e., achievement motivation, academic achievement, and African American phenomenology), an equal number of conceptual frameworks was possible.

According to Graham (1997), "Principles from attribution theory concerned with perceived responsibility in self and others are used as a conceptual framework for examining social motivation (i.e., peer-directed aggression) and academic motivation (i.e., achievement values) in African American youth" (p. 24). In contrast to Graham, other researchers have focused on achievement motivation theory to explain the outcomes of academic achievement. Bempechat (1999) stated,

> Recent advances in achievement motivation theory have provided a conceptual framework for exploring the ways in which high and low achievers may differ in their approaches to learning. In particular, the focus on children's beliefs about the causes of success and failure has helped us understand why some students embrace academic challenge while others shy away from it. (p. 1)

In addition, another approach that may affect this research: social behavior. Robinson (1997) wrote,

> The foundation for understanding how social behavior influences the academic performance of African Americans was laid in 1986 by Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu. Through an examination of racial identity and academic performance they proposed that the psychological functioning of African Americans can be understood using the "racelessness" construct. The conclusion reached under this interpretive conceptual framework was that African Americans who had high academic performance were adopting behaviors and attitudes that distanced them from African American culture. This distancing resulted in increased feelings of depression, anxiety, and identity confusion. Eventually, this depression was responsible for a return to poor academic performance. (p. 2).

Lastly, the theoretical framework would not be complete without a pure connection to the bottom line. Do cultural differences, derived from and exacerbated by society, affect motivation for achievement in African American students? Critical race theory (CRT) speaks to this connection:

> As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT is not an abstract set of ideas or rules. However, critical race scholars have identified some defining elements. The first is that racism is a normal, not aberrant or rare, fact of daily life in society, and the assumptions of white superiority are so ingrained in our political and legal structures as to be almost unrecognizable. Racial separation has complex, historic, and socially constructed purposes that ensure the location of political and legal power in groups considered superior to people of color. Racism is also likely permanent, and periods of seeming progress are often followed by periods of resistance and backlash as social forces reassert white dominance. In reaction,

> CRT challenges the experience of whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color. This "call to context" insists that the social/experiential context of racial oppression is crucial for understanding racial dynamics. (Bell, 1992, as cited in Parker, Deyhle & Villenas, 1999, p.183).

Above all, the ultimate goal of educational research is to advance equitable education for all students involved in CRT. It is equally paramount to this research because the theory seeks to diminish the boundaries between inequality or inequity. One might suggest it is these inequalities or inequities that perpetuate the achievement gap.

> CRT is an exciting, revolutionary intellectual movement that puts race at the center of critical analysis. Although no set of doctrines or methodologies defines critical race theory, scholars who write within the parameters of this intellectual movement share two very broad commitments. First, as a critical intervention into traditional civil rights scholarship, critical race theory describes the relationship between ostensibly race-neutral ideals, like "the rule of law," "merit," and "equal protection," and the structure of white supremacy and racism. Second, as a race-conscious and quasi-modernist intervention into critical legal scholarship, critical race theory proposes ways to use "the vexed bond between law and racial power" to transform that social structure and to advance the political commitment of racial emancipation. (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, p. xiii)

Disclosure of Personal Interest

As a United States military veteran, and currently a military spouse, the researcher has vowed his new career to the education of our children and adults desiring to work

with our children. Throughout his nine years as a K-12 educational practitioner, the researcher consistently met children around the globe who contradicted the unfortunate statistical anomaly supposedly indicating African American children to be academically inferior to other nationalities. The researcher was personally found victim to such a travesty in his middle and high school years. Unfortunately, a bleak future threatened him, as explained by his teachers and counselors, based on his inability to perform successfully on standardized tests. Although the researchers' military commitments of frequent geographic reassignments to various global locations caused him to frequent new job markets, he consistently met and mentored students spanning the entire grade range, diverse ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as various languages besides English. The researcher agrees that much research is in need about middle school African American adolescents, and particularly studies that offer a different or more positive point of view of them, especially the African American males.

Most recently and specifically, while working at a private Christian school in Germany, the researcher was driven to tell stories about middle school African American students to contradict commonly accepted negative stereotypes of the African American student. This emphatically engrained faith-based environment contributed significantly to the outcomes but however, was not the intent or considered variable in this research. The researcher's primary focus of study was on middle school African American students' meaning making about motivation and academic achievement, so he submits the students' stories to the reader.

The school from where the stories will emanate was under the umbrella of a contemporary, Pentecostal, and rapidly growing multicultural church. It was comprised

mostly of families connected to the military stationed overseas, and the lead pastor was a well-decorated retired military officer. The researcher and his family were actively engaged and involved in the intricacies of this organization for six years. Moreover, the researcher played an instrumental role each week as the music director and one of the key musicians in the church. In August 2000, the church-sponsored school opened its doors for the first time.

The researcher served on the inaugural faculty of the school as vice principal, 2/3 grade multilevel instructor, young men's Bible instructor, and pre-K-12 music director. Indeed, it is understood that small schools are more intimate and have a tendency to produce academically proficient students; however, the numerous hats worn by the faculty were varied, as the reader can see from the researcher's experience. Due to local, national, and legal concerns about taxes and wages, graduate school and paternal responsibilities far outweighed the compensation for a 65–70 average hour workweek at the school. Therefore, the researcher left the school, but not the church.

While working as music director in a Department of Defense middle school, the researcher's daily interactions with students exemplified the questions, feelings, and desires he regarded as being stories of success. Despite many years and multiple leadership changes, the researcher found himself back at the private school in a role in which he performed best: that of rebuilding. Consequently, his position as principal brought new challenges.

The researcher found himself immediately tasked with leading the young adult cohort in a middle-high school multilevel classroom. The students involved in this study were, at one time, under the immediate supervision of the researcher. More specifically,

each of the respondents was enrolled in the cohort in whom the researcher was the teacher. He found himself in a timeframe in which the completion of his doctoral studies was imminent. In addition, another permanent change of station had arisen for his family, so they would have to move again. As an honorably discharged military member, the researcher wholeheartedly understood and he unequivocally supported his wife's career.

The private school staff maintained an active role in the church. Among the staff, six of the total seven were internal church members, and the seventh was on the inaugural staff with the researcher in addition to minister at her local church. All members were already knowledgeable about this research project. The researcher received full and total, immediate cooperation extended from all levels within the private school and church echelons, including the families of the students who might have been involved. Due to the faith-based beliefs of all the participants, either personally or under parental guidance, as well as the researcher, that variable may have contributed to the responses; however, it was not be a focus in this research.

As the ultimate change agent, the called and chosen true educator must maintain a pure democratic education for all students. It is the humble belief of the researcher that educators hold the key to the future by molding, coaching, leading, and facilitating the students who will in the near future lead this, our great country. In line with this, Egeler (2003) reminded us of the following Chinese proverb: "If you are planting for a year, plant grain. If you are planting for a decade, plant trees. If you are planting for a century, plant people" (p. 12).

Summary

This chapter addresses the major concerns of this work: motivation, academic achievement, and how these are possibly interrelated, as understood and explained by African American middle school students. The next chapter will review the relevant literature in three parts: the areas of motivation, achievement, and middle school students.

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

> *"Motivational theories can be divided into two types, push theories, and pull theories. Under push theories, we find such terms as drive, motive, or even stimulus. Pull theories use such constructs as purpose, value, or need. In terms of a well-known metaphor, these are the pitchfork theories on the one hand and the carrot theories on the other*." Kelly, 1958 (p. 50)

Overview

To grasp a true understanding and meaning of motivation, the researcher found himself in a historical quest for the earliest research findings related to motivation. An electronic search through four university libraries, eight search engines, at east fifty various scholarly journals and countless paperbacks and reference sources led the researcher to the following discourse. The deliberative dialogue displayed chronologically; although it is not a comprehensive list in its totality, is however, pertinent to the discussion of motivation and academic achievement.

This research consisted of three primary components: motivation, academic achievement, and the middle school student's perspective and meaning making of aforementioned constructs. This chapter is presented in three sections. The first section speaks to motivation, and the researcher has assembled a historical snapshot or chronological assembly of the development and a brief overview without analysis of the historical evolvement of motivation. The second section of this chapter addresses achievement motivation. Lastly, the third section directly deals with the connectedness and engagement that affect middle school academic achievement. Immediately following, the researcher addresses the theories specific to this research and summarizes the chapter.

Dewey (1913) developed sociocultural theory, a high personal meaning that was developed through the identification of the self with a developing activity; its subject matter and methods.

Vygotsky (1930s) advanced the meaning of sociocultural theory in an approach that emphasized how cognitive development proceeds as a result of social interactions between members of a culture. He said motivation could not be merely understood from an individual standpoint, but must include the cultural involvement of that individual to further understand their motives of engagement.

Lewin's (1938) field theory of motivation said behavior must be derived from a totality of coexisting facts. These coexisting facts make up a "dynamic field," which means that the state of any part of the field depends on every other part of it, and behavior depends on the present field rather than on the past or the future. This is in contrast both with the belief of teleology (i.e., that the future is the cause of behavior) and with the belief of asociationism (i.e., that the past is the cause of behavior).

Miller and Dollard (1941)'s social cognitive theory (SCT) explains how people acquire and maintain certain behavioral patterns, while also providing the basis for intervention strategies (Bandura, 1997). Evaluating behavioral change depends on the factors of environment, people, and behavior. SCT provides a framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating programs.

Rotter's (1950s) locus of control is a concept in psychology whereby people see themselves as either internally driven or externally tempted to precede toward goals. Intrinsic motivation has been intensely studied by educational psychologists since the 1970s, and numerous studies have found it to be associated with high educational

achievement and enjoyment by students. Most recently, intrinsic motivation was described as a combination of Weiner's attribution theory and Bandura's self-efficacy theory. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to student being prodded or bribed with some set of awards to gain their interest and attention (e.g., pizza parties for behaving when a substitute is in place of the regular teacher).

Maslow's (1954) self-esteem is a theory about how people satisfy various needs in the context of their work, based on two primary groupings: deficiency needs and growth needs. "Within the deficiency needs, each lower need must be met before moving to the next higher level" (Huitt, 2001, p.2). The levels of need are physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization.

Heider's (1958) attribution theory describes the ways in which people explain the behaviors of others. It also explores how an individual's attribute causes events and how cognitive perception affects motivation. The theory drives the way people attribute causes into two types: external or situational attribution (e.g., natural phenomena) and internal or dispositional attribution (e.g., personal level of intelligence).

Herzberg's (1959) motivation and hygiene factors refer to a two-dimensional paradigm of factors affecting people's attitudes about work. Hygiene factors that can demotivate if they are not present (e.g., supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, and salary). Hygiene factors affect the level of dissatisfaction, but are rarely quoted as creators of job satisfaction. Motivation factors will motivate if they are present (e.g., achievement, advancement, recognition, and responsibility). Dissatisfaction is not normally blamed on motivation factors, but motivation factors are cited as the cause of job satisfaction.

McClelland's (1961) achievement motivation covers three types of motivational need: achievement, authority/power, and affiliation. "It has been used traditionally as a personality construct, denoting an individual's relatively stable disposition to approach (or avoid) achievement-related activities" (Boggiano & Pittman, 1992, p. 245).

Rotter (1953) and Bandura (1963) developed social learning (and later cognitive) theory. Ultimately, the law of effect states that people are motivated to seek out positive stimulation, or reinforcement, and to avoid unpleasant stimulation. Bandura's approach advanced the works of Rotter by emphasizing the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social cognitive theory is the concept of self-efficacy, wherein the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute a required course of action produces attainment.

deCharms's (1968) locus of causality is based on his observation that students are too little governed by their own intrinsic motivation and too powerless over external controls and demands. As origins, students are active and responsible, but as pawns, they are passive and take little responsibility for schoolwork. In addition, he developed programs to help teachers support student self-determination (e.g., emphasizing the importance of setting realistic goals, personal planning of activities to reach the goals, personal responsibility for actions, and feelings of self-confidence).

House's (1966) path-goal theory included the interaction of leadership behaviors with situation characteristics in determining the leaders' effectiveness. The four key components of leadership behaviors are directive, achievement-oriented, supportive, and participative. Two situational variables (i.e., subordinates' personal characteristics and

environmental demands, such as the organization's rules and procedures) most strongly contribute to leaders' effectiveness.

Nicholls's (1990s) goal-task/ego theory is often referred to as performance goals. The theory focuses on achieving normative-based standards, doing better than others, or doing well without a lot of effort. Task-involved refers to being interested in a task for its own qualities (intrinsic motivation). Task-involved students are less threatened by failure than are other students because their egos are not tied up in the success of the task. Conversely, ego-involved seek to perform tasks to boost their egos, for the praise that completing the task might attract, or because the task confirms their self-concept.

Ames's (1992) goal-mastery/performance theory is also referred to as learning goals. This theory focuses on gaining competence or mastering a new set of knowledge or skills. Mastery orientation is further described as a student's wish to become proficient in a topic to the best of his or her ability while consistently seeking deeper engagement with the task and greater perseverance in the face of setbacks. Performance orientation is described as a student's wish to achieve highly on external indicators of success (e.g., grades, wherein the student is highly influenced by the grades and is associated with discouragement in the face of low marks).

Elliot's (1997) goal-approach/avoidance theory holds the premise that we engage in social connections when we can determine a win-win environment. We engage if we are certain, but avoid when we are uncertain of personal capabilities and understanding. Not all goals are directed toward approaching a desirable outcome (e.g., good grades); goals can also be directed toward avoiding an undesirable outcome (e.g., being grounded for failure).

In terms of literature analysis, the researcher's observations, as they relate to contemporary: within the last 10 years, and notable scholars making major contributions to the study of motivation, include but are not limited to the following scholars and constructs as illustrated in Figure 1. With efforts of saving space, this table has the following labels. 1: Achievement and Motivation, 2: Academic/Education and Motivation, 3: Self-Schema, 4: Social Interests, 5: Intrinsic/Extrinsic Theory, 6: Motivation and African American Studies, 7: Motivation Development, 8: Motivation and Personality, and 9: Goal Theories.

The commonalities of these profoundly spoken educational researchers are congruent with the views of most researchers in this particular field; however, the researcher has identified a need for further research germane to non-multi-ethnic comparison studies. Useful and comprehensive qualitative, phenomenology, and ethnographical studies based on individual ethnicities must be available within the body of knowledge. Additionally, the need for this research is prevalent in the study of preadolescent ages, as well. Middle school students are the least studied for an unknown reason. Another major criticism is that most of the research available today focuses on white participants, thus contributing to a deficit of cultural information available for future research. Educational research must include all ethnicities in order to further the understanding of ethnic differences, if in fact there are differences.

Table 1

Notable Contemporary Scholars and Motivation Constructs.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
M. Kay Alderman		✓	✓						
Carole Ames	✓	✓	✓						✓
Albert Bandura			✓	✓			✓		
Martin Covington		✓	✓				✓		
Edward Deci			✓		✓				
Carol Dweck				✓			✓	✓	
Jacquelynne Eccles			✓						
Sandra Graham	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Elizabeth Linnenbrink	✓	✓	✓						
Martin Maehr	✓				✓		✓		
J. G. Nicholls		✓	✓					✓	✓
Frank Pajares		✓	✓				✓		
Paul Pintrich			✓				✓		
Richard Ryan			✓		✓		✓		
Dale Schunk	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Deborah Stipek	✓	✓	✓						
April Taylor	✓	✓				✓			
Bernard Weiner			✓		✓		✓		
Kathryn Wentzel		✓	✓	✓					
Allan Wigfield	✓		✓				✓		
Barry Zimmerman		✓	✓						

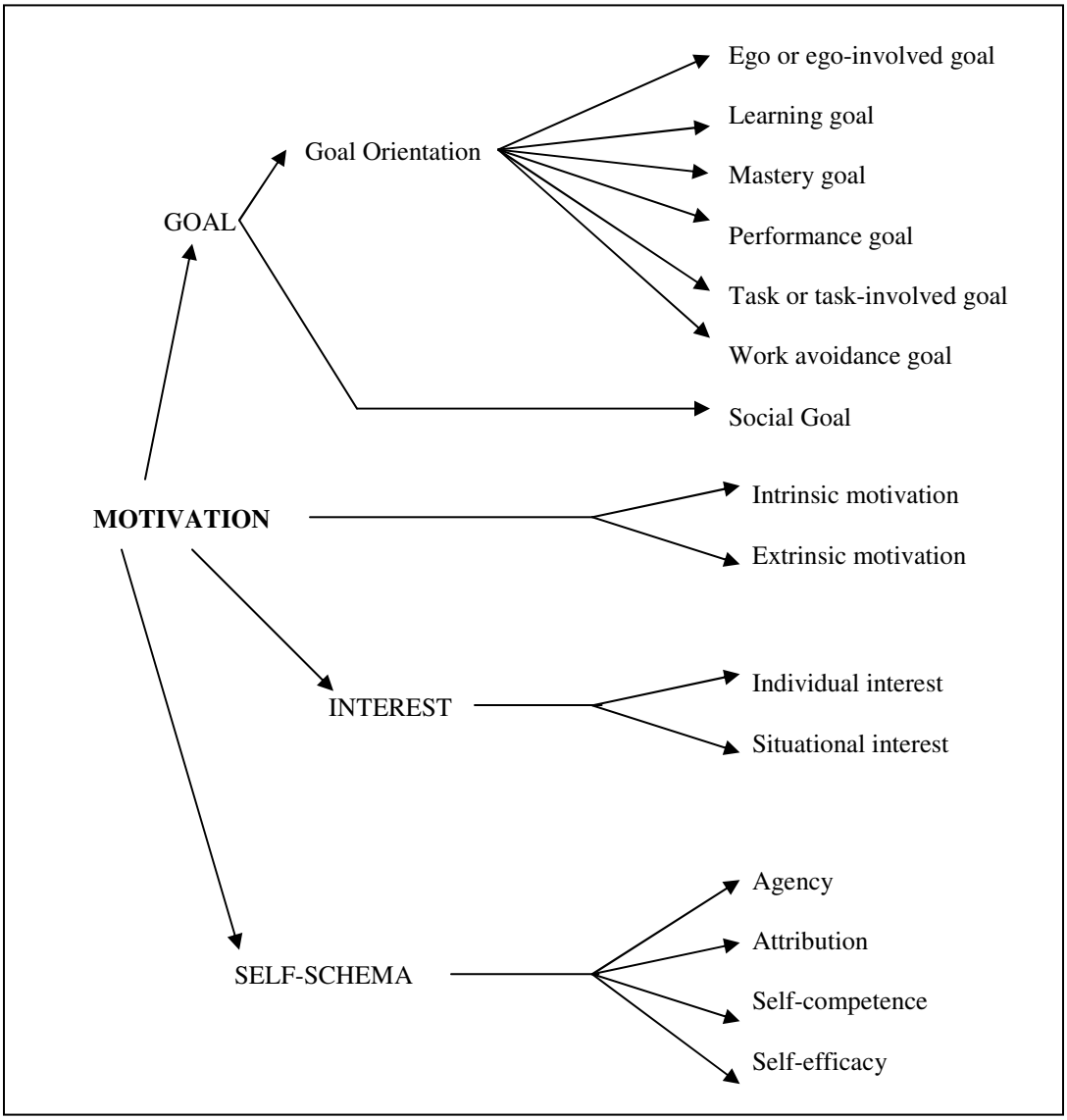
Murphy and Alexander (2000) produced the benchmark collection of motivational constructs, as related to motivation. Their findings resulted in 20 motivational key terms relevant to academic achievement and motivation, based on recent research conducted within the last five years. Referring to Figure 1, the authors stated, "This graphic summary is not meant to be hierarchical. Rather, it is meant to depict some overarching relationships among these terms" (p. 7).

Most studies to date have examined the relationship between motivation and academic achievement, primarily with regard to intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation orientations (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Gottfried, 1985; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001; Greene & Miler, 1996; Meece & Molt, 1993; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Wigfield, Eccles, & Pintrich, 1996; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Generally, intrinsic orientation refers to motivation associated with internal and personal factors, such interests and enjoyment, whereas extrinsic orientation refers to motivation created by external factors, such as rewards, punishment, and peer pressures (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, 1996).

A collection of past findings has shown that students who are intrinsically motivated persist longer, conquer more challenges, and demonstrate more accomplishments in their academic endeavors than do those who are extrinsically motivated (Ames, 1992; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Nicholls, 1984; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Pintrich & Garcia, 1991). Students with extrinsic goals tend to focus on obtaining rewards, earning higher grades, and winning peer students' approval because they perceive their behaviors to be controlled by

external rather than internal factors. Some researchers (Biehler & Snowman, 1990; Deci, 1975; Dweck, 1986) believed that extrinsic motivational factors diminish students' intrinsic motivation.

Figure 1 Key Terms Relevant to Academic Achievement and Motivation



Source: Murphy & Alexander (2000, p. 8).

Conversely, recent theories have challenged the dichotomy of educational motivation and attempted to understand the relationship between motivation and

academic outcomes from multidimensional perspectives (Dowson & McInerney, 1997, 2001; Husman & Lens, 1999; Hwang, 2000; McInerney & McInerney, 1996; Van Etten, 1997; Van Etten, Pressley, Freebern, & Eschevarria, 1998). Learning activities are complex tasks that can be influenced by a complex array of multi-motivational modes. Research has suggested that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation orientations are not mutually exclusive, but can coexist with various motivational determinants (e.g., present, future, and social goals).

According to Husman and Lens (1999), highly intrinsically motivated students can simultaneously be extrinsic in terms of future goal orientations. Students' extrinsic motivational factors combined with positive future goals can actually facilitate their present value and intrinsic motivation (Van Calster, Lens, & Nuttin, 1987). To illustrate, several ethnographic studies of African Americans (Farrell, 1994; O'Connor, 1997; Rowley, 2000) found that students who related extrinsic factors to positive future goals were more engaged in school and received better grades than students who did not do so. Understanding the relationship between the utility and future outcomes of tasks may facilitate the present value and intrinsic motivation of the tasks. This would imply that high academic performance goals with extrinsic factors do not necessarily diminish the effect of students' intrinsic motivation, but operate simultaneously with various modes of motivation.

Social goal theorists have also begun to re-examine the role of extrinsic motivation. In contrast to negative notions of extrinsic motivation, recent researchers recognize extrinsic orientations related to students' social reasons, such as social approval and social concerns (Blumenfeld, 1992; Dowson & McInerney, 1997, 2001; Urdan &

Maehr, 1995). For example, Dowson and McInerney found a positive relationship between students' social goals and effective engagement in learning. Students employed social elements in order to optimize their academic skills.

Multiple orientations for learning should be particularly true in cultures that encourage various modes of motivation both in school and at home. Currently, African Americans are the nation's largest ethnic minority group (Baruth & Manning, 1999). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (1996), African Americans numbered 32 million in 1995 and will total nearly 40 million by the year 2050. These demographic changes create a need for educators and researchers to understand the thoughts and perceptions of this growing minority in the United States and to find appropriate ways to meet their needs.

Surprisingly, compared with the numerous studies about motivation and learning, little research has examined African American middle school students' motivation from multidimensional perspectives. Therefore, our understanding of African Americans' learning and motivation continues to remain largely based on the dichotomous theories of motivation. With aims of truly understand what it means to become a motivated learner, our understanding must traverse a wider range of African American students' thoughts and perceptions. Motivation researchers need to probe more deeply and search more extensively and creatively into the cognitive processes and emotions that accompany motivational orientations. Researchers especially need to situate this exploration in the contexts that the students—as well as teachers, parents, and others—naturally experience (Maehr & Meyer, 1997, p. 393).

With efforts of further, understand the students' perspective, on which this research was focused, Harter (1981) developed a self-report scale of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation in the classroom that can be used as part of a diagnostic battery to assess students' motivational orientation. This scale consists of five subscales: three scales assess motivational components (i.e., preference for challenge, curiosity/interest, and mastery) and two scales assess cognitive-informational structures (i.e., independent judgment and internal criteria). Harter's survey was designed with the specific intent of use with upper elementary students. It consisted of a 4-point forced-choice format in which students indicated whether they were similar to the intrinsically or extrinsically motivated students.

During a three-month lecture on leadership, taught by the researcher to the cohort, students found themselves engaged in the use of this self-report. The discourse, while primarily based on leadership also entailed numerous sessions on motivation and how it pushes or pulls; drives, academic achievement. The self-report was not a part of this study specifically however, the respondents were to some degree of the components of motivation prior to the research based on the sessions spent in class. The sessions were instructed in one-hour modules, three times per week for three months in which, motivation specifically comprised one academic month of sessions.

Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002) suggested that situational interest can enhance achievement when students are engaged in a task or activity. Academic achievement, study skills, and engagement can be increased by tapping into students' interests, which further explains the focus of this study on the student. Nevertheless, the teacher's style or

approach of teaching has been shown to be an important variable within the educational process.

Northouse (2004) stated that the path-goal theory is about how leaders motivate subordinates to accomplish designated goals. The stated goal of this leadership theory is to enhance employee performance and employee satisfaction by focusing on employee motivation. The teacher has total control over the learning environment, and the children respond to the atmosphere the teacher creates (Collins, 1992). Motivating students requires not only a general knowledge about how to engage young people and sustain their interest at different ages, but also an understanding about what individual students believe about themselves and their abilities, what they care about, and what tasks are likely to give them the success that will keep them working hard to learn (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 296).

Current interest and research on the influence of self-beliefs in school contexts were so prevalent that, after a thorough analysis of the state of knowledge related to theories and principles of academic motivation for the *Handbook of Educational Psychology*, Graham and Weiner (1996) observed that this line of inquiry was on the verge of dominating the field of motivation. This focus on students' self-beliefs as a principal component of academic motivation is based on the assumption that the beliefs students create, develop, and hold to be true about themselves are vital forces in their success or failure in school (Pajares, 2003).

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is the theory of how people explain things. It is a field of psychology with its beginnings arising from the work of Fritz Heider in 1958. It is helpful in helping us to understand behavior and motivation.

Covington (1998) asserted,

> One feature of attribution theory is its focus on the role of effort in achievement. This emphasis is justified by the belief that student effort can be controlled by teachers through the application of rewards for trying and, when necessary punishments for not trying. Weiner reasoned that cognitive or thought processes rather than emotional anticipation were the agents primarily responsible for the quality of achievement, meaning what people think was given priority over how people feel as the prime mover of achievement. He additionally proposed that *how* individuals perceive the cause of their prior successes and failures is the deciding factor in choosing whether to work on a particular task and in deciding how long to persist once work begins and with what amount of enthusiasm. (p. 14)

Attribution theory has three main principles, as outlined by Weiner (1986):

1. Behavior is observed, determined to be deliberate, and attributed to internal or external causes
2. Achievement can be attributed to effort, ability, level of task difficulty, or luck
3. Causal dimensions of behavior are locus of control, stability, and controllability

With respect to education, specifically, Weiner (1980) asserted,

> Causal attributions determine affective reactions to success and failure. For example, one is likely to experience pride in success, or feelings of competence, when receiving an A from a teacher who gives only that grade…On the other hand, an A from a teacher who gives few high grades generates great positive affect. (p. 362)

Attribution theory is relevant to this study because it has been proven to be a useful conceptual framework for the study of motivation in blacks (Graham, 1998). In addition, the intended focus on autonomous African American subjects in this study is to avoid the common over-comparison of one ethnicity to another and instead to further the study of one particular ethnicity in a positive light (Graham, 1994, 1997). Causal attributions ask why question; thus, the intent here is to ask why the students feel one way or another about the meaning of academic achievement, and more specifically about the motivation that drives high achievers.

The achievement motive as a topic of study appealed to researchers concerned with motivation among African Americans. Paralleling the experimental research on motive measurement and its behavioral correlates was a growing interest in the relationship between achievement need and social mobility. McClelland's (1961) ambitious attempt to relate the achievement motive to economic growth of nations underscored the linkage between the study of personality structures on the one hand and social mobility on the other. It is but a short leap to suggest that ethnically different groups in this society might also differ in their achievement needs. (Graham, 1994, p. 60)

Weiner (1972) conducted a study wherein he connected attribution theory to the study of the education process. He proved that causal attributions in a Headstart program

did influence the likelihood of undertaking achievement activities, the intensity of work at these activities, and the degree of persistence in the face of failure. In his later works, Weiner (1994) suggested that perhaps the issue for motivational psychologist is more specifically that the debate over effort versus ability may redirect future study of this matter.

Locus of Control

Locus of control, as developed by Julian Rotter in late 1950s, speaks to our possibilities of future successes or failures resulting in one of two possibilities: internal or external factors. Individuals with an internal focus see their results based on their own efforts or lack thereof while individuals with external focus find their results from chance or fate.

Rotter (1954) observed people in therapy and noticed the following:

Different people, given identical conditions for learning, learn different things:

- Some people respond predictably to reinforcement, others respond less predictably, and some respond unpredictably
- Some people see a direct and strong connection between their behavior and the rewards and punishments they receive

The core of Rotter's (1960) approach is known as expectancy value theory. The basic assumption is that one's behavior is determined not just by the presence or size of reinforcements, but by the beliefs about what the results of one's behavior are likely to be (i.e., how likely one is to get reinforcement). Additionally, Rotter believed, as do the majority of social learning theorists, that if one sees a connection amid behaviors and reinforcers, then the reinforcers influence one's behavior. If one does not see the link,

then one reacts less inevitably to the reinforcers (and learning is not as likely to occur). The term Rotter coined for whether a behavior will meet with a satisfying result was "locus of control." Locus means "place." Internal (high general expectancy) locus of control people consider that, through their behavior, they can manage the probability of receiving reinforcers. External (low general expectancy) locus of control people do not see as great a relationship between their behavior and the likelihood of being rewarded. Nunn (1993) said,

> Within a social learning perspective, Rotter defined locus of control a generalized expectancy of internal versus external control over behavioral outcomes and were viewed as a cognitive expectancy, which defined the individual's view of causal factors related to these outcomes. (p. 636)

Wigfield and Eccles (2001) stated,

> Locus of control concerns individuals' experience of control over outcomes or reinforcements. Thus, when individuals have an internal locus of control, they view success and failures (i.e., outcomes) as contingent on their own behavior. Conversely, when individuals have an external locus of control, they view success or failures as a function of chance, luck, or whims of others that cannot be understood or anticipated. (p. 149)

Locus of control is thusly considered to be viewed as a personal acceptance of situations or outside influences of those situations. Internal views are those wherein the individual takes personal responsibility for the results of their vested engagements into meaningful learning experiences. External views are found to be one wherein the

individual finds his or her success or failure based on chance or fate. More specifically, the individual with an external control views their results as out of their control.

Reynolds (1976) likewise stated,

> The concept of locus of control grew out of Rotter's (1954) social learning theory which postulates that behavior is a function not only of the value of reinforcements available to the subject in any given situation, but also of the subject's expectation that any particular behavior on his part will result in the attainment of the available reinforcement. The term locus of control denotes the specific types of expectancy for reinforcement, which refers to the person's beliefs regarding who or what determines the behavior-reward contingency. (p. 221)

Judge, Bono, and Thoresen (2002) suggested that locus of control is closely correlated with other variables (e.g., self-esteem) and that it should not be isolated in future studies. The researchers also stated that self-esteem and locus of control emerge to reveal significant stability and are innate. Nunn and Nunn (1993) found connections between locus of control and other psychological characteristics and perceptions.

Locus of Causality

Locus of causality explains students' reasons for performing tasks in two domains: academic achievement and prosocial activities (Ryan & Connell, 1989, p. 751). When someone or something influences a student from the outside that is labeled external or extrinsic. When students freely choose to perform an activity, the causality is considered internal or intrinsic.

A central issue for theories of motivation concerns the perceived locus relative to the person of variables that cause or give impetus to behavior. Heider (1958) introduced the concept of perceived locus of causality primarily in reference to interpersonal perception, and more specifically with regard to the phenomenal analysis of how one infers the motives and intentions of others. He distinguished between personal causation, the critical feature of which is intention, and impersonal causation, in which environments, independent of the person's intentions, produce a given effect.

DeCharms (1968) elaborated and extended Heider's phenomenal analysis, particularly with regard to the explanation of behavior (as opposed to outcomes). deCharms argued that there is a further distinction within personal causation or intentional behavior between an internal perceived locus of causality, in which the actor is perceived as an origin of his or her behavior, and an external locus of causality, in which the actor is seen as a pawn to heteronomous forces.

DeCharms (1968) pointed out, there is an enormous difference between interpersonal attributions of causality and knowledge of the causes of one's own behavior, a difference that lies at the center of all motivational theory. The central difference concerns the access an actor has to his or her own internal status versus an observer's reliance on external conditions in the understanding of other's behavior. (Ryan & Connell, 1989, p. 749)

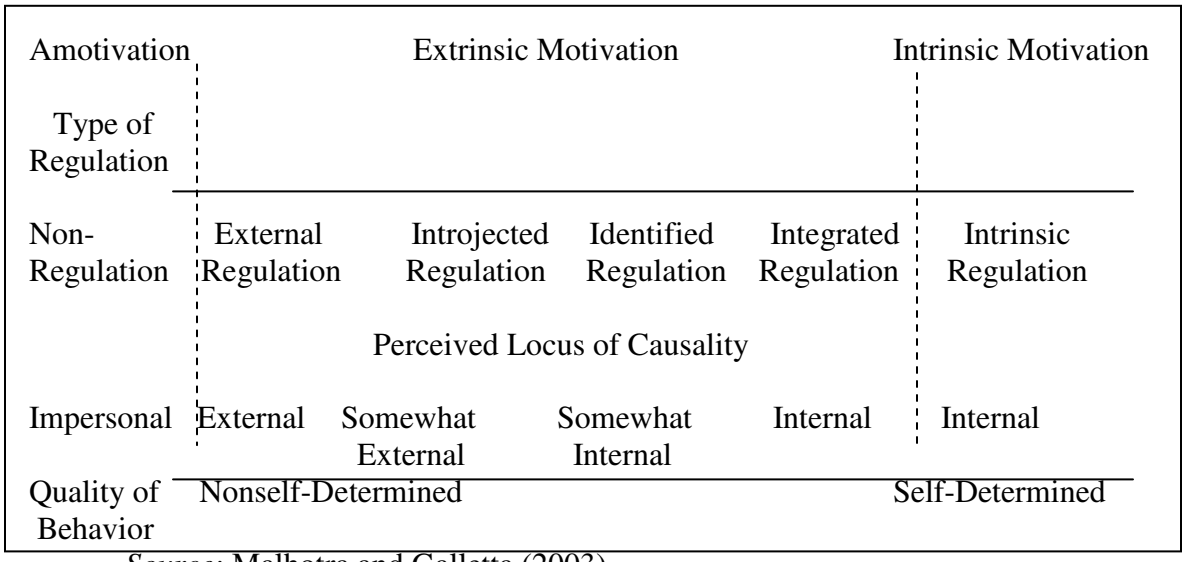
Deci and Ryan (1985) based their own work on self-determination heavily on the influence of Heider (1958) and deCharms (1968). They wrote,

> our theory is however, motivational rather than cognitive because it addresses the energization and the direction of behavior and it uses motivational constructs to

organize cognitive, affective, and behavioral variable. Because their theory had been influenced by the perceived locus of causality construct, their theory differs from the cognitive theories in that intentional behaviors are truly chosen. (p. 7)

Malhotra and Galletta (2003) presented supportive and argumentative data related to locus of causality. The authors asserted, "Rather than an oppositional view, locus of control should be viewed as a continuum from amotivation to extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation" (p. 4). They elaborated on this statement with a pictorial (see Figure 2) based on the work of Deci and Ryan (1985, p. 16).

Figure 2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation as a Continuum of PLOC



Source: Malhotra and Galletta (2003)

Deci and Ryan (as cited by Malhotra and Galletta, 2003) further explained the continuum:

Both self-determined and controlled behaviors are intentional, though only self-determined behaviors involve a true sense of choice, a true feeling free in doing what one has chosen to do. Controlled behaviors, although undertaken with the intent of achieving an outcome are not truly chosen but compelled by some

> internal or external force-one that has to do them, whether to attain a monetary payment or to appease some generalized sense of authority. Thus intentional actions are differentiated along a "perceived locus of causality continuum" anchored by self-determination and control. Amotivated actions are ones whose occurrence is not mediated by intentionality and hence is characterized by impersonal perceived locus of causality. (p. 4)

Thus far, it is the researcher's modest observation that terminology and semantics are the only differences between the motivational terms. One consistency is that an internal or external factor significantly drives the motivation. Perhaps if the full deployment of this continuum is recognized as a balance, educators may be able to accomplish more effective and efficient motivation systems. This could lead to more engaged students and ultimately to less of a perceived achievement gap.

> Children's experiences in school affect not just the development of their mental talents, but also their emotional adjustment and psychological well-being…Consequently, motivational strategies need to be assessed not only for their success at producing performance and achievement, but also for their impact in these broader and perhaps more important areas of development. A theory of motivation in education needs to address the whole child. (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 246)

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the desire or motivation to accomplish a task solely for the enjoyment of accomplishing the task and without having to depend or rely on some outside or external variable. Kelly (1958) labeled it as a "pull theory that uses

such constructs as purpose, value, or need" (p. 50). Deci and Ryan (1985) said, "Intrinsic motivation is in evidence whenever students' natural curiosity and interest energize their learning. When the learning environment provides optimal challenges, rich resources of stimulation, and a context of autonomy, this motivational wellspring of learning is likely to flourish" (p. 245).

This construct causes individuals to intentionally choose to engage in an activity for its own purposes. Examples include learning to play a musical instrument, writing poetry, drawing, gardening, and other hobbies of choice. "Intrinsic motivation is choosing to do an activity for no compelling reason, beyond the satisfaction derived from the activity itself—it's what motivates us to do something when we don't *have* to do anything" (Raffini, 1996, p. 3). It is because of an individual's autonomy or self-determination that he or she is only personally satisfied when there is a free will in decisions about engaging in activities.

Gottfried, Fleming, and Gottfried (2001) stated,

> Academic intrinsic motivation specifically focuses on school learning. When this construct was first proposed, it was based on the following…
>
> 1. intrinsic motivation theory and research.
> 2. including pleasure derived from the learning process itself
> 3. the learning of challenging and difficult tasks
> 4. persistence and a mastery orientation, and
> 5. a high degree of task involvement. (p. 3)

Gottfried (1985) hypothesized academic intrinsic motivation is positively related to school achievement in elementary and junior high school students. The Children's

Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAMI) was developed to ascertain the statistical truth about her hypothesis. Prior to this research effort, no tools existed to investigate and measure academic intrinsic motivation specifically within subject areas, as well as generally for school learning. Her 122-item, Likert-scale, self-report inventory measuring children's intrinsic motivation for school yielded specific results in three studies with children of elementary or junior high school age.

- Study I: 141 white, middle-class, fourth grade children
- Study II: 260 African American and white middle class children in grades four through seven
- Study III: 166 white middle-class children in grades five through eight

Her findings were not surprising in that they very favorably supported her initial hypothesis. Her findings also illustrated that a higher level of intrinsic motivation directly correlates with greater perceptions teachers hold of students, student earned grades, as well as standardized test scores. More importantly, generalities or commonalities of scores were found to exist regardless of varying grade, sex, or race.

Gottfried (1985) found, additionally, that students with higher levels of academic intrinsic motivation tended to have higher levels of achievement, purely based on the constructs listed above. As personality studies and research illustrate, humans may posses many qualities, but yield for one reason or another to dominant personality traits. The same model fits here. With an understanding of the opposite end of the continuum, perhaps, the engagement in schools can be approached differently for students not high in intrinsic motivation or more specifically those sustaining an extrinsic position.

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation is the desire or push to perform a certain behavior based on the possibility of receiving an external reward because of a particular task completion. Extrinsic motivation, like intrinsic motivation, has been widely studied; however, it could be argued, to vary considerably in its relative autonomy, and thus could reflect either external control or true self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This means the following:

> Students can perform actions with resentment, resistance, and disinterest, or alternatively, with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task. The former case is class extrinsic motivation—one feels externally propelled into action. In the latter case, the extrinsic goal is self-endorsed and thus adopted with a sense of volition (p. 55)

Because extrinsic motivation relates to education specifically, "all too frequently, educators, parents, and policymakers have ignored intrinsic motivation and viewed education as an extrinsic process, one that must be pushed and prodded from without" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 245). Again, the concern or need for an understanding of an applied motivation continuum persists. "Extrinsically motivated behaviors are executed because they are instrumental to some separable consequence and can vary in the extent to which they represent self-determination. Internalization and integration are the processes through which extrinsically motivated behaviors become more self-determined" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 65).

Academic Achievement and Motivation

Dweck and Elliot (1983, as cited in Boggiano & Pittman, 1992, p. 189) asserted, "[in] most theories of achievement-motivated activity is the assumption that independent of actual ability level, motivation has a profound influence on students' achievement" (p. 7). Most notably, the authors additionally stated, "achievement varies with motivational level" (p. 7). Achievement motivation theory has great ties to the extrinsic and intrinsic constructs. It implies that some forms of external attributes or rewards drive the extrinsically driven or motivated learner, while the joy of learning or the challenge of acquiring new material is the basis for intrinsically motivated learners. Most specifically, academic achievement is merely the attachment of the academic variable to the qualitative term "achievement." More specifically, the researchers aimed to deal most specifically with academic achievement as it relates to motivation. The researchers were speaking about self-regulated students who proactively seek out information when needed and take the necessary steps to master it (Zimmerman, 1990). The authors went on to state, "When they encounter obstacles such as poor study conditions, confusing teachers, or abstruse text books, they find ways to succeed. Self-regulated learners view acquisition as systematic and controllable processes, and they accept greater responsibility for their achievement outcomes" (p. 4).

Boggiano and Pittman (1992) asserted that five factors influence achievement in children:

1. Teacher strategy: controlling or autonomy
2. Children's perceptions of support of autonomy

3. Children's approaches to schoolwork (motivational orientation—extrinsic or intrinsic)
4. Children's responses to evaluative-controlling cues
5. Indices of maladaptive achievement

McClelland (1961) discussed and contributed to a motivational needs theory that ascribed to the fact that three different types of motivational need exist in each person: the needs for achievement (nAch), the need for affiliation (nAff), and the need for power (nPower). The premise of this theory is that no single component autonomously drives the individual, thus affecting academic achievement. It was the researcher's belief that his intention was that all people are motivated, but how they are motivated is based on one or a combination of the three premises aforementioned.

The first of the three, need for achievement (i.e., the researcher's belief that this entity drives the academic achievement component of this research), is based solely on a standard of excellence. Within this component of McClelland's (1961) theory, research has found most high-achievers adequately displayed a deep and consistent desire of willing acceptance of personal responsibility for performing a task. In addition, these students maintain a tendency of personal choice of greater than moderate or difficult tasks or goals. They took calculated risks and became bored, or un-cognitively challenged, when not doing so. Lastly, the high achievers described in this component of his theory maintained a strong desire for performance feedback.

The second of the three components deals specifically with the individual's need for affiliation. This construct deals with the individual's need to maintain friendly and meaningful connections with others. Due to this need, individuals want real and true

approval from others, have a tendency to willingly accept the norms or group rule, and feel sincere concern for the feelings of others. With respect to positive team attributes, these individuals consistently maintain the roles of peacemakers or gatekeepers of the group with which they are involved. Their need for acceptance far outweighs personal desires or sacrifices.

The last of the three components described by McClelland is the need for power. Plainly and simply put, this need is the internal desire to control others, accept responsibility for them, and by some means influence them behaviorally. With respect to high achievers, these students have an internal and great need to influence and direct others, based on their internal leadership drive. They have a natural desire to lead the functions or organizations with which they are involved.

The most notable construct of need for achievement, as asserted by McClelland (1961) is as follows:

> The individual is more likely to select easy or difficult tasks, thereby either achieving success or having a good excuse for why failure occurred. In the latter situation, the individual is more likely to select moderately difficult tasks, which will provide an interesting challenge, but still keep the high expectations for success (p. 2).

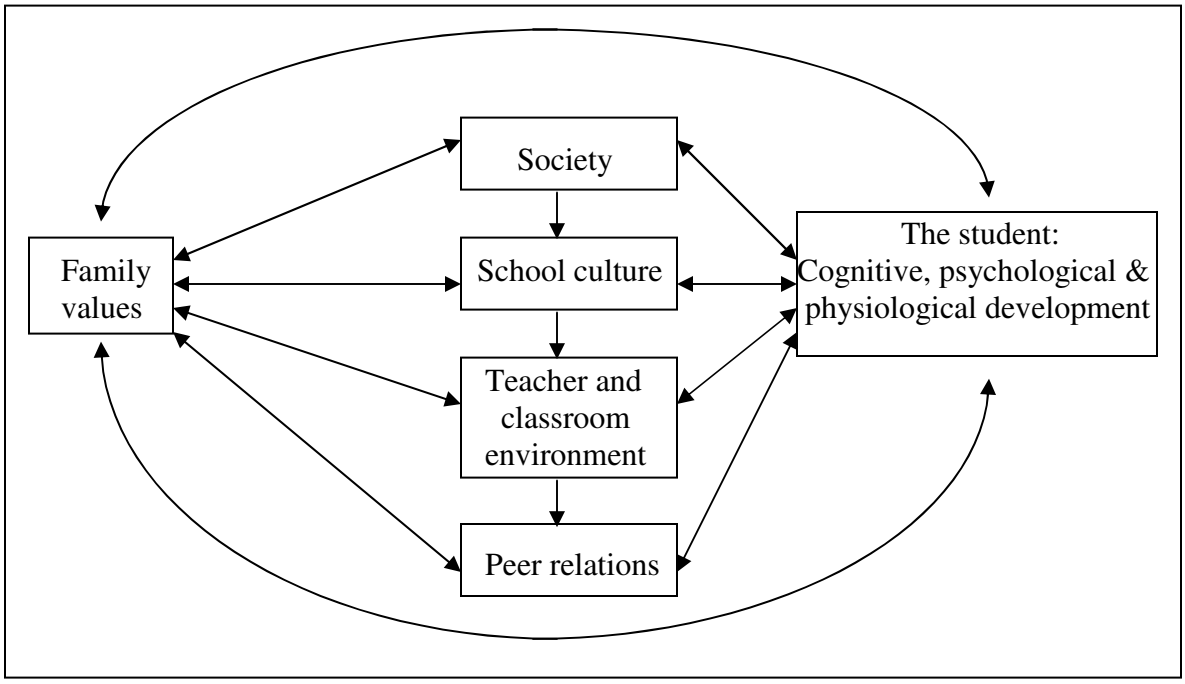
Connectedness and Engagement

Ainley (2004) emphasized the point that "young adolescents are often distinguished by their lack of connection with schooling. These students are described as being bored, disengaged, or unmotivated" (p. 424). What causes students to reach this

point of withdrawal or become unmotivated? What has happened to the internal motivational factors that have changed the students' perspective on the educational process? This section aims to delineate the aforementioned questions. This section speaks about the characteristics of connectedness and engagement, with recommendations for increasing motivation so students can achieve academically.

The researcher developed a model (see Figure 3) that illustrates the directional interactions of the educational process. The key components are the family, student, and the school (i.e., including the classroom environment, and teachers' instructional strategies or classroom methods). This will be discussed in detail in chapter five. This illustration displays the connection between the societal and historical aspects and all the mentioned variables.

Figure 3 Middle School Student Connectedness and Engagement to School



The model, as developed by the researcher, speaks to the intricacies of the middle school educational process. It is the researcher's belief that this process stems from and

begins with the family values (i.e., including the disciplinary actions of and consistency by the parents to the adolescent student). Marjoribanks and Mboya (2001) asserted that, to truly determine student outcomes, educational researchers must seek to understand the following three constructs as they relate to the aspects of parenting style determined by or defining the family values: the goals parents express for their children, the practices parents use to assist children reach those goals, and parenting style (p. 335).

Desimone (1999) stated that parental involvement is significant because it is viewed as an efficient social investment with a payoff far greater than its costs. It addresses considerations of equal opportunity and is consistent with the strong belief in this country that the primary responsibility for children's well-being lies with the parents. The author described the styles of parenting approaches that have a direct effect on student achievement: authoritative parenting practices, high expectations and aspirations, parent-teacher communication, participation in school events or activities, parental assistance at home, and participating in and discussions about learning activities. Additionally of importance is participation in school-level decision making roles, and strong parent social networks or social capital. With that being said, the lead component in the researchers' model is explained as the primary or lead role in the process as a whole.

The researcher defines society to be the community as a whole, including the statistical anomalies that continue to display disparities between ethnic groups (e.g., socioeconomic differences). Becker and Luthar (2002) asserted that "studies that examine disadvantaged youth achievement focus on negative outcomes, failing to uncover and inform interventions of modifiable factors that lead some students to academic success

despite formidable economic and social barriers" (p. 198). To tell the entire story, educational researchers must seek the total truth, with recommendations or serious suggestions for improvement of these disparities so schools can be both self-developed cultures defined by local society, as well affect that local society. "Schools serving large concentrations of disadvantaged youth receive inadequate funding and incompetent staff, which prohibit these schools from adopting more promising instructional and developmentally responsive teaching methods" (p. 201). Lastly, schools are defined by the classroom cultures established by the student-teacher relationships in each room.

Achievement and motivation, as they relate to this micro-view of the researcher's model, are the connection or relationship between and within the teacher and student and play a significant role in academic outcomes. Wentzel (2000) emphasized this point by stating,

> Students who perceive their classrooms as socially supportive environments are likely to pursue these goals that are valued in that context. If students develop a sense of relatedness to their teachers, this should translate into pursuing social goals to behave appropriately but also task related goals to learn and achieve." (p. 108)

Following the natural progression of the model is the discussion of the need or desire for peer relationships. Jarvinen and Nicholls (1996) offered the following discourse:

> As they move into adolescence, individuals spend increasing amount of time in the company of peers and less time with family members, and the maintenance of satisfying peer relationships becomes a central task.

> Adolescents who are better accepted by their peers have a higher self-esteem and maintain higher levels of academic achievement than do less accepted adolescents. Furthermore, less accepted adolescents are more at risk for problems in later social and psychological functioning. (p. 435).

One would agree that these beliefs contribute to a greater sense of intimacy and nurturance than are associated with the belief that sincerity and consideration of others' feelings leads to social success. Greater levels of self-esteem thus ultimately contribute to the total academic achievement engagement process, as displayed in the researcher's model. The final component of the model discusses the student specifically and his or her cognitive, psychological, and physiological development.

Berk, 2000 addressed the significant behavioral and social learning theories. Freud's psychosexual stages of development as described in (p.17) and Piaget's stages of cognitive development in the early 1930s (p. 22) speak favorably to this area of the middle school student's development. Erickson's (1950) psychosocial stages (p. 19) will be the focus of the researcher's model. Freud defines this stage as adolescence, wherein the child's active engagement in puberty causes the sexual impulses of the phallic stage to reappear. Piaget's formal operational stage begins at age eleven, when a child develops the capacity to reason with symbols that do not refer to objects in the real world. The cognitive development in this stage allows the child to begin to understand and grasp the concept of possible outcomes in a scientific problem, rather than the simple, obvious problems they dwelt with in previous stages of development. Conversely, Erickson deals with these constructs in addition to a vital aspect of the preadolescent environment—his or her identity. The understanding of self and defining one's own identity are prevalent

for academic achievement and motivation. Without the understanding of self and defining of social connections, the adolescent finds himself or herself not able to deal with the academic stressors as successfully as do students who are socially accepted and connected. Erickson asserted, "Normal development must be understood in relation to each culture's life situation" (p. 18). Herein lies the discourse of understanding self, based on family values and how those constructs directly play a significant role in the classroom environment—most specifically, the connection between student-classmates and student-teacher relationships.

Stipek (1988, as cited by Huitt, 2001) illustrated the impact of motivation on the classroom by saying there are a variety of reasons individuals may be lacking in motivation. He provided a list of specific behaviors associated with high academic achievement: (p. 9)

- Do not have a written list of important goals that define success for you personally.
- Believe that present goals or activities are wrong for you.
- Feelings/emotions about present activities are generally negative.
- Don't have (or believe you don't have) the ability to do present activities or obtain future goals.
- Satisfaction of achieving goals seems in distant future.
- Present activities not seen as related to important goals.
- Important goals conflict with present activities.
- Extrinsic incentives are low.
- Personal problems interfere with present activities.

The specific behaviors that are directly associated with high-academic achievers include the following questions. Do the students…

- Pay attention to the instructor?
- Volunteer answers in class?
- Begin work on tasks immediately?
- Maintain attention until tasks are completed?
- Persist in trying to solve problems rather than giving up as soon as the problem appears difficult to solve?
- Work autonomously when appropriate?
- Ask for assistance when it is really needed?
- Turn assignments in on time?
- Turn in complete work?
- When given a choice, select challenging courses and tasks?
- Accept initial errors or less-than-perfect performance as a natural part of learning a new skill?
- Perform fairly uniformly on different tasks that require similar skills?
- Engage in learning activities beyond course requirements?

Theory Specific to Topic

Waugh (2002) stated,

> There are at least ten models of motivation in the literature, each emphasizing different aspects, some of which are interrelated of which achievement motivation theory or achievement goal theory is included. The ten models can be summarized under the following headings. (p. 66)

1. Arousal And Anxiety Model
2. A Needs Model
3. Achievement And Social Goal Model
4. A Behavioral Motivation Model
5. Attribution Theory
6. Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Model
7. Expectancy Value Model
8. Self-Regulated Learning
9. Perceived Self-Efficacy Model
10. Personal Investment Model

Weiner (1990) stated that motivational research became almost synonymous with achievement motivation research. Educational psychology thus shifted into the spotlight, away from the periphery where it was first identified in the reviews of Young (1941, 1950) and Marx (1960). The concept of need achievement was developed by McClelland and his colleagues in the late 1940s to explain differences among individuals in their reactions to success and failure (Fyans, 1980). This author identified and defined three primary types of motivational need: achievement motivation (n-ach), authority/power motivation (n-pow), and affiliation motivation (n-affil). This model has since been further studied, modified, and enhanced, as Elliot (1999) illustrated, in the pioneering work of the 1970s by Dweck, Nicholls, Ames, and Maehr.

Within this tradition, achievement goals are commonly defined as purposes of task engagement. The specific type of goal adoption posits to create a framework for how individuals interpret and experience achievement settings (Elliot, 1999). This theory, the

first of two specific theories driving this research project, is most often in contemporary uses referred to as "achievement goal theory," which is concerned with the perception and pursuit of goals. However, it is not concerned merely with immediate objectives, but also with the larger concept of what it means to pursue and succeed in schools. Two types or purpose have received the most attention: task goals, which refer to learning or mastery, and ego goals, which speak directly to performance or ability (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999). Within a decade, goal theory was declared a major new perspective by someone who had played a prime role in launching a cognitive revolution in the study of motivation (Weiner, 1990, as cited by Maehr, 2001). Maehr went on to state that today there is little doubt goal theory is a prominent—if not dominant—perspective on achievement. Certainly, it is the preeminent perspective in the study of achievement in educational settings.

The second theory specific to this research was that of locus of control, commonly known as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, developed by Julian Rotter (1954). It has long been thought that the offering of extrinsic pay-offs (e.g., praise, gold stars, and school grades) inhibits the will of students to learn. This view is sustained by the widely held assumption that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are not just separate processes, but incompatible (Covington & Mueller, 2001). Dev (1997) defined intrinsic motivation as (a) participation in an activity purely out of curiosity that is a need to know something, (b) the desire to engage in an activity purely for the sake of participating in and completing a task, and (c) the desire to contribute. According to Dev, this type of student is more likely to complete the chosen task and be excited by the challenging nature of an

activity. The intrinsically motivated student is also more likely to retain the concepts learned and to feel confident about tackling unfamiliar learning situations.

With the understanding that motivation has been, is, and probably always will be at the heart of teaching and learning (Maehr & Meyer, 1997), there is no question about why we base this discussion on Rotter. Since the profound works of Freud, Rotter's work has been the most important development in the study of motivation because it advanced the needed attention to theory that can be operationalized, tested, and put to work, even in the complex world of schools, individual difference, situational difference, and interaction (Maehr & Meyer, 1997). His contribution to the body of knowledge became one of the principal constructs in personality research in the 1970s and 1980s (Kazdin, 2000). The following discourse by Rotter (1989) summarizes our discussion of locus of control:

> Internal versus external control of reinforcement, often referred to a locus of control, (LOC) I currently one of the most studied variables in psychology and the other social sciences. Frequent studies have been done in fields as diverse as political science and public health, and a test of individual differences in locus of control has been translated into many different languages. Briefly, internal versus external control refers to the degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or an outcome of their behavior is contingent on their own behavior or personal characteristics versus the degree to which persons expect that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate, is under the control of powerful others, or is simply unpredictable. Such expectancies may generalize along a gradient based on the degree of semantic similarity of the situational cues. (p 1)

Summary

This literature review highlighted the chronological development of motivation, provided explicit definitions, and illustrated current research results related to motivation, and more specifically the motivational factors contributing to academic achievement. This chapter listed the notable historical scholars, as well as the contemporary benchmark scholars to whom we can eagerly look for future studies to evolve the meaning of motivation, to which this document aims to contribute.

Some of the research gaps or scholarly controversies are described by Graham (1997) as follows: “During the decades of 1970s and 1980s maintained growing marginalization, as research on African Americans all but disappeared from the pages of major APA journals. Six years into the 1990s, the situation has changed very little” (p. 33). Additionally, when research is done, it merely displays the negative disparities between the ethnicities.

In chapter three the methodology of this research project will be discussed. Motivation is the compelling force that activates the leaner as he or she strives to achieve balance by reducing the discrepancies between what is and what ought to be (Fox & Milner, 1999). This type of focus will require qualitative approaches in order to inductively and holistically understand student experiences within their context-specific settings.

Chapter 3. Methodology

> *"Education policy makers continually talk about the causes of the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students. Why haven't we asked African American students what they consider are the reasons for their low performances?"* (Taylor, 2003)

Qualitative research, unlike that of its quantitative counterpart, offers a rich and thick description of certain phenomena. Rather than concerning descriptive or inferential data proving or disqualifying a theory, qualitative research aims to provide insight into specific words that paint a picture, experiences, or feelings or emotions that pertain to a certain phenomenon. This phenomenological research analyzed how three middle school African American academic high achievers make meaning of motivation and academic achievement. To accomplish this end, I assembled experiences both inside and outside the classroom, perceptions, definitions, and feelings about motivation and academic achievement. This determined the threads of commonality or schemes based on students' understanding of the terms and will further the phenomenological understanding and meaning of those experiences. Phenomenology is thus defined as a study of objects and events as they appear to the experiencing observer, or as the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.

The aim of phenomenology is to study human phenomena without considering questions of their causes, their objective reality, or even their appearances. The aim here was to study how human phenomena are experienced in consciousness, in cognitive and perceptual acts, as well as how they may be valued or appreciated aesthetically. Phenomenology seeks to understand how persons construct meaning and a key concept is

intersubjectivity. Whatever meaning we create has its roots in human actions, and the totality of social artifacts and cultural objects is grounded in human activity. (Wilson, 2002, p. 1)

Merriam (1998) stated, "Qualitative research draws from the philosophy of phenomenology in its emphasis on experience and interpretation and that the focus would be on the essence or structure of an experience" (p. 15). In addition, according to Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002), who understood social phenomena from the perspective of human participants, data were collected in natural settings, and the research aims at generating theory rather than testing theory. The phenomenological approach sees the individual and his or her world as so interconnected that essentially the one has no existence without the other. Qualitative researchers emphasize subjective thinking because, as we see it, objects less obstinate than walls dominate the world (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Qualitative, or interpretivist, researchers seek to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture, rather than breaking it down into variables. The goal is a holistic picture and depth of understanding by means of observation and in-depth interviews, rather than numeric analysis of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings people assign to them. Interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as a situation emerges (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994).

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenology study was to determine the meaning making of motivation by high-achieving middle school African American

students. The findings from this study indicated that high-achieving African American students tend to address various types of motivation and multiple goals related to their educational values and reasons for studying. In order to ascertain such answers by telling the stories of these children, the following research questions were investigated:

- How do minority students make meaning or define motivation and success?
- How do the narratives of these students mention notions related to locus of control?

In order to hear the students' voices, the methods of inquiry were interpretive and relied autonomously on observations during a structured face-to-face interview, utilizing an interview protocol (see Appendix B). This method was accomplished both individually and collectively, and included voluntary written response to the protocol by the students. Field notes of interpretation were developed. "By eliciting stories through interviews and then analyzing those narratives, the researcher will explore the meaning that students created from the stories they told" (Brunner, 2002, as cited by Daniels, 2004, p. 44).

As a qualitative study, the researcher carried out this inquiry on a Saturday. We engaged in the interview protocol individually and then collectively to enable a more relaxed environment and not to skew the data by responding to the interview itself. There were three middle school students, one of the sixth-grade female and two in the eighth-grade, one male one female, in which the females are sisters.

Specific Procedures

Singleton, Straits, and Straits (1993, p. 260) stated that face-to-face interviewing using open-ended questions, which require respondents to answer in their own words and

probes, can tell more about a phenomenon, and have a greater number of advantages and success than do other methods. Merriam (1998) defined *probes* as questions or comments that follow something already asked. This is why the research being a primary instrument of data collection has advantages. Probing can come in the form of asking for more details, for clarification, or for examples (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002).

On a Saturday, not to interfere with the normal school day or schedule, the involved students with their parents met me at a public location. We used a reserved boardroom to avoid outside interruptions. The conference room we used was set up much like that of the researchers'' classroom in that, it was a typical boardroom layout. The families greeted the researcher, a formal introduction proceeded, explaining the purpose for us being together, and the details of what was to transpire, and providing a reminder that participation is strictly voluntary. Because the room was already pre arranged to the researchers' expectations, the students had enormous individual and collective writing space for privacy and teamwork if needed, as they transcribed their written responses to each of the questions on the protocol. Under the researchers' guidance, the parents read and signed the parental consent form (see Appendix E). Following the same format, the students completed their forms as well (see Appendix F). The students, along with the parents, had no qualms about including actual names as indicated and appropriately marked on the consent forms.

We then began the reading of the interview protocol (see Appendix B), as I invited each participant to clarify any and all understanding about the questions before attempting to answer them, and reminded them to answer to the best of their understanding, as well as in their own words. Once an individual had finished, I asked

privately if they were willing to engage in a group discussion based on their responses. If the answer was no, their participation would have been complete with the collection of their written responses. Because they all said yes, we engaged in a structured open forum as a collective unit.

Merriam (1998) explained that the interview structure continuum has three primary sections. The far left of the continuum is highly structured/standardized, in which the wording of questions is predetermined, the order of questions is predetermined, and the survey is likely to take an oral form. The middle of the continuum is semistructured and the researcher maintains a mix of more-or-less structured questions. The far right is unstructured or informal and the open-ended questions use a more flexible, exploratory format, much like that of a conversation. The group section in this research was nestled between the far right and the middle of the continuum. However, it mostly rested on the far left of the continuum. The entire process was conducted in three hours; however, the researcher did not rush the participants through the process.

The second of the three most common forms of recording was the choice of the researcher: note taking. While video or audiotape may be preferred, one participant's parent asked that it not be done. In compliance with the parent's request, note taking was the means of collecting additional information. As suggested by Merriam (1998), immediately following the dismissal of the families, the researcher engaged privately in a written reflection period, commonly known as post-interview notes, "to allow the investigator to monitor the process of data collection as well as begin to analyze the information itself" (p. 88). This took place immediately following the dismissal of the participants as the researcher took about an hour to complete his notes.

Selection of Participants

"Small school size is not only a good idea but an absolute prerequisite for qualitative change in deep-seated habits" (Meier, 2002, p. 107) which is a major reason the researcher chose to delve into this school of choice. Agape International Academy is a small private Christian school located in Ramstein, Germany. The students are primarily military dependents whom are connected to the umbrella church or other local churches in the community. The autonomy of this school and its children led to a desire to complete my research, due primarily to its significant characteristics and differences compared with most other schools.

Immediately following the successful completion of my general exams and prospectus defense, in the spring of 2005, I returned home to Germany and met with the superintendent and principal of the school I intended to include in my study. The conversation was very brief because, due to my six-year direct involvement with the church family as one of the primary musicians, one of the original staff members, and now as a returning principal, the relationship had already been proven. When another teacher at the school was invited into the room and asked the same question, she without hesitation listed the same five students I like to include in this study if they are willing.

Immediate approval and wholehearted support was offered from all upper levels of management at the school and church organization, provided the researcher did not interfere with the normal flow of classroom procedures. The researcher explained that any material utilized in the dissertation would be gathered during the weekend at an undisclosed place, not inside the school or during school hours. We all (i.e., superintendent, principal, parents, students, and I) were in agreement.

Considering IRB approval had not yet been authorized, my discussion with the families was broad and general. A couple of weeks later, I invited each of the middle school families to a meeting, following church. They all attended. I explained to the families what I was doing and wanted to find. I explained to each of them what was going to be happening in the near future. Additionally, I explained to them once I had received IRB approval for the study, I would meet with them on an official level to seek voluntary participants and to administer the appropriate paperwork with necessary signatures.

Because I was an active member of the church body, which was the umbrella for the school, this research project had been under discussion among the adults during the entire time of my doctoral studies. As we reached the time for the actual assembly of the dissertation study, questions arose with respect to validity because I had accepted the Principalship and, more specifically, was the primary teacher for the age group of students I intended to include. I had to be certain the actual selection was not biased. "The teacher is part of the curriculum and therefore part of the establishment of the goals in the first place and part of the ensuing achievement" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 29). The original, official IRB approval was dated April 28, 2006. Due to the name of this research project evolving, a new letter or approval was sent to the researcher dated May 5, 2006 (see Appendix A). Because electronic dissemination of my approval had taken place, I was able to reserve the boardroom and formally establish the research date of May 6, 2006.

Selection Criteria and Process

The participants of this study were three middle school African American students attending a private Christian school in Ramstein, Germany. Agape International

Academy opened its doors in August 2000. The firmly faith-based school comprises 96% American students, mostly active duty military or Department of Defense civilian dependents. The school educated 86 children with various multilevel classrooms (pre K 3 -4, K, 1-3, 4-6, and 7-12). It is interesting to note that in this school of the staff of 7 adults, 3 held bachelors degrees, two of which were in education. No classrooms occupied more than 12 children and each classroom had either a full time volunteer aid or a floating aid from room to room throughout the day. The other actively engaged adults were ministers or elder's wives in the church. The school is located in the heart of the local community at walking distance from traditional German shops, restaurants, and train stations. As explained in the disclosure section of chapter 1, my reason for involving this school was to tell the stories of American children educated on foreign soil by Christian standards.

As previously stated, the student selection process was one whereby achieving agreement between the faculty of the school and parents involved was, at best, an instantaneous process. The first criterion was that of Terra Nova or Stanford standardized test scores, according to which all candidates are in the top quartile (i.e., the 90^{th} percentile or better) and have maintained such scores for at least the last four to five school years.

The second criterion was that of grades or grade point average (GPA) for the current school year as well as the students' overall GPA. Each of the recommended and subsequently selected students earned not les than a 3.5 GPA, which they had maintained for the last four or five school years. This GPA standing consistently rewards students involved with school honor roll achievements. However, the students were relatively

unconcerned about this minor accomplishment, as one of them stated in the initial school briefing that informed families about the proposed research study and its proponents.

An additional criterion was the students' need to choose to participate by showing an interest in the research project, without any immediate reward for participating. The formal invitation to participate (see Appendix C) was submitted and immediately responded to, from the principal (see Appendix D). Thusly, the research project progressed forward. Based on the aforementioned criteria, we, the adults, had a potential pool of five students; however, one from each middle school was the desired aim. Recognizing we were in a high-operations tempo military community, the extra students were found in a permanent change of station before we could begin the project; thus, the remaining three were ready.

Data Collection

During the winter vacation of 2005, as principal, I notified the superintendent of the need and approval to proceed. His missionary travels deprived me of consistent conversation. However, because verbal approval had been granted the previous school year, and permission had been obtained from the parents to conduct the research in the school, I assembled the institutional review board (IRB) application form and began to prepare its components. My committee approved my proposal during my oral exams in April 2005. Letters of intent, permission, and consent were graciously included in the IRB package and all approved as indicated in Appendix A. Once approval was granted by the IRB, I contacted, by phone, the school and families involved and requested a collective meeting with the group. In this meeting, I reminded the families of the discussion held at the school and explained that the appropriate paperwork needing

signatures would be administered the day of the formal interview. Standardized test scores and report cards were readily available from the school once IRB had granted permission to proceed. The day prior to the research interview, I spent at the school with the principal as I reviewed the official school records for each of the three participants. All selection ad participation criterions were met, if not exceeded, thus the research as planned ensued. At the conclusion of the formal interview, a formal debriefing script was read (see Appendix G) to both families involved. Students were additionally told, their responses both written and verbal would be typed and sent to them for their approval. The students received the sanitized, typed versions of the interview three weeks later and within two days, the researcher had received their approval that no modifications, additions or deletions were necessary.

Instrumentation

> In qualitative research, interviews may be the dominant strategy for data collection, or they may be employed with participant observation, document analysis or other techniques. In all of these situations the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so the researcher can develop insights on how the subjects interpret some small piece of the world. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96).

The primary data collection instruments are the interview protocol (Appendix A), or more specifically, the responses that will come from the protocol; the face-to-face interviews; and myself. The researcher is essentially the main "measurement device" in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interviews were used to further the understanding of the answers submitted on and in the protocol. In addition to the scripted

questions in the protocol, additional questions were provided to the participants, as I will address in chapter four. The researcher was the primary instrument of data collection, according to Merriam (1998), by using probes or "questions or comments that follow up something already asked" (p. 80).

Interviews

The interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) were based on the interviewer's actions, questions, and ultimately "shape the relationship and therefore the ways the participants respond and give accounts of their experiences" (p. 110). With the understanding that questions are at the heart of the interview process, attempts were made to ensure *good or sound* questions are assembled in the interview protocol. Pre-testing (i.e., unofficial use of the questions with students and adults around the military community and at other schools in previous school years, who were not included in the study) helped the researcher to examine the appropriateness and relevance of the interview questions from the participants' perspective. Heppner and Heppner (2004) asserted that pilot testing of a protocol helps the researcher solidify the questions and their intended uses. The interview ultimately is a product of interpretive collaboration, in which all participants' responses (written, verbal, and nonverbal) are inevitably implicated in making meaning (Ritchie & Rigano, 2001). Interestingly, due to time constraints, the researcher, veered from the normal individual interviews and held one collective group interview (Patton, 1987; Merriam, 1998).

Observations

Research observation is a research tool when it comprises the following four components:

1. Serves a formulated research purpose
2. Is planned deliberately
3. Is recorded systematically
4. Is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability (Merriam, 1998, p. 95)

The author continued by listing what to observe:

1. The physical setting, including the environment, the space allocated, resources, and technologies
2. The participants, including who, how many, their roles, and what brings them together
3. Activities and interactions (i.e., what is going on, if there is a definable sequence of activities, and how the subjects interact with the activity and one another)
4. Conversation (i.e., the content of the conversation, who is speaking, who is listening, and the verbal and nonverbal cues)
5. Subtle factors (e.g., symbolic meanings of words; nonverbal communication, such as dress and physical appearance)
6. The researcher's behavior (pp. 97–98).

As stated by Daniels (2004), "Combining interviews with observations allows the researcher to understand the context of the students' responses" (p. 52). The observations will be limited to the interview process and the researcher was the participants' primary teacher for half a school year. It was my intent to use my memory of detailed class discussions and activities to provide examples of information shared during

conversations. My two-to-six-year relationship with the families and nine months of working directly with the students in our constructivist classroom further enriched the descriptions provided by the students.

Data Analysis

"The system of analyzing data is a dynamic process of continually refining the discovery of relationships among the data as they are collected and compared across the emergent categories" (Langram, 1997, p. 193). This study aimed to provide meaning making, as determined, defined by, and from the students' perspective. The constant comparative method, as described by Merriam (1998) provides themes for the analysis of the data. In addition, the researcher sought to discover some of the underlying structures or essence of that experience through the intensive study of individual cases. To a certain degree, this phenomenological study could be classified as an ethnographic study because the researcher came to know a culture or group through direct immersion and engagement by means of fieldwork and participant observation. Subsequently, the researcher was able to portray that culture through text.

Ethnographic analysis, similar to that of phenomenological approaches, uses an iterative process in which cultural ideas that arise during active involvement in the field are transformed, translated, or represented in a written document. It involves sifting and sorting through pieces of data to detect and interpret thematic categorizations, search for inconsistencies and contradictions, and generate conclusions about what is happening and why. The themes will tell the stories of each individual as well as of the collective stories of high-achievers. This will be further discussed in the following chapter. Due to the similar ethnic involvement of the participants, "understanding how semiotic artifacts

influenced the cultural models in use and the situated meanings that are reflected by sociocultural theory on this study" (Daniels, 2004, p. 55).

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative research tends to work with fewer subjects or respondents than does quantitative research, but analyzes each case to a deeper level. Qualitative analysis maintains a set of techniques specifically developed to analyze qualitative data, such as content analysis, text analysis, and conceptual analysis. Content analysis is further defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories, based on explicit rules of coding (Stelmer, 2001). Merriam (1998) stated that qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that it is the content of interviews, field notes, and documents that is analyzed as the researcher seeks to find themes and recurring patterns of meaning (p. 160).

There are two general categories of content analysis: conceptual analysis and relational analysis. Conceptual analysis can be thought of as establishing the existence and frequency of concepts in a text. Relational analysis builds on conceptual analysis by examining the relationships among concepts in a text (Palmquist, 1997). Black and Lenzo (2003) defined text analysis as taking in strings of characters and producing strings of words whereby the words are used as items for which a lexicon can provide pronunciations, either by direct lookup or by some form of letter-to-sound rules. The qualitative analysis in this phenomenological study was painted by the words of the participants.

> Creswell (1998) identified this process [participants' own phrasing] in his discussion of procedures designed to ensure rigorous qualitative analysis. By

> using the participants' words, I hoped to ensure that their voices were accurately and honestly represented. My thinking was influenced by Shernoff et al. (1999), who claimed that we take a "philosophical leap of faith" when we study student perceptions and thus it "is not necessary to acknowledge the existence or accuracy of the event anywhere else but in consciousness. (Daniels, 2004, p. 17)

By directly involving the students and telling their stories, the researcher aimed to ascertain a more realistic viewpoint of the students' perspectives. Grover (2004) defined phenomenological study as research allowing subjects to communicate their experiences without having those experiences transformed by the researcher through any alteration of meaning. However, interpretation of the collected information is equally important to the success of a research project.

Interpreting involves, as stated by Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002), reflecting about the words and acts of the study's participants and abstracting important understandings from them. It is an inductive process by which generalizations are made based on the connections and common aspects between the respective categories and patterns.

An Introduction to the Participants

"I want to teach my students how to live this life on earth,
To face its struggles and its strife and how to improve their worth,
Not just the lesson in a book on how the river flows,
But how to choose the proper path wherever they may go,
To understand eternal truth and know the right from wrong,

And gather all the beauty of a flower and a song.

For if I help the world to grow in wisdom and in grace

Then I shall feel that I have won and I have filled my place.

And so I ask your guidance Lord, that I do my part,

For character and confidence and happiness of heart."

James J. Metcalf (n.d)

Jessica

Jessica is very active at the age of 13. She maintains her eighth-grade straight A academic status and still finds time for her choice of private music lessons on two instruments, dance and swim teams, and an entrepreneurial venture whereby she runs her own babysitting service. Her father proudly serves an active duty branch of the United States military as an enlisted man and her mother is an educator recently promoted to the Principalship. Jessica has lived overseas for nine of years and her favorite duty location is "anywhere there is a mall." When asked why she chose to participate in this research venture, she quickly and excitedly exclaimed, "When I get my PhD, I wanna [want to] have an idea how much work I need to begin preparing for." Jessica's least earned GPA in her entire academic career has been 3.4 as she consistently scores in the 90th percentile or better on her standardized tests. Jessica feels that with her parents placing a great importance on education she has accepted the challenge, as does her part willingly. Admittedly, "I don't spend a lot of time on homework because I finish it at school. I like to re-read or review my notes at home so this keeps me from having to carry so many books back and forth." She maintains a very strong sense of self and is proud of her accomplishments although she admits, "I'm like, doing what every child that wants to go

to college should be doing. I believe it because greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world." When asked about friendships and social interaction, she simply stated, "I like the girls in my class and most of them like me but where I'm headed I don't have time for a lot of silly games but we're cool." She is unequivocally college bound, graduate and post-graduate school determined and as well, career focused.

Xavier

Xavier is equally active as Jessica and is a 14 year-old, eighth-grade boy whose chosen interest includes but is not limited to video games, sports, and girls. He is a military dependent whose father proudly serves active duty in one of the branches of the United States military while his mother serves in the trenches of the classroom in early education. He has three younger siblings and aspires to become an architect. Xavier has lived overseas all but four years of his life, as he is a confident, goal oriented athletically gifted and consistent honor student. Xavier's views on homework were in fact profound. "I don't do it until I have to. Almost all of it is because the teacher needs to make up for lost time. It's busy work and I hate busy work. I even asked my teacher once since I had finished the work in class if he had any more for me to d or if I could go to the library and read something. The teacher told me no, just do your homework. I normally finish all the work for the month in a day or two just to stay out of trouble." His favorite duty location is here in Germany. When asked why he wanted to be a part of this research project, he simply said, "It sounds cool and it gives me a chance to learn something new."

Throughout Xavier's illustrious educational career, he has maintained a GPA of 3.6 or better and as well has consistently scored in the 96th percentile on his standardized test scores. He is undoubtedly self-driven to the extent that if he can get something out of

it although as he stated, “I do enjoy school and sometimes do extra work just for the fun of it.” Xavier is very popular and has many friends. When asked about is friendships he said, “If you want to have friends, the Bible tells us to show yourself friendly, so I help people when I can and they like that. It makes me feel good to help folks.”

Kaela

Kaela is Jessica’s younger and only sister. At the current age of 12, she is in the seventh-grade. She informed the researcher of her aspirations in life as she works towards becoming an educator ‘with at least a PhD’, but would not mind having a professional career in the performing arts as well. She enjoys dance and private music lessons on two instruments, and said with a sly grin that she “I can’t stand boys…yet.” Her reason for enlisting in this research project was most profound, “I wanna [want to] learn how to do research early so I’ll have it down pat when it’s time for real…plus I hope to learn something new.” Kaela, the epitome of confident introvert, has just began to blossom as she formally enters the true adolescent years. She says she does not have many friends but the ones she does have, they are together all the time. Due to the physiological changes that take place at her age, emotional and psychological not to mention, physical changes are her primary distractions or discomforts at this time however, she proudly maintains a 3.8 GPA or better since beginning her educational journey. Kaela said, “I hate it when the teachers don’t care or don’t take the time to help. One time I got an 89 on a test and wanted to go over it with the teacher to understand what I did wrong. The teacher told me, you got a B+. Isn’t that good enough? Obviously not, that’s why I asked but if she didn’t care why should I is what I used to think but now I wanna [want to] make the best grade on everything with or without my teacher’s help. I can do all things

through Christ who strengthens me and I will be successful." Her standardized test scores have dipped and climbed from 89th percentile to 96th percentile in one year and back down the next. She is however, on the climb again this year at a 93rd percentile.

Risks of Involvement

The researcher explained to the parents before they signed the letter of consent (see Appendix E) to participate that no risk would be involved for these students because they were merely responding to "no wrong answer" questions and holding a discussion with me. This research was purely academic, so no physical or psychological stressors arose. The researcher assured the parents they were invited to be present. However, the researcher suggested that, if their presence might inhibit the students from accurately and honestly answering questions, they stay close but not directly in the room with us. All parents agreed and had no intention to be present at any other time than the official welcome and closure.

The interview protocol did not hinder the academic progress of any of the students because the researcher will not disclose any information to anyone but those directly involved in the research. There were, by definition, no questions leading to detrimental emotional or physical involvement. With the understanding no risks or rewards were involved, the researcher informed the subjects they would receive paraphernalia of their choice from the campus bookstore. Because they were University of Oklahoma fans, the researcher promised to deliver something special from the campus bookstore after the study had been completed. The researcher visited the campus; purchased all the items the students had chosen and delivered the items to each of them.

Summary

Chapter 3 described in detail the methodology, including specific procedures, sample selection criteria and processes, data collection, instrumentation, interviews, observations, data analysis, qualitative analysis, and a brief introduction to the subjects. In addition, the research questions addressed meaning making and academic achievement and motivation revealed in the stories of the participants (Kotlowitz, 1992; Kozol, 1992; Suskind, 1999).

The remainder of this dissertation will introduce the participants as they make meaning of academic achievement and motivation. Chapter 4 will present the findings of the completed research. Chapter 5 will include a discussion, lessons learned, implications for educators, recommendations for future research and a conclusion.

Chapter IV. Findings

The Schema of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the making sense of motivation, as defined by African American middle school high-achieving students by soliciting the voices of such aforementioned students. This study focused primarily on two research questions that explored the constructs of motivation and academic achievement autonomously as well as the possible connection between the constructs. The questions are the following:

- How do African American students make meaning or define motivation and academic achievement?
- How do the narratives of these students mention notions related to locus of control (e.g., external control, internal control, locus of causality)?

The questions used within the interview protocol (see Appendix B) materialized a paradigm or model for exploration and analysis of the students' meaning making of the constructs. This study provided a deliberative dialogue on the middle school level or specifically for young adolescents' perceptions. From their responses to each research question the researcher developed themes of commonalities that will be discussed later in this chapter. After soliciting students that met the researchers pre determined participation criteria, I notified the students and parents, by telephone, of the researchers' desire to include them in this research. During the formal interview session, students individually responded to a series of questions (the interview protocol) and once completed, a structured discussion based on their responses transpired. The discussion notes, in addition to the verbatim written responses were typed, sanitized, and analyzed to

determine meaning of the constructs, ascertain themes of commonality in responses, as well as address each research question in full detail.

Pre Interview Context

"The description of the entire setting observed should be sufficiently detailed to permit the reader to visualize that setting. The inclusion of quotations from participants about their reactions to and perceptions of that environment may be particularly useful" (Patton 1987, p.82). Saturday, May 6, 2006, I made final arrangements to the well-lit and spacious, corner conference room. The room had two full walls of windows, furnished with leather and oak furniture, interspersed with plants, and, cooperatively set to a room temperature of 78 degrees. The three participants arrived, with their parents, about five minutes before the start time because the parents were to be included in the preliminary stages of the interview. We greeted each other and at the set time of 10 am began. I assured the parents, that the respondents would be in this room until completion of the interviews approximately three hours later. All three were pleased with the room and the arrangements. Jessica said, "Wow this look[s] just like our old classroom when you were our teacher." Xavier immediately added, "This is so much more cool than the other way [referring to present configuration]." Kaela simply smiled as she normally does in agreement with something said or done. The parents agreed that after their signatures had been completed, they would leave the immediate room. The students were excited. The conference room was set up with white board, markers and eraser, and I brought pencils, scratch paper, dictionaries, pens, name-tags, the various IRB forms (consent), and a copy of the interview protocol for each student. The procedures were explained, agreed and understood. The parents and students read and signed their respective consent forms,

under my direction. Concluding the preliminaries, the parents left the conference room and the interview with the respondents began.

The Interview Phase I: Written Responses

Phase one of the interview consist in its totality of the written portion of the interview. In this section, the researcher addressed all components of the interview as tabulated in Tables 2 through 5. This phase of the interview held with no formal, open discussion. The researcher afforded the students all the time they needed to write their responses, as indicated later in said tables.

Ten minutes after the hour, we read the protocol together to ensure all questions that comprised the protocol, were understood. There were no questions and each of the participants understood what was being asked as well as what was expected of them. After reading the protocol in its totality, the students began writing their responses immediately. Smiles and ponders for in depth answers took place, as the room was quiet during this time of individual writing. Once finished, the students were allowed a short break, to use the restrooms down the hall. Kaela was the last respondent to finish writing and all three were eager to begin the oral part of the interview.

Xavier asked, “Can we do some more, or is the group discussion all that’s left?” I replied that as they are reading their responses I would be taking some notes but there was more to accomplish. So as not to distract the participants with my analysis, I allowed the students to use their written responses as we engaged in discussion.

Tables 2 through 5 tabulate the written results from the respondents. The researcher sanitized and typed the responses and then allowed the students to proofread the documents for two reasons. First, to ensure accuracy in their words and what was

said. Secondly, to ensure the true meanings of their responses were captured. The participants approved the sanitized transcripts and they requested no modifications.

Altogether, there are four tables. Tables 2 through 4 provide data from Phase I: Written Responses. Table 2: Demographics of Participants, details specific demographics information about each of the participants while Table 3: Academic Achievement and table 4: Motivation, compiles the collective findings from the written responses of the protocol. Table 5: Closing provides data from Phase II: the Oral Discussion.

Responses

"Human beings are active by nature and this 'intrinsic proactivity' can be found from earliest childhood onwards" (Deci and Ryan 2002, p.409).

Tables 2 through 5 address the written responses of the interview protocol. An analysis of each of the tables follows.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Jessica	26 November 91	♀	8	MA	NA	PhD	Lawyer/Educator
Xavier	17 August 92	♂	8	BA	AA	MS	Architect
Kaela	10 September 93	♀	6	MA	NA	MA	Educator

Table 2 Discussion of Demographics

See Table 2 for a tabulation of the demographic specifics of each of the respondents. The reader is provided the following key for defining the columns.

A: date of birth, B: gender M (male) and F (female), C: current grade, D: mother's achieved education, E: father's achieved education and G: respondents' desired profession. Data not included in the table yet believed to be relevant to the demographic information were that all three participants are African American and they each currently attend private schools. Furthermore, all three respondents were students of the researcher in previous years.

Additionally, there are similarities among the parents of each of the respondents that presumably affect the mindset of the students and are results of the parenting styles of the parents. The mothers are educators. Furthermore, the fathers are active duty enlisted members of the United States military. Neither of those commonalities was addressed in this research.

An additional notable commonality was that each of the students maintains academic success while engaged in various and numerous extracurricular activities. While the students did not actually see themselves as achieving great strides academically, they do seek additional work and or involvement in various activities. One additional notable commonality is that the families all have a practicing faith structure with strict adherence to a biblical lifestyle. This was determined by the researcher over the years as the researcher was intimately engaged in the church system with the families. This construct was not addressed in this research however; the faith-based beliefs did have some bearing as the reader will find later in this chapter.

Lastly, one significant variable not indicated in Table 2 is that the researcher was the primary teacher for each of the students in the past.

Table 3

Written Meaning Making of Academic Achievement

Jessica	Xavier	Kaela
What is your definition of achievement? Please give examples		
I believe that is when you meet the goal you have set. If I set a goal to make straight A's, & I make them I have achieved my goal.	To me achievement is when a person, teacher or pupil exceeds their own expectations or goals. One example is when a basketball player, who isn't the best, says to him/herself that they're going to get 2 rebounds &7 points. If they go out and they get 4 rebounds & 7 points, they have achieved, exceeded personal expectations or goals.	When you set a goal to reach & you reach it. For example almost any singer or actor you seen on TV most of their goals were set when they were small like Christina Aguilera. She sang ever since she was small. Now she has her own albums.
What is your definition of academic achievement? Please give examples		
Basically the same but when it comes to grades, like the example I gave you in the other one.	Academic achievement is when a person who knows that they can get a certain grade, puts forth the effort and mind power into their studies. This person doesn't necessarily have to achieve a better grade but have applied themselves, worked harder, and have proved to themselves that they can do more or do better than they have previously. An example of this is when a C student wants to prove to himself and everybody else that he's smarter than labeled. So he pushes himself, checks his homework & thinks twice before putting down an answer to do better. He may or may not achieve they A on his report card but he knows that he has the will & brain power to achieve.	When you set a goal as for as your schoolwork. This year I set my goal on not getting a C. so far I haven't. I actually got more achievement than I thought.

What is your definition of a high-achiever?		
Jessica	Xavier	Kaela
A person who never thinks they have learned enough. They always feel that they can go a step or two farther. There is never an end to learning.	A high achiever is a person who puts forth a lot of effort to not fail.	When you don't except average and want more.
Do you feel that you are a high achiever? Why or Why not?		
Yes, The reason I say yes is because I always feel that I could add to what I already know. There is something's in this world that you have to know but then just stuff you know. There is so much information in this world to limit myself to just say my textbooks.	No. I feel I'm failing because I feel like I can do better than an A. In some subjects I know that I won't get as high a grade but still put forth the effort to try to get an A.	Yes, because when I make a B on a quiz I know I could have done better.
What kind of grades do you get? Has your grades been consistent throughout your education or have you seen high and low points? Do you feel this is an example of (academic) achievement? Why or why not?		
3rd quarter GPA: 3.88	3rd quarter GPA: 3.80	3rd quarter GPA: 4.0
My grades are mostly A's & B's. Lately they have been all A's. They have pretty much except my 7th grade year because the teacher that I had…we just didn't communicate well. Therefore my grades did suffer. My B's dropped to C's. But I brought them back up Yes I do, because even when I hit a low point I brought my grades back up. When my grade dropped I set a goal to bring them back up…and I did	I get A's & B's. 1st quarter I earned a 3.66 GPA & second quarter a 3.16 GPA. My grades have been pretty much consistent, but the second quarter was a low point for me. No, because throughout school, it has been really easy. I've never had to put forth much effort. The only class that has caused me trouble was Algebra. [his Algebra grade was A- for this term]	A's & B's. No, when I switched to private school in the 5th grade it was very different from public school so I made some C's but I brought them back up & have never made another C on my report card. Yes, because to know that you achieved in one of the most important responsibilities in your life as a kid.

Does your teacher drive your levels of achievement or are you self-driven? What about your past teachers?		
Jessica	Xavier	Kaela
I feel it is both because your teacher can have a way that he/she does something and you draw to it but at the same time a teacher can encourage you, have all sorts of sorts of great study plans, or anything along those lines but if you aren't self-determined none of that will make a difference. I feel that in the past it was the same. Most of my teachers have motivated me & yes this makes it so much easier to work. When you know you have someone supporting you, it makes things go much smoother	My English & history teachers have always pushed me to get and meet my potential. My other teachers probably have pushed me, but not since science & math have never posed a threat to me, I never recognized the push. I feel that in the past it was the same.	I am more self-determined. In your later life, like in college, if you get a professor that doesn't care and won't drive your levels you won't do as good as you would if you were self-determined. Still self-determined because if I wasn't, back in the 4th grade, I would have gave up.

Discussion of Table 3 Making Meaning of Academic Achievement

The interview protocol for Table 3 provided six questions in which the last two questions had sub questions of three and one level of explanation respectively.

The first question asked for their definition of achievement. Although varying degrees of explanation were given, the end result was that each of the respondents directly connected achievement to goals. They addressed goal setting as well as reaching or exceeding those goals.

The second question referred to the students' definition of academic achievement. For all three, that definition consisted of achieving high grades.

The third question asked the students for their definition of a high-achiever while the fourth question asked if they felt they were in fact high-achievers. These two questions produced the first gender differences I responses. Both females respondents had more in depth expectations of high-achievement and simultaneously believed they were high-achievers. They used phrases like "never thinks they learned enough" and "don't accept average and want more."

The male respondent had a similar definition of a high-achiever and defined a high-achiever as one who puts forth a "lot of effort to not fail while succeeding academically." Yet he did not define himself as a high-achiever. When the subsequent question asked him why he felt he was not a high-achiever, he responded by saying he was not performing as well as he would like to in certain subjects. However, it should be noted that the responses are similar if not in fact mostly identical. The students completed the written responses with no open discussion or verbally submitted questions.

The fifth question on Table 3 addressed the grades the student received. The third quarter markings had not been passed to them at this time but the researcher was privileged the information as indicated by their GPAs being provided for the reader. The respondents equally stated they get As and Bs and have equally had drops or low points but have returned to a status of academic achievement. The reasons or explanation for those drops varied as one states she had communication challenges with her teacher. One respondent stated he doesn't put forth the effort because it is easy for him and the third respondent associated her drops in grades to a move in school environment or changing

of schools. However, as stated before, it is interesting to note that each of them identify the reason or challenge and over come that challenge to satisfy a need for higher marks. The respondents' feeling of self worth was never in violation although they consistently felt they could perform better.

The final portion of this question asked if they felt their grades were an example of academic achievement. The female respondents' equally thought yes as it was their responsibility to bring back up and keep their grades high. The male respondent felt he was not an example of academic achievement because he didn't put forth much effort.

The last questions of this section asked the students if their teachers drive their levels of achievement or if they in fact are self-driven. The questions included past teachers. The reader is reminded, the researcher is in fact one of the respondent's past teachers. They each maintained high expectations for themselves as that is a trait commonly found in self-determined personalities. All three respondents defined themselves as self-determined or internally driven. However, that did not keep them from seeking positive guidance or acceptance from their teachers.

The second of the research questions driving this study asked if the narratives of these students mention notions related to locus of control. In this final question of this portion of the protocol, the notions begin to appear. Deci and Ryan (1985) define the concept of self-determination by stating, "self-determination is a quality of human functioning that involves the experiences of choice or the experiences of an internal perceived locus of causality" (p. 38). Additionally, the student's responses further reinforce Deci and Ryan's concept that self-determination deals with the control of ones environment or outcomes (p. 38).

The responses thus far have all shown a relatively consistent approach to an internal locus of control when one looks at an application of self-determination theory. Wigfield and Eccles (2001) state, "success-oriented students count their worth in terms of approaching success and by intrinsic payoffs inherent in this goal" (p. 37). As discussed in Chapter 2, attribution theory brings about a connection to the responses of the students. Deci and Ryan (1985) state, "the process of making attributions is an intrinsically motivated process because it helps people master their environments and to feel a sense of competence and self-determination" (p. 190). The students' responses, especially in questions three through six of the aforementioned section of the protocol, embody this statement.

The third portion of the interview protocol addressed the meaning making of motivation. The reader will find a summation table of the written responses with a synopsis immediately following.

Table 4

Meaning Making of Motivation

What is your definition of motivation ? Please give examples		
Jessica	Xavier	Kaela
My definition of motivation is when you have something or someone helping push you along to achieve your goal. If you think you can't do something, someone can say something that will make you think you can. They then have just motivated you.	My definition of motivation is someone, some thing or some feeling that pushes you or strive for to complete a task. Like when a teenager sees the new game system & wants it. When their parents wont give them the money he/she has to get a job. This system makes them wake up every morning, makes them go to work and makes them do whatever he/she needs to do at the job to get his/her paycheck. That's motivation.	When someone encourages you. My mom gave me motivation to stay in dance because at first I didn't give it a chance but my mom told me to still try it & am glad I did stick with it because I love it now that I have experienced it.
What is your definition of a motivated learner?		
A person who sets a goal and wont give up until they reach it.	My definition of a motivated learner is a person who uses a person, thing or feeling to help them exceed personal expectations or goals.	Someone who loves to work hard & is dedicated to it.
Do you feel that you are motivated about achievement in school? Why or why not?		
Yes. I am constantly striving to make all A's.	Yes & no because most of the time I'm self motivated & at other times when the new game system comes out, that pushes me to do better, hoping that will help me get the system.	Yes, because I set my goals in school and I intend to reach them & maybe even higher.

Does your teacher help motivate you or are you self-motivated? What about your past teachers?		
Jessica	Xavier	Kaela
I would say a little of both. Yes my past teachers have. Things they have said made me want to do better in school. I also believe that doing better in school will also make you do better in life.	I think that I am self-motivated. Even in the past, I was self-driven, but there were times where I would try to impress my parents, teachers, or students.	Sometimes when I have a bad day, she encourages me to go forward. Yes, them too.
How much time do you spend on homework in a day?		
Only about 15-20 minutes sometimes. Most of the time it's done at school.	On average, I spend about 50-55 minutes a day.	I get finished with my all my school work & homework by noon so the rest of the day to study.
How much time do you take to prepare for a quiz or test?		
It depends. Anywhere from 15 minutes- 1 hour.	Usually, I don't study for quizzes or tests because the information sticks in my head.	Most of the time until the due date.

The first question of this Table asked the students the definition of motivation. Each of the respondents used some form of external stimuli to explain their meaning of motivation. Each of them used terms like "push" or "encourage" in their definitions.

However, with the second question asked for the definition of a motivated learner and the students used terms such as "hard work" and "exceeding personal goals." "The intrinsic needs for competence and self-determination motivate an on going process of seeking and attempting to conquer optimal challenges" (Deci and Ryan, p. 32). Wigfield and Eccles (2001) adds, vigor in carrying out the goals to explain the student's reasoning in hard work or desire to exceed predetermined goals and expectations.

Question three asked the students if they felt they were motivated about achievement in school. The students further embodied the aforementioned quotes because

they constantly refer to “going beyond” or “further”. That would indicate total satisfaction is not actually achievable but in fact the pursuit of satisfaction is the goal of a high-achieving learner.

Another interesting concept developed in these responses is illustrated by Brophy (1998), who states: “Achievement motivation maintains two key components: motivation to succeed and motivation to avoid failure” (p. 50). The respondents equally strive for greater than average goals as specifically illustrated in question three. The students willingly engage in various activities, of varying degrees of difficulty specifically for intrinsic reasons. In Chapter 3, I introduced the participants. Each of them, in addition to maintaining academic excellence has numerous activities that they have chosen to engage in. As Brophy (p. 51) asserts these student have a focus of “achieving success” rather than “avoiding failure.”

The last section of the interview protocol was that of closing questions. This section is labeled closing or probing questions because within it, the researcher felt deeper understanding or meaning making of academic achievement and motivation would begin to appear. The written responses had not as great an impact to this research as did the oral responses.

Written Closing Questions

Table 5

Closing Questions

Do you feel academic achievement and motivation are necessary to be successful in school?		
Jessica	Xavier	Kaela
Yes I do. The reason being is that in the world today there is so many distractions & if you aren't motivated & willing to try to achieve you will get distracted and school will not be as much as a priority	Yes, because without either (there are students like this) wouldn't be successful or as successful as the students with academic achievement motivation	Yes, because you will never go anywhere if you base yourself on average
Do you feel academic achievement and motivation are necessary to be successful in life?		
Yes I do. There is no way you could possibly get through life without motivation. People will do anything to destroy your plans & if you are not self motivated you are basically giving the[m] permission to take control of your life	In life, more motivation is needed to able to have the necessities to live a decent life. To have what others don't, you have to do what others wont & that is all about motivation	Yes, you will never go anywhere in your life if you don't have these things
What role does academic achievement and motivation play in your future?		
It will help me get into (& finish) college because I know that without being motivated or setting goals to achieve, I would not be able to do anything, let lone get into college	In a person's future, academic achievement gets you places and motivation keeps you there	One of the biggest because that will take me to college & maybe to a PhD

Do you perform well academically because you like school or do you seek rewards for your achievement?		
Jessica	Xavier	Kaela
It is personal because I want to do well in school. Knowledge is forever but is a piece of paper	I like school. I'm not sure if it's because I want to be smart, my urge to do better, or the overall concept of school, to learn, but me liking school is the reason for my academic achievement	Because I like school. If you truly like school you don't need that kind of reward. My reward is knowing that one more goal is achieved
How do you define positive motivational reinforcement? Is it important to your goals? How would you measure it?		
Wanting someone to do something they didn't think they could do but they did. Yes. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the least & 10 being the most, I would give it a 8.	Positive motivational reinforcement is when you use positive motivation to achieve new heights. Yes, because it pushes you to meet your goals. I would measure it in effort & will power.	When someone encourages you with positive things. Yes, for me. 1-10 scale, I would say a 7.
Is there a correlation or a relationship between academic achievement and motivation?		
Yes, because you have to be motivated to achieve things. Say you are on a basketball team & your free-throw will make or break the game. Your teammates job is to encourage you or motivate you to make the shot. If you make the shot you have achieved your set goal. Therefore the two have been used together to help you	No, because like in a chemical equation (in science) academic achievement is the result or product and motivation is the energy used to fuse the components together	Yes, you need both in your life & both to reach your goals

The first question here asks if the students feel academic achievement and motivation are necessary to be successful in school? The students responded with similarity in that they agreed yes, academic achievement, and motivation are necessary to be successful in school.

The second question asked the students if they felt academic achievement and motivation are necessary to be successful in life. The respondents answered identically this question the same as they did the previous question. They feel collectively yes, academic achievement and motivation are both necessary to be successful in life. The students made a connection between present school efforts and later in life results. These values are common to that of high achievers. Wigfield and Eccles (2001) asserts, values have to do with the desires and preferences (Do I *want* it?) and are more concerned with the perceived importance, attractiveness, or usefulness of achievement activities (p. 122).

The third question asked the students what role does academic achievement and motivation play in their futures. "The power of expectations in the lives of children begin long before they come to school. Through socialization in the homes and community, children learn of expectations for their lives" Caruthers (2006, p.1). It is with this understanding that children arrive at school already understanding what it will take to reach academic achievement. Those with this understanding and intrinsic motivators normally tend to perform more successfully. Again, like previous responses', the students equally see themselves in education environments beyond high school and agree that their future is predicated on their academic achievements and motivation today.

The next questions asked the students about their performance in school based on them liking school or seeking rewards. "A student who is motivated to learn will find school both enjoyable and meaningful" (Dev 1997). The concept of needing rewards or seeking rewards relates to that of an external locus. The three respondents equally feel, they like school and rewards are not needed. They find the learning environment on the whole engaging enough without the necessity of external rewards or stimuli. One would

have to agree the students, based on the responses thus far are internally driven and maintain an internal locus of control.

The fifth question asked the students to define positive motivational reinforcement and if it is important to their goals. “Reinforcement and rewards have been frequently used synonymously. A reinforcer is an event that increases the frequency of the behavior it follows. Its effects on behavior, however, do not define a reward. Rewards are stimuli that are assumed to be positive events” Cameron and Pierce (1994, p. 364). The last portion of this question asked them to measure the importance of positive reinforcement. Their understanding was that this is when someone encourages you to reach new heights of understanding. The female respondents measured its importance on a 1-10 point scale with scores of 8 or 7. The male student measured its importance through effort and will power. The three did however agree that “yes”, positive motivational reinforcement is important to their goals.

The sixth questions asked the students if there was a relationship between academic achievement and motivation. While the gender responses were different, their understanding of the relationship was clear. The students feel that there is some form of affect on each other. The male student said, “academic achievement is the result or product and motivation is the energy used to fuse the components together.” Brophy (1998) adds, achievement situations require people to perform some goal-oriented task knowing that their performance will be evaluated (p. 49).

Educational research has traditionally focused, until more recent years, primarily on the view points of the researcher(s) involved. In efforts of obtaining a more true and realistic view of the phenomenon one would tend to believe that by including the voices

of the participants, a more holistic and pure set of qualitative data would become prevalent. To that end, this research not only included the stories through written and verbal responses of the students, but based its findings solely on their perceptions and understanding of the concepts being researched. Patton (1987) asserts, "the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms" (p. 115). With this understanding, this research was developed, conducted and completed in that manner. In the next section, Interview Phase II: Oral Discussion, themes or connections will addressed in grater detail. The next section illustrates the oral discussion of the previously discussed written responses and includes additional questions.

Interview Phase II: Oral Discussion

By 11:40 am, the structured discussion had begun, based on the responses, in a round table open format wherein each of the students was anxious and eager to read what they had written to share with the other students. The researcher began the dialogue with the following statement, "Now that you all have had a chance to finish your written responses, are there any comments or questions before we move to the next phase of this process?" Based on the fact that each of them resounded the answer of "no, Sir" we continued.

Dialogue within each response almost ensued immediately but we agreed to table all formal or lengthy discussions until the open ended or probing section of the interview for detailed discussion. Jessica was first to submit verbal responses as she stated, "this is easier than I thought it would be…I thought we would have to answer some hard questions or maybe even do some problem solving. I can't wait to get to college." The

others agreed with positive head nods or statements of, “me too.” The students were consistently and positively supportive of each other’s responses as I often heard, “I didn’t think of that…that’s good.” Rude or misconduct behavior was never an issue or concern. Each student was fully engaged, cooperative, and insightful the entire session.

While equal time was afforded to each respondent, the discussions were mostly led or dominated by Jessica. The other participants willingly went along with her self-chosen leadership role, as there were no dissents from her leading style. The impact she had on the others ultimately did not affect their verbal responses as indicated in their consistent, open, and positive body languages and non-verbal responses however, she without question or hesitation led the group. As discussions transpired, Jessica was first to verbally exclaim the use of God in her reasoning thus similar scriptural responses began to be verbalized by the other respondents. Her influence was, in the researcher’s opinion, her normal personality but not to the extent that it was overbearing or negatively dominating the activity or inclusion of the other respondents. Xavier consistently provided caveats to Jessica’s initial statements while he sometimes initiated the key concepts of responses thus showing further support of her leadership role. Kaela, unless directly questioned, normally went along cooperatively yet did provide profound insights when addressed. Actively submerged into their culture, both academically and personally, the researcher found the students’ deportment to be characteristic of their normal personalities in an academic setting: confident, reassuring of others, fully engaged and cooperative.

The remainder of this chapter will address the findings, in which through the student’s stories, meaning making of motivation and its possible relation to academic

achievement become crystallized. I will as well include the themes connecting the stories and meaning making and lastly discuss the unanticipated findings.

Meaning Making of Academic Achievement

This section addresses, in part, the first research question: how do African American students make meaning of or define academic achievement and motivation. I will speak to the meaning making of academic achievement portion of the first research question. The subsequent dialogue in this paper will address the meaning making of motivation portion of the first research question followed by themes of connectivity in which the second research question: do the narratives of these students mention notions related to locus of control?, will be addressed in its entirety.

The students collectively agreed that achievement was synonymous with success, or the attainment of one's goals. Their understanding here was that one could not be successful without achieving a certain level of gratification or accomplishment. It is interesting to note that the respondents as well felt that achievement is a journey never fully reached. Jessica stated, "if I achieve success along the way then I am an achiever in that task but I'm not like a real achiever until I have reached the highest possible level in that task." Xavier added, "achievement is like milestones that need to be reached in order to climb to the next level higher." That being said the researcher concludes their meaning of achievement as not an obtainable goal but necessary steps of acquiring incremental goals that are more significant. Brophy (1998) asserts, "learning proceeds most smoothly when it involves continuous progress achieved through small, easy steps with consistent success along the way" (p. 51). That discourse led us more specifically to academic achievement.

The same concepts applied however the students' collectively agreed that academic achievement includes doing ones best at each step in the educational process. Covington (1998) states, "the kinds of goals we must foster in school are intrinsic in nature, involving the desire to become more effective as a person…learning becomes the means to an end, not an isolated event" (p. 135). Kaela noted, "academic achievement can be looked at like, by my report card and the school records but mine is also knowing how well I did on each assignment to get those grades." Xavier immediately added, "the ending grade doesn't mean much to me if I didn't learn something useful. I hate busy work [be]cause the teacher has run out of ideas." Jessica added, "I can't say that I'm an academic achiever until I have reached the highest level of education. Most folks get good grades then get lazy [be]cause they reached one goal. I need to keep going so I can get to the end of this journey." The others emphatically agreed. It is with this understanding that the students feel academic achievement is not a goal per-se, however, a work in progress used as milestones along the way. What rang paramount in the ears of the researcher was that even as well as these students have been performing thus far, they didn't see their to date accomplishments as meaning anything unless the work, time and energy invested today will have a much greater pay off later in their educational, professional and personal lives. Their discussion was at best, in the form of a visionary's' dialect in that they collectively understand the importance of the investment now with the return on that investment five, ten or even twenty years form now.

The students continued to discuss their meaning making of academic achievement but the context of the discussion turned more scripturally related after Jessica made the following comment.

> Jessica says, "Like this year's school motto Isaiah 1:17 'learn to do well' it's a process where we continue to strive for our best and to do better than before. Also it means making that grade and keeping it consistent on my report card over the years. I need academic achievement to be the best I can all through school so it will better my chances of graduating from college."

Additional scriptures emanated from the other respondents as they continued to provide their understanding or meaning making of academic achievement. The responses as a whole were predominantly simple reading of their responses, as they had at this point not too much, additional information to add. The conversation then moved its focus to the meaning making of motivation.

Meaning Making of Motivation

Pintrich and Schunk (2002) states, "most professional agree that we infer the presence of motivation from the following behavioral indicator: choice of tasks, effort, persistence and achievement" (p. 13). These indicators are pertinent to the discussion as they students provide their meaning making of motivation. Choice of tasks refers to their interest. "When students have a choice, what they chose to do indicates where their motivation lies" (p. 13). The second index is effort. "Students motivated to learn are likely to expend greater mental effort during instruction and employ cognitive strategies they believe will promote learning" (p. 14). Persistence refers to the time spent on a task. For example the reader will find that the respondents spend varying amounts of time on homework and when preparing for tests and quizzes. The last index is achievement. Achievement is "viewed as an index of motivation. Students who chose to engage in a task, expend effort, and persist are like to achieve at a higher level" (p. 14). The reader will see references to each of these indexes as you read this section.

The researcher began this discourse thusly,

> "I think that's good. For the record, not that my little opinion means much, but I am proud of each of you and pray that you continue to do the awesome job you have been doing in school. The habits that you form now, will be the practices that you carry into your adult lives….Let's move on to motivation for a few moments…are there any other questions or comments on academic achievement? …ok, tell me either what you wrote or what you have to add to what you wrote about motivation."

Because Jessica was first to respond and used the words "self-driven" I asked her to explain what she meant by that. She responded thusly.

> "it's like when I know I have something to do, so I do it and try to do it as soon as it is given to me. Some of my friends have to be pushed to get their work done. They mostly have to be motivated by someone else but I don't. I know what I have to do and the sooner I get my work done the sooner I can relax or do something else without having a lot of work pilled up on me at the last minute."

Deci and Ryan (1985) supports these comments by stating, "intrinsic motivation is based in the need to be self-determining and suggested that rewards are widely used as instruments of control, can often co-opt people's self-determination and initiate different motivational processes" (p. 49). Jessica compares herself to some of her friends that have to be "pushed" presumably, with some sort of reward to get them to perform the task. Conversely, as she is intrinsically driven, her desire is to complete the tasks immediately and move on to something else.

When Xavier chimed in, he mentioned his mom having to push him sometimes. With this being relevant to the intrinsic versus extrinsic discussion, the researcher asked him to elaborate on that statement. His reply was as follows.

> "she doesn't have to push [be]cause I will do the work just to keep from being in trouble but like when I'm in my room I'd rather be playing a video game than doing my work so my mom gets on me. Sometimes my dad jumps in but he is more strict than my mom so he likes sits there in the room until I finish. I try to finish before they come home so they wont be mad at me and stuff."

Deci and Ryan (p. 50) refer to this as "avoidance of punishment" style of motivation as Xavier strives for completion to avoid punitive interactions with his parents. With the understanding that African American parenting styles are more aggressive than other cultures, motivation may be held to the students' beliefs but interaction with the parents significantly contribute to the student's beliefs. Desimone (1999) adds, "minority parents have higher levels of involvement and interaction with their children (p.12).

While this student may be intrinsically driven, the avoidance of fear seems to drive him more dominantly. The parental involvement here illustrates a very active role in the life of this student. He made mention elsewhere that he is self-driven but it depends on the subject. Regardless, his parents will not allow him to become a procrastinator in his studies. Conversely, Kaela used even a different connection to motivation as she referred to the positive reinforcements of others to recharge her intrinsic batteries. Kaela states:

> I don't need encouragement because I want to do well but it's nice to know my mommy and teachers are proud of me. I'm not as motivated to dance but since that's what makes my mommy happy, I have fun in dance class. In school I like to learn so I'm ready to work. It makes me feel good when they are proud of me…it lets' me know I'm like doing what they expect and want from me. The Bible says obedience is better than sacrifice so when they are proud of me that means I'm like obedient and doing good so I don't have to worry about a punishment."

Jessica immediately adds.

> "no punishment, when it happens is fun, but it is necessary, I think it says in Hebrews but my parents can get serious with the punishments so I stay obedient."

The students each used different examples of motivation however, when Xavier used sports as an example, the excitement level increased dramatically. The students were almost finishing each other's statements as they each had something to add. Xavier stated, "I know I'm not that good at [basketball] free throws but getting fouled is part of

the game, so I shot twenty every morning before and after school plus more than the couch ask me to do so I can get better." Jessica excitedly said, "me too and I practice my dribbling too just as much." Kaela added, "I'll probably never be that good but I like to play the game so I work hard so I won't let my teammates down." Covington (p. 77) states, "accurate self-knowledge enables individuals to credit their talents fairly, as well as to recognize their shortcomings." Additionally, "as applied to schools, one's worth often comes to depend on the ability to achieve competitively" (p. 78).

When I redirected the conversation to academic achievement and its possible connection to motivation, the responses were similar but with a different focus. Kaela stepped up first this time by adding to the conversation the following, "I'm motivated to do good in school because I need to do good to get into college and it makes me feel good when my mom and dad are proud of me." The others agreed by nodding their heads as she continued,

> "what I hate is when I am ready to go and want to do something fun or new and the teacher says we don't have time or that's not in my plans for the day. The teachers sometime can kill my joyful spirit with their negative or unresponsive attitude."

Kaela's motivation or engagement approaches may be significantly diminished due to the responses of interactions with her teacher. Teacher student interactions will be addressed later in this document however, educators intending of increasing student engagement must consider the student's request with at minimum, respect. Deiro (2003) asserts, "Treating children with respect means showing regard for their basic human rights to expression and believing in their abilities to manage their own lives successfully" (p. 61). Ultimately, this requires the educator to listen effectively with sincerity, considering what the student has to say. As it relates to the self-determination discussion, Deci, Vallerand,

Pelletier and Ryan (1991) states, "supports for competence (e.g., optimal challenges and performance feedback) and for relatedness (e.g., parental involvement and peer acceptance) facilitate motivation" (p. 333). Because these students maintain an autonomy-supportive approach, intrinsic motivation is more readily facilitated.

> Jessica added, "the Lord is my strength and His strength is my joy so I try not to let it bother me but I wanna [want to] do better work for the teachers that listen to me like, try my suggestions in class. That makes me feel good so I wanna [want to] keep on coming up with good suggestions."

> Xavier added, 'I don't wanna [want to] like, look stupid in class so [with] the teachers I know will listen, I add a lot of stuff to that class but the teachers who don't care, I just do my work and wait for the class to be over."

During the group discussion portion of the interview, the students asked to use the white board and markers to draw their understanding of how the concepts of motivation and achievement could possibly relate. "The study of motivation provides a rich framework for addressing some of the most pressing issues affecting academic achievement" Wigfield and Eccles (2001, p.121). The following is their understanding of how motivation drives academic achievement. Because they emphatically define internal as "me or I" and external as "my parents or the teacher" I asked them to elaborate.

> Jessica responds, "Internal is me and what I decide to do in my own mind…internal is self motivation or driven by my own choice. It's like when I have control of the project. I wish I had more say or control in my classroom. The teachers sometimes act like they don't trust us enough to make a decision. External is like when your mom or the teacher makes you do something."

> Xavier added, "I think its like the same thing. External is not me or like if I don't have control."

> Kaela asserts, "I think its like what they [referring to other participants] said but would it like mean I take control is internal or things just happen are external?"

> Xavier answers, "one of my friends call[s] it fate. I don't believe in fate because God is the light unto my path so fate has nothing to do with it. The Bible tells us that we have life more abundantly through Him but we must obey our parents and

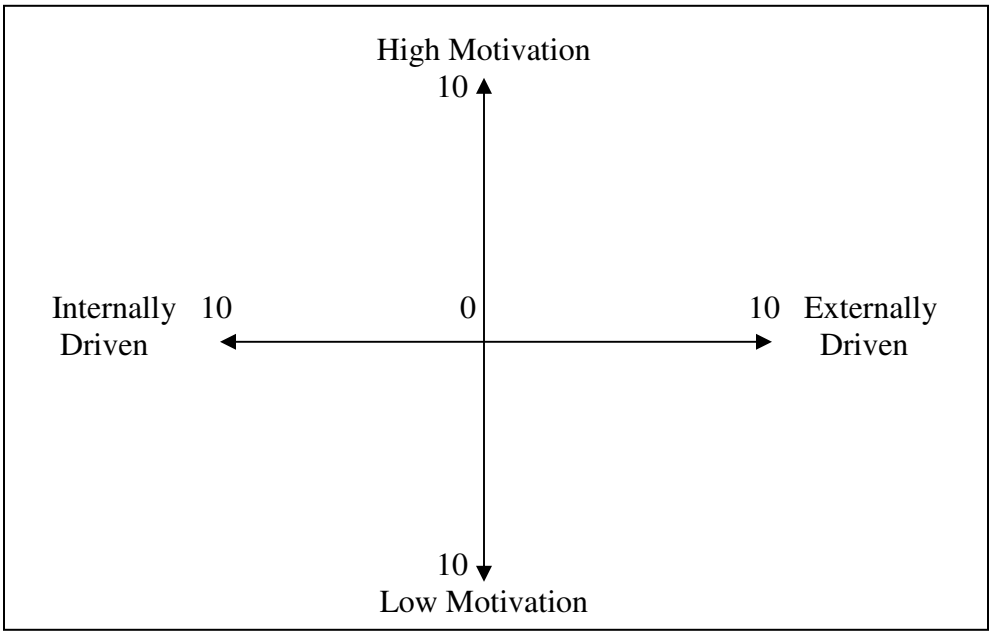
> leaders to receive that blessing. I prayed and did my best with my own effort through God's favor or I didn't and when I didn't do my part, I'd fail."
>
> Jessica surmised this section with, "my mom always says, 'you don't need luck when you're blessed' and [be]cause I'm blessed in the city & blessed in the field…"

It is the researchers' belief that a great deal of the student's perception has to do with the teaching they received while I was the teacher for the cohort, last year and definitely has a connection to the style of parenting in the home. The students also agreed that the type of motivation depends on the classroom environment; Xavier called it "culture", and sometimes the subject being talked about. Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan (1991) asserts, "teacher's orientations influence the general classroom climate…students in classrooms with autonomy-supportive teachers displayed more intrinsic motivation, perceived competence, and self-esteem than did students in classrooms with controlling teachers" (p. 337). For clarification, the researcher asked if they meant we have both types of motivation and depending on the situation, we lean to or use one preference or the other? All three shook their heads while saying yes. Jessica asked if they could use the white board to draw a picture to provide further explanation their understanding of the possible connection between the two concepts. I asked them to please use the board and show me what that looks like. Figure 4 is their depiction of the interaction between academic achievement and motivation.

The progression or development of this figure transpired in less than ten minutes as Jessica drew on the board first, a curvilinear line in the fashion of an upside letter u. With this she explained how the beginning, or far left of the line was "doing stuff [be]cause I like it or want to" and the opposing side "because someone wants me to or I have to." Kaela and Xavier took no hast in modifying this first picture as they reminded

her, the goal was show both motivation and academic achievement. One would surmise this student depiction also greatly refers to or is inclined to represent engagement. Meaning, if the students do not feel motivated, they will not engage and thus not produce as well academically as normally capable. During this pictorial development, the researcher watched and took notes without submitting any verbal or non-verbal connotations as to acceptance or non-acceptance of the work under development. After just under ten minutes and four or five revisions, the students settled and unanimously agreed on the following.

Figure 4 Motivation and Academic Achievement Interaction Matrix



The students provided verbal explanation of their product as they exclaimed simultaneously, “we’re done!” Kaela called the horizontal line academic achievement as Xavier called the vertical line motivation. I asked them to expound on their reasoning.

Xavier, “High motivation means you have a lot of it or very little”

Jessica, “your motivation moves up and down as having a lot of little depending on the assignment or the subject”

Kaela, “or the teacher’s attitude”

Xavier, “does that make sense?”

The researcher responded, “yes but what are the numbers for?”

Xavier, its like to show how much strength or power the type of motivation is.”

The researcher stated, “good, what about the left to right movement?”

Kaela, “that’s like are you motivated within your self or are you doing it because someone or something else is making you do it”

Xavier, “this is like the internal and external”

Jessica, “like I am mostly a high number on the internally driven [be]cause I don’t need a lot of help to remind me what I need to do. It’s not my parents’ future, its mine so I have to take control over my destiny.”

The researcher asked, “where do you, Xavier and Kaela see yourselves on this continuum?”

Kaela, “what’s a continuum”

Xavier, “its like a two opposite directions on a subject that go from one meaning to the other. Right?”

The researcher responded, “absolutely. I call both lines, you have continuums because they begin at one end of the spectrum and travel through to the complete opposite of the spectrum.”

Kaela, “ok, I’m like all over the place…it depends on the subject. If I like the subject and the class is really involved I’m like here (pointing at Q1). But I’m never down here (pointing at Q4).

Xavier, “I’m always up here (pointing & moving from Q1-Q3).

As the researcher asked the last question of what do the quadrants mean and how they would classify the students in them, the students equally provided statement as they continued to make meaning making of academic achievement and motivation. The students labeled the quadrants as the following: Quadrant 1: high motivation-internally driven, Quadrant 2: low motivation-internally driven, Quadrant 3: high motivation-

externally driven and Quadrant 4: low motivation-externally driven. Their definitions were determined as a group, without immediate coaching, and provided here.

> Quadrant 1: "Students like us that don't need our hand(s) held and want to do good at all we do. Most kids call us teachers' pet [be]cause we always are helping or leading class but it don't [doesn't] bother us. We like new things and get bored doing the same thing every day. Every project is just as important as the other."
>
> Quadrant 2: "Students like us in a boring classroom or when the teacher doesn't care, or when they say mean things to us or make us look dumb or stupid. We're still excited to do our work and still wanna [want to] learn but it's not fun so it's like a boring day in class like nothing to look forward to."
>
> Quadrant 3: "Those type of students who give their all just for a prize. Like when the teacher says they are going to be absent and we can have a party or pizza if we're good for the sub. Or even, those students who know they can do good in school but don't until their mom and dad tells them to make a certain grade or they can't go on a field trip or play ball or something."
>
> Quadrant 4: "These students are the ones who mostly get in trouble [be]cause they don't care about anything. We try to help them but they don't wanna [want to] be seen with the 'smarty's' and they mostly [be]cause a lot of problems in school."

Themes of Connectivity

This section speaks to the core of the second research question in that it will address the inclusion of internal or external discussions or inferences made in the students' written and verbal responses. Content analysis was the primary method to complete this section of the research. Patton (1987) asserts that content analysis involves identifying coherent and important examples, themes, and patterns in the data. The analyst looks for quotations or observations that go together, that are examples of the same underlying idea, issue, or concept (p. 149). As discussed in chapter three, the researcher reminds the reader that content analysis has two general categories: conceptual and relational. Palmquist (1997) asserts conceptual analysis can be thought of as establishing the existence and frequency of concepts in text while relational analysis

builds on conceptual analysis by examining the relationships among the concepts in the text. Considering the later is built from the findings in the aforementioned, Patton, (1987) reminds the reader that analyst pulls all the data related to an issue, then subdivides that data into coherent categories, patterns, and themes.

"Obvious themes are those that occur and reoccur" Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 89). The researcher read and re-read the collected data, analyzing the scripts until themes became prevalent. "Analyzing the text involves several tasks: discovering themes and subthemes, winnowing themes to a managble few and building hierarchy of themes and linking themes into theoretical models" (p. 85). Through extensive reading of the sanitized transcripts of the written and verbal responses, the dominant and consistent themes that rang true in this research were as follows:

1) college and career focus
2) teacher-student interactions
3) if I were the teacher

College and Career Focus

The first of the two dominant themes in this research was that the respondents were equally college and career focused. Due to the presumed parental support, the students had grasped an early appreciation and respect for education. They each understood that in order to reach certain levels of success in life, they had a definitive amount of work to do in school, more specifically during their young adolescent educational careers as indicated in their previously illustrated responses. Covington (p. 30) states, "self-generated goals remain a constant target until the individual achieves them. For this reason we can refer to self-defined goals as constant or 'absolute' in

nature." This statement was illustrated in the meaning making of motivation, both written and verbal sections as the children agree a motivated learner is one who accepts hard work and desires to exceed personal goals. Later they each considered themselves motivated learners serious about achievement in school. Each student willingly accepted the challenge and were not allowing deterrents or distractions to stand in their path. A significant example would be that of when Jessica said, "It's not my parents' future, its mine so I have to take control over my destiny." As stated by Boggiano and Pittman (1992) it is of great significance to understand not only how strongly people are motivated to achieve something, but also why they strive to succeed" (p. 169). The strength discussed here as was addressed in the students' model, in which they stressed with the numbers how much strength one would maintain on the continuum. Jessica's statement personifies the why portion as she takes personal responsibility for her future.

A strong sense of future attainable goals based on present activation of faith beliefs was prevalent as each of the respondents had a strong understanding and use of the Biblical references, as I will discuss in a later section. The students' understanding of what it takes to qualify for college was evident as they in turn merely see their future accessible by completing not only bachelors' degrees but as well graduate and even postgraduate degrees. In the demographical description, (see Table 2) each student desires advanced degrees and or career positions wherein advanced degrees would be the avenue to successful attainment of said positions.

What was also evident is that the mothers of these students are educators committing to the life long learner mentality, which brings to mind the strength of involved and active parental support. However, the students collectively held a personal

responsibility or attitude towards their educational goals, as they are self-regulatory. Deci and Ryan (2002) declares goals to be related to needs and motives in the self-regulatory process, in that individuals adopt goals that help serve their dispositional desires by channeling them in a more concrete direction" (p. 373). The students are taking responsibility for their education and subsequently their future. The students consistently referred to the teacher-student interactions as assisting or hindering their motivation.

Teacher-Student Interactions

The second theme discovered in this research was the importance of the teacher-student interactions. The participants, all high-achievers, referred to negative classroom experiences, environments wherein they felt the teacher did not care, or the interactions between themselves, other students, and the teacher were less than desirable. For example, Jessica stated, "Sometimes the teacher can make you feel self motivated and sometimes they can take your motivation away by their attitudes" as Xavier added, " I don't want look stupid in class so in the classes where I know the teachers don't care, I just do my work and wait for the class to be over." With each of these students being intrinsically motivated, their levels of autonomy are significantly greater than that of their classmates. They are disturbed when that autonomy is threatened or diminished by the teacher. "Autonomy develops most effectively in situations where children and teenagers feel a sense of relatedness and closeness to, rather than disaffiliation from, significant adults" (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan 1991, p. 339).

These highly motivated students found themselves emotionally distraught in these environments thus producing, in their words, enough to satisfy the teacher's requirements and nothing more. The teacher-student interaction has been the premise of numerous

research ventures. This research proves it paramount to the successful engagement of the student. Gay (2000, p. 47) asserts, “Teacher who genuinely care about students generate higher levels of all kinds of success than those who do not. They have high performance expectations and will not settle for nothing less than high achievement.”

During the discussion on high and low motivation when describing their model, they described what causes low motivation when Kaela submitted simply, “the teacher’s attitude.” More specifically under the discussion of quadrant two when Jessica and Xavier explained factors causing low motivation, “in a boring classroom or when the teacher doesn’t care, or when they say mean things to us or make us look dumb or stupid.” Thusly, if the student feels the teacher cares about them, their engagement will increase thus academic achievement increase. Anderman and Maehr (1994) suggest the classroom and school environments stress certain factors that contribute to many of the motivational problems which occur during adolescence (p. 290). Another means of reducing student withdrawal or disengagement would be for teachers to establish a good relationship with each student (Bell, 2003).

If I Were the Teacher

At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher had heard so frequently the factors that caused these high-achieving students to withdraw, he included an additional question to the protocol. The students were already at the board, giving their explanation for the model they developed. The researcher, in tune to the hints taking place by the student’s responses, improvised on those inclinations and submitted one additional and final question. “In light of your responses thus far, if you were the teacher, what would your classrooms be like in similarity or difference to the classrooms you are in now?

Table 6

If I Were the Teacher

Jessica	Xavier	Kaela
No grades, I'd use a portfolio Students would feel cared for Students would be encouraged to explore new things Students would have some say in the procedures of the class Students would not be talked down to but respected as people too Students would not be threatened to express themselves My classroom would be fun, exciting and unpredictable Fair and consistent punishment Every Friday would be a day for reflection with a class discussion on how to do better rather than a bunch of tests	I like the no grades too! & I like the portfolio of personal progress Music would be playing softly all the time Individual learning centers with couches instead of desks all the time Students would be encouraged to speak up instead of being told no all the time Homework would mean something or it wouldn't be done Punishments only if necessary Students could read or research whatever, when they finished their main work Students would give a lot of the lectures based on their individual and group research projects Students would have to help the younger classes at something then tell the rest of the class what they learned from that Everyone will succeed!	I like everything they said plus I would add make sure that what we learned was connected to something real in the world, like running business to learn math and English Students would have to take part in like debates and stuff Students would have to read and do more book reports and presentations I would build in free time so the students have sometime to work on what they want I would set up more time for music in class My class would have to be fun for me to be fun for my students and if I take a break to talk to other teachers I would surely like take a break to help my students If someone had to be punished, the students would role play the courts and the students would determine the punishment Every student is as important as the others

The researcher allowed the students a couple of moments to collect their thoughts and began their discourse. Table 6 illustrates the summary of their comments to their defined desirable classroom.

It is important for the reader to understand, this was not an original portion of the interview protocol however, due to the conversation as it unfolded, it was a concept the researcher felt would bring about tactic and explicit information on the student's perceptions. Additionally, this approach was found to be congruent with the findings of Elliot (1999). Intrinsically motivated students have an appreciation for punishment but are not driven by the fear of it such that is found in extrinsically motivated students. Elementary and high school students while engaged in role-play, "have the ability to be highly creative in learning activities if they are provided ample opportunities" Gay (p. 196). Role-play when used effectively, allows individuals to explore and develop, in a practical way, the skills passed on to them as theory during an experience in life like that of the classroom. It allows individuals to portray internal feelings about those in superior positions without fear of reprisal or punishment.

It was the researchers' thought, if the students were to role-play and provide what they felt is the ideal classroom their list would tell not only what they desired but also equally, what they do not like: ultimately, what causes them to disengage.

What is interesting to note is that each of them had something to say about each student, in their classroom reaching a level of success and fulfillment, while in the classroom. The students, while not to great extent mentioned much about their peer relationships, are however concerned that their peers are equally successful in academic ventures. The students as well had a congruent desire for autonomy or self-governing

approach to the educational process. The researcher affectionately labels this as student ownership. Giving them a sense of accountability should proportionately increase their desire to engage while not having to wait on fellow class members allows them to remain engaged. Additionally they each maintain the desire for independent progress with no traditional grading system and teacher support rather than de-motivating approaches. The students' responses in this simple unplanned exercise provides a futuristic approach to the traditional classroom however, is the contemporary constructivist approach by definition. The researcher equally drew to the unequivocal desire for every student to be a success.

Summary

This chapter dialogued the findings of this research project. The purposive sampled participants', as defined by Barbour (2001), written and verbal responses provided thorough visions of their interpretations and told the stories of three African American high-achieving middle school students in a small Christian school in Germany. Now that we have, through the voices of the students, determined meaning making of motivation and meaning making of academic achievement as well as the relation between the two constructs, the last chapter of this paper will address lessons learned. The last chapter, through their meaning making and stories, will discourse the lessons learned, recommendations for educators and educational researchers' future research endeavors.

CHAPTER V. Conclusion

Through one structured interview, this study involved three high-achieving, highly motivated middle school African American students. To understand how these students make meaning of motivation and academic achievement, I invited the students to tell their stories of the educational journey, as they believe it to exist. The similarities in their lifestyle made for a specific and narrow margin of findings however relevant to the continued study of educational practices. The themes discovered within their stories illustrate enlightened insights for educators with the desire of increasing intrinsic motivation in their classrooms thus improving academic achievement for all adolescent students. I will discuss these later in implications for educators. Chapter 5 summarizes the research project. It includes all previously discoursed material with closure on all findings. This chapter contains seven sections: discussion, conceptual underpinnings, research critique, lessons learned, implications for educators, recommendations for future research and the conclusion.

Discussion

Through a structured interview, this study involved sixth and eighth graders from a private Christian academy in Germany. This study was conducted to understand how high-achieving African American middle school students make meaning of academic achievement and motivation and to see if their narratives have related notions to locus of control. I reminded the participants that there were no wrong answers during the written and oral phases of the interview, and they were encouraged to speak freely and honestly. However, it is the researcher's belief that due to the strong family involvement in the rearing and up-bring of the children, synonymous with that of significantly faith-based

families, that the children responded not in a purely personal manner but rather with answers they felt their parents or the researcher was seeking. The participants comprised two females and one male, all African American. Due to the families' military affiliation, the students have been enrolled in both public and private schools around the world. While their travels may have varied, their meaning making, goals, expectations, and understanding of the education process mirrors each other remarkably. The stories provided should assist any educator or educational researcher in making strides at improving the motivation and ultimately the academic achievement of the students in classrooms they lead. Deiro (2003) asserts,

> A teacher's respect and an ethical use of power are key to students' perceptions of caring. With respect, teachers can communicate caring to students when disciplining them, correcting their assignments, lecturing, or playing with them. Such respectful treatment can go a long way toward creating a caring learning environment, promoting the academic growth of students, and enhancing a teacher's ability to make a difference in students' lives. (p. 62).

Conceptual Underpinnings

This research was developed with three underpinnings, or conceptual framework: academic achievement, achievement motivation, and African American phenomenology. This research addressed each of these, in addition to numerous other theories.

The data may as well indicate a strong connection to a faith-based learning environment. It is not the researcher's intent to suggest that a forced authoritarian environment is the means to achieve a total intrinsic classroom but however, it is suggested that the faith-based component is significant to the findings in that, the

responses are from the respondents based on their faith-beliefs. Needless to say, the respondents perhaps, were answering in a manner they feel their parents or perhaps even the researcher would have desired to hear.

This research is additionally unique in that it includes, African American, military dependent, high-achievers attending a private Christian school on European soil while the current literature negates t include such a profoundly assembled source of data. Of 120 dissertations similar to this topic, none, to date speak to each of the variables or components in this project.

Academic achievement was one of the underpinnings of this study. As one of the respondents stated, academic achievement is the product and motivation is the means by which we obtain it. Academic achievement is one of the most widely studied concepts in the field of education. It, within itself, is a construct most often referred to in negative results as educational researchers consistently aim to reduce the amount of under achievement. The construct has recently driven federal levels to develop the Title I: No Child Left Behind Act for sole intent and purpose of increasing academic achievement. It is not the researchers' intent to engage in debate over this act in this document but it is noted that the issue or national concern for academic inequalities has become publicly available.

The stories within this research ensure us that educational researchers to increase academic achievement as indicated by the responses of these high-achievers are achieving great strides.

Conversely, the second underpinning was that of achievement motivation. Bempechat (1999) speaks to achievement motivation based on the influential work

underway by Bernard Weiner. Much like that of the respondents in this research Bempechat identifies three categories that students use to define achievement motivation: innate ability or intelligence, effort, and external factors like being lucky (p. 1). Each of these high-achieving students maintained one or combinations of the first two mentioned. The third suggestion was not as great a discussion in this research in that due to the faith beliefs practiced in the homes of the respondents, luck is not possible. Additionally in a recent similar study, the author adds,

> "African American students in Catholic schools had beliefs about success and failure that were more conducive to learning. They were more likely to attribute success to ability and less likely to attribute either success or failure to external factors such as luck" (p. 3).

Each of the respondents in this study consistently referred to their academic achievements resulting from their effort, goals, and persistent approaches at reaching levels greater than average.

The third underpinning in this research was that the African American phenomenology as understood through the critical race theory. Kevin Brown in Delgado (1995) states, the conflict between African Americans and other dominant American cultures is significantly, "a primary reason for the poor performance of African Americans in public schools" (p. 373). This theory was addressed due to the cultural connection and similarity of the researcher and the respondents. Conversely, it is the humble belief of the researcher that perhaps rather than focusing on this particular theory, which gets its beginnings from a law perspective, the researcher should have spoke to faith based belief theories. Never during the interview did the respondents consider race.

It was not addressed or even implied as a construct that affects directly or indirectly the students' possibilities of reaching achievement. It is their belief that effort, and determination are stands between the student or marginal achievement and high achievement.

The theoretical connections addressed in this research are as equally important to the findings as the conceptual discussion. This research comprised one specific discussion that is prevalent to this research: locus of control or causality.

As discussed in Chapter 2, locus of control as developed by Rotter (1954) was premised on the fact that individuals hold two primary views of engagement into activities: internal or external control. As discussed, internal is clearly associated with a self-determined approach in which effort and ability are the primary considerations for reaching levels or satisfaction and or achievement. Individuals freely choose to engage in meaningful activities purely for the enjoyment of them. Students maintaining an internal locus of control are readily available to participate in the classroom, as most often, they will find satisfaction in mediocre or less challenging work, as indicated in the students' responses of this research. Conversely, individuals maintaining an external locus of control seek outside stimuli to pull them into engagement of activities. Not that one locus is sufficient than the other, but the external needs are met with rewards or extras that the internal are not seeking. Julian Rotter (1990) summarizes the locus of control discussion,

> "internal versus external control refers to the degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or an outcome of their behavior is contingent on their own behavior or personal characteristics versus the degree to which persons expect

that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck or fate, is under the control of powerful others, or is simply unpredictable" (p.46).

Research Critique

This section will address the researcher's thoughts of the research project to include short comings, possible recommendations or varying approaches that could have been used. Additionally, the researcher will speak to the challenges that existed in this research.

The interview, while accomplishing all predetermined requirements of the research, was not long enough. The three hours that the interview took place merely allowed for a terse and scrubbed approach at answering the questions. The 3-hour length of time should have been left open and the respondents determine the closing time. Additionally, the respondents were given copies of the transcripts to proof read. This would have been an opportune time to meet together again for a follow up meeting or interview. Patton (1987) asserts,

> "in the anthropological tradition of field research a participant-observer expects to spend a minimum of six months and often years living in the culture being observed. In sociological studies of subcultures studies vary in length from months to years. To develop a holistic view of an entire culture or subculture takes a great deal of time" (p. 79).

This research was based on the six-year history and memory of the researcher however, to obtain a more realistic view of the respondents the researcher should have allowed more time. Allowing this would have reduced the following cluster of challenges or critiques to this study.

Within the actual interview itself, the researcher planned on a semi-structured of informal approach yet due to inexperience, leaned to a more structured approach. While this approach within itself is useful and helpful, the other ends of the continuum would create for more in depth told stories and wide ranges of conversation based around the protocol, rather than simply answering the questions. Furthermore, allowing for a more informal interaction would have needed recordings of the transcripts. The researcher had one parent not willing to submit to the recording of the interview, which created another challenge. The interview should have been recorded and professionally scripted.

By engaging in outside scribes or recording devices this research may have been perhaps not so terse, in that the researcher would not have had to guide the discussion, take notes and watch the non-verbal's that took place during the interview. To no fault of the respondents, this was a personal lesson learned.

While the respondents were purposively chosen, including family members might not have been a good idea. This limits the variety in responses as the sisters share the same home environment thus, will hold similar views of the world as it relates to the congruent upbringing and parenting styles.

Lessons Learned

The first lesson learned in this research is that one of the teacher-student interaction. More emphatically, how that interaction plays a significant role in the students' self worth and ultimately their engagement in the classroom. The students each had a strong parental support unit in the home however; they were consistently troubled with the inconsistency of knowing if the teachers cared about and for them. It is the researcher's humble opinion that without caring teachers, the students will continue to

perform with levels of excellence however; their self worth may be increased with this knowledge. Additionally, this piece of classroom interaction may be what stands between the not so high-achieving student reaching levels of desired performance. The students' perceptions echoed what Lumsden (1994) said, if the students experience the classroom as a caring, supportive place here there is a sense of belonging and everyone is valued and respected, they will tend to participate more fully in the process of learning" (p.3 as cited in Daniels 2004, p. 118). Lewis, Schaps and Watson (1996) asserts like a family, the caring classroom provides a sense of belonging that allows lively, critical discussions and risk-taking (p. 21). The authors additionally list five key components to ensure a caring classroom.

1. Warm, supportive, stable relationships
2. Constructive learning
3. An important curriculum
4. Intrinsic motivation, and
5. Attention to social and ethical dimensions of learning.

Wigfield, Eccles and Rodriguez (1998) state learning in classrooms is not done in isolation; instead it occurs in the context of relationships with teachers and peers. These relationships, along with the different roles that emerge for students and teachers in various classrooms, strongly influence how students learn (p. 74).

The second lesson learned is the desire for student ownership in the educational process. Shindler, (n.d.) adds

> Instructional behaviors that promote an internal locus of control are rooted in developing a clear understanding of cause and effect. Students need to see that

> their achievement is directly related to their behavior, especially their level of effort. A requisite to seeing this relationship is providing students with choices and expecting accountability for those choices.

Of the list of six practices that promote students' internal locus of control, the first two recommendations of the list speak to the student ownership issue.

> 1. Assess the process and other student-owned behaviors. Students do not often have control over their ability, but they do have 100% control over the degree to which they apply themselves. When we assess the process, we manufacture a success psychology.
>
> 2. Give students voice and ownership of classroom rules and consequences. Then when students break rules, follow through with consistently applied consequences (p. 4).

It has been the researchers' common practice to support student ownership by allowing the students to determine various aspects of the daily routine, weekly goals as well as classroom management to include, the physical arrangement, cleanliness and maintenance of property. The students in this environment take on a personal approach and consider the room itself not just to be a part of the building but in fact their responsibility and property. It has been the finding in said environment that the students take on, without prodding, a responsibility for their room and when issues are not working well, they openly discuss why and ultimately determine means for improving the environment. When the young adolescents have a voice in this issue, it becomes important and personal to them. To that end, because they see themselves in the schema of things, they want to perform to higher standards in those areas.

The intent of this study was to tell the stories of high-achieving students and to make meaning of motivation and academic achievement through their voices. It is the researcher's humble belief that the student's stories demonstrate that student's are not only willing but also more than capable to contribute salient and viable inputs to the body of knowledge as it relates to the topics discussed in this research project. The stories emphatically addressed in great detail both research questions that compelled this study and in addition, provided lessons for educators to ponder and consider as they venture towards motivating learning environments.

Implications for Educators

With the intent of summarizing the recommendations collected from the student's stories, the researcher will aim in this section to delineate a list of suggestions for educators desiring to increase intrinsic motivation in the students of their classrooms. The following is not the end all but a comprehensive and proven set of quick tips. The list while discussed in the stories of the students is further personified in Rogers, Ludington and Graham (1999).

1. Provide meaningful choices as often as possible while still adhering to rigorous curriculum standards.
2. Provide frequent, specific, non-judgmental feedback focused on progress and growth.
3. Embed learning in contextualized activities that the students find enjoyable and worthwhile.
4. Protect each student from embarrassment while holding to high standards and expectations from him/her.

5. Build positive self-concept and high self-esteem through evidence of success provided by challenging and worthwhile tasks.
6. Avoid the use of extrinsic motivators.
7. Use varied and enjoyable instructional activities that match the learning styles needs and multiple intelligences of your students.
8. Model whatever is to be learned with high levels of enthusiasm.
9. Provide celebrations, including cheers, certificates of mastery, and other exciting, and energy endorphin producing activities.
10. Use effective cooperative learning techniques to promote friendships, bonding and goal interdependence.
11. Ensure that the learning is challenging but possible for each student, and
12. Provide feedback with the five characteristics essential to motivation: students will legitimately feel smart or capable; valued, important, and a part of the group; safe and secure; happy; and in self-control or autonomous. (pp 11-12).

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study purports essential ingredients that enhance or diminish the motivation of the middle school student, it additionally raises various additional questions for future research. As with any research project, it begins with a set of predetermined questions and ends with a completely new set of interrelated propositions. This endeavor is in like to those before it. Subsequently this research, as stories told by the students, suggests veins for further research that will continue to illuminate directions that

educators can journey with aims of satisfying the diverse needs of all students in this never-ending world of change.

Grover (2004) reports the relevance and strength of the research process itself will continue to suffer due to children being but objects of study rather than collaborators in telling the story of their lived experience (p. 92). Future research endeavors must include the voices of the children it researches. The children of today are much more equipped mentally and technologically than those of previous years as their insights are profound to the aims of educators on a global scale. Before true educational reform can occur, this outdated factory metaphor of schooling must be replaced with new metaphors that more fully respond to the demands and opportunities of the twenty-first century which would involve redoubling research into children's perceptions of the future and their place in it, Covington (2000, p. 193).

The preponderance of motivation research or academic achievement research maintains an ethnic comparative approach in which a fair description of positive information is prevalent. Additional research is needed from an ethnically autonomous approach with great regard to that of the African American student. Graham (1988) states we are just beginning to explore how children who differ in race and social class perceive their causal world (p. 17).

An additional variable not specifically or in detail addressed in this research was that of the military child. While America holds many diverse challenges in the public, more specifically inner city arenas, the military child has just as great an emotional upheaval on him/her as they have to deal with the possibility of one or both parents being sent into harms way for the perseverance of democracy. These children make a grand

sacrifice in support of their actively engaged military parent(s). Further research should address the emotional state of uncertainty or imbalance these children are victim to yet still required to maintain an academic level of excellence.

I would be remised to not include the discussion of prayer and faith-based beliefs in school. Recent debate has transpired over whether to eliminate "God" and my country from the pledge of allegiance not to mention the never-ending saga of the allocation for prayer in schools. While it was not the focus of this research directly, there was a subtle hint to the connotation that some sort of faith-based belief is needed in our lives regardless of personal choice or preference. Before we remove it from school, perhaps more research should ensue on the perceptions of feelings of the children that will ultimately be affected by the decision.

In summation, this study included the experiences of three middle school students in one small school on European soil. By replicating the methods involved here in other private or even public schools in larger demographic locations and in larger scaled studies, researchers may conclude similar findings or perhaps additional lessons to be learned that will subsequently further the understanding by teachers as they strive to enhance the motivational environments in their classrooms.

Conclusion

My quest for knowledge and the perseverance of the future drove me to this career with a wholehearted belief, as the Book of Luke instructs us that it is far better to tie a milestone around our necks and be cast into the sea than to lead a child astray. My daily endeavors have been to speak life into the hearts and minds of the ones with whom we will pass this earth on to one day. Educators in the like around the globe are

performing our daily duties with the sole intent of affecting change in a positive manner. Our endeavors for a better world are evident in the procedures willingly taken in the trenches of the classroom. What does the optimum learning environment really look like? What truly is the meaning of achievement? Rather than allowing our children the use of excuses that will build monuments of nothingness that build a continuous structure that will take them to the land of null, are we really passing the effectual keys to a better life?

Motivation is the construct behind all that happens in life. Whether for positive or negative goals, we are all driven by some sort of motivation. If we are to preserve the future then the education of the children now must include them in the plans. Educators and researchers alike must acknowledge links between student beliefs and the context of everyday practice in order to better understand and improve academic outcomes. We as educators must yield ourselves to one pure and holy passion for it is there all our greatest energy will be. Through our passion a greater love and respect for something meaningful and tangible will be passed on. For our passion, is a gift from God.

> *"No matter what…it is with God. He is gracious and merciful. His way is through love, in which we all are. It is truly a love supreme*" John Coltrane (1965).

References

Ainley, M. (2004). What do we know about student motivation and engagement? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 85,* 424–436.

Akande, A. (1990). *The meaning of self in the African mind.* Department of Psychology, University of Life.

Alderman, M. K. (1990). Motivation for at-risk students. *Educational Leadership, 48*(1), 27.

Ames, C. (1992). Classrooms: Goals, structures, and student motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 84*, 261–271.

Anderman, E. M., and Maehr, M. L. (1994). Motivation and schooling in the middle grades. *Review of Educational Research, 64*(2), 287-309.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to research in education* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Thomson Learning.

Bandura, A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Barbour, R. (2001). Checklists for improving rigour in qualitative research: A case of the tail wagging the dog? *BMJ, 322*, 1115-1117.

Baruth, L. G., & Manning, M. L. (1999). Multicultural counseling and psychotherapy: A lifespan perspective. Merrill Prentice Hall.

Becker, B., & Luthar, S. (2002). Social-emotional factors affecting achievement outcomes among disadvantaged students: Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Psychologist, 37*(4), 197–214.

Bell, L. I. (2003). Strategies that close the gap. *Educational Leadership, 60*(4), 32-34.

Bempechat, J. (1999). *Learning from poor and minority students who succeed in school*. Retrieved March 27, 2006, from http://www.edletter.org/past/issues/1999-mj/learning.shtml

Berk, L. E. (2000). *Child development* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Biehler, R. F., & Snowman, J. (1990). *Psychology applied to teaching* (6th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Black, A., & Lenzo, K. (2003). *Building synthetic voices.* Retrieved February 26, 2006, from http://festvox.org/bsv/bsv-text-ch.html

Blumenfeld, P. C. (1992). Classroom learning and motivation: Clarifying and expanding goal theory. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 84*, 272–281.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1992). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Boggiano, A., & Pittman, T. (1992). *Achievement and motivation.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Brophy, J. (1998). *Motivating students to learn.* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Cameron, J. and Pierce, W. D. (1994). Reinforcement, reward, and intrinsic motivation: a meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 64*(3), 363-423.

Caruthers, L. (2006). Classroom Interactions and Achievement. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from www.mcrel.org.

Clandinin, D., & Connelly, F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Coltrane, J. (1965). *A love supreme.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Impulse Records

Collins, M. (1992). *Ordinary children, extraordinary teachers*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.

Copeland, G. (1997). Prayers that avail much: Commemorative Gift Edition. Tulsa, OK: Harrison House.

Covington, M. (1998). *The will to learn: A guide for motivating young people.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Covington, M. (2000). Goal theory, motivation, and school achievement: An integrative review. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51,* 171-200.

Covington, M., & Mueller, K. (2001). Intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation: An approach/avoidance reformation. *Educational Psychology Review, 13*(2), 157–176.

Crenshaw, K. W. et al. (1995). *Introduction*. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, & K. Thomas (Eds.) *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: New Press.

Cross, C., & Applebaum, K. (1998, March). Stretching students' minds is basic education. *Educational Leadership*, 74–76.

Daniels, E. (2004). Nobody's ever asked me that before: Middle school students talk about motivation to achieve in school contexts. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 65*(5), AAT 3134620.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Deci, E. L. (1975). Motivational processes affecting learning. *American Psychologist, 41*(10), 1040–1048.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. New York: Plenum.

Deci, E. L., Vallerand, J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *Educational Psychologist, 26,* 325–346.

Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (2002). *Handbook or self-determination research.* Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press.

Deiro, J. (2003). Do your students know you care? *Educational Leadership, 60*(6), 60-62.

Delgado, R. (1995). *Critical race theory: the cutting edge.* Temple, PA: Temple University Press.

Desimone, L. (1999). Linking parent involvement with student achievement: Do race and income matter? *The Journal of Educational Research, 93*(1), 11–30.

Dev, P. (1997). Intrinsic motivation and academic achievement: What does their relationship imply for the classroom teacher? *Remedial & Special Education, 18*(1), 8-21.

Dowson, M., & McInerney, D. M. (1997, March). *Psychological parameters of students' social and academic goals: A qualitative investigation.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.

Dowson, M., & McInerney, D. M. (2001). Psychological parameters of students' social and work avoidance goals: A qualitative investigation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 93*(1), 35–42.

Dweck, C. S. (1986). Motivational processes affecting learning. *American Psychologist, 41*(10), 1040–1048.

Dweck, C., & Leggett, E. L. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review, 95,* 256–273.

Egeler, D. (2003). Mentoring millennials: Shaping the next generation. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress Books.

Elliot, A. (1999). Approach and avoidance motivation and achievement goals. *Educational Psychologist, 34*(3), 169–189.

Elliott, E., & Dweck, C. (1988). Goals: An approach to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54,* 5–12.

Farrell, E. (1994). Self and school success: Voices and lore of inner-city students. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Flowers, L., Milner, H., & Moore, J. (2003). Effects of locus of control on African American high school seniors' educational aspirations: Implications for preservice and inservice high school teachers and counselors. *High School Journal, 87*(1), 39-50.

Fyans, L. (1980). Achievement motivation: Recent trends in theory & research. New York: Plenum Press.

Gay, G. (2000). Culturally responsive teaching: theory, research and practice. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gottfried, A. E. (1985). Academic intrinsic motivation in elementary and junior high school students. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 77*, 631–645.

Gottfried, A. E., Fleming, J., & Gottfried, A. W. (2001). Continuity of academic intrinsic motivation from childhood through late adolescence: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 93*(1), 3–13.

Graham, S. (1988). Can attribution theory tell us something about motivation in blacks? *Educational Psychologist 23*(1), 3-21.

Graham, S. (1994). Motivation in African Americans. *Review of Educational Research, 64*(1), 55–117.

Graham, S. (1997). Using attribution theory to understand social and academic motivation in African American youth. *Educational Psychologist, 32*(1), 21–34.

Graham, S. (1998). Can attribution theory tell us something about blacks? *Educational Psychologist, 23*(1), 3–21.

Greene, B. A., & Miler, R. B. (1996). Influences on achievement: Goals, perceived ability, and cognitive engagement. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 21*, 181–192.

Grover, S. (2004). Why won't they listen to us? On giving power and voice to children participating in social research. *Childhood, 11*(1), 81–93.

Gutman, L. M., Sameroff, A. J., & Eccles, J. S. (2002). The academic achievement of African America students during early adolescence: An examination of multiple risk, promotive, and protective factors. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30*(3), 367-399.

Harter, S. (1981). A new self-report scale of intrinsic versus extrinsic orientation in the classroom: Motivational and informational components. *Developmental Psychology, 17*, 300–312.

Haycock, K. (2001). Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Leadership, 58*(6), 6–11.

Heppner, P., & Heppner, M. (2004). Writing and publishing your thesis, dissertation & research: A guide for students in the helping professions. Belmont, CA: Thompson Brooks/Cole.

Hodgkinson, H. (1985). All one system: Demographics of education-kindergarten through graduate school. Washington D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Huitt, W. (2001). Motivation to learn. *Educational Psychology Interactive.* Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved March 2, 2006, from http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/motivation/motivate.html

Husman, J., & Lens, W. (1999). The role of the future in student motivation. *Educational Psychologist, 34*(2), 113–125.

Hynd, C., Holschuh, J., & Nist, S. (2000). Learning complex scientific information: motivation theory and its relation to student perceptions. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 16*(1), 23–57.

Hwang, Y. S. (2000). *Asian American college students' motivation in education*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Jarvinen, D., & Nicholls, J. (1996). Adolescents' social goals, beliefs about the causes of social success, and satisfaction in peer relations. *Developmental Psychology, 32*(3), 435–441.

Judge, T., Erez, A., Bono, J., & Thoresen, C. (2002). Are measures of self-esteem, neuroticism, locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy indicators of a common core construct? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(3), 693–710.

Kaplan, A., & Maehr, M. (1999). Enhancing the motivation of African American students: An achievement goal theory perspective. *The Journal of Negro Education, 68*(1), 23–41.

Kaplan, B., & Maxwell, J. A. (1994). Qualitative research methods for evaluating computer information systems. In J. G. Anderson, C. E. Aydin, & S. J. Jay (Eds.). *Evaluating health care information systems: Methods and applications* (pp. 67-94). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kelly, G. A. (1958). Man's construction of his alternatives. In G. Lindzey (Ed), Assessment of human motives (pp. 33-64). New York: Rinehart & Company.

Kotlowitz, A. (1992). *There are no children here*. New York: Anchor Books.

Kozol, J. (1992). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Langram, C. (1997). Adolescent voices: Who's listening? *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education, 8*(4), 189–199.

Latham, A. (1997). Responding to cultural learning styles. *Educational Leadership, 54*(7), 88–89.

Lewis, C., Schaps, E. and Watson, M. (1996). The caring classroom's academic edge. *Educational Leadership 54*(1), 16-21.

Linnenbrink, E., & Pintrich, P. (2002). Motivation as an enabler for academic success, *School Psychology Review, 31*(3), 313–327.

Maehr, M. (2001). Goal theory is not dead: Not yet anyway: A reflection on the special issue. *Educational Psychology, 13*(2), 177–185.

Maehr, M. A, & Meyer, H. A., (1997). Understanding motivation and schooling: Where we have been, where we are, and where we need to go. *Educational Leadership, 9*(4), 371–409.

Malhotra, Y., & Galletta, D. (2003, January 6-9). Role of commitment and motivation in knowledge management systems implementation: Theory, conceptualization, and measurement of antecedents of success. *Proceedings of 36th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences* (pp. 1-10). Retrieved March 21, 2006, from http://www.brint.org/KMSuccess.htm

Marjoribanks, K., & Mboya, M. (2001). Family capital goal, goal orientation and South African adolescents' self-concept: A moderation-mediation model. *Educational Psychology, 21*(3), 334–350.

McCombs, B. (1991). *Metacognition and motivation in higher level thinking*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

McClelland (1961). *The achieving society.* New York: Free Press.

McInerney, D. M., & McInerney, V. (1996). Goals and school motivation: Aboriginal and Navajo perspectives. *SET Research Information for Teachers, SET, 3,* 1–4.

Meece, J. L., & Molt, K. (1993). A pattern analysis of student's achievement goals. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 85,* 582–590.

Meier, D. (2002). The power of their ideas: Lessons from a small school in Harlem. Boston: Beacon Press.

Merriam, S. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Murphy, P. K., & Alexander, P. A. (2000). A motivated exploration of motivation terminology. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25***,** 3–53.

National Urban League's annual state of black America. (2005, April 14). Retrieved March 27, 2006, from, http://www.blackcommentator.com/134/134_cover_blacks_down_out.html

Nicholls, J. (1984). Conceptions of ability and achievement motivation. In R. Ames & C. Ames (Eds.). *Research on motivation in education: Student motivation* (Vol. 1, pp. 39–73). New York: Academic Press.

Northouse, P. G. (2004). *Leadership theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.

Nunn, G., & Nunn, S. (1993). Locus of control and school performance: Some implications for teachers. *Education, 113*(4), 636–640.

O'Connor, C. (1997). Dispositions toward (collective) struggle and educational resilience in the inner city: A case analysis of six African American high school students. *American Educational Research Journal 34*(4), 593–629.

Pajares, F. (2003). Self-efficacy beliefs, motivation and achievement in writing: A review of the literature. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 19*(2), 139-159.

Palmquist, M. (1997). *Content analysis*. Retrieved February 26, 2006, from http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~palmquis/courses/content.html

Parker, L., Deyhle, D., & Villenas, S. (1999). Race is-race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Patton, M. Q. (1987). How to use qualitative methods in evaluation. New Bury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Pino, N., & Smith, W. (2004). African American students, the academic ethic, and GPA. *Journal of Black Studies, 35*(1), 113–131.

Pintrich, P. R., & De Groot, E. V. (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 82,* 33–40.

Pintrich, P. R. (1994). Continuities and discontinuities: Future directions for research in educational psychology. *Educational Psychologist, 29*, 137–148.

Pintrich, P. R., & Garcia, T. (1991). Student goal orientation and self-regulated learning in the college classroom. In M. L. Maehr & P. R. Pintrich (Eds.). *Advances in motivation and achievement: Goals and self-regulatory processes* (Vol. 7, pp. 371–402). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Pintrich, P. R. & Schunk, D. H. (2002). *Motivation in education: theories, research, and application, 2nd ed.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Raffini, J. (1996). 150 ways to increase intrinsic motivation in the classroom. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Reeve, J. (1996). Motivating others: Nurturing inner motivational resources. Boston: Allyn &Bacon.

Reynolds, C. (1976). Correlational findings, educational implications, and criticisms of locus of control research: A review. *Journal of Black Studies, 6*(3), 221–256.

Ritchie, S., & Rigano, D. (2001). Researcher-participant positioning in classroom research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 14*(6), 741–756.

Robinson, L. (1997). Correlations and implications of enthusiasm for learning and academic performance in urban youth: An evaluation of the children's defense funds' black community crusade for children. *The Berkeley Mcnair Journal, 5*. Retrieved March 27, 2006, from http://www.mcnair.berkeley.edu/97Journal/Robinson.html

Rogers, S., Ludington, J., & Graham, S. (1999). *Motivation and learning.* Evergreen, CO: Peak Learning Systems, Inc.

Rotter, J. B. (1954). *Social learning and clinical psychology.* New York: Prentice-Hall.

Rotter, J. B. (1960). Some implications of a social learning theory for the prediction of goal directed behavior from testing procedures. *Psychological Review, 67,* 301–316.

Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs, 80*, No. 609.

Rotter, J. B. (1990). Internal versus external control of reinforcement: a case history of a variable. *American Psychologist, 45*(4), 489-493.

Rowley, S. J. (2000). Profiles of African American college students' educational utility and performance: A cluster analysis. *Journal of Black Psychology, 26*(1), 3–27.

Ruhland, D., & Feld, S. (1977). The development of achievement motivation in black and white children. *Child Development, 48,* 1362–1368.

Ryan, R., & Connell, J. (1989). Perceived locus of causality and internalization: Examining reasons for acting in two domains. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57,* 749–761.

Ryan, R., & Deci, E. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25,* 54-67.

Shindler, J. V. (n.d.). Creating a psychology of success in the classroom: Enhancing academic achievement by systematically promoting student self-esteem. Retrieved June 5, 2006, from http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/jshindl/teaching/self-es.htm

Singham, M. (1998). The canary in the mine: The achievement gap between black and white students. *Phi Delta Kappan, 80*(1), 8–16.

Singleton, R., Straits, B., & Straits, M. (1993). *Approaches to social research* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford Press.

Skinner, E. A., & Belmont, M. J. (1993). Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and students engagement across the school year. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 85,* 571–581.

Stemler, S. (2001). An overview of content analysis. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 7(17). Retrieved February 26, 2006, from http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=17

Suskind, R. (1999). *A hope in the unseen: An American odyssey from the inner city to the Ivy League.* New York: Broadway Books.

Taylor, K. (2002–2003). Through the eyes of students. *Educational Leadership, 60*(4), 72–75.

Urdan, T. C., & Maehr, M. L. (1995). Beyond a two-goal theory of motivation and achievement: A case for social goals. *Review of Educational Research, 65,* 213–243.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. (1996). *Statistical abstracts of the United States* (116th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Van Calster, K., Lens, W., & Nuttin, J. (1987). Affective attitude toward the personal future: Impact on motivation in high school boys. *American Journal of Psychology, 100,* 1–13.

Van Etten, S. (1997). College students' academic coping: A model integrating metacognitive, motivational, strategic, social and environmental factors. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 58.* 0668.

Van Etten, S., Pressley, M., Freebern, G., & Eschevarria, M. (1998). An interview study of college freshmen's beliefs about their academic motivation. *European Journal of Education, 13*(1), 105–243.

Waugh, R. (2002). Creating a scale to measure motivation to achieve academically: Linking attitudes and behaviors using Rasch measurement. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 72,* 65–86.

Weiner, B. (1972). Attribution theory, achievement motivation, and the educational process. *Review of Educational Research, 42*(2), 203-215.

Weiner, B. (1980). *Human motivation.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Weiner, B. (1986). An attributional theory of motivation and emotion. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Weiner, B. (1990). History of motivational research in education. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 82,* 616–622.

Weiner, B. (1994). Ability versus effort revisited: The moral determinants of achievement evaluation and achievement as a moral system. *Educational Psychologist, 29*(3), 163-172.

Wentzel, K. (2000). What is it that I'm trying to achieve? Classroom goals from a content perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25,* 105–115.

Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2001). *Development of achievement motivation.* San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., & Rodriguez, D. (1998). The development of children's motivation in school contexts. *Review of Research in Education, 28,* 73-118.

Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., & Pintrich, E. R. (1996). Development between the ages of 11 and 25. In D. C. Berliner & R. C. Calfee (Eds.). *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 148–185). New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.

Wilson, T. D. (2002). *Alfred Schutz, phenomenology and research methodology for information behavior research*. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from http://information.net/tdw/publ/papers/schutz02.html

Young, P. (1941). Motivation. In W. S. Monroe (Ed). *Encyclopedia of educational research* (pp. 735–742). New York: Macmillan.

Young, P. (1950). Motivation. In W. S. Monroe (Ed). *Encyclopedia of educational research* (Rev. ed., pp. 755–761). New York: Macmillan.

Zimmerman, B. (1990). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. *Educational Psychologist*, 25, 3–17.

Zimmerman, B. J., Bandura, A., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1992). Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting. *American Educational Research Journal, 29*(3), 663–676.

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Authorization

(When copying final version, place IRB Authorization here)

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

I. Demographics

a. Date Of Birth
b. Ethnicity
c. Gender
d. Education
    i. Your grade level
    ii. Type of school you attend now (Private of public)
    iii. Type of school you attended in the past (Private or public)
    iv. Highest level of education of parent or guardian: place "M" for Mom & "D" for Dad, "G" for grandparent.
e. Your goal of level of education
    i. Why

II. (Academic) Achievement

a. What is your definition of achievement? Please give examples.
b. What is your definition of academic achievement? Please give examples.
c. What is your definition of a high achiever?
d. Do you feel that you are a high achiever? Why or why not?
e. What kind of grades do you get?
    i. Has your grades been consistent throughout your education or have you seen high and low points?
    ii. Do you feel this is an example of achievement?
    iii. Why or why not?
f. Does your teacher drive your levels of achievement or are you self determined?
    i. What about your past teachers?

III. Motivation

a. What is your definition of motivation? Please give examples
b. What is your definition of a motivated learner?
c. Do you feel that you are motivated about achievement in school? Why or why not?
d. Does your teacher help to motivate you or are you self motivated?
    i. What about your past teachers.
e. How much time do you spend on homework in a day?
f. How much time do you take to prepare before a quiz or test?

IV. Closing (Probe) Questions

a. Do you feel academic achievement and motivation are necessary to be successful in school?

b. Do you feel academic achievement and motivation are necessary to be successful in life?
c. What role does academic achievement and motivation play in your future?
d. Do you perform well academically because you like school or do you seek rewards for your achievement? Please explain in detail.
e. How do you define positive motivational reinforcement?
    i. Is it important to your goals?
    ii. How would you measure it?
f. Is there a correlation or a relationship between academic achievement and motivation? Why or why not?
g. Now that the interview has been conducted, where do you see yourself going from here?

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate

PSC 2 Box 11203
APO AE 09012

Monday, January 9, 2006

Principal Kim Butler
Agape International Academy
Landstuhler Strasse 29
66877 Ramstein Germany

Dear Principal Kim Butler,

As you are aware and have been privileged to since its inception, I have been involved in a doctoral program with the University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs. As I have concluded, successfully, my generals (written & oral exams) in April of 2005, the final and major phase of my program left is the dissertation. I have been working with the campus to this end and find that sometime in the near future I will be moving more aggressively on this major portion of the total program. To that end, when I submit to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on campus, I will need to include a letter granting my permission to include Agape International Academy students, more specifically three middle school students. As we discussed very early in the school year, the selection of students has already been accomplished, in which you are aware due to your involvement in that process. However, due to our superintendents' extensive travel requirements & persistent absenteeism, I never acquired written approval from him although his publicly stated verbal approval for me has been common knowledge as he stated in our meeting last year, in addition to the first parent-teacher-student meeting last August. That being said, I submit this inquiry to you as a brief reminder of all that as led to this point & humbly request, as the principal, your formal permission to include in my IRB application package that will be submitted sometime later this year. I thank you in advance for your cooperation and attention to this matter. Have a terrifically blessed day.

Faithfully yours in His service,

Frederick (Tre') Hammond, III
Doctoral Candidate
University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs

Appendix D

Response Letter From School



AGAPE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

Landstuhler Strasse 29 º 66877 Ramstein Germany
Phone++49 (0) 6371-46-3440 º Fax ++ 49 (49) 6371-46-2985
E-mail: AGAPEacademy@aol.com

January 27, 2006

Dear Mr. Hammond,

It is with great joy and excitement; we here at Agape International Academy join in your research project. As we have worked together from the beginning of this program, we as well join you in the anticipation of the completed project. Our students and families alike are willing to continue to support you in this venture, as I personally want to bestow God's magnificent hands of grace, endurance and prosperity on you and this venture. Thank you for telling the story of our students here in Germany. If there is anything needed additionally, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at kimlpratt@cs.com, as you do have my unyielding support. May God continue to keep you & bless you.

Respectfully yours,

Kim Butler
Principal
Agape International Academy

Appendix E

Parent Letter of Consent

PARENT INFORMED CONSENT
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

PROJECT TITLE:	**Making Sense of Motivation: Stories of High Achieving African American Middle School Students**
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	**Mr. Frederick (Tre') Hammond, III**
CONTACT INFORMATION:	**Email: Frederick.D.Hammond-1.III@ou.edu** **Home: 06383-579-563 or Cell: 0179-964-8234**

Your child is being asked to volunteer for a research study. This study is being conducted at the Recreation Center on Ramstein Air Force Base in a private classroom. Your child was selected as a possible participant because he or she has maintained academic excellence, scored in the top percentile on standardized tests and is at the head of his or her class academically. You and your child are asked to please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

The sponsor of the study is: Mr. Frederick (Tre') Hammond, III, under the direction of Professor Rosa Cintron in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies at The University of Oklahoma.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is: further the research on student motivation and academic achievement. The intent of this study is to obtain this important insight from the student perspective and will contribute significantly to the body of knowledge dealing with this subject.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: answer an interview protocol consisting of four sections in which totals 36 questions. After you have provided written responses to the questions, you and the other participants will engage in a discussion, with me, guided solely by your responses. This is being done so that I understand the full meaning of your written responses. There is no wrong or incorrect response to any of the questions. At the conclusion of our discussion, we will have a final question and answer session to ensure I have answered all your questions, and then conclude our meeting. This portion of the research project should not take any more than three hours in total to compete.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

The study has no risks by participating. Your responses, both written and oral, will only become knowledge to the public in the dissertation in which your true names will not be disclosed unless you authorize me to do so. Below is a section asking this question. Feel free to choose freely if you wish to have your name known or remain unknown to the public. There will be no physical or psychological stress however, you are reminded at any time of the procedure if you feel, and you no longer wish to participate you may stop.

The benefits to participation are: as a middle school student, your honestly answered responses to the interview protocol and immediately following discussion, will contribute to the body of scholarly knowledge in the areas of motivation and academic achievement. More specifically, your participation will greatly assist me in completing my educational journey by contributing greatly to my dissertation.

Compensation

You will be reimbursed for your time and participation in this study with lunch at the recreation center immediately following our meeting and as well have your choice of items from the campus bookstore that sells all University of Oklahoma clothing and paraphernalia.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify the research participant unless you authorize me to do so. Research records will be stored securely in my computer, in my home and only approved researchers will have access to the records. Your grades and test scores are in the possession of the school in which I will read and take notes, but not remove from the school for this research.

Participants' names will not be linked with their responses unless the participant specifically agrees to be identified. Please select one of the following options.

- ☐ I prefer to leave my child's identity unacknowledged when documenting findings; please do not release my name when citing the findings.
- ☐ I consent to the use of my child's name when recording findings and that he or she may be quoted directly.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at email address, home phone or cell phone listed at the top of this document. You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405.325.8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Parent Signature	Date

Appendix F

Student Letter of Consent

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

PROJECT TITLE:	**Making Sense of Motivation: Stories of High Achieving African American Middle School Students**
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	**Mr. Frederick (Tre') Hammond, III**
CONTACT INFORMATION:	**Email: Frederick.D.Hammond-1.III@ou.edu** **Home: 06383-579-563 or Cell: 0179-964-8234**

Dear _____:

My name is Mr. Frederick (Tre') Hammond, III, and I am a doctoral candidate under the direction of Professor Rosa Cintron in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies at The University of Oklahoma. I am doing research on middle school aged students and how they define motivation and academic achievement. Because you have maintained academic excellence, and are at the head of your class, I am asking you to participate in my research. There are no risks and the questions you will answer plus our group discussion should take no more than three hours. I'm holding this meeting at the Recreation Center on Ramstein Air Force Base and am treating you to lunch when we finish. Additionally, you will have your choice of University of Oklahoma paraphernalia as a gift for participating. Your decision to join me in this research project will cost you nothing more than three hours of your time on a Saturday afternoon. There are no wrong answers in this research but you will have to write your responses then join in the conversation at the end. If you feel, at any time, that you do not wish to continue you can stop right then. You'll still be invited to lunch and will still get your choice of gift from the campus. I ask that you talk it over with your parents to make sure you and your parents understand your involvement. Thank you for helping me in achieving an educational milestone of my own: my doctorate degree. I look forward to working with you, soon.

Confidentiality

Participants' names will not be linked with their responses unless the participant specifically agrees to be identified. Please select one of the following options.

- ☐ I prefer to leave my identity unacknowledged when documenting findings; please do not release my name when citing the findings.
- ☐ I consent to the use of my name when recording findings and that I may be quoted directly.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at email address, home phone or cell phone listed at the top of this document. You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405.325.8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Student Signature	Date

Appendix G

Debriefing Script

Debriefing Script

With the understanding that the collection of data are to be completed in one session consisting of three hours or less, students would be together for this period of time. It is a custom of the organization to frequent the local ice cream shop in the Recreation Center on base after major events. That being said, with the IRB approval, the boardroom or at minimum, one of the classrooms in the Recreation Center would be reserved for a three-hour time-period on a Saturday afternoon. All participants and parents would meet at the agreed upon place of business. Parents are invited to attend if their presence will not interfere with the procedures. The debriefing script is as follows…

At the beginning of the interview…

1. I would begin with a formal conveyance of thanks to all participants & parents for helping me contribute to the body of knowledge and completing this research project.
    a. "Students, Parents & Families, I'd like to formally thank each & every one of you for giving up your time and effort in helping me with this research project. The energy you have afforded me will catapult my educational dreams. To the participants, as you have heard me say so many times before, you are the only thing standing between you and your destiny so go forth as if your life depended on each endeavor and remember no one achieves success without help. When you reach this point in your educational journeys, call me if I can help. THANK YOU ALL!"
    b. "Are there any questions from the students…from the parents?" Of course, each & every question will be answered immediately & professionally.

After the interview…

    c. "What we did as a team was to collect data to assist in the meaning making of academic achievement and motivation. Scholars & theorists have provided detailed arguable definitions for years but as an educator, I have always wondered the students' point of view. Other than the publication of my dissertation, I have no intent or desire to convey independent responses to any of our discussions to anyone unless you granted permission. If you did not grant permission, I will willingly use fake-chosen names when discussing with my doctoral committee. Rest assured I am proud of each one of you. As promised, since you voluntarily participated in my research, I would like for each of you to look at this catalog to pick which item from the bookstore you would like to receive as a thank you gift. If that particular item is not available, make sure you include your second or even third choice. Are there any further questions?"
    d. "Our lunch and ice cream has arrived, in which I'm picking up the tab so unless, we have any other concerns or issues I, the University of Oklahoma, my doctoral chair Professor Rosa Cintron, & the entire educational body of knowledge thank you."