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Prenursing students' perceptions of the nursing profession

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PRENURSING STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS
OF THE NURSING PROFESSION

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science

In
The School of Human Resource and Workforce Development

By
Essie Dee Scott Cockrell
B.S.N., Northwestern State University, 1970
August 2002
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Completing this significant educational endeavor was the realization of a personal goal set much earlier in my life, made possible by family, friends, and a team of educators that believed in me. All I asked was a chance to succeed, and I got that chance and so much more from so many. First, I am grateful to Dr. John Larkin, Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School and a member of my committee. His easygoing manner, career encouragement and continued support have been a meaningful source of motivation for me to complete my graduate work.

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“Thanks be to God…who through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” 2 Corinthians 2:14
Bloom Where You’re Planted

“God has placed you here for a purpose,
Whatever it might be;
Know He has chosen you for it
And labor faithfully.”

Anonymous
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................... iii

List of Tables...................................................................................................................... xi

Abstract............................................................................................................................. xvii

Chapter One  Introduction .............................................................................................. 1
  Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1
    Importance of Nursing ............................................................................................... 1
    Perceptions of The Nursing Profession ................................................................. 2
    Current Nursing Shortage ......................................................................................... 3
    Factors Leading to the Nursing Shortage ............................................................... 4
    Importance of Informed Career Decision Making .................................................. 5
    Actions Which Can Lead to More Informed Decision Making ............................. 6
  Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................ 6
  Purpose of the Study .................................................................................................... 8
  Objectives .................................................................................................................... 8
  Significance of Study .................................................................................................. 10
  Definitions of Terms ................................................................................................... 11

Chapter Two  Review of Literature .............................................................................. 13
  Preview ......................................................................................................................... 13
    Historical Perspective of Nursing .......................................................................... 13
    Image of Nursing ...................................................................................................... 16
    Impending Nursing Shortage ................................................................................... 21
    Importance of Informed Career Decision Making ................................................ 27

Chapter Three  Methodology ...................................................................................... 38
  Population and Sample .............................................................................................. 38
  Instrumentation .......................................................................................................... 40
    Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Instrument .................................................. 40
      Instrument: Part I .................................................................................................. 40
      Instrument: Part II ................................................................................................. 40
  Data Collection ........................................................................................................... 41
  Data Analysis ............................................................................................................. 42
    Objective One ......................................................................................................... 42
    Objective Two ......................................................................................................... 43
    Objective Three ........................................................................................................ 43

Chapter Four  Findings ............................................................................................... 45
  Objective One ............................................................................................................ 45
    Year of High School Graduation ........................................................................... 45
Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations .................. 115
Conclusions ..................................................................... 115
References ........................................................................ 121
Appendix
A: Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perception Scale ..................... 127
B: Letter to Prenursing Students Regarding the Survey ........... 136
C: Postcard Thank you/Reminder to Prenursing Students ......... 138
D: Follow-up Letter to Non respondents .............................. 140
Vita ................................................................................. 142
LIST OF TABLES

1. Year of High School Graduation Indicated by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.........................46

2. Student Classification Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States........................................47

3. Cumulative High School Grade Point Average Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.......48

4. Grade Point Average on All College Coursework Completed of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.......49

5. Additional Professional Credentials Held by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.......................50

6. Current Nursing Classification Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States....................51

7. Highest College Degree Completed as Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States...............52

8. Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Reported Employment/Volunteer Experiences.................................................................52

9. Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Reported Family Member(s) in Healthcare Setting.................................................................53

10. Type of Home Community as Perceived by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.....................54

11. Whether or Not Selected Reasons for Choosing Nursing as a Career Were Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States...............................................55

12. Whether or Not Selected Nursing Practice Areas of Interest Were Identified by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States...................................................56

13. Age of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States........................................................................57
14. Gender of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.............................................................. 58

15. Ethnic Background of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States........................................... 58

16. Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Indicated That They Were “Willing to Serve as a Mentor” for Prenursing Students After Graduation ........................................ 59

17. Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Would Like to Return to Their Home Community Following Graduation.................................................. 60

18. Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Indicated that “Observing a Nurse in Action Influenced Their Decision to Choose Nursing as a Career” ......................... 60

19. Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Indicated a Willingness to “Enroll in a Prenursing Orientation Course for No Academic Credit” .................................. 61

20. Perceptions of the Nursing Profession Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States................. 63

21. Factor Analysis of Perceptions about the Nursing Profession Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.............................................................. 67

22. Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States ...................... 69

23. Analysis of Variance of “Nursing Education” Perception Sub-scale Scores by Student Classification Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States......................... 70

24. Relationships between Selected Academic Measures and Nursing Perceptions Sub-scale Scores Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States................................. 71

25. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Had Completed a College Degree ........................................ 72
26. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Had Additional Healthcare Credentials ...........................................75

27. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Have Volunteered in a Healthcare Setting” ..............................75

28. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Have Worked in a Healthcare Setting” ..........................76

29. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Have “Shadowed a Nurse on the Job”’ as an Employment/Volunteer Experience.................................................................77

30. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “One or Both Parents Is/Are in Healthcare” .....................79

31. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “One or Both Parent(s) Is/Are a Nurse” .................................79

32. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Family Members Other Than Parents Are in Healthcare” .........80

33. Relationships Between Age and Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores Among Prenursing Students as a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.................................................................80

34. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Gender of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States .................................................................81

35. Comparison of the Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Ethnic Background of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.................................................................82

36. Comparison of the Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Type of Home Community of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States.................................................................83
37. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Desire to Help Others” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...85

38. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Desire to Care for Others” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...86

39. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Diversity of Job Opportunities” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...86

40. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Exposure to Family and Friends in Healthcare” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...87

41. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Prior Work Experience” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...88

42. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Hands on Caring for Family and Friends” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...89

43. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Religious Influence” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...90

44. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Career Change after Completing Another Degree” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...90

45. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Interest in Research of the Science and Health of Man” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………………...92
46. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Status of Professional Degree” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………...92

47. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Salary Opportunities” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession…………………………………………………………………...93

48. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Neonatal” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested…………………………………………………………………...95

49. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Nurse Anesthetist” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested…………………………………………………………………...95

50. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Emergency Room” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested…………………………………………………………………...96

51. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Surgery” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested…………………………………………………………………...96

52. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Undecided” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested…………………………………………………………………...97

53. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Pediatric” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested…………………………………………………………………...97

54. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Nurse Practitioner” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested…………………………………………………………………...98
55. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Willingness to Return to Home Community after Graduation”…99

56. Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Willingness to Enroll in a Prenursing Orientation Course for No Academic Credit”…………………………………………………………………... 100
ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the nursing perceptions among prenursing students enrolled in a baccalaureate prenursing program. Objectives in the study included describing undergraduate baccalaureate prenursing student on selected demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnic background, etc., determining the perceptions of students about the nursing profession, and determining if a relationship existed between students' perceptions of nursing and selected personal characteristics such as classification, reason for choosing nursing, area of nursing practice most interested, etc.

A total of 207 (66.35%) prenursing students enrolled in prerequisite courses for a baccalaureate nursing program participated in the study. Instrumentation consisted of a two-part researcher designed instrument, Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument. Data were obtained from students who were in a prenursing program of study and came to the prenursing advising office for counseling.

The findings of the study indicated that prenursing students are unclear about their perceptions of the nursing profession, and direct experiences with the healthcare professions have an impact on students' decision making regarding nursing.

The researcher concluded that most prenursing students recognize the need for career information about nursing, and the majority of students are willing to enroll in an Introduction to Nursing course even if for no academic credit.

The researcher recommends that universities should consider implementing a Introduction to Nursing course, which includes a lecture and field experience component
as an effective recruiting tool and for nursing programs to assist currently enrolled
prenursing students to solidify their career choice.

In addition, the researcher recommends that further research be done to follow the
baccalaureate prenursing participants in this study through nursing school and into their
early nursing career to compare prenursing students’ perceptions of nursing with their
perceptions of nursing as senior nursing students and after 5 years of nursing practice.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The nursing workforce seems to be at an exciting crossroad of change, both in recruiting and in curriculum. The environment of healthcare has changed and so has nursing, resulting in students asking, “what is nursing?” (Wieck, 2000). This question creates a challenge for nurse educators. In order to attract and retain bright, capable students in nursing, there must be changes in prenursing curricula to provide and assure accurate and definitive perceptions of nursing. Factors which currently contribute to students’ perceptions of nursing must be identified in order to establish and provide students with the career making skills necessary in choosing a nursing career, find job satisfaction following graduation, and remain in nursing as a career.

Importance of Nursing

Registered Nurses (RNs) are still the largest segment of healthcare’s present workforce, constituting fifty-nine per cent (59%) of the healthcare providers in the United States today. RNs are well-educated scientific experts, educators, researchers, inventors, leaders, and comforters, and are the primary care providers for many patients regardless of age, gender, or cultural background (Geolot, 2001).

Cost controls mandated by Managed Care have changed the delivery of healthcare away from the hospital and physician, thus expanding the role of the RNs, to provide patient assessment and treatment and to wear a variety of hats instead of the traditional “nurses’ cap”. Given these expanded roles, RNs are obtaining graduate degrees as Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs). APNs are engaged as physician extenders to provide continued quality patient care and to assure cost effectiveness in healthcare. Therefore,
nurses are expected to practice in more autonomous roles, maximizing patient care and empowering patients to care for themselves as a result of excellent patient education.

The industry of healthcare is rapidly moving forward in technological advances that will allow patients to be monitored at home by RNs. Computer monitored tests for patients are enabling more in-home primary care by nurses, including monitoring results and regulating medications for patients in the home.

Changes in present life-styles of the U.S. population have also pre-empted a number of health related problems such as obesity, higher incidences of diabetes and heart disease, HIV, AIDS, and Hepatitis A, B, C, and D that will demand nursing care (NIDDK, 1998; Sternberg, 2001; American Heart Association, 2001).

Another factor driving the demand for nurses is an aging U.S. population. Individuals now live thirty years longer than a century ago, thus introducing pre-existing health deficits that require patient monitoring by nurses. In addition, it is projected that the middle-aged “baby boomer” population will be cared for at home through technology that is monitored by nurses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1995).

Nursing can be defined as the most, and certainly no less than one of the most, valuable pieces in the puzzle of healthcare. Without nurses, healthcare could not be implemented. Consequently, it must be assured that we have an adequate nurse workforce, both now and in the future, if we are to continue to provide quality healthcare for everyone in the face of continued economic constraints.

**Perceptions of The Nursing Profession**

Today, the conceptualization by students of the nursing profession appears uncertain, and the question asked by many students is “What is nursing?” (Wieck, 2000). Historically, nurses have been predominantly females who were easily recognized by a
white hat and uniform making the professional and the profession more visible. Today, white uniforms and hats have been replaced by vivid colored scrub suits worn by both male and female nurses, as well as the majority of other employees in healthcare.

Students’ perceptions of nursing are based on visual images that are often limited to bedside care and drug administration instead of that of a highly skilled and well-educated nursing professional with an important role to play in healthcare. Many students have not spent time with a nursing professional or volunteered in a healthcare setting to acquire a background on which to establish perceptions about nursing, and thus have limited their opportunities for more informed career decision-making skills.

Literature suggests that students’ career perceptions are highly individual, and are the product of contracted images of jobs they see for themselves, derived images from media, and delegated images from parents and friends. Students often view the status of a job linked to value judgments about the visible dimensions of the job (e.g. skilled work instead of an analytical partner in patient care) (Foskett and Hensley-Brown, 2000). Thus students’ career perceptions may be less defined, resulting in a decline of students choosing a career in nursing.

**Current Nursing Shortage**

One thing the public does know about nurses is that inadequate nurse staffing in hospitals may be jeopardizing the quality of patient care (Cho, 2001). Evidence suggests that there are shortages of nurses willing, or available, to fill vacant positions in hospitals, nursing homes and home care (NurseWeek, 2001). Although there have been nursing shortages in the past, the current shortage is different in that it is driven by the demand for growing healthcare needs and the aging of the “baby boomer” nursing work force and nurse educators. Because of the central role nursing plays in quality patient care in the
community, hospitals, and nursing homes across the nation a nursing shortage is clearly everyone’s problem. Although the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2000) lists nursing as one of the top 40 growth jobs for the next ten years (Nursing World, 2001) the number of students applying to baccalaureate nursing programs across the nation is decreasing (Hopkins, 2001, Geolot, 2001, Benjamin, 2000).

It is imperative to recruit and retain students in baccalaureate nursing programs to provide the increasing healthcare needs for the future. In order to reduce the current nursing shortage and insure the delivery of quality healthcare, it is important that students make more informed career decisions about baccalaureate nursing.

**Factors Leading to the Nursing Shortage**

Nursing faces competition from many other career paths, which has made it more difficult to recruit students into nursing. Students are looking for “high status” careers, and because students’ perceptions of nursing are limited to visible images instead of informed career decisions, many view nursing as bedside care and taking orders from physicians (Wieck, 2000). Understanding students’ perceptions of nursing can be helpful in formulating curricula to empower students with excellent career making skills which will determine the future of nursing.

Many bright students are looking for advanced degrees, and are often confused regarding academic tracks for nursing. These students are often discouraged by the lack of standardization in nursing education, and choose alternative curricula in medicine instead of nursing. Students also need to be aware of advanced degrees in nursing like Advanced Practice Nursing (APN) that prepare students to achieve advanced educational opportunities.
After nearly a decade of managed healthcare which has resulted in constant change, healthcare cutbacks and inadequate funding for quality patient care. As a result, nurses have become frustrated with these restrictions placed on their ability to provide quality patient care, therefore they are finding it more difficult to encourage students to enter the nursing profession (Peterson, 2001), and many have left the profession or retired.

**Importance of Informed Career Decision-making**

Career guidance and counseling are two components of a total career education program. Students need to understand themselves in order to explore and plan a career, and must be aware of and understand all their options if they are to make informed career decisions (Cunanan and Maddy-Bernstein, 1994). Students will need to be well informed about the nursing profession in order to make a more informed career decision. Many aspects of adult jobs such as nursing are invisible to young people, thus making it difficult for them to select nursing as a career choice.

The perception of nursing is one of distorted clarity by prenursing students; thus many students do not have realistic views of what a nursing professional’s job responsibilities are. Hagan (2001) reports that over the past 20 years RNs have changed dramatically in the mode they have chosen for their basic nursing education. As a result, many students are not aware of the variety of educational pathways for nursing. Bright students interested in the “high status” education of specialized professional nursing (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2000) are uncertain about the academic programs required for these careers. All students need to be aware of the educational track they need in order to reach individual career goals in nursing.

Informed career decisions can provide a basis for students upon which to make a career choice in nursing, enhance recruitment into nursing, lower the attrition rate of
nursing students, and influence retention of nursing graduates in the present health system environment.

**Actions Which Can Lead to More Informed Decision-making**

Career development is the lifelong process that incorporates education, occupational training, and work as well as one’s social and leisure life (Zunker, 1998). Students need to be aware of and to understand career options if they are to make an informed career decision (Cunanan and Maddy-Bernstein, 1994).

Students could be offered the educational environment of a healthcare career orientation course, Introduction to Nursing, which should enable them to make a more informed career decision about nursing. A curriculum inclusive of the “high status” academics required for baccalaureate nursing, which includes interactive group learning and “shadowing” of nursing professionals, could provide improved career decision-making skills for prenursing students. Undecided students interested in finding out more about a career in professional nursing can also utilize the class to enhance a career decision.

**Statement of the Problem**

Nursing and major roles that the profession plays in the delivery of healthcare are not always visibly promoted to interested students in making a career decision. Having career information available for students allows them to make a more informed career decision and ultimately achieve greater career satisfaction (Zunker, 1998).

There appears to be a limited, and in some cases, negative perception that is of the nursing profession created by a number of factors that filter down to college students. Students’ perceptions about nursing have been shown to be influenced by several factors including negative parental viewpoints, a lack of time spent by students in healthcare settings, absence of nurse mentors, and unrealistic television media portrayals of nurses.
(e.g. ER, Emergency Room). In addition, there may be poor or inadequate information on academic and career planning for potential nursing students (Faskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1998).

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1998) state that students are currently seeking professional autonomy, “high status”, and challenging academic careers instead of being a “carer”. Nursing is often seen as “carer” by high school and college students whose visual association with nursing is limited to bedside care and taking orders from physicians. Students’ perceptions about nursing can influence their decision to choose a career in nursing. Thus knowledge about students’ perceptions of nursing can be an important factor in determining their needs for a more informed career decision-making process.

Attracting informed, bright, and capable students into baccalaureate nursing programs is vital to educate the number of RNs needed to provide the delivery of quality healthcare for everyone now and in the future (Geolot, 2001).

Given the impact that student perceptions can have on career choice, it is a challenge to nursing educators and recruiters to provide informed career decision-making opportunities essential to students in formulating both accurate and positive perceptions about nursing.

Therefore, research is needed to determine if students’ perceptions of nursing change once they are in nursing programs, and if adequate informed career decisions making skills about nursing prior to entering nursing programs can improve nursing student retention rates and career satisfaction.
Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the nursing career perceptions of prenursing students currently enrolled in a research extensive university baccalaureate prenursing program.

Objectives

Objectives designed to address the purpose and guide the research study are:

1. Describe undergraduate student enrollment in a prenursing curriculum at a comprehensive research university. Selected characteristics for description include:
   a.) Year of high school graduation.
   b.) Current student classification (ex. Freshman).
   c.) Cumulative high school GPA.
   d.) GPA on all college coursework completed.
   e.) All additional credentials held (ex. licensed practical nurse (LPN), certified nursing assistant (CNA), Lab Tech.).
   f.) Current nursing classification (ex. Prenursing, RN to BSN).
   g.) Highest college degree completed (ex. AD, BS, MS, PhD).
   h.) Employment/volunteer experiences (i.e., employment, volunteering, “shadowing”).
   i.) Family members in healthcare.
   j.) Professional credentials held (ex. RN, LPN, technical program, etc.).
   k.) Type of home community.
   l.) Reason(s) for choosing nursing.
   m.) Area of nursing practice most interested.
n.) Age.
o.) Gender.
p.) Ethnic background.
q.) Desire to be a mentor.
r.) Desire to return to home community after graduation.

2. Determine the perceptions of baccalaureate prenursing students about the nursing profession as measured by the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Instrument: College Level, 2001.

3. Determine if a relationship exists between students’ perceptions of the nursing profession and the following selected personal characteristics:
   a. Student classification
   b. Academic performance (high school GPA, current College GPA)
   c. Completed college degree
   d. Additional credentials in healthcare
   e. Employment/volunteer experience in healthcare
   f. Family members in healthcare
   g. Age
   h. Gender
   i. Ethnic background
   j. Type of home community
   k. Reason for choosing nursing
   l. Practice area of interest
   m. Return to home community after graduation
n. Willingness to take an Introduction to Nursing course for no academic credit

**Significance of Study**

This study represents one of the first opportunities to determine prenursing students’ perceptions of the baccalaureate nursing program and the profession of nursing. At a time when the nation faces a critical professional nursing shortage and the numbers of students entering the baccalaureate program of nursing have steadily declined (Peterson, 2001, Hopkins, 2001, Benjamin, 2000), it becomes imperative to determine whether students’ perceptions of nursing accurately describe academic programs and the nursing profession.

Understanding students’ perceptions of nursing will help nurse recruiters and educators to determine whether an Introduction to Nursing course would be beneficial to prenursing students. Academic and visible healthcare experience can provide students with more informed career decision-making skills, as well as help to formulate informed perceptions of professional nursing. Would a more informed career decision-making process thus help in the recruitment and retention of students in baccalaureate nursing programs?

Determining students’ perceptions about nursing would provide educators with a basis for curriculum development. Identifying these perceptions can lead to academic standards and healthcare experiences that could prove crucial to meeting students’ individual career development needs both now and in the future.

This research is also important because it could provide information related to current perceptions about the nursing profession that experienced nurses could address in the workplace as they mentor students. Students who volunteer or work in healthcare need
to have nurse role models that present positive and accurate characteristics about nursing, as well as the negative aspects of the profession. Knowledge of both types of factors can provide students the necessary skills to formulate quality perceptions for career decision-making.

Baccalaureate prenursing programs, baccalaureate nursing schools, and the nursing profession as a whole, contribute to the clinical experience for prenursing students. The results of this research can serve as a tool for nurse educators in developing a challenging curriculum preparing prenursing students to integrate a career in nursing into their life.

**Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of the study, the following terms were operationally defined:

**Prenursing student** - An individual currently enrolled in prenursing pre-requisite classes at Louisiana State University (LSU) in preparation to apply to the baccalaureate nursing program at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center School of Nursing (LSUHSC SON).

**Pre-requisite classes** – Thirty-eight hours of science and liberal arts academic classes taken before an individual is eligible to apply to LSUHSC SON.

**Baccalaureate nursing program** - A four-year professional nursing program in which students earn a bachelor of science degree in nursing (BSN) and the right to sit for the NCLEX-RN to become a registered nurse (RN).

**Perceptions** - Personal ideas and beliefs about the baccalaureate nursing program and the nursing profession.

**Professional nurse** – Registered nurses (RN) graduating from a baccalaureate program with a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN), or a two-year associate (AD, ASN, or ADN) or diploma nursing program (DNA, DNS, or DipHE).
ANA - American Nurses Association, the national professional nursing organization.

NCLEX-RN – Nursing Certification Licensure Exam for Registered Nurse.

Registered nurse (RN) - Nurses who have completed accredited baccalaureate, associate, or diploma schools of nursing and successfully completed the NCLEX-RN licensure exam.

“Shadowing” - The act of following a professional nurse during their regular daily activities on the job and observing what they actually do.

Mentor – Someone who takes a special interest in helping a student develop into a successful professional.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Preview

This section will present a review of relevant literature beginning with a historical and philosophical perspective of nursing. This will be followed by the image of nursing with special relationship to career decision-making. The nursing shortage will then be summarized with an emphasis on the factors that have a major impact on the need for an adequate nursing work force. A brief discussion on the importance of informed career decision-making will conclude with a brief proposal for a prenursing Introduction to Nursing course that is designed to meet the career decision-making needs of students. The curriculum design for the class would be centered on students’ needs that may be identified by this study.

Historical Perspective of Nursing

Since Florence Nightingale’s pioneering work, only five generations of nurses have set their footprints in history. In that short time, nursing has grown enormously in knowledge, skill, prestige, and value. Nursing needs to be recognized as a member of the scientific discipline that can make valuable contributions to healthcare (Mundinger, 1998).

America witnessed nursing first in the 20th century in home visiting and community-based care. Then, during World War II nurses cared for patients on the European front and ran hospitals here in the United States while physicians were at war. Nurses were entrepreneurs for soup kitchens for the poor, directed individual and family counseling on dietetics and school health stations, and provided most community-based
care with physicians seeing only the critically ill. Nurses shed their uniforms for coveralls in the war and worked with their medical colleagues in the indistinguishable teamwork of saving lives, only to return after the war to resume their prewar status (Mundinger, 1998).

Mundinger (1998) suggests that with biomedical and technological breakthroughs, government funding established hospitals that cared for more and more patients. With booming insurance in the 1950s, care giving grew and so did healthcare costs. With insurance tied predominately to physician fees and hospital costs, nursing gained a commodity on community-based care and became the decision maker in home care.

Associate degree (AD) hospital based nursing programs, which had been the education and clinical training centers for nurses and supplied its nursing workforce, began to decline. Baccalaureate nursing programs, which offered a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) in addition to preparation for RN licensure became the focus for nursing education. The BSN degree began its ascendancy with emphasis on public health and leadership training, which resulted in advancing the BSN nurse as the hospital head nurse (Mundinger, 1998).

Physicians could see many more patients in a day if the patient came to their offices, so nurses took up home visiting for patients that could not get to the doctor’s office; however, unlike other medical costs, home visiting was not well paid. As a result, nurses became more and more concentrated in hospitals where salaries were better. Nurses were almost entirely in charge of patient care, with the exception of a few hours that may have been spent in surgery. The resource focus was not on the nurse, but on
high tech hospital cost. Nurses quickly realized… that which is paid for directly is given the highest value (Mundinger, 1998).

As a result, nursing schools developed the first advanced practice programs in nursing, which were midwifery and psychiatric nursing. In the 1960s, nursing specialties proliferated and in 1965, the nurse practitioner (NP) was born. This era was also the birth of Medicare and Medicaid, federal programs that insured payment of healthcare for the elderly and poor. Although NPs did not receive direct government payment under the original statute, amendments during the next 28 years provided access for services, and nurses soon saw job security in advanced practice nursing (Mundinger, 1998).

During the 1970s, enrollments in BSN and master of science programs in nursing (MSN) increased; new AD programs were also established. The base salary was the same for the BSN RN and the two-year graduate AD RN. As a result, many BSN RNs pursued graduate degrees where they would be paid more for their advanced education in nursing (Mundinger, 1998).

The 1960s and 1970s also saw significant growth rates in the development of doctoral education in nursing, primarily in higher education and administration, quickly followed by theory development and testing. In the 80s doctoral programs in advanced practice research and in theoretical foundations of practice were established, and were followed in the 90s with programs of research in practice outcomes, effectiveness, and the relationship of practice to policy.

Today NPs work in institutions and in private practice as clinical specialists where they see patients over an extended time period and across many settings and accountability in advanced nursing practice is growing. These advancements have
fostered nurses with authoritative and complementary roles in team care with physicians (Mundinger, 1998).

The valuable background of professional development of nursing is influenced by need, biomedical knowledge, and the economic and financial structure of the nation and its health care system. Among nursing’s greatest contributions are primarily counseling, teaching, disease prevention, and health promotion, which are much less riveting to the public than elegant technology and life-and-death medical situations that are often associated with the physician (Mundinger, 1998). Thus, nursing has struggled for recognition and independence as well as opportunity while often overshadowed by its partner, medicine. Mundinger says nursing has proven that it can advance its future by educational preparation, securing public recognition and access through research, and by developing a structure in the nation’s healthcare system that uses nursing services in a protected and focused way.

Instead of preparing students for a specific job, literature suggests that nurse educators are equipped with knowledge, skills, and experiences that will allow them flexibility and an opportunity to advance throughout their careers (Moore, 1998). Key words to look for in nursing will be Advanced Nursing Practice (APN), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Nurse Practitioner (NP), and Nursing Role (Lynch, 1996).

**Image of Nursing**

Career images of nursing can be shaped by a number of influences. Data by researchers in a South Hampton, United Kingdom study involving secondary and college age students, confirmed the importance of career images and perceptions in shaping the career choices of individual students (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1998). The word “perception” is defined as the “ability to perceive
and the result of perceiving, to realize or become aware of something through the senses, an
impression accompanied by an understanding of what it is” (Webster, 1937).

To assist the reader in developing an understanding of perceptions as related to career decisions
about nursing, reference will be made to several recent projects that have been completed that
confirm the importance of career images in shaping career choices.

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1998) state that gender images influence
perceptions of nursing. Historically, nursing has been an occupation of women, as seen
in all female nursing management, staffing, teaching, discipline, and organization. In
fact, males under 10 years of age included in this study did not take the question about
males in nursing seriously. The 17-year old males, however, were more conscious of
being politically correct but still referred to the stereotypically feminine personality
characteristics needed to be a nurse (i.e., patient, nice, caring).

Additional data indicate that young men are unlikely to make a decision to enter
nursing before age 21. College age males felt that male masculinity would be doubted if
men chose a nursing career. Interestingly, the focus of a career as a physician centered
around intellectual potential, whereas nursing focused around personality traits
(Marshland, 1996). This could indicate a significance of role models and mentors as key
factors influencing a student’s image of nursing.

Students’ focus on the roles and tasks of nursing showed that younger students in
the Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1998) study saw nursing as very task oriented
(i.e., related to visible tasks of patient care at the bedside). A greater percentage of older
students appeared to perceive nursing as carrying out orders without responsibility,
status, or authority. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1999) suggest that images of career
progression and security are very important factors to students in formulating career perceptions. For example, most students in the research chose jobs they believed to offer greater career opportunities than nursing. These students chose jobs which were difficult to enter or highly selective, such as sports and acting.

Understanding why students choose or reject a nursing career is relevant in designing a recruiting program for students. Nurse educators face the challenge of providing students with a variety of informative factors about nursing, which are important to students in career decision-making. Students are currently formulating career decisions from a variety of sources that do not include nurses, therefore, students may have vague, distorted, or inaccurate images of nursing that result in disillusioned career choices. A review of literature suggests that increasing numbers of students are making career decisions related to nursing based on a limited range of informational factors and deficient career making skills. The following data define how students presently view the nursing profession, at what age they begin to make decisions related to nursing, and some identified factors influencing students’ images of nursing:

1. According to Kerstern, Barkwell, and Meyers’ (1991) students chose nursing related to five categories of reasons. In order of frequency students’ reasons stemmed from a desire to nurture, meet emotional needs, employment opportunities, financial opportunities, and interest in science/disease.

2. Stevens and Walker (1993) reported the most frequent reason for college-bound students to choose nursing was the desire to help people, followed by wanting to do important work and the desire to work with all kinds of people.
3. Kelly, Shoemaker, and Steele (1996) examined the motivational factors for males choosing a career in the predominantly female dominated field. The results revealed that the choice of a career in nursing was influenced by the following: job security/availability; desire to help people, professional autonomy, and previous contact with the healthcare system (i.e. volunteering, working, family member, etc.), and family support.

The foregoing studies revealed that most male and female students’ primary interest in nursing was not linked to cognitive understanding of nursing, but on emotional desires, such as helping people and the desire to nurture. In the three studies cited in examining students’ interests in nursing, at least two of the studies showed significant interest in each of the remaining areas. Students’ knowledge base of educational programs for nursing, nursing licensure, professional opportunities, or professional responsibilities were not indicated.

Beck (2000) suggests that nurse educators need to use creative strategies and programs in career education to attract more applicants, and that first-hand knowledge of why students choose nursing as a career is basic and necessary. Three new pieces of important information on students’ reasons for choosing a nursing career that emerged through Beck’s study were the powerful effect of observing nurses in action, feeling as though something was missing from their original career choice, and not gaining acceptance into medical school. Although Beck’s study cannot be broadly generalized, it does have implications for nurse educators. It confirmed a repetitive pattern among students entering nursing as a career, namely a strong desire to help people and to experience an idealized “one to one” relationship with patients.
A student’s perception that the nursing profession reaps benefits for both patient and nurse are not always matched with the realities of today’s healthcare delivery. Consistently, a student’s strongest perception about nursing is that of a nurse’s one to one relationship with patients, which in today’s managed healthcare system is not a reality. One implication in general for nursing educators was that of not setting up students for disillusionment. Changes in nursing practice need to be made clear to students. Curriculum must be implemented to help students and new graduates adjust to realities of today’s healthcare. Importantly, students must still be able to realize satisfaction and pleasure in the career they have perceived as one of caring for others. Otherwise, students are more likely to drop out of nursing programs or leave the profession after entering the workforce.

Why are students overlooking careers in nursing? The Journal of Vocational Education and Training (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1998) sought to develop an understanding of how students perceive nursing as a career at various stages in their education, and how these perceptions affect students’ interests in nursing. The study indicates that decisions about jobs are being made at an early age and that by late elementary school students have often rejected jobs on the basis of perceptions. Thus, it is important to provide career information and experience for well-defined perceptions about nursing that can be developed for greater career decision-making skills.

On many campuses, curriculum-based community “service learning,” as it is most frequently referred to rather than traditional co-curricular volunteerism, represents a real growth area to enhance career-making skills (Fisher, 1996). Bringle and Hatcher (1996) define service learning as a credit-bearing educational experience in which students
participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs. Students reflect on the service to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Overall, the data revealed that young people have a very limited and out-dated understanding of career progression of nursing and were unaware of changes in nurse education and training. Nurse educators have a responsibility not to set up students for disillusionment but instead to identify prenursing students’ perceptions about nursing, help them to formulate accurate perceptions of nursing, and to adequately prepare them to succeed in nursing education and the nursing workforce.

**Impending Nursing Shortage**

Nursing programs everywhere are using inventive tactics of tuition reimbursement, financial aid, high school “shadowing” programs, and opening doors to immigrant and minority students in order to attract the volume of students needed to provide the nursing workforce to care for the future population. Declining enrollment in baccalaureate nursing programs, an aging nursing workforce, the majority of nurse educators nearing retirement, and the current environment of healthcare are key factors underlying the current nursing shortage (Benjamin, 2000; Peterson, 2001; Hopkins, 2001; Hellinghausen, 1998).

Although recruitment incentives are being offered, little is being done to influence a prenursing student’s image of nursing, career making skills, or factors that negatively affect students’ images of nursing. Sound images of nursing and more informed dimensional career opportunities in nursing could provide students significant skills for more informed career decisions. Developing improved career-making skills allows
prenursing opportunities to explore career/job satisfaction in nursing. Locke (1959) states, “Job satisfaction is the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values.” Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are functions perceived by what we want and what we obtain. Periodic assessments are needed periodically to determine the changes that students desire and need in a career. Locke says students who make more informed career decisions tend to find greater satisfaction in a chosen career. Therefore, students who choose a nursing career based on a more informed career decision should find greater career satisfaction as a nurse.

Although the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2000) predicts a significant 21 percent job growth rate among RNs by 2006, the largest among all professions, fewer students are choosing careers in nursing. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing Media Relations (2000) states that with the steady decline of enrollment in baccalaureate nursing programs, the need to attract nursing students appears imperative.

The Bureau of Health Professions, Division of Nursing (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000a), estimates that by 2010 the country will need 1.4 million RNs with a BSN, but will have only 635,000. Of the 532,000 nursing positions requiring a master’s degree or Ph.D., only 250,000 nurses will actually be available to fill the demand.

Literature reflects the aging of the current nursing workforce, indicating the average age of RNs to be 44.3 years, with those under age 30 representing only 10 percent (Peterson, 2001). Alarmingly, one-third of these young nurses indicated that they
plan to leave the nursing profession within the next year (Hagan, 2001). Most nurse educators are nearing retirement with an average age of 55.5 years. This will affect the future of nursing education and the supply of students to fill nursing vacancies according to the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses Preliminary Findings (U.S. Department of Health Services, 2000a; Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000).

Conversely, changes in financing and organization of healthcare delivery resulted in a decreased demand for nursing services through the 1990s. In addition, forced deteriorations in quality healthcare resulting from constant cutbacks have made it difficult for frustrated nurses to encourage students to become nurses (Peterson, 2001). The projected intersection of supply and demand to the current shortage of nursing is estimated to be 2010, when the supply of RNs will no longer exceed the need. The future supply and demand of RNs will show a widening gap unless measures are taken to attract students into nursing, reduce attrition rates, and retain nursing graduates (Peterson, 2001; Ulrich, 2001; Hinshaw, 2001).

Virtually everyone has been in contact with and experienced the importance of having a nurse care for them during one’s lifetime. Dicey Smith, MSN RN, an expert in the field says, “Nursing is the only profession I know that allows one to impact the lives of others from birth to the grave (Smith, C.P., personal communication, April 30, 2001).” It is often referred to as the “heart and soul” of health care (Harris, P.W., personal communication, April 15, 2000). Studies prompted by Congressional involvement showed a strong and consistent relationship between nurse staffing and important patient outcomes in acute care hospitals inpatient units (Needleman, Bruihaus, Mattke, Stewart,
and Zelivinsky, 2001). The results of these studies indicated that patients cared for by a
higher RN share of total staffing had a reduction in secondary infections and length of
stay in hospital. Also, careful monitoring of in-home technology by nurses showed
improved clinical outcomes (Compber, Kim, and Bader, 1998; Health Resources and
Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions Division of Nursing, 2001).
Economic factors integrated into healthcare and hospitals since the 1990s, show the
importance of excellent healthcare provided to patients by professional RNs (Bellack and
Byers, 2000).

A number of related factors provide useful guidelines to indicate the increasing
need for RNs. Study results indicate that older Americans compose a greater segment of
the U.S. population than ever before. The U. S. Census Bureau (1995) and the U.S.
Government Census (2000) report that since 1990, the percentage of Americans aged 65
and older has tripled, and the elderly population itself is getting older. Americans 85 and
older, representing 4.0 million individuals, is 33 times larger. According to the Programs
and Initiatives for Aging (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000b), one
out of every six Americans, a total of over 89 million, will live to be 100 years old in the
next 30 years (Peterson, 2001). An adequate nursing force will be needed to care for this
aging population of “baby boomers,” who are living longer and healthier lives and are
expected to live well into their 80s and 90s (U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services, 2000b).

Millions of older people have chronic illnesses and must rely on others for care.
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000b) states that older Americans
will not routinely be cared for in hospitals, but instead will be cared for at home by
family, hospice, and technology trained personnel. Increased longevity has prompted an increased need for orthoroplasty procedures, where many elderly patients need continued skilled transitional care by nurses before they are discharged (Center for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, 2001a). The aging patient traditionally has pre-existing deficits, which require nursing care and patient education, as more self-care is required by patients and caregivers at home (Center for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, 1999).

An aging population has also increased the number of cases of Alzheimer’s disease to 4 million; the expected number of cases will be 14 million according to the Alzheimer’s Association (Davis, 2001). Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) and RNs will be needed to direct institutional and home care for these patients and teach families how to care for these patients. Nurse researchers, educators, and others who study the profession’s future say also that nurses will monitor patients in their homes and community nursing centers, with only the critically ill being hospitalized (Center for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, 2001b).

With environmental health science also a national concern, the nursing profession is working to interpret this science in clinical settings, research, and in schools of nursing. Nurses are in the right place to document links between exposures and disease consequence, guide exposure prevention efforts, advocate for increased funding for exposure reduction programs, and recognize specifics in environmentally-induced diseases in the decades to come.

Another imperative for nurses is reflected in a recent report by the American Heart Association, in which it is stated that sudden cardiac death is increasing in
America’s youth (American Heart Association, 2001). RNs will be needed to educate parents and the general public to recognize symptoms of cardiac distress in youth, since it is believed that lack of recognition of cardiac distress symptoms might contribute to the delayed application of cardiopulmonary resuscitation or defibrillation to prevent death.

Yet another threatening health problem mandating increased nursing care is that 61% of the individuals in the United States are either overweight or obese (Moran, 1999; National Institute of Diabetes and Kidney Disease (NIDDK), 1998). These conditions lead directly and indirectly to heart and kidney disease, diabetes, emotional problems, gastrointestinal disturbances, etc. and therefore to an increase in outpatient visits, and admissions to hospitals and nursing home care (Squires, 1998). More children are overweight today than ever before, and youth are facing greater health risks from smoking, poor diets, lack of exercise and other “risky” social behaviors (Obesity in Children and Adults in the U.S., 2000). RNs in schools, public health centers, and in research and education awareness play a vital part in child and youth health disease prevention, nutrition, exercise, and weight control.

Other serious health issues include HIV deaths, which had slowed by almost 20% a year, has declined only 4% in 1999. In addition, we are fighting a global war against AIDS (Sternberg, 2001). Hepatitis B, and C are in epidemic stages in the US. Sternberg states that the assistance of nurses in patient education in side effect management, hematological parameter monitoring, and medication dosing and administration, is crucial to maximizing patient compliance and therapy outcome with these individuals.

Nurses oversee patient care in the community; provide primary care in a variety of non-acute settings, and highly technical care with acutely ill patients requiring
hospitalization. Nurses are among a few health professionals responsible to their patients and profession to validate the safety and efficacy of healthcare practice. Over 50 million people a year are hospitalized, and because of the central role nurses play in hospitals and nursing homes across the nation, the nursing shortage is everyone’s problem (Nursing World, 2000; Nevidjon and Erickson, 2001).

**Importance of Informed Career Decision-Making**

Studs Turkel stated, “Work is about daily meaning as well as daily bread. For recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short for a sort of life rather than Monday through Friday sort of dying...We have a right to ask of work that it include meaning, recognition and astonishment, and life” (Byars, 1996).

Many prenursing students are uncertain about what career opportunities nursing will offer them, and some have misconceptions about what a nurse actually does. Some students have just never considered nursing. Could informed career decision-making influence recruitment of students into nursing, lower attrition rates, and help retain nursing graduates in the workforce? Career development is a lifelong process, which incorporates education, occupational training, and work, as well as one’s social and leisure life (Zunker, 1998). Today, the changes in the work-world and new definitions of what a career is are challenging us to make sense of our careers and reassess their meaning in our lives. Traditional job definitions are vaporizing, and it is never too early to begin preparing for a life-long career (Worklife Career Development, 2001; Alaniz, 2000b).

Career guidance and counseling are components of a total career education program. Students need to understand themselves in order to explore and plan a career.
The School-To-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 states the strong need for career education and development programs for all students in order to provide students with information sharing, outreach, communication, career education, labor market information, job placement, work experience programs, counseling and assessment, and public relations (Cunanan and Maddy-Bernstein, 1994).

The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee’s (NOICC) National Career Development Guidelines list outreach, counseling, assessment, instruction, career information, work experience, consultation, referral, placement, and follow-up as processes of career guidance and counseling programs (Cunanan and Maddy-Bernstein, 1994). These authors maintain that counseling is one process of the guidance program and refers to the interaction between a professional counselor and an individual or a small group; however, students must have the responsibility of all decisions. Students need to be aware of and understand all of their options if they are to make an informed career decision. (Ettinger, Lambert, and Rudolf, 1994).

Developing accurate perceptions about the career in which a student is interested is one key to informed career decision-making. Recruiting students into nursing can begin with younger students as they formulate career goals and look to mentors as role models in careers they identify with. “Eyes to the Future” is an online multi-age magazine targeting middle school girls interested in math and science. It reaches them at an age when they are thinking about which career path they might take for the future. It also links middle school girls with high school girls interested in math and sciences who can be mentors and help the former make wise career choices (Little, 2000). The curriculum for an Introduction to orientation to nursing course could include placing
prenursing students as mentors for younger students whose images of nursing are gradually increasing. A greater number of students may choose careers in nursing if provided with better decision-making skills and positive perceptions at a younger age, before negative images of nursing are shaped.

There are many challenges for nursing to develop programs to interest students in nursing. Primary Care Resource Initiative for Missouri (PRIMO) is an example of a career development program designed to remedy the shortage of nurses by placing students in grades 7-12 in summer “shadowing” health-related professional programs. PRIMO serves as a successful career decision-making tool for students interested in health careers, and encourages students in high school through post-graduation education to remain and practice in Missouri (Mid-Missouri Area Health Education Center, 2000; Northeast Missouri Area Health Education Center, 2000).

Some nursing programs encourage or require a volunteer or “shadowing” experience for admission. This experience helps students to see first hand what a career in nursing has to offer (“Shadowing and Mentoring Experience”, 2000). A Introduction to Nursing course that is designed to acquaint students with professional nursing could provide students further opportunities to explore the academia of nursing, as well as clinical images, before a career choice is made. If bright, capable students are uncertain or have not made a decision about a career, the orientation class may provide them with insight into an excellent and promising career of nursing.

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown’s study (1998) indicates that the main reason individuals desire to become a nurse is helping people. Indifference is the main reason
for not wanting to enter nursing; therefore, many students had not rejected a nursing career but instead had not given it any consideration.

Identifying students’ perceptions about nursing academia can indicate to nurse educators, advisors, and recruiters whether or not students’ perceptions are based on accurate information from professional sources. Also, by linking students’ images of clinical nursing in the setting with facts, nurse professionals can help students to develop accurate perceptions, which can determine career goals now and in the future.

To provide an adequate nursing workforce and to replace waning numbers of nurse educators, it is important to understand factors contributing to students’ current career decision-making skills (Beck, 2000; Nursing 2000; Alaniz, 2000a). This researcher’s findings could provide data to professional nurses related to current student expectations about the nurse workforce.

Recently, career opportunities for women have escalated and the mostly female dominated profession of nursing is facing stiff competition in career choice alternatives. Schools of nursing, nurse advisors/recruiters, and nurse mentors could utilize information related to current student perceptions of nursing in understanding what students are looking for in making career choices. Prenursing students could make more informed career decisions about a career in nursing if their perceptions were clearly understood by professionals and those who educate nursing's future practitioners.

Little research has been done to determine prenursing students’ academic and clinical perceptions regarding nursing. It is the researcher’s intent to determine what these students’ perceptions are, and to identify any factors that may have influenced their development. Data collected can then be used by nurse educators to develop a
curriculum that will address student’s needs, which may affect recruitment and/or retention of prenursing students. Identifying images that may affect the perceptions of nursing can also provide data for improving or developing a new curriculum in career education for prenursing students. Questions that can be targeted in an Introduction to Nursing course may include: What are the reasons students are not choosing a nursing career, what are students’ perceptions of a professional nurse, or what can one do with a degree in nursing, and can students be recruited into the nursing profession through career education/development? These questions need to be answered in order to address the current shortage of baccalaureate nursing students in our universities and in the nursing workforce.

Teenagers see nursing as working irregular shifts, taking orders from doctors, and bedside care probably forever, says Dennis Sherrod, Ed.D. RN, associate director of the North Carolina Center for Nursing (Sherrod, 2001). Many students still see nursing and think…bedpans and needles. Although this certainly can be part of nursing care, the role of the registered nurse today is a team coordinator of healthcare providers assuring quality care for all patients (Corcoran, 2001; Cooper, Laud, and Dietrich, 1998; Domrose, 2000; Gaskill, 2000).

Alaniz (2000b) says that nursing students will need to possess the qualities: motivator, savvy, and team player. They will need to speak several languages and understand the cultures from which those languages come; master the Internet and know how to navigate its sea of information to find the precise data needed; feel at ease with all of the latest medical technology; be knowledgeable of all medical insurance policies and legal and ethical codes (state and federal) related to healthcare; and understand the human
psyche. Nurses must also be excellent communicators and maintain clear communication with all colleagues, doctors, and patients defusing all interpersonal conflicts in a flash. The nurse of the future must anticipate healthcare trends years away and train for them now. A nurse will marry and raise a family, coach children’s sports teams, care for aging parents, and finish graduate degrees while completing research. If that is not enough, they will be on the cutting edge in telemedicine and consulting on several committees and boards. The nursing profession and America must be sensitive to the needs of providing career development to students and adults, formulating well-defined perceptions about professional nursing in the 21st century.

High school students of today want some adventure in their lives and some travel in their careers, said Diane Mancino, Ed.D. RN, executive director of the National Student Nurses Association (NSNA) (Rasmussen, 2001). The NSNA has recently produced a youth recruitment video, “Nursing: The Ultimate Adventure,” targeting youth at the high school level in promoting modern images of nursing. The video creates a sense of excitement about the field and discusses the emotional effect a nurse can have on patients. It shows interviews with students who want to go into nursing, and new images of career opportunities in nursing such as, research, the pharmaceutical industry, technology, and law, and the ability to make autonomous decisions on a moment-to-moment basis in healthcare delivery.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988) has spent the last 25 years studying what makes people happy and concludes that happiness is derived from our most favorable experiences. His research indicates that these experiences challenge and match our skills to our abilities. In addition, one must understand the complexities and nuances of each
task. For example, a skilled nurse is so consumed in the emergency care of his patient that an eight-hour shift passes by in what seems like minutes. The work experience is so absorbing that there is not enough capacity in the mind to allow one to consider the past, the future, or any external circumstances. Byars (1996) says that exploring careers is essential for youth to understand the world of work, but it must also include career education that will inform youth of challenges of adult life. Reaching one’s career goals does not guarantee happiness, success, and personal fulfillment.

People have a way of seeing the world and interpreting what is experienced. When encountering new knowledge or an experience that cannot be integrated comfortably with current ways of seeing the world, one has a choice of rejecting the new information or revising previous views (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow calls this “transformative learning”, which can be done by reading or hearing something new, taking a course, or by having a discussion with friends or colleagues. Transformative learning involves changing one’s perspective. Mezirow also uses the term “meaning perspective” to describe how one sees the world. One expects to see things a certain way because of past experiences. This frame of reference or perspective stems from the way an individual grew up, one’s culture, and knowledge that has been acquired. Mezirow describes meaning perspectives as values of culture that have been accepted without question (i.e. because one grew up with it). For example, nursing is commonly perceived as a female profession. The opportunity to influence students’ perspectives about nursing can influence whether accurate perceptions are used in making a career decision about nursing. Transformative learning about nursing can satisfy certain needs that many students may have in order to make a more informed career decision regarding nursing.
Students’ meaning perspectives about nursing that are outdated or inaccurate and not redirected by providing transformative learning, can affect students’ interests in nursing.

Canton (1994) suggests that meaning perspectives are limited because alternatives have not been considered. If one reflects on and is critical of existing perspectives, this opens up the opportunity for new choices, which can be empowering. By questioning and learning we free ourselves to make choices which otherwise would be limited. Students who have not considered nursing have limited the alternatives for a career choice. Taking an Introduction to Nursing course can open up new choices for a career in nursing. Canton states that transformative learning consists of stages that take place in a variety of ways. Individuals need to prepare themselves for transformative learning by:

1. Becoming aware of their current beliefs.
2. Being receptive to new events or information.
3. Questioning their beliefs, values, and assumptions.
4. Reflecting on their beliefs and where they come from.
5. Asking why it is important to question their perspectives.
6. Talking with others about their perspectives.
7. Revising our perspectives where necessary.

Once people reach adulthood, many personal values, beliefs, and assumptions about the world around them are already formed. Although we acquire new knowledge and skills, much of our learning as adults becomes a process of transforming rather than forming. Many negative perceptions about nursing that were formed earlier by students could be transformed through exploration and revision of one’s career perspectives.
Frank Parsons’ (1909) Trait-and Factor theory (Zunker, 1998) maintained that an individual would be best satisfied with a career that was matched with the characteristics of the individual. Parsons wrote the first book on career decision-making early in the twentieth century entitled *Choosing a Vocation*. His conceptual framework for helping an individual select a career one liked and that matched one’s abilities, provides a systematic plan for career guidance. “Shadowing”, volunteer experiences, and academia about nursing can provide a conceptual framework for prenursing students that will allow them to determine if nursing is a satisfying career choice and matches their strongest personal skills.

Ginsburg, Ginsburg, Axelrod, and Herma (1951) developed the first approach of career development from individual developmental stages (Zunker, 1998). These researchers viewed career choice as a life-long developmental process and cited three stages categorized by characteristics within age groups:

1. **Fantasy Period** of childhood before age 11, purely a play orientation early in the stage, becoming more work-oriented near the end of the stage.

2. **Tentative Period** of early adolescence, ages 11-17, a period of gradual recognition of work requirements, interests, abilities, work reward, values, and time perspectives.

3. **Realistic Period** involves adolescents, age 17 to young adult. Within this age, individuals integrate capacities and interests, further develop values, specify occupational choice, and crystallize occupational patterns.

The Realistic Period is the age group and period of the typical prenursing student. Ginsberg theorized that as career decisions were made during this period, other careers
were no longer potential choices. Although this was later proven to be false, Ginsberg continued to stress earlier choices in the career decision-making process.

Donald Super (1972) worked with the self-concept theory of career development. Research generated from his approach indicates that the vocational self-concept develops through physical and mental growth, observations at work, by identification with working adults, the general environment, and general experiences. Super’s theory reinforces the “shadowing” aspect of the proposed prenursing class, that as a broader awareness of the working world is developed in the individual, the more sophisticated their vocational self-concept becomes. The dimensions of Super’s work support the concept that career education and counseling provide students with the necessary tools for more effective career-making skills, as well as maturity or readiness to enter career-related activities. Super’s theory of vocational development is considered the most comprehensive of all theories (Bailey and Stadt, 1973) and is supported by many research projects (Osipow, 1983).

There have been many theories about career development, but one common assumption is that it is a lifelong process that should meet the needs of an individual at all stages of life. Prior to the current nursing shortage, some universities eliminated Introduction to Nursing courses for prenursing students; however, recent literature and professional opinion strongly support providing this type of class in order to give students the visual and verbal experiences needed to develop informed and positive perceptions about nursing. In addition, it would provide necessary tools for the development of improved career-making skills in nursing, which are essential for choosing a career you are both suited for and will enjoy by making a more informed career decision. More
informed career decisions made by students related to the opportunities in a nursing career could also prove beneficial in the recruitment of students into baccalaureate nursing and in retaining new graduates in the nursing profession.

The researcher supports the idea that an Introduction to Nursing course on the Louisiana State University (LSU) campus taught by a nursing professional could provide baccalaureate students with the essential tools necessary for more informed career decision-making skills related to nursing. The curriculum would include academia (i.e., student assessments, career education and development in nursing, etc.), interactive group learning (i.e., group presentations, role-play, etc.), and a clinical aspect (i.e., “shadow” nursing professionals, spend time with nurse mentors, service learning, etc.). All students interested in nursing would be invited to take the course.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the nursing career perceptions of prenursing students currently enrolled in a research extensive university baccalaureate prenursing program.

This chapter presents information regarding the procedures used to conduct the study. The methodology of the study is organized in the following sections:
(1) population and sample, (2) instrumentation, (3) data collection, and (4) data analysis.

Population and Sample

The target population was defined as students currently enrolled in a baccalaureate prenursing curriculum. The accessible population was defined as all students who were currently enrolled in prerequisite courses for admission into the baccalaureate nursing program at one research extensive university in the southern portion of the United States (U.S.)

The frame of the accessible population was established as all students who came to the prenursing advising office for academic or other counseling and were registered in the database of prenursing students during the fall and early spring semester of the 2001-2002 academic year. The accessible population was identified as 312 students.

The sample in this study included 100% of the defined accessible population. The minimum required sample size was 174 students, which was determined by Cochran’s sample size determination formula. A total of 207 students participated in the study, which consisted of 66.35% of the defined accessible population.
The undergraduate student enrollment characteristics for this research extensive university in the southern portion of the United States included the following breakdowns:

- Overall undergraduate enrollment, Fall 2001: 26,130

- Enrollment by student classification:
  - Freshmen 7,509
  - Sophomore 5,868
  - Junior 5,577
  - Senior 7,176

- Age of Students by Classification:
  - Freshmen 19.2
  - Sophomore 20.6
  - Junior 21.9
  - Senior 24.7

- Enrollment by Ethnic Group:
  - White 20,589
  - Black 2,546
  - Asian 984
  - American Indian 96
  - Hispanic 636
  - Non-Resident Alien 722
  - Unknown 557

- Enrollment by Gender:
  - Male 12,358
Female 13,772

**Instrumentation**

This section addresses instrumentation development, validity, and reliability. A two-part researcher designed instrument, Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perception Scale Instrument was used for collection of data. Part I of the instrument measured students’ perceptions about nursing. Part II consisted of a Participant Profile Form designed by the researcher, which obtained selected demographic and individual characteristic information about the study sample of prenursing students.

**Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument**

**Instrument Part I:** The researcher-designed a two-part Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perception Scale Instrument was used to collect data for this study. Part I of the instrument consisted of 25 items concerning the nursing profession, which were derived from the literature and from the experiences of the researcher. Each statement asked students to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement on a scale ranging from “strongly disagree” with a value of “1” to “strongly agree” with a value of “5.”

The instrument was validated through a review by a panel of experts consisting of nursing professionals as well as experienced professional researchers.

The instrument was field tested by a sample of nursing students not included in the research sample.

**Instrument: Part II:** The second part of the instrument was a demographic form developed from relevant literature regarding perceptions of the nursing profession and from a collection of individual and work-related questions derived from students in a prenursing academic advising setting. The demographic information requested included individual characteristic
items such as current student classification, highest college degree completed, work/volunteer experience, high school and college GPAs, family members in healthcare, age, gender, ethnic background, reasons for choosing nursing, area of nursing interest, location of practice after graduation, and information on students’ willingness to take an Introduction to Nursing course for no academic credit.

**Data Collection**

Data for this study will be collected using the following steps:

1) Approval was obtained from the Office of Sponsored Programs. To obtain this approval, the researcher completed a standard form for research review. Included in this approval was the opportunity to collect data from students on the university campus.

2) All students who had registered with the prenursing advising office were maintained in a database of prenursing students.

3) A survey packet including a cover letter (See Appendix B), a copy of the survey instrument (See Appendix A), and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope were mailed to each of the students in this database.

4) Students were encouraged to return the instrument by mail or to return the completed instrument at the time they came to the advising office for counseling at which time they would receive a “special gift” of home-baked cookies from the researcher. Students who had not responded or who were not in the database at the time of the first mailing and had attended an advising conference at the nursing advisor’s office, were offered the opportunity to complete the instrument while at the office. The
researcher maintained an up-to-date list of respondents so that students were not asked to complete a second copy of the instrument.

5) Ten days after the initial mailing, reminder post cards (See Appendix C) were mailed to all non-respondents. In addition, non-respondents were sent an email reminder.

6) Three weeks after the initial mailing, a reminder letter (See Appendix D) and a second copy of the instrument was mailed to non-respondents.

7) After the follow-up letters, the researcher received 207 useable responses. This yielded a useable response rate of 66.35% or 207 of 312 sample numbers.

**Data Analysis**

To accomplish the objectives of the study, the following analysis procedures were utilized:

**Objective One** described undergraduate students enrollment in a prenursing curriculum at a comprehensive research university according to selected demographic characteristics. The characteristics include the following: year of high school graduation, cumulative high school GPA, current student classification, current nursing classification, GPA on all college coursework completed, additional professional credentials, highest college degree completed, work/volunteer experience, family members in healthcare, reason(s) for choosing a nursing career, area of nursing practice most interested, desire to be a mentor, desire to return to home community after graduation, age, gender, ethnic background, and type of home community.

Measures of central tendency and variability were used to describe the prenursing students on the defined demographic characteristics. Variables that were measured on an interval level of measurement were summarized using means and standard deviations.
Variables that were measured on a categorical scale of measurement, were summarized using frequencies and percentages in categories.

**Objective Two** determined the perceptions of baccalaureate prenursing students about the nursing profession as measured by the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument.

To accomplish this objective, the researcher presented the mean and standard deviation for each of the 25 items included in the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument. In addition, a factor analysis of the items in this scale was conducted to identify underlying constructs in the scale. This procedure enabled the researcher to minimize the inflation for experiment-wise error associated with examining relationships between demographic characteristics and each of the 25 items individually specified in subsequent objectives.

After the underlying constructs were identified, the researcher computed sub-scale scores for each of the identified constructs, which were then used in analysis of relationships with demographic characteristics. It should be noted that these scores no longer reflected simply agreement/disagreement, but as positive or negative perceptions of nursing with a scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

**Objective Three** determined if a relationship existed between students’ perceptions of the nursing profession and the following selected personal characteristics: current student classification, academic performance (cumulative high school GPA and GPA on all college coursework completed), highest college degree completed, additional professional credentials, employment/volunteer experiences, family members in healthcare, age, gender, ethnic background, type of home community, reason(s) for choosing nursing,
area of nursing practice most interested, desire to return to home community after graduation, 
willingness to take an Introduction to Nursing course for no academic credit.

To accomplish the third objective of the study, the researcher used two procedures. 
For variables that were measured on an interval or ordinal scale of measurement, correlation 
coefficients were calculated between the factor sub-scale scores and each of the demographic 
characteristics being examined for their association with perceptions of nursing. The Pearson 
Product Moment correlation coefficient was used to correlate the characteristics. For 
variables that were measured on a nominal scale of measurement (such as gender), each of the 
perception factor sub-scale scores were compared by the categories of the demographic 
characteristics using the independent t-test procedure or the One-Way Analysis of Variance 
procedure (as appropriate). Tukey’s post hoc multiple comparison test was used as a follow-
up to the ANOVA procedure to identify specific groups where differences existed in the three 
sub-scale scores.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Objective One

Findings of the study are presented in this chapter and are organized by objectives. The first objective was to describe undergraduate students enrolled in a prenursing curriculum on selected demographic characteristics at a research extensive university in the southern portion of the United States. Selected characteristics for description included the following: 1) year of high school graduation, 2) current student classification, 3) cumulative high school grade point average (GPA), 4) GPA on all college coursework completed, 5) additional professional credentials held, 6) current nursing classification, 7) highest college degree completed, 8) employment/volunteer experience, 9) family members in healthcare, 10) type of home community, 11) reason(s) for choosing nursing, 12) area of nursing practice most interested, 13) age, 14) gender, 15) ethnic background, 16) desire to be a nurse mentor, 17) desire to return to home community to practice following graduation, 18) whether or not observing a nurse in action influenced the decision to choose nursing as a career, and 19) willingness to enroll in an Introduction to nursing course if it carried no academic credit.

Year of High School Graduation

Participants were asked to indicate their year of high school graduation. Of the sample of 206 respondents who provided useable data for this item, the largest group reported that they graduated from high school in the year 2000 (n=76, 36.5%). The earliest high school graduation year reported was 1991 with two participants (1.0%) indicating this year. The year reported by the fewest number of respondents was 1992 (n=1, .5%), and there were no students who reported a graduation date before 1990 (See Table 1).
Table 1

Year of High School Graduation Indicated by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Graduation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 or earlier</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>206&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> One student did not respond to this item.

**Student Classification**

Regarding student classification, the largest group of students were those who indicated that they were classified as sophomores (n=79 or 38.2%). The second largest group was the junior classification which was reported by 55 (26.6%) of the responding students. Only one student reported a classification of “Other”, but did not specify the “Other” classification (See Table 2).

**Cumulative High School Grade Point Average**

Participating prenursing students were asked to indicate their cumulative high school grade point average (GPA). Reported high school grade point averages ranged from a low of
Table 2

Student Classification Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Classification</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other$^a$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>207</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$The respondent who indicated “Other” did not specify the classification.

2.00 to a high of 4.50. When examining high school grade point average data in categories, the category which included the largest number of students was 3.30-3.79 (n=86, 42.4%). Only 1 student (.5%) reported a cumulative high school grade point average lower than 2.3. The mean cumulative high school grade point average of prenursing students responding was 3.58 (SD=0.40) (See Table 3).

**GPA On All College Coursework Completed**

The prenursing students participating in the study were also asked to indicate their gpa on all college coursework completed. The mean GPA on all college coursework completed of prenursing students responding was 3.18 (SD = 0.42). The college GPA data ranged from a low of 2.00 to a high of 4.00. When examining college GPA data in categories, the grade point average category with the largest number of respondents was found to be 2.80-3.29 (n= 79 or 41.6%). The next most frequently reported category was 3.30-3.79 (n=74, 38.9%).
Table 3

Cumulative High School Grade Point Average Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Grade Point Average</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 – 2.79</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8-3.29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30-3.79</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.80-4.0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;4.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203(^a)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Reported high school GPAs ranged from 2.00 to 4.50 with a Mean of 3.58 (SD=0.40).
\(^a\) Four students did not respond to this item.

In addition, 26 students (13.7%) reported GPAs that were lower than 2.80 (See Table 4).

Additional Professional Credentials

Another area on which study participants were described was whether or not they held selected additional professional credentials. Respondents were asked to indicate for each of the four types of professional credentials if they held that credential. Of those provided, the credential that was reported by the largest group of respondents was the “Healthcare technical programs” with 3 (1.4%) of the 209 participants indicating that they held this credential. However, 14 (6.7%) indicated that they held some “Other” professional credential. These individuals were also asked to specify the credential they held. Nine of the 14 who reported “Other” specified the “Other” credential. The credential specified by the largest number of these subjects was
“Certified nursing assistant” (n=3). Data regarding “Additional professional credentials held” is presented in Table 5.

**Table 4**

**Grade Point Average on All College Coursework Completed of Prenursing Students at a Research Extension University in the Southern Portion of the United States**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Grade Point Average</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3-2.79</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.80-3.29</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30-3.79</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8-4.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>190</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Reported college GPAs ranged from 2.00 to 4.00 with a mean of 3.18 (SD=.42)

*aSeventeen students did not respond to this item.*

**Current Nursing Classification**

The students’ current nursing classification is reported in Table 6. The majority of students (n=182, 87.3%) indicated they were classified as prenursing students. Nineteen (9.2%) current students reported being a nursing student. These nineteen respondents who indicated that they were classified as nursing students were those who had been admitted to nursing school, but they had not yet started their nursing program. In addition, an “Other” response category was provided with a request to specify if “Other” was marked (See Table 6).

**Highest College Degree Completed**

Participants were asked to report their highest college degree completed. The majority of respondents (n = 194, 93.7%) did not report having completed a degree. Of the 13 (6.3%)
respondents who indicated having completed a degree, the majority ($n = 8, 61.5\%$) reported that they had completed a baccalaureate degree. Only 1 student (7.7\%) indicated having an Associate Degree. In addition, an “Other” response category was provided with a request to specify if “Other” was marked. Table 7 presents a distribution of college degrees completed.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credentials</th>
<th>Yes Frequency</th>
<th>Yes Percent</th>
<th>No Frequency</th>
<th>No Percent</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
<th>Total Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other $^a$</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Technical Programs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate RN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma RN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Practical Nurse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$“Other” credentials represented included: Certified Nursing Assistant (3), Unlicensed Nursing Assistant (3), Associate degree RN from Philippines, which is not accepted in U.S. (1), Pharmacy Technician (1), Dental Assistant (1), and 4 individuals who indicated “other” did not specify the credential.

Employment /Volunteer Experience

Participants were asked to indicate whether or not they had employment and/or volunteer experience. Three specific healthcare employment/volunteer experiences were provided for the respondents: 1) have volunteered in the healthcare setting; 2) have worked in the healthcare setting; 3) have “shadowed” a nurse on the job, with a request to check all that applied to the respondent. In addition, an “Other employment/volunteer” experience option was provided with a request for respondents to specify if marked. The experience that was reported by the largest
Table 6

Current Nursing Classification Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nursing Student Classification</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prenursing</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>206&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>These students had been admitted to nursing school but had not yet started the program.

<sup>b</sup>“Other” classification responses identified by students (n=4) were: Occupational Therapy (1), Undecided (2), and Animal Science(1).

<sup>c</sup>One student did not respond to this item.

The number of respondents was “Volunteered in the healthcare setting” (n=115, 55.6%). Fifty-six (26.8%) had “shadowed” a nurse and 55 (26.3%) respondents had worked in a healthcare setting. Fifteen (7.2%) had “Other” “Employment and/or volunteer experiences” (See Table 8).

Family Members In Healthcare

Students participating in the study were also asked to report information regarding “Family members in healthcare”. Four options were provided and respondents were asked to mark all of the available options that applied to them. The response that was identified by the largest number of subjects was, “Family members other than parents are in healthcare” (n= 127, 62.0%). The response that was indicated by the smallest number of subjects was, “One or both parents is/are nurse(s) (n= 33, 16.1%). The frequency of responses to each of the options provided is presented in Table 9.
Table 7

Highest College Degree Completed As Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS/BA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>The four respondents who marked “Other” did not specify a degree.

<sup>b</sup>194 respondents did not report having completed a degree.

Table 8

Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Reported Employment/Volunteer Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered in healthcare setting</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Shadowed” a nurse on the job</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in healthcare setting</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>“Other” Employment/volunteer experience included: Observed surgery (2), Worked in pharmacies (2), “Shadowed” physicians (2), Parent is a Nurse Practitioner (1), Parent is a RN, observed at work (1), Worked in Vet Clinic (1), Worked in biomedical research (1), Participated in a medical careers program in high school (1), Attended national forum on medicine (1), Volunteered in a food bank (1) and Construction work (1). One individual that indicated “Other” did not specify an area of employment or volunteer experience.
Table 9

Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Reported Family Member(s) in Healthcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family in Healthcare</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Totala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members other than parents in healthcare</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one in family in healthcare</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or both parents in healthcare</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or both parents is/are nurses</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Two students did not respond to this item.

Type Of Home Community

Survey respondents were asked whether they would describe their “Type of home community” as rural, town, suburban, or city/urban. The largest groups of respondents reported their home community as Suburban (n = 70 or 34.1%) or City/Urban (n = 65 or 31.7%). The smallest group (n = 23 or 11.2%) was those who indicated that their home community was Rural (See Table 10).

Reason(s) For Choosing Nursing

Respondents were provided with a list of possible reason(s) for choosing nursing as a career and were requested to check all of the available reasons that applied to them. Eleven reasons were offered the subjects with an “Other” response also available. Of the 11 provided responses, the reason that was marked by the largest number of study participants was “Desire to help others” (n = 193, 93.2%). The reasons that were identified by the smallest number of
respondents were “Religious influence” \((n = 27, 13.0\%)\) and “Career change after completing another degree” \((n=11, 5.3\%)\). In addition, 16 respondents \((7.7\%)\) indicated that they had some “Other” reason for choosing nursing as a career. These individuals were also asked to specify their “Other” reason for choosing nursing. Of the 16 “Other” responses, all respondents specified a reason. The frequency that each of the reasons was provided is presented in Table 11.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/Urban</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total     | 205\(^a\) | 100.0   |

\(^a\) Two students did not respond to this item.

**Practice Area of Most Interest**

Participating students were provided a list of 14 practice areas and asked to indicate the nursing practice area in which they were most interested. Even though subjects were instructed to check only one area of nursing practice, a substantial number of respondents indicated multiple areas. Consequently, the researcher made the decision to report for each of the available practice areas whether or not it was selected by the respondents. This was judged to be a preferred method of reporting the results than simply treating all students who marked multiple
Table 11
Whether or Not Selected Reason(s) for Choosing Nursing as a Career Were Reported by Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to help others</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to care for others</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of job opportunities</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary opportunities</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands on caring for family and friends</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in research of the sciences and health of man</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of professional degree</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family in healthcare</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior work experience</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious influence</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career change after completing another degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other”</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*“Other” reasons given included: Job flexibility (3), Broad job opportunity (3), Opportunity to work and spend time with family (2), Interest in the science of the body (2), Family members In nursing (1), A result of volunteering (1), Interest in labor and delivery (1), Love and respect for nurses (1), Foundation for future goals (1), Enjoy working with people, especially children (1).*

areas as missing data. When these responses were summarized, the area of nursing practice that was identified by the largest number of respondents was “Nurse anesthetist” (n=68, 33.0%).

Other practice areas frequently selected included: “Nurse practitioner” (n=46, 22.3%), “Pediatric” (n=45, 21.8%), and “Neonatal” (n=44, 24.4%). Fourteen (6.8%) of the responding students indicated that they were “Undecided” regarding their practice area of most interest, and nine (4.4%) indicated an “Other” area of practice. These nine individuals were also asked to
specify what the “Other” area was in which they were interested. Seven students specified the “Other” area (See Table 12).

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>n^</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurse Anesthetist</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse Practitioner</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatric</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neonatal</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Room</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other^b</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/surgical care</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing educator</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU/CCU</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Nurse Specialist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^aOne student did not respond to this item.
^b“Other” areas given by respondents in this group included: Women’s health/labor and delivery (3), and Care of the elderly (1), Nursery (1) and Oncology and breast cancer (2). Two respondents did not specify “Other”.

Age

Participating Prenursing students in the study were asked to indicate their “Age” in years.

The mean age of the prenursing students responding to this study was 19.8 years (SD= 2.10).
The ages ranged from the youngest students at 18 years to the oldest student at 39 years. When examining age data in categories, the age group within which the largest group of students was classified was the 18-19 category \((n=99, 48.1\%)\). In addition, 89 (43.2%) were in the 20-21 age group. Only six (2.9%) students reported ages that were 24 years or higher (See Table 13).

### Table 13

**Age of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>206(^a)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Mean=19.8, SD=2.10

\(^a\)One student did not respond to this item.

**Gender**

Prenursing students were also described on the characteristic gender. The majority of respondents indicated that they were female \((n=176, 85.4\%)\). Correspondingly, 30 (14.6%) of the respondents reported their gender as male (See Table 14).

**Ethnic Background**

Students participating in the study were asked to indicate their ethnic background. The majority of respondents \((n=170\) or 82.5\%) reported their ethnic group as White/Non Hispanic. Of the remaining respondents, 25 (12.1\%) indicated they were African/American, 6 (2.9\%) indicated Asian, and 4 respondents (1.9\%) indicated Hispanic. One (0.5\%) respondent indicated
“Other” in response to the item “Ethnic background”. Respondents who marked “Other” were asked to specify the Ethnic group. Data regarding “Ethnic background” of respondents is presented in Table 15.

Table 14

**Gender of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>206(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) One student did not respond to this item.

Table 15

**Ethnic Background of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Background</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Non Hispanic</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African/American</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^a)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total             | 206\(^b\) | 100.0   |

\(^a\) One student indicated “Other” and specified African/Asian as ethnic background.

\(^b\) One student did not respond to the item.
Serve As Mentor After Graduation

Respondents were asked to indicate if they would serve as a mentor for prenursing students after graduation. The majority (n=182 or 89.2%) of students indicated that they would serve as a mentor. Twenty-two (10.8%) respondents indicated they would not serve as a mentor for students. Three respondents did not answer this item (See Table 16).

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serve As Mentor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204a</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Three students did not respond to this item.

Return To Home Community Following Graduation

Prenursing students were asked to indicate if they would return to their home community following graduation. These data are reported in Table 17. Although the majority (n=110 or 54.5%) of respondents said they would not like to return to their home communities, 92 (45.5%) respondents said they would (See Table 17).

Observing A Nurse

Respondents were asked “Did observing a nurse in action influence you to choose nursing as a career”. The majority (n=114 or 59.4%) indicated that it did influence their decision to choose a career in nursing. The smaller group of respondents (n =78, 40.6%) indicated that it did not (See Table 18).
Table 17

Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Would Like to Return to Their Home Community After Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 202<sup>a</sup> 100.0

<sup>a</sup>Five students did not respond to this item.

Table 18

Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Indicated that “Observing a Nurse in Action Influenced Their Decision to Choose Nursing as a Career”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observing A Nurse</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 192<sup>a</sup> 100.0

<sup>a</sup>Fifteen students did not respond to this item.

**Would Take a Prenursing Orientation Course for No Academic Credit**

Respondents were asked to indicate if they “Would enroll in a prenursing orientation course if it carried no academic credit (0 credit).” The participating students were asked to provide a “yes” or “no” response. The majority (n=148 or 72.2%) of the students indicated they would take the class for 0 credit, while 57 (27.8%) indicated they would not take the class for no academic credit (0 credit) (See Table 19).
Table 19

**Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Indicated a Willingness to “Enroll in an Prenursing Orientation Course for No Academic Credit”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enroll in Orientation Course</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205(^a)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a^\)Two students did not respond to this item.

**Objective Two**

Objective two of the study was to determine the perceptions of baccalaureate prenursing students about the nursing profession as measured by the Part I of the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument. Part I of the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale consisted of 25 perception statements related to nursing to which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point Likert-Type Scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree. To facilitate the interpretation of the responses to the items in this scale, the researcher developed a scale of substantive interpretation with the following categories: 1.5 or less= Strongly Disagree; 1.51 to 2.50 =Disagree; 2.51-3.49=Undecided; 3.50 to 4.49=Agree; 4.50 or more=Strongly Agree.

The item with which the prenursing students most strongly agreed was “Observing and ‘shadowing’ nurses (i.e. spending time with RNs on the job) influences an individual’s perceptions of the nursing profession” (Mean= 4.70, SD=.56), which was a rating of “Strongly Agree.” Two additional items that received ratings from prenursing students in the “Strongly Agree” category were “Prenursing students would benefit from a prenursing orientation course”
(Mean= 4.62, SD=.67) and “Completion of an Introduction to Nursing course before entering nursing school would have a strong influence on students’ perception of nursing” (Mean= 4.53, SD =.72).

The item with which respondents most “Disagreed” in relationship to the nursing profession was “High salaries are the primary reason students choose nursing as a career” (Mean = 2.21, SD =.88). The rating for this item was in the “Disagree” category. Two additional items also received ratings of “Disagree” by respondents, namely, “Students in baccalaureate nursing programs are automatically licensed as RNs upon graduation” (Mean = 2.33, SD=1.29), and “Nursing graduates of alternative programs (i.e. Associate Degree and Diploma Non-degree) can enroll directly in advanced nursing specialization programs (i.e. Graduate nursing programs” (Mean= 2.48, SD=1.08). Overall, four of the items in this scale were rated in the “Strongly Agree” category, twelve were rated in the “Agree” category, six were in the “Undecided” category, and three were rated in the “Disagree” category. There were no items rated in the “Strongly Disagree” category (See Table 20).

To further summarize the findings regarding the prenursing students’ perceptions of the nursing profession, the researcher used factor analysis to determine if underlying constructs could be identified in the data.

The researcher first determined the appropriate number of factors to be extracted from the scale. Using a combination of the latent root criteria and the scree test criterion, the number of factors to be extracted was determined to be three. The results of the factor analysis including the factor, its label as determined by the content of the items included in the factor, the percentage of variance explained by each factor, and the factor loadings for each item in each of the factors is presented in Table 21. The three sub-scales were labeled by the researcher as “Decision making regarding nursing”, “The nursing profession”, and “Nursing education".
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Observing and ‘shadowing” nurses (i.e. spending time with RNs on the job) influences an individual’s perceptions of the nursing profession”</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Prenursing students would benefit from a prenursing orientation course”</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Completion of an Introduction to Nursing course before entering nursing school would have a strong influence on students’ perceptions of nursing”</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Graduates from a baccalaureate nursing program can be employed in a wide variety of medical areas”</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nurses are called upon to fulfill multiple roles as nursing professionals (e.g. researcher, manager, caregiver, patient advocate in community based setting, etc.)”</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There is currently a shortage of registered nurses (RNs) in the United States”</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nurses are regarded as highly ethical and honest professionals”</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Patient education is a major part of the role of nurses”</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Critical thinking is demonstrated by analyzing and solving challenging problems”</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Understanding the nursing profession is a primary concern of prenursing students”</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mentoring (described as ‘when one person sees something in another person and wants to help that person grow’) is critical for success in nursing”</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Career information is readily available to all students on the university campus”</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The American Nurses Association’s (ANA) position is that Baccalaureate nursing education should be the standard for entry into professional nursing”</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The majority of currently employed nurses have positive perceptions about nursing”</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Table 20 continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Students are more likely to choose nursing if family members or friends are in healthcare careers”</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The majority of currently employed RNs work in a hospital setting”</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Most prenursing students make the decision to enter nursing based on accurate information about nursing”</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Managed healthcare has had a positive influence on nursing”</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“RN’s cannot make decisions about patient care without first consulting with a physician”</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nursing students in rural and under served areas are more likely to want to return to their hometown to work after graduation”</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Prenursing students understand the roles and responsibilities of professional nurses”</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Popular media (i.e. television shows like ER) is the primary source by which individuals define nursing”</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nursing graduates of alternative programs (i.e. Associate Degree and Diploma Non-degree) can enroll directly in advanced nursing specialization programs (i.e. graduate nursing programs)”</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Students in baccalaureate nursing programs are automatically licensed as RNs upon graduation”</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“High salaries are the primary reason students choose nursing as a career”</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Mean value based on Response Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

b Response categories based on the following scale established by the researcher: 1.5 or less= Strongly Disagree; 1.51 to 2.50 =Disagree; 2.51-3.49 Undecided; 3.50 to 4.49= Agree; 4.50 = Strongly Agree

The first factor identified in the scale related to prenursing students’ perceptions relative to “Decision making regarding nursing”. Items in this factor included “Nurses are regarded as highly ethical and honest professionals”, “Graduates from a baccalaureate nursing program can be employed in a wide variety of medical areas”, “Observing and ‘shadowing’ nurses (i.e. spending time with RNs on the job) influences an individuals perceptions of the nursing profession”, “RN’s are called on to fulfill multiple roles as nursing professional”, “Prenursing
students would benefit from a prenursing orientation course”, “Completion of an Introduction to nursing course before entering nursing school would have a strong influence on students’ perceptions of nursing”, and “There is currently a shortage of registered nurses in the United States”. The factor loadings ranged from a high of .63 to a low of .40 and explained 16.44% of the overall variance in the scale (See Table 21).

The second factor was identified by the researcher as “The nursing profession” and it explained 10.20% of the overall scale variance. This factor included: “Prenursing students enrolled in universities understand the roles and responsibilities of professional nurses,” “Students in baccalaureate nursing programs are automatically licensed as RNs upon graduation”, “Understanding the nursing profession is a primary concern of prenursing students”, “The majority of currently employed nurses have positive perceptions about nursing”, “RNs cannot make decisions about patient care without first consulting with a physician”, “Managed healthcare has had a positive influence on nursing”, “Nursing graduates of alternative programs (i.e. Associate Degree and Diploma Non-Degree) can enroll directly in advanced nursing specialization programs (i.e. Graduate nursing programs)”, “The majority of currently employed RNs work in a hospital setting”, “Career information about nursing is readily available to all students on the university campus”, and “Most prenursing students make the decision to enter nursing based on accurate information about nursing.” This factor yielded factor loadings ranging from a high of .63 to a low of .43 (See Table 21).

The third factor identified by the researcher as “Nursing education” included “Popular media (i.e. television shows like ER) is the primary source by which individuals define nursing”, “Students are more likely to choose nursing if family members or friends are in healthcare careers”, “Nursing students in rural and under served areas are more likely to want to return to their hometown to work after graduation”, “High salaries are the primary reason students choose
nursing as a career”, and “The American Nurses Association’s (ANA) position is that baccalaureate nursing education should be the standard for entry into professional nursing”. This factor added 6.81% of explained variance and yielded factor loadings ranging from a high of .61 to a low of .35 (See Table 21).

After the three sub-scales and items to be included in each were identified, the researcher computed scale scores for each of three identified sub-scales. These sub-scale scores were identified as the mean of the items included in each of the respective factors. Since some of the items were designed as reverse scale items (for example, on some items strongly disagree represented the more positive attitude), the items were recoded so that for all items, the higher value represented a more positive attitude toward the nursing profession. After the items were recoded, a mean perception score was computed for each sub-scale identified by the factor analysis. It should be noted that these scores no longer reflect simply agreement/disagreement due to the recoded items. The sub-scale scores should now be interpreted as positive or negative perceptions of nursing.

For the first sub-scale labeled “Decision making regarding nursing” the individual subject mean scores ranged from a low of 1.5 to a high of 5.0 with an overall mean of 4.44 (SD = .42). The second scale was “The nursing profession” and had individual subject means ranging from 1.8 to 4.1. The mean score for the group was 3.03 (SD = .42). Finally, the third scale, “Nursing education” had an overall mean rating of 3.12 (SD = .49) with individual subject scores ranging from 1.2 to 4.4. When these sub-scales were examined, the factor which received the most positive response score was the sub-scale “Decision making regarding nursing” (Mean = 4.44, SD = .42) (See Table 22).
Table 21

Factor Analysis of Perceptions about the Nursing Profession Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor “Decision Making Regarding Nursing”</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(16.44% of variance explained)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nurses are regarded as highly ethical and honest professionals”</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Graduates from a baccalaureate nursing program can be employed in a wide variety of medical areas”</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Observing and ‘shadowing’ nurses (i.e. spending time with RNs on the job) influences an individuals perceptions of the nursing profession”</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nurses are called on to fulfill multiple roles as nursing professions (i.e. researcher, manager, caregiver, patient advocate in community based settings, etc.)”</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Prenursing students would benefit from a prenursing orientation course”</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Completion of an Introduction to Nursing course before entering nursing school would have a strong influence on students’ perceptions of nursing”</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There is currently a shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs) in the United States”</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Patient education is a major role of nurses”</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Critical thinking is demonstrated by analyzing and solving challenging problems”</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mentoring (described as ‘when one person sees something in another person and wants to help that person grow’) is critical for success in nursing”</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor “The Nursing Profession”</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10.20 % of variance explained)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Prenursing students enrolled in universities understand the roles and responsibilities of professional nurses”</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Students in baccalaureate nursing programs are automatically licensed as RNs upon graduation”</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Understanding the nursing profession is a primary concern of prenursing students”</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Objective Three**

The third objective of the study was to determine if relationships existed between perceptions of the prenursing profession and selected personal and professional demographic...
Table 22

Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean(^a)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>1.5-5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>1.8-4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>1.2-4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All items were recoded so that higher responses reflect more positive perceptions and nursing.
\(^a\) Scale values range from 1 = negative perception to 5 = positive perception.

characteristics. For variables that were measured as continuous data in the study, appropriate correlation coefficients were used to measure the degree of relationship between each of the demographics and the three nursing perception sub-scale scores. However, for demographic variables that were measured as categorical data (for example: gender), the data analysis procedure that was determined to be more meaningfully interpretable was to compare each of the three nursing perception sub-scale scores by categories of the demographic characteristic. Appropriate comparative techniques were used as required by the number of groups included in each respective demographic characteristic.

**Student Classification**

The first variable that was examined for relationships with the prenursing perception sub-scale scores was “Student Classification” (defined as freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior classification in school). Students who indicated their classification as either graduate or “Other” were eliminated from this comparison because the number of subjects in each of these two groups was inadequate to make meaningful comparisons. The analysis technique that was used to accomplish this aspect of objective three was the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)
procedure. When comparisons were made in the perception sub-scale scores by student classification, the sub-scale scores “Decision making regarding nursing” (F3,197=1.711, p=.17), and “The nursing profession” (F3,197=0.356, p=.79) were not found to be significantly different by categories of student classification. However, when the sub-scale, “Nursing education”, was compared by categories of student classification, a significant F value indicated that at least one significant difference existed among the classification groups (F3,197=3.43, p=.02). Tukey’s post-hoc multiple comparison test was used as a follow-up technique to identify the specific groups where significant differences existed. This procedure revealed that the mean “Nursing education” score for freshman (Mean=3.30) was significantly higher than the mean score for juniors (Mean=3.03) in the sample. Therefore, freshman level students were found to have more positive perceptions of “Nursing education” than junior level students (See Table 23).

Table 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Classification</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Group Means: Freshman=3.30, Sophomore=3.08, Junior=3.03, Senior=3.20

*Groups that were found to be significantly different using Tukey’s post hoc procedure were freshman and junior.

**Academic Performance**

The second characteristic which was examined for relationships with prenursing perception sub-scale scores was academic performance (defined as cumulative high school grade
point average (GPA) and GPA on all college coursework completed). The analysis technique that was used was the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient. Each of the two GPA measures was correlated with each of the three sub-scale scores.

When cumulative high school GPA was correlated with prenursing perception sub-scale scores, no significant relationships were found. In addition, when the GPA on all college coursework completed was correlated with the three prenursing perceptions sub-scale scores, no significant relationships were identified (See Table 24).

Table 24

**Relationships Between Selected Academic Measures and Nursing Perceptions Sub-scale Scores Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nursing Perceptions Sub-Scale</th>
<th>High School GPA</th>
<th>College GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>n&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The correlation procedure used was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

<sup>a</sup>Four students did not respond to this item.

<sup>b</sup>Seventeen students did not respond to this item.

**Completed College Degree**

The third characteristic examined for relationships with prenursing perception sub-scale scores was whether or not the student respondent had previously completed a college degree. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate their “Highest college degree completed.” However, the number of respondents who indicated they had completed the college degrees provided as response options (Associate degree, Bachelor of Science/Art degree, Master of
Science degree, and “Other” degree) was inadequate to make comparisons among the individual groups. Therefore, all respondents who indicated that they had completed a college degree were placed into one group and these individuals were compared with those who had not completed a degree. Therefore, the variable of comparison was whether or not the student had completed a college degree. The procedure used to examine these relationships was the independent t-test. Each perception sub-scale score was compared by categories of the variable whether or not respondents had completed a college degree. When these comparisons were made, no significant differences were found in the three sub-scale scores (See Table 25).

Table 25
Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Had Completed a College Degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale</th>
<th>Degree Completed&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No Degree Completed&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.62 (.42)</td>
<td>4.43 (.41)</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.18 (.38)</td>
<td>3.02 (.42)</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.08 (.45)</td>
<td>3.12 (.49)</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup><sub>n=13</sub>
<sup>b</sup><sub>n=194</sub>

<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Additional Professional Credentials

The fourth characteristic examined for relationships with prenursing perception sub-scale scores was whether or not the students had “Additional professional credentials.” As part of the
survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they held selected “Additional professional credentials.” However, the number of respondents who indicated they had each of the credentials specified in the instrument (Diploma RN, Associate RN, Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Healthcare Technical programs (i.e. x-ray, laboratory, dental, etc.) and “Other” credentials) was inadequate to make comparison among individual groups. Therefore, all respondents who indicated they had additional credentials were placed into one group and those who did not have additional credentials made up the other group. Consequently, the variable of comparison was whether or not the student had additional professional credentials. The procedure used to examine these relationships was the independent t-test. Each perception sub-scale score was compared by categories of the variable whether or not the respondent had additional professional credentials. When the comparisons were made in the perception sub-scale scores by whether or not respondents had additional professional credentials, the sub-scale score “Decision making regarding nursing” (t191=2.13, p=.04) revealed a significant difference (See Table 26). Students who indicated they had additional professional credentials had a mean score of 4.65 (SD=.25) whereas respondents who did not have additional professional credentials had a mean score of 4.42 (SD=.42). The other two nursing perception sub-scale scores were not found to be significantly different by whether or not additional professional credentials were held.

**Employment/Volunteer Experiences**

Relationships were also examined between nursing perception sub-scale scores and whether or not the respondents had selected employment/volunteer experiences. The first aspect of this characteristic of employment/volunteer experience that was examined was whether or not the respondents indicated they had volunteered in a healthcare setting. The independent t-test procedure was used to determine if differences existed in the nursing perception sub-scale scores
by whether or not they had volunteered in a healthcare setting. Results of these comparisons revealed that students who indicated that they had volunteered in a healthcare setting had more positive perceptions of the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale (Mean=4.53, SD=.28) than students who indicated that they had not volunteered in a healthcare setting (Mean=4.32, SD=.51) ($t_{154}=3.77, p<.001$). No significant differences were found in the other two sub-scale scores (See Table 27).

The second of these experiences examined was whether or not students reported they had worked in a healthcare setting. The independent t-test procedure was used to determine if differences existed in the nursing perception sub-scale scores by whether or not they had worked in a healthcare setting. Results of these comparisons revealed that students who indicated that they had worked in a healthcare setting had more positive perceptions of the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale (Mean=4.54, SD=0.27) than students who indicated that they did not have work experiences in a healthcare setting (Mean=4.40, SD=.51) ($t_{92}=2.03, p=.04$). No significant differences were found in the other two sub-scale scores (See Table 28).

The final aspect examined was whether or not the respondent indicated that they had “Shadowed’ a nurse on the job.” The independent t-test procedure was used to determine if differences existed in the nursing perception sub-scale scores by whether or not they had “Shadowed’ a nurse on the job.” Results of these comparisons revealed that students who indicated that they had “Shadowed’ a nurse on the job” had more positive perceptions of the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale (Mean=4.53, SD=.33) than students who indicated they had not “shadowed’ a nurse on the job” (Mean=4.40, SD=.44) ($t_{151}=2.00, p=.04$). No significant differences were found in the other two sub-scale scores (See Table 29).
Table 26

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Had Additional Healthcare Credentials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale</th>
<th>Additional Credentials&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No Additional Credentials&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.04/.34</td>
<td>3.03/.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.21/.52</td>
<td>3.11/.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=16  
<sup>b</sup>n=191  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Table 27

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Have Volunteered in a Healthcare Setting”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Volunteered In A Healthcare Setting”</th>
<th>Have</th>
<th>Have Not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Volunteered&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.53/.28</td>
<td>4.32/.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.02/.43</td>
<td>3.04/.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.13/.50</td>
<td>3.11/.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=115  
<sup>b</sup>n=92  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 28

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Have Worked in a Healthcare Setting”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Identified “Worked in a Healthcare Setting”</th>
<th>Have Worked&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Have Not Worked&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.54/.27</td>
<td>4.40/.45</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.00/.49</td>
<td>3.04/.40</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.13/.44</td>
<td>3.12/.51</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=53  
<sup>b</sup>n=154  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

**Family Members in Healthcare**

The sixth variable examined for relationships with nursing perception sub-scale scores was student responses to selected items regarding their family members that were in healthcare. Study subjects were asked to indicate for three items related to family members if the item applied to them. The first item was “One or both parents is/are in healthcare.” The procedure that was selected as the most appropriate technique to accomplish this aspect of the objective was the independent t-test. When students who indicated that “One or both parents is/are in healthcare” were compared with those who did not indicate that “One or both parents is/are in healthcare” on each of the three nursing perceptions sub-scale scores, those who indicated “Yes” as their response to the item were found to have significantly more positive perceptions related to “Decision making regarding nursing” (Mean=4.57, SD=.33) than those who did not report “No”
to this item (Mean=4.40, SD=.43). When the other two sub-scale scores were compared by categories of this variable, no significant differences were found (See Table 30).

Another aspect of “Family members in healthcare” was the students’ responses to the item, “One or both parents is/are a nurse.” Each of the three sub-scale scores was compared using the independent t-test procedure by whether or not the students indicated that one or both of their parents was a nurse. Results of these comparisons revealed that there were no significant differences in the three sub-scale scores (See Table 31).

Table 29
Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Have ‘Shadowed a Nurse on the Job’” as an Employment/Volunteer Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Have ‘Shadowed a Nurse on the Job’”</th>
<th>“Shadowed”(^a)</th>
<th>Did Not “Shadow”(^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean(^c)/SD</td>
<td>Mean(^c)/SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.53/ .33</td>
<td>4.40/ .44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.04/ .40</td>
<td>3.03/ .43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.10/ .55</td>
<td>3.13/ .47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)\(n=56\)
\(^b\)\(n=151\)
\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

The third aspect of “Family members in healthcare” measured in this study was whether or not “Family members other than parents are in healthcare.” Results of the t-tests conducted to make these comparisons revealed that there were no significant differences in the three sub-scale scores by whether or not family members other than parents were in healthcare (See Table 32).
The seventh variable to be examined for relationship with perceptions of nursing was “Age.” To accomplish this part of the objective, the researcher used the Pearson’s Product Moment correlation coefficient to measure the relationship between age of students and each of the three sub-scale scores identified in the perceptions scale (See Table 33).

A significant positive correlation ($r=.18, p=.01$) was identified between respondents’ “Age” and the sub-scale titled “Decision making regarding nursing.” The nature of this relationship was such that older prenursing students tended to have more positive perceptions of the items included in the “Decision making related to nursing” sub-scale than younger prenursing students. The correlations between respondents’ “Age” and sub-scales “The nursing profession” ($r=.05, p=.46$) and “Nursing education” ($r=.13, p=.06$) were not found to be significant.

The eighth characteristic examined for relationships with perceptions of prenursing student’s regarding the nursing profession was “Gender.” To accomplish this, the researcher used the independent t-test to compare each of the three sub-scales by categories of gender. When these comparisons were made of the three sub-scale scores, “Decision making regarding nursing”, “The nursing profession”, and “Nursing education” by whether the respondent was “Male or Female”, there were no significant differences (See Table 34).

The ninth variable examined was the ethnic background of the respondents. To accomplish this part of the stated objective, the researcher determined that the most appropriate statistical procedure was to use the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The variable
Table 30

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “One or Both Parents Is/Are in Healthcare”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “One or Both Parents Is/Are in Healthcare”</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.57/ .33</td>
<td>4.40/ .43</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.04/ .37</td>
<td>3.02/ .44</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.22/ .43</td>
<td>3.09/ .50</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a_n=42\)
\(b_n=163\)
\(c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Table 31

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “One or Both Parent(s) Is/Are a Nurse”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “One or Both Parent(s) Is/Are a Nurse”</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.56/ .31</td>
<td>4.41/ .43</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.09/ .44</td>
<td>3.01/ .42</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.22/ .43</td>
<td>3.10/ .50</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a_n=33\)
\(b_n=177\)
\(c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 32

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Family Members Other Than Parents Are in Healthcare”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Identified “Family Members Other Than Parents Are in Healthcare”</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.43/.42</td>
<td>4.45/.42</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.06/.43</td>
<td>2.97/.41</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.14/.49</td>
<td>3.08/.49</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=127  
<sup>b</sup>n=78  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Table 33

Relationships Between Age and Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores Among Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>n&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>One student did not respond to this item.
p=.44) for the sub-scale “The nursing profession” also revealed no significant differences. Likewise, the one-way ANOVA (F3,201=.73, p=.54) for the sub-scale “Nursing education” revealed no significant differences.

**Type Of Home Community**

Another characteristic that was examined to determine if it was related to the perceptions of prenursing students’ regarding the nursing profession was the “Type of home community” (specified as rural, town, suburban, or city/urban). To accomplish this part of the objective, the researcher used one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests to compare each of the three sub-scale scores by categories of the reported type of home community. When these analyses were conducted, no significant differences were found in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale (F3,201=1.03, p=.38); in “The nursing profession” sub-scale (F3,201=1.56, p=.20); or in the “Nursing education” sub-scale (F3,201=0.63, p=.60) (See Table 36).

**Table 34**

**Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Gender of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male(^a)</td>
<td>Female(^b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean(^c)/SD</strong></td>
<td>Mean(^c)/SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.43/ .38</td>
<td>4.44/ .42</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>2.99/ .38</td>
<td>3.03/ .43</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.16/ .49</td>
<td>3.11/ .49</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) n=30  
\(^b\) n=176  
\(^c\) Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 35

Comparison of the Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Ethnic Background of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Decision making regarding nursing”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The nursing profession”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nursing education”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aThree students did not respond to this item.

Reason(s) For Choosing Nursing

The eleventh variable examined in this objective was to determine if a relationship existed between students’ perceptions of the nursing profession and whether or not selected reasons for choosing the nursing profession were identified by the respondents. Respondents were provided a list of twelve items: “Desire to help others”, “Desire to care for others”, “Diversity of job opportunity”, “Exposure to family and friends in the healthcare profession”, “Prior work experience”, “Hand on caring for family and friends”, “Religious influence”, “Career change after completing another degree”, “Interest in research of the
Table 36

Comparison of the Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Type of Home Community of Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Decision Making Regarding Nursing”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Nursing Profession”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nursing Education”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aThree students did not respond to this item.

sciences and health of man”, “Status of the professional degree”, “Salary opportunities”, and “Other” and instructed to check all that applied. To accomplish this objective, the researcher determined that the most appropriate approach was to compare the respondents who did indicated each reason with those who did not identify each of the available reasons.

The statistical procedure that was selected to accomplish this purpose was the independent t-test. Each of the three sub-scale scores identified in the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument: “Decision making regarding nursing”, “The nursing profession”,

83
and “Nursing education” was compared by whether or not each of the items was identified as a “Reason for choosing nursing.”

The first reason examined was whether or not the respondents selected “Desire to help others” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. Each of the three sub-scale scores identified in the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument was compared by whether or not the students identified “Desire to help others” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (See Table 37). When the comparisons were made, one of the sub-scale scores was found to be significantly different by categories of the variable of investigation. Students who identified “Desire to help others” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=3.10, \(SD=0.49\)) had significantly lower perceptions of the items in the “Nursing education” sub-scale than those who did not identify this as a reason for choosing nursing (Mean=3.40, \(SD=0.47\)) (\(t_{205}=2.25, p=.03\)).

The second reason examined for relationships with nursing perceptions was whether or not the respondents selected “Desire to care for others” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. Each of the three sub-scale scores were compared by whether or not the students identified “Desire to care for others” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (See Table 38). When the comparisons were made, one of the three sub-scales was found to be significantly different by categories of the variables of investigation. Students who identified “Desire to help others” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=4.46, \(SD=.36\)) had significantly more positive perceptions of the items in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than students who did not identify this as a reason for choosing nursing (Mean=4.29, \(SD=.67\)) (\(t_{205}=2.00, p=.04\)).
Table 37

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Desire to Help Others” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Desire to Help Others”</th>
<th>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.45/.42</td>
<td>4.31/.21</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.02/.42</td>
<td>3.09/.45</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.10/.49</td>
<td>3.40/.47</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=193  
<sup>b</sup>n=14  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

The third reason that was examined for relationships with Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument sub-scale scores was whether or not the respondents selected “Diversity of job opportunities” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (See Table 39). When the comparisons of each of the three sub-scale scores were made, one was found to be significantly different by categories of the variable of investigation. Students who identified “Diversity of job opportunities” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=4.48, SD=0.32) had more positive perceptions of the items in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than those who did not identify this as a reason for choosing nursing (Mean=4.33, SD=.58) (t<sub>205</sub>=2.31, p=.02).

The fourth reason which was examined for relationships with the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument sub-scale scores was whether or not they identified “Exposure to family and friends in the healthcare profession” as a reason for choosing the
Table 38

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Desire to Care for Others” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Desire to Care for Others”</th>
<th>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.46/ .36</td>
<td>4.29/ .67</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.02/ .41</td>
<td>3.08/ .51</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.10/ .49</td>
<td>3.25/ .48</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=193  
<sup>b</sup>n=14  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Table 39

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Diversity of Job Opportunities” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Diversity of Job Opportunities”</th>
<th>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.48/ .32</td>
<td>4.33/ .58</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.05/ .43</td>
<td>2.98/ .41</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.13/ .47</td>
<td>3.09/ .53</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=148  
<sup>b</sup>n=59  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 40

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Exposure to Family and Friends in Healthcare” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Identified “Exposure to Family and Friends in Healthcare”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}n=65\)
\(^{b}n=142\)
\(^{c}\text{Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.}\)

nursing profession. This was accomplished by using the independent t-test. No significant differences were found in the three sub-scales scores (See Table 40).

The fifth reason examined was whether or not the respondents selected “Prior Work Experience” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. Each of the three sub-scale scores identified in the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument was compared by whether or not the students identified “Prior work experience” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (See Table 41). The results of the comparisons showed that one of the sub-scale scores, “Decision making regarding nursing” was found to be significantly different by categories of the variable of investigation. Students who indicated “Prior work experience” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=4.59, SD=0.27) had significantly more positive perceptions of the items in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than
Table 41

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Prior Work Experience” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Prior Work Experience”</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean/SD</td>
<td>Mean/SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.59/0.27</td>
<td>4.40/0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.00/0.43</td>
<td>3.04/0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.18/0.54</td>
<td>3.10/0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^\text{a}n=43  
^\text{b}n=164  
^\text{c}Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

those who did not indicate this as a reason for choosing nursing (Mean=4.40, SD=.44) \((t_{205}=2.8, p=.01)\).

The sixth reason which was examined for relationships with the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument sub-scale scores was whether or not they identified “Hands on caring for family and friends” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. This was accomplished by using the independent t-test. No significant differences were found in the three sub-scale scores (See Table 42).

The seventh reason which was examined for relationships with the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument sub-scale scores was whether or not they identified “Religious influence” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. This was accomplished by using the independent t-test. No significant differences were found in the three sub-scale scores (See Table 43).
Table 42

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Hands on Caring for Family and Friends” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Hands on Caring for Family and Friends”</th>
<th>Yes (^a)</th>
<th>No (^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean(^c)/SD</td>
<td>Mean(^c)/SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.47/ .42</td>
<td>4.40/ .41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>2.98/.41</td>
<td>3.09/.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.11/.51</td>
<td>3.14/.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) n=114  
\(^b\) n=93  
\(^c\) Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

The eighth reason that was examined was the “Career change after completing another degree.” To determine if a relationship exist between “Career change after completing another degree” and the three sub-scale scores identified in the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument, the researcher determined that the most appropriate statistical procedure to use was the independent t-test. Although three sub-scale scores were provided in the data, “Decision making regarding nursing”, “The nursing profession”, and “Nursing education”, the t-test revealed no significant differences in any of the three sub-scale scores (See Table 44).

The ninth reason that was examined for a relationship was “Interest in research of the science and health of man” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. Each of the three sub-scale scores, “Decision making regarding nursing”, “The nursing profession”, and “Nursing education” in the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument, was examined for relationships with this variable. The researcher determined that using independent t-tests was the
Table 43

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Religious Influence” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Religious influence”</th>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)n=27
\(^b\)n=180
\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Table 44

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Career Change after Completing Another Degree” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Career Change after Completing Another Degree”</th>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)n=11
\(^b\)n=196
\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
most appropriate approach to compare the subjects that did and did not identify this item in the survey. When t-test results were examined to determine if there was a relationship between the variable and the three sub-scale scores, no significant differences were revealed (See Table 45).

The tenth reason that was examined was whether or not the respondents selected “Status of professional degree” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. Each of the three sub-scale scores was compared by whether or not respondents perceived “Status of professional degree” as a reason for choosing a nursing profession. When the comparison was made, the three sub-scale scores revealed no significant differences (See Table 46).

The eleventh reason that was examined for relationships with Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument sub-scale scores was “Salary opportunities” (See Table 47). When the comparisons were made, one significant difference was found among the three sub-scale scores: “Decision making regarding nursing”, “The nursing profession”, and “Nursing education.” The sub-scale “Nursing education” was found to be significantly different when compared by whether or not students chose the variable “Salary opportunities” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. Students who identified “Salary opportunities” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=3.18, SD=.51) had significantly more positive perceptions of the items in the “Nursing education” sub-scale than those who did not identify this a reason for choosing nursing (Mean=3.03, SD=.44) ($t_{207}=2.21$, p=.03).
### Table 45
Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Interest in Research of the Science and Health of Man” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Mean&lt;sup&gt;c/SD&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; Mean&lt;sup&gt;c/SD&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.49/ .33</td>
<td>4.40/ .47</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.06/ .40</td>
<td>3.01/ .44</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.10/ .49</td>
<td>3.14/ .49</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> n=89  
<sup>b</sup> n=118  
<sup>c</sup> Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

### Table 46
Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Status of Professional Degree” as a Reason for Choosing the Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Mean&lt;sup&gt;c/SD&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; Mean&lt;sup&gt;c/SD&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.44/ .42</td>
<td>4.44/ .41</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.03/ .39</td>
<td>3.03/ .44</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.15/ .55</td>
<td>3.10/ .45</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> n=73  
<sup>b</sup> n=134  
<sup>c</sup> Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 47

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Salary Opportunities” as a Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Salary Opportunities”</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-scale</strong></td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)\(n=125\)
\(^b\)\(n=82\)
\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

**Practice Area Of Interest**

The twelfth variable examined in the objective was to determine if a relationship existed between students’ perceptions of the nursing profession and students’ “Practice area of interest.” Respondents were provided a list of fourteen practice areas in nursing and were asked to identify one area of nursing in which they were was most interested, although some students (\(n=38\)) identified more than one “Practice area of interest.” To accomplish this objective and avoid the loss of respondent data, the researcher determined that the most appropriate approach was to compare the subjects who did with those who did not identify each of the available practice areas. This technique was judged to be the procedure that would provide the reader with the most interpretable outcomes of the proposed data analysis. The statistical procedure that was selected to accomplish this purpose was the independent t-test.
The fourteen “Practice areas of interest” examined by the researcher in this study included: Neonatal, Nurse Anesthetist, Emergency Room, Psychiatric, Medical/Surgical, Nursing educator, Surgery, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Community health, Undecided, Pediatric, Nurse Practitioner, ICU/CCU, and “Other.” Each of the three sub-scale scores identified in the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument was compared by whether or not students identified each practice area as an area of interest. This technique was judged to be the procedure that would provide the reader with the most interpretable outcomes of the proposed data analysis. In efforts to ensure that statistical comparisons had a meaningful level of statistical power, the researcher determined that any practice area that was identified by less than 10 respondents would not be used for comparing the nursing perception sub-scale scores. When this criterion was applied, seven of the fourteen practice areas were found to have sufficient numbers for further analysis. These practice areas included: Neonatal Nursing (n=44), Nurse Anesthetist (n=68), Emergency Room (n=27), Surgery (n=18), Undecided (n=14), Pediatric Nursing (n=45) and Nurse Practitioner (n=46).

When the comparisons were made, no significant differences were found in the nursing perception sub-scale scores by categories of whether or not any of the seven practice areas of interest were selected (See Tables 48-54).

**Return To Home Community After Graduation**

The thirteenth independent variable examined to determine if a relationship exist between prenursing student’s perceptions of the nursing profession, was whether or not students indicated “Desire to return to home community after graduation.” To accomplish this part of the objective, the researcher used the independent sub-scales “The nursing profession”, and “Nursing education” were examined by categories of the independent variable. No significant
Table 48

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Neonatal” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Neonatal”</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean/SD</td>
<td>Mean/SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.52/32</td>
<td>4.42/44</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.06/41</td>
<td>3.02/43</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.08/48</td>
<td>3.12/49</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\text{n}=44\)
\(^b\text{n}=162\)
\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Table 49

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Nurse Anesthetist” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Nurse Anesthetist”</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean/SD</td>
<td>Mean/SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.47/44</td>
<td>4.42/41</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>2.97/44</td>
<td>3.06/41</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.08/44</td>
<td>3.13/51</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\text{n}=68\)
\(^b\text{n}=138\)
\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 50

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Emergency Room” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Emergency Room”</th>
<th>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.56/0.28</td>
<td>4.42/0.43</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.06/0.46</td>
<td>3.02/0.42</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.27/0.38</td>
<td>3.09/0.49</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=27  
<sup>b</sup>n=179  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Table 51

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Surgery” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Surgery”</th>
<th>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td>Mean&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;/SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.34/0.26</td>
<td>4.45/0.43</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.00/0.50</td>
<td>3.03/0.42</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.10/0.59</td>
<td>3.11/0.47</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>n=18  
<sup>b</sup>n=188  
<sup>c</sup>Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 52

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Undecided” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Undecided”</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.47 (.28)</td>
<td>4.44 (.42)</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.00 (.47)</td>
<td>3.03 (.42)</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.10 (.43)</td>
<td>3.11 (.49)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)\(n=14\)

\(^b\)\(n=192\)

\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

Table 53

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Pediatric” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Pediatric”</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-scale</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.39 (.55)</td>
<td>4.45 (.37)</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.01 (.43)</td>
<td>3.03 (.42)</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.12 (.47)</td>
<td>3.11 (.49)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)\(n=45\)

\(^b\)\(n=161\)

\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 54

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Nurse Practitioner” as an Area of Nursing Practice in Which Respondent Is Most Interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified “Nurse Practitioner”</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-scale</strong></td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td>Mean(^c/SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.44/ .32</td>
<td>4.44/ .44</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.12/ .41</td>
<td>3.00/ .42</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.19/ .50</td>
<td>3.09/ .48</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)n=46  
\(^b\)n=160  
\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.

differences were found in the category of the variable “Desire to return to home community after graduation” (See Table 55).

**Would Take an Introduction to Nursing Course for No Academic Credit**

The final characteristic examined for relationship in this part of the objective was “Whether or not students indicated a willingness to enroll in an Introduction to nursing course for no credit (0 credit hours).” To accomplish this, the researcher used the independent t-test. No significant differences were revealed in each of the three sub-scale scores when compared with this item (See Table 56).
### Table 55

**Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Willingness to Return to Home Community After Graduation”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Identified “Willingness to Return to Home Community After Graduation”</th>
<th>Yes(^a)</th>
<th>No(^b)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)\(n=92\)

\(^b\)\(n=110\)

\(^c\)Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
Table 56

Comparison of Nursing Perception Sub-scale Scores by Whether or Not Prenursing Students at a Research Extensive University in the Southern Portion of the United States Identified “Willingness to Enroll in an Introduction to Nursing Course for No Academic Credit”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Identified “Willingness to Enroll in an Introduction to Nursing Course for No Academic Credit”</th>
<th>Yes&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean±/SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making regarding nursing</td>
<td>4.46/0.44</td>
<td>4.37/0.34</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nursing profession</td>
<td>3.00/0.42</td>
<td>3.08/0.43</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing education</td>
<td>3.13/0.50</td>
<td>3.11/0.47</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> n=148  
<sup>b</sup> n=57  
<sup>c</sup> Scale values ranged from 1=negative perception to 5=positive perception.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Purpose and Objectives

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of nursing among prenursing students at a research extensive university in the southern portion of the United States.

Objectives designed to address the purpose and guide the research study included:

1. Describe undergraduate student enrollment in a prenursing curriculum at a comprehensive research university. Selected characteristics for description include:
   a. Year of high school graduation.
   c. Cumulative high school GPA.
   d. GPA on all college coursework completed.
   e. Additional professional credentials (ex. licensed practical nurse (LPN), certified nursing assistant (CNA), Lab Tech.).
   f. Current nursing classification (ex. prenursing, RN to BSN).
   g. Highest college degree completed (ex. AD, BS, MS, PhD).
   h. Employment/volunteer experience (i.e., employment, volunteering, “shadowing”).
   i. Family members employed in healthcare.
   j. Type of home community.
   k. Reason(s) for choosing nursing.
   l. Area of nursing practice most interested.
m. Age.

n. Gender.

o. Ethnic background.

p. Desire to be a mentor.

q. Desire to return to home community after graduation.

2. Determine the perceptions of baccalaureate prenursing students about the nursing profession as measured by the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument: College Level, 2001.

3. Determine if a relationship exists between students’ perceptions of the nursing profession and the following selected personal characteristics:


   b. Academics performance (cumulative high school GPA, GPA on all college coursework completed).

   c. Highest college degree completed.

   d. Additional professional credentials.

   e. Employment/volunteer experience in healthcare.

   f. Family members in healthcare.

   g. Age.

   h. Gender.

   i. Ethnic background.

   j. Type of home community.

   k. Reason(s) for choosing nursing.

   l. Practice area of interest.
m. Return to home community after graduation
n. Willingness to take a prenursing orientation course for no academic credit

**Procedures and Methodology**

The target population for this study was defined as students currently enrolled in a baccalaureate prenursing curriculum. The frame of accessible population was defined as students who are currently enrolled in prerequisite courses for admission into the nursing program at a research extensive university in the southern portion of the United States.

The sample included all students pursuing a prenursing program of studies at the selected university who came to the prenursing advising office for academic or other counseling during the fall and early spring semesters of the 2001-2002 academic year. The sample (n=207) was 66.35% of the defined accessible population.

Data were collected using a two-part researcher designed instrument, Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perceptions Scale Instrument, which was administered to all students who were pursuing a prenursing program of studies at the selected university who came to the prenursing advising office for academic or other counseling during the fall and early spring semesters of the 2001-2002 academic year. Part I of the instrument consisted of a measure of perceptions about nursing. The instrument consisted of 25 statements regarding the nursing profession. Each statement asked students to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement on a scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” with a value of “1” to “Strongly Agree” with a value of “5”. Part II consisted of a “Participant profile form” designed by the researcher in order to obtain selected demographic and individual characteristic information about the study population of prenursing students. Respondents were asked to provide demographic information which included individual characteristic
items such as student classification, highest college degrees completed, work/volunteer experience, high school and college GPA, family members in healthcare, personal profile, influences on choosing nursing, reasons for choosing nursing, area of nursing interest, location of practice after graduation, information on serving as a mentor, and willingness to take an Introduction to nursing course for no academic credit.

Two hundred and seven surveys were collected out of the total frame and acceptable population of three hundred-twelve prenursing students for a 66.35% useable response rate.

**Findings**

A summary of the major findings are listed below under the three objectives of the study.

**Objective One**

1. Regarding “Year of high school graduation” of the respondents (n=206), the largest group reported that they graduated from high school in the year 2000 (n=76, 36.5%). The earliest high school graduation year reported was 1991 with two participants (1.0%) indicating this year.

2. Regarding “Student classification,” the largest group of students was those who indicated that they were classified as sophomore (n=79 or 38.2%). The second largest group was the junior classification that was reported by 55 (26.6%) of the responding students.

3. Reported “Cumulative high school grade point average” ranged from a low of 2.00 to a high of 4.50. The category, which included the largest number of
students, was 3.3-3.79 (n=86, 42.4%). The mean cumulative high school grade point average of prenursing students responding was 3.58 (SD=0.40).

4. The mean “Grade point average on all college coursework completed” by prenursing students responding was 3.18 (SD=0.42). The grade point average category with the largest number of respondents was found to be 2.80-3.29 (n=79 or 41.6%), although the next most frequently reported category was 3.30-3.79 (n=74, 38.9%). The mean college grade point average of prenursing students responding was 3.18 (SD=0.42).

5. Regarding “Additional professional credentials” reported by respondents, the two professional credentials that were reported by the largest number of respondents were healthcare technical programs (i.e. x-ray, laboratory, dental, etc.) with 3 (1.4%) reporting and “Other” with 13 (6.3%).

6. Regarding the prenursing students’ “Current nursing classification,” the majority of students (n=182, 87.5%) indicated they were classified as prenursing students. Nineteen (9.1%) current students reported being a nursing student, but they had not yet started their nursing program.

7. Regarding “Highest college degree completed,” the majority of respondents (n=194, 93.7%) did not report having completed a degree. Of the 13 (6.3%) respondents who indicated having completed a degree, the majority reported that they had completed a baccalaureate degree (n=8, 61.5%) and 1 student (7.7%) had completed an associate degree.
8. Of the respondents who indicated they had volunteered, worked or “shadowed” in the healthcare setting (n=207), the largest number of respondents (n=115, 55.6%) “Volunteered in the healthcare setting.”

9. Students were also asked to report information regarding “Family members in healthcare”. Four options were provided and respondents were asked to mark all of the available options that applied to them. The largest number of subjects had “Family members other than parents are in healthcare” (n=127, 62.0%) and the smallest number of subjects had “One or both parent(s) is/are nurse(s)” (n=33, 16.1%).

10. Survey respondents were asked to describe their “Home community” as rural, town, suburban, or city/urban. The largest groups of respondents reported their “Home community” as suburban (n=70, 34.1%) and city/urban (n=65, 31.7%), the smallest group (n=3, 11.2%) was rural.

11. A majority of respondents (n=193, 93.2%) indicated their “Reason for choosing nursing” was “Desire to help others”.

12. Nurse Anesthetist (n=68, 33%) and Nurse Practitioner (n=46, 22.3%) were the two “Practice area in which respondents had the most interest.” Clinical Nurse Specialist and Community Health were the students’ least favorite practice areas.

13. The mean “Age” of the prenursing students responding to this study was 19.8 years (SD= 2.09). The largest age group was 18-19 (n = 99, 48.1%). Only 6 (3.0%) were over 24.
14. Female prenursing students were a substantial majority (n = 177, 85.1%) over males in the study (n = 31, 14.9%).

15. The majority of the respondents’ “Ethnic background” (n=170, 82.5%) was White/Non Hispanic. Other ethnic groups included 25 (12.1%) African/American, 6 (2.9%) Asian, 4 (1.9%) Hispanic, and one (0.5%) African-Asian.

16. A majority (n=182, 89.2%) of the students indicated that they would serve as a mentor and only 22 (10.8%) indicated they would not.

17. The majority (n=110, 54.5 %) of respondents said they would not return to their home communities to practice nursing, although 92 (45.5%) respondents said they would.

18. The majority of students (n=114, 59.4%) indicated that “Observing a nurse in action” influenced their decision to choose nursing as a career.

19. The majority (n=148, 72.2%) of students indicated they “Would enroll in an Introduction to nursing course for no academic credit (0 credit)”.

**Objective Two**

1. The first response item on the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perception Scale Instrument indicated that the majority of respondents (n=114, 59.4%) “Strongly Agreed” that the major influence on a students’ perceptions of nursing was observing and “shadowing” nurses (Mean= 4.70, SD= .56). Students also “Strongly Agreed” that they would benefit from an Introduction to nursing course (Mean= 4.62, SD=.67) and that having an Introduction to nursing course would have a strong influence on their perceptions of nursing (Mean= 4.53, SD =.72). Students disagreed most with the
perception that high salaries were a reason students chose nursing (Mean = 2.21, SD = .88).

a. The first factor identified in the scale related to prenursing students’ perceptions was “Decision making regarding nursing”. The factor loadings ranged from a high of .63 to a low of .40 and explained 16.44% of the overall variance in the scale.

b. The second factor was identified by the researcher as “The nursing profession” and it explained 10.20% of the overall scale variance. This factor yielded factor loadings ranging from a high of .63 to a low of .43.

c. The third factor identified by the researcher was “Nursing education”. This factor added 6.81% of explained variance and yielded factor loadings ranging from a high of .61 to a low of .35.

2. After the three sub-scales and items to be included in each were identified, the researcher computed scores for each of the three identified sub-scales. It should be noted that these scores no longer reflect simply agreement/disagreement but are positive or negative perceptions of nursing with sub-scale ranges of 1=negative to 5=positive.

a. For the first sub-scale labeled “Decision making about nursing”, the individual subject mean scores ranged from a low of 1.5 to a high of 5.0 with an overall mean of 4.44 (SD = .42).

b. The second scale was “The nursing profession” and had individual subject means ranging from 1.8 to 4.10. The mean score for the group was 3.03 (SD = .42).
c. Finally, the third scale, “Nursing education” had an overall mean rating of 3.12 (SD = .49) with individual subject scores ranging from 1.2 to 4.4. The factor which received the most positive response score was the sub-scale “Decision making about nursing profession” sub-scale (Mean = 4.4, SD = .42).

**Objective Three**

1. The first variable that was examined for relationships with nursing perceptions sub-scales was current classification (ex. Freshman). When comparisons were made in the perception sub-scale scores by the student classification, the sub-scale scores “Decision making regarding nursing” (F3,197 = 1.711, p = .17), and “The nursing profession” (F3,197 = 0.356, p = .79) were not found to be significantly different by categories of student classification. However, when the sub-scale, “Nursing education” was compared by categories of student classification, a significant F value indicated that at least one significant difference existed among the classification groups (F3,197 = 3.43, p = .02). In the sub-scale “Nursing education”, the mean score for freshman was 3.30 and the mean score for juniors in the sample was 3.03. Therefore, freshman level students were found to have more positive perceptions of “Nursing education” than junior level students.

2. The second characteristic was academic performance (“Cumulative high school grade point average (GPA)”). When “cumulative high school GPA” and the “GPA on all coursework completed” were correlated with the three prenursing perception sub-scale scores, no significant relationships were identified.

3. The third characteristic examined was whether or not the student respondent had previously “Completed a college degree.” All respondents who indicated that they
had “Completed a college degree” were placed into one group and these individuals were compared with those who had not “Completed a college degree.” No significant differences were found in the three sub-scale scores.

4. The fourth characteristic examined was the variable whether or not the student had identified that had “Additional professional credentials”. The sub-scale score “Decision making regarding nursing” (Mean=4.65, SD=0.25) (t_{191}=2.13, p=.03) revealed a significant difference. Students who had “Additional professional credentials” had more positive perceptions of nursing with a mean score of 4.65, whereas respondents who did not identify that they had “Additional professional credentials” had a mean score of 4.42. The other two nursing perception sub-scale scores were not found to be significantly different.

5. Relationships were also examined by whether or not the respondents had reported that they had employment/volunteer experiences.

a. The first of these experiences examined was whether or not students reported they had “Volunteered in a healthcare setting.” Students who indicated that they had “Volunteered in a healthcare setting” had more positive perceptions of the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale (Mean=4.53, SD=0.28) than students who indicated that they did not have volunteer experiences in a healthcare setting (Mean=4.32, SD=.51) (t_{92}=3.77, p=<.001). No significant differences were found in the other two sub-scale scores.

b. Students who had “Worked in a healthcare setting” had more positive perceptions of the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale (Mean=4.54, SD=.27) than students who had not “Worked in a healthcare setting” (Mean=4.40, SD=.45)
No significant differences were found in the other two sub-scale scores.

c. Respondents indicating that they “Had shadowed” a nurse on the job had more positive perceptions of the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale (Mean=4.53, SD=.33) than students who indicated they had not “Shadowed” a nurse in a healthcare setting (Mean=4.40, SD=.44) (t_{151}=2.27, p=.03). No significant differences were found in the other two sub-scale scores.

6. The sixth variable examined was “Family members in healthcare.”

a. The first item was “One or both parent(s) is/are in healthcare”. Subjects who identified this item were found to have significantly more positive perceptions related to “Decision making regarding nursing” (Mean=4.57, SD=.33) than those who did not report this item (Mean=4.40, SD=.43). When the other two sub-scale scores were compared by categories of this variable, no significant differences were found.

b. The second aspect was the students’ responses to the item, “One or both parent(s) is/are a nurse.” These comparisons revealed that there were no significant differences in the three sub-scale scores.

c. The third aspect was whether or not “Family members other than parents are in healthcare.” There were no significant differences in the three sub-scale scores by categories of this variable.

7. The seventh variable was “Age.” A significant positive correlation (r=.18, p=.01) was identified between respondents’ “Age” and the sub-scale titled “Decision making regarding nursing.”. The nature of this relationship was such that older prenursing
students tended to have more positive perceptions of the items included in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than younger prenursing students. The correlations between respondents’ “Age” and the remaining sub-scales “The nursing profession” ($r=.05, p=.46$) and “Nursing education” ($r=.13, p=.06$) were not found to be significant.

8. The eighth characteristic examined for relationships with perceptions of prenursing student regarding the nursing profession was “Gender.” There were no significant differences between males and females.

9. The ninth variable examined was “Ethnic background,” no significant differences were found using the one-way ANOVA in “Decision making regarding nursing” ($F_{3,201}=.37, p=.78$), “The nursing profession” ($F_{3,201}=.90, p=.44$) or “Nursing education” ($F_{3,201}=.73, p=.54$).

10. The tenth characteristic was the “Type of home community” (specified as rural, town, suburban, or city/urban). No significant differences were found in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale ($F_{3,201}=1.03, p=.38$); in “The nursing profession” sub-scale ($F_{3,201}=1.56, p=.20$); or in the “Nursing education” sub-scale ($F_{3,201}=0.63, p=.60$) scores.

11. The eleventh variable examined in this objective was to determine if a relationship existed between student’s perceptions of the nursing profession by whether or not students identified selected “Reasons for choosing the nursing profession.” 

a. The first reason examined was “Desire to help others”. Students who identified “Desire to help others” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=3.10, SD=0.49) had significantly lower perceptions of the items in the
“Nursing education” sub-scale than those who did not identify this as a reason for choosing nursing (Mean=3.40, SD=0.47) (t205=2.25, p=.03).

b. The second reason examined was “Desire to care for others.” Students who identified “Desire to care for others” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=4.46, SD=.36) had more positive perceptions of the items in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than students who did not identify this as a “Reason for choosing nursing” (Mean=4.29, SD=.67) (t205=2.00, p=.04).

c. The third reason that was examined for relationship with nursing perceptions was “Diversity of job opportunities.” Students who identified “Diversity of job opportunities” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=4.33, SD=.58) (t205=2.31, p=.02).

d. The fourth reason was “Exposure to family in the healthcare.” No significant differences were found in the three sub-scales scores.

e. The fifth reason examined was “Prior work experience” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession. Students who indicated “Prior work experience” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=4.59, SD=0.27) had significantly more positive perceptions of the items in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than those who did not indicate this as a reason for choosing nursing (Mean=4.40, SD=.44) (t205=2.8, p=.01).

f. The sixth reason examined was “Hands on caring for family and friends.” When comparisons were made, no significant differences were revealed.
g. The seventh reason examined for relationship was “Religious influences.” When comparisons were examined for significant differences, none were revealed.

h. The eighth reason was “Interest in research of the science and health of man.” No significant differences were revealed.

i. The ninth reason that was examined was “Status of professional degree.” When the comparison was made, the three sub-scale scores revealed no significant differences.

j. The tenth reason that was examined for relationships with nursing perception sub-scale scores was “Salary opportunities”. When the comparisons were made, the sub-scale “Nursing education” was found to be significantly different. Students who identified “Salary opportunities” as a reason for choosing the nursing profession (Mean=3.18, SD=.51) had more positive perceptions of the items in the “Nursing education” sub-scale than those who did not identify this a reason for choosing nursing (Mean=3.03, SD=.44) (t_{207}=2.21, p=.03).

12. The twelfth variable examined in the objectives was “Practice area of interest”. The practice areas included: Neonatal nursing (n=44), Nurse Anesthetist (n=68), Emergency Room (n=27), Surgery (n=18), Undecided (n=14), Pediatric nursing (n=45) and Nurse Practitioner (n=46). When the comparisons were made, no significant differences were found in the nursing perception sub-scale scores by categories of whether or not any of the seven practice areas of interest were selected.

13. The thirteenth independent variable compared was “Desire to return to home community after graduation”. No significant differences were found in the sub-scale
scores by categories of the variable “Desire to return to home community after graduation.”

14. The final characteristic examined was whether or not students indicated a “Willingness to enroll in an Introduction to nursing course for no academic credit (0 credit hours)”. No significant differences were revealed in the three sub-scale scores when compared by whether or not students indicated they would take the course for no academic credit.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn by the researcher:

1. Prenursing students recognize the need for career information regarding the nursing profession.

   This conclusion is based on the following findings from the study: Respondents “Strongly Agreed” with the item in the Cockrell-Punter Nursing Perception Scale Instrument that indicated “Prenursing students would benefit from a prenursing orientation course” (Mean = 4.62). This item received the second highest rating of the 25 items in the scale. In addition, the majority of students who participated in the study (n = 148, 72.2%) indicated that they would enroll in a Introduction to nursing course even if it carried no academic credit.

   This conclusion is supported by the literature which indicates that many students today still view nursing as limited to taking orders from a physician rather than as a career with high levels of autonomy and opportunity for critical thinking and
decision making (Wieck, 2000). In addition, one of the factors that have been linked to the impending serious nursing shortage is that nurses are leaving the profession after working only a short time. This phenomenon has been linked to students entering nursing programs without a clear understanding of the nursing profession. Therefore, a course designed to communicate clearly the characteristics of and opportunities in the modern nursing profession should help with retention of professional nurses since they will enter with a clearer view of the nature of the career field.

Based on this conclusion and these findings and implications, the researcher recommends that an Introduction to nursing course be immediately developed and initiated at institutions that do not currently have one in place. This course should be offered for academic credit, however, since the nursing curriculum already exceeds the credit hour requirements of many other curricula, the course should be offered initially as an elective, which students (especially those who are undecided about the nursing profession) could complete to assist them in making their decision. This course could also be an effective recruitment tool for the nursing program by establishing it as a multi-level credit course in which students who were exploring career options could enroll for one credit hour and the additional credit hours are used for field experiences (especially “shadowing” nurses on the job) to assist currently enrolled prenursing students to solidify their career choice.

2. Prenursing students are highly motivated students:

   This conclusion is based on the following findings from the study: (a) students in the study indicated high academic achievement by a mean cumulative high school GPA of 3.58 (SD= 0.40)
and a somewhat lower but good college GPA on all college coursework complete. (Mean = 3.18, SD = 0.42); (b) the majority of prenursing students (n=148, 72%) demonstrated self-motivation in their willingness to “Enroll in an Introduction to nursing course” even if it carried no academic credit; (c) a large group of students indicated an interest in practice areas that required advanced education and training: “nurse anesthetist” (n=68, 33.0%) and “nurse practitioner” (n=46, 22.3%); and (d) the majority of students indicated that they had volunteer experiences (n=115, 55.6%).

3. Prenursing students are unclear regarding their perceptions of the nursing profession.

This conclusion is based on the finding that students indicated a substantial level of uncertainty regarding the items included in the sub-scale “The nursing profession” (Mean = 3.03, SD = 0.42). The response descriptor for the value of three was “Undecided” regardless of the direction of the coding of the items (for both direct and reverse coded items). Additionally, the relatively low standard deviation of the sub-scale (Mean=3.18, SD = 0.42) indicates that there was not a wide diversity in the responses to these items.

This conclusion is similar to a study done by Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1998), where students were also uncertain about the profession of nursing. Older students perceived nursing as carrying out orders without responsibility, status, or authority. Students were interested in “high status” careers and not as “helpers.” Additionally, the study showed that male respondents were plagued by gender images of nursing as a traditionally female dominated profession. Their study also showed that younger students viewed nursing as very task oriented, limited to only the visible task they observed while visiting someone in the hospital or watching a nurse on television shows like ER. Many students do not reject nursing; they simply have not
considered it (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1998). The Primary Care Resource Initiative in Missouri (PRIMO is an example of a program designed to help remedy the shortage of nurses by developing students’ interest in health careers. PRIMO has been a successful career decision-making tool for Missouri’s junior high students by placing them in summer “shadowing” programs placed with health-related professionals. The program also continues to encourage students after they graduate to pursue careers in the health profession and to remain and practice in Missouri through additional programs and incentives (Health Professions Recruitment, 2000).

Based on this conclusion and these findings and implications, the researcher recommends that increased emphasis be placed on awareness of the roles and responsibilities of nurses in prenursing programs. This could be done through field experiences and through mentoring programs established to place prenursing students with professional nurses in various areas of practice. However, since the most productive recruiting audience for the nursing profession has been shown to be elementary and junior high age students (Little, 2000) (Health Professions Recruitment, 2000), the researcher further recommends that programs be established to make students in upper elementary and middle schools aware of the roles played by nurses in society as well as the variety of opportunities available to individuals entering the nursing profession. This program should be co-sponsored by the respective state’s department of education and the area healthcare providers and professionals. Jointly, these groups could deliver a program that would enable students to make informed career decisions as they approach the age to make choices regarding their professional future.
4. Direct experiences with the healthcare professions have an impact on students’ decision-making regarding nursing.

This conclusion is based on the following findings of the study: (a) students who indicated that they had “Volunteered in a healthcare setting” had significantly more positive perceptions on the sub-scale “Decision making regarding nursing” than students who had not “Volunteered in a healthcare setting” \( (t_{154} = 2.03, p = .04) \); (b) students who indicated that they had “shadowed” a nurse on the job” had more positive perceptions on the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than those who had not “shadowed” a nurse \( (t_{151} = 2.27, p = .03) \); (c) students who indicated that they had “Worked in a healthcare setting” had more positive perceptions on the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than those who had not “Worked in a healthcare setting” \( (t_{92} = 3.77, p < .001) \); and (d) students who indicated that they had “Other professional credentials” had more positive perceptions in the “Decision making regarding nursing” sub-scale than those who did not have “Other professional credentials” \( (t_{191} = 2.13, p = .03) \).

This conclusion is consistent with career decision-making literature, which indicates that direct experience enhances both the ability of a student to make a career decision and the stability of that decision. Super’s (1972) research of career development theorized that the development of vocational self-concepts are influenced by physical and mental growth, observations at work, identification with working adults, the general environment, and general experiences. This theory supports the inclusion of a “shadowing” component in a proposed
Introduction to nursing course. This “shadowing” component should provide the students with a greater awareness of the nursing profession, and according to Super (1972), “As a broader awareness of the working world is developed in the individual, the more sophisticated their vocational-self concept becomes.”

Based on this conclusion, the researcher recommends that all students applying to nursing schools should be required to present evidence of direct field experiences in a nursing environment prior to completion of the requirements of the prenursing curriculum. Organized field experiences, sponsored by the prenursing program, should be made available to and required of students who enroll in the prenursing curriculum without prior field experiences. In addition, students who have the required field experiences and wish to gain further experience should be encouraged to complete the program sponsored experiences since they would be designed to provide the students with exposure to a wide variety of nursing practice areas and in diverse cultural and community healthcare settings.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

COCKRELL-PUNTER NURSING PERCEPTION SCALE INSTRUMENT
Listed below are a series of statements regarding the nursing profession. For each of the statements, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by circling the response that best represents your opinion. The available responses for each item range from “Strongly Disagree” with a value of “1” to “Strongly Agree” with a value of “5”. Please be assured that there are no right or wrong responses to these statements, and that your individual answers will never be connected with you personally. The identification number on the instrument is strictly for the purpose of being able to follow-up any individual who have not responded to the survey.

Read each statement carefully and circle the number which most closely reflects your opinion.

1. Critical thinking is demonstrated by analyzing and solving challenging problems. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Popular media (i.e. television shows like ER) is the primary source by which individuals define nursing. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Nursing students in rural and under served areas are more likely to want to return to their hometown to work after graduation. 1 2 3 4 5
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<td>4. Students are more likely to choose nursing if family members or friends are in healthcare careers.</td>
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<td>5. Patient education is a major part of the role of nurses.</td>
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<td>6. Most prenursing students make the decision to enter nursing based on accurate information about nursing.</td>
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<td>7. There is currently a shortage of registered nurses (RNs) in the U.S.</td>
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<td>8. The American Nurses Association’s (ANA) position is that Baccalaureate nursing education should be the standard for entry into professional nursing.</td>
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<td>9. Mentoring (described as “when one person sees something in another person and wants to help that person grow”) is critical for success in nursing.</td>
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<td>10. Graduates from a baccalaureate nursing program can be employed in a wide variety of medical areas.</td>
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<td>11. The majority of currently employed RNs work in a hospital setting.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>High salaries are the primary reason students choose nursing as a career.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Nurses are called on to fulfill multiple roles as nursing professionals. (e.g. researcher, manager, caregiver, patient advocate in community based settings, etc.).</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Managed healthcare has had a positive influence on nursing.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Students in baccalaureate nursing programs are automatically licensed as RNs upon graduation.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Observing and “shadowing” nurses (i.e. spending time with RNs on the job) influences an individuals perceptions of the nursing profession.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Prenursing students understand the roles and responsibilities of professional nurses.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Career information about nursing is readily available to all students on the university campus.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Nursing graduates of alternative programs (i.e. Associate Degree and Diploma Non-degree) can enroll directly in advanced nursing specialization programs (i.e. graduate nursing programs).</td>
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<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>20. RNs cannot make decisions about patient care without first consulting with a physician.</td>
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<td>21. Understanding the nursing profession is a primary concern of prenursing students.</td>
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<td>22. Prenursing students would benefit from a prenursing orientation course.</td>
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<td>23. Nurses are regarded a highly ethical and honest professionals.</td>
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<td>24. Completion of an Introduction to Nursing class before entering nursing school would have a strong influence on students perceptions of nursing.</td>
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<td>25. The majority of currently employed nurses have positive perceptions about nursing.</td>
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**Prenursing Participant Profile Form**

**Directions:** To help in accurately interpreting the responses provided to the survey items, some basic descriptive information about the participants will be very useful. Therefore, please respond to each of the following items by checking (x) the most appropriate space(s) or by writing the information in the space provided as requested.

Again, in responding to the questionnaire **you may be assured of complete confidentiality.** Persons choosing not to respond to this instrument or any part thereof will in no way be penalized. Your return of this completed instrument will constitute consent to participate.

This number is solely for the purpose of identifying those who have not yet responded so that they can be mailed a follow-up questionnaire. Your name will never be placed on your completed questionnaire or associated in any way with your individual responses. Thank you very much for your cooperation and for being a vital part in helping nursing to meet prenursing students’ needs for the 21st century.

1. **Identify current student classification:**
   - _______ Freshman
   - _______ Sophomore
   - _______ Junior
   - _______ Senior
   - _______ College graduate
   - _______ Other (Please specify: ______________________________________)

2. **Year of High School Graduation:**
   (Year Only)
   
   ______

3. **Cumulative High School GPA:**
   
   ______

4. **GPA on all college coursework completed:**
   (NOT including currently enrolled courses)
   
   ______
5. **Identify current nursing classification:**
   - ____Prenursing student
   - ____Nursing student
   - ____Registered nurse
   - ____Other: (specify)_______________________

6. **Please identify highest college degree completed:**
   - ____Associate degree (AD)
   - ____Bachelor of Science (BS)/ Bachelor of Arts (BA)
   - ____Master of Science (MS)
   - ____Other

7. **Please identify all additional professional credentials held:**
   (Check all that apply)
   - ____Diploma RN
   - ____Associate RN
   - ____Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)
   - ____Healthcare Technical programs (i.e., x-ray, laboratory, dental, etc.)
   - ____Other: (specify)_______________________

8. **Identify employment/volunteer experiences:**
   (Check all that apply)
   - ______Have volunteered in the healthcare setting (ex. hospital, nursing home, clinic, etc.)
   - ______Have worked in the healthcare setting (ex. hospital, nursing home, clinic, etc.)
   - ______Have “shadowed” a nurse on the job
   - ______Other (please specify_____________________________________

9. **Family members in healthcare:**
   (Check all that apply)
   - ____one or both parents is/are in healthcare
   - ____one or both parents is/are nurses
   - ____family members other than parents are in healthcare
   - ____no one in family is in healthcare

10. **Your age:**
    - _______yrs.
11. Your gender: 
   __(Male)   __(Female) 

12. Your ethnic background: 
   _____White/Non Hispanic _____African/American _____ Asian _____Hispanic 
   _____Other (please specify)______________

13. Did observing a nurse in action influence you to choose nursing as a career? 
   ___Yes 
   ___No 

14. I would describe my home community as primarily: 
   ___Rural 
   ___Town 
   ___Suburban 
   ___City/urban 

15. Reason(s) for choosing nursing as a career: 
   (Check all that apply) 
   ___Desire to help others 
   ___Desire to care for others 
   ___Diversity of job opportunities 
   ___Exposure to family and friends in the healthcare profession 
   ___Prior work experience 
   ___Hands on caring for family and friends 
   ___Religious influence 
   ___Career change after completing another degree 
   ___Interest in research of the science and health of man 
   ___Status of professional degree 
   ___Salary opportunities 
   ___Other (specify)__________________________

16. Area of nursing practice in which you are most interested: (check only one) 
   ___Neonatal   ___Nursing Educator   ___Pediatric 
   ___Nurse Anesthetist   ___Surgery   ___Nurse Practitioner 
   ___Emergency room   ___Clinical Nurse Specialist   ___ICU/CCU 
   ___undecided   ___Psychiatric   ___community health 
   ___Other (please specify)__________________
17. **Would you serve as a mentor for prenursing students after graduation?**

   ____ Yes
   ____ No

18. **Would you like to return to your home community after graduation?**

   ____ Yes
   ____ No

19. **Would you enroll in an introduction to nursing course if it carried no academic credit (0 credit hours)?**

   ____ Yes
   ____ No
APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PRENURSING STUDENTS REGARDING THE SURVEY
December 7, 2001

To: LSU Pre-nursing Students

Re: Exciting News! You will be part of the FIRST pre-nursing student research done at LSU!

Pre-nursing Students,

Your perceptions about the nursing profession are very important in making your career decision to become a nurse. Realizing this, LSU has approved the conduct of a study, which is designed to measure pre-nursing students' perceptions of the nursing profession and its program of study. We value your input for this study, which may provide insight for nurse educators to meet pre-nursing students' career making needs here at LSU, across the nation, and possibly worldwide.

The primary purpose of the study is to determine what these perceptions are and to attempt to identify factors, which might have an influence on the development of these perceptions. The results of this study should be of great benefit in developing a curriculum that will clarify your needs as a pre-nursing student and in your career satisfaction as a nurse, by providing better educational experiences and maximizing opportunities for success in nursing.

You have the opportunity as a pre-nursing student to participate in the first known research study related to pre-nursing students on the LSU campus, and your participation is vital to its success. Enclosed you will find an instrument called "The Cockrell-Punten Nursing Perceperous Instrument" and a brief demographic questionnaire. Please take the time to complete both of these forms and return them in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope as soon as possible. Or you may drop them into the sealed box labeled "Nursing Perceptions," located in the Center For Advising and Counseling in 150 Himes Hall, where you will receive a small token of my appreciation for your participation.

Your cooperation in the study is very important, without your input the results of the study will be incomplete and less useful in addressing your educational experience as well as those of future pre-nursing students and the profession of nursing.

Please be assured that your responses will remain completely confidential. The identification number located on the instrument is for verification of receipt of the instrument and follow-up purposes only. At no time will your name be associated with your individual responses on any portion of the survey. Both the Director and I have insisted on this level of confidentiality.

Thank you in advance for being a vital part of the pre-nursing program here at LSU and in the future of nursing.

Sincerely,

Basie Cockrell
RN BSN
Faculty Advisor
LSUHSC SON

Michael F. Burnett
Professor and Director
School of Vocational Education
Louisiana State University

Attachments

LSU Health Sciences Center
SCHOOL OF NURSING
Student Affairs and Records

Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center • 1800 Gravier Street • New Orleans, Louisiana 70112-2202
phone: (504) 564-4113

137
APPENDIX C

POSTCARD THANK YOU/REMINDER TO PRENURSING STUDENTS
January 11, 2002

Dear Pro Nursing Students:

I wanted to thank those of you that have already mailed back your research questionnaire on personalizing that I sent to you on personalizing student’s perceptions of professional nursing, and to remind those of you who have not returned your questionnaire to please do so as soon as possible. I care very much about your perceptions of nursing and would like to include them in my research study here at LSU.

If you haven’t already completed the first mailing and are not able or if you are not available, you can send the questionnaire back to the following address:

Ernie Cockrell
LSUHC Nursing Advisor
190 Henn Hall, LSU
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Thank you so very much.

Ernie Cockrell, RN, BSN
APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO NON-RESPONDENTS
January 31, 2002

RE: PLEASE RETURN THIS TO YOUR NURSING ADVISOR TODAY.

Dear Nursing Student,

PLEASE TAKE 5 MINUTES TO COMPLETE THIS FORM. IT IS URGENT THAT YOU RETURN THE ENCLOSED INSTRUMENT TO ME TODAY.

I have NOT received your reply to this questionnaire, which was originally mailed to you in December. You may not have received it, or if you did send it back, I did not receive it. I ask that you please complete the enclosed copy and return it in the stamped envelope today. You may also drop it by my office in 150 Himes at the front desk.

I must have these turned in to the main office immediately, so please take a moment and return it to me today. Please contact me if you have any questions.

My Sincere Thanks,

Mrs. Essie

Mrs. Essie Cockrell RN BSN
Your Pre-Nursing Advisor
LSUHSC School of Nursing
essie@lsu.edu
225-578-2894 (work)
225-683-8751 (home)
VITA

Essie Dee Scott Cockrell was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and reared in Baywood, Louisiana, a rural community in the northern portion of East Baton Rouge Parish. She was an honor graduate of Pride High School in 1966 where she received several scholarships. She completed her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana, in 1970. Following graduation, she passed her state boards as a registered nurse (RN) in 1971 and then specialized in critical care nursing.

Her professional career includes staff nursing roles in critical care and medical/surgical nursing. She has been a school nurse in East Baton Rouge Parish, covering both junior high schools and high schools in the northern end of that parish, as well as inner city schools. She developed and taught the Medical Careers honors course for five major schools in East Baton Rouge Parish in 1972, which included coordinating healthcare field sites for students to visit weekly as well as developing the curriculum for the honors course.

After ten years in a professional career as a nurse, she chose to forego her professional career to stay at home and raise a family. During the next sixteen years, she was a full-time wife and mother, helped in the family business Clinton Drugstore, was an active member and leader in her church, community and local school. In addition to chairing and organizing large fundraisers and teaching independent studies, she also served as president of several organizations. She attended continuing education classes in nursing, computer technology, and education and kept her nursing license current during this time at home.
More recently, she returned to her professional career as a nurse and for the past seven years has served as faculty prenursing advisor for a baccalaureate nursing program. Among her responsibilities as prenursing advisor is the recruitment of students into the baccalaureate nursing program. She has undertaken numerous responsibilities within the school of nursing and on the university campus within her employment and also serves as liaison between the university and the School of Nursing where she is employed. In addition, she also teaches a study abroad course in healthcare for prenursing and nursing students in England and Scotland.

Current professional memberships include Sigma Theta Tau international honor society of nursing, American Nurses’ Association, Louisiana State Nursing Association, and Feliciana Nursing Association.

She currently serves as a member on the Admissions, Progression, and Graduation committee within her school of nursing.

She resides in Clinton, Louisiana, with her husband, Larry Ross Cockrell, They have one adult son, Ross Tanner Cockrell, who attends college. She continues to be active in professional, church, and community activities.