ABSTRACT
        Research indicates that most women continue to avoid
achievement or excellence in careers considered to be "masculine"
fields. One reason for this appears to be that even highly motivated
women lack confidence in their abilities and are discouraged from
seeking demanding careers by others. Recently, a growing number of
older "reentry" women are entering college. These women have an even
greater difficulty developing a positive view of their academic
competence. Extensive research has demonstrated the importance of
attributions or beliefs about why success or failure occurs in
understanding achievement-oriented behavior. Ability, effort,
motivation, luck, difficulty of a task, and outside help or hindrance
are among the causal attributions that can be made. Models in the
literature are examined that conceptualize the the attributional
process and discuss causal attributions and general expectations for
women, the perpetuation of existing expectancies, and women's own
expectations and the attribution of causes of one's own performance.
It has been found that reentry women tend to feel insecure about
their academic competence and that the housewife role may have added
to this. Additional problems include feelings of guilt, and the
reactions of others to their reentry, including family, classmates,
and instructors. Reentry women appear to have three basic needs:
training in basic academic skills such as how to write papers;
adequate child care; and women in similar situations with whom they
can talk. (JMD)

DRAFT FOR COMMENTS

(Final draft to be co-authored by Esther Sales)

WOMEN'S ASSESSMENT OF THEIR

ACADEMIC COMPETENCE

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Higher education, long considered an essential part of the socialization of the middle class male, is becoming increasingly important for women. A growing percentage of women are going to college although the percentage of men is still higher than for women. Between 1970 and 1974, the number of women in college increased by 30 per cent compared to a twelve per cent increase for men (Tavris & Offir, 1977).

There are many reasons for people to aspire to a college education. Traditionally, the benefits have been seen in terms of economic gains--being able to get a more interesting and higher paying job (Sweet, 1973). This is probably one of the primary motivations today for the typical male or female student who enters college immediately after high school graduation and graduates with a B. A. or B. S. four years later. A study in the early 70's at a large western university found that 70% of the college women surveyed planned to work outside the home all or most of their adult lives (Parsons, Frieze, & Ruble, in press-a). Thus, women as well as men are preparing for later careers.

Women with and without college educations are increasingly entering the labor force (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Zellman, in press-b). However, women are not entering graduate school in large numbers to prepare for professional careers. Since World War I, the percentage of doctorates earned by women has remained relatively constant at 10 to 15% of all Ph. D. 's (Centra, 1974). More women are working outside the home but they are holding lower level clerical and service jobs (Bernard, 1971; Centra, 1974; Epstein, 1971). Most women continue to avoid achievement or excellence in careers in politics, business, sports and other fields considered to be "masculine" fields. One reason for this appears to be that even these highly motivated women lack confidence in their own abilities and are discouraged from seeking demanding careers by others (Frieze, 1977). Some reasons for this will be explored more fully in this paper.

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Recently another group of women have become of concern to college administrators. With the belief that education should be a lifelong process and that it can help women to more fully live their later years after their children are in school or grown, a growing number of older "re-entry" women are entering college (O'Connell, 1977). These are women who stopped their formal education after high school or who started college but dropped out before they had attained their desired degree. These women have an even greater difficulty in developing a positive view of their academic competence.

There are a number of psychological variables which one could use to more fully understand why some women are initially disinterested in college and then later return. One theoretical viewpoint which has been helpful in past research dealing with women's relative lack of achievement in professional careers concerns the beliefs of women about their abilities and their reactions to the successes and failures they experience in academic and professional environments (Frieze, 1975; Frieze, 1977). These factors may also be of major importance for understanding the re-entry woman.

In addition, these same types of variables are helpful in understanding how others react to the re-entry woman. Beliefs of teachers, other classmates, and friends and family about the competence of the re-entry woman and their assessments of the reasons for her successes and failures may be as important, if not more so, than any internal psychological barriers to achievement in the women themselves (Frieze, et al., in press-a).

ATTRIBUTING THE CAUSES OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Weiner and his associates (e.g., Weiner, 1974; Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971) have done extensive research demonstrating the importance of attributions or beliefs about why success or failure occurs in understanding achievement-oriented behavior.

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Most of this research concerns the attributions made by an individual about his or her own successes and failures and how these attributions influence affect, future expectancies and subsequent achievement strivings. It is assumed that people will be more likely to attempt tasks where they feel they have a high expectancy of doing well and that they will desire to maximize positive feelings about success and minimize negative feelings about failure. Both affect and expectancy are effected by the type of causal attribution made about why a particular event was a success or failure. Similar processes exist for attributions about other people (Frieze, 1977).

A diagram of the attributional process as conceptualized by Frieze et al. (in press-a) is shown in Figure 1. In this model, the attributional process begins with an achievement behavior which is then interpreted as a success or failure. Once the outcome is established, the person utilizes available information such as his or her prior expectancy for the person's success at this task and the past history of this person's and others' successes to determine the cause of the outcome (Frieze, 1976-a; Frieze, & Weiner, 1971).

Insert Figure 1 about here

There are many possible reasons why a particular success or failure might occur and, therefore, many causal attributions which can be made in any situation (Heider, 1958). Thus, a person may succeed at a task because of his or her high ability, trying hard, general motivation, good luck, the fact that the task was relatively easy and/or someone helping. Failure may result from low ability, not trying sufficiently hard, lack of motivation, being sick or tired, bad luck, task difficulty, or someone interfering (Elig & Frieze, 1975; Frieze, 1976-b; Weiner, et al., 1971).

Insert Table 1 about here

These causal attributions can be classified along three dimensions: internal-external; stable-unstable; and intentional-unintentional. This classification system is shown in Table 1. Ability, effort, mood, personality, and knowledge are causes originating within or internal to the individual, while task difficulty, other people's help or hurt and luck are causes within the environment or external to the individual. This dimension has been shown to be particularly important for affect. More pride or satisfaction is reported by people who attribute their successes internally than if the attribution is made to an external cause (Weiner, Heckhausen, Meyer, & Cook, 1972; Weiner, Russell, & Lerman, in press). These same studies have shown that internally attributed failures lead to more shame or dissatisfaction after failure.

A second dimension along which the various causes may be differentiated is in their stability. Ability, personality, diligence or laziness and task difficulty are relatively stable causes, while effort, mood and luck may be highly changeable. If success at a particular type of activity was due to a person's high ability or the activity's being easy, one would anticipate continued success for that person on the same task. Similarly, if a failure was due to these stable causes, continued failure would be anticipated. Conversely, unstable causes lead to acknowledging the possibility of change. Failures attributed to bad luck or lack of effort may result in expectations for eventual success since bad luck might finally change or trying harder might lead to future success (McMahan, 1973; Weiner, et al., 1972).

An attribution is considered to be intentional to the degree that the person is perceived to have control of his or her actions. Thus, ability and personality are factors within the person over which that person has little control, and events attributed to these factors would

be unintentional. However, the actor is perceived to have control over the effort he or she exerts so that attributions to effort are intentional (as well as being internal). The intentionality dimension appears to be related to reward and punishment, with most reward given for performances attributed to internal, intentional causes, although further research is needed to clarify these relationships (Weiner, et al., in press).

Causal Attributions and General Expectations for Women

Forming Expectations. People have many types of expectations for other people. For those they know well, these expectations are based on a series of past experiences with the person. They know generally how that person will react in a variety of situations and they expect the person to behave similarly in the future. Expectations for what they will or will not be able to do are also based on a series of past performance levels. Expectations also depend on the specific nature and requirements of the task and on one's view of why the person was or was not successful in the past (e.g., Valle & Frieze, 1976; Weiner, 1974).

Expectations for a stranger or a casual acquaintance are necessarily based on other information; there is no past history of success or failure. In such cases, expectations are based largely on stereotypes. The unknown individual is first identified as being a member of one or more groups (these may include sex, age, race, social-economic class, etc.). Since many possible labels can be applied, the more personally salient would most likely be invoked. Then, on the basis of one's stereotypes of that most salient group, the individual will be expected to have the attributes and abilities associated with that group (Ichheiser, 1970). Thus, an unknown woman might be expected to be good at cooking but poor at mathematical tasks by those who do not know her.

Expectations About Women's Abilities. The available research suggests that women

are expected to do more poorly than men at numerous tasks. For example, Feldman-Summers and Kiesler (1974) reported that they were unable to find any occupation in which females were expected to outperform males. For all the professions they used, which included pediatrician, writer, child psychologist, surgeon, dancer, diagnostician, clinical psychologist and biographer of famous women, males were expected to be more successful than females. These lower expectations may also directly affect the performance of women. Research has indicated that when people are randomly assigned to high and low expectancy groups, the high expectancy group tends to perform better than the group to which low expectancies were assigned (Rosenthal, & Jacobson, 1968; Tyler, 1958).

Attributions About Women. Causal attributions for performance also differ according to the sex of the person being evaluated. Deaux and Emswiller (1974) asked both male and female college students to evaluate another's performance at finding hidden objects in a complex design. The task was described as either masculine or feminine; males were expected to do better at the masculine task and females at the female task. When given information that the person had succeeded at the task, males' successes on the masculine task tended to be attributed more to ability while females' successes were more likely to be attributed to luck. There were no differences on the feminine task.

The causal attributions made about a person have important implications not only for the affect and expectancies of that person but also for the rewards given that person by others (Weiner, et al., in press). People are constantly being evaluated by others for their achievements, whether being considered for a grade, a job, or a promotion. The kinds of attributions made by the decision makers in these situations have major consequences for those being judged. For example, if a teacher thinks that the reason that a student did well on a test is that

he cheated, the reaction of the teacher will be quite different than if he felt that the student had studied hard for the exam. Also, a student will probably be more motivated to study in a class where she thinks the teacher determines grades on the basis of competence and the effort of the student rather than by chance or favoritism. Another example of this process is the reaction of an employer to a poor performance by an employee. If the employer perceives that the poor performance was due to external circumstances over which the employee had no control (such as being given a difficult assignment) or unstable factors which might be expected to change in the near future (the employee had been sick and is now better), the employer will be more likely to give that employee a second chance. If, however, the employer felt that the poor performance was the result of internal factors such as the employee being lazy or incompetent, the employer might well fire the person (Valle, & Frieze, 1976).

A pattern of attributing the successes of men more to their abilities than the successes of women and the failures of women more to their lack of ability was reported by Feather and Simon (1975) and Etaugh and Brown (1975). Etaugh and Brown also found that female successes were more attributed to effort. Feldman-Summers and Kiesler (1974) further found that male subjects attributed more ability to a male physician than to a female physician. The males attributed the success of the female physician to either her strong motivation or to her having an easier task (i. e., external factors aided her in becoming a doctor). Female subjects in this study also attributed greater motivation to the female physician, but they were more likely to see the male physician as having an easier task.

Although there have not been a great many studies in this area, and there have been none as yet dealing specifically with re-entry women, those studies which have been done suggest that female successes in general are more likely to be attributed to unstable factors

such as luck or effort while male successes are more often attributed to the stable internal factor of ability. Such patterns, if they generalize, would imply that even when women do succeed, since their successes are attributed more to unstable factors, they would not be expected by others to continue to be successful.

The Perpetuation of Existing Expectancies

Valle and Frieze (1976) present a model relating initial expectations and causal attributions which might have important implications for the evaluation of women. This model suggests that when making a prediction about the future performance of an individual, the perceiver considers both the individual's most recent performance and the expectations which the perceiver had before that performance. Predictions about the future depend upon how much importance is given to this recent performance and how much to the initial expectations. This model suggests that the amount of importance given to a previous performance is related to the attributed cause of that performance. If the performance was attributed to stable factors (e.g., ability or task) the previous outcome would be weighted heavily. If, on the other hand, the outcome was attributed to unstable factors (e.g., luck or effort) it should be weighted less heavily. Therefore, the more an outcome is attributed to stable causes, the greater weight which will be given to that outcome in determining predictions for the future, and the closer the expectations for the future will be to the outcome, regardless of initial expectancy.

In addition, the type of attribution made is a function of the difference between the actual outcome and the initial expectancies. The greater the absolute value of this difference the greater will be the tendency to attribute the outcome to unstable factors such as luck, mood, or effort. The less this absolute difference, the greater will be the tendency to attribute the outcome to stable factors such as the ability of the actor or stable effort. For both observer

attributions (Feather, & Simon, 1971-a; Frieze, & Weiner, 1971) and self attributions

(Feather, 1969; Feather, & Simon, 1971-a; 1971-b; Simon, & Feather, 1973), this implication

has received wide support; the greater the difference between an outcome and previous

expectations (either measured directly or assumed from the information available concerning

the actor's past performance), the greater the tendency to attribute the outcome to unstable

factors, especially to luck. Correlational data from Valle (1974) provide further support in a

direct test of these implications.

Insert Figure 2 about here

To summarize, as shown in Figure 2, Valle and Frieze's model describes a mechanism

whereby changes in expectations are minimized by the types of causal attributions which are

made. Unexpected outcomes are attributed to unstable causes and, therefore, have less weight

in determining future predictions; expected outcomes are more attributed to stable cause and

tend to support and reinforce original expectations. This model has important implications for

a person who is expected to do poorly. If such a person performs well, the performance will

be attributed to unstable factors, which in turn, means that the supervisor will still expect

the person to do poorly in the future. This process would be especially detrimental for a

minority group member or a woman who is expected to do poorly just because of membership

in that group. Because of these initial low expectations on the part of many people, it would

be more difficult for such people to establish their competence to their supervisor. This

model for expectancy changes is particularly applicable to the situation of re-entry women.

The application of this model is relevant to women only if they are indeed expected to

do less well than men. Research has indicated that the performances of women are usually

evaluated lower than those of men. Goldberg (1968) demonstrated that female college students

evaluated articles supposedly written by women lower than articles with male authors, even

though the authors' names had been randomly assigned. Similar results were found in more

recent studies (e.g., Deaux, & Emswiller, 1974; Pheterson, Kiesler, & Goldberg, 1971;

Piacente, Penner, Hawkins, & Cohen, 1974).

The Valle and Frieze model would then predict that in situations in which women are

expected to perform poorly, a successful performance by a woman will tend to be attributed

more to unstable factors than would a similar performance by a man. In turn, since this

successful performance has been attributed to unstable factors, it will have less impact on the

evaluator's predictions for the future success of the woman than a similar successful per-

formance would have for a man. In other words, it would be more difficult for a woman to

prove her competency by a high quality performance than it would be for a man. The research

which indicated that success by women tends to be attributed more to unstable factors supports

this prediction (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974; Feldman-Summers, & Kiesler, 1974).

Finally, the model predicts that by manipulating the type of attribution made for a

particular outcome, one can lessen or increase the weight given to that performance in making

predictions for the future. If the teacher can be made to attribute the cause of a successful

performance to stable factors, the vicious circle of low initial and future expectations can be

interrupted by changing the causal attributions. However, the model also cautions that a

woman's performance should not be too deviant from the initially low expectations held for her

by others. If a woman who is expected to do very poorly, actually does very well, this will be

attributed to unstable factors even more than might already be expected. The model suggests

that there is a point of maximum change for any specific situation and that the level of per-

formance should be better than expected but not too much better (Valle, & Frieze, 1976).

Women's Own Expectations and Causal Attributions

Self Expectations. One's own expectations for success and failure have been shown to affect one's behavior in achievement situations. Several studies have demonstrated that people with high expectations of success on achievement tasks perform better than those with low expectations (e.g., Battle, 1965; Feather, 1966). While these studies do not eliminate the possibility that these high expectations are based on a history of prior success, other studies (Diggory, 1966; Tyler, 1958) have randomly assigned levels of expectancy. Subjects that were randomly given high expectation levels performed better than those given low expectation levels in these studies, thus demonstrating that expectancy levels directly affect performance.

Differential expectations for success and failure in males as compared with females bave been well documented (e.g., Crandall, 1969; Frieze, et al., in press-a). Women do not expect to do as well as men in novel tasks, athletic tasks or academic tasks. Men consistently overestimate their future performance while women tend to underestimate.

Given the cultural stereotype that males are more intelligent, more achieving, and more competitive than females (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972), it is not surprising that males generally report higher expectations than females or that both males and females predict that males will be more successful. However, while this cultural stereotype influences generalized expectancies, it should not have the same effect on specific expectancies for familiar tasks (McHugh, Note 1). If a subject has had previous experience with a task, the expectancy estimate is based on past experience. However, when giving an expectancy estimate for a novel task, the person must rely upon a more general expectancy level (Frieze, et al., in press-a). However, even with familiar tasks women may

not see their performances as positively as men. Lacher and Lacher (Note 2) reported that

male college freshmen were more likely to see their high school grades as underestimating

their ability; female freshmen felt their high school grades overestimated their ability

even though there were no differences in the actual ability levels of men and women as

measured by their verbal SAT scores or college grades.

Consequences of Higher Male Expectations. Whether sex differences in expectation

levels are explained by generalized versus specific expectancies, cultural stereotypes, experi-

mental manipulations, or other factors, the effects of the higher expectations of males still

exist. Higher expectations for success lead to superior performance (Diggory, 1966), and

higher evaluations of performance (Shrauger, 1972). They may also lead to selection of

more difficult tasks (Veroff, 1969) or may keep women from pursuing their desired career

(Jones, Note 3). Thus, the consequences of these higher male expectations are improved

opportunities for their achievement.

Although males have higher expectations than females, females generally make more

accurate estimates of their probability of success. When Crandall (1969) compared male

and female expectations for success with predictions based on objective ability measures,

males were found to over estimate their future performances. While the merits of high

expectations have been discussed, the advantages of accurate estimates are often ignored.

If the accuracy of expectations rather than the absolute level of expectation determined

performance, females rather than males might fare better. However, the present culture

does not punish over-statement of ability for males, while it does applaud absolute levels

of performance (Frieze et al., in press - a and b).

Attributing the Causes of One's Own Performance

Research investigating causal attributions for success and failure has shown that
different causal explanations have varying implications for feelings of pride or shame and.
for future expectancies which are similar to the implications of attributions made by other
people. Maximum security in success is derived from the perception that the success is
due to the internal, stable factor of ability (see Table 1). Pride, on the other hand, is more
associated with success resulting from trying hard (internal and intentional). However, the
effort attribution produces little security about future successes since continued effort must
be exerted to maintain positive outcomes. Success attributed to external factors produces
less pride. If success is perceived as caused by the external, unstable element of luck,
there is neither pride nor security that success will reoccur.

An opposite pattern of consequences occurs with failure attributions. Maximum
shame is associated with failures perceived as caused by low ability or lack of effort. If
lack of ability is seen as the primary cause of the failure, not only is there shame (since this
is an internal attribution), but there is also an avoidance of the activity in the future, since the
person will believe that there will be no way in which future failure could be avoided (except
for occasional instances of good luck). On the other hand, failures attributed to bad luck or
task difficulty produce less shame. If bad luck is perceived as the primary cause, future
successes would be anticipated as luck fluctuates. Lack of effort, although leading to shame,
would be changeable and, therefore, would result in greater expectancy changes than lack of
ability attributions.

Although attributions are clearly influenced by situational factors (e.g., Frieze &
Weiner, 1971; Snyder & Frieze, Note 4), it is hypothesized that in many cases people have
patterns of making certain causal attributions more than others (Frieze, 1976a; Frieze et al.,
in press a). Maximum self-esteem would theoretically be associated with a tendency to make

internal, stable attributions for success and external, unstable attributions for failure.

Fitch (1970) verifies these hypotheses to some degree with data showing that low self-esteem males attributed success more to internal causes. Although these patterns of perceiving success and failure may perpetuate self-esteem, other data suggests that maximum achievement striving is associated with slightly different patterns of causal attributions. Kukla (1972) demonstrated that high achievement motivated men tend to attribute their successes to both high ability and effort while they perceive their failures as caused by lack of effort. Thus, these men are "motivated" by the experience of failure to try harder. Also, high achievement motivation is generally associated with higher expectancies or estimates of personal ability (Bar-Tal & Frieze, 1977; Kukla, 1972). Low achievement motivation is associated with less attribution of success to internal factors; failure for low achievers is more attributed to their low ability (Weiner & Kukla, 1970; Weiner & Potepan, 1970).

Much of this data on individual differences in causal attributions is based only on male subjects (who are college students). However, given the low initial expectancies which women generally report, certain attributional patterns might be predicted (Frieze et al., in press-a). If a woman expects to do poorly but instead does well, she would be likely to attribute the outcome to an unstable cause such as luck. This means she will not change her expectancies and she feels no pride in her success if the attribution is made to the external element of luck. When a female with low expectancy fails on a task, an expected outcome, she tends to attribute it to lack of ability. This attributional pattern perpetuates a Low Expectation Cycle by minimizing the positive effects of success and maximizing the negative effects of failure (Jackaway, 1974) which is similar to the Valle and Frieze (1976) model described earlier for attributions of other people (see Figure 2).

Some research has supported these predictions that women would attribute success more to luck and failure more to lack of ability. This self-derogatory pattern has been found in grade school girls (Dweck & Reppucci, 1973; Nicholls, 1975). Also, girls, more than boys, tend to focus on negative feedback as a basis for deciding how they will do in the future (Crandall, Katkowsky, & Crandall, 1965). Women are more likely than men to attribute failures to lack of ability (McMahan, Note 5). Given such attributions, it is easy to see why women might avoid achievement situations since when women make these attributions, the subjective outcome of achievement tasks can at most be neutral (for success) and may be highly negative (for failure).

However, much of the current research does not find these attributional patterns in women. Many studies have instead found a general externality on the part of females (e.g., McArthur, 1976). Some studies have found that females rate tasks as easier than do males in both success and failure conditions (Bar-Tal & Frieze, 1977; McMahan, Note 5). By rating the task as easier after either success or failure, females may have reduced the value of their successes, and increased the negative implications of their failures; thus, these task-ease attributions are similar in substance to the self-derogatory pattern discussed above (Frieze et al., in press-a).

A number of studies have found that females make greater use of luck attributions than males for both success and failure (Bar-Tal & Frieze, 1977; Feather, 1969; McMahan, Note 5; Simon & Feather, 1973; Wiegers & Frieze, 1977). This pattern is also character- ized by a general externality, but has different implications from task-ease attributions. The pattern of luck attributions implies that, at least within traditionally defined masculine areas assessed in these studies (such as academic achievement), women take less responsi- bility for and feel less pride in their successes and less shame about their failures. Thus,

women employing this attributional pattern would experience relatively little affect in achievement situations.

Insert Table 2 about here

It can be concluded that many different patterns of causal attributions can be found in women. Some of these may be related to other personality measures as shown in Table 2 (Frieze et al., in press-a). One of the most important personality variables for understanding women who stay in college may be achievement motivation. Women with high achievement motivation appear to have a somewhat different pattern of attributions than traditionally oriented women. For example, observations of professional women indicate that they work very hard and are highly motivated to succeed. In fact, some writers (Bird, 1968; Epstein, 1971) suggest that they must actually be better at what they do professionally than their male colleagues in order to experience any career success. Futhermore, professional women perform at this high level without any of the environmental supports which professional men frequently have such as a supportive wife (Frieze, et al., in press-b). This pattern of continuing hard work as a basis for achievement in these women suggests that they may perceive their successes and failures as being dependent upon effort rather than upon luck or other causal factors. However, data indicating that nearly all women have lower estimates of their own abilities than men would also lead to the hypothesis that even high achievement motivated women lack the positive belief in their own abilities which characterizes the high achievement motivated man (Frieze, 1975; Frieze et al., in press-a).

Preliminary studies have suggested that highly motivated women do employ more effort attributions for both success and failure than low achievement motivated women (Feldman-Summers & Kiesler, 1974). Bar-Tal and Frieze (1977) also found that high

achievement motivation was related to higher estimates of ability for both male and female subjects although this finding was stronger for men than women. In one of the few studies using a black sample, Murray and Mednick (1975) found that achievement motivation levels affected the causal attributions of black women. Also, there appear to be differential attributional patterns for under and "over achieving" women and men (Wiegers & Frieze, 1977).

Along with individual differences in attributional patterns among women, there are also a number of situational factors which affect attributions. The fact that attribution patterns may vary for an individual across situations is seldom taken into account. It is generally implied that one's pattern of making causal attributions is an enduring disposition. However, the assumption of such consistency is being generally challenged (Bem & Allen, 1974; Mischel, 1973). A relative lack of interest in situational determinants of attribution patterns may be partially responsible for the inconsistencies found in some of the attribution research (Frieze et al., in press-a).

The Re-Entry Woman

Self Assessment and Personality Characteristics

Many women make an initial decision in high school about whether they want to go to college or not. At that point, there is evidence that those who plan on going to college have higher estimates of their academic abilities and higher expectancies for their performance level on a specific classroom assignment (Wiegers and Frieze, 1977). Other data suggests that at the time they do decide to go to college (or to re-enter college if they had dropped out earlier), re-entry women feel quite insecure about their level of academic competence. In fact this is one of the most frequently mentioned problems of the older woman student (Sales, Shore and Bolitho, Note 6; Kelman and Staley, 1974; Brooks, 1978;

Richards, Note 7). Thus pattern of low self expectations has a number of negative consequences for these women as documented earlier in this paper.

In addition to the fact that women with lower academic self esteem are less likely to go to college in the first place, the housewife role may also have added to this. Although housewives are expected to be competent at a large number of varied tasks such as house cleaning, child care, rearing children, decorating, cooking, entertaining, etc (Bernard, 1968), they are typically given little training for doing these tasks. Many women report feeling that they are inadequately prepared for this role (Lopata, 1972).

Traditional housewives may also find that they have no explicit standards they can use for deciding when they are successful. There are no agreed upon criteria for what should be done. There are no raises for good performance nor firing for poor performance (Lopata, 1972). Thus, it may be difficult for housewives to build up feelings of competence in any area. They may also become increasingly less confident about academic-like skills because of lack of opportunity to practice them. Women who have worked outside the home before returning to college seem to have fewer problems adjusting than those who have only been housewives (Sales, et al, Note 6). Also women who return to school report feeling less satisfaction with their traditional housewife role than women who remain in this role (O'Connell, 1977).

Along with concern over academic competence, many re-entry women feel guilt about neglecting their homemaker roles (Sales et al, Note 6; Richards, Note 7; Nero, Note 8). Many of the re-entry women did start college originally but dropped out because they got married and felt that their obligations as a wife or mother were more important than school (O'Connell, 1977). The importance of this necessity for choosing between a high level career and being a wife and mother is also seen in the fact that college women with high career

aspirations report feeling that they must delay marriage and children so that such career attainment is possible (Parsons, et al, in press). However, other data suggests that older women students may be more motivated to achieve than younger women, perhaps because they have fewer conflicts about whether they should be in school or having a more traditional life as a wife and mother (Lubetkin and Lubetkin, 1971).

Women who decide to re-enter college often do so when their children are in school or even older (Richards, Note 7). This is a time when many women begin to reassess their lives and to search for personal fulfillment in many ways (Frieze, et al, in press-b). Going back to school is one means of meeting these needs (Sales, et al, Note 6; Richards, Note 7; Brooks, 1978). Women may also return to college because of the need to train for a better job and the financial gains this will bring (Sales, et al, Note 6; Richards, Note 7; Nero, Note 8).

Women who are dissatisfied with their housewife roles do have many options in addition to returning to school. They can assume volunteer work, get a job immediately, or have an extramarital affair (Frieze et al, in press-b). One study indicated that the mothers who choose to return to school rather than filling any extra time with other activities were more dominant, ambitious, self confident, achievement oriented and self-actualizing (O'Connell, 1977). Thus, even though they may be less confident than younger women, they would tend to have more of the stereotypic masculine-competence traits than the usual housewife.

Reactions of Others to the Re-entry Woman

As mentioned earlier, many re-entry women feel enormous guilt over their presumed neglect of their family responsibilities. Probably because of this, women whose husbands are supportive tend to be more satisfied and successful (Sales et al, Note 6; Brooks, 1978).

Husbands are often college educated themselves and possibly more supportive because of this (O'Connell, 1977). Also, the re-entry women tend to have fewer children than women who remain housewives (O'Connell, 1977).

The re-entry women often must cope with classmates who question her presence in the classroom and with instructors who doubt her ability and have trouble relating to her (Richards, Note 7). Such negative reactions may serve to perpetuate feelings of low self esteem on the part of the re-entry women. These low evaluations, which may be based on totally eroneous stereotypes, are very difficult to change as discussed earlier. It is interesting to note that they exist at all given the fact that re-entry women often perform at a very high level in their classes (Richter and Whipple, 1972).

Re-entry women appear to have three basic needs. First, they need training in basic academic skills such as how to write papers or take tests. Since these women lack confidence in these areas, the training will help them overcome their fears and, hopefully, help them build a more positive view of their own abilities (Kelman and Staley, 1974; Brooks, 1978).

Second, many women feel that their re-entry is made far easier if there is adequate child care nearby (Kelman and Staley, 1974; Richards, Note 7). This not only helps in time management for the re-entry student but it also helps alleviate any guilt she may feel over neglecting her children.

Finally, many of these women express a need to talk to other women in similar situations. This can help them feel less isolated. It also gives them role models and allows them to help one another in providing ideas for how to manage their busy schedules (Brooks, 1978).

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Table 1

A Three-Dimensional Model for Classifying
Causal Attributions for Success and Failure

(modified from Elig and Frieze, 1975)

INTERNAL

	Stable	Unstable
Intentional	Stable effort (Diligence or laziness)	Unstable effort (Trying or not trying hard)
Unintentional	Ability Knowledge or background Personality	Fatigue Mood

EXTERNAL

	Stable	Unstable
Intentional	Others always help or interfere	Others help or interfere with this event
Unintentional	Task difficulty or ease Personality of others	Task difficulty or ease (task changes) Luck or unique circumstances Others accidentally help or interfere

Table 2

Possible Factors Influencing Expectations and Attributions of Women

Factor	Typical Direction of Influence
1. Societal Expectations Female Success	Women expected to do poorly on achievement tasks. Success attributed more to luck.
2. Personal Expectations for Success	Women generally have low expectations for themselves. Attribute success more to luck or the task.
3. Individual Differences:	
Achievement Motivation	Highs more internal, believe in effort more.
Fear of Success	Denial of responsibility for success through external attributions.
Androgeny	Higher expectations for masculine tasks. More internal attributions for success.
4. Situational Factors:	
Type of Task-Experience	Higher expectancies for tasks with prior history of success.
Type of Task-Sex Role Relation	Higher expectancies for female than male tasks.
Competition	More external for competitive success.

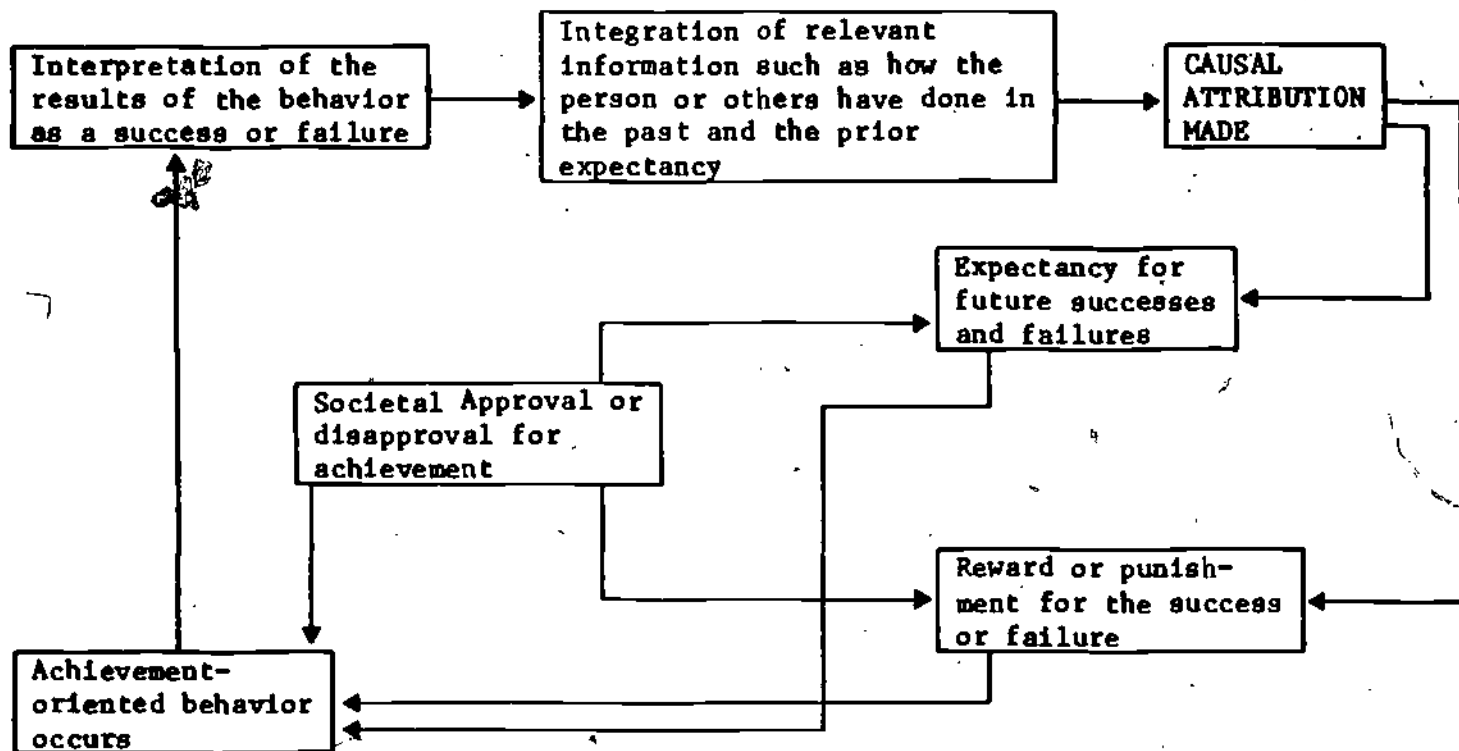[From Frieze, Fisher, Hanusa, McHugh, & Valle, in press-a.]

Figure 1. The attributional process for achievement events. (Modified from Frieze, Fisher, Hanusa, McHugh, & Valle, in press-a.)

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Initial Expectancy	Performance Level	Causal Attribution	New Expectancy

High ─┬─► High ──────► Ability or other ──► Very High
      │   stable internal
      │   factors
      │
      └─► Low ───────► Bad luck or lack ──► High
                       of effort or
                       other unstable
                       factors

Low ─┬─► High ───────► Good luck, special ─► Low
     │   effort or other
     │   unstable factors
     │
     └─► Low ────────► Lack of ability or ─► Very Low
                       other stable
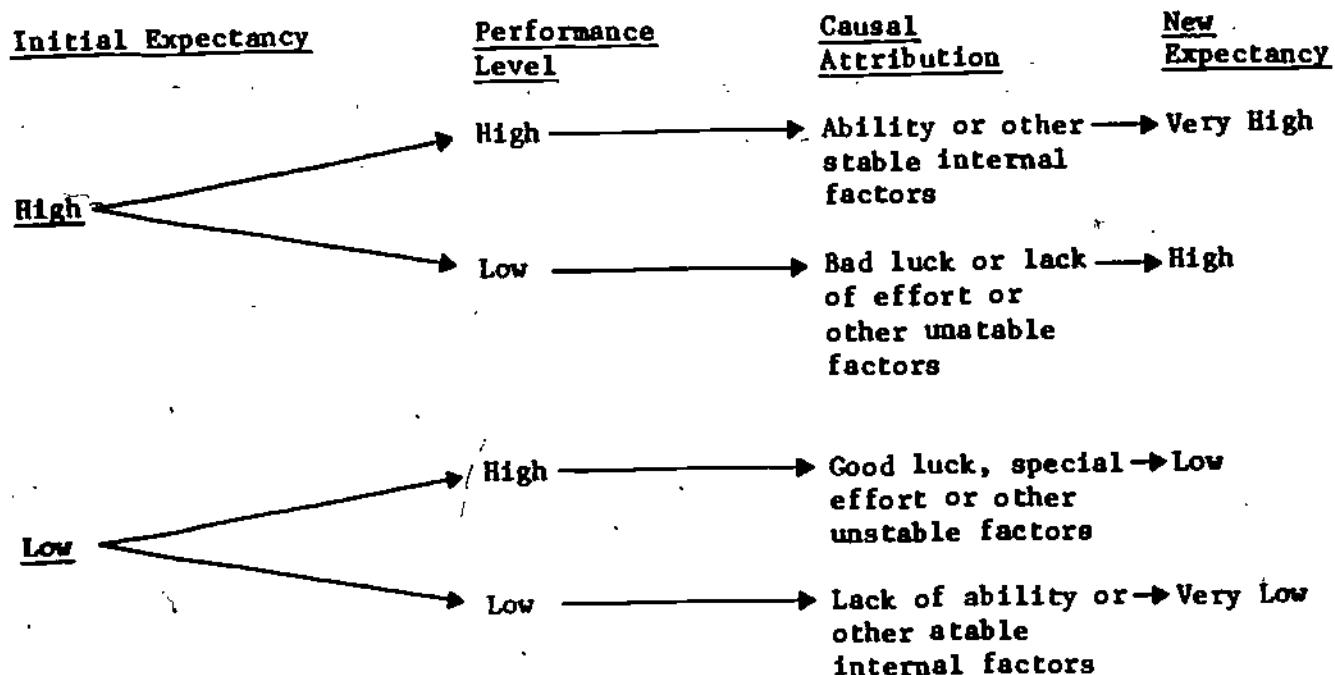   internal factors

Figure 2. Attributional mediation of expectancy changes. From V. A. Valle &
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