1992

A study of the factors contributing to the success of secondary school students in two northern California cities

James Patrick Richards
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Richards, James Patrick, "A study of the factors contributing to the success of secondary school students in two northern California cities" (1992). *Master's Theses*. 498.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.xjyg-sv7f>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/498

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

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

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 1351069

**A study of the factors contributing to the success of secondary
school students in two northern California cities**

Richards, James Patrick, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1992

U·M·I

300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

A STUDY OF THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING
TO THE SUCCESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
IN TWO NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CITIES

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
James P. Richards
September, 1992

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Dr. David Bond

Dr. Kathleen M. Densmore

Dr. Robert Kumamoto

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN TWO NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CITIES

by James P. Richards

This thesis examines the factors that may have contributed to the success of 103 secondary school students in Fremont and Newark, California during the 1990-91 school year. Students from nine different schools were identified by teachers, counselors, and/or administrators as meeting the criteria of a successful student as defined for them by the researcher. These students completed an 83 question survey designed to explore the students' backgrounds, behaviors, characteristics, and beliefs. In addition, 12 of these students were randomly selected to participate in a personal interview where the factors contributing to their success were discussed in detail.

The research revealed that a variety of factors may have contributed to the students' success. Among the factors found to be most crucial to the attainment of success were role-modeling, self-motivation, goal setting, participation in extra-curricular activities, an optimistic outlook, and a positive attitude about school in particular and life in general.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	Introduction	1
	Background	3
	Problem Statement	9
	Purpose Statement	10
	Research Questions	11
	Definitions	11
	Assumptions	13
	Limitations	14
	Delimitations	15
	Statement of Significance	15
2	Literature Review	17
	Introduction	17
	The Backgrounds of Successful People and Role Modeling	18
	Unsuccessful, At-Risk-Students- Factors Behind their Failure	26
	Successful Students - Factors Contributing to their Success	30
3	Methodology	43
	Introduction	43
	Research Method	44
	Research Design - Population	44
	Data Collection	49
	The Survey	49
	The Personal Interview	51
	Data Analysis	52
4	Results and Analysis of the Data	53
	Results of the Survey	53
	Results of the Personal Interview	76
	Summary of the Findings	87
5	Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations	88
	What are the Characteristics of Successful Students?	89
	How are At-Risk Students Contrasted with Successful Students?	91
	What Kind of Backgrounds do Successful Students have?	92
	What Specific Behaviors, Related to their Success, do Successful Students Exhibit?	93
	What Beliefs, Related to their Success, do Successful Students have?	94
	What Motivates Successful Students?	95
	What do Successful Students have in Common?	96
	Conclusions and Recommendations	96
6	References	99
APPENDIX #1	Student Survey	107
APPENDIX #2	Personal Interview Questions	120

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most secondary school students want to be successful. Their parents want them to be a success. Their teachers want them to be a success. Yet, many are not. Students who are not doing well are far too prevalent in classrooms. Recent studies seem to confirm this. Currently, approximately 27% of all children in the United States drop out of public school before high school graduation. This percentage is approaching one out of two students among our ethnic poor. Every teacher knows numerous students who are capable of learning to a far greater extent than they actually do. Since 1980, more than a dozen reports from national panels and commissions that have studied public education in this country agree that the school achievement of our children is below their abilities (Wlodkowski & Jaynes, 1990, p.2).

Yet, there are exceptions. Many students today excel in school. Consider the following three, real case, successful students. Student A graduated from high school with a 3.95 grade point average. She was elected secretary of her senior class, had a leading role in her school's production of the play "South Pacific," was on the school track and tennis team, was a member of several school

sponsored clubs, and worked a part-time job at a restaurant on weekends. She was accepted for admission to a highly competitive university.

Student B, a seventh grader, carried a 3.9 grade point average, played concert piano, was a member of a dance competition team, skied, attended girl scouts, and babysat on weekends.

Student C, during his sophomore year in high school, maintained a 3.65 grade point average, played football, basketball, and baseball, was the class vice-president, and was a volunteer at his city's shelter for the homeless.

Why did these students flourish? There are no simple answers. Student A came from a well-to-do family that placed a huge emphasis on education. Student B, on the other hand, was from a broken home. Her parents divorced when she was four and her mother survived by working menial jobs and accepting welfare. No one in her family had graduated from college. Student C, from a middle-class family, lived with his parents who both worked. His home was located in a lower middle class neighborhood where hundreds of families of similar social status resided. But student C accomplished significantly more than his neighborhood counterparts. Why?

It would appear that there is more to it than family background and/or social status. What was it that set these and other successful students apart? What made these

students special? Why did they achieve success both in and out of the classroom? And, perhaps more importantly, can others learn from achievers like these? In this thesis the researcher will study the factors that contributed to the success of high achieving students in an attempt to answer these questions.

BACKGROUND

Libraries and bookstores are filled with information about successful adults. In practically every field there is information from and about successful practitioners on how they achieved their success. For example, we can read step by step accounts chronicling how high achieving business people, athletes, entrepreneurs, and celebrities attained their status.

However, in nearly all cases, these accounts are written by, for, and about adults. There is very little information on successful young people, successful students, and how they achieved *their* success. Perhaps young people are not commonly thought of as "successful." Still, schools regularly graduate students who have excelled and have achieved more than their peers.

In many cases these students go on to achieve great success as adults. If their success has been especially

noteworthy, a newspaper or magazine article, maybe even a book, may have been written about their success, their life. There may even be some mention of the successful person's adolescence, their secondary school years. Yet rarely, aside from an occasional child prodigy in education, athletics, music, or the arts, have there been detailed appraisals of successful students between the ages of 12 and 18. Further, there are countless young people who have achieved significant success who have never had their lives written about in newspapers, magazines, or books.

Yet, students today may need role models. Students may need to learn how to become successful. Students could learn that most successful people were not born successes. Instead, they became successful as a result of a variety of factors that contributed to their success, most of which could possibly be learned and repeated through "modeling." (See Definitions.) Although role models can be and often are famous celebrities, it is the researcher's contention that there is a huge reservoir, an untapped source of positive role models in almost every school throughout the country. Students aspiring greater success in school might consider looking to their successful peers to provide the best answers to the question, "What must I do to become a successful student - and person?"

Modeling the behavior of experts in any endeavor may be a successful technique in achieving success. There are

strategies for financial success, for creating and maintaining vibrant health, for feeling happy and loved throughout your life. If you find people who have already obtained financial success or fulfilling relationships, you just need to discover their strategy and apply it to achieve similar results...this is the power of modeling (Robbins, 1987, p. 114).

Likewise, parents and teachers might benefit in two ways from learning what makes successful students successful. First, they could adapt their parenting and teaching methods to fit with what parenting and teaching methods helped produce successful children and students. Second, parents and teachers can enlighten their children and students with the facts about how successful young people went about achieving their success.

Successful students are often overlooked by teachers and the general public. The pervading perception of these students may be that they are merely doing what is supposed to be done. But a closer examination reveals a preponderance of time, effort, and money being spent to help guide and correct problem students while successful students may be taken for granted, in spite of their vast accomplishments in school and out. In secondary schools today, vice-principals spend a great length of their time counseling and disciplining students who have trouble fitting in and succeeding in school. Continuation schools,

schools set up specifically to accommodate problem, at-risk students, are a part of many large school districts today.

Meanwhile, students who meet and exceed the educational objectives of their schools are issued a diploma, receive a handshake, and are sent on their way. The researcher contends that, prior to departing their schools, high achievers should be studied carefully in order to determine the reasons for their success.

There is no precise way to measure the number of successful students. Indeed, what defines a "successful student" is open to debate. However, a successful student is not only the previously mentioned child prodigy who has obtained astounding success in a specific field. Instead, for the purpose of this thesis, the definition of a successful student has been broadened, based upon the complexity and difficulty of precisely defining success, to include the student who:

- Maintained at least a 3.3 (B+) grade point average.
- Was involved in at least one extra-curricular activity including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Member of athletic team.
 - Member of student organization or club.
 - Holds elected office in student

- council, student government, etc.
- Takes lessons in activities like dance, instrumental music, singing, acting or art.
- Participates in church group, youth group, or volunteer service organizations.
- o Has at least three friends.
- o Expresses positive attitudes about learning, school, and life in general, eg. enjoys attending school, takes pleasure in learning, appreciates teachers, describes self as optimistic.
- o As evaluated by a teacher, counselor, or principal, is a positive role model for other students, is gregarious, and shows the potential for future success.
- o Has no record of drug or alcohol abuse or personal misconduct.

Although the last three items could be considered subjective criteria for measuring success, it is impossible to come to a completely objective and unanimously agreed upon definition of what makes a student successful. Although grades, trophies, and honors can be documented, affective considerations must also be taken into account.

There are numerous examples of high achieving students who are unhappy and unsuccessful in the non-academic areas of their lives. Japanese schools are often cited for their ability to produce students who score well on achievement tests. However, 73% of Japan's voters are dissatisfied with the Japanese educational system. Their chief complaints center on a system whose school becomes "all-consuming" leading to rising student violence, high stress, and even student deaths and abuse at the hands of teachers. Further, (Japanese) students' morals and patriotism need fostering (Schooland, 1986).

A successful student then is not merely a conformist - one who has adapted to his or her school's norms and studies and works hard only to achieve high marks on a report card. Instead, the successful student is a creative, self-motivated, critical thinker who is able to evaluate different aspects of society and make his or her own judgements about those aspects.

Therefore the researcher has included in the description of a successful student, attributes that can not be precisely measured. Whether or not a student can be classified as a good role model, can be considered gregarious, or to have a positive attitude is open to question. Still, these traits are important and should not be ignored given their importance in students' self-esteem as well as how they are perceived by others. The criteria

used in measuring successful students in this thesis included factors important to the students' self-esteem and well being. The researcher considered happiness and contentedness an important part of success.

Finally, in identifying successful students, it is helpful to point out what they are not. They are not "at-risk" students - students not making a successful transition into the adult world (Forecast Home Economist, 1988.) Successful students are making the transition into the adult world. This thesis will attempt to show how they are doing it.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Teachers, parents, and secondary school students do not have enough information about the varying factors that contribute to the success of today's students. Currently, there is considerable information available about "at-risk" students. Solving the educational and social problems that could keep an almost 30% of the U.S.A.'s young people from graduating from high school is a monumental task. Possible approaches to meeting the at-risk student's demands include incentives, get-tough policies, alternative schools, or even not targeting at-risk students for special treatment. The controversial nature of the at-risk issue, the relative

merits of each possible solution are debated at length among educators (Forecast Home Economist, 1988).

In each of the major schools of thought on how to solve the at-risk dilemma the focus has been on the at-risk students themselves. There has not been a focus on the students who are doing well in school. More information is needed about successful students. Perhaps by looking closely at successful students - and contrasting them with at-risk students - more answers might be produced to help gain a better understanding of why some students excel in school while others have difficulty.

Perhaps the old adage, "If it's not broken, don't try to fix it," has applied to research in the area of students not at risk. Although there has been research conducted on successful students and schools with successful programs (see Chapter 2), more information is needed.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research paper is to provide parents, teachers, and students with information about the specific factors that contributed to the success of successful secondary school students from various schools representing diverse demographic areas in two Northern California cities. Findings will be presented with the

intention of letting less successful students know how they can be more successful. If young people know more about why and how some students excel, they could possibly model the high achievers and become more successful themselves. In addition, if teachers and parents know more about successful students, they can use the information to teach their own students and children how to be more successful.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the characteristics of successful students?
2. How are at-risk students contrasted with successful students?
3. What kinds of backgrounds do successful students have?
4. What specific behaviors, related to their success, do successful students exhibit?
5. What beliefs, related to their success, do successful students have?
6. What motivates successful students?
7. What do successful students have in common?

DEFINITIONS

AT-RISK STUDENT: A student who is not making a successful

transition into adulthood (Newman, 1988).

BEHAVIOR: A particular act, function, or reaction. (Webster, 1988) Behavior is motivated by the desire to accomplish a specific task or goal.

BELIEF: To have a firm conviction; to have a strong belief about something (Webster, 1988).

CHARACTERISTIC: A distinguishing trait, quality, or property including a (student's) past and present home, family, and school environment (Webster, 1988).

ENGAGEMENT: When students participate in the activities offered as part of the school program (Mosher & Macgowan, 1985).

GOAL: An aim or purpose. A pre-planned objective students choose to pursue (Webster, 1988).

HIGH ACHIEVER: (Or "high achieving student") used

interchangably with "successful" student throughout this thesis.

MODELING: The process of discovering the sequence of internal representations and behaviors that allows someone to accomplish a task. Once the components of the strategy, language, belief, and behavior have been detailed, the skill can be much more easily learned by another (Robbins, 1987, p. 417).

MOTIVATION: A need or desire that causes a person to act (Webster, 1988).

ROLE MODEL: A person who is unusually effective or inspiring in some social role, job, position, etc. and so serves as a model for another or others (Webster, 1988).

ASSUMPTIONS

The purpose of this thesis is to provide information to parents, teachers, and students about 103 successful students in two Northern California cities. Included in

this purpose is the assumption that students can model the behaviors of their successful peers. It is further assumed that parents and teachers may use the information presented in this thesis to help their children and students achieve greater success. Because the students studied in this thesis were identified and selected by their school's teachers, counselors, or administrators, it is assumed the students met the requirements for a successful student as identified formerly. However, it is possible that, intentionally or not, some students may have been selected on the basis of the preconceived judgements of their selectors. (See Chapter 3 for more information on how the students examined were identified and selected.) Finally, it is assumed that the students truthfully answered the questions posed to them in the survey and/or interview.

LIMITATIONS

Students surveyed and interviewed in this thesis may have had different interpretations of the questions and some of the terms used in the survey than those of the researcher. In most cases the researcher was not available to clarify those items for the students. Therefore, the successful students themselves had to make their own interpretations of the survey questions. The researcher

did not make personal contact with each student surveyed so clarification of all questions and terms was not possible.

DELIMITATIONS

The information obtained for this thesis was garnered from secondary school students (grades 7-12) from nine different schools in Fremont and Newark California. These cities, located in southern Alameda County in the San Francisco Bay area include students from diverse ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. However, the findings should not be generalized outside the specific students surveyed and/or interviewed for this thesis. Further, taking into account that people, times, and circumstances change, generalizations should not be made and conclusions should not be drawn about the 103 students studied beyond the 1990-91 time frame.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This thesis is significant in that its findings reflect the specific characteristics, backgrounds, behaviors, and beliefs of 103 successful secondary school students in two Northern California cities. The findings will focus on

some of the factors which appear to have contributed to the success of the students studied in this thesis. Students, parents, and teachers may refer to the information presented in this thesis for guidance on how to produce similar successful results. However, certain modifications may be necessary when attempting to apply what might have worked for one person in a specific circumstance and situation to another person in an entirely difference circumstance and situation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Studying successful students, specifically the factors contributing to their success, can help other students, parents and teachers learn how success was attained by the high achievers.

Success is a subjective term yet certain students have been consistently identified as high achievers, well-adjusted, or successful by their teachers, parents, and/or peers. What accounted for those students' success? A review of the related literature in the areas of a student motivation, characteristics, background, behavior, and beliefs produced some answers.

The sources of this literature review are:

- o Sixteen books (including two textbooks) pertinent to student success gathered from the Alameda County (CA) Public Library System, San Jose State University's Clark Library and three retail book stores located in Fremont and Newark, CA.
- o A search of the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) 1982-June, 1991 using the following search keys (including various combinations of those listed):
 - students
 - secondary school students
 - success
 - high achievement
 - academic achievement
 - dropout rate
 - high risk students
 - student attitudes

-- role models	-- s t u d e n t
-- student believes	behavior
-- mentors	--student
	characteristics
-- parent influence	

- o The Education Index, July 1986 - June 1990 using the following headings as a guide:

-- success	-- a c a d e m i c
-- student characteristics	success
-- student achievement	-- prognosis of
-- failure	success

- o World Book Encyclopedia (1990 edition)

- o Webster's New World Dictionary (1988 edition)

This literature review will be organized into three parts:

1. The Backgrounds of Successful People and Role Modeling.
2. Unsuccessful, At-Risk Students - Factors Behind Their Failure.
3. Successful Students - Factors Contributing to Their Success.

THE BACKGROUNDS OF SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE AND ROLE MODELING

Throughout history certain individuals achieved great success and made extraordinary contributions to society. What accounted for the success of those who distinguished themselves from the masses? In some cases genetics, luck, and general good fortune played a predominant role. Kings became kings because their fathers were kings. Many wealthy people inherited their money. Olympic champions and world-class athletes were often born with exceptional physical characteristics that helped them achieve success.

But not always. Consider the words of Hill(1965,p.38-40):
Helen Keller became deaf, dumb, and blind shortly after birth. Despite her great misfortune, she wrote her name indelibly in the pages of the history of the great. Her entire life served as evidence that no one is ever defeated until defeat has been accepted as reality. Charles Dickens began by pasting labels on blacking pots. The tragedy of his first love penetrated the depths of his soul and converted him into one of the world's great authors. John Bunyan wrote "Pilgrim's Progress," considered one of the finest of all English books, after he had been confined to prison and punished because of his views on the subject of religion. O. Henry discovered the genius that slept within his brain after he met with great misfortune and was confined to a prison cell in Columbus, Ohio. Robert Burns, the world famous poet, was an illiterate country lad who was cursed by poverty. Beethoven was deaf; Milton was blind yet their names will last as long as time endures (1965, pp.38-40).

Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, yet he was deaf. He claimed he could "hear through the skull" by placing his head against a phonograph speaker. He personally supervised thousands of recordings and could instantly detect a wrong note. Prior to his fame as an inventor Edison had a modest

start in life. He worked rather ordinary jobs including selling newspapers and candy and operating a telegraph (World Book, 1990, p.76).

Theodore Roosevelt once received a letter from an admirer congratulating him on his amazing abilities. Roosevelt wrote back:

No, my friend, you are quite wrong about me. I am just an ordinary individual without special ability in any line. In most things I am only just above the average; in some things I am under the average rather than over. This is certainly true of my physical powers. I can't run. I'm only an ordinary walker; I'm certainly not a good swimmer. I can probably ride a horse better than I can do anything else, but I am not a remarkable horseman. Neither am I a good shot. My eyesight is so poor that I have to be near my game to take any aim at all. So you can see that as far as physical gifts are concerned, I am just an ordinary man. The same thing is true of my literary ability. I am certainly not a brilliant writer. During my life I have written a good deal, but I always have to work and slave over everything I

put on paper. (Hildebrand, 1955, p.12)

Many of the most successful and creative people achieved success despite slow starts, misfortune, and setbacks. For example, Walt Disney spent his boyhood on a Missouri farm. He moved to California to become a movie producer, but failed. He set up his first studio in his garage. For several years he struggled just to pay expenses.

- o Abraham Lincoln described his father as "a wandering laboring boy who grew up literally without education." Lincoln himself was not an immediate success in politics. In fact, he suffered eight consecutive defeats in attempts to gain public office.
- o Vincent Van Gogh, after failing at a business career, applied to theological school, but was rejected. During his lifetime he received no recognition and sold only one painting.
- o At age 16 Henry Ford walked eight miles to Detroit to find work in its machine shops. Later he began designing engines by tinkering in a small shop he set up on his farm.
- o Prior to founding the American Red Cross, Clara Barton was a teacher and then a government clerk. After nursing wounded men on Civil War battlefields, the U.S. government, at first, refused to give her help or encouragement.
- o Harriet Tubman was born a slave. The first time she interfered with a supervisor to save another slave

from punishment, the enraged supervisor fractured Tubman's skull with a two pound weight. She recovered, but suffered blackouts for the rest of her life. Still, she went on to help hundreds of slaves escape to freedom as the most famous leader of the "underground railroad" (World Book, 1990).

What characteristics, beliefs, motives, and behaviors did these successful people exhibit that set them apart from others? Can others learn how to succeed by modeling successful people? Robbins implied they can:

Modeling is the pathway to excellence. If you want to achieve success, all you need to do so find a way to model those who have already succeeded. That is, find out what actions they took, specifically how they used their brain and body to produce the results you want to duplicate. If you want to be a better parent, a better athlete, a more successful businessman, what you need to do is find models for excellence (1987, p.79).

The American Council on Education and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (1989) discussed a national agenda for early awareness of post-secondary education. Early awareness programs are broadly based efforts to introduce students in the late elementary and early secondary grades to the increased opportunities available to high school graduates who enroll in a post-secondary education program. Among the intervention

strategies discussed was to build self-esteem and instill a positive attitude toward success through education including the use of role models and mentors (American Council on Education, 1989).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 1990) recommended that parents and administrators desiring to help teenagers meet the challenges of high school and beyond should guide teens' actions by setting a good example.

The idea of teaching students how to succeed through the use of role models has been especially important with at-risk and/or minority students. Several studies focusing on specific groups seem to have concluded that role modeling was an important factor in the success achieved by some people. For example, the Utah Migrant Education Annual Summer Evaluation Report discussed achievement gains made by students enrolled in Utah's Migrant Education programs. Among the factors that contributed positively toward achievement gains were the use of cultural materials and the presence of staff who served as role models for students (Utah Office of Education, 1986).

Flynn (1984) discussed affective characteristics that predict preschool achievement in disadvantaged children. He cited "relationship with an achievement model" as instrumental in student achievements.

Lee (1984) investigated "Psychosocial Variables Related to Academic Success for Rural Black Adolescents." He found

that students who scored highest on The California Achievement Test in reading and math identified strongly with positive role models.

Hatchett (1986) surveyed scholars' opinions as to why the educational achievement of poor black males is disproportionately low and how the problem might be addressed. He reported that, in general, black educational facilities with black role models are needed to solve black males' educational difficulties. Further, the lack of black mentors, counselors, and role models at predominantly white colleges is one factor in the poor retention of black students (Wiley, 1989).

Gandara (1982) studied seventeen Mexican American women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who had completed J.D., M.D., and Ph.D. degrees. After interviewing each she found one of the most important background variables contributing to their success was the strong models provided by their mothers. Smail (1982) described efforts made on a project to improve girls' attitudes towards physical science and craft subjects and to encourage them to elect more science classes. Among the recommendations made was to arrange school visits by women working in those fields to act as role models.

The use of role modeling has traditionally been important for American Indian Women who act as role models for their children (Edwards, Daines & Reed, 1984). In their study of graduates of the American Indian Social Work Career Training Program at the University of Utah, they found that 80% of

those graduates identified role models and an active support system as crucial to the attainment of their degrees.

Lewis (1986) claimed that "success emulation" is an avenue to success. Success emulation takes place when a person or an organization attains success or excellence by studying products, principals, and practices of successful organizations and then adapting those that are appropriate to a new situation, making modifications when appropriate or necessary. Lewis suggested that students who emulate outstanding achievers in school, making necessary adaptations, can be extremely successful in their own right.

Finally, even self-modeling has been shown to be effective. Shunk and Hanson (1989) found that elementary school children having difficulty in arithmetic could improve by using themselves as models. By observing self-model videotapes as well as viewing peer models, the students raised their achievement levels.

In summation, an examination of the lives of some of the most successful people in history seems to show that great success could be attained despite modest, humble, or even adverse starts. Apparently, despite the fact that great achievers in history were often not born into an environment different from millions of others, something special about their make-up enabled them to achieve great results. Further, the literature appears to conclude that the use of role modeling is an effective way to achieve success. Therefore, it may be beneficial for people wanting to achieve success to

model highly successful individuals. It seems possible then that students, regardless of their backgrounds or environments, could possibly achieve success- and modeling their successful peers might be a logical method for doing so.

UNSUCCESSFUL AT-RISK STUDENTS - FACTORS BEHIND THEIR FAILURE

In examining the factors that may have contributed to the success of the students studied in this thesis, it is important to also consider the converse - factors that may have prevented other students from succeeding. There has been a vast amount of research conducted in the area of at-risk students. No attempt will be made here to complete a comprehensive review of all the literature in the area of students at-risk. Instead, an overview of some of the key factors that could negatively effect students' success will be presented. The researcher concentrated on those factors that directly contrasted with the factors that have been shown to contribute to success.

For example, Stephens (1990) studied the educational histories of incarcerated male felons at the Sing-Sing Correctional Facility in New York. Through a random sample of 220 inmates conducted in the summer of 1989 he found that 79% of those studied were high school dropouts. The dropouts experienced a significantly greater rate of grade retention, school transfers, misbehavior, poor attendance, and poor academic performance than did graduates in prison. They also

had significantly less extracurricular activity. Stephens claimed that adverse socioeconomic conditions and poor role modeling probably contributed to their dropping out and criminality.

O'Conner (1985) also focused on less successful students. He examined the causes of students leaving school early and he worked on identifying the characteristics of at-risk students. His report suggested that students drop out not on spur-of-the-moment decisions. Rather, research suggests that dropping out is a result of serious personality and environmental conflicts that build over a length of time. Among the reasons for the conflicts are feelings of alienation from school, a perceived "lower class" status, and peer influence - negative role modeling.

Another form of negative role modeling was put together in a document by the Alaska State Department of Education (1987). The document contained a collection of essays written by students that dropped out of high school and were seeking equivalency diplomas. In the essays the students discussed why they quit school, what it was like in the real world without a diploma, and how they realized leaving school early was, in their words, a mistake. The students offered advice to other students who may consider dropping out of school. By reading the essays, printed in their original form, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors, students learn what not to do.

The characteristics of at-risk students have been

investigated in detail in numerous research studies. Diaz-Soto (1988) observed the home environments of 11 lower achieving Puerto Rican fifth and sixth graders in southeastern urban Pennsylvania. She made notes on her observations as a participant observer of a variety of households and found that the homes of the lower achievers were characterized by a lack of supervision, no parent involvement in school, and poor parent/school communication.

Kaminsky (1986) found that children who fail to learn to read adequately in the early grades increase the likelihood of continued failure as they "move through the system." Further, low achievers are less likely to believe that persistence at a task will result in success.

Gage and Berliner (1984, pp.399) found that low achieving students tend to cite external factors as the cause of their success and internal factors as the cause of their failure. With those kind of beliefs such students can not find any sensible reasons to make a great effort to succeed in school tasks.

Low-achieving students often receive lower expectations from teachers and are more likely to be treated in ways that further reduce motivation to learn (Good & Brophy, 1986, pp.400-404). As a result, failure becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuated by teachers and the at-risk students themselves.

Coplon believed that children may be started down the road toward failure early in life. He quoted Erica Manfred,

a former probation officer for Family Court in Brooklyn, New York:

If children don't get sufficient love early in life, they go crazy. If you're baking a cake and you forget to put the salt in while you're baking, you can't sprinkle it on top later. [At-risk students] never got salt in their cake. They've never been socialized. (1985, p.399)

Magid and McKelvey (1987, pp.3,4) wrote about children with criminal traits. They suggested children's problems can begin even earlier.

Premature infants, those born with low birth weights have special problems, researchers found. Because of the attendant medical problems, they may have a very difficult time getting the right stimulus for proper bonding and attachment to occur. This combination of physical and emotional deficits puts these babies at especially high risk (for failure) later in life.

Finally, the lack of self-esteem is an important factor in the non-success of students. The California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility (1990, p.3) noted that when young people fail to find acceptance and affirmation, a sense of belonging, and a significant part in decision making, many of them seek those human necessities in gangs. Also, low self-esteem is a significant contributing factor to drug and alcohol abuse.

Obviously gang membership and drug and alcohol abuse inhibit student success.

The Task Force also referred to a testimony presented to it by Doctor Sarafin Zasneta of Southwestern College in which he maintained that a student with a negative self-concept performs with the belief that he or she is incapable of learning. This condition leads to under achievement.

SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS - FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR SUCCESS

The literature on the factors that contribute to student success often contrast with the literature on at-risk students. In Diaz-Soto's research on Puerto Rican youth (1988), she found that high achieving students' homes were characterized by supervision, organization, parent involvement, and communication between parent and child and parent and school.

Mosher and MacGowan (1985) discovered that contrary to low achievers' feelings of alienation, high achievers have a strong engagement (participation in the activities offered as part of the school program) with their schools. Generally, the greater a student's engagement, the greater the student's achievement and academic knowledge. Further, as students became more involved in school, their social behavior improved.

In Gage and Berliner's (1984, p.400) examinations of the

attributes affecting students' performance, they noted that while low achievers tend to blame themselves for poor performance in school and luck for any success they might achieve, high achievers believe that hard work and internal factors are responsible for their success. Successful students, therefore, are confident that they themselves primarily affect their own achievement. Failure, as they view it, is a result of external factors like poor instruction or bad luck - temporary causes that will eventually be overcome by their own strong internal characteristics such as personal effort and high ability.

The California Task Force (1990, pp.61-84) reported that the correlation between a healthy self-concept and positive educational outcomes is strong. They cite Jones and Grienecks (1970), who claimed that self-concept is the most effective and consistent predictor of academic achievement, even better than test scores. Further, the task force investigated the school, classroom conditions, and teacher-student relations that might promote academic success. Practitioners in the field believe that low self-esteem interferes with learning and suggests that high self-esteem may well promote it. Thus, school failures could be lessened by promoting those conditions known to enhance self-esteem and facilitate learning.

Wlodkowdki and Jaynes viewed motivation as a key factor in student success:

Motivation to learn, to value and pursue reading,

writing, thinking, computing, problem solving and the like, is a primary characteristic of successful students. When a child's motivation to learn is well developed as a personal trait, the future is blessed with discovery, opportunity, and contributions. For these young individuals, going to college is a natural step; on the job training is desirable, and alternative vocations are realistically possible. People who possess motivation to learn may find external barriers of circumstance and prejudice, but they are not their own enemies and they are the most fit to learn ways to overcome such obstacles. (1990, pp.12,13)

According to Wlodkowski and Jaynes (1990, pp.13-22), motivation to learn is influenced by four factors:

1. The Culture - Specifically, how much does the student's culture value educational success and achievement in school?
2. The Family - Parents appear to be the primary influence on a child's motivation to learn. (The authors cite Henderson, [1987])
3. The School - When it comes to motivation to learn, teachers do make a difference. They are not as powerful as parents but they can make school life miserable or appealing.
4. The Child (or student) - When it comes to nurturing excellence in learning, most teachers will only be as successful as their students let them be. Students, at some point, must become self-motivated.

Clark (1987) noted the following ten "effective family characteristics" that contribute to student success:

1. A feeling of control over their lives. Effective

parents believe they can make a difference in their children's academic and personal development.

2. Frequent communications of high expectations to children. Children are expected to do well in school.
3. A family dream of success for the future - they have a vision of personal success for each child and a plan for making their dreams come true.
4. A view of hard work as a key to success. Parents emphasize that it is not primarily fate or genes or good looks that make the difference but specifically hard work. Their children believe that success will come from their own inner motivations and commitment.
5. An active, not sedentary, life style. Parents discourage idleness and help guide their children's time into wholesome activities.
6. Twenty-five to thirty-five home centered learning hours per week to include traditional homework and study time as well as other learning activities such as games, sports, hobbies, household chores, part-time jobs and other youth programs.
7. A view of the family as a mutual support system. Children are given responsibilities and are made to feel needed in their families.
8. Clearly understood household rules, consistently enforced. Children have reasonable limits and sanctions.
9. Frequent contact with teachers. Parents check on children's progress and generally cooperate with teachers.
10. An emphasis on spiritual growth. Parents encourage and inspire children to strive for inner peace and love.

Successful students display certain characteristics and behavior that allow them to take learning seriously, do well in school and still enjoy it (Ryan, Connell, & Grolnick, 1991). In general, they exhibit the following traits:

1. They get good grades but tend to see them as concise information about the quality of their learning rather than symbols of their identity.
2. They are intrinsically motivated, finding the process of learning (reading, studying) to be satisfying.
3. They have accepted the learning values of their family and school.
4. Most of the time they are self-regulated learners - they don't need constant reminders to study or complete homework, for example.
5. They realize they are mainly responsible for their own learning. They tend not to blame others when learning does not go smoothly.
6. They realize the benefits of effort. They know they have to strive for improvement and excellence.
7. They are good problem solvers. They know how to use resources such as the library and to ask for help when necessary.
8. They may become anxious or doubtful, but not excessively.
9. They view setbacks more as learning more information than as failure. More often than not, they learn from their mistakes.

Greene (1987, pp.101, 104, 182) recognized an "achievement loop" in successful students that included high self-esteem, goal setting, a strong desire to achieve, and self confidence. He contrasted this with a "non-achievement loop" in which less successful students exhibit low self-esteem, do not set goals, have little desire to achieve, and have low self-confidence. Greene suggested that goal setting is especially important in student success:

The goal directed child stands out from the rest.

Goals encourage the development of "egoism." This egoism is a reflection of a child's positive sense of himself and his confidence that he can make positive things happen in his life. Without egoism, bridges would never be built, books would never be written, statues would never be sculpted, and vaccines would never be discovered.

Further, Greene outlined specific behaviors children display that signal that they have acquired the skills required for achievement. These behaviors include the ability to:

- o evaluate available information
- o assess options
- o establish goals and priorities
- o organize time and resources
- o develop a strategy for achieving objectives
- o persevere in the face of obstacles
- o learn from mistakes
- o bounce back from setbacks
- o assess oneself objectively

A report by the Task Force on Student Success (1988-89) defined a successful student as "being aware of the skills and qualities being taught and seeks experiences which will further personal growth in attaining those skills and qualities. The report also maintained successful students have specific knowledge and skills, personal qualities, and personal values:

Knowledge and Skills

- o Mastery of communication, computation, and scientific skills
- o Knowledge of how to learn as a lifelong skill
- o Orientation toward specific learning goals
- o Understanding of the global interdependence of all

- people and societies
- o Knowledge of family, national, and human heritages
- o Understanding of technology as a tool for human endeavors

Personal Qualities

- o Self direction
- o Rational thinking
- o Creativity
- o Productive and recreative use of time
- o Independence of thought
- o Eagerness for discovery
- o Aesthetic sensitivity
- o Willingness to take risks for growth
- o Ability to sustain effort toward the meeting of goals
- o Emotional well-being
- o Recognition of the interests that motivate other people.

Personal Value

- o Valuing of self
- o Valuing of schooling and learning
- o Commitment to moral and ethical values
- o Valuing of other people
- o Appreciation of the arts and humanities

Bar-Tal and Guttman (1981) compared attributions of teachers, pupils, and parents regarding pupils' academic success or failure. Eighty pupils, eight teachers, and fifty parents were asked to explain the achievement of the pupils. The results showed that teachers attributed pupils' success to themselves and the pupils. Parents attributed pupils' success to themselves and the teacher. Pupils attributed their success to themselves and the teacher. Each group, therefore, attributed pupils success, to some extent, to the teacher. However, it should be noted that the students tended to attribute their success mainly to their own efforts.

Numerous other authors and researchers have cited specific factors that contribute to a student's successful performance in school. Trelease (1981) suggested that successful students learned because they imitated successful adults that they saw and heard. He wrote, "It is this ability to imitate that allows a 15-month-old child to say his first words" (p.2). Trelease expounds on the virtues of reading aloud to children which in turn will lead to the development of a child's language skills as well as moral and ethical values as a result of the child's imitation of quality literature.

Fields (1987, pp.55-57) believed that teaching children good communication and study skills, establishing high expectations, and consistently rewarding success will teach valuable skills that will be used throughout the student's life. Fields stated that children with backgrounds in those areas have a maximum potential for achievement and a minimum chance for failure. On the subject of rewarding success as a means to ensure further success she quoted Dr. Carole Grosse, who lectures across the United States on the topic of Student Achievement. "The more you concentrate on rewarding success, the less likely you'll find it necessary to punish misbehavior."

Students who become involved in serving others may develop strong morals and values that lead to success. According to Parsons (1985, pp.39-43) a mandatory national

service of two years should be required of all students. Service in the military, working to better the environment, or participating in a social program aiding the elderly, youth, handicapped, or homeless would foster skills, requisite for success.

Collier (1981, p.171) pointed out that "visual imagery" is an important strategy practiced by high achievers. Picturing in the mind successful experiences in future challenges and events can lead to the actual occurrence of those successful experiences, he claimed.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (1990) reported that parent involvement in school is a primary influencing factor on student success. They reported that the more parents are involved in school, the better their children do academically. Further, they state that parents should keep in touch with their teenagers and encourage discussion about their experiences, opinions, and feelings and keep in touch with other parents. "When neighborhoods or communities share a common set of expectations for teenage behavior, life is much easier for everyone," they stated.

Van-Hecke and Tracy (1987) concluded that students' motivation to learn and achieve is dependent upon parent encouragement. In general, their findings showed encouragement influenced children's achievement motivation.

High aptitude for learning may not always be the determining factor in student achievement. Easton (1987) studied community college students attending City College of

Chicago who were receiving high grades through diligent study rather than high aptitude. In interviews he conducted with 26 students, he discovered that active participation in learning, study/review, selectivity in teachers and classes, and planning were responsible for student success.

Geary (1988) also examined students who were successful in a difficult environment. In her examination of the factors in the experiences of black, inner-city 10th and 11th graders that enabled them to succeed in spite of the debilitating factors and circumstances that surrounded them, she found that a "positive attitude" and "hard work" contributed to student success as well as the following behaviors and characteristics: participation - both in class and in extra-curricular activities, "social flexibility" (the ability to adapt to different people and social settings), friendliness, humility and self-motivation. In addition, the successful students had high expectations of their teachers and they wanted a curriculum that they could relate to.

Asian American students are often recognized as being exceptionally high achievers. Karkhanis and Tsai (1988) addressed this. They contended that the educational success of Asians is, in general, not a myth and that lessons drawn from the example of the academic achievement of Asian Americans can be applied to American education "across the board." The following themes characterize the educational success of Asian Americans: love of learning, love of the United States, gratitude for the freedom and opportunities

that the United States has to offer, and a "deep determination to succeed." The authors also cited Asian/American Academician C. Izawa who reviewed the relationship of academic success to genetic factors, motivational factors, and environmental factors including cultural heritage and historical background. His findings indicated that, "any person of any color or of any national origin with normal intelligence who works extraordinarily hard and strives for excellence will achieve a high level of success in education."

In conclusion, it is evident that the literature concerned with the factors contributing to the success of students does not lead to simple conclusions. It appears that a variety of factors influence student achievement. Different authors and researchers point out different influencing factors. Some contrast with others. For example, Sealover (1988) found no significant correlation between parental involvement and students academic success. This contradicted the previously mentioned report by the National Association of Secondary School Principals that reported that parent involvement was crucial.

The scope of factors is broad. For example, besides those mentioned formerly, factors included Graham's (1985) study that found that achievement was associated with a student's age, father's occupational status, mobility, favorite subjects, future plans, and job aspirations as well as Steinberg's contention that peers, in general, encourage

academic success, part-time employment in excess of fifteen hours per week adversely affects student performance, and the relationship between school performance and family structure or maternal employment is "far less substantial than is widely believed." Indeed, the determinants of student success are varied and complex. However, they do seem to provide those interested in the subject with general concepts and guidance as well as ideas for further study.

Finally, examining the characteristics of successful students is not a new idea. Langdon and Stout (1951, pp.3-7, et seq.) looked at 261 "well adjusted children" between the ages of five and twenty-one. They based their book, on two studies conducted during 1948-49 and 1949-50. The first was made by eight students at the Milwaukee State Teachers College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1950). The second was by forty-five graduate students at New York University. Both groups were concerned with learning everything possible about what helps children become "well adjusted" or successful. The students the researchers studied were identified as being exceptionally well-adjusted (or successful) by their teacher or principal. Langdon and Stout reported that those children, in general, came from families where:

- o Discipline was stressed - although a variety of discipline techniques were used.
- o Routines were established and responsibilities were given to each family member.
- o Doing things together as a family was important.

- o Religion was a part of family life and the children could express their ideas about it.
- o Relationships between each family member were stressed "everyone can be different but still get along."
- o Learning from each other and learning as a family took place.
- o Most important, (according to Langdon and Stout) love, trust, appreciation, and "letting (the children) know that they are wanted" were highly prevalent in the families of successful, well adjusted students.

This thesis is similar to the studies Langdon and Stout reviewed. However, over 40 years have passed since then. A current examination of the factors that contribute to student success is necessary.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Successful secondary school students may be a resource that other students can refer to when attempting to become successful students themselves. In addition, if parents and teachers understand the factors that appear to contribute to the success of some high achieving secondary school students, they could use that information to help guide their children and pupils toward greater accomplishment in school. Teachers, parents, and secondary school students do not have enough information about the varying factors that contribute to the success of today's students. The purpose of this thesis is to provide more information about successful secondary school students and some possible explanations for their success.

In an attempt to gain this information, the researcher believed it was best to approach the successful students themselves and ask them questions relevant to their achievement. Approaching their parents and teachers was considered, but it was believed that secondary school students (grades 7-12, ages 12-18) could provide first-hand, their perceptions on how they achieved their success.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this thesis is descriptive. Descriptive research is appropriate because it is normally used to describe conditions, situations, and events of the present. Descriptive research commonly uses people as a source of information and this thesis is based upon the information provided by successful secondary school students - specifically their answers to a variety of questions. Also, because the students from which the information was obtained are currently enrolled in secondary school, the information describes present conditions. This thesis will describe conditions and factors that contributed to the success of successful secondary school students.

RESEARCH DESIGN - POPULATION

In this thesis 103 successful secondary school students, considered successful by their teacher, counselor, or principal while they attended school in Fremont and Newark, California during the 1990-91 school year, were consulted. Fremont, located in the San Francisco Bay Area, is a city of approximately 175,000 residents. Newark, surrounded by Fremont, is a smaller city of about 45,000. Both cities can be described as "suburban" - neither urban nor rural. Students from the following schools were surveyed:

Mission San Jose High School	-	17 students
Hopkins Junior High School	-	15 students
Thornton Junior High School	-	15 students
Newark Memorial High school	-	13 students
Kennedy High School	-	10 students
Irvington High School	-	10 students
Washington High School	-	9 students
American High School	-	8 students
Walters Junior High School	-	6 students

The students attending the schools identified came from diverse economic backgrounds. Their schools were located in areas from those servicing primarily middle to upper class families to those whose student body was generally from middle to lower class households. The student population studied in this thesis ranged from three students whose family income was less than \$15,000/year to eight students from families with incomes over \$100,000/year. An attempt was made by the researcher to select schools (and thus students) from a cross section of demographic areas.

The San Francisco Bay Area in general and Fremont and Newark in particular are multi-cultural regions. This is especially evident in the ethnicity of the schools from which the 103 successful students studied attended during the 1990-1991 school year. They included schools with a minority enrollment spanning from a low of 29% to a high of 56%. Fifty-seven percent of the successful students in this thesis were minority, non white students.

The tables below provide further information about the population of students studied in this thesis:

Male **Female**
44 **59**

AGE	# of Students
12	7
13	12
14	21
15	11
16	10
17	21
18	21

Grade	# of Students
7	17
8	23
9	12
10	12
11	14
12	25

Grade Point Average	# Students
3.2	1
3.3	7
3.4	6
3.5	19
3.6	12
3.7	9
3.8	16
3.9	6
4.0	23
4.1	1
4.2	2
4.3	1

Ethnic Identity	# of Students
Chinese/Chinese American	12
Japanese/Japanese	

Ethnic Identity	# of Students
Black	5

American	2	White	45
Filipino	8	Mexican/ Mexican American	6
Pakistani/ East Indian	8	Latin/Latin American	1
Other Asians	9	Spanish/Spanish American	1
Portuguese	1	Declined to State	5

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME OF STUDENTS (In dollars)

Income	# of Students	Income	# of Students
0 - 15,000	3	60,000 - 80,000	23
15,000 - 25,000	2	80,000 - 100,000	13
25,000 - 40,000	13	over 100,000	7
40,000 - 60,000	15	over 250,000	1

DID NOT STATE: 26

The students were identified by their teacher, counselor, or principal. The researcher visited ten schools and met personally with teachers, counselors, and/or principals. A copy of the successful student survey (appendix one) was given to each along with an explanation of the purpose of the research - to discover some of the factors that contribute to the success of successful secondary school students. The teacher, counselor, or principal was asked to identify successful students at his or her school based upon the criteria outlined on page one of the survey and to administer the survey to the students. It was up to the individual whether or not to allow the survey to be completed in class or

on the student's own time. Most students completed the survey outside class (according to the researcher's school contacts). When students completed the survey they returned it to the appropriate person who notified the researcher that it was complete and ready for pick-up.

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the appropriate authorities: school district director of secondary education and school principals. Personal visits and/or phone calls were made to these people by the researcher requesting permission which was given verbally in all cases excepting one. The exception was a high school principal who declined to allow the research at her school because she believed that school's students had been "researched enough."

Teachers and counselors were generally cooperative and showed an interest in the study. Those who were not cited the time factor and length of the survey as reasons for not participating. However, for the most part, the researcher was successful in locating successful students to complete the survey. One hundred thirty-two surveys were given to teachers, counselors, or principals to administer. One hundred three were returned to the researcher. Perhaps it was the population of those being surveyed - successful students - that allowed for the high return rate.

It should be noted that although the criteria for a "successful student" was written on the survey and the researcher attempted to answer any questions posed by principals, counselors, or teachers administering the survey,

the survey administrators were responsible for selecting who they believed most fit the criteria for a successful student. No limits or restrictions were placed on them for choosing a precise amount of students, a certain proportion of males or females, or a specific number of students representing a different category or classification. Additional surveys could be obtained if necessary; however, no survey administrator requested additional ones. Seven surveys were returned to the researcher blank. Twenty-two were never returned to the survey administrators by the students.

DATA COLLECTION

Data on the students studied in this thesis were collected through the use of two instruments: a survey and a personal interview. Initial field testing of these instruments was conducted. Participants in the field testing were not part of the survey and were not interviewed for this study. Written evaluation of the instruments concerning clarity, structure, and validity was requested of the volunteers. The writer made modifications and refinements as suggested - the primary one being to shorten the length of the survey.

THE SURVEY

The 103 students studied in this thesis completed a ten

page, 83 question survey. The survey contained a variety of questions about different factors that could influence student success. The questions were concerned with the students'

- o general background (age, sex, grade, ethnic identity)
- o family life
- o social life
- o school life
- o extra curricular activities
- o study habits
- o future plans
- o beliefs - relevant to success

An attempt was made for the survey to question many aspects of the student's life that may have contributed to their success. The basis for the majority of the questions was the literature on the subject of achievement, student success, and at-risk students. The other questions were created by the researcher in an effort to explore some possible explanations for the students' success that were not discussed in the literature.

The questions were designed with the intent of searching for commonalities among the successful students. Although no two students could be expected to answer all questions on the survey in the same way, the researcher was looking for certain questions that a majority of students gave the same answer to. It was thought by the researcher that certain questions might stand out as a result their being answered alike by a conspicuous percentage of students and thus provide clues about which factors most contribute to student success.

Students were asked on the survey to complete short answer questions or to select the best answer in multiple

choice questions. Multiple choice questions offered from two to eight choices - dependent on the content of the question. Four questions asked respondents to rank their answer choices.

In addition to the 81 questions, the survey also contained a cover letter to the students explaining the purpose of the survey, outlining the criteria for a successful student, and identifying the researcher. Also, at the end of the survey, students were asked if they would volunteer to be interviewed. If the student was willing to submit to an interview, he or she was asked to provide their name, address, and telephone number to the researcher so an interview could be arranged. If the student did not choose to provide this information, he or she would remain anonymous.

Note: A copy of the survey and cover letter can be found as Appendix 1.

THE PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Fifty-six students volunteered to participate in an interview. Twelve students were randomly selected by the researcher and interviewed individually at a variety of locations, including their home, school, or at a fast-food restaurant located in Fremont.

The interview consisted of 15 open-ended questions - twelve of which had more than one part. Like with the survey, the personal interview questions were based on literature concerned with student achievement, student success, and at-

risk students. (See Appendix 2 for a copy of the personal interview questions.) The purpose of the personal interview was to ask the students questions related to their success that could not be answered adequately in a survey. Again the researcher was looking for commonalities in the respondents answers.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data in this thesis were obtained from a survey administered to 103 successful secondary school students and an interview with a random sample of 12 of those students. A table of random numbers was used to select the sample of 12 students. The type of data gathered was primarily nominal data. The data will be presented in chapter four in the following format:

1. Responses to each of the 81 questions found in the survey will be reported in raw numbers. A table outlining these data will be included for each question. A brief discussion of the findings will follow some tables - as appropriate.
2. Responses to the personal interview questions will be discussed in narrative form following each question.
3. A final narrative discussion of the overall findings including tables as appropriate.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This thesis was designed to determine the factors that contributed to the success of 103 successful secondary school students in two Northern California cities. An eighty-three question survey was completed and returned to the writer by 103 students. Results of each question on the survey will be presented below in table format, including the question and the raw number of responses to each answer choice.

In addition, personal interviews were conducted with 12 randomly selected students who completed the survey and volunteered to be interviewed. Results of the interviews will be presented in narrative format. Specifically, each interview question will be provided along with a summary of the students' answers.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

1. Age							
	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>
n=	7	12	21	11	10	21	21

2. Sex

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
n=	44	59

The schools the students attended had a total male/female breakdown of 52% male and 48% female. Therefore, the fact that 57.3% of the successful students identified by the principals, teachers, and counselors were female seems unusually disproportionate.

3. School

	<u>Mission San Jose High School</u>
n=	17

	<u>Newark Memorial High School</u>
n=	13

	<u>Washington High School</u>
n=	9

	<u>Hopkins Junior High</u>
n=	15

	<u>Kennedy High School</u>
n=	10

	<u>American High School</u>
n=	8

	<u>Thornton Junior High</u>
n=	15

	<u>Irvington Junior High</u>
n=	10

	<u>Walters Junior High</u>
n=	6

4. City

	<u>Fremont</u>	<u>Newark</u>
n=	91	12

5. Grade

	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>
n=	17	23	12	12	14	25

6. Grade Point Average (est.)

	<u>3.2</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>3.4</u>	<u>3.5</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>3.7</u>
n=	1	7	6	19	12	9
	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.1</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>4.3</u>
n=	16	6	23	1	2	1

The Average G.P.A. of all students surveyed was 3.72

7. Ethnic Identity

n=	<u>American Indian/Alaskan Native</u>	<u>Black(not Hispanic Origin)</u>
	0	n= 5
n=	<u>Chinese/Chinese American</u>	<u>White(not Hispanic Origin)</u>
	12	n= 45
n=	<u>Japanese/Japanese American</u>	<u>Mexican/Mexican American</u>
	2	n= 6
n=	<u>Filipino</u>	<u>Latin/Latin American</u>
	8	n= 1
n=	<u>Pakistani/East Indian</u>	<u>Spanish/Spanish American</u>
	8	n= 2
n=	<u>Other Asian</u>	<u>Declined to state</u>
	9	n= 5

8. Who do you live with?

n=	<u>Both parents</u>	<u>One parent</u>	<u>father</u>	<u>mother</u>
	88	15	n= 3	n= 12

A significant majority of the students resided with both parents.

9. Approximate family income in dollars.

	<u>0 - 15,000</u>	<u>15,000 - 25,000</u>	<u>25,000 - 40,000</u>
n=	3	2	13

	<u>40,000 - 60,000</u>	<u>60,000 - 80,000</u>	<u>80,000 - 100,000</u>
n=	15	23	13
	<u>Over 100,000</u>	<u>Over 250,000</u>	<u>Did not state</u>
n=	7	1	23

A large percentage of students (22.3) did not answer this question. The researcher asked six students who did not respond why they hadn't. All said they did not know the answer. Perhaps those who did were not entirely accurate, however, there appears to be a good cross section of students representing varying incomes.

10. Does your mother work now? If yes, occupation.

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	73	28

Note: Two students' mothers were deceased.

Because such a large percentage of students had working mothers, it does not appear - for the secondary students studied - that a mother's working impeded student performance.

No occupation stood out. The most commonly named occupation was clerical/secretary jobs - named six times. It was followed by "manager" named five times and teacher named four times.

11. Does your father work now? If yes, occupation:

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	98	2

Note: Three Students' fathers were deceased.

A huge percentage of the students had working fathers. Again, no occupation was dominant. The most commonly named

were engineer - six times, business owner - five times, and business manager - five times.

12. Number of brothers and sisters you have? _____
ages? _____.

	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
n=	10	47	28	6
	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
n=	9	1	1	2

Forty-eight students had older siblings. Forty-Five had younger ones. (Some had both) Obviously, the dominant number of siblings was one. However, this appears to follow general demographic trends.

13. How much were you read to in your pre-school years?

	<u>often</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>never</u>
n=	59	30	11	3

Since over 86% remember being read to either often or sometimes, it appears that being read to during the pre-school years is a significant factor influencing the success of the students studied.

14. How would you describe yourself?

	<u>very religious</u>	<u>religious</u>
n=	10	39
	<u>a little religious</u>	<u>not religious</u>
n=	36	18

Although 82.5% of the students considered themselves at least "a little religious," the degree of religious conviction does not appear overly significant.

15. How much were/are morals, values, love for others, and the difference between right and wrong stressed in your home?

n=	<u>stressed very much</u> 78	<u>stressed</u> 17
n=	<u>stressed a little</u> 8	<u>not stressed</u> 0

Based on these percentages it appears that stressing morals and values may have been a significant factor in the success achieved by the students studied.

16. Which statement best describes how you were taught discipline?

Mostly punished for poor behavior, sometimes rewarded for good behavior.
n= 30

Mostly rewarded for good behavior, sometimes punished for bad behavior.
n= 20

A balance between being rewarded for good behavior and punishment for poor behavior.
n= 53

Although "a balance" was named over 50% of the time, it does not seem that any answer stood out as being dominant.

17. Rank the methods of punishment most often used in your home.

Answers ranked first appear below:

n=	<u>grounding</u> 17	<u>corporal</u> 11	<u>lectured</u> 62	<u>none</u> 3
n=	<u>denied privileged</u> 4	<u>forced to give up activity</u> 1	<u>other</u> 5	

Lectures appear to be dominant. It seems significant that over 97% were disciplined in some form. Only one student was forced to give up an activity or sport as the primary

discipline method.

18. In general, how long do you get along with your brothers or sisters?

	<u>very well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>somewhat</u>	<u>not very well</u>
n=	29	47	16	1

Note: Ten students had no siblings. Almost three out of four got along well or very well with brothers and sisters. Only one student claimed to not get along with his brother.

19. How familiar are you with your father's hopes, ambitions, and goals?

	<u>very familiar</u>	<u>somewhat familiar</u>	<u>not familiar</u>
n=	31	46	23

Approximately 75% of the students were at least somewhat familiar with their father's goals. This seems to be a significantly high percentage.

20. How familiar are you with your mother's hopes, ambitions, and goals?

	<u>very familiar</u>	<u>somewhat familiar</u>	<u>not familiar</u>
n=	39	49	14

Whereas 75% of the students were at least somewhat familiar with their father's goals, 85% were at least somewhat familiar with their mother's.

21. Do you have regular chores around the home?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	81	22

Note: Of the 22 who said they did not have regular chores, 14 had part-time jobs. Therefore, 92% of the students had regularly scheduled work of some kind.

22. Do you have a part-time or full-time job away from your home? If so, what is it?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	43	60

Of the 43 students who said yes, 37 were 16 or older. Fast-food restaurant worker was the most named job - 29 of the 43 students did that type of work. Since almost 42% of the students held jobs, it does not seem that working while attending school impeded the performance of those students studied.

23. Do you have a best friend?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	82	21

With almost 80% of the respondents claiming to have a "best friend," close friendship may have been an important variable in their success.

24. How many "close" friends do you have?

	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3,4</u>	<u>5,8</u>	<u>9+</u>
n=	0	3	13	42	31	14

Approximately 71% of the students had a small group of three to eight "close" friends.

25. Do you now or have you ever had friends or peers who are successful students who you model yourself after?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	67	36

Nearly two out of three of the students had a successful student model among their friends or peers.

26. In general, are your friends involved with drugs?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	1	102

It appears safe to conclude, based on the above percentages, that the successful students studied did not have friends who were involved with drugs.

27. In general, do your friends drink on a regular basis? (Regular basis means they drink at parties, to have fun - generally drink at least once per month. It does not mean an occasional drink on special occasions.)

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	21	82

Although more of the successful students' friends used alcohol regularly (as compared to drugs), four out of five said their friends were not regular users of alcohol.

28. Do you drink on a regular basis?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	7	96

Six of the seven students who answered yes were sixteen or older. Four of the seven wrote on the survey that although they drink, they do not "get drunk." It seems apparent that alcohol use on a regular basis and successful performance at school do not coincide - at least for the students studied.

29. Do you have a steady/serious girlfriend/boyfriend?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	24	79

Two out of three of the yes respondents were in grades eleven or twelve. More than three out of four of the students were not "seriously" involved in relationships.

30. At what age did you become seriously interested in the opposite sex?

n=	<u>8 or less</u> 12	<u>9 - 10</u> 13	<u>11 - 12</u> 27	<u>13 - 14</u> 35
n=	<u>15 - 16</u> 8	<u>17+</u> 2	<u>still not</u> 6	

There does not appear to be anything unusual or conspicuous about these responses.

31. Please rank the activities you engage in with your friends.

1 = engage in most often 7 = least often engage in.
Ranked first:

n=	<u>studying</u> 12	<u>playing sports</u> 27	<u>shopping</u> 8	<u>attending sports</u> 3
n=	<u>watching T.V./movies</u> 17	<u>talking on the phone</u> 51		
n=	<u>attending dances and/or parties</u> 10	<u>other</u> 4		

One activity, talking on the phone, was named number one by almost twice the next most often named activity, playing sports. It appears that the successful students studied were not different when it came to enjoying what might be considered "traditional teenage activities."

32. Do you have any close "family friendships." (Family friendships are when your parents are friends with a friend's parents and your families plan parties, vacations, and other activities together.)

n=	<u>yes</u> 63	<u>no</u> 40
----	------------------	-----------------

It appears significant that over 60% of the students were close to the *families* of their friends.

33. In general, how much do you enjoy school?

	<u>very much</u>	<u>some</u>	<u>a little</u>	<u>not at all</u>
n=	32	59	10	2

Although 32% of the students said they enjoyed school very much, 59 students said they liked school only some and 10 students said they liked school only "a little." Therefore, it does not appear necessary for students to love school to do well at it.

34. Which is more important in your enjoying a subject or class?

	Subject matter - regardless of who is teaching it.
n=	12

	Teacher - the teacher can make the subject interesting or uninteresting.
n=	91

An overwhelming majority of the students felt the teacher was what most influenced their enjoyment of a class.

35. How much do you participate in class? (ask questions, offer opinions, comments, etc.)

	<u>often</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>never</u>
n=	64	31	8	0

It seems that participation in class - over 92% of the students said they participated at least sometimes - was something the successful students studied had in common with each other.

36. How many of your teachers do you like?

	<u>all</u>	<u>most</u>	<u>some</u>	<u>few</u>	<u>none</u>
n=	16	64	17	4	1

In general, the successful students liked their teachers.

Over 95% said they liked at least "some" of their teachers.

37. How many of your teachers do you respect?

	<u>all</u>	<u>most</u>	<u>some</u>	<u>few</u>	<u>none</u>
n=	48	37	15	3	0

Over 82% of the students respected most or all of their teachers.

38. How many of your teachers do you consider role models for you?

	<u>all</u>	<u>most</u>	<u>some</u>	<u>few</u>	<u>none</u>
n=	5	16	45	27	10

Despite the fact that 37 students had few or no role models among their teachers, almost two out of three of the students considered at least some of their teachers role models.

39. Rank the qualities you most admire in teachers.

1 = most admire 5 = least admire

Most admired:

	<u>knowledge of the subject</u>	<u>interesting teaching style</u>	
n=	29	41	
	<u>sense of humor</u>	<u>friendliness</u>	<u>classroom control</u>
n=	21	28	7

The students named "interesting teaching style" most often but no quality was dominant. It appears a variety of factors influenced the students' opinion of their teachers.

40. Which do you prefer?

	<u>a generally strict teaching style</u>
n=	10

	<u>a generally loose, relaxed teaching style</u>
n=	93

Obviously, the students studied preferred a relaxed teaching style.

41. Rank the following methods of learning.

1 = learn best from. 6 = learn least from
Named #1 most often.

n=	<u>reading</u>	<u>watching others, modeling their behavior</u>
	14	16

n=	<u>lectures, discussions</u>
	25

n=	<u>experience, mistakes</u>	<u>group projects</u>
	40	17

n=	<u>movies, films, computers</u>
	9

The students learned best from a variety of methods, however, learning from experience and mistakes, was mentioned number one 15 more times than the next most named method, lectures and discussions.

42. Where do you usually study?

n=	<u>school library</u>	<u>public library</u>	<u>friend's house</u>
	0	0	4

n=	<u>bedroom</u>	<u>other room in home</u>	<u>other</u>
	79	18	2

Over 94% of the students studied in their homes - more than three out of four in their bedrooms.

43. When do you usually study?

n=	<u>immediately after school</u>	<u>late afternoon</u>
	15	32

n=	<u>early evening</u>	<u>late evening</u>
	35	21

The students studied at varying times. No particular

study time stood out.

44. What kind of environment do you normally study in?

	<u>quiet area</u>	<u>with T.V. on</u>	<u>with radio on</u>
n=	48	15	40

Less than half of the students studied in a "quiet" environment. It would seem, therefore, that the students studied could succeed studying in environments that may have traditionally been considered distracting.

45. Do you normally study alone or with others?

	<u>alone</u>	<u>with others</u>
n=	94	9

A huge majority of the students normally studied alone. This appears to be a significant habit of the students studied.

46. If you study with others, who do you study with?

	<u>friends</u>	<u>parents</u>	<u>brothers or sisters</u>	<u>other</u>
n=	7	1	0	1

Because only nine students normally studied with others, this question does not appear to be significant. However, only one student normally studied with her parents.

47. How often do you need help studying?

	<u>often</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>never</u>
n=	0	37	56	10

Based on their answers, the majority of students appeared to be independent in their study habits. However, a significant percentage needed help on occasion.

48. If you need help, who do you mostly get it from?

n=	<u>friends</u> 59	<u>parents</u> 27	<u>brothers/sisters</u> 8
n=	<u>teachers</u> 8	<u>other</u> 1	

The students' peers were named more than twice as often as their parents as the primary source for help. Of the 27 students who named parents as the person who most often gave help, 21 were in grades seven or eight. Therefore it appears that as the students got older they relied less on parents and more on friends when asking for help when studying.

49. How much do you enjoy studying?

n=	<u>very much</u> 5	<u>some</u> 52	<u>a little</u> 30	<u>not at all</u> 16
----	-----------------------	-------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

Although nearly 80% of the students enjoyed studying "a little" or "some," only about 5% said they enjoyed studying "very much."

50. When you were younger, were you a member of any youth organizations? (Boy/Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, Youth Sports, etc.)

n=	<u>yes</u> 65	<u>no</u> 38
----	------------------	-----------------

51. If yes, please list those you were involved with.

n=	<u>scouts</u> 40	<u>sports</u> 35	<u>church groups</u> 13
----	---------------------	---------------------	----------------------------

Note: Figures add up to less than 100% due to the fact that only some of the 103 students were involved in these activities. Also, the raw numbers add to more than 65 because some students were involved with more than one of the groups.

52. Have you taken lessons in music, athletics, dance, or drama?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	87	16

53. If so, what lessons have you taken?

(Top five responses - many students listed more than one)

	<u>music</u>	<u>sports</u>	<u>dance</u>	<u>drama</u>	<u>art</u>
n=	63	59	31	18	10

54. What extra-curricular activities are you involved in? Please list them in order from most time spent on to

least time spent on.

1 = most time spent.

-- Most often ranked as number one or two as most time spent on.

	<u>sports</u>	<u>clubs</u>	<u>music</u>
n=	62	35	25
	<u>dance</u>	<u>student government/leadership</u>	<u>church</u>
n=	20	35	18

Note: Seven students ranked more than one choice as number one.

55. Which do you consider most important?

	<u>extra-curricular activities</u>	<u>academics</u>	<u>equally important</u>
n=	2	29	72

Based upon the responses to questions 50-55, it appears evident that involvement in extra-curricular activities of all types has been a part of the lives of the population studied. Further, although only two of the 103 students said extra-curricular activities were more important than academics, almost 70% of the students felt activities were as important as academics.

61. How much do you believe your goals will become reality, actually occur?

n=	<u>believe very strongly</u> 69	<u>believe</u> 31
n=	<u>believe a little</u> 3	<u>do not believe</u> 0

It appears obvious that the successful students studied believed in setting goals. Almost without exception they set goals for themselves and visualized the successful attainment of those goals.

62. How much are your parents involved with your goal setting?

n=	<u>very involved</u> 19	<u>involved</u> 40	<u>a little involved</u> 28	<u>not involved</u> 16
----	----------------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------

Almost 60% of the students had their parents "involved" or "very involved" in their goal setting and only 15.5% of the students said their parents were "not involved" in helping them set goals. It would appear that the students generally sought some guidance from parents when setting goals.

63. How much do you support the following statement:
"Difficult times are good because they enable us to learn, grow, and become stronger."

n=	<u>very much</u> 53	<u>some</u> 41	<u>a little</u> 8	<u>not at all</u> 1
----	------------------------	-------------------	----------------------	------------------------

Over 90% of the students supported the statement which would appear to show they believed bad times can be used as learning experiences.

64. Do prefer to participate in team sports or individual sports?

	<u>team sports</u>	<u>individual sports</u>
n=	67	36

Almost twice as many students preferred team sports over individual sports, however, this does not seem to be especially unusual and may reflect the population as a whole.

65. How often do you feel bored?

	<u>often</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>never</u>
n=	12	50	34	7

These figures do not seem significant. The students had varying levels of boredom.

66. How often do you feel depressed?

	<u>often</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>never</u>
n=	11	38	47	7

Although only 10.7% of the students felt depressed often, 93.2% had experienced depression. Most, 82.5%, felt depressed sometimes or seldom. Again, these figures do not appear to be exceptional.

67. Rank the following people from one - those having the most positive influence on your life - to four - those having the least positive influence on your life. (Results show number of times ranked first).

	<u>parents</u>	<u>teachers</u>	<u>friends</u>	<u>other relatives</u>
n=	56	7	29	11

Parents, as might be expected, were ranked first by over half of the students. Friends were considered most influential or ranked second most influential by 83.8% of the students. Teachers, generally, had the least influence on the students lives.

68. Of the people you know personally, who do you consider your role model? Name (first name only) and relationship: _____

n=	<u>parent</u> 26	<u>brother/sister</u> 11	<u>friend</u> 20
n=	<u>teacher</u> 23	<u>other relative</u> 6	<u>none</u> 17

Although no particular group stood out - the students found their role models in various relationships - 83.5% of the students had *someone* they considered as their role model.

69. How important do you consider it to be to have role models?

n=	<u>very important</u> 30	<u>important</u> 56	<u>not important</u> 17
----	-----------------------------	------------------------	----------------------------

83.5% of the students considered having a role model at least "important."

70. Do you plan to attend college?

n=	<u>yes</u> 101	<u>no</u> 2
----	-------------------	----------------

Obviously, college appeared to be an almost natural part of the students' plans for their future.

71. What career do you want to pursue? _____
not sure _____

Note: 22 different careers were mentioned. No career choice seemed to stand apart from the others. It may be significant that only eight said "none."

Top career choices:

n=	<u>doctor</u> 23	<u>lawyer</u> 11	<u>teacher</u> 9	<u>business</u> 6
----	---------------------	---------------------	---------------------	----------------------

72. If you were forced to choose between a high-paying job that you did not enjoy and a low-paying job that you enjoyed very much, which would you choose?

	<u>high pay / low enjoyment</u>	<u>low pay / high enjoyment</u>
n=	29	74

What appears to be a significant majority preferred a job with low pay but high enjoyment.

73. How important is it for you to have a job where you help others?

	<u>very important</u>	<u>somewhat important</u>	<u>not important</u>
n=	46	51	6

94.2% of the students considered having a job in which they help others at least "somewhat important."

74. Do you believe you will get married?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
n=	99	1

Note: Two students (1.9%) wrote "not sure" on the survey.

An overwhelming majority of the students saw themselves getting married in the future.

75. If yes, at what age (approximately) will you get married? _____

	<u>23</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>other</u>
n=	11	22	12	11	11	36

Although age 25 was mentioned most frequently, no particular age seemed to be overly mentioned.

76. How much television do you watch on a school day?

	<u>less than one hour</u>	<u>1-2 hours</u>	<u>3-4 hours</u>
n=	34	46	19

	<u>5-6 hours</u>	<u>over 7 hours</u>
n=	4	0

77. How much television do you watch on non-school days?

	<u>less than one hour</u>	<u>1-2 hours</u>	<u>3-4 hours</u>
n=	23	49	18

n= 5-6 hours over 7 hours
 8 5

It appeared moderation was the key in the students' television watching. A small percentage of students watched five or more hours of television and more than two out of three watched at least an hour of television.

78. How would you describe your sense of humor (your ability to laugh at things, including yourself).

n= very good good fair poor
 63 37 3 0

Over 97% of the students felt they had a "good" or "very good" sense of humor.

79. In general do you believe that your life is pre-determined, controlled by fate and forces beyond your control or do you believe that your life is controlled by you - your decisions determine what will happen in your life.

n= predetermined, controlled by fate
 10

n= controlled by my decisions
 88

Although five students wrote on the survey that they believed *both* had an equal influence, a very significant majority of the students believed that they themselves most control their lives.

80. Which of the following was most influential in achieving your success?

n= parents yourself friends teachers religion luck
 34 58 4 5 9 4

Note: Eleven students marked more than one answer.

It appears that the students themselves and their parents were most influential in their achieving success, however, there were exceptions.

81. How often have you been "hooked" on activities that you felt a strange urge to master? (Examples: Nintendo, Skateboarding, Skating, Yo-Yo, etc.)

	<u>very often</u>	<u>often</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>never</u>
n=	32	15	39	11	6

Nearly 84% of the students had been "hooked" on activities at least "sometimes." Almost half were hooked "often" or "very often."

82. How would you describe yourself with regard to manners?

	<u>very well mannered</u>	<u>well mannered</u>	<u>not well mannered</u>
n=	72	31	0

All of the students studied considered themselves at least "well mannered."

83. Generally, using the definition of "successful student" outlined at the beginning of this survey, what percentage of your friends would you classify as successful?

	<u>over 75%</u>	<u>50-75%</u>	<u>25-50%</u>	<u>less than 25%</u>
n=	50	36	15	2

83.5% of the students classified at least half of their friends as successful students.

RESULTS OF THE PERSONAL INTERVIEW

1. You have been identified by your teacher (or counselor) as an exceptionally successful student. Why do you think you have been a successful student?

Answers tended to fall into one of two categories: Those who said their parents were instrumental in their success and those who said their friends and peers had the most influence. Six students spoke primarily about how their parents got them off to a good start by encouraging them to excel - and expecting success. Those students seemed to agree that at a certain point - anywhere between grade three and six - they became self motivated.

Five students claimed that thier friends and peers were the most important factors behind their success. These students were part of a social group where doing well in school was encouraged. The students claimed that their friends supported them and often inspired them to do well.

The most interesting answer came from an exchange student from Sweden. She claimed she did well because, "School in America is so easy!" She said she was only an "average" student in Sweden but, compared to her

country's educational standards, it was not difficult to be a successful student in the United States.

2. How old were you when you began school? Did you attend pre-school? What were your early impressions of school? Did you enjoy school from the outset? Have you ever hated school?

Without exception, the twelve students interviewed enjoyed school from the outset and had positive initial first experiences in school. Four students mentioned that they looked forward to school because they had older brothers or sisters who were attending - and enjoying - school. Five of the twelve attended pre-school and the rest began school in Kindergarten. The students began school anywhere between ages two and five. One student remembered crying when she was taken out of her pre-school for two weeks for a family vacation.

None of the students could remember hating school for an extended length of time - like a semester or more. Five spoke of difficult times such as moving to a new school and "not knowing anybody," but their negative feelings about school were temporary. It seems apparent that having good initial experiences in school was a trait common to the successful students studied.

3. Would you describe your parents as strict or lenient?

How were you disciplined? Are your parents equally strict? Do you believe that fear of punishment was a factor in your success?

In general, students described their parents as lenient or "more lenient than strict." Only two considered their parents strict. Four students said their parents were equally strict. Five said their mother was more strict than their father; three said their father was the stricter parent.

The students were disciplined in a variety of ways ranging from "grounding" (confinement to their home during free time) to "just being talked to." In all cases the students knew why they were being punished. No student believed that fear of being punished was a significant factor in their success. Four felt it may have been a minor motivating factor when they were "younger."

4. What is your greatest strength? What is your biggest weakness?

The students gave a variety of answers, however, the most common theme was persistence, determination to succeed, and a "never give up" attitude. Eight students listed those traits as their greatest strength. Other

strengths mentioned were generosity, leadership ability, social skills, and being a good listener.

Common weaknesses of the students were procrastination, shyness, sloppiness, "getting overly caught up in things," and the most common answer (mentioned six times) - becoming anxious or overly nervous about too many things.

5. How do you learn best? Think about a teacher, class, or experience in which you learned a great deal. Why do you think you learned so much from that teacher, class, or experience?

The most common answer was a certain teacher made a certain class especially interesting. Nine of the students discussed how a certain class was exceptional and the teacher made a lasting impression. Common reasons stated for a class being memorable included the teacher's friendliness and ability to relate to the students as well as general feelings of comfort and security with both the teacher and classmates.

Two students related that they learned best when they were forced to "do something" or try something. Examples given were putting on a play or being "forced" to learn how to write a term paper using proper footnotes. As one student explained, "I learn best when I do it not hear about it." Another student claimed she

learned best when she felt pressure. Unless she was under pressure to learn - either from others or pressure she put on herself (like doing well in school) - she didn't believe she learned as well.

6. Describe your behavior in a typical class. Do you participate often? Where do you sit? Do you ask a lot of questions?

Without exception the students who were interviewed said they participated often in their class. Some said that they were quiet at first but participated more often as the class progressed. Eight students said they sat at the front or "near the front" of their class. Three students said they sat "wherever my friends sat" and it didn't really matter where they were in the classroom. Nine students said they asked a lot of questions - as the situation demanded. They weren't shy about asking for clarification or help. Two students preferred to ask their friends (who knew) questions after class. One student said he was quiet during the class but asked the teacher questions after class.

7. Do you consider yourself an optimist or pessimist? Why?

All twelve students considered themselves optimists.

They looked forward to their future and believed good things would happen to them. The reasons given for their optimistic feelings were split between parental and peer group influence. Six students believed their parents were optimistic and, generally, this attitude was transferred to them. The other six students felt their optimism was a result of being surrounded by optimistic friends.

8. What are your professional and non-professional goals?

Professional goals were to attend a "good college" (all 12 students) become a doctor (three students), work on Broadway (one student), become a lawyer (two students), fly airplanes in the Air Force (one student) and work to assist developing countries in an international help organization (one student). Four students were unsure about their professional career goals.

"Travel" was mentioned most often as a non-professional goal - named by ten students. The students expressed a desire to travel "all over the world" and see new things. One student wanted to learn to sky dive while another said she just wanted a "happy family."

9. Describe your parents' influence on you. What most did

you learn from them? How did they teach you?

A variety of answers to this question were given. The most frequent response had to do with parents teaching morals and values through their actions and words. Five students said their morals and values came from their parents and that is how they were most influenced by their mother and father.

Other answers included learning social skills and how to get along with others (three students had this general response), being encouraged to try new things and not being afraid to take risks, problems solving and how to deal with problems, being encouraged at a young age to form good study habits, and the development of a "high expectation attitude."

The students were most often taught through watching and modeling their parents' behavior and being talked to in a comforting and understanding way. Being "talked to" by parents was mentioned by ten students.

10. How do you go about solving the problems you experience in life?

With only one exception the students attacked their problems immediately. Only one student said she dealt with a problem by "ignoring it, hoping it will go away." The others expressed a desire to solve the problem as

soon as possible so that, as one student put it, "it wont play on my mind" (bother him).

Three students preferred to keep their problems to themselves. Those that felt a need to talk about their problems in order to help solve them normally talked with friends. Six of the nine students who liked talking about their problems spoke to friends first. Two approached parents first. One went to his school counselor.

The students' consensus for a method for solving problems generally had to do with exploring as many options and alternatives as possible before deciding on a solution. Most (nine) felt it important to get the input of others - their thoughts and opinions on possible solutions.

11. What person has had the biggest positive influence on you? Why and how has this person influenced you?

Five students named their mother as having the biggest positive influence on them. Three students said it was their father. Three said it was a friend who most influenced them and one said it was an older sister. The specific reasons why these people had the influence they did varied, but a common theme was they all taught the students valuable lessons either directly or indirectly. For example, one student spoke about how her mom sat down

with her each night helping her through difficult homework assignments. Another related how his dad taught him, indirectly, how to work hard simply by working hard himself. Watching his father, this student said, inspired him to try hard and not complain when things sometimes don't go well. "I learned from my father," he explained, "not to give up when things get tough. He doesn't come out and say it. He just lives that way."

12. How do you feel about taking risks? What kind of risks have you taken in order to achieve success? (For example, have you placed yourself in a position where you could fail - tried out for a team, part in a play, run for office, etc.)

Ten of the students said that taking risks was something they normally do and it was necessary in order to achieve success. However six of those students remarked that they did not necessarily enjoy taking risks but the alternative - not trying something and later regretting it - often pushed them into risking failure. The students spoke about times in their life when they did not try something and later felt sorry that they had not even made an attempt. One student said, "There is no failure. Just go for it. If you don't get it at least you've learned from the experience."

Two students said they didn't like taking risks and

rarely took them. One said she valued security and feared failure. She had taken some risks - like running for office - but did not seek out "risky situations" because "I get so uptight." She went on to explain how her fear of failure motivated her. One student said she considered her inability to place herself into risky situations a weakness. As a result she "forced" herself to take risks - even so far as to spend her senior year of high school studying in a foreign country, away from family, friends, and the security of home.

13. Have you ever failed at something you really wanted to succeed at? How do you handle failure?

Every student interviewed could recall failing at something important to him or her. Some remembered childhood disappointments like striking out in an important little league game or not being chosen for a major part in a school play. Others recounted more recent setbacks such as losing an election for class vice-president or failing to be hired for a part-time job. All twelve students said that although they were disappointed when they failed, failure did not discourage them from trying new, different things. In fact several students said their failure helped them in the long run. For example, the student who lost the election said she gained valuable experience and learned enough from her

failure that she was able to win an election for student body secretary the next year.

14. Do you worry a lot or are you a more relaxed person?

The results were almost evenly split. Six students said they were more on the nervous, anxious side. Five said that although they did worry at times, they tended to be relaxed and at ease more often than not. One student said she couldn't decide. Her anxiety level fluctuated, she explained.

There does not appear to be an advantage or disadvantage either way. Those who tended to worry a lot mentioned that their anxious feelings kept them alert, motivated - and successful. Those who were more relaxed told how they could concentrate better and focus on what they were doing better in a relaxed state. It seemed not to matter if the students studied worried a lot or were more relaxed. They were successful both ways.

15. Generally, are you a happy person? Do you foresee yourself as being a happy person in the future?

Unanimously, the students claimed to be happy most of the time. Further, although some expressed some apprehension over what the future might bring, they all foresaw themselves being happy and successful in the

years ahead and looked forward to growing up. Many expressed excitement about new opportunities and greater independence. It appears that being happy and optimistic about future happiness is a trait that the students interviewed shared.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

A close examination of the findings reported in this thesis appears to show that the factors that may have contributed to the success of the secondary school students studied in this thesis are varied and complex. Yet, there does seem to be some distinctive features common to a majority of the students studied. For example, the students tended to be goal oriented, happy, and optimistic about their future. They had positive initial experiences in school, appreciated their teachers, and usually studied alone. Still, other factors appeared less important. For instance, it did not seem to affect the performance of the students studied if they watched a moderate amount of television or talked on the phone with friends and it did not appear to matter what the students' parents did for a living.

A closer analysis of the key findings and recommendations by the researcher can be found in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to discover what factors contributed to the success of 103 successful secondary school students in two Northern California cities. The thesis was based on the premise that if students know more about why and how some of their peers were able to achieve success, they may, with some appropriate adaptations, model the high achievers and become more successful themselves. Further, if teachers and parents know more about successful students, they can use the information to teach their own students and children how to be more successful.

A review of the related literature appears to show that successful individuals throughout history were not normally born successes. Often, some of the most successful people arose from adverse backgrounds, difficult circumstances, and initial failure to achieve significant success. The literature also seemed to show how modeling the behavior of successful people was a possible avenue to success. Finally, the literature showed that the factors contributing to the success of successful students were extensive, varied, and complex.

Seven research questions were presented in chapter one:

1. What are the characteristics of successful students?

2. How are at-risk students contrasted with successful students?
3. What kind of backgrounds do successful students have?
4. What specific behaviors, related to their success, do successful students exhibit?
5. What beliefs, related to their success, do successful students have?
6. What motivates successful students?
7. What do successful students have in common?

In an attempt to answer these questions the researcher surveyed 103 successful secondary school students representing nine different secondary schools. Twelve of those students were interviewed by the writer. The successful students (identified by their teacher, counselor, or principal) answered a variety of questions designed to explore and explain the factors that contributed to their success. Their responses to the questions were reported and an emphasis was placed on pointing out the commonalities among the successful students.

In this chapter the researcher will summarize how the students as a whole answered the seven question listed above. This will be followed by a final conclusion and recommendations.

What are the Characteristics of Successful Students?

The students studied in this thesis were predominantly happy, achievement - oriented, yet "normal" adolescents. They

were "normal" in the sense that they did not appear to exhibit any extraordinary characteristics that would conspicuously differentiate them from their peers. For example, they did not claim to love everything about school nor did they spend several hours each day in the library. They talked on the phone with friends and most watched television regularly. Only five percent said they enjoyed studying "very much." Nearly all experienced some boredom and depression.

Yet there does seem to be characteristics common to the successful students that may set them apart from their peers. The students seemed to have strong morals. They said they believed in helping others. Seventy-seven percent had volunteered their time in some type of helping activity. Over ninety-four percent said that, in considering a future career, having a job helping others is at least "somewhat important." The students claimed to be well-mannered. All of the students thought of themselves as well-mannered or very well-mannered. The students were very social. They usually had a best friend and at least one other close friend as well. Although less than one in four had a steady girlfriend or boyfriend over ninety percent were seriously interested in the opposite sex.

Based upon these findings the researcher recommends that students, parents, and teachers note that the successful students did not have extraordinary characteristics that would be difficult to model or be perceived as unattractive by adolescents. Indeed, the students studied were characteristically "normal" teenagers.

How are At-Risk Students Contrasted with Successful Students?

Based upon the literature concerned with students at-risk, a primary difference between successful students and at-risk students may be the students' view of the future. Generally, successful students have set goals which they fully believe will be attained. As a result they enjoy life and look forward to the future. They have experienced success in the past and work hard to ensure continued success.

At risk students, conversely, do not normally appear to set goals for themselves. They did not seem to look forward to the future. They seemed to view the future with fear and do not look forward to it. For various reasons they may not have experienced enough success to believe success is something worth working for.

The researcher recommends that at-risk students be taught goal setting skills. It is further recommended that the parents and teachers of at-risk students be encouraged to help improve the students' perception of the future and - when possible - engineer successes for them so they can fully experience and appreciate achievement.

It is strongly recommended that future research concentrate on contrasting at-risk students with successful students. Perhaps at-risk students and successful students could be studied using the same instruments. For example, at-risk students' answers to the questions on the survey and interview used in this thesis could be compared and contrasted

with the responses given by successful students.

What Kind of Backgrounds do Successful Students Have?

The students studied in this thesis came from families where there were working parents. Although the researcher intentionally studied students representing varying demographic regions - from upper to lower-middle class - it was found that 98% of the students' fathers were employed and 72% of their mothers held jobs. It did not appear important what jobs they held - their parents held various jobs from white to blue collar occupations - but it may be significant that such a large percentage of the students' parents worked. Perhaps the students learned the necessity and value of work from watching - and modeling their parents.

Although only 10% of the those surveyed claimed to be "very religious" and 18% said they were "not religious," 92% of the students said that morals, values, and love for others were "stressed" or "stressed very much" in their homes. Three out of four students said they got along with their brothers and sisters "well" or "very well." Only one student said he did not get along with his brother well. The students were disciplined in different ways but fewer than 3% said they were not disciplined.

It did not seem important whether the students came from small or large families. The families of the students surveyed varied in size. Ten students were an only child

while 19 had at least three brothers and/or sisters. It also varied as to whether the students had older or younger brothers and sisters. Place in the family did not seem to be a significant factor influencing success. It does seem important, however, that the students were read to at a young age. Only 14% of the students said they were seldom read to and even fewer - 3% - said they were never read to.

Consequently, although the students came from a variety of backgrounds, they generally came from homes where their parents worked, they were read to in their pre-school years, and morals, values, love for others, and discipline were stressed.

**What Specific Behaviors, Related to Their Success,
do Successful Students Exhibit?**

The Successful students studied in this survey were busy students. They were involved in lots of activities-some connected and others not connected to school. Over 85% of the students were involved in more than one extra-curricular activity.

The students were active participants in school. More than nine out of ten students said they participate "often" or "sometimes" in class. Not a single student said he/she never participates in class. The successful students tended to sit toward the front of the class and raise their hands and ask questions. After school they studied at various times but

over 90% usually studied alone, suggesting that although they are social - almost 85% had at least three close friends - the successful students seemed to recognize that they were responsible for their own learning. The successful students rarely drank - 94% did not drink on a regular basis but they watched television, talked on the phone, went shopping, played sports, and attended dances and concerts.

**What Beliefs, Related to Their Success,
do Successful Students Have?**

Successful students appear to believe in themselves. Over 97% of the students "believed" or "believed very strongly" that their goals would become reality, actually occur. They also seemed to understand that life can be difficult, but good things can happen as a result of misfortune. For example, more students said they learn best from experience and mistakes than any other learning method and over 91% of the students said they "believe" or "believe very strongly" that difficult times are good in that they enable us to learn, grow, and become stronger.

The successful students tended to be moderately religious. Only 18% said they were not religious, but fewer than 10% said they were "very religious." They believed it is important to have role models. Over 83% thought that having role models is "important" or "very important." They also had medium feelings about school. While only 2% said they did not

enjoy school at all, less than one out of three said they enjoy school "very much." More than half said they enjoy, school "some." The students did feel strongly about their teachers. Eight out of ten said they liked and respected most or all of their teachers. They believed they do better in a class where a teacher has a loose (as opposed to strict) teaching style. Over 90% preferred a loose, relaxed teaching style. The students also believed extra-curricular activities are important. Over 70% thought extra-curricular activities were equal to academics in importance.

What Motivates Successful Students?

The primary motivating factors for the successful students appeared to be the students' parents and peers. The students, in general, were not "pushed" by their parents to become successful. Instead they were *expected* to do well. The students explained how their parents had set up a home environment where there were expectations to succeed. Success, to the students, seemed to be a natural part of growing up.

The students were also highly motivated by their peers. In fact, of the students interviewed, most said they were driven to succeed more by their friends than their parents, especially when they got into secondary school. As one student explained, "In elementary school I was motivated mostly by my parents, but once I got into junior high (grade seven) my friends influenced me more." This student's peer

group encouraged each other to work hard and be successful.

The students may also be described as self-motivated. Even though they may have originally been motivated by their parents or friends, as some pointed out, they became self-motivated and seemed to understand that they were ultimately responsible for their own success.

What do the Successful Students have in Common?

Successful students appear to have a multitude of behaviors, characteristics, and beliefs in common. In spite of the fact that no two students are the same, the successful students studied in this thesis seemed to share many of the same features. These have been pointed out extensively by the researcher.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Successful students do not seem to become successful by accident. The reasons why some students are exceptionally successful are numerous, broad, and complex, yet, there may be specific explanations for their success. Students, parents, and teachers can learn how students excel by studying students who are already proven successes. By incorporating some of the same behaviors, attitudes, and even beliefs common to high achievers into their own lives, other students may become more

successful themselves. However, it is important for students to recognize which specific behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs they are modeling and make a conscious effort to make appropriate modifications based upon their own unique situations, their own unique lives. The writer does not recommend that any student blindly copy the exact behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs of any person regardless of how successful that person may be. Although students can learn from and model others, it is imperative that they maintain their own individual identities.

In this thesis the researcher studied numerous factors that contributed to the success of successful secondary school students. However, there are other factors that may influence success that were not examined. For example, this study did not take into consideration a student's creativity, health, or level of fitness. These factors could be included in future research on successful students. The writer believes that further research on the factors that contribute to the success of successful students is necessary on different students, in different schools, representing varying geographical regions. Any conclusions drawn and recommendations made in this thesis are limited and based only on the specific students studied in two Northern California cities.

It is also recommended that programs whereby younger students are able to closely observe and study the successful habits of older students be implemented in school systems. Perhaps a form of student mentorship could be experimented

with. In such a program, students at the elementary or junior high level could be paired with successful high school students in order to gain first hand information about the specific factors that led to the mentor's success.

Further, the writer recommends that research be conducted to study the effectiveness of role modeling when the model is the same sex, shares a common background, and/or ethnicity as those he or she is modeling for versus models who do not share common traits with those they are modeling for. For example, can a Caucasian teacher be a model for Hispanic students? There have been studies (see literature review) that would appear to show that role models for a particular group are effective in helping the group members achieve success when the model shares common characteristics with the group. However, it is uncertain if models would be equally effective if they were *different* from the group.

Finally, the researcher concludes and recommends that students, parents, and teachers should engage in their own research and study particularly successful students that they have access to. An excellent way to learn how to be a success is to study and model those who have already obtained it.

REFERENCES

- Alaska State Department of Education. (1987). Is School Important: Essays by People Who Know. Juneau, AK: Author.
- American Council on Education - National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. (1989). Certainty of Opportunity. A Report of the NAFS/ACE Symposium on Early Awareness of Postsecondary Education. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- Bar-Tal, D. & Guttman J. (1981). A comparison of teachers', pupils', and parents', attributions regarding pupils', academic achievements. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 51, 301-311.
- California Task Force to Promote Self Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. (1990). Toward a State of Self Esteem. Sacramento, CA: Author.
- Clark, R. M. (1987). Effective families help children succeed in school. Network for Public Schools, 5, 1-6.
- Collier, R. M. (1981). How to help your child get better grades. New York: Pinnacle.

Coplan J. (1985, August) Young, bad, and dangerous. Ladies Home Journal, pp. 124, 125, 165, 166.

Diaz-Soto, L. (1988). The home environmental and Puerto Rican children's achievement: a researcher's diary. (Report No. CSOS-R-292). Houston, TX: National Association for Bilingual Education Conference. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 299 341).

Easton, J. Q. (1985). Student learning processes: how poorly prepared students succeed in college. Research and Teaching in Developmental Education, 1, 12-37.

Edwards, E., Edwards, M. E., Daines, M., & Reed S. M. (1984). Modeling: an important ingredient in higher education for American Indian students. Journal of the National Association of Women's Deans, Administrators, and Counselors, 48, 31-35.

Fields, T. (1987). How to Help Your Child Make the Most of School. Tuscon, AZ: Fisher.

Flynn, T. M. (1987). Affective characteristics that predict preschool achievement in disadvantaged children. Early Child Development and Care, 3, 251-263.

- Forecast Home Economists Editors. (1988, October). At Risk Students, pp. 10-11.
- Gage, N. L. & Berliner, D. C. (1984). Educational psychology (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Gandara, P. (1982). Passing through the eye of the needle: high achieving Chicanas. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 4, 167-179.
- Geary, P. A. (1988). Defying the odds: Academic success among at-risk minority teenagers in an urban high school. Madison, WI: National Center on Effective Secondary Schools.
- Good, T. L. & Brophy, J. (1986). Educational psychology (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Graham, D. T. (1985). School achievement as an influence upon affective characteristics of secondary migrant students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma, Norman.
- Greene, L. J. (1987). Smarter kids. Tuscon, AZ: The Body Press.
- Hatchett, D. (1986). A conflict of reasons and remedies. Crises, 2, 36-41.

- Henderson, A. (1987). The evidence continues to grow: parent involvement improves student achievement. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Hildebrand, K. (1955). Achieving real happiness. New York: Harper & Roe.
- Hill, N. (1965). Think and grow rich. New York: Dutton.
- Jones, J. G. & Grienecks, L. (1970). Measures of self perception as predictors of academic achievement. Journal of Educational Research, 63, 201-203.
- Kamisky, S. (1986). High and low achieving fourth graders perception of success and failure. Reading Improvement, 23, 124-129.
- Karklanis, S. & Tsai, B. L. (1988). Educational excellence of Asian Americans: myth or reality? Brooklyn, NY: Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association.
- Langdon, G & Stout I. W. (1951). These well adjusted children. New York: John Day.

- Lee, C. C. (1984). An investigation of the psychosocial variables related to academic success for rural black adolescents. Journal of Negro Education, 53, 424-434.
- Lewis, J., Jr. (1986). Achieving excellence in our schools. Westburg, NY: Wilkerson.
- Magid, K. & McKelvey, M. (1986). High risk. Golden, CO: M & M.
- Mosher, R. & MacGowan, B. (1985). Assessing student engagement in secondary schools: Alternatives, conceptions, strategies of assessing, and instruments. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED-686-583).
- National Association of Secondary School Principals (1990). How to help students succeed in school-beyond the academic tips. Reston, VA: Author.
- O'Conner, P. (1985). Dropout prevention programs that work. OSSC-Bulletin, 29, (4), 11-15.
- Parsens, C. (1985). Seeds. Santa Barbara, CA: Woodbridge Press.
- Rhodes, B. J. (1990, May 12). Bay Area brains, academic all-stars shine. The Argus, p. 1.

- Robbins, A. (1986). Unlimited power. New York: Ballentine.
- Ryan, R. M., Connell, J. P. & Grolnick, W. S. (1991). When achievement is not intrinsically motivated: a theory of self-regulation of school. Achievement and Motivation: A Social-Development Perspective. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Press.
- Schooland, K. (1986). The bullying of Japanese youth. International Education, 15 (2), 5-28.
- Schunk, D. H. (1989). Self-modeling and children's cognitive skill learning. Journal of Educational Psychology, 81 (2), 155-163.
- Sealover, I. E. (1988). The relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement of high school students. Spring, TX: Texas-Klein School District.
- Snail, B. (1982). Girls into science and technology: the first two years. School Science Review, 63, 620-630.

- Steinberg, L. (1988). Monoinstructional influences on high school student achievement: the contribution of parents, peers, extracurricular activities and part-time work. Madison, WI: National Center on Effective Secondary Schools.
- Stephens, R. T. (1990). Educational histories of incarcerated male felons with an emphasis on perceptions of schools, causes of dropping out, and participation in prison educational programs. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University.
- Task Force on Student Success (1988-89). Focusing on student success. North Central Association Quarterly, 76 (6), 435-443.
- Trelese, J. (1985). The read aloud handbook. New York: Viking-Penguin.
- Utah State Office of Education (1986). Utah migrant education annual summer evaluation. Salt Lake City, UT: Author.
- Van-Hecks, M. & Tracy, R. J. (1987). The encouragement of adult influence on children's persistence. Child Study Journal, 17 (4), 251-268.

- Walker, C. L. (1987). Success or Failure. Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.
- Webster's New World Dictionary (3rd ed.) (1988). New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Wiley, E. (1989). Mentor programs successful in minority retention. Black Issues in Higher Education, 5 (22), 8.
- Wlodkowski, R. J. & Jaynes, J. H. (1990). Eager to Learn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- World Book (1990). Chicago, IL: Scott Fetzer.

Dear Successful Student,

You have been identified as a "successful student" by your teacher, counselor, or principal. A successful student is a student who:

- * maintains at least a 3.3 (B+) grade point average.
- * is involved in at least one extra-curricular, but not limited to, the following:
 - o Member of athletic team.
 - o Member of student organization or club.
 - o Holds elected office in student council, student government, etc.
 - o Takes lessons in activities like dance, instrumental music, singing, acting, or art.
 - o Participates in church group, youth group, or volunteer service organizations.
- * has at least three friends.
- * expresses positive attitudes about learning, school, and life in general, e.g. enjoys attending school, takes pleasure in learning, appreciates teachers, describes self as optimistic.
- * as evaluated by a teacher, counselor, or principal, is a positive role model for other students, is gregarious, and shows the potential for future success.
- * has no record of drug or alcohol abuse or personal misconduct.

Your teacher, counselor, or principal believes you meet these requirements. Congratulations!

My name is James Richards. I am a teacher in Fremont, California. I am studying successful students like you. It is my hope that if teachers, parents, and especially other students are able to learn about you, you can be a positive 'role model for students not as successful as yourself. The following survey will ask you a large number and variety of questions about many different aspects of your life. Although many of the questions may be quite personal, be assured that you will remain anonymous. Your answers (along with the answers of others participating in this study) will be shared but your name will never be used without your permission!

Thank you for taking the time to participate. Be assured that your involvement will do much to help teachers, parents, and fellow students. Also, thank you for being such a successful student! Speaking from a teachers point of view, it is students like yourself that make teaching a joy.

SUCCESSFUL STUDENT SURVEY

1. Age: _____ 3. School: _____
2. Sex: _____ Male _____ Female 4. City: _____
5. Grade in school: _____ 6. Grade point Average (est.)
_____ 7	_____ 10
_____ 8	_____ 11
_____ 9	_____ 12
7. Ethnic Identity (check one):
_____ American Indian/Alaskan Native	_____ Black (not of hispanic origin)
_____ Chinese/Chinese American	
_____ Japanese/Japanese American	
8. Who do you live with?
_____ both parents	_____ other, please state who.
_____ one parent	_____
_____ mother	
_____ father	
9. Approximate annual family income in dollars (check one):
_____ 0 - 15,000	_____ 60,000 - 80,000
_____ 15,000 - 25,000	_____ 80,000 - 100,000
_____ 25,000 - 40,000	_____ over 100,000
_____ 40,000 - 60,000	_____ over 250,000
10. Does your mother work now?
- _____ yes _____ no If yes, occupation _____
11. Does your father work now?
- _____ yes _____ no If yes, occupation _____

12. Number of brothers and sisters you have _____
ages _____
13. How much were you read to in your pre-school years?
_____ often _____ sometimes _____ seldom _____ never
14. How would you describe yourself?
_____ very religious _____ a little religious
_____ religious _____ not religious
15. How much were/are morals, values, love for others, and the difference between right and wrong stressed in your home?
_____ stressed very much _____ stressed a little
_____ stressed _____ not stressed
16. Which statement best describes how you were taught discipline?
_____ Mostly punished for poor behavior, sometimes rewarded for good behavior.
_____ Mostly rewarded for good behavior, sometimes punished for bad behavior.
_____ A balance between being rewarded for good behavior and punishment for poor behavior.
17. Rank the methods of punishment most often used in your home.
1 = most used 7 = least used
_____ grounding _____ denied privileged
_____ corporal (spanking) _____ (T.V., Telephone)
_____ lectured (yelled at) _____ forced to give up
_____ none _____ activity (sport)
_____ other, what _____
18. In general, how well do you get along with your brothers/sisters?
_____ very well _____ well
_____ somewhat _____ not very well

19. How familiar are you with your father's hopes, ambitions, and goals?

_____ very familiar _____ somewhat familiar
_____ not familiar

20. How familiar are you with your mother's hopes, ambitions, and goals?

_____ very familiar _____ somewhat familiar
_____ not familiar

21. Do you have regular chores you do around the home?

_____ yes _____ no

22. Do you have a part-time or full-time job away from your home?

_____ yes _____ no If yes, what is it? _____

23. Do you have a best friend?

_____ yes _____ no

24. How many "close" friends do you have?

_____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2
_____ 3,4 _____ 5-8 _____ 9+

25. Do you now or have you ever had friends or peers who are successful students who you modeled yourself after?

_____ yes _____ no

26. In general, are your friends involved in drugs?

_____ yes _____ no

27. In general, do your friends drink on a regular basis. (Regular basis means they drink at parties, to have fun—generally drink at least once per month. It does not mean an occasional drink on special occasions.)

_____ yes _____ no

28. Do you drink on a regular basis?
 _____ yes _____ no
29. Do you have a steady/serious girlfriend/boyfriend?
 _____ yes _____ no
30. At what age did you first become seriously interested in the opposite sex?
 _____ 8 or less _____ 11-12 _____ 15-16
 _____ still not _____ 9 - 10 _____ 13-14 _____ 17+
31. Please rank the activities you engage in with your friends.
 1 = engage in most often 7 = least often engage in
_____ studying	_____ watching T.V./movies
_____ playing sports	_____ talking on the phone
_____ shopping	_____ attending dances and/or
_____ attend sports	_____ other parties
	_____ other what? _____
32. Do you have any close "family friendships?" (Family friendships are when your parents are friends with a friend's parents and your families plan parties, vacations, and other activities together.)
 _____ yes _____ no
33. In general, how much do you enjoy school?
 _____ very much _____ some
 _____ a little _____ not at all
34. Which is more important in your enjoying a subject or class?
 _____ subject matter - regardless of who is teaching it.
 _____ teacher - the teacher can make the subject interesting or uninteresting
35. How much do you participate in class? (ask questions, offer opinions, comments, etc.)
 _____ often _____ sometimes

_____ seldom _____ never

36. How many of your teachers do you like?

_____ all _____ most
 _____ some _____ few _____ none

37. How many of your teachers do you respect?

_____ all _____ most
 _____ some _____ few _____ none

38. How many of your teachers do you consider to be role models for you?

_____ all _____ most
 _____ some _____ few _____ none

39. Rank the qualities you admire most in teachers.

1 = most admire 5 = least admire

_____ knowledge of the subject _____ sense of humor
 _____ interesting teaching style _____ friendliness
 _____ classroom control

40. Which do you prefer: _____ a generally strict teaching style
 _____ a generally loose, relaxed teaching style

41. Rank the following methods of learning.

1 = learn best from 6 = learn least from

_____ reading _____ experience, mistakes
 _____ watching others, _____ group projects
 _____ modeling their behavior _____ movies, films,
 _____ lectures, discussions

42. Where do you usually study?

_____ school library _____ bedroom
 _____ public library _____ other room in home
 _____ friend's house _____ other, where _____

43. When do you usually study?

_____ immediately after school _____ early evening
_____ late afternoon _____ late evening

44. What kind of environment do you normally study in?

_____ quiet area _____ with T.V. on
_____ with radio on

45. Do you normally study alone or with others?

_____ alone _____ with others

46. If you study with others, who do you study with?

_____ friends _____ brother or sister
_____ parents _____ other, who? _____

47. How often do you need help when studying?

_____ often _____ sometimes _____ seldom _____ never

48. If you need help, who do you mostly get it from?

_____ friends _____ teachers
_____ parents _____ other
_____ brothers/sisters

49. How much do you enjoy studying?

_____ very much _____ some
_____ a little _____ not at all

50. When you were younger, were you a member of any youth organizations? (Boy/Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, Youth Sports, etc.)

_____ yes _____ no

51. If yes, please list those you were involved with:

52. Have you taken lessons in music, athletics, dance, or drama?

_____ yes _____ no

53. If so, what lessons have you taken? Please list.

54. What extra-curricular activities are you involved in? Please list them in order from the most time spent on to the least time spent on.

1 = most time spent

1. _____	4. _____
2. _____	5. _____
3. _____	6. _____

55. Which do you consider most important?

_____ extra-curricular activities

_____ academics

_____ equally important

56. Check which of the following "helping" activities you are involved with.

_____ tutoring other students	_____ environmental
_____ fundraising for charity	_____ other _____
_____ working with children, senior citizens, the handicapped	_____ none

57. In general, do you set goals for yourself?

_____ yes _____ no

58. Do you visualize (imagine, picture) yourself achieving your goals?

_____ yes _____ no

59. Do you set short-range goals (goals to be achieved in less than one year)?
- _____ yes _____ no
60. Do you set long range goals (goals that will take more than one year to achieve)?
- _____ yes _____ no
61. How much do you believe your goals will become reality, actually occur?
- _____ believe very strongly _____ believe a little
_____ believe _____ do not believe
62. How much are your parents involved in your goal setting?
- _____ very involved _____ a little involved
_____ involved _____ not involved
63. How much do you support the following statement:
"Difficult times are good because they enable us to learn, grow, and become stronger."
- _____ believe very much _____ believe
_____ believe a little _____ do not believe
64. Do you prefer to participate in team sports or individual sports?
- _____ team sports _____ individual sports
65. How often do you feel bored?
- _____ often _____ sometimes _____ seldom _____ never
66. How often do you feel depressed?
- _____ often _____ sometimes _____ seldom _____ never
67. Rank the following people from one - having the most positive influence on your life - to four - having the least positive influence on your life.
- _____ parents _____ friends
_____ teachers _____ other relative
who? _____
68. Of the people you know personally, who do you consider your role model?

Name (first name only) and relationship _____
_____ none

69. How important do you consider it to be to have role models?

_____ very important _____ important _____ not important

70. Do you plan to attend college?

_____ yes _____ no

71. What career do you want to pursue?

_____ not sure

72. If you were forced to choose between a high-paying job that you did not enjoy and a low-paying job that you enjoyed very much, which would you choose?

_____ high pay / low enjoyment
_____ low pay / high enjoyment

73. How important is it to you to have a job where you help others?

_____ very important _____ somewhat important
_____ not important

74. Do you believe you will get married?

_____ yes _____ no

75. If yes, at what age (approximately) will you get married?

Age: _____

76. How much television do you watch on a school day?

_____ less than one hour	_____ 5-6 hours
_____ 1-2 hours	_____ over six hours
_____ 3-4 hours	

77. How much television do you watch on non-school days?

☐ less than one hour ☐ 5-6 hours
☐ 1-2 hours ☐ over six hours
☐ 3-4 hours

78. How would you describe your sense of humor (your ability to laugh at things, including yourself).

☐ very good ☐ good ☐ fair ☐ poor

79. In general, do you believe that your life is pre-determined, controlled by fate and forces beyond your control or do you believe that your life is controlled by you - your decisions determine what will happen in your life.

☐ A). Pre-determined, controlled by fate.
☐ B). Controlled by my decisions.

80. Which of the following was most influential in achieving your success?

☐ parents ☐ yourself ☐ friends
☐ teachers ☐ religion ☐ luck

81. How often have you been "hooked" on activities that you felt a strange urge to master. (Examples: Nintendo, Skateboarding, Skating, Yo Yo, etc?)

☐ very often ☐ often ☐ sometimes
☐ seldom ☐ never

82. How would you describe yourself with regard to manners.

☐ very well mannered ☐ well mannered
☐ not well mannered

83. Generally, using the definition of "successful student" outlined at the beginning of this survey, what percentage of your friends would you classify as successful?

☐ over 75% ☐ 25% - 50%
☐ 50% - 75% ☐ less than 25%

Note from the researcher:

Thank you very much for participating in this research! It would be a great help to me if I could personally interview you to discuss some of your answers in more detail. If an interview with you would be acceptable, please list your name, address, and a phone number where you can be reached. I will contact you soon.

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____

Thank you very much

James Richards

PERSONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. You have been identified by your teacher (or counselor) as an exceptionally successful student. Why do you think you have been a successful student?
2. How old were you when you began school? Did you attend pre-school? What were your early impressions of school? Did you enjoy school from the outset? Have you ever hated school?
3. Would you describe your parents as strict or lenient? How were you disciplined? Are your parents equally strict? Do you believe that fear of punishment was a factor in your success?
4. What is your greatest strength? What is your biggest weakness?
5. How do you learn best? Think about a teacher, class, or experience in which you learned a great deal. Why do you think you learned so much from that teacher, class, or experience?
6. Describe your behavior in a typical class. Do you participate often? Where do you sit? Do you ask a lot of questions?
7. Would you consider yourself an optimist or pessimist? Why?

8. What are your professional and non-professional goals?
What college will you attend or hope to attend?
9. Describe your parent's influence on you. What most did you learn from them? How did they teach you?
10. How do you go about solving the problems you experience in life?
11. What person has had the biggest positive influence on you? Why and how has this person influenced you?
12. How do you feel about taking risks? What kind of risks have you taken in order to achieve success? (For example, have you placed yourself in a position where you could fail-tried out for a team, part in a play, run for office, etc.)
13. Have you ever failed at something that you really wanted to succeed at? How do you handle failure?
14. Do you worry a lot or are you a more relaxed person?
15. Generally, are you a happy person? Do you foresee yourself as being a happy person in the future?