

Motivational correlates of real to ideal occupational aspiration shifts among black and white men and women

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Shifts from traditionally open real to traditionally closed ideal occupational aspirations were examined among black and white men and women as functions of social class and achievement, affiliation, and power motivations. It was hypothesized that achievement and power, but not affiliation, motivations would manifest an effect in fantasized ideal closed aspirations. In general, women shifted, men did not. Middle class white women shifted regardless of motive type or strength. Among middle and working class black women, the predominant trend for the three motives is for the low-motivation group to shift and the high-motivation group not to shift, contrary to the hypothesis. Rather than strong motivation in women resulting in tendencies to fantasize about motive-related closed occupations, it appears that strong motivation results in a correspondence between real and ideal occupational aspirations in black women but not in white women. The latter fantasize about ideal occupational goals regardless of motive strength.

Certain components of the occupational structure in the United States have been less accessible to women than to men and to blacks than to whites. If those occupations that, by tradition, have been closed either to women or to blacks are desired by members of those groups, then it is likely that they are apt to fantasize about the attainment of those goals with a greater frequency than they are apt to treat those goals as being realistic; that is, they are more likely to indicate that their ideal occupations are among those that have been traditionally closed to women or to blacks, whereas their real occupations are among those that have been traditionally open to them. This research explored the frequencies of shifts from traditionally open to traditionally closed occupational aspirations when real and ideal aspirations were compared among black and white men and women who differed in social class and in achievement, affiliation, and power motivation. It was hypothesized that achievement and power motivations but not affiliation motivation would manifest an effect among ideal aspirations. Typically, competitive achievement-type occupations and power-type occupations involving authority over others have been closed to women and to blacks; affiliative-type occupations have been open (Littig, 1974). It was anticipated, therefore, that among black men and black and white women, strong achievement and power motivations would be related to shifts to closed ideal aspirations and that

strong affiliation motivation would be related to an absence of shifts, on the basis of the assumption that affiliation motivation is a disposition consistent with aspiration to traditionally open occupations and, therefore, that individuals with strong affiliation motivation would not fantasize about ideal occupations that are categorically different from their real occupational goals.

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects were 140 black and 70 white (a comparison group) men and 200 black and 100 white women who were students in either traditionally black or white colleges in America. On the basis of a classification of the occupations of the fathers of the subjects in the samples into white collar and blue collar categories, designations of colleges into social class types were made, and subjects were assigned to social classes on the basis of type of college attended. There were 70 black male and 100 black female subjects from both working class and middle class colleges. The 70 white male and 100 white female subjects were from middle class colleges only.

Procedure

Occupational aspirations were determined from subjects' responses to two items on the questionnaire on vocational goals of college students (Littig, 1966): (1) Five years after completing your education, what job do you plan to have? (2) What job would you most like to have 5 years after completing your education if it were possible for you to have any job in the world? The first question defined real aspirations and the second question ideal aspirations. Classification of occupations as open or closed followed the procedures described by Littig (1966) for black men and by Mednick and Puryear (1975) for black and white women.

Achievement, affiliation, and power motivations were assessed by means of content analysis (Smith & Feld, 1958) of the test of insight (French, 1958). The test of insight and

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the questionnaire on vocational goals of college students were administered, in that order, by persons of the same sex and race as the subjects in college classrooms. Subjects were classified as high or low in motive strength on the basis of median splits within their respective groups. Rank-order correlations of motives within race, sex, and social class groupings ranged from $-.07$ to $+.30$, with an average correlation of $+.14$, and the scores were considered to be acceptably independent.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the frequencies of aspirations to occupations traditionally open or closed to black men, for black and white men, or to women for black and white women. The overall difference among these groups is highly significant [$\chi^2(15) = 55.35, p < .001$]. Substantial shifts from real open occupational aspirations to ideal closed occupational aspirations occurred among middle class white women [$\chi^2(1) = 8.58, p < .01$], and working class black women [$\chi^2(1) = 5.82, p < .02$]. None of the middle class black, the working class black, or the middle class white male comparison groups manifested any comparable shift from real to ideal occupational aspirations. The phenomenon, then is principally within sex rather than between race or social class.

The effects of motivation among women, but not men, were complex. Among the latter, none of the groups showed a significant motivational effect. Among women, a variety of motivation-related aspirational shifts occurred. The presence or absence of these shifts appear in Table 2. Low, but not high, achievement motivation in all groups was related to shifting [middle class white women, $\chi^2(1) = 10.96, p < .001$; middle class black women, $\chi^2(1) = 9.71, p < .01$; working class black women, $\chi^2(1) = 3.92, p < .05$]. Low, but not high, affiliation motivation was related to open-to-closed shifts among middle class black women [$\chi^2(1) = 6.49, p < .01$] and working class black women [$\chi^2(1) = 3.99, p < .05$]. Both high [$\chi^2(1) = 6.33, p < .02$] and low [$\chi^2(1) = 8.30, p < .01$] affiliation motivation middle class white women shifted from open to closed aspirations. Power motivation also did not differentially

Table 2
Presence (Y) or Absence (N) of Shifts in Occupational Aspirations Among Women

| Motive | Strength | Shifts | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
| | | White Middle Class | Black | |
| | | | Middle Class | Working Class |
| Achievement | High | N | N | N |
| | Low | Y | Y | Y |
| Affiliation | High | Y | N | N |
| | Low | Y | Y | Y |
| Power | High | Y | Y | N |
| | Low | Y | N | Y |

correlate with shifts among middle class white women; both groups shifted [high, $\chi^2(1) = 7.71, p < .01$; low, $\chi^2(1) = 9.64, p < .01$]. Among middle class black women, high power motivation was related to shifts [$\chi^2(1) = 5.15, p < .05$], but low power motivation was not. Among working class black women, the reverse relationship obtained; low power motivation was related to shifts [$\chi^2(1) = 6.00, p < .02$], but high power motivation was not.

The motivational findings for women suggest a discernible if not definitive pattern. Generally, among the white middle class group, there is a tendency for subjects to shift from open real to closed ideal occupations regardless of strength of motive. The only exception to this pattern occurs among high achievement motivation subjects who did not shift, although, even among them, a tendency to shift from open to closed approaches significance [$\chi^2(1) = 3.83, p < .06$].

Among black women, the predominant trend for the three motives is for the low-motivation group to shift and the high-motivation group not to shift from open to closed aspirations. The only exception occurs in the middle class group, where a reverse relationship is present for power motivation.

DISCUSSION

Men appear, from these data, to have relatively stable occupational aspirations. Whether or not they aspire to occupations that traditionally have been either open or closed to black men, both black and white men maintain the same patterns of aspirations for both real and ideal goals. Their ideal goals are not categorically different from their real goals. Women, on the other hand, regardless of race or social class, tend to shift from real open to ideal closed occupations. This tendency among white women is essentially independent of motivation. Among black women, it is strongly affected by motivation. In that group the predominant tendency is for women with weak motives to shift from real open to ideal closed occupations, and for women with strong motives to indicate that they aspire to the same occupations, either open or closed, when asked to state both real and ideal goals. The implication is that among black women strong motivation is more related to stable goal setting than is weak motivation, and that under strong motivation black women's aspiration patterns are more like those of

Table 1
Race, Sex, Social Class, and Shifts from Open Real (R) to Closed Ideal (I) Occupation

| Class | Race | Occupation Type | Sex | | | |
|---------|-------|-----------------|-----|----|-------|----|
| | | | Men | | Women | |
| | | | R | I | R | I |
| Middle | White | Open | 21 | 20 | 65 | 38 |
| | | Closed | 49 | 50 | 35 | 62 |
| Middle | Black | Open | 36 | 32 | 47 | 27 |
| | | Closed | 34 | 38 | 53 | 73 |
| Working | Black | Open | 27 | 21 | 53 | 36 |
| | | Closed | 43 | 49 | 47 | 64 |

Note— $\chi^2(15) = 55.35, p < .001$.

the men in this research; that is, there is a correspondence between real and ideal goals. This implies, further, that strongly motivated black women choose real goals that they desire with sufficient intensity to reduce the tendency to fantasize about different ideal goals. This finding is consistent with previous reports (Littig, 1971) that black women are more realistic goal setters than white women, and it suggests that strong motivation is a factor in this phenomenon.

The hypothesized relationships between motivation and occupational aspirations were not supported. Indeed, they were contradicted. Rather than strong motivation in women manifesting itself in tendencies to fantasize about motive-related closed aspirations, this study suggests that among white women occupational fantasizing is essentially unrelated to motivation, and that among black women strong motivation results in similar real and ideal aspirations. It is an absence of strong motivation that leads, among black women, to dreaming about occupational goals that are different from those they expect to attain.

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