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EDUCATIONAL PLANS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS: AN EXPANSION OF TWO COLLEGE CHOICE MODELS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agriculture and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Counseling

by

Lisa M. Smith-Vosper
B.A., Southern University and Agriculture and Mechanical College, 1990
M.A., Southern University and Agriculture and Mechanical College, 1991
December 1997
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Praise God from whom all blessings flow!!  To the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent Triune God, whose unwarranted grace, unmerited favor, supernatural strength, great faithfulness, and Agape' love saw and directed me, showered and deepened me, shielded and defended me, and strengthened and drove me as I matriculated through this process. Thank you for ordering my steps and navigating my way! You get all the Glory for this accomplishment.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if the factors that have been posited by previous researchers to affect predisposition to attend college in high school students are the same for the two-year college population, and to investigate whether or not an expansion of the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) three-phase model of college choice and the Hossler and Stage (1992) Model of High School Students' Predisposition to College would yield great benefits. This analogy uses variables that have been advanced as effectual in the predisposition stage of the college choice process on the selected student population.

The problem is that previous research has not examined the college choice process that students in two-year colleges undertake. Moreover, it ignores the duplicative nature of the college choice process for community college students. Specifically, this study investigates the simple bivariate relationship between predictors reported in the predisposition literature for high school students (socioeconomic status, parents education, etc.) and a measure of community college student's decision to transfer or not transfer to a baccalaureate institution upon leaving the community college. For the nine included variables (SES,
parents' education, GPA, parents' and significant others' expectation and encouragement, students' personal expectation, college involvement, gender, ethnicity and age), the simple bivariate relationship with a measure of community college student's decision to transfer or not transfer to a baccalaureate institution upon departing from community college is measured.

To test the explanatory power of the expanded Hossler and Stage model, hierarchial logistic regression procedures are employed. Model 9, which included all variables, was significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level. Of all the variables introduced in the hierarchial logistic regression analysis, EXPECT 2 (the personal educational expectations and aspirations students have for themselves) produced the most statistically significant relationship to predisposition to transfer ($r=.2921$).

The results of this study have some implications for state and federal policymakers responsible for developing policies related to student financial aid, administrators at community colleges and baccalaureate institutions, and for those responsible for the enrollment management and recruiting functions at both two- and four-year institutions.
CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

In this section, I provide background information on student college choice and the phases and variables involved in the three phase model of college choice (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987) and a theoretical model of high school students' predisposition to college (Hossler and Stage, 1992). In this section, I also define important terms; identify one of the problems associated with the existing literature; pose a series of questions to be addressed; state the purpose and significance of the study; and identify the hypotheses tested; and provide a synopsis of this chapter.

Background

In the last decade there has been a plethora of information on and interest in the topic of college choice (Manski and Wise, 1982; Litten, 1982; Chapman, 1984; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Hossler and Stage, 1992). Some factors that have consistently motivated related discussions include: funding for public colleges and universities and student financial
aid; the increasing number of college students who are of "nontraditional-age" (many of whom attend community colleges), while "traditional-age" students are decreasing; and the fluctuating number of students of color, particularly African Americans¹, who are attending institutions of higher education. These college choice issues have implications not just for college and university administrators who want to administer intervention strategies designed to attract a desirable number of students, but there are also policy implications for state and federal entities, which have vested interests in understanding the factors that shape aggregate student enrollments (Hossler and Stage, 1992).

Student college choice has been defined in previous literature as a "complex, multi-stage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed by a decision to attend a specific college or university or institution of advanced vocational training" (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989, p. 234).

Using this definition, researchers have examined a variety of factors that

¹ In 1976, 603,000 African Americans were enrolled in four-year institutions and 429,000 in two-year colleges. By 1980, the enrollment of blacks had increased slightly to 633,000 at baccalaureate institutions and 468,000 at community colleges. In 1984, the enrollment figures for African Americans dropped again at four- and two-year colleges, to 617,000 and 459,000, respectively (Teddlie and Freeman, 1996).
have influenced the decisions which secondary school students make when selecting colleges. As a result, several multi-stage models (Litten, 1982; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Jackson 1982) emerged which focus on variables that affect students' decisions to attend college, such as: parental attributes, student background characteristics, high school characteristics, environment, and student academic ability. Much of the research on student choice further characterizes it as a developmental process which occurs in cycles, steps, phases or stages (Chapman, 1984; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987, Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982).

This study is based on the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) model of student choice and on the Hossler and Stage (1992) theoretical model of predisposition to attend college. The Hossler and Gallagher model is characterized by Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith (1989) as a combined model which incorporates aspects of sociological and econometric models. In this developmental model of college choice, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) draw on earlier models (Chapman, 1984; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982) to identify three stages in the college choice process: predisposition, search and choice.
In the first stage, predisposition, students determine whether they would like to continue their education beyond high school. Students who desire to enter a college or university proceed to the second stage, search, wherein they gather information about institutions of higher education. In the third stage, choice, students decide which college they will attend.

The individual steps in the college choice process have been elucidated by previous researchers. According to Hossler and Stage (1992), most investigations of student college choice have either focused on the final choice step or examined correlates of aggregate postsecondary student enrollments. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) report that of the three phases which are discussed, the predisposition stage has received the least attention.

Of the research conducted on college choice generally, and the predisposition stage specifically, very few studies have factored the community college student into the equation. Of these only a few have focused specifically on two-year college students' predisposition to further their education beyond the community college by transferring to baccalaureate institutions. Moreover, a limited number of studies have
been based on a theoretical model of the predisposition stage of college choice which specifically examines the educational plans of community college students (Nora and Rendon, 1987).

Past and present trends and statistics suggest that the factors which influence the college choice process may be different for students in two-year and four-year institutions. According to Smith (1990), little attention has been given to the decisions of two growing college-going populations - nontraditional age students and two-year college students. Bers and Smith (1987) provide introductory findings which suggest that students in two-year colleges conduct less intensive searches and often collapse the stages of search and choice. For the community college students who have the fortitude to attend a four-year institution, the decision becomes one of which college to attend.

Hossler's (1985) precursory indications deduced that students who enter two-year colleges may differ from those who enter four-year colleges. However, such differences have not been studied extensively. Nearly two decades ago, Jackson (1978) also suggested that the choice process may vary among students. He concluded that the beginning decision stage for
some students may be a choice of which college to attend, while for others it is whether or not to attend college.

Although these findings suggest that differences exist between students in two- and four-year colleges, there has been no direct comparison of the levels where student college choice considerations must be applied. Litten (1982) suggested that to truly understand the choice process, identifying how the selection process differs for various types of college attendees is critical.

While the need for further study on the college choice processes of two-year college students has been cited by numerous researchers, the primary focus has been on the movement of traditional-age students from high school to college (two-year and four-year). Almost entirely lacking in college choice research are studies that use large samples of community college students and attempt to understand the relationship between family and student background characteristics, student achievement, and student motivation and the predisposition phase of college choice. There is a vast body of literature that uses large samples to conduct structural studies (Tierney, 1980; Jackson, 1986; Manski and Wise, 1983), but Hossler and
Stage (1992) point out that many of these studies are dated; and that their study is unique in that it looks specifically at the predisposition phase.

Specifically, the Hossler and Stage model (1992) draws on the literature of college choice, as well as on the work of sociologists who studied status attainment. This model posits that family background characteristics influence the expectations of significant others, student achievement, and the degree of student involvement in high school activities. Family background characteristics also were expected to affect the criterion variable, students' educational plans, both directly and indirectly, through parents' expectations and student high school experience factors. Finally, parental expectations and the student high school experience factors were found to have a direct influence on students' educational plans. This study identified correlates of predisposition using the maximum likelihood estimation technique, LISREL VII (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1989). The differences between the paradigms previously identified and other models of college choice and predisposition are discussed in the next chapter.
Definition of Terms

Community College Students

Vaughan (1995) defines a community college as "a publicly supported, regionally accredited institution of higher education that offers the associate's degree as its highest degree" (p. 2). When referred to herein, the term community college students will refer to those students who continue their postsecondary education at two-year institutions, but not to those students who attend vocational technical schools. The terms two-year college students and/or junior college students are used synonymously with community college students.

Traditional-Age Students and Nontraditional-Age Students

Previous educational research defined traditional-age students as those students who attend college immediately after high school and/or are between the ages of 18 and 22 years; and defines nontraditional-age students as those students who begin or continue their formal education at the age of 25 years or older.

Realizing that these definitions do not account for the 23 and 24 year old students who attend higher education institutions, I utilize Smith's
(1990) definitions for traditional- and nontraditional-age students. The term traditional-age students refers to those students between the ages of 18 and 24 years. Nontraditional-age students refers to those students who are 25 years and older.

**Student College Choice**

Hossler and Stage (1992) explain that "the term student college choice has been used to describe a wide range of postsecondary educational decisions including (a) the decision of students to continue their education at the postsecondary level and (b) the decision to enroll in a specific postsecondary institution" (p.426, emphasis in the original).

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) summarize student college choice as a process through which college attenders move from an initial step of establishing a predisposition toward higher education to the final step of selecting an institution to attend. Student college choice has been defined in the literature as a "complex, multi-stage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed by a decision to attend a specific college or university or institution of advanced vocational training" (p. 234).
Building on this and Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith's (1989) definition, when used in this study, student college choice refers to a multifarious process through which individuals cultivate ambitions and desires to pursue formal education beyond high school or the community college and, as a result, determine whether to attend a specific two-year or baccalaureate institution, or to transfer from a community college to a particular four-year university.

The Predisposition Phase of Student College Choice

The predisposition stage of college choice refers to the early phase of development in which students determine whether or not they will continue their formal education beyond high school. In my work, predisposition refers to the initial step of the student college choice process wherein high school students determine if they will continue their formal education after high school and/or community college students decide whether to continue their formal education beyond the two-year college (with or without having earned an associate degree).
Duplicative College Choice

Duplicative college choice is a three-phase process utilized by students in two-year colleges to assess or determine the degree of their educational attainment beyond the community college. Consistent with the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) model, the first phase of the duplicative college choice model is predisposition. It is in this cognitive phase where students at the two-year college determine if they are predisposed to furthering their postsecondary education beyond the community college. Those students interested in transferring, proceed to the reflective search phase. Here, students revisit the original list which they compiled during the initial college choice process to ascertain whether they should transfer to colleges and universities which they previously identified as appropriate schools for them to attend. In this phase, new transfer options may also be introduced.

Unlike the Hossler and Gallagher and the Jackson (1982) models, this new list, comprised of institutions to which the student will actually apply, is called a “transfer set”. The final phase, transfer, is the stage in which students decide to transfer to a particular college or university.
Purpose of the Study and Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate an expansion of the "Theoretical Model of Predisposition" advanced by Hossler and Stage (1992), in order to determine if the factors that affect the future educational decisions of high school students are the same as those affecting community college students. This analogy uses variables that have been advanced as effectual in the predisposition stage of the college choice process on the selected student population.

As a result of college choice research being concentrated on status attainment and the actual attendance patterns of high school students, knowledge has accrued around some components of the college choice process. The problem is that researchers have not examined the college choice process that students in two-year colleges undertake. Moreover, it ignores the duplicative nature of the college choice process for community college students.

Specifically, these questions have not been addressed: (1) What are the factors that influence community college students as they consider transferring to baccalaureate institutions? (2) Are currently identified
factors in the development of educational plans for high school students the same as those which influence students in two-year colleges? (3) Are male and female community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions? (4) Are African American and white community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions? (5) Are traditional- and nontraditional-aged community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions? (6) How adequately does an expanded version of the Hossler and Stage (1992) predisposition model of college choice classify community college students with respect to their predisposition to transfer to four-year institutions?

This in-depth investigation of these questions helps to shed some light on why a large proportion of community college students who are predisposed to and who intend to transfer and persist to the baccalaureate degree and beyond are not attaining their goals.

Research Questions to be Investigated and Hypotheses to be Tested

Research Question 1: What are the factors that influence the decision of community college students to consider transferring to baccalaureate institutions?
Research Question 2: Are currently identified factors in the development of educational plans for high school students the same as those which influence students in two-year colleges?

To address research questions 1 and 2, I investigate the simple bivariate relationship between predictors reported in the predisposition literature for high school students (socioeconomic status, parents education, etc.) and a measure of community college student's decision to transfer or not to transfer to a baccalaureate institution upon leaving the community college. Additionally, for reasons articulated later in this document (see Chapter 2), the following variables are posited as factors uniquely related to the predisposition of community college students to transfer: socioeconomic status, parents’ education, students’ achievement, parents and significant others’ expectation and encouragement, students’ personal expectation, involvement in college activities, gender, ethnicity and age.

For each of these measures, I investigate the simple bivariate relationship with a measure of community college students decision to transfer.
or not to transfer to a baccalaureate institution upon departing from community college.

Hypothesis 1: As socioeconomic status increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

Hypothesis 2: As parents' education increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

Hypothesis 3: As student academic achievement increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

Hypothesis 4: As parents and significant others' expectations and encouragement increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

Hypothesis 5: As students' personal expectations increase, their predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

Hypothesis 6: As the involvement in college activities increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.
Research Question 3: Are male or female community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

Hypothesis 7: Female students at community colleges will likely be more predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than will male students.

Research Question 4: Are African American or white community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

Hypothesis 8: African American students at community colleges will likely be more predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than will white students.

Research Question 5: Are traditional- or nontraditional-aged community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

Hypothesis 9: Nontraditional-age students at community colleges will likely be more predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than will traditional-aged students.

Research Question 6: How adequately does an expanded version of the Hossler and Stage (1992) predisposition model of college choice classify community college students with respect to their predisposition to transfer to four-year institutions?
Hypothesis 10: The explanatory power of the expanded Hossler and Stage predisposition model for community college students will be statistically significant overall.

These hypotheses are explained and examined more closely in Chapter II, Review of the Literature, and the results of the statistical tests are presented in Chapter IV, Quantitative Results.

Significance of the Study

This comparative analysis which employs certain variables that might affect the decisions of high school and community college students could yield great benefits. First, existing theoretical models of college choice could be revised and updated to include one of the largest and most rapidly growing segments of the college-going population, attendees of community colleges. Second, college and university admissions officers or enrollment managers could use these findings to expand their recruitment base. Third, two-year college and four-year university administrators could utilize this data to improve inter-institutional collaborations related to transfer and articulation policies. Fourth, this research may be used by federal and state agencies and higher education institutions in implementing
policies and practices which positively impact attrition, retention, and transfer rates among higher education institutions. Finally, college and university academic advisors could use these findings to increase the likelihood that students progress toward and achieve their academic, training, and related goals.

Since very few studies on student college choice have systematically examined the variables included in available theoretical models of college choice, this continuous investigation could be beneficial and enable researchers to consistently improve existing models and/or develop new ones. Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) college choice model combines aspects of Jackson (1982), Litten (1982), and Chapman's (1984) earlier renderings; and Hossler and Stage (1992) point out that the studies which are available are dated. By distinguishing variables that influence educational plans of community college students in the predisposition phase of college choice, I will enable institutions and other providers to be better equipped to serve the needs of this college-going population, and in the process they will be able to stabilize their consistently fluctuating enrollment statistics.
Summary

The primary focus of this study is to determine if the model describing factors that affect educational decisions of high school students can be expanded to include college choices of community college consumers. Through the years, researchers have identified factors which influence the decisions of the general high school population, but have failed to investigate whether differences exist between those factors and the ones which have an impact on community college attendees. Greater insight into the predisposition stage of college choice, generally, and implications for both of the college-going populations, particularly, are gleaned herein as I have identified variables that are likely to influence two-year college students.

One problem with college choice literature is that it does not reveal that there has been an in-depth look at the choices that 2-year college students make, nor has there been a comparative analysis which examines the variables that affect the decisions of community college students. To address this predicament, my work examines the following research questions:
1. What are the factors that influence the decision of community college students to consider transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

2. Are currently identified factors in the development of educational plans for high school students the same as those which influence students in two-year colleges?

3. Are male and female community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

4. Are African American and white community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

5. Are traditional- and nontraditional-aged community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

6. How adequately does an expanded version of the Hossler and Stage (1992) predisposition model of college choice classify community college students with respect to their predisposition to transfer to four-year institutions?

The theoretical models are discussed more in-depth in Chapter II, Review of the Literature. The procedures to be employed and the research methodology are discussed in Chapter III, Research Methodology. The results and findings are presented in Chapters IV and V, Quantitative Results and Qualitative Results, respectively, and conclusions and implications are discussed in Chapter VI.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate an expansion of the "Theoretical Model of Predisposition" advanced by Hossler and Stage (1992) to determine if the factors therein also affect the educational decisions of community college students. In this section, I review the literature that is relevant to college choice, generally, and that which is relevant to the predisposition phase of the college choice process, specifically.

I begin the review of the literature by describing how the search for the literature was conducted. Then I provide a brief overview and description of the three categories into which researchers (Jackson, 1982; Hossler, Braxton & Coopersmith, 1989) have classified college choice models. According to the factors emphasized in each paradigm, models of college choice have been categorized as econometric, sociological, or combined.
Afterwards, I examine the college choice combined models of Litten (1982), Jackson (1982), and Hossler and Gallagher (1987), focusing specifically on the first stage of the process, predisposition. Fourth, I analyze models that highlight the predisposition stage of college choice (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Hossler and Stage, 1992; Nora and Rendon, 1990). This is an important part of the review as I drew on these models in the development of my own model which focuses on community college students.

Fifth, the relationships of variables found by previous researchers to correlate to predisposition are reviewed. In this section, I also identify and offer an overview with definitions of the variables operative in college choice, as well as examine in detail, the correlates presented in the hypotheses to be tested. Finally, I review the theoretical frameworks which guided this study and suggest two additional models that may add to the current body of literature on college choice and predisposition.

**Literature Review Procedures**

My literature review procedures consisted of locating, digesting, and analyzing research reports on variables that I considered for inclusion in
this study. Initially, I searched preliminary sources, which are the indexes
to particular bodies of literature. The preliminary source that yielded the
best results was the *Educational Resource Information Center* (ERIC).
By using the subject index for education, I was able to find books,
periodicals, and microfilm or microfiche articles that were published and
registered on the subject. From the leads that I gathered from ERIC, I was
able to use *Louisiana On-line Library Access* (LOLA) to see what
holdings the LSU library possessed.

In my examination of preliminary sources, I found several secondary
sources that were helpful in providing relevant information which led me to
refine and tighten the breadth of my study or which could be included as
supplemental data and/or general information in the body of this work.
The references that were cited by these secondary sources or were listed in
their bibliographies provided me with a useful list of journal articles in
which authors had previously studied student college choice.

Since the secondary sources gave only a modest overview or review
of the primary sources, I obtained and studied the original reports of the
research that were most relevant to my investigation. I also conducted a
computer search of *Dissertation Abstracts International* and ordered, through *Interlibrary Borrowing*, dissertations on the topic that were completed by researchers at other universities. After spending more than a month reading articles written by primary and secondary authors, I began to immerse myself in the literature, to digest as much as possible, and to synthesize the information, results and conclusions. My discoveries are detailed in the remainder of this literature review section.

**Econometric, Sociological, and Combined Models of College Choice**

Numerous models of college choice have evolved that offer an explanation of the college choice process. Emerging from status attainment, persistence and econometric theories, college choice models have been clustered into three categories: econometric (Kohn, Manski & Mundel, 1976; Bishop & VanDyk, 1977; Fuller, Manski & Wise, 1982; and Manski & Wise, 1983); sociological (Sewell et. al., 1957 and 1970; Boyle, 1966; Alwin & Otto, 1977; Sewell & Shaw, 1978); and combined (Chapman, 1984; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987).
Econometric models suggest that students exclude postsecondary alternatives based on economic factors, academic factors, and geographic location, and then evaluate the remaining ones. According to Jackson (1982), using family background, academic experiences and social context, students assess the econometric factors to determine if there is an economical benefit to attending an institution beyond high school. As a result, the student executes his or her educational plans based on the financial benefit attending higher education institutions is believed to offer.

Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) have pointed out that econometric models of college choice can be further divided into two additional categories or strands, and subcategories within each of those strands. The strands focus on different units of analysis. The first strand attempts to determine enrollments, with institutions, states and the nation as the units of analysis (Fuller, Manski & Wise, 1982, as cited by Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith, 1989). The unit of analysis for the second strand focuses on the individual student. The subcategories for this unit are represented by three types of econometric models: College and Non-
College Choice, also known as College-going Models; Choice Among Colleges; and the Consumer Choice Models.

Sociological models, which generally concentrate on only one or two explanatory variables, identify a variety of individual and social factors which lead to occupational and educational aspirations (Sewell, et. al., 1957 and 1970). Since these aspirations are key in the status attainment process, researchers in sociology attempted to analyze the college aspirations of students and the roles portrayed by various individual and occupational factors (Jackson, 1982; Sewell & Shaw, 1978). During the process of gaining prestige or status, the role of education is of central importance (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989).

Although sociological and econometric models have focused on educational plans with regard to college selection, neither of these approaches has provided a satisfactory explanation of the process of college choice (Hossler et. al., 1989, emphasis in the original). Combined models incorporate aspects of the aforementioned models and divide the student's educational decision making plans into a sequential, progressive, multiple-stage process. As befitting the longitudinal nature of the decision
making process, the purpose of the combined model is to identify factors which affect college choice from a policy implementation perspective and to utilize a wide range of variables provided by the other models (Hossler, et. al., 1989).

Two major categories of combined models have emerged: a three-stage model (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Hanson and Litten, 1982) and a multi-stage model that is comprised of between five and seven stages (R. Chapman, 1984; Litten, 1982; Kotler, 1976; Lewis and Morrison, 1975). After careful study of both classifications, Hossler, et al (1989) suggest that the three-stage model can be viewed as a simplified, "collapsed" version of the multi-stage paradigm.

**The Combined Models of College Choice**

The three-stage combined model, specifically, the work produced by Hossler and Gallagher (1987), provided a foundation for this research. Additionally, two other combined models are examined in greater detail below: Litten's (1982) multi-stage model and Jackson's (1982) three-stage model. Particular attention was paid to the first stage in each model.
Larry H. Litten (1982)

In Litten's 1982 "Expanded Model of the College Choice Process" (Figure 1), he concludes that the college selection process is a complex series of activities upon which many phenomena impinge. He likens the educational decision making process to a funnel, where a vast number of prospective students initially entertain the idea of college attendance and, as the process advances through the stages, the number of students becomes smaller. Expanding on his and Hanson's 1982 work, Litten selects variables from the econometric and status-attainment models to advance his multi-stage model in which each stage is not given a descriptive label.

Background, high school attributes, student performance, environment, and personal attributes are the broad variable groupings that comprise stage one. Background factors include race, income, socioeconomic status (SES), parents' education, family culture, parents' personalities, religion and gender. High school attributes entail social composition and quality.
Figure 1: Litten's (1982) "Expanded Model of the College Choice Process"
Student performance includes high school class rank and curriculum. Environment consists of occupational structure, economic conditions, and cultural conditions. Personal attributes focus on academic ability, self-image, personal values, benefits sought, personality/lifestyle, and other abilities.

Litten has been successful at: 1) creating a model that shows how the educational decision making process is undertaken and how it is different for different groups of people; 2) suggesting admissions and recruitment procedures for specifying student populations by selecting as segmentation variables: race, gender, ability level, parents' educational levels, and geographic location; and 3) providing sufficient detail on the variables included in each factor so that enrollment policies that may affect the college-going rates in postsecondary institutions may be developed.

For the purposes of my study, the limitation of this model is that Litten does not consider and explore the possibility and probability that the factors offered in this paradigm may have a different effect on community college students.
Gregory A. Jackson (1984)

Preference, exclusion, and evaluation are the three phases in Jackson's "Combined Model of College Choice" (Figure 2). Jackson has emphasized classifications of factors which focus on the interrelationships of variables which influence the college choices of students. The first phase, preference, emphasizes the sociological processes of college choice, while the exclusion and evaluation phases accentuate the econometric aspects of choice.

In the preference stage, three sets of variables are correlated with high school students' educational and occupational aspirations. The strongest correlate is academic achievement. The next in strength is social context, which includes the school, the neighborhood and the student's peers. The final correlate to students' aspirations is family background.

Two things are noteworthy about Jackson's Combined Student Choice Model. First, in order to inform the design of enrollment strategies, Jackson ranks the effects of different variables found in the general three-stage model of student college choice (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith,
Figure 2: Jackson's (1982) "Combined Student Choice Model"
1989). Second, a major purpose of this model was to begin assessing and evaluating typical methods for influencing enrollment.

On the other hand, two shortcomings are evident. First, unlike Litten's (1982) model, Jackson does not detail specific variables within each broad variable category, so it would be difficult for enrollment managers who use this model to tailor policies specifically for students affected by the unmentioned subcategories within each variable grouping. Second, in considering my interests, like Litten, Jackson does not appraise the issues that may influence students at two-year college.

Hossler and Gallagher (1987)

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) propose a "Three Phase Model of College Choice" (Figure 3) using as a foundation the work of Jackson (1982), Litten (1982), and R. Chapman (1984). *Predisposition*, the first stage of this student college choice paradigm, is defined by the authors as the "developmental phase in which students determine whether or not they would like to continue their formal education beyond high school" (p. 209). For those students who are predisposed to furthering their education at a college or university, stage two, the *search* phase, is the period during
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Figure 3: Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) "Three Phase Model of College Choice"
which students gather information about institutions of higher learning. In the choice stage, the third phase, students decide which college or university they will attend.

In the predisposition phase of this interactive model, three categories of individual factors are advanced along with organizational factors. The individual factors include student characteristics, significant others, and educational activities. The organizational factor is school/college characteristics. In addition to the general three phase model of college choice, Hossler and Gallagher provide paradigms for each stage within the general model. The Model of Predisposition is reviewed in the next section.

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) developmental model suggests individual factors which affect college choice, as well as, organizational factors. Additionally, this model uncovers possible research implications for institutional, state, and federal policymakers who are charged with tracking and/or monitoring fluctuating enrollment patterns at postsecondary institutions.

One of the things that this model does not address, however, is what impact, if any, do these individual and organizational factors have on the
students enrolled in junior colleges. The question still remains, do the factors that Hossler and Gallagher suggest affect the educational decisions of high school students, also influence the college transfer plans of community college consumers?

**College Choice Models of Predisposition**

In the existing literature on the college choice process, limited attention is given to the initial predisposition stage. In this section, I look at three models that emphasize the originating phase of the student choice process. Hossler and Gallagher (1987), Nora and Rendon (1990), and Hossler and Stage (1992) are evaluated.

**Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) Phase One: Predisposition Model**

In Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) directional, linear representation of predisposition (Figure 4), student characteristics are the commencing variables. Included as student characteristics are socioeconomic status (SES) and student ability and achievement. From the variable student characteristics, lines flow to each of the following factors: significant others, educational activities, and school/college characteristics; and from each of these characteristics, lines lead to the node that represents
Figure 4: Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) "Predisposition Model"
predisposition toward attendance. Significant others include the attitudes of parents and peers and the effect that these attitudes have on students' enrollment decisions. Hossler and Gallagher and other researchers gave specific attention to parental encouragement. Conklin and Dailey (1981) found that a positive linear the amount of parental encouragement students receive to attend college and their subsequent postsecondary plan.

Educational activities consist of involvement in extracurricular, precollegiate experiences. For example, previous research (Hearn, 1984; Willingham, 1970; Austin, 1985; Pace, 1984, cited by Hossler and Gallagher) has shown that involvement in student government associations, debate teams, drama clubs, and other student organizations is positively related to attending a college or university and has an effect on students' educational predisposition.

School/College characteristics refer to the organizational attributes of high schools and colleges that influence predisposition. High school quality and college proximity are examples of the characteristics that affect predisposition.
As discussed in the model review section, in addition to individual factors, Hossler and Gallagher provide an explanation of the organizational factors which affect college choice, an aspect that was overlooked by researchers who previously studied the educational decisions of secondary students. Their model of predisposition uncovers possible research implications for understanding what factors influence students' academic choices. As a result, institutional, state, and federal policymakers are more knowledgeable, and thus better equipped to chart and enhance enrollment figures at their respective higher education institutions.

Conklin and Dailey (1981) determined that as the amount of parental encouragement rises, students seem to be more likely to attend a four-year selective college as opposed to a two-year institution or non-selective four-year campus. This finding suggests that certain factors which have been found by previous researchers to influence high school students' predisposition to attend college, may affect students who select two-year institutions differently. Hossler and Gallagher did not question and/or further investigate along this line of reasoning to determine if the factors that are posited to affect the college choice plans of students at
baccalaureate institutions also have an impact on the ambitions of students who choose community colleges.

Hossler and Stage's (1992) Theoretical Model of High School Students' Predisposition to College

Drawing on the literature of student college choice and the work of sociologists who studied status attainment, Hossler and Stage developed and tested a theoretical model of predisposition to attend college (Figure 5). In the model, four boxes represent the five variable categories which the authors posit will have a direct or indirect effect on student predisposition. They are: socioeconomic variables; demographic characteristics; parental/peer expectations and encouragement; and ability and high school experiences.

The socioeconomic variable (SES), which includes family income, was positioned to have a direct and indirect effect on the criterion variable, student predisposition. SES was considered to affect student predisposition through the parental/peer expectations and encouragement, and the ability and high school experiences variables.
Figure 5: Hossler and Stage's (1992) "Theoretical Model of High School Students' Predisposition to College"
Demographic characteristics include family background features such as ethnicity, gender, and parents' educational level. Family background characteristics were presumed (1) to influence levels of parental/peer expectations and encouragement, student ability, and degree of involvement in high school activities, as well as (2) directly affect the educational plans of students. Additionally, these constructs were also expected to be the path through which demographic characteristics indirectly influenced students' ambitions. Finally, the student's ability (GPA) and high school experiences (grades and activities), and parental/peer expectations and encouragement were each believed to have a direct impact on students' academic decisions.

Focusing on the role of parental encouragement and expectations in the formation of future educational goals, these researchers produced and tested a causal model which provides a useful framework for studying college choice. Their results also have implications for policymakers who are faced with the challenge of improving postsecondary attendance rates. Finally, enrollment managers can use the information generated from this
research to devise marketing strategies and target viable college-going populations.

Although this model is widely cited and ascribed to, Hossler and Stage recognize that it is not without limitations. For example, they indicate that "whether the same factors are as important and interact in similar patterns among Black, Hispanic and other ethnic groups is not known.... More research on the college choice for other ethnic groups is needed" (p. 446). Even though this model was designed to test predisposition to attend college in ninth-graders, an expansion of this model to include the factors that affect community college students' educational plans would greatly enhance the literature. Hossler and Stage did not attempt to include this segment of the population. Nonetheless, because the results from this research corroborate many previous findings, the utility of the Hossler and Stage model could be further explored to include other ethnic classifications, upperclass students, and community college attendees. An expansion to include students in two-year colleges is investigated in this work.
Nora and Rendon's (1990) Causal Model of Determinants of Predisposition to Transfer Among Community College Students

Nora and Rendon (1990) attempted to address predisposition issues with respect to students in two-year colleges. The purpose of their study was "to determine how community college student background characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes exhibited during community college enrollment influenced student predisposition to transfer" (p.239). In their work, these authors replicated Tinto's (1975) Model of Social Integration using a community college student population on which to test student predisposition to transfer (Figure 6), the dependent variable. Student background factors, initial commitments, social integration, academic integration, and predisposition to transfer, were examined for structural relationships.

Student background factors included high school grades, parents' educational attainment, encouragement of significant others, and ethnicity. These factors were examined to determine their direct and indirect effects on community college students' predisposition to transfer. These factors were also believed to have been influenced by the direct and indirect effects of initial commitments, social integration, and academic integration;
Nora and Rendon's (1990) Causal Model of Determinants of Predisposition to Transfer Among Community College Students

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Figure 6: Nora and Rendon's (1990) Causal Model of "Determinants of Predisposition to Transfer Among Community College Students"
number of four-year institutions to which students planned to apply for
transfer; transfer behavior; and transfer perceptions.

Initial commitments were measured by assessing the importance that
students attached to achieving their educational goals and to attending their
selected institution. Initial commitments not only had a direct effect on
predisposition to transfer, but it also had an indirect effect on educational
plans through academic and social integration.

Social integration factors consisted of faculty contact outside class,
involvement in extracurricular activities, informal conversations with
faculty, participation in freshman orientation, reading the college
newspaper, and looking at the bulletin board for announcements and
special activities. Influenced by initial commitments, social integration was
posited to have a direct effect on students' predisposition to transfer.

Four multiple indicators encompassed academic integration:
academic perceptions, perceptions of transfer, behavior counseling, and
academic behavior. Like social integration, academic integration was
posited to have a direct impact on transfer behavior, transfer attitudes, and
planning behavior, the three multiple indicators that comprised the dependent variable, predisposition to transfer.

With a dearth of information on the educational plans of the community college population, this study is an important step in addressing the problem of transfer in the junior college community, particularly for African-American students. Nora and Rendon maintain "studies that explain the educational experience of students as they flow through the community college must be considered important not only to understand what is happening to students in this sector but to use the research findings to affect practice and policy (p. 250).

A limitation of the Nora and Rendon study is that the authors confine their ethnic comparisons to Hispanic and White students, even though African American students comprise 40.1% of the total population of students of color and Hispanics make up 36.3% of that same population (American Association of Community Colleges, 1995). This does not allow the researchers to correlate the data using a variety of ethnic classifications nor does it permit them to compare and contrast across racial groups.
Further, a limitation cited by previous researchers (Carbrera, Castaneda, Nora & Hengstler, 1992; Bean, 1985) with Tinto's (1975) model is also a limitation with this work. The missing link in this theory is the role of external factors in shaping commitments, perceptions, ambitions and preferences of students to be predisposed to transfer.

Additionally, this paradigm has some latent factors that are not clearly understood without reading the accompanying text. For example, the four initiating constructs, parents' educational attainment, high school grades, encouragement by others and ethnic origin, are considered student background factors, but nowhere on the figure is this indicated (see figure 6). Just as the authors described what comprises each of the other variables, student background factors should have been clearly explained in the model and/or assigned a node from which lines would flow to its components.

Finally, a model of predisposition, such as this one that utilizes literature embedded in student attrition, retention, and/or persistence studies as a theoretical framework, can offer useful information, but it may also lack some of the longitudinal, developmental progressions that are
characteristic of paradigms born out of the college choice literature. These authors do not place this model within the college choice process nor do they allude to the duplicative nature of the predisposition phase of the decision making stratagem for community college students.

In this study, I address these issues, discuss the relationships to be studied, offer a criteria for selecting variables which are identified as correlates of predisposition, examine the hypotheses that were presented in Chapter I and offer two hypothesized models which have implications for expanding the body of available information on the college choice decision making process, generally, and on the predisposition phase, specifically, by examining the duplicated process in which community college students are engaged.

**Relationships to be Studied**

Several variables have been identified as correlates of predisposition. In this study, I include variables which met one of the following criteria:

1. The variable has been previously shown to have a strong positive correlation with predisposition; or
2. The variable is specifically applicable to high school or community college students; or

3. The variable has been theorized as a correlate of predisposition by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) or Hossler and Stage (1992).

The variables previously shown to have a strong positive correlation with predisposition are: *socioeconomic status (SES)* (Ekstrom, 1985; Hossler and Stage, 1992; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Tuttle, 1981; Hossler, Braxton, Coopersmith, 1989; Lee and Frank, 1990); *parents' educational level* (Hossler and Stage, 1987; Jackson, 1986; Manski and Wise, 1983; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Trent and Medsker, 1967); *student ability and accomplishments* (Hossler and Stage, 1992; Jackson, 1986; Litten, 1982; Manski and Wise, 1983; Maxwell, 1992); *parental/significant others' encouragement and expectations* (Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987; Hossler and Stage, 1988 and 1992; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Smith and Bers, 1990; Murphy, 1980); *students' personal educational expectation and aspirations* (student plans and aspirations) (Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987; Jackson, 1978; Trent and Medsker, 1968; Hossler and Stage, 1988); and *involvement in school activities* (Austin, 1985; Otto, 1976; Spady, 1975; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Hossler and Stage, 1992).
Three additional variables (age, race and gender) are also included in this research. In recent years, many studies either have been criticized for not including these variables or have suggested that future research factor these variables into the equations.

Further, for community college students these variables may be particularly telling since according to the American Association of Community Colleges, (1) 58% of the two-year college population is comprised of women; (2) the mean age of junior college students is 29; and (3) of all ethnic minorities enrolled in higher education in the U.S., the majority are matriculating at community colleges. This is particularly true of African Americans.

Each of these variables (including the three additional ones) satisfies at least one of the three criteria previously mentioned. In the following section, I provide definitions and in-depth examinations of each correlate of predisposition which was presented in the Hypotheses to be Tested section of Chapter I.
Correlates of Predisposition

Hypothesis 1: As socioeconomic status increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

In this work, I use family income level as a proxy for socioeconomic status (SES). Previous research (Tuttle, 1981; Sewell et al., 1972; Ekstrom, 1985) has found that SES is positively correlated with predisposition. Using the data from the 1980 High School and Beyond study (HSB), Tuttle (1981) found that SES accounted for 6.8% of the explained variance in his study. He also found that SES had an indirect effect on predisposition when influenced by student ability and achievement. Additionally, Stage and Hossler (1989) report that the impact of socioeconomic status on predisposition may differ for males and females.

Hypothesis 2: As the parent education increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

The combined educational level of the student’s mother and father are categorized as parental educational level in this work. Several studies
(Manski and Wise, 1983; Jackson, 1986; Trent and Medsker, 1967; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Tuttle, 1981) have indicated that parents' educational level exerts a strong influence on predisposition.

In 1983, Manski and Wise compared the results of students whose parents had less than a high school education with students whose parents received a college degree or higher. Unsurprisingly, students whose parents had received a college education were more than twice as likely to be predisposed to apply to and to attend college.

Using a sampling of secondary school students from Indiana, Stage and Hossler (1989) determined that mother's level of education, when mediated through parental encouragement, had a positive indirect effect upon the academic decisions of male and female students, while father's educational level had both a positive direct and indirect effect on both students. The total effect for males was 8% and for females was 7%.

**Hypothesis 3:** As student academic achievement increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.
Previous research has defined student ability operationally as class rank, SAT or ACT score, and/or student grade point average (GPA). Jackson (1982), Litten (1982), and Hossler and Gallagher (1987) suggest that even though class rank may have been computed when students are predisposed to continue their education, very few students are aware of what their rank actually is in their class. Further, the stage during which educational plans are explored generally occurs prior to scholastic testing. With this in mind, in this study, student ability and accomplishments are reflected by the student's GPA, which has been positively correlated with predisposition in the literature (Yang, 1991; Manski and Wise, 1983; Tuttle, 1981; Jackson, 1986), and will be referred to as student academic achievement.

Manski and Wise (1983) realized that SAT scores and high school GPAs were the best predictors of who would apply to college. Jackson (1986) found that grades explained 4.2% of the variance in postsecondary participation rates in the National Longitudinal Study of 1972 (NLS) sample and 7.9% of the variance reported in the 1980 High School and Beyond (HSB) data. In 1987, Carpenter and Fleishman discovered that
student ability and academic achievement had a direct effect on postsecondary attendance.

Hypothesis 4: As the parents and significant others expectations and encouragement increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

Overwhelmingly, the parental influence variable seemed to be the greatest predictor of predisposition to attend college. In the postsecondary plans of Indiana ninth graders, the largest amount of variance, 18.2%, accounted for in the population was attributed to parental encouragement (Hossler and Stage, 1988). Other authors have made similar observations.

In 1968, Sewell and Shaw found that parental encouragement was a stronger influential factor that SES or student ability in predicting educational plans and explained 37% of the variance in higher educational ambitions of students.

Conklin and Dailey (1981) found that as parental encouragement increased, students were more likely to attend four-year institutions or more selective postsecondary colleges and universities. As parental
encouragement decreased, students were more likely to select and attend community colleges or technical schools.

Other researchers (Jackson, 1986; Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987) have found that a relationship exists between predisposition and the level of support and encouragement received from significant others (friends, peers and, in the case of some nontraditional-age community college students, spouses or partners). In this work, parental encouragement is coupled with expectations of significant others, and referred to as expectations and encouragement of parents and significant others. This variable is defined operationally as the parents' level of expectation concerning their children's educational plans and/or the amount of support and encouragement the student receives from significant others.

**Hypothesis 5:** As students' personal educational expectations and aspirations increase, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

Students' personal educational expectations and aspirations are those unique characteristics that appear to be inextricably tied to and/or influenced by other background characteristics, such as SES, students'
ability and achievement, and the expectations that parents have for the student (Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987; Hossler and Stage, 1988; Bouse and Hossler, 1991).

Previous research on college choice, specifically the predisposition stage, suggests that there is a positive relationship between the educational expectations of students and predisposition to attend a postsecondary institution (Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987; Jackson, 1978; Trent and Medsker, 1968). Here, students' personal educational expectations and aspirations are defined in the student's personal level of expectation and aspiration concerning their postsecondary educational plans.

Hypothesis 6: As the involvement in college activities increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

In both status attainment and college choice literature, the construct "involvement in high school activities" has been posited to correlate with students' predisposition. In the status attainment literature, involvement or social integration is believed to have a significant impact on students' predisposition (Tinto, 1987; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Bean, 1980).
In the college choice literature, Hossler and Stage (1988) revealed that the third best predictor of predisposition was involvement in high school activities. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) speculated that involvement in school activities has an effect on predisposition. In 1984, Hearn discovered that students who take an active role in student government, on debate teams, in drama clubs and in journalism activities tend to select and attend more selective institutions.

Involvement in college activities, herein referred to as student involvement, is defined as the number of extra-curricular activities in which community college students are involved and the student’s level of participation in those activities.

Hypothesis 7: Female students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than male students.

The reported effect of gender on predisposition has been nebulous at best. Two Australian studies, (Elsworth, 1982; Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987) found that gender had no impact on the higher education ambitions and choices of postsecondary students. Coming to a similar conclusion,
Tuttle (1981) deleted gender from his path model because it was not a significant correlate.

Conversely, Hossler and Stage (1987) and Stage and Hossler (1989) found that women considered going to postsecondary educational institutions more than their male counterparts, but received less family support and encouragement. Even given this fact, more women are enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions than men (Digest of Educational Statistics, 1994). The American Association of Community Colleges reported in their National Profile (1995) that women represented 58% of the 1992 Fall headcount enrollment at community colleges. Using the correlates above, in this work I increase our understanding of what affect gender differences has on predisposition.

Hypothesis 8: Black students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than will white students.

Like gender, the impact of ethnicity and race upon postsecondary plans has yielded contradictory results. Tuttle (1981) and Ekstrom (1985) discovered that race had very little or no effect on postsecondary ambitions
when student ability and SES were held constant. Manski and Wise (1983), using the NLS data, found trends among minority students, particularly African Americans similar to those found by Jackson (1986), who used data from both NLS and HSB.

Using the same data sets, Brown (1982) discovered that the number of African American students aspiring to attend two- and four-year institutions had actually increased between 1972 and 1980. The problem is that fewer African American students are actually attending college. Hanson's (1994) findings support Brown's and she categorized those students who do not follow through with their academic plans as "lost talent."

Bateman and Hossler (1996) concluded that research in this area of ethnicity concerning postsecondary educational plans is critical. They explain that current, emerging research efforts have sought to understand the enrollment decisions (McDonough and Antonio, 1995) and postsecondary educational attainment (Wolfe, 1985) of African American students, but few studies have compared the development of postsecondary educational plans among white and African American students.
Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith (1989) maintain that "current evidence suggests that any correlation between race and predisposition is the result of other background variables, such as SES, which may be associated with race" (p. 254). In this research, I clarify this concern by using the explained correlates to investigate the role ethnicity plays with respect to predisposition.

**Hypothesis 9:** Nontraditional-age students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than will traditional-age students.

Generally, college choice literature has investigated the postsecondary educational plans of high school students. For the most part, previous researchers have looked at the aspirations of traditional-age students who selected four-year institutions in which to continue the postsecondary matriculation.

Other authors (Anderson and Darkenwald, 1979; Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; Bean and Metzner, 1985; Bers and Smith, 1987; Bers and Smith, 1991; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Smith and Bers, 1989; and others) have examined the academic decisions of nontraditional-age
students and found that previous college choice findings are not likely to be applicable to these students. In this research, traditional-age students are those students who are between the ages of 18 and 24 and nontraditional-age students are 25 years of age or older.

Each of the constructs considered meets at least one of the previously mentioned criteria of this study. They are: socioeconomic status (SES); student ability and accomplishments, parental educational level, expectations and encouragement of parents and significant others, student involvement in school activities, race, age, and gender. The hypotheses above have been examined and reviewed in detail and each of these correlates has been defined in an effort to build an expanded causal paradigm from Hossler and Stage's (1992) theoretical model of high school students' predisposition to college.

In examining the hypotheses to be tested, I have intentionally explored each variable using information previously cited by researchers to be correlated with the educational plans of high school students to see if these factors have the same or a similar effect on community college
students' level of predisposition to transfer. Through this examination, I addressed research question 6 and tested hypothesis 10:

Research Question 6: How adequately does an expanded version of the Hossler and Stage (1992) predisposition model of college choice classify community college students with respect to their predisposition to transfer to four-year institutions?

Hypothesis 10: The explanatory power of the expanded Hossler and Stage predisposition model for community college students will be statistically significant overall.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) model of college choice and the Hossler and Stage (1992) model of predisposition to college. These models look at college choice, particularly the predisposition phase, as a sociological process. Variables have been identified in this process which are likely to influence students during their decision making process as they attempt to determine whether to continue their education past high school.

This study proposes two theoretical models: (1) a dual model of college choice which includes both college-going student populations, high school students and community college students; and (2) a duplicative
college choice model of students' predisposition to further their education, which includes factors that influence high school students' educational plans to attend a two- or four-year college or university and includes the variables that affect community college students' predisposition to transfer to baccalaureate institutions. These components have been omitted in previous research on the subject.

A Dual Model of College Choice

Figure 7 suggests a general model of college choice, which includes both of the college-going student populations. Expanding on the three phase model that Hossler and Gallagher (1987) offered, this developmental model incorporates the individual and organizational factors that interact to produce outcomes for community college students.

In this rendition, there are still three model dimensions: predisposition, search and choice. The involved dimensions, influential factors, and categorical definitions found in high school students' college choice processes in this model are consistent with those presented by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and thus, will not be restated; however, the
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**Figure 7:** Smith-Vosper's Hypothesized Model of College Choice for High School and Community College Students
additional dimensions that address the community college matriculant are explained.

Predisposition is the step of the student college choice process wherein high school students determine if they will continue their formal education after high school and/or community college students decide whether to continue their formal education beyond the two-year college (with or without having earned an associate degree). The previously stated individual factors that researchers found to be correlated with predisposition are identified in the predisposition model detailed below.

Bers and Smith (1987) provide preliminary findings which suggest that two-year college students conduct less intensive searches and often collapse the stages of search and choice into one step: deciding to continue on to a four-year college and deciding on a particular college or university at the same time. For the community college students that are the exception to this finding, the search step entails gathering or reviewing previously collected information about baccalaureate institutions.

Search is the phase in the college choice process during which the most interaction occurs between colleges and universities and potential
consumers. It is during this stage that students form what Jackson (1982) termed a "choice set" (p. 239), a group of institutions to which students actually apply. I submit that for the community college student, search activities consist of developing a transfer set. These may be four-year institutions that the student considered before selecting the two-year college in which they actually matriculated or other institutions that now appeal to the more mature student and offer them the best fit.

In 1987, Hossler and Gallagher cited the 1981 observation of D. Chapman which suggested that "communication strategies that colleges use to search for potential students has an impact on the search phase.... Thus, at the same time students are searching for institutions, institutions are searching for students" (p. 213). This information now has more far reaching consequences for recruitment and admissions managers who are faced with the responsibility of obtaining the desirable enrollment statistics. These administrators may need to re-evaluate their university search activities and direct a greater portion of their university recruitment resources toward students in two-year colleges.
In the final phase, choice, the student evaluates the institutions identified in the transfer set, narrows the set, and selects the university into which he or she will transfer.

A Duplicative College Choice Model of Secondary and Community College Students' Predisposition to Further their Education

Figure 8 presents a model of the initial stage of college choice. This model looks at the variables that were presented by Hossler and Stage (1992) to be correlated with predisposition. The model includes SES, student ability and accomplishments, parental encouragement and expectation, family background characteristics and involvement in school activities as the independent variables, and predisposition as the dependent variable.

Lines flowing from one independent variable, through another one, and then to predisposition suggest that there is an indirect relationship between the initial variable and predisposition, mediated by the intermediate variable. Variables with lines flowing straight to predisposition suggest a direct relationship between the two. The hypothesis is that each independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable, predisposition.
Figure 8: Smith-Vosper's Duplicative College Choice Model of Secondary and Community College Students' Predisposition to Further Their Education
This model further suggests that once a high school student has progressed through the *initial predisposition phase*, searched for possible colleges and universities, made the decision to attend a two year college, and matriculated, that student must then advance through a *duplicate predisposition phase* as a two-year college student and again precede to the search and choice (which consists of transferring - in this case) stages of the student choice process in order to select a four-year institution where they may further their education to the baccalaureate level and possibly beyond.

The addition of these two developmental models are important for several reasons. First, the dual college choice model identifies factors which influence the decision making process from a policy analysis perspective. Second, unlike the Nora and Rendon (1990) model, the paradigm of predisposition advanced here and the combined college choice model do what Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith (1980) suggest is "befitting the longitudinal nature of the college choice process." These models are "presented as sequential and as stages in the decision-making process" (p. 240). Third, the causal processes that previous authors have
discussed for secondary students generally may not apply to community college students for the following reasons:

a.) Current college choice literature almost exclusively focuses on traditional-age students. Kuh, Bean, Bradley, Coomes, and Hunter (1986, as cited by Bers and Smith, 1987) note that research carried out using traditional-age resident students may not apply to older or part time commuter students. According to the National Profile (AACC, 1995) the average age of community college student was approximately 29 years in 1992 and nearly 31% reported their age as over 30 years (p.25). Additionally, in 1992, nearly 63.6% were enrolled as part-time students (p. 23).

b.) Nontraditional-age students' reasons for attending college differ from those of their traditional-age counterparts. Aslanian and Brickell (1980) confirmed that the decisions of these students to attend college stemmed from life transitions, such as: a significant personal event (divorce, widowhood, children leaving home or going off to school) or a dramatic change at work (layoff, promotion, need for skill enhancement, preparation for a new career).
c.) The role of parental encouragement and/or the support of significant others varies for high school students and students at two-year colleges. Several researchers, including some of those cited earlier, have found that parental involvement is the greatest predictor of a student's predisposition to attend college. Researchers (Nora and Rendon, 1990; Smith, 1990; Smith and Bers, 1989) who investigate the decisions of community college students have found that parental encouragement also has a positive effect on the decisions of this population. However, Smith (1990) found that parental involvement in the college choice process of community college students affected traditional- and nontraditional-age students differently. Fifty-two percent of younger community college students reported that the selection of the community college came as the result of a parent’s suggestion, while only three percent of older students were influenced by the suggestion of their parents. For these older students the greatest influence came from significant others (peers, friends and, in fewer cases, spouses).
Summary

Although this study focuses on predisposition, it is critical that educational researchers and students clearly understand the broader issue of college choice. Further, it is important that the college choice process take into consideration one of the most rapidly growing segments in the college-going population: community college matriculants. Hossler (1985) noted that there is preliminary evidence to suggest that two- and four-year college entrants may be different. Additionally, he indicated that these differences have not been fully investigated. Specific differences such as those that exist between traditional- and nontraditional-age students, for example, have not been adequately explored.

This review supports the modification of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three phase model of college choice and the expansion of Hossler and Stage's (1992) model of high school students' predisposition to college. The variables that met the criteria set forth in this part and that are included in this study are: socioeconomic status (SES), student ability and accomplishments, expectations and encouragement of parents and significant others, the students' personal educational expectation, parents'
education level, student involvement in school activities, gender, ethnicity and age. Additionally, literature on college choice, specifically on predisposition, is devoid of studies that include these variables in examining the community college student population, which are segmented by gender and race. Accordingly, this study adds to the current body of literature relevant to college choice and the predisposition stage of that process.

In Chapter III, Research Methodology, I discuss the procedures which were employed and the research methodology.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Overview and Introduction

College choice, specifically the predisposition phase, is accepted by educational researchers as an intricate procedure in students' development of educational plans. This process is complex because the variables that impact on these plans vary from student to student. For the purposes of this study, I triangulated the data that was collected by employing a mixed methodology (both quantitative and qualitative research methods).

In the quantitative phase, I gathered information about methods of data collection and statistical procedures involved in the study. In the initial section, I describe the population from which the subjects were drawn and the sampling procedures that were utilized. Then, I describe the research design, instrumentation, and the analysis strategy and procedures.

In the qualitative section, I explain which qualitative techniques were employed in this study and why. I discuss the sampling procedures used to get information-rich cases, and the validity and reliability of the instrumentation. Then, I detail the data collection procedures and data
analysis process that was utilized. Finally, I offered justification for employing methodological triangulation.

**The Research Design**

Educational research has its roots in the conventional, quantitative or positivistic paradigm that originated in the psychological and behavioral sciences. Using this quantitative or deductive model, researchers posit what they believe will occur and test this hypothesis to determine if it is supported by data. Patton (1990) described this method as one that “requires the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned” (p. 14). He further explains that the advantage with a quantitative approach is that it is possible to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions which gives a broad generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously.

In the last two decades, another research model has emerged and has received attention from educational researchers. Postpositivistic research, also referred to as naturalistic, interpretive, case study or qualitative
research, is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as multi-method in its focus, which means that qualitative researchers study people, situations and/or events in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to study particular issues in depth and detail. Patton (1990) points out that, in contrast to positivistic methods, postpositivistic methods produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases, which increases understanding but reduces generalizability.

Patton further suggests that “because qualitative and quantitative methods involve differing strengths and weaknesses, they constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive strategies for research” (p.14). With this in mind, I utilize a combination of these methods, known as triangulation.

There are four broad categories of triangulation: 1) data triangulation, which is the use of a variety of data sources in a study; 2) investigator triangulation, which is the use of several different researchers and evaluators; 3) theory triangulation, which is the use of multiple
perspectives to interpret a single set of data; and 4) methodological
triangulation or the use of multiple methods to study a single problem or
program (Denzin, 1987b, as cited by Patton, 1990).

For the purpose of this research study, I utilized methodological
triangulation in an attempt to add validity and credibility to the results of
this study. The application of both qualitative and quantitative methods
results in a study that has both breadth and depth.

Quantitative

Research Design

The information in the quantitative section of this chapter is based
on a correlational research design. Correlational research is a type of
investigation in which researchers seek to explore the direction and
magnitude of relationships among variables through the use of correlational
statistics (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). These studies can be either predictive
or relational. Relationship studies can be used to “gain a better
understanding of factors that contribute to make up a more complex
characteristic” (Borg, 1987, p.191). Further, the correlational method
permits the researcher to examine how several variables, either individually
or in combination, might affect certain behavior. All correlational statistics reported in this study were computed with the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

**Sampling Technique**

Sampling is defined by Gall, Borg & Gall (1996) as “the process of selecting members of a research sample from a defined population, usually with the intent that the sample accurately represent that population” (p.769). “Nubian” Community College provided the sampling frame, a list of all members of the accessible population. Students enrolled in community colleges during the spring 1997 term make up the target population. These students are of interest in this study and are those to whom these results are generalized.

The Louisiana Board of Regents indicates that there are seven existing public two-year colleges in the state of Louisiana and a host of others scheduled for opening in the near future. Of the existing ones: (1) three are branch campuses of either the predominately white or historically black university systems; (2) one was born out of a technical-vocational school; (3) one is not expected to open its doors until Fall 1998 or
sometime thereafter; and (4) one was considered the 13th and 14th grades and was governed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, but has recently moved under higher education governance.

“Nubian” Community College (Nubian) is a comprehensive community college; therefore, it provided the experimentally accessible population, all students enrolled at Nubian Community College. Additionally, Nubian was selected because this accessible population: 1) appears to represent a cross section of the state’s population, unlike the other two-year colleges in the state; and 2) is consistent with and reflects the composition of the target population for this study. This latter reason is important in establishing population validity. If the data illustrate that the accessible population is closely analogous to the target population on the variables that are most relevant to the research, then population validity is established. Additionally, since Nubian reflects the composition of the target population and its population is consistent with other urban community colleges of its size, it was easier to generalize these findings to the broader population.
In selecting the sample, surveys were given to students who participated in on-campus registration during the spring 1997 term. The generalizability of the sample is then the extent to which students that participated in on-campus registration during the spring 1997 term are representative of the entire accessible population, but is limited to the extent that students failed to participate or cooperate with the survey effort. According to the Registrar's Office and the Office of Institutional Research the students who participated and those who did not participate were not drastically different from each other. Thus, the sample is representative of the population.

Instrumentation

For the quantitative portion of this study, an instrument I designed was used (Appendix A). The survey design was based on: a) the characteristics of postsecondary educational plans that were included in this study, and b) the factors that are posited to affect postsecondary aspirations as revealed from the review of the literature.

In the first part of the survey, I gathered information about the students' personal and family demographics. The initial item, gender was
coded as male=0 and female=1. The ethnicity variable was originally
coded as 1=Black, 2=Asian, 3=Native American, 4=White, 5=Hispanic,
and 6=I choose not to indicate. Since this study looks at only the
educational plans of Black and White students the other ethnic groups were
purged and the new codes were as follows: 0=White and 1=Black.

Items three and four requested the number of years completed in
school by students' father and mother, respectively. In combination, these
items comprise the variable, parental educational level. They were coded
from two to 20, with two representing 0 years of school completed and 20
representing the Doctorate or other terminal degree.

In this section students were also asked to disclose the combined
income level of their parents or guardians. The ranges were: 1=$12,000 or
less; 2=$12,001 - $21,000; 3=$21,001 - $40,000; 4=$40,001 - $70,000;
5=$70,001 - $100,000; and 6=over 100,000.

With the last item in this section, I asked the students to identify
their age category from one of the following groupings: 1=17 - 19 years;
2=20 - 24 years; 3=25 - 29 years; 4=30 - 39 years; 5=40 - 49 years; 6=50 -
59 years; 7=60 - 69 years; 8=70 years; and other - Specify was coded as 9=missing.

The second section contained three questions. With the first I asked the respondents to indicate the level of educational attainment their parents expect of them. No expectation/encouragement = 0 and the final selection Doctorate or other terminal degree = 9. The second question had two parts. The first part required the respondents to indicate the level of educational expectation that they had for themselves. The choices ranged from Trade School = 1 to Doctorate or other terminal degree = 8. Next, the participants were asked to indicate whether they were more motivated to transfer now than when they first enrolled. With the third question I asked the surveyees to indicate their future educational plans with respect to transfer. The original coding was reflected by 0 = no plans to transfer up to 5 = transfer beyond five years. For the purposes of this study, the variable TRANSFER was re-coded to show that no plans to transfer = 0 and any plans to transfer (2-5) = 1.

In Part III of the survey I asked questions relative to the students’ community college involvement, preparation, performance and ability. For
the variable representing involvement in activities, students’ responses were coded with a 1 if the students were involved in activities and a 0 if they were not active. For the GPA item, the codes ranged from 3.5 - 4.0 = 7 to less than 1.0 = 1.

The next part of the instrument addressed the level of support and encouragement the student received from his or her parents and/or significant others. In this section of the questionnaire, the students were asked to indicate the level of support or encouragement they received from their parents/significant others by assigning a value (3 - “very supportive and encouraging,” 2 - “somewhat supportive and encouraging,” or 1 - “not supportive or encouraging at all”) to each person identified in that item. An “other” category was provided for students to rate someone not included in the existing list.

In the final part, the respondents had an opportunity to provide personal information so that they could be contacted to participate in a voluntary follow-up focus group interview. The resulting instrument consisted of 17 primary items and one item included for the voluntary personal disclosure and contact information.
Reliability and Validity

Reliability is the extent to which something is dependable. In other words, does it do what it is supposed to do? In educational research, reliability refers to the survey instrument. In preparing this instrument, I asked: 1) Will I be able to depend on this questionnaire to address the questions I ask about postsecondary aspirations? 2) Will other researchers be able to depend or rely on this survey? 3) Will this instrument remain dependable over time? These questions guided the development of the survey instrument.

Gall, Borg & Gall (1996) suggest that an instrument be put to a thorough pre-test prior to using it in a study. Further, the pre-test form of the questionnaire should be designed in such a way that respondents have space to make comments, criticisms and/or recommendations.

In addition to being reliable, a research instrument must also be valid. The 1985 *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* defines validity as the “appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores” (as cited by Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p.249). There are several types of research validity. One
concern in this work was face validity, the degree to which this survey tests items to determine whether they cover the content that the survey purports to measure, or the appearance of the survey.

To satisfy the issue of instrument validity, during Fall 1996, I gave a version of the survey to students in graduate classes in the Department of Administrative and Foundational Services at Louisiana State University and to administrators at a local community college and at the research site to check the clarity of the instrument before it was actually administered. Further, since self-reports were included on the questionnaire, there were potential threats to the validity of the instrument. In an attempt to reduce this threat, methodological triangulation was employed.

Operational Definitions and Tests of Hypotheses

For Hypothesis 1, socioeconomic level (SES) was measured by family income level and was assessed through a bivariate correlation analysis of the relationship between SES and predisposition to transfer for community college students. Item five on the survey instrument provided the data to determine the family income level. Respondents selected from
six categories, with 1 indicating $12,000.00 or less to 6 indicating over $100,000.00.

For Hypothesis 2, parent education (PAREDUC) was determined by the combined education levels of the students’ parents or guardians. Items three and four of the instrument were used to determine the parental educational level, and the possible responses to the questions range from one to eight years to completion of a doctorate or other terminal degree. I tested this variable by using a bivariate correlation analysis of the relationship between PAREDUC and predisposition to transfer for community college students.

For Hypothesis 3, student academic achievement (GPA) was measured by each students’ grade point average, and questionnaire item 13 provided this data. This hypothesis was assessed through a bivariate correlation analysis of the relationship between GPA and predisposition to transfer for community college students.

For Hypothesis 4, level of expectation and encouragement of parents/significant others (EXPECT 1) was defined by parents’ or guardians’ level of expectation concerning the student’s educational plans.
or the level of expectation which students received from their significant others. Question eight addressed this variable. For this item, students indicated the educational level which their parents/guardians or significant others expected them to complete. By using a bivariate correlation analysis, the relationship between EXPECT 1 and predisposition to transfer for community college students was measured.

For Hypothesis 5, students' personal educational expectation/aspiration (EXPECT 2) was operationally defined as the level of expectation each student had concerning his or her educational plans/aspirations. Question nine addressed this variable. Students' choices ranged from 1 = Trade School to eight = Doctorate or other terminal degree. The relationship between EXPECT 2 and predisposition to transfer for community college students was assessed through a bivariate correlation analysis.

For Hypothesis 6, involvement in college activities (ACTIVITY) was operationally defined as the number of extra-curricular activities in which the student is involved and the student's level of participation in those activities. Items 11 and 12 requests that the
respondents indicate the activities in which they were involved and the honors or awards that they had received. The relationship between ACTIVITY and predisposition to transfer for community college students was assessed through a bivariate correlation analysis.

For Hypothesis 7, gender (GENDER) was indicated in item one on the survey, and was assessed through a bivariate correlation analysis of the relationship between GENDER and predisposition to transfer for community college students.

For Hypothesis 8, ethnicity (RACE) was provided in question two on the instrument and was measured by a bivariate correlation analysis of the relationship between RACE and predisposition to transfer for community college students.

For Hypothesis 9, age (AGE) was reflected by the students’ response to item seven of the survey, and was assessed through a bivariate correlation analysis of the relationship between AGE and predisposition to transfer for community college students.

Data Collection

I began the data collection procedures for this study by researching the history of the institution through archival records. This included
written college accounts of its development, news articles, college
catalogues, campus maps, survey data collected by previous researchers,
etc.

The next step was to acquire documentation by contacting the
appropriate "gate-keeper" to first, get permission to conduct this study at
the college, and second to request the administrations' endorsement of this
project. The Vice President for Students Services was the contact person
at Nubian. From her, I requested a demographic listing of all the students
enrolled at Nubian. She arranged several opportunities for me to meet with
the Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the Institutional
Research Officer, the campus Registrar and any other college officials who
might be of assistance.

The Registrar and Director of Registration and I worked together
during the Spring 1997 registration process to facilitate the survey
administration process. Each student who was surveyed during registration
received a survey instrument, accompanied by a letter of transmittal from
me and a letter of cooperation from the Vice President. The students were
instructed and encouraged to complete the questionnaire and mail it in or
return it to the designated survey station in the registration arena. The
Registrar was asked to collect any surveys that were turned in after registration and I made arrangements to pick up those. The letter of request that I enclosed stressed the importance of obtaining accurate information in order to determine what factors affect community college students’ predisposition to transfer.

Several administrators at the research site warned me that students may be less likely to participate in the survey if the length of the instrument was “excessive”. I questioned exactly what was considered excessive for students at community colleges. I was told that a survey that was more than one to two pages was excessive. My instrument was four pages and there were also two attachments, for a total of six pages.

In an effort to minimize the number of pages that students would be given, I reduced the paper size of my letter such that two letters would fit on a single 8 ½ x 11 sheet. Stacks of the letter were placed on tables at the two survey sites, as well as in other strategic areas throughout the arena, so that students (or parents) who wanted to keep a copy of the letter for their files could have it. I also enlarged the Vice President’s letter and made several poster-size copies, which were displayed throughout the arena. Finally, the four page survey instrument was copied in booklet form on a
single 11 x 17 sheet. Of the 3,005 surveys that were disseminated 2,501 (83.2%) were completed and returned.

Data Analysis

To address hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4, the Pearson correlation was used. To address hypotheses 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, point biserial correlations were used. The assumptions associated with these procedures were examined and the t-test statistic was used as the statistical criterion with a statistical significance level of 0.05.

To address hypothesis 10, a hierarchical logistic regression procedure was used. Logistic regression provides the researcher with a means of predicting the probability of an event (e.g., transfer or not transfer to a four-year college) using multiple predictors. Additionally, this procedure provides information about the relative potency of various predictors as well as the overall ability of the model to classify subjects.

The hierarchical procedure utilized in this study involved entering the nine variables included in this analysis in sequence according to the conceptual model formulated in Chapter 2. The analyses focused on the patterns of significant relationships and the overall explanatory power of the model as additional predictors were added.
Descriptive Statistics - Means and Standard Deviations

For the independent variables (socioeconomic status, parental educational level, student academic ability and accomplishment, parental/significant others level of expectation and encouragement, students' personal educational expectation, ethnicity, gender, and age) and the dependent variable (predisposition to transfer) means, standard deviations and frequency counts were computed and measured by the force response items and presented.

Multivariate Correlational Statistics

Specifically, the Pearson correlation was used to address research questions one through five and hypotheses one through nine. Further, logistic regression procedures were employed to assess the fit of the model and to test each hypothesis that the simple correlation between each independent variable and predisposition to transfer. This test was conducted at significance (α) level 0.05.

Prior to conducting the analysis test, the assumption of the Pearson correlation procedure was checked and the data was inspected for outliers/ outliers, missing data, extreme values, etc.
Hierarchical Logistic Regression Procedures

Hierarchical logistic regression procedures were used to address research question six and hypothesis 10. Specifically, each variable was entered into the model, in sequential steps or stages, to predict predisposition to transfer. Then statistical analyses were computed to determine if there was a significant increase in the correlation.

The first step was to compute the correlation between the best predictor (SES) and the criterion variable (predisposition to transfer). This procedure yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R). In step two, the second independent variable (PAREDUC) was selected based on the likelihood that it improved the prediction made by the first variable. These two predictor variables together yielded a multiple correlation coefficient. In steps three, four, and five predictors were entered (GENDER, RACE, and AGE, respectively). The multiple correlation coefficient for each was reported. In step six, the variable EXPECT 1 was entered and yielded a multiple correlation coefficient. The independent variable, EXPECT 2, was introduced in step seven and the corresponding coefficient was yielded. The predictor variable GPA was introduced in step eight and the subsequent multiple correlation coefficient was reported. In the final step,
ACTIVITY was introduced and yielded a coefficient. The number of steps in the hierarchical logistic regression analysis equaled the number of independent variables. I performed a hierarchical regression consisting of a nine step analysis since there were nine predictors included in this study.

Although 2,501 students participated in the survey process, some wrote illegibly, marked more than one selection, and/or omitted questions altogether. In those instances, using the listwise deletion command, cases were eliminated if they contained a missing value on any variable in the list. Employing this command resulted in 1,438 useable cases.

Qualitative

Research Design

The qualitative aspect of this study consisted of focus group interviews. Patton (1990) explains that a focus group is an interview with a small group of people, usually six to eight (other researchers, like Krueger, 1988, maintain that focus groups are typically composed of seven to ten participants), who participate in the session for one to one and a half hours. “The participants are typically a relatively homogeneous group of people who are asked to reflect on the questions asked by the interviewer. The objective is to get high quality data in a social context where people
can consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (p.335). Furthermore, focus group interviews also provide some quality controls on data collection in that the participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other that weed out false and extreme views, while providing an enjoyable gathering for the participants (Patton, 1990).

**Sampling**

The participants for these interviews were selected using purposeful sampling techniques and their demographics as determined by the quantitative survey instrument. “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth” (Patton, 1990, p. 169, emphasis in the original). The specific strategy incorporated here was homogeneous sampling. In order to describe the particular subgroup in depth and to ensure that the group consisted of a cross section of the sample, extra efforts were made to include an ethnic, gender, and age mix. Additionally, the focus groups were conducted using the open-ended interview technique to add depth and detail to what resulted statistically.
Instrumentation: Reliability and Validity

Validity in quantitative research depends on a careful instrumentation process to guarantee that the instrument actually measures what it purports to measure. The quantitative instrument must be administered appropriately according to the standardized procedures that are established. In qualitative research, however, the researcher is the major information gatherer. Without predetermined expectations or opinions, the researcher studies cases, environments, and/or situations as they occur naturally. The credibility, reliability and validity of qualitative inquiry are especially dependent on the credibility of the researcher because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and the center of the analytical process (Patton, 1990). According to Patton (1990), the researcher must be trained and prepared intensively and rigorously in order to improve the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the findings. Thus, the reliability and validity of qualitative research depends heavily on the skill, competence and sensitivity of the one conducting the research study.

Data Collection

The field research for the qualitative phase of this study consisted of interviews. Specifically, the focus group interview was employed. Gall, et
al. (1996) describes the focus group interview as a process with “an interviewer and a group of research participants, who are free to talk with and influence each other in the process of sharing their ideas and perceptions about a defined topic” (p.760). The field work included four, one hour long focus group interview sessions. As recommended by previous researchers, each group consisted of five to seven participants (Borg, et al., 1996; Patton, 1990; Krueger, 1988) and no participant was interviewed more than once.

In selecting an interview instrumentation format, it is important that the interviewer never supply the phrases or categories that must be used by respondents to express themselves. “While there are variations in strategy concerning the extent to which the wording and sequencing of questions ought to be predetermined, there is no variation in the principle that the response format should be open-ended” (Patton, 1990). With this in mind, in this work, a combination of the informal conversational and the interview guide approach interview techniques was exercised. These two forms were selected because their combined strengths increased the salience and relevance of questions and facilitated organization and analysis of data, while helping to reduce interviewer effects and bias.
Data Analysis

The data that were gathered during the focus group interviews were reviewed, analyzed and recorded. This informal conversational-guide approach interview was structured such that the exact question wording and the question order was not predetermined. However, during the natural course of the interviews, questions emerged from the immediate context.

"No matter what style of interviewing is used, and no matter how carefully one words interview questions, it all comes to naught if the interviewer fails to capture the actual words of the person being interviewed. The raw data of interviews are the actual quotations spoken by the interviewees" (Patton, 1990, p. 347). Since there is no substitute for this data, the focus group interviews conducted for this study were audiotape recorded.

Once all the interviews were recorded, the data were analyzed using predetermined categorical schemes. Predetermined categorical schemes are used when the researcher has an idea of what will be found during the data collection process. Therefore, he or she determines the categories before any data are collected. Once the data are gathered the researcher
then “fits” the information into the categories that were outlined in advance. Specifically, using a predetermined categorical scheme similar to Teddlies’s (1989) Simple Valance Analysis was employed. The data were analyzed within each group and were compared across groups.

The focus groups were organized into four categories: African-American, traditional-age students; African-American, nontraditional-age students; Caucasian traditional-aged students; and Caucasian non-traditional-age students (see figure 9). Successful efforts were made to have students with varying SES levels, and both genders represented.

In Chapter V, *Qualitative Results*, a breakdown of each groups’ background characteristics is provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African-American Students</th>
<th>Caucasian Students</th>
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<td>Traditional-Age</td>
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<td>Group Two</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

*Figure 9: Focus Group 2 x 2 Matrix*
Methodological triangulation was employed in this study in order to determine if the postpositivistic approach provided any support to the data which were collected using positivistic methods, and vice versa. In this study, the qualitative data supplied the detailed, in-depth information that the quantitative method lacked. Moreover, the quantitative method provided the broad generalizable findings that the qualitative method lacked.

The quantitative results will be presented in Chapter IV and the qualitative results of the focus group interviews will be presented in Chapter V. Implications will be discussed in Chapter VI, Summaries, Conclusions, and Implications.
CHAPTER IV
QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the applicability of a modified version of the Hossler and Stage (1992) model of predisposition to college. The Hossler and Stage model was designed for high school students and reflects many of the aspects of the lifestyles of young adults (i.e., living with parents, etc.). The modifications which I presented in this study entailed extending this model to the post-secondary setting. Specifically, in this study I focused on the applicability of a model of the predisposition of community college students to transfer to four-year institutions for pursuit of the baccalaureate degree and beyond.

The specific changes of the model involve: 1) the inclusion of expectation and encouragement of parents and significant others versus parents and peers, 2) the addition of students' personal educational expectation and aspiration, 3) the ability and high school experience node was replaced by student ability and accomplishment and students’
involvement in community college activities, and 4) student predisposition to attend college became student predisposition to transfer.

The data reported in this study entailed both quantitative and qualitative components. Patton (1990) explains that the advantages of a quantitative methodological approach is that it enables the researcher to measure the reactions of a vast number of people to a limited set of questions, facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data. The quantitative component consisted of a large scale survey of students enrolled at the research site and provided a generalizable set of findings.

I gathered a variety of data on student demographic characteristics, socioeconomic information, social psychological variables, etc. Specifically, this research contains nine independent variables and one dependent variable. The independent variables examined in this work are socioeconomic level, parent education level, student academic achievement, level of expectation and encouragement of parents/significant others; students' personal educational expectation and aspiration; involvement in college activities; gender; ethnicity; and age. The
dependent variable is predisposition to transfer from a community college to a baccalaureate institution.

This chapter is organized in three major sections. In Section One, I present the statistical results of the surveys collected during spring registration at the college, including descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and hierarchial logistic regression procedures. In Section Two, I addresses the research questions and the tests of the hypotheses. In the final section of this chapter I present a quantitative summary and conclusions.

Section One: Statistical Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. These data indicate that the sample is reasonably similar to the larger population of community college students at the research site. The sample is largely female, 60.8% and, based on official documentation from the registrars office, the percentage of females enrolled at this college is 60.5%. The sample is also similar to the population in terms of age. Fifty-four percent of the students in the sample are in the 17-24 age range. Again, this result is similar to the...
larger population with 50.9% of the population falling in the 17-24 age range.

In terms of ethnicity, African Americans comprised 48% of the sample, while Whites made up only 36.8%. This was inconsistent with the demographics of the population. African Americans represented 40.2% of the population and Whites 46.1%. Students selecting *I choose not to indicate* from the ethnicity choices may explain only 4.5% this difference.

With respect to social background characteristics, the family income of most students was within the $21,000 to $40,000 range. These students,
for the most part, students originated from homes where both the mother (36.3%) and the father (31.8%) were high school graduates. Table 1 also presents information on expectations of parents and significant others. These data show that the majority of parents/significant others expect that students will attain at least a Bachelor’s degree. In terms of level of support (3=very supportive/encouraging; 2=somewhat supportive/encouraging; 1=not supportive or encouraging at all), others were deemed the most supportive with a mean of 2.80, followed by mothers whose mean was 2.79.

Correlations

Correlation is a statistical technique that is used to measure and describe a relationship between two variables. The Pearson correlation matrix for the dependent variable, predisposition to transfer, and the nine independent variables with the community college student as the unit of analysis are presented in Table 2. These data show many patterns of association reported in other work.

For example, SES is one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement in this data and in previous works (Ekstrom, 1985; Hossler
and Stage, 1992; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Tuttle, 1981; Hossler, Braxton, Coopersmith, 1989; Lee and Frank, 1990). Here, SES and academic ability and accomplishment, as measured by GPA, are positively correlated and statistically significant. Measured at the .05 alpha level, this correlation yielded an $r$ value of .0775 and suggests that the higher the SES, the higher the GPA of community college students is likely to be.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficients Among Independent and Dependent Variables

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<td>.1754</td>
<td>.2921</td>
<td>-.0207</td>
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Note: In each cell, upper values are Pearson Correlation Coefficients and lower values are probability values.
Further, parents' education level had a statistically significant positive impact upon students' personal educational expectations and aspirations. This finding is consistent with the works of Hossler and Stage, 1987; Jackson, 1986; Manski and Wise, 1983; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Trent and Medsker, 1967; and others.

Previously, several researchers conducting descriptive studies (Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987; Conklin and Dailey, 1981; Ekstrom, 1985; Hossler and Stage, 1988 and 1992; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Smith and Bers, 1990; Murphy, 1981) have pointed out that there is a significant relationship between parental expectations and educational aspirations of high school students. The correlation between parents' and significant others' expectations and community college students' personal educational expectation and aspirations also yielded a statistically significant positive r value of .4783. The following correlations were also significant at the p<.05 level: GENDER and SES, male students were found to have higher incomes than female students; GPA and AGE, AGE and TRANSFER, and AGE and EXPECT 2, non-traditional-aged students maintained higher academic standings than did traditional-age students. That
notwithstanding, nontraditional-age students indicated lower personal educational expectations and aspirations and they were less predisposed to transfer.

Other significant relationships found were: AGE and PAREDUC, younger students indicated that their parents had received more education than older students; PAREDUC and SES, the higher the education of parents/ significant others, the greater their income level; PAREDUC and RACE and RACE and EXPECT 2, white students indicated higher levels of education for their parents/significant others than African American students; however, African Americans showed higher personal educational levels of expectancy; GENDER and ACTIVITY and RACE and ACTIVITY, male and African American students indicated a greater amount of involvement in activities than their female and white counterparts.

I also discovered from the results of this data that some variables which were found previously to have a significant relationship to predisposition to attend college for high school students did not hold true for students at community colleges. For example, SES and predisposition
to transfer produced a positive correlation which was not statistically significant. Measured at the .05 alpha level, this relationship yielded an r value of .0471, which suggest that the higher the socioeconomic status the more likely the students would be predisposed to transferring. However, the probability value (.0740) shows that this correlation is not significant.

The relationship between involvement in activities and predisposition to transfer also produced a statistically insignificant relationship. Contrary to the findings of previous researchers (Austin, 1985; Otto, 1976; Spady, 1975; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Hossler and Stage, 1992; and others), who found that there was a positive significant relationship between involvement in school activities and predisposition to attend college for high school students, I find that although positive, this correlation yielded an r value of .0060 and a probability value of .8205 at \( \alpha = .05 \). This suggests that for community college students involvement in activities has little influence on student predisposition to transfer.

For me, one of the most surprising findings was that the relationship between GPA and predisposition to transfer was negatively correlated and
not statistically significant. Measured at the .05 alpha level, this relationship showed a Pearson correlation coefficient -.0207 and a probability value of .4320, which suggests that students with low GPAs are predisposed to transferring and students who have achieved academically are not as likely to be predisposed to furthering their education beyond the community college. Some interesting conclusions can be drawn and implications made from this, but these and others will be presented in Chapter VI, Summaries, Conclusions, and Implications.

Section Two: Research Questions and Hypotheses

Tests of the Hypotheses

Nine specific hypotheses were investigated to examine the relationships between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable. Bivariate correlation analysis was used to determine the degree to which each independent variable covaried with predisposition to transfer in this setting. A hierarchial logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which these variables, independently or in groups, accounted for variance and was used in this study to test the ability of nine
independent variables to predict predisposition to transfer for community college students.

The six research questions and each of the nine hypotheses were posed to evaluate the relationships between the criterion variable, predisposition to transfer, and the predictor variables: income (SES), parent education (PAREDUC), expectations of parents/significant others (EXPECT 1), students’ personal educational expectation and aspirations (EXPECT 2), academic ability (GPA), involvement in activities (ACTIVITY), gender (GENDER), ethnicity (RACE), and age (AGE). The final hypothesis tests the overall explanatory power of the expanded version of the Hossler and Stage model.

Examination of Research Questions 1-5 and Hypotheses 1-9

To address each of the six research question, Hypotheses 1 - 10 were tested. Research questions 1 and 2 were addressed through Hypotheses 1 - 6. Hypothesis 7 was tested to address research question 3. Research question 4 and 5 were addressed by Hypotheses 8 and 9, respectively. The final research question is addressed by Hypothesis 10 and will be discussed in the Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis.
The examination and results of research questions 1-5 and hypotheses 1-9 follow:

**Research Question 1:** What are the factors that influence the decision of community college students to consider transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

**Research Question 2:** Are currently identified factors in the development of educational plans for high school students the same as those which influence students in two-year colleges?

**Hypothesis 1** - As socioeconomic status increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation yielded a statistically insignificant positive ($p \leq .05$) r value for a relationship between SES and predisposition. Therefore, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there is not sufficient evidence to support the claim that as socioeconomic status increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer also increases. It is worth noting that this is in
stark contrast to results reported for educational aspirations in previous research on high school students. As a student's socioeconomic background increases, aspirations for advanced education increase.

**Hypothesis 2 - As the parental educational attainment level increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.**

The data yielded a statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) positive correlation (.08293) for the relationship between parents' education and predisposition to transfer. As found in previous research (Hossler and Stage, 1987; Jackson, 1986; Manski and Wise, 1983; Stage and Hossler, 1989), this finding suggested that the greater the parental education, the more likely a two-year college student is to transfer. I rejected the null hypothesis that as parents’ education level increases, students predisposition to transfer will not be affected, and concluded that a higher level of educational attainment for parents of community college students did increase the educational aspirations of these students.
Hypothesis 3 - As student ability and accomplishment increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

The correlation between student academic ability and accomplishment, which was measured by GPA, and predisposition to transfer was not statistically significant. Further, the correlation was negative. Therefore, I failed to reject the null hypothesis that increased student ability will not have an affect on community college students’ predisposition to transfer, and concluded that community college students with high GPAs are not necessarily predisposed to transferring to a four-year institution.

Hypothesis 4 - As parents and significant others’ expectations and encouragement increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will also increase.

Parents and significant others’ expectations and encouragement yielded a statistically significant \( (p \leq .05) \) r value of .1754. The data therefore reveal that there is a positive correlation between the expectations of parents and significant others and community college
students' predisposition to transfer. I rejected the null hypothesis, and
concluded that community college students' predisposition to transfer
increases with increased levels of encouragement and expectations from
parents and significant others.

**Hypothesis 5 - As personal educational expectations and
aspirations increase, community college students' predisposition to
transfer to a four-year institution will also increase.**

Community college students' personal expectations and aspirations
and predisposition yielded a statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) $r$ value of
.2921. The data reveal that there is a relationship between students'
personal expectations/aspirations and predisposition to transfer. The null
hypothesis that as a students' personal aspiration increases, their
predisposition to transfer is unchanged was therefore rejected and I
concluded that community college students' predisposition to transfer is
significantly and positively influenced by the students' personal
educational expectation/aspirations.
Hypothesis 6 - As the involvement in college activities increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.

The Pearson Product Moment correlations yielded a non-significant r value of .0060 for this relationship. For community college students, the data show that involvement in college activities is not correlated with predisposition to transfer. Thus, the null hypothesis that involvement in college activities has no affect on predisposition to transfer was not rejected.

Research Question 3: Are male or female community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

Hypothesis 7 - Female students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transferring to a four-year institution than will male students.

The Pearson Correlation yielded a statistically insignificant (p ≤ .05) r value for the relationship between gender and predisposition. Although the relationship between GENDER and TRANSFER is positive, which
suggests that females are more predisposed to transfer, the correlation is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is substantiated and can not be rejected.

Research Question 4: Are African American or white community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

Hypothesis 8 - Black students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than will white students.

With an (p ≤ .05) r value of .0627, ethnicity proved to be a statistically significant correlate of predisposition to transfer for community college students. Specifically, the data show that African-American students are more likely to be predisposed to transferring than white students. I therefore rejected the null hypothesis which states that Black students will not be more predisposed to transferring to a four-year college than their white counterparts.
Research Question 5: Are traditional- or nontraditional-age community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

Hypothesis 9 - Nontraditional-age students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transferring to a four-year institution than will traditional-age students.

Age yielded a statistically significant (p ≤ .05) r value of -.1012, revealing that there is a negative correlation between age and community college students’ predisposition to transfer. This suggests that as age increases students become less likely to have aspirations to further their education beyond the community college. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that non-traditional-age students at community colleges are not as predisposed to transfer as traditional-age students.

Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis: Examination of Research Question 6 and Hypothesis 10

Logistic regression is a method of analyzing the collective and separate contributions of the independent variables to assess the amount of variation in the dependent variable. To further examine Hypotheses 1 - 9, I used hierarchial logistic regression procedures. Additionally, I used this
procedure to examine and address research question 6, which looks at the explanatory power of the expanded Hossler and Stage predisposition model for community college students.

Specifically, to predict predisposition to transfer, each independent variable was entered, in tandem, into the hierarchical model, resulting in a total of nine models. Statistically significant levels were examined to determine if there was a significant change in the role of the predictor variables. These results bear on the unique role of the individual predictors, relative to others considered in the model.

It should be noted here that because of the unique nature of students at community college, the independent variable, students' personal expectation and aspiration, could be perceived as being synonymous with the dependent variable, predisposition to transfer. In the Postsecondary Educational Plans Survey, item 9a asked students to indicate the highest educational level they planned to complete. The possible selections ranged from 1=Trade School to 8=Doctorate or other terminal degree. In item 10, I asked respondents to indicate their future educational plans to transfer to a baccalaureate (4-year) institution. Students could select from 1=no plans
to transfer to 5=transfer beyond 5 years. This item was coded as 0=no plans to transfer and 1=any plans to transfer (choices 2-5).

It should be further noted that for students at the community college who select any choice in question 9a, with the exception of Trade School, Certificate Program, or Associate’s Degree, would, most likely, select some degree of transfer in item 10. Thus, there is a possibility of a built in degree correlation between EXPECT 2 and the TRANSFER variable.

However, it is my position that the expectations of future educational plans beyond the two-year college, and concrete plans to transfer are distinct. Nonetheless, for comparison purposes, I present the logistic regression analyses results and address research question six and hypothesis 10 with and without the inclusion of the EXPECT 2 variable. Finally, I conclude with a quantitative summary.

**Research Question 6:** How adequately does an expanded version of the Hossler and Stage (1992) predisposition model of college choice classify community college students with respect to their predisposition to transfer to four-year institutions?
Hypothesis 10 - The explanatory power of the expanded Hossler and Stage predisposition model for community college students will be statistically significant overall.

Results with All Variables Included

In the first model, logistic regression of the dependent variable, predisposition to transfer from a two-year to a four-year college using community college students as the unit of analysis, shows that the independent variable, SES, produced a chi-square score for covariates of 3.193. Using one degree of freedom, SES was not statistically significant (p=0.0740) at the .05 level.

In the second model, SES is reintroduced followed by PAREDUC based on the likelihood that it would improve the prediction made by the first variable. With two degrees of freedom, Model 2 yielded a chi-square score for covariates of 10.249 and a standardized parameter estimate of .1021 for PAREDUC, which were statistically significant (p=0.0059 and p=0.0076, respectively) at α = .05. SES remained insignificant with a standardized estimate of 0.0229. The concordant value of this model further revealed that more than half of the cases were correctly classified.
The predictor variable GENDER was introduced in Model 3. The subsequent chi-square score for covariates of the overall model reported a statistically significant \((p=0.0069)\) value. However, the standardized parameter estimates for each individual variable revealed that PAREDUC was the only predictor in this model that was statistically significant.

In Model 4, RACE was entered. With four degrees of freedom, the chi-square score for this model was 22.407 which was significant at the .05 \(\alpha\) level \((p=0.0002)\). The standardized parameter estimate also revealed that RACE and PAREDUC as individual predictors were statistically significant.

AGE was the fifth independent variable introduced into the model equation. With five degrees of freedom, Model 5 yielded a score for covariates of 32.141 which was statistically significant at the .05 level \((p=0.0001)\). Individually, the standardized parameter estimates of AGE, RACE and PAREDUC proved to be statistically significant predictors of community college students’ predisposition to transfer. GENDER and SES were not significant.
With the introduction of EXPECT 1, Model 6 produced a chi-square score for covariates of 63.356. With 6 degrees of freedom, this overall model was statistically significant at \( \alpha = .05 \) (\( p=0.0001 \)). Of the six predictors entered in this model, only the latter three, RACE, AGE, and EXPECT 1, yielded significant standardized parameter estimates. SES, PAREDUC, and GENDER were not predictive.

The variable EXPECT 2 entered the model and produced a chi-square score of 136.962. With seven degrees of freedom, this model was statistically significant at \( \alpha \) level .05 (\( p=0.0001 \)). Of the seven variables introduced, only EXPECT 2 and AGE generated statistically significant standardized parameter estimates. This would suggest that regardless of a student’s ethnicity and the expectations of their parents/significant others, community college students predisposition to transfer is more significantly based on the personal educational expectations and aspirations these students have for themselves. The concordant value for Model 7 revealed that 73.7\% of the cases were correctly classified. This remained consistent for Models 8 and 9.
The hierarchical regression analysis of model eight revealed that this model produced an overall chi-square score of 137.556, which was statistically significant at the .05 level with eight degrees of freedom. Specifically, the variables EXPECT 2 and AGE (p=0.0001 and 0.0369, respectively) generated individual, standardized parameter estimates that were statistically significant.

With the addition of the variable ACTIVITY, the final model produced an overall chi-square score of 137.558. With nine degrees of freedom, Model 9 was significant at $\alpha = .05$ (p=0.0001). Standardized parameter estimates showed that of the nine variables included in the hierarchical regression analysis, EXPECT 2 and AGE were the only statistically significant predictors for this last model.

Using students from one urban community college in Louisiana as the unit of analysis, the expanded structural model of community college students' predisposition to transfer to a baccalaureate institution was found to be statistically significant and a useful tool in understanding and examining student college choice. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis of no association and concluded that the explanatory power of the...
expanded Hossler and Stage model of predisposition was statistically significant. The results of the logistic regression analyses which includes all eight independent variables and the one dependent variable are presented in Table 3.

**Results with All Variables Included Except EXPECT 2**

Models 1 through 6 of the hierarchical logistic regression analyses yielded identical results as the logistic regression models which were previously run. In Model 7 of the reruns, the dependent variable, predisposition to transfer from a two-year to a four-year college using community college students as the unit of analysis, shows that the independent variable, GPA, produced a chi-square score for covariates of 63.400. Using seven degree of freedom, GPA was statistically significant (p=0.0001) at the .05 level. The concordant value for Model 7 revealed that 65.2% of the cases were correctly classified. In the final model, Model 8, this value dropped slightly to 65.1%

With the addition of the variable ACTIVITY, the hierarchical regression analysis of Model 8 revealed that this model produced an
Table 3: Hierarchical Logistical Regression Analyses (with all variables included)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 7</th>
<th>Model 8</th>
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<td>0.0691**</td>
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<td>0.0343**</td>
<td>0.0268**</td>
<td>0.0268**</td>
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Chi-Square for the Score Criteria

|         | 3.193** | 10.249  | 12.144  | 22.407  | 32.141  | 63.356  | 136.962 | 137.556 | 137.558 |

Concordant Values

|         | 42.4%   | 54.0%   | 54.2%   | 57.6%   | 59.2%   | 65.1%   | 73.7%   | 73.7%   | 73.7%   |

Note: ns - not statistically significant at the α = .05 level
overall chi-square score of 63.430, which was statistically significant at the .05 level with eight degrees of freedom. Specifically, the variables RACE, AGE and EXPECT 1 (p=0.0159, 0.0109 and 0.0001, respectively) generated individual, standardized parameter estimates that were statistically significant.

Despite the exclusion of the EXPECT 2 variable, the expanded structural model of community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a baccalaureate institution was found to be statistically significant and a useful tool in understanding and examining student college choice. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis of no association and concluded that the explanatory power of the expanded Hossler and Stage model of predisposition was statistically significant. The results of the logistic regression analyses which includes seven independent variables (excludes EXPECT 2) and the one dependent variable are presented in Table 4.
Table 4: Hierarchical Logistical Regression Analyses (without EXPECT 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
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<td>Standardized Parameter Estimates</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
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Chi-Square for the Score Criteria

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<td>3.193**</td>
<td>10.249</td>
<td>12.144</td>
<td>22.407</td>
<td>32.141</td>
<td>63.356</td>
<td>63.400</td>
<td>63.430</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Concordant Values

|           | 42.4% | 54.0% | 54.2% | 57.6% | 59.2% | 65.1% | 65.2% | 65.1% |

Note: ns - not statistically significant at the \( \alpha = .05 \) level
Section Three: Quantitative Summary

The quantitative results of this study were based on a survey from which I obtained the perspectives of 2501 students in one urban community college in south Louisiana. By employing listwise deletion the sample was reduced to 1438 usable observations which contained no missing information.

The findings show that parent education, parents/significant others’ expectations and encouragement, student’s personal educational expectations and aspirations, ethnicity, and age were significant predictors of students’ predisposition to transfer to baccalaureate institutions, using the community college students as the unit of analysis. Two-year college students’ personal educational expectations and aspirations was the best predictor of predisposition to transfer. To test the nine hypotheses, bivariate correlation analysis was used to determine the degree to which each independent variable covaried with the criterion variable. Hierarchial logistic regression analysis was measured to test Hypothesis 10 and
employed to assess the extent to which these variables, singly or corporately, accounted for variance.

Descriptive statistics were reported which disclosed that the means of the selected sample were compatible with those of the larger population. Specifically, gender and age breakdown means were consistent. The Pearson correlation matrix displayed several significant positive relationships. Among them were: SES and GPA; PAREDUC and EXPECT 2; EXPECT 1 and EXPECT 2; SES and PAREDUC; RACE and ACTIVITY; and RACE and EXPECT 2. Additionally, the following negative correlations were found: SES and RACE; SES and GENDER; AGE and TRANSFER; GPA and RACE; GPA and AGE; EXPECT 1 and AGE; EXPECT 2 and AGE; and GENDER and ACTIVITY.

Of all the variables present in the correlation matrix and introduced in the hierarchical logistic regression analysis, EXPECT 2, the personal educational expectations and aspirations students have for themselves, produced the most statistically significant relationship to predisposition to transfer. In the hierarchical logistic regression analysis where the EXPECT 2 variable was excluded, RACE, AGE and EXPECT 1 were
statistically significant at the 0.05 alpha level and EXPECT 1, the expectations and encouragement of parents and significant others, proved to be the most statistically significant correlate to predisposition to transfer producing an $r$ value of 0.1754.

With or without EXPECT 2, RACE, AGE, and EXPECT 1 held as consistently important predictors. Again, whether the EXPECT 2 variable is considered or not, as anticipated, each procedure yielded fundamentally similar findings with regard to factors that influence community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year college.

In the next chapter, I present the qualitative results of this study.
CHAPTER V

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Introduction

The qualitative component of this work involved a series of focus group interviews with two-year college students from the selected institution. Focus groups are appropriate because previous researchers have noted that the interaction among the participants stimulates them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express if interviewed individually. Further, the focus group interview avoids putting the interviewer in a directive role. Rather, they ask questions to initiate discussion, but then allow participants to take major responsibility for stating their views and opinions and drawing out the views of others in the group (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996).

Krueger (1988) describes a focus group as “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. It is conducted with approximately seven to ten people by a skilled interviewer. The discussion
is relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable for participants as they share ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion” (p. 18).

The focus group interviews were organized so that the participants in each group were internally homogeneous, externally heterogeneous, and mutually exclusive. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) explain that the focus group technique works best when the members of each group are on an equal basis. For this study, four interview groups emerged: Group 1, African-American, traditional-age students; Group 2, Caucasian, traditional-age students; Group 3, African-American, nontraditional-age students; and Group 4, Caucasian nontraditional-age students.

An Aside

Considering my discussions with administrators at the community college where my fieldwork was conducted, wherein they warned me that their students lacked patience for completing surveys and tended not to participate in interviews at all, I had to gauge carefully the procedures that I would employ to collect the data needed for this research. Consistent with the observation of Patton (1990) which maintained that it is important...
for the investigator to determine “how best to conduct the fieldwork” (p. 251), my approach to collecting the data needed was actual physical entry into the field setting to establish trust and rapport and gain the cooperation of the students instead of “infiltrating the setting” (Douglas, 1976, p. 167, as cited by Patton, 1990, p. 251). Therefore during registration, I assumed the role of participant-observer (Spradley, 1979) and had the opportunity to observe and interact with students one-on-one at the research site.

At the beginning of the first day, students, faculty and staff wondered who I was and why I was there. By that afternoon, I knew nearly everything there was to know about the registration process. My survey station became an unofficial information center. The table from which I issued the survey instrument was equipped with class schedules, campus maps, registration hours, fee payment information, identification cards and other information which students generally seek during the registration process. It was designed to be an information center that would attract students. If there was something that I could not answer, while the students completed the survey, I would search for the answer. The security guards who monitored the doors during registration,
counselors who were advising students, and other registration personnel
directed the outgoing and incoming traffic to the survey area, and
encouraged students to complete the instrument.

By the last day of registration, students were coming up to the table
requesting survey forms, and completing them while they awaited their
billing statements or stood in line for advising. Students who had to leave
the registration arena to pay their fees returned to submit their completed
forms.

Near the end of registration one day, an young African-American
lady entered the door, extremely upset and frustrated. Cursing under her
breath, she said, "I am sick of this crap! People sending you on a wild
goose chase. This s*@# don't make no sense." As she approached the
table, I proceeded to ask what had her so upset. In a loud voice, she began
to complain that all she needed to do "was take a damn placement test, but
the lady told [her] that [she] needed to stand in the line in Building 1. That
was the line to pay fees." After a 45 minute wait, she realized that she had
been misinformed. She was then sent to two other places, only to find that
again she was misinformed. By the time she reached the registration arena, she was already “fed up”.

I invited the young lady to have a seat behind the table with me and explain to me what was going on. Slowly she calmed down. After she had finished venting, I promised her that I would find out exactly where she was supposed to go to take her test and give her explicit directions. I asked her to complete one of the postsecondary educational plans surveys while I went to get the information she needed. She began to complete the instrument as I left to ask the Registrar where she was supposed to be.

When I returned to the table, not only had she completed the survey, but she had recruited several other students who were entering or exiting the building, explained the importance of their completing the survey, passed out copies of my explanatory letter of transmittal, and encouraged them to complete and return the instrument, which they all did. I gave the young lady the information that she needed and directions as to how to get to the placement testing site. She thanked me and was on her way.

Approximately 40 minutes later, she returned and said, “Thank you, again. This is the first time that anyone went out of their way for me just
so I wouldn’t get the run around. I really appreciate it.” I said, “You’re welcome. If you have any other problems, let me know and I will see what I can do to help!” The young lady went on to say that she had told some of her friends and other people in the testing and placement office to come in and fill out the survey. She also said that she would send others so “they would not miss the opportunity to be included.” Later that afternoon and for the remaining days of registration, periodically, students would come up to the table and say that Christy, the young lady, had informed them that I was conducting a very important survey and encouraged them to complete the instrument so that their perspectives could be recorded.

Other students came by the table for help and information because they were told that “the lady at that table [the survey area] can help you, and if she can’t she will find out who can.”

All of my encounters with students during the registration process were not positive. Some persons ignored my attempts to get their attention or to speak with them, picked up surveys and left them incomplete in other parts of the arena, or expressed disapproval of having to “make the time” to complete the survey. One visibly irritated man snatched a survey form,
grabbed a pen out of the cup which I provided, plopped down on the couch near the survey table, and began to fill out the instrument. About four questions into the survey, he jumped up and said, "I don't have time for this crap! It is not you people's' business how far my daddy went in school. Hell, I don't know anyway!" He slammed the survey and pen down on the table and stormed out. This and other positive and negative personal dialogues and interactions with students during the quantitative data collection stage prepared me for the qualitative data collection phase.

The remainder of this chapter is organized in seven major sections. Section one presents the sampling procedures and details the interview format and procedures. Section two provides the results of Group 1, traditional-age, African American students. Section three reports the findings of Group 2, traditional-age, Caucasian students. In Section four, the outcome of the African American, nontraditional-age session, Group 3, is presented. The results of the Caucasian, nontraditional-age focus group are reported in Section five. In Section six each group will be compared and contrasted in a cross-focus group analysis. In the final section of this chapter, seven, I present the qualitative summary.
Section One:  
Sampling and Interview Procedures

**Sampling Procedures**

A homogeneous sampling technique was employed in the qualitative section of this work. The purpose of homogeneous sampling is to select a sample of similar cases so that the particular group that the sample represents can be studied in depth (Gall, Borg, Gall, 1996). Of the 2,501 surveys that were completed, more than 2,000 students indicated that they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview. After the quantitative data were entered, the surveys were divided into the four previously identified categories. In an effort to establish that the sampling procedure was not biased, I used purposeful random sampling identify specific cases within each homogeneous grouping. Initially, 15 to 20 survey instruments were randomly selected from each group. The students who provided contact information were called to schedule an interview. This became a time consuming process because it was important that all the participants for each focus group be available at the same time on the same day.
From Group 1, 34 students were called, ten students confirmed, but seven showed up. From Group 2, 21 students were contacted, eight students confirmed, and one said that he would try to adjust his work schedule so that he could make it. Seven students showed up, but one left before the interview started. From Group 3, 28 students were contacted, 12 students indicated that they would participate, but only six attended. After 32 calls, 15 people indicated that they would be present for Group 4's interview, but only seven students took part. The results of each focus group interview is presented in its respective section.

Interview Format

Patton (1990) describes three basic approaches to gathering qualitative data through open-ended interviews. They are the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach and the standard open-ended interview. For my purposes, a combination of the informal conversational and interview guide approach was employed. The structure of the focus groups was such that the conversation was so natural that the group did not feel like they were being interviewed. Additionally, as with informal conversational interviews, some questions were generated
spontaneously. For the most part, however, the structure of the interview guide approach was followed. The topics to be explored were basically outlined so that each group would address the same basic issues. The order in which the topics were explored and the exact wording of each question were not predetermined. As the situation evolved the wording and order of questions were determined.

Qualitative research traditionally has been used to illuminate subjects or situations that have been found to contain little information. Further, qualitative methods have been employed to add breadth, depth, and detail by enhancing or providing an explanation of what was found in the quantitative portion of a given work. Patton (1990) maintains that qualitative research offers richer meanings to those areas under study.

For the purposes of my research, the qualitative component has been included to elucidate what survey respondents may have meant by the responses they offered in the quantitative section. Patton (1990) explained that "Qualitative data can put flesh on the bones of quantitative results, bringing the results to life through in-depth case elaboration" (p. 132). This combination will show how the research fits together as a whole.
The qualitative section in this study was designed to clarify or add additional meaning, where necessary, to the survey results. Generally, in this section I investigate the factors which influence community college students predisposition to transfer to baccalaureate institutions. Specifically, issues related to male and female students, traditional- and nontraditional-age students, and African American and Caucasian students are explored here, since RACE and AGE held as consistently important predictors, and since GENDER was positively correlated, although not statistically significantly.

Using predetermined categorical schemes, four major areas were covered during the focus group interviews. They were: 1) Background Characteristics, 2) Expectation and Encouragement Factors, 3) Community College Involvement and Preparation, and 4) Transfer Behavior.

**Interview Procedures**

Members of each group were asked to arrive at the interview site ten to 15 minutes early to give them enough time to locate the room, get settled and have refreshments. When the students arrived, refreshments and reading material were available for them while they waited for the session.
to begin. Once the interview began, I introduced myself, requested permission to audio tape record the session, explained the purpose of the research study, and asked if there were any questions before we began.

As an ice breaker, the students were asked to introduce themselves using an adjective which began with the same letter as the first letter of their first name that each felt would describe and tell the others a little bit about them (e.g. - Loquacious Lisa). The participant's seemed to enjoy this exercise. In fact, throughout the interview, they referred to each other by their adjective names. In order to protect each participants identity, in this work I will adopt that same procedure of referring to the students by the fictitious, descriptive names similar to the ones they gave themselves. Luckily, no students in any of the four focus group interviews used the same adjective. At the end of each session, which lasted from a minimum of 55 minutes to a maximum of 74 minutes, the participants took turns going around the table trying to recall each others' "adjective name". Each of the four focus group interviews was conducted in a similar manner.
Section Two:
Group 1: African American Traditional-Age Students
Interview Results

Background Characteristics

Seven African American traditional-age students were included in this interview: Awesome Ashley, Capable Calvin, Mild Monica, Dashing Diana, Kicking Kiva, Mackin Mohammed, and Tough Tammy. The questions related to background revealed that although this was a homogeneous group some personal background differences existed. A summary of the group’s make up is presented in Table 5.

Awesome Ashley, a 24 year old female, indicated that she was single and had no children. Her mother and father both attended high school, but neither graduated, and she fell in the low socioeconomic bracket. Capable Calvin a single, 22 year old male, explained that he had no children. He came from a family which fell within the moderate SES level, both of his parents had attended but not graduated from college. Mild Monica said that she was a 24 year old, married mother of two whose SES was medium high level. Her mother was an college graduate and her father attended high school. Dashing Diana, who comes from a moderate
Table 5: Background Characteristics of African American Traditional-Age Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>MHE</th>
<th>FHE</th>
<th>Child(ren)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Ashley</td>
<td>24 - female</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable Calvin</td>
<td>22 - male</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild Monica</td>
<td>24 - female</td>
<td>medium high</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dashing Diana</td>
<td>23 - female</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicking Kiva</td>
<td>19 - female</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackin Mohammed</td>
<td>21 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough Tammy</td>
<td>21 - female</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SES - low: $12K or less; moderate: $12.001 - $21K; medium: $21,001 - $40K; medium high: $40,001 - $70K; high: 70,001 and greater. MHE = Mother's highest level of educational attainment. FHE = Father's highest level of educational attainment.

socioeconomic background, indicated that she was a single mother of one. Her mother had acquired some college training and her father had attended high school but not earned a diploma. Kicking Kiva, an engaged 19 year old female, explained that her family’s SES level fell in the moderate range. Her mother had completed some college and her father some high school. Twenty-one year old Mackin Mohammed said that he is a single father with one daughter. His family’s income level was medium and his mother had some college training and his father graduated from college. Tough Tammy, a single 21 year old female, indicated that both of her parents were college graduates and that their socioeconomic level was
classified as high. Tough Tam (as the group referred to her) had no children.

**Expectations and Encouragement Factors**

To initiate discussions on the subject of encouragement, the group was asked which person or persons, event or thing had encouraged them the most to pursue their academic goals. They were also asked what expectations their parents or significant others had for them in terms of furthering their education beyond high school. All of the students indicated that their mothers encouraged them and/or were instrumental in their decision to further their education. The following excerpts are taken directly from their comments:

**Awesome Ashley** - “My mother was probably my greatest influence. My mom - she is a maid. She cleans houses as a living and she told me that it was definitely not the way to go. Even though she did provide pretty well for me growing up. She just really encouraged me, wanting me to use my mind more, instead of the physical aspect of trying to make a living. She really encouraged me to get my
education so I would not have to be doing the same thing that she has to do.”

**Capable Calvin** - “My parents didn’t seem to care one way or another if I went to college. Well, my mom always wanted what was best for me. I actually came here because all my friends were here, but I got with the wrong crowd and ended up sitting out for a few semesters. The thing or should I say person who turned me around or encouraged me the most was Mr. Willie, the janitor at my old high school. I was there one day ‘hoopin’ with some of my friends. I ran up by the building to get some water and I spoke to Mr. Willie. He said, ‘Hey Calvin what you up to?’ I said, ‘Nothing.’ Then he told me...he said, ‘Calvin, you are too smart to be up to nothing. I watch you guys and wish I could get those years back, but I can’t. Calvin, you go to school and get your education, so one day you won’t be saying this to another young brother.’ That’s what he said out of the blue! That messed with my head for a while. Now, I’m back in school and doing okay.”
Mild Monica - “As long as I can remember my mother talked about me going to college. She got her bachelor’s degree and told me that I could get mine, too. She always told me that she wanted me to have a better life for myself. Then, I had my daughter at a very young age. I want her to see that things, obstacles come your way but you can overcome them. I have always wanted to be a nurse and the only way to get that is to go to college. I know that I have to get my education for her sake. As she grows up, she will know the importance of getting her education.”

Dashing Diana - “I decided to come to college to make my mother happy. She always told us how she wanted us to get our education. In fact, my mother encouraged me to come to this college, because she attends here too. She said that she always wanted to get her [Associate] degree, and she is not going to stop until she gets it. I’m not either. I don’t want to let her down, and besides that I have three small children of my own and I want them to have nice things. Things that I didn’t have.”
Kicking Kiva - “I just want to make my mama happy and myself.
Because I did not graduate from high school... I got my GED. So I
want to show her that I can graduate from somewhere. Since I did
not graduate from high school at least I could graduate from college.
I think my mother was disappointed with me, even though she never
said that to me. I don’t ever want to disappoint her again. I will
graduate and get my Associates and maybe go on. I just want to
prove to her that I can be disciplined and finish something that I
start.”

Mackin Mohammed - “I still live at home, and there was no question
about it. ‘If you live under this roof,’ my mom would say, ‘you’re
going to be in somebody’s school.’ She was serious about that. I
remember her telling us about how there was a time when we
(colored folks) couldn’t go to school. My father graduated from
college, my mother never did, but she has always encouraged me to
and I think she expects me to. More importantly than that though, is
that I have an eight month old daughter that I have to provide for, and when she grows up I want her to look at me and be proud of her daddy.”

Tough Tammy - “Both my parents are college graduates. My mother got her Master’s degree, plus 30 and my father received his Bachelor’s degree. There has never been any doubt in my mind that I would graduate from college, but I am more determined now. I am an only child, and my parents used to do everything for me. My father died when I was younger and my mother passed away in 1992. At first, I did not know what I would do, but the one thing that my mother said that has stuck with me is ‘If you go to school and get your education, you don’t have to worry about who is going to take care of you. You can provide for yourself!’ She was right and that’s exactly what I am doing, getting my education so I can continue to have the life that I became accustomed to when my parents were here.”
Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation

During this phase of the interview, Group 1 was asked about their level of involvement in activities at the community college and their academic preparedness as demonstrated by their GPAs. Unanimously, the group said that they did not have time to get involved with extracurricular activities. Awesome explained that between going to class, working 30 hours a week and trying to keep up her GPA she does not have time for extra activities. Capable explained that he comes on campus, goes to class, and then he is gone. Kicking Kiva said that with her hectic school and work schedules, she barely has time for her fiancé, so she definitely does not have time for “fun and games” at Nubian. Mild Monica said that she is “married with children” and there is no such thing as free time for activities. Mackin explained that it was important to him to maintain a 2.8 grade point average, and since he was trying to boost his GPA, he really could not afford to get side tracked with extra activities. Tough Tam said matter of factly, “That extracurricular stuff was for high school. Once a serious student gets to this stage they just don’t have time for it [activities].”
This group's grade point averages ranged from 2.0 to 3.3. Most of the students were satisfied with their grades. However, Kiva and Mohammed were working on improving their GPAs.

**Transfer Behavior and Intentions**

Every one of the students in Group 1 indicated that they were predisposed or had aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution to further their education. However, when they were asked specifically when they would follow through on their aspirations, only two students seemed committed to actually transferring.

Tough Tammy, who could graduate in December, indicated that instead of graduating from Nubian, she intends to transfer to a four-year nursing school and get the baccalaureate degree as a registered nurse. Then she intends to work and let the hospital send her back to school to get her Master's with a pediatric specialty.

Dashing Diana, who is an Early Childhood Education major, remarked that she plans to transfer to a four-year institution immediately after she graduates. Ultimately, she wants to start her own nursery and day
care business. Diana explained that she knows to be qualified and successful she has to attain at least the bachelor's degree.

The other students in the group, although excited and optimistic about the prospect of transferring, did not demonstrate any serious intention to follow through. Their comments included: “I will see how far I go here”; “I really would like to go to a four-year college, but I will play it by ear and take it one class at a time”; and “Honestly, I don’t know if I will ever transfer. I do want to, but I honestly just don’t know. I may work once I’m finished here.” An additional probe revealed that grades and finances were important in determining whether or not African American traditional-age students would follow through on their transfer aspirations.

Section Three
Group 2: Caucasian Traditional-Age Students Interview Results

Background Characteristics

Group 2 consisted of six Caucasian traditional-age students: Respectable Roy, Caring Connie, Loving Leslie, Just Jonathan, Rowdy Rachel, and Flirty Franklin. A summary of the responses to questions related to background characteristics are reflected in Table 6.
Table 6: Background Characteristics of Caucasian Traditional-Age Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>MHE</th>
<th>FHE</th>
<th>Child(ren)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respectable Roy</td>
<td>20 - male</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>h.s. grad</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool Connie</td>
<td>22 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving Leslie</td>
<td>18 - female</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Jonathan</td>
<td>21 - male</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowdy Rachel</td>
<td>19 - female</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>h.s. grad</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flirty Frank</td>
<td>24 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SES - low: $12K or less; moderate: $12,001 - $21K; medium: $21,001 - $40K; medium high: $40,001 - $70K; high: $70,001 and greater. MHE = Mother’s highest level of educational attainment. FHE = Father’s highest level of educational attainment.

Respectable Roy, a single 20 year old male, categorized his socioeconomic background as moderate. He explained that his father and mother were high school graduates and that his mother had also attended college for a time. Caring Connie, a single 22 year old female, indicated that both of her parents were college graduates and that she fell into the medium SES bracket. An 18 year old female, Loving Leslie, reported a moderate socioeconomic level. Her mother was a college graduate and her father had completed some high school. Just James, a 21 year old single male, came from a moderate SES background. His parents both attended high school. His mother graduated from high school and went on to
acquire some college training while his father did not graduate from high school. Nineteen year old, Rowdy Rachel reported a low socioeconomic background. Both of her parents were high school attendees, but only her mother graduated from high school. Flirty Frank, a 24 year old single male, indicated a medium socioeconomic background. Both of Fred’s parents graduated from high school and went to college. His mother matriculated for a few years, but his father graduated.

**Expectation and Encouragement Factor**

Like Group 1, the students in Group 2 were asked which person or persons, event or thing had encouraged them to further their education beyond high school. I also asked them to explain what expectations their parents or significant others had concerning their educational pursuits and what effect, if any, did their expectations have on them. Their responses ran the gamut. A detailed account follows:

**Respectable Roy** - “For me, attending college just kind of happened. I did not really know what I wanted to do after high school. All I knew is that I wanted to be an artist. I’m not really too interested in getting a
degree anymore. My mom wants me to go to college so I’m going
to make her happy and stay in college while I’m trying to get
something going on with art. I don’t really need a degree to do it.
But, I was trying to manage my art by taking some business classes
and getting my degree in marketing. I was taking some art classes at
[a four-year college in the state], but the art teacher there was living
hell. She said I did not know how to draw, and she made it
unbearable. I finally dropped out. That was when I decided that I
did not need a degree to be successful with my art. My mom, who
had went to college, suggested that I give the community college a
try. So far, it’s all right but I still am not sure what the future holds.
I believe in some fields degrees are important, but for me it’s not.
As far as expectations go, I know my mom wants me to go to
college, but I don’t think my father has any real expectation. He has
never said that he wants me to graduate and become a this or a that.
Hell, he has never said that. The only thing I do know is that he
just doesn’t want me bummin’ around the house all day doing
nothing. Now, don’t get me wrong. I know he cares about me and stuff, but he wants me to get a job and be able to support myself.”

Cool Connie - “My parents definitely want me to graduate from college. There’s no doubt about that. They want me to major in something that’s going to allow me to be able to support myself. I think they probably want me to get my Master's degree. But wait, maybe that’s just all in my head. Because they didn’t say -- they are not the type to say ‘You have to get...’ You know. Actually, because my dad and my brother, they’re kind of like... well, they think they’re so great or whatever. So anyway... and they think that I’m like a girl, so you know, whatever. So, my brother did get his Master’s and I think my brother, like, totally doubted me and my, like, abilities, but that’s just because I dropped out of [another state institution]...well, I don’t know. So, that just makes me like more driven. They didn’t never really say, so I will probably just go as far as I can if I have the money and the opportunity. I’m definitely going to get a Bachelor’s! There is no doubt about that, but as far as the Master's
program, that is ahead. I'm going to keep it in mind, because with the Master's, I'd like to teach. So as far as expectations go, my father and my brother don't have any faith in me, and my mother will just support whatever I decide. They never just encouraged me. Well, after I told my mother that I was coming to the community college and then I plan to go on and get my Bachelor's, then she started saying stuff like, 'Oh, you can do it' and stuff like that. I'm not going to bring it up anymore. I'm just going to graduate."

Loving Leslie - "My father encouraged me to go to college. He never attended college. In fact, I don't remember if he even graduated from high school. But, he encouraged me to get a college degree. My mother, I know loves me, but she has never pushed me toward college. When I told her I was going, she seemed happy, but that was it. I think she didn't expect me to really do anything positive with my life since I got pregnant and had a baby so young. But my father always wanted me to get my education. He encourages me to be the very best that I can be."
Just Jonathan - “My mother was the person who encouraged me to go to college. Let me rephrase that. My mother made it clear that I had to do something productive with my life. So, she told me to either get my education or go into the service. My parents, especially my mother, expect me to get a college degree. Once I started school she would tell me to take advantage of this opportunity and get my degree. I don’t want to let her down.”

Rowdy Rachel - “My tenth grade teacher encouraged me to go to college. I wasn’t the best student in the world, but Ms. Thomas said that I had potential. She told me to study hard and stay focused and I could go far. I took her advice. This is my second semester and I’m doing fine. Last semester I made the honor roll.”

Flirty Frank - “My boss is the reason that I’m in school. He told me that I should consider going back to get my certificate or Associate degree, because once I got it, my pay would increase and I could
move up faster to management. So, I expect to stay in school at least long enough to get my Associate degree.”

**Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation**

Students in Group 2 were asked to describe the level of their involvement in extracurricular activities at the community college and to assess their academic preparation as measured by their GPAs. Most students indicated that they were not involved in extracurricular activities primarily because they just did not have the time. Just Jonathan and Flirty Frank indicated that between their school and work schedules, time just did not permit them to get involved with other activities. Loving Leslie explained that her son was her major responsibility and, because of her school schedule, she already did not spend as much time with him as she would like, so extra activities were out. Rowdy Rachel simply said that none of the extracurricular activities offered at the school were of interest to her, so she didn’t “waste her time.” Respectable Roy and Cool Connie both indicated that they were involved in activities. Respectable said that
he gets involved with extracurricular art projects, while Cool volunteers with the orientation program.

The GPAs of the students in Group 2 ranged from 2.8 to 3.3. The female students in this group reported the higher GPAs. The male students seemed less concerned about the grade point averages and more interested in "just getting finished".

Transfer Behavior and Intentions

Unlike their African American counterparts in Group 1, the traditional-age Caucasian students in Group 2, for the most part, were more inclined not to transfer. Respectable made it clear that his future work did not really require a degree and his attendance at the community college was to make his mother happy. It was obvious from his comments that his new attitude concerning school was influenced by the discouragement or lack of support he received from a teacher at the university he had previously attended.

Ironically, Cool Connie was an exception. The lack of encouragement and support that she received from her parents and brother
seemed to motivate her to strive harder. Cool indicated that she “will
definitely get the Bachelor’s degree” and perhaps the Master’s, despite her
family’s lack of support and encouragement.

   Loving Leslie’s father, Just Jonathan’s mother, and Flirty Frank’s
employer influenced their plans to attend college. Each of these students
expressed a commitment to completing their work at the community
college and getting the Associate degree, but neither was predisposed to
transferring beyond that point. Loving and Just explained that they wanted
to be able to get better jobs when they finished. Leslie was particularly
cconcerned about being able to care for her son. Flirty’s focus was on
advancement in his current job.

   Rowdy Rachel reported that her strongest source of encouragement
to attend college and to be the best that she could be was a high school
teacher. She accepted that advice and explained that she plans to go as far
as she can. Rosemary said that she intends to get the Associate, the
Bachelor’s and beyond. She said, “As long as I keep my grades up and
stay focused, I can do it.”
Section Four:
Group 3: Nontraditional-Age African American Students
Interview Results

Background Characteristics

The members of Group 3 seemed to develop a mutual fondness for one another right away. Unlike the other three groups, before the interview actually began, the participants introduced themselves and engaged in conversation while enjoying the refreshments. I had to interrupt their discussions so that we could formally begin. In fact, they seemed so comfortable with one another that I asked if they already knew each other. None of them did. After I introduced myself and gave them an overview, I asked them to introduce and tell a little bit about themselves. The students who participated in the focus group interview for Group 3 were asked a series of questions related to their backgrounds.

Group 3 was comprised of six African American, nontraditional-age students: two males, Loud Leroy and Handy Harold, and four females, Honest Hazel, Laughing Lydia, Bouncing Bertha, and Energetic Ethel. A summary of their background characteristics is presented in Table 7.
Table 7: Background Characteristics of African American  
Nontraditional-Age Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>MHE</th>
<th>FHE</th>
<th>Child(ren)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest Hazel</td>
<td>42 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud Larry</td>
<td>49 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>d.k.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughing Lydia</td>
<td>47 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handy Hamilton</td>
<td>36 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouncing Bertha</td>
<td>57 - female</td>
<td>medium high</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>d.k.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic Ethel</td>
<td>51 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>divorced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SES - low: $12K or less; moderate: $12,001 - $21K; medium: $21,001 - $40K; medium high: $40,001 - $70K; high: 70,001 and greater. MHE = Mother's highest level of educational attainment (d.k. means didn't know). FHE = Father's highest level of educational attainment (d.k. means didn’t know).

Honest Hazel, a soft spoken, 42 year old female, indicated that she was married and the mother of three grown children. She described herself as coming from a middle class family with an income in the medium range. She said that her mother attended high school, but her father had only completed the 8th grade.

Forty-nine year old Loud Larry described himself as a “hard-working, fun-loving, people person”. He said that he was married and has four children. His socioeconomic level fell in the medium range. He said that his mother, who had attended college, raised him and his five brothers. He did not know how much schooling his father had.
Laughing Lydia, a 47 year old divorcee, explained that she was the mother of two grown children and the proud grandmother of three, two boys and one girl. She also disclosed that both of her parents were college graduates and that her socioeconomic level would be considered medium high.

The youngest member of Group 3 was Handy Hamilton, a single, 36 year old father of two. Harold indicated that his mother was a high school graduate and she had also attended college for a while. His father also attended high school, but never graduated. Harold said that he believed his father earned his general equivalency degree (GED), but he was not sure. Handy classified his income within the medium range.

A 57 year old widow, Bouncing Bertha indicated that she is the mother of a set of twin boys and one daughter and the “Nana” of four precious grandchildren. Betty admitted that although she came from humble beginnings, her socioeconomic level could be categorized as medium high. She explained that her mother achieved an eighth grade education and she was not really sure about her father’s education. She
just recalled that he worked in an old steel mill when she was a young child.

Energetic Ethel classified herself as having a medium income level. The 51 year old divorced woman was the mother of three. She had four grandchildren and two step-grandchildren. Energetic Ethel indicated that her mother attended the early years of high school, but dropped out to care for her family. Years later, she went back and satisfied the requirements to receive her GED. Her father graduated from high school and attended college briefly before going off to the service.

**Expectations and Encouragement Factors**

The participants were asked to identify what person(s), event or thing encouraged them to attend college. Additionally, they were asked what expectations their parents or significant others had of them in terms of their furthering their education beyond high school and the community college. Excerpts of some of their comments are as follows:

**Honest Hazel** - “For years I have wanted to go to college, but I never thought I had it in me. I married right after high school and started
having children right away. After my kids were school age, I got a job in housekeeping at a very nice hotel. I would talk about going to school, but decided that it was more important to see to it that the kids got a college education. My oldest son graduated with his Master's degree and has a very good job with AT&T. My daughter got her Bachelor's degree and married her college sweetie and moved to Atlanta not too long ago. My baby boy attended college for a year or so, then he got involved with some business venture and is doing really well now. One day, my husband and I were talking and he said, 'Hazel, you have been talking about going to college since Charles (the oldest child) was a baby. The kids are grown and doing fine. If you want to go to school then stop talking about it and just do it!' During the holidays the year before I came to Nubian, I told the kids I was planning to start college next semester. They were so excited. 'Mom that's great,' they said. My baby boy said that he would pay my tuition and my oldest said if I keep my grades up, he and my daughter-in-law would get me something nice. Can you imagine that. My daughter couldn't
believe it. She said, 'You go girl.' They were treating me they way I had treated them for years. That did it for me. Once I actually enrolled and started classes, my husband came in and said, 'Hazel, I'm proud of you.' So, I guess my family's encouragement and support was the little boost I needed to continue my education."

**Loud Larry** - “I came to school because I had to. To keep my job, I had to take this computer class. Of course, I did not want to. I had not been in a classroom in years. I did really well in that first class. I learned a lot and I enjoyed the people, some young enough to be my children and some much older than me. When the class was nearing the end, the instructor announced that he would be teaching another class next semester that is a follow up to the class I was in. I wanted to take it. When I got my grades, I was so excited. I had gotten a “B”. I kind of made some silly mistakes on the final. I talked to my boss and told him that I was interested in continuing. We have made arrangement for me to be reimbursed for school as long as it is related to my job. My supervisor has been encouraging me. He said
that if I continue and get my degree, I should negotiate for a raise and a promotion. That’s my master plan. My family is supportive too, but my wife can not wait until I get completely finished. She is just used to me going to work and coming home. Now, I go to work, leave from there and go to class two nights a week, and on the nights I don’t have class, I have homework. So, I guess work made me come to school, but my personal drive and fulfillment made me stay, not to mention the support from the job and home.”

Laughing Lydia - “After 27 years of marriage, my husband and I divorced after my youngest child finished school. I knew we had problems, every married couple does, but I never expected that. I never had to work, and I didn’t know how to handle the daily business operations of the house, my husband did all of that. After I finished crying, I decided that it was time to take care of myself. I came to campus one afternoon, filled out all of the paperwork and paid my fees for the next semester. I debated between majoring in the Office Careers program and General Studies. I finally decided to major in General
Studies and if something changes I can always change my major. Honest Helen, my children were surprised, too, but they were and are very encouraging and supportive. I raised good children. I thank God for them. I guess it was an event that pushed me into the classroom."

**Handy Hamilton** - “When I finished high school, my mother told me to go on to college. I didn’t. I worked for a while, then I enlisted in the army. I served eight years. When I came back home, it seemed like the only place I could get a job was with the Post Office, which was okay, but I wanted to do more than that. I received a lot of training in engineering-related fields in the service, so I decided to come to school and major in Mechanical Engineering Technology. I have done quite well. I was prompted to attend college because of the need for a career change and because I always remembered the words of my mother, ‘Hamilton, you can’t go wrong going to school.’ She was right.”
**Bouncing Bertha** - "In 1995, my husband walked outside one Saturday morning to pick up the paper and check the mail. On his way back inside he collapsed by the flower bed. The next day he was gone. We had been married for 37 years. I did not know what I was going to do. I actually wanted to die, too, but my children told me that was not an option. I went to Jackson, Mississippi and stayed with my sister for several months just to get away. Everything here [in the city] reminded me of Benjamin. Once I returned, I cleaned up the house and put some of his things away and realized that Ben would want me to get on with my life. We had always talked about if we could live our lives all over what would we do differently. I always said that I would go to college and get my degree. That day in the attic it felt like Ben’s spirit was saying to me that now was my chance to live life again. It was hard, but I called the school to see what I needed to do, and here I am. My children have been wonderful through all of this. Sometimes, I feel like I’m the child and they’re the parents. Honest and Laughing, I have to report my grades to my children, too. At the end of each semester, almost like..."
clockwork, they are calling and asking, ‘How did we do this semester?’ I’m just glad that I have made really good grades.”

**Energetic Ethel** - “My reason for coming to school is very similar to Laughing Lydia’s. Last year, after nearly thirty years of marriage, my husband and I divorced. We had been going through the motions for the past five years or so. I think we began to just tolerate each other. After my - well our - daughter married, we decided that we didn’t have to keep pretending. I had basically been a housewife since before the children were born. Once our daughter married and moved away, we decided to go our separate ways. It was hard, extremely hard in the beginning, but I think we are closer, or should I say better friends, since the divorce. My children and my grands [children] are extremely supportive of my return to school. They are constantly encouraging me and I need that. That’s why I think I work so hard, because I don’t want to let myself or them down. I feel like I don’t have a choice; I have to be successful and get my degree. I got a job as a receptionist in a doctor’s office, so I am
majoring in the Office Careers Program. It was definitely an event that was the reason I came to school at the community college.”

Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation

After a lengthy discussion on encouragement factors, the members of Group 3 were asked about their level of involvement in activities at the community college. I also asked them to discuss their level of academic preparedness as measured by their grade point averages. Each member of the focus group, almost in unison, stated that they were not involved in community college activities. They offered similar reasons for their inactivity.

Loud Larry and Handy Hamilton cited lack of time as their reason for not being involved. Energetic Ethel said that usually the activities that she has considered attending have conflicted with her work schedule. Honest Hazel and Loud Larry both mentioned family obligations as their reason for inactivity. Laughing Linda explained that she was concerned about maintaining her honor roll average so studying for her was more
important than social functions and ball games (Betty agreed). Bouncing
Betty did admit that she had attended a few functions sponsored by the
Student Government Association that were held out in the courtyard of the
City Park Campus, but she “felt out of place”.

The grade point averages for the participants from Group 3 ranged
from a 3.1 to 4.0. The men, Loud Larry and Handy Hamilton, reported the
lowest GPAs, 3.1 and 3.25, respectively. Laughing Lydia indicated that
she has maintained a 3.5 grade point average for the last three semesters.
Honest Hazel revealed that she has a 3.8 GPA and Bouncing and Energetic
both boasted perfect 4.0 averages.

Transfer Behavior and In tensions

Nontraditional-age African American students in Group 3 explained
their future educational plans with respect to transferring to a four-year
university. Nearly all the students in this group did not see transfer in their
future. Loud Leroy said that once he got his Associate degree, his
promotion and his raise he was finished. Handy Harold was not
predisposed to transferring. Rather, he seemed more anxious to complete
the work on his Associate degree so that he could get an improved
occupation. Although Laughing Linda, Bouncing Betty and Energetic Edna had outstanding grade point averages, neither of them indicated that they were predisposed to transferring to a four-year institution to pursue the baccalaureate degree. Each of these students appeared fascinated, even intrigued, by the idea of receiving the Bachelor's degree or another advanced degree, but none indicated that they actually planned to transfer. Honest Helen was the only participant who entertained the idea of transferring. She said that she “would not count anything out.” It would depend on how well she did overall at the community college.

Section Five: Group 4: Nontraditional-Age Caucasian Students
Interview Results

Background Characteristics

Focus Group 4 was composed of seven nontraditional-age Caucasian students. They were: Jazzy James, Magpie Minty, Charismatic Carl, Kind Karla, Polished Pamela, Gentleman George, and Merry Melissa. The background information that they disclosed is summarized in Table 8.
Table 8: Background Characteristics of Caucasian Nontraditional-Age Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>MHE</th>
<th>FHE</th>
<th>Child(ren)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jazzy James</td>
<td>54 - male</td>
<td>medium high</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>6th or 7th</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megpie Minty</td>
<td>29 - female</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>h.s. grad</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic Carl</td>
<td>32 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind Karla</td>
<td>38 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polished Pamela</td>
<td>52 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman George</td>
<td>48 - male</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>col. grad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merry Melissa</td>
<td>64 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>widowed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SES - low: $12K or less; moderate: $12,001 - $21K; medium: $21,001 - $40K; medium high: $40,001 - $70K; high: $70,001 and greater. MHE = Mother’s highest level of educational attainment. FHE = Father’s highest level of educational attainment.

Fifty-four year old Jazzy James indicated that he was a happily married man with no children. He said that neither of his parents completed high school. His mother finished the 8th grade and his father complete the 6th or 7th. Jazzy explained that he and his wife were comfortable and maintain a medium high socioeconomic status.

Megpie Minty, a single mother of three small children, indicated that she was 29 years old. She classified her income level within the moderate range. She said that both of her parents graduated from high school, but her father also took some college courses.

Charismatic Carl was a 33 year old single father of one, who
revealed that his mother is a college graduate and his father was a high school graduate who took some college courses for self-improvement. Charles indicated that his income level placed him in the medium category.

Kind Karin is a 38 year old female. The mother of four was married and classified her socioeconomic level as medium. Karin explained that both of her parents graduated from high school. Her father later graduated from college and her mother had also attended college but had not graduated.

Polished Pamela was a 52 year old mother of five and grandmother of four. She is married and indicated that her socioeconomic status could be classified as medium. Both of Pamela’s parents attended high school, neither of them graduated.

Forty-eight year old Gentleman George indicated that he was a divorced father of three grown sons. George said that he owned his own business and would categorize his income level as high. He explained that both of his parents are college graduates.

Merry Melissa told the group that she was a 64 year old widowed mother and grandmother. She had four children, two boys and two girls,
and six grandchildren, four girls and two boys. Martha said that her parents were the two smartest people she knew, even though her mother only completed the 8th grade and her father the 6th grade. Martha identified her SES level as falling in the medium range.

**Expectations and Encouragement Factors**

During this part of the interview for focus Group 3, the nontraditional-age Caucasian students were asked to explain which persons, event or thing encouraged or prompted them to further their education beyond high school. I also asked them what expectations did their parents or significant others have for them concerning their educational pursuits. Excerpts from their comments revealed the following:

**Jazzy James** - "No one encouraged me to come to school. I’m here because I knew that, if I was going to make it in this world, I would have to have my education. I want to change my area and develop a specialty. I want to get into computer drafting. I’m good at it. Once I get my degree, I will be so much more marketable and make
so much more money. All the encouragement I need comes from my desire to have a better life and my persistence to see it through."

Megpie Minty - "For me, changes in the field. The medical field is changing a lot so that’s what made me come back to school. I wanted to sort of broaden my horizons and see if there were some other thing that I wanted to do besides bedside care, in case I didn’t like the changes that were coming up. Now medicine has a lot of transcription and different courses to give you a great, broad range of things you can try in medicine. And that’s always a nice option to have variety. Some people that I knew had come and taken the course and they enjoyed it and encouraged me to come. So here I am. Oh, and once I complete this program it will put me in a better position to get a higher paying job and that’s important for me as a single mother."

Charismatic Carl - “I came to the community college because it was right down the street, literally, and because I don’t know what I want to
major in or what I want to be when I grow up. (Members of the group laughed). No, seriously. I was an okay student in high school, but after I graduated I went to the job market and I have done pretty good for myself, but I want more. My mother, well both my parents, but especially my mother, expected and encouraged me to go to school and get a degree. Now, I have a child that just made one last Friday. I don’t have a choice but to grow up. My parents encourage me and expect me to get my Associate degree and transfer on to get the Bachelor's too. Right now, I’m going to take it one semester at a time.”

Kind Karla - “I’m at Nubian because I wanted a career change. And this was the only place that was holding this class in the area that I wanted. Plus, I have small children, so I need to come either during the week when they’re in school or on a Saturday, like I did last semester, or a night class. And also, I couldn’t go away to school. You know, it’s kind of hard. My husband knows that I want to get this certification and he is very supportive. He helps out with the
children when I can’t be there, which has made coming back easier.
I had gone to college once before and it was just too hard to juggle everything. Now that I’m older and more focused it seems easier. I just want to get finished.”

Polished Pamela - “I am one of those people who has to stay active to keep my mind functioning. I have been working in the same job and the same position for 20 years. I could go to work and do my job with my eyes closed — sleep. I stopped feeling challenged. I just had a routine. I was in a rut. A lady at the office, who works on the other side in purchasing, and I were talking in the break room one day and she told me that she had been going to school for the last couple of semesters and she was nine hours shy of her Certificate in Office Careers. I asked her a little about the program and how hard were the classes. She explained everything to me. When I got home, I told John [her husband] that I thought I wanted to go to college. He laughed. I said, ‘John, I am serious. I know I can do it if Ann [co-worker] can, and she is almost finished.’ Once he saw
that I was seriously considering this, he began to encourage me. He would come home and ask if I went to pick up the information from the school yet. ‘How much is this going to cost anyway.’ I think that’s what he was really worried about, paying all that money if I wasn’t serious. When I finally completed the packet and got ready to register it wasn’t as expensive as John thought it would be. I took six hours last semester and I got a 4.0 average. John was more excited than I was. He called each of our children one Sunday afternoon and just bragged about my grades. Now, I’m trying to convince him to come and work toward the engineering degree he always wanted. I’m satisfied with my decision to return to school.

So, I guess my unwillingness to just live a mundane life is what prompted me to continue my education and the support of my family and co-workers has made it easier.”

**Gentleman George** - “Let me put it in a nutshell. I never intended to come to college. I have always been very good with cars. It has put my children through school, bought a house and several cars, and
afforded me a comfortable life. Two years ago, my wife left. Just like that. She handled all of the accounting and stuff with the books. That was just not my area. Now it is. I decided that I would never be in that position again. I came to school to take some courses in business management and accounting, and I have done a decent job. My children and my girlfriend are really supportive. The boys help out around the shop when I have to be in classes and Sharon [his girlfriend] works the phones, writes receipts and stuff like that.”

Merry Melissa - “I’m 64 years old. Now, you know I didn’t plan to be in school at this age. Two years ago my husband of nearly 45 years died. He had been sick with cancer for some time. Before he died, he told me, ‘Mel (that’s what he called me), don’t you go and stop living. You have too much life ahead of you. I will be in a better place.’ After he was gone, I found myself getting depressed and just sitting around the house, and that just was not me. Art and I were always doing something or going someplace. We were both retired and now it was time to enjoy the journey. I guess it was last year
that my grands came to visit for the summer. Thomas and Terry are both computer whizzes. They showed me how to work the computer and I became pretty good at it. When my son, Tom, came to get the boys he said, ‘Mom, why don’t you go to school and take computers as a leisure course?’ Thomas and Terry chimed in, ‘Yea Muh, that would be awesome. Next, summer you can teach us stuff.’ When they left, I called Nubian and found out that they did offer non-credit courses in computers. I signed up and took the first one, Computer Fundamentals. I enjoyed it so much that I have started to take at least one course per semester for credit. My family keeps encouraging me to stick to it and stay active. My teachers are wonderful, too, but more than anything else I like the other students. They call me Moms [she laughs]! We study together, work on projects together, and sometimes just talk about life. They don’t treat me like ‘that old lady in the class’. They treat me like a friend and that is what I think keeps me going.”
Community College Involvement and Preparation

In this stage of the interview, the group was asked about their involvement in extracurricular activities. They were also asked to assess their academic preparedness as measured by their grade point averages. Each one of the nontraditional-age Caucasian focus group participants indicated that they were not involved in activities at the community college. Jazzy James, Polished Pamela, Gentleman George and Merry Melissa each cited commitment to their studies as the reason that they were not actively involved in extracurricular programs. Kind Karla and Magpie Minty explained that with school, work and family obligations, there just was no time for additional activities. Charismatic Carl candidly admitted, “None of the activities that I am aware of interest me. Frankly, I can think of so many other things to do with my time.”

The grade point averages of Group 4 ranged from 2.5 to a perfect 4.0. Both Charismatic Carl (2.7) and Magpie Minty (2.85) indicated that they wanted to bring their averages to at least a 3.0 this semester. However, Gentleman George was satisfied with the 2.5 grade point average that he had earned. Jazzy James explained that the Spring 1997
semester was going to be his hardest semester yet, but if he could maintain his 3.2 average and not let it drop, he would be content. Kind Karla admitted that when she first entered college as a teenager her grades were deplorable. She said she was immature and just not serious about school. So, she was very proud of her 3.7 cumulative average and honor roll status. Polished Pamela and Merry Melissa both boasted GPAs of 4.0.

**Transfer Behavior and Intentions**

Some of the nontraditional-age Caucasian students explained that they had thought about transferring to baccalaureate institutions. However, when they were asked specifically about their educational plans and pursuits beyond the two-year college, none expressed an interest in following through with their original thoughts.

Jazzy James said that he could not make any more money with the Bachelor's degree than he could with an Associate degree. He stated, "After I complete the Associate degree, I intend to work full-time, save some money and plan for my retirement, so I can do some traveling with my wife."
Magpie explained that the Associate degree would give her what she needs to be competitive in the medical field. She said that she plans to get her A.S. [Associate of Science] degree, and get a real job, so that she can make a better life for her children. She also said that if the medical field changes again very drastically, to the point that a B.A. was necessary, then she would consider working toward that, but otherwise the Associate was enough for her.

Charismatic Carl explained that his parents, especially his mother, had encouraged him to persist on to the baccalaureate, but he was not quite sure what he wanted to do. He said that he will “take things one semester at a time.” He also added, “that does not mean that I won’t transfer, I’m just not sure right now if and when.”

Kind Karla, Polished Pamela, Gentleman George, and Merry Melissa all indicated that they have no interest in transferring to a four-year institution. Karla said that once she gets her Associate degree she is finished. Polished explained that she was satisfied with what she has been able to accomplish so far, and once she gets her Certificate in Office
Careers, she hoped to advance in her job. Gentleman George admitted that he came to Nubian to acquire a specific skill in business and accounting. He explained that he really does not have any intention of even completing the Associate degree or Certificate Program. He said that he lives a very comfortable life and is content where he is. Merry Melissa simply said that she is enjoying her time in school and will take one or two classes each semester until she finishes her Associate degree program, but after that, she’s going to spend time traveling to see “the grandkids.”

Section Six:
Cross Group Analysis of Focus Groups 1 - 4

In the previous four sections of this chapter, I looked at four areas of interest for each individual focus group interview. Using a cross-group analysis technique that employs predetermined categorical schemes, in this section I analyze and contrast the four groups in four main areas: Background Characteristics, Expectations and Encouragement Factors, Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation, and Transfer Behavior and Intentions. I present a summary of some of the preliminary findings of each of the focus group interviews in Table 9.
Background Characteristics

A total of 26 community college students from the research site were interviewed for the qualitative portion of this research. The groups involved ten male and 16 female participants, 13 traditional-age and 13 nontraditional-age students, ranging in age from 18 years to 64 years. The ethnic division was also equal. There were 13 African American and 13 Caucasian students, representing incomes from $12,000 or less to more than $70,000. Overall, male students reported higher SES levels than females, which was consistent with the quantitative research findings of this work. The qualitative sample also included 14 singles, six married, two widowed, three divorced and one engaged student. Sixteen of those were parents and ten were not. The combination of the four focus groups indicated that they represented a cross section of the community college population (see Appendix C, Table A).

Expectations and Encouragement Factors

With few exceptions, the Expectations and Encouragement Factors results revealed that the responses were consistent along age lines.
Table 9: Cross-Group Analysis of Focus Groups Interviews, 1 - 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age-Gender</th>
<th>Encouragement</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American Traditional-Age Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Ashley</td>
<td>24-female</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>P U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable Calvin</td>
<td>22-male</td>
<td>h.s. janitor</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>P U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild Monica</td>
<td>24-female</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>P N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dashing Diana</td>
<td>23-female</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicking Kiva</td>
<td>19-female</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackin Mohammed</td>
<td>21-male</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>P U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough Tammy</td>
<td>21-female</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caucasian Traditional-Age Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectable Roy</td>
<td>20-male</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool Connie</td>
<td>22-female</td>
<td>self</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving Leslie</td>
<td>18-female</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Jonathan</td>
<td>21-male</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowdy Rachel</td>
<td>19-female</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flirty Franklin</td>
<td>24-male</td>
<td>boss</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American Nontraditional-Age Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest Hazel</td>
<td>42-female</td>
<td>spouse/kids</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>P U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud Larry</td>
<td>39-male</td>
<td>supervisor</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughing Lydia</td>
<td>47-female</td>
<td>l. c.</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handy Hamilton</td>
<td>36-male</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouncing Bertha</td>
<td>57-female</td>
<td>l. c./kids</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic Ethel</td>
<td>51-female</td>
<td>l. c./kids</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caucasian Nontraditional-Age Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazzy James</td>
<td>54-male</td>
<td>self</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magpie Minty</td>
<td>29-female</td>
<td>l. c./job</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic Carl</td>
<td>32-male</td>
<td>mother/dad</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind Karla</td>
<td>38-female</td>
<td>career change</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polished Pamela</td>
<td>52-female</td>
<td>spouse</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman George</td>
<td>48-male</td>
<td>l. c.</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merry Melissa</td>
<td>64-female</td>
<td>l. c.</td>
<td>✭</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Encouragement - Lc.: life change(s). Involvement - ✭: actively involved in activities; ✭: not involved in activities at all; ✭: moderately involved in activities. GPA - Grade point averages are based on a 4.00 scale. Transfer - P: predisposed to transferring; Y: yes, intends to transfer; N: no plans to transfer; U: undecided about transfer.
Irrespective of ethnicity, traditional-age students overwhelmingly indicated that their mothers were directly or indirectly responsible for their college attendance and to some extent future educational aspirations and goals. In other rare instances, students cited their father, him or herself, a high school teacher, an employer, and a high school janitor as the person who encouraged them to attend college and/or to transfer.

For seven out of the 13 nontraditional-age students, a major event, occurrence, or life change prompted their college attendance. For three students, going through a divorce was the deciding factor. The death of a spouse was the impetus for two participants. Changes in the occupational field and desired career changes were factors for two other group members. The remaining members stated that their self-determination or the encouragement of a parent, spouse, or significant other, such as a child or children, grandchildren, or a supervisor, moved them to consider or enter college.
Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation

For most of the students included in this work, involvement in community college activities was not a priority. In fact, only two students, both traditional-age Caucasians, indicated that they were actively involved in activities; one nontraditional-age student said that she occasionally participated in extracurricular involvements, and the remaining 23 explained that with work and family obligations, class and school responsibilities and commitments, no interest in the planned activities, and virtually no free time, involvement in extracurricular functions was just not feasible.

Academic Preparation, as measured by grade point average, showed that nontraditional-age students fared better in the classrooms than their counterparts, averaging at least 3.43 on a 4.00 scale. Traditional-age students had a mean GPA of 2.67 on a 4.00 scale. In both age categories, African American students produced higher grade point averages than did Caucasian students, a finding which is inconsistent with the quantitative results in this work. African Americans between the age of 17 and 24 had an average GPA of 2.67, while white
students in the same age grouping reported an average of 2.65. For nontraditional African America students, the average grade point of 3.61 was higher than that of the Caucasian nontraditional-age participants, who reported an average of 3.28. Also, in the area of academic preparedness, female students in each group consistently had higher GPAs than the male students.

Transfer Behavior and Intentions

Interviews with traditional-age black and white students indicated that all seven of the African American students were predisposed to transferring, but only three indicated that they would follow through on those aspirations and plans. The majority of Caucasian students, on the other hand, indicated that they had no real desire to transfer to a four-year institution. The two white students with the highest GPAs expressed a desire to persist on to the baccalaureate and possibly beyond.

Neither group of nontraditional-age students were committed to transferring to a baccalaureate institution. Only one student indicated that she was predisposed to continuing her education, but she had not completely decided whether or not she would actually transfer. Of the
remaining 12 students, ten said that they had no plans to transfer and the other two were undecided.

Section Seven: Qualitative Summary

The qualitative results of this study were based on the findings of four focus group interviews composed of 26 students from one urban community college in south Louisiana. In Group 1, seven African American traditional-age students were interviewed. In Group 2, six Caucasian traditional-age students were questioned. In Group 3, six nontraditional-age African American students, and in Group 4, seven Caucasian nontraditional-age students were included in the qualitative data collection process.

Using a predetermined categorical scheme, four areas were addressed during the conversational-guide approach interviews. They were: Background Characteristics, Expectations and Encouragement Factors, Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation, and Transfer Behavior and Intentions. The findings show that for traditional-age students, their mothers exerted the greatest influence on.
their attendance patterns. However, the educational expectations of mothers and other significant individuals did not directly impact the transfer plans of students in this two-year college. Of the students who had made definite plans to further their education beyond the community college, all were female.

For nontraditional-age students, life changes, such as death of a spouse, divorce, or career changes, had a lot to do with their attendance patterns. Additionally, significant others played a more prominent role in the lives of students 25 years of age and older than did parents. Nontraditional students also boasted higher grade point averages than traditional students. That notwithstanding, fewer nontraditional students expressed an interest in furthering their educational pursuits. For the majority of traditional and nontraditional African American and Caucasian students, there was no room for involvement in community college activities. For most students, work, school, and family obligations took precedence over extracurricular involvement.
In the final chapter, I present conclusions, discussion and implications for this work.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

In this chapter, I briefly restate the research problem and describe the significance of the study, recapitulate the purpose and design of the study, summarize the research questions and hypotheses that were investigated in the quantitative phase and the corresponding findings, interpret those findings consistently with previous educational research and theory on college choice, present the findings from the qualitative phase, identify limitations of the study, and offer implications for theory, practice and future research.

Restatement of the Research Problem and Significance of the Study

College choice research has primarily concentrated on status attainment and the actual postsecondary attendance patterns of high school students. As a result, knowledge has accrued around some components of the college choice process. The problem is that the body of literature on the educational plans of students has not fully examined the college choice
process that students in 2-year colleges undertake. Moreover, it completely ignores the duplicative nature of the college choice process in which community college students are engaged.

Through the years, researchers have identified factors which influence the decisions of the general high school population, but have failed to investigate whether differences exist between those factors and those which have an impact on community college attendees. Greater insight into the predisposition stage of college choice, generally, and implications for both of the college-going populations, particularly, can be gleaned by identifying the variables that are likely to influence students in 2-year colleges.

Further, a comparative analysis which contains specific variables that might affect the decisions of high school and community college students would yield great benefits to educational researchers and students, college and university admissions officers or enrollment managers, two-year college and four-year university administrators, federal and state agencies and higher education institutions, and college and university academic advisors.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the applicability of an expanded version of the Hossler and Stage (1992) model of predisposition to attend college. The Hossler and Stage model was designed for high school students and reflects many of the aspects of the lifestyles of young adults (i.e., living with parents, etc.). The modification presented in this study entailed extending this model to the post secondary setting.

Specifically, this study focused on the applicability of a model of the predisposition of community college students to transfer to four-year institutions for baccalaureate degrees.

Design of the Study

The study was completed in two major phases. In the first phase of the study, I focused on the quantitative analysis of the data collected from a 17 item survey instrument which I designed. The survey was based on: a) the characteristics of postsecondary educational plans that were included in this study, and b) the previous factors that were posited to affect postsecondary aspirations. In the quantitative section, I also addressed the following research questions and hypotheses associated with each:
1. What are the factors that influence the decision of community college students to consider transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

2. Are currently identified factors in the development of educational plans for high school students the same as those which influence students in two-year colleges?

3. Are male or female community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

4. Are African American or white community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

5. Are traditional- or nontraditional-age community college students more likely to be predisposed to transferring to baccalaureate institutions?

6. How adequately does an expanded version of the Hossler and Stage (1992) predisposition model of college choice classify community college students with respect to their predisposition to transfer to four-year institutions?

The information collected in the quantitative phase of this study was based on a correlational research design and descriptive statistics were computed for each variable.

In phase two of the study, I examined the qualitative data collected through four focus group interviews with traditional-age African American and Caucasian students and nontraditional-age African American and
Caucasian students at the community college. Using predetermined categorical schemes, I conducted conversational-guide approach interviews. Four major foci that were addressed were: Background Characteristics, Expectations and Encouragement Factors, Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation, and Transfer Behavior and Intentions.

Summary of Quantitative Research Findings

Descriptive statistics revealed that the selected sample was consistent with the accessible population. Specifically, the racial composition, gender, age breakdown, and SES means were consistent. Bivariate correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between and among the nine independent variables and the one dependent variable, predisposition to transfer. These analyses produced several findings:

1. SES and student academic achievement, as measured by GPA, are positively correlated and statistically significant. Measured at the .05 alpha level, this correlation yielded an r
value of .0775, and suggests that the higher the SES, the higher the GPA of community college students is likely to be.

2. Parents' education level (PAREDUC) had a statistically significant positive effect upon students' personal educational expectations and aspirations (EXPECT 2). This correlation produced an r value .2048 and a probability value of .0001 when it was measured at the .05 level of significance.

3. The correlation between parents' and significant others' expectations (EXPECT 1) and students in 2-year colleges' personal educational expectations (EXPECT 2) yielded a statistically significant positive r value of .4783.

4. Male students were found to have higher incomes than female students, producing a Pearson correlation coefficient of -.1170.
5. Non-traditional-age students maintained higher academic standings than did traditional-age students, producing an r value of .2397.

6. The correlation between AGE and TRANSFER showed that non-traditional-age students indicated lower personal educational expectations and aspirations and were less predisposed to transfer than were traditional students. The relationship between AGE and TRANSFER yielded a statistically significant r value of -.1012 and a probability value of .0001.

7. According to the correlation between AGE and PAREDUC, younger students indicated that their parents had received more education than did older students. This relationship produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of -.1472.
8. White students indicated higher levels of education for their parents/significant others than did African American students ($r = -0.1758$).

9. The correlation between RACE and EXPECT 2 indicated that African Americans showed higher levels of personal educational expectancy ($r = 0.0808$) that did their Caucasian counterparts with respect to transfer.

10. Male ($r = -0.0758$) and African American ($r = 0.0895$) students indicated a greater amount of involvement in activities than did their female and white counterparts.

11. PAREDUC and SES indicated an $r$ value of 0.3928, which suggests that the higher the level of education for parents/significant others the greater the income level.
Quantitative Conclusions and Discussion

Several of these findings are consistent with the work of previous researchers. For example, my findings corroborate the findings of Ekstrom, 1985; Hossler and Stage, 1992; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Tuttle, 1981; Hossler, Braxton, Coopersmith, 1989; and Lee and Frank, 1990, who all found that SES and student academic achievement are positively and significantly correlated.

Consistent with the works of Hossler and Stage, 1987; Jackson, 1986; Manski and Wise, 1983; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Trent and Medsker, 1967; and others, I found that the relationship between parent education and students’ personal educational expectations and aspirations is statistically significant.

Previously, several researchers conducting descriptive studies (Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987; Conklin and Dailey, 1981; Ekstrom, 1985; Hossler and Stage, 1988 and 1992; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Smith and Bers, 1990; Murphy, 1981) have pointed out that there is a significant relationship between parental expectations and educational aspirations of
high school students. My findings document the view that this is also true for community college students.

Additionally, in this study, I discovered that some of the findings previous educational researchers have reported for high school students are not consistent with the findings for the community college population. For example, previous researchers (Austin, 1985; Otto, 1976; Spady, 1975; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Hossler and Stage, 1992; and others), found that there was a positive significant relationship between involvement in school activities and predisposition to attend college for high school students. I found that although this relationship is positive in this work, the correlation yielded an r value of .0060 and a probability value of .8205 at $\alpha = .05$, which suggests that for community college students involvement in activities has little, if any, influence on student predisposition to transfer. Further, this finding suggests that the predisposition of 2-year college students to transfer is prompted by some factor(s) other than extracurricular involvement (e.g., desired achievement of a long-term educational goal, personal educational aspirations or encouragement or expectations of others, etc.).
Previous researchers (Hossler and Stage, 1992; Jackson, 1986; Litten, 1982; Manski and Wise, 1983; Maxwell, 1992) have also reported that the higher a student's academic achievement (GPA) the more likely they are to attend a postsecondary institution. Surprisingly, the correlation between student ability and accomplishment, as measured by GPA, and predisposition to transfer revealed a negative non-statistically significant relationship. This suggests that some factor(s) other than a student's academic ability play a more major role in determining students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution to continue their educational pursuits (e.g., acquiring the skills needed to get or advance in a job, age, the expectations of self and others, etc.).

In my work, SES and predisposition to transfer produced a positive correlation, which suggests that the higher the socioeconomic status the more likely the students would be predisposed to transfer; however, this relationship was not statistically significant. Previous researchers (Ekstrom, 1985; Hossler and Stage, 1992; Stage and Hossler, 1989; Tuttle, 1981; Hossler, Braxton, Coopersmith, 1989; Lee and Frank, 1990) found
that SES and predisposition to attend college in high school students was not only positive, but statistically significant.

Summary of the Tests of Hypotheses

Hypotheses associated with each research question were tested. To address research questions and hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4, the Pearson correlation was used. To address research questions and hypotheses 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, point biserial correlations were used. To address research question and hypothesis 10, a hierarchical logistic regression procedure was used. The results are as follows:

For Hypothesis 1, As socioeconomic status increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase. I failed to rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there is insufficient evidence to support the claim that higher socioeconomic levels foster predisposition to transfer in students at community college.

For Hypothesis 2, As the parental educational attainment level increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase, I rejected the null hypothesis and
concluded that a higher educational attainment level for parents of students in 2-year colleges did increase the educational aspirations of these students to transfer.

For Hypothesis 3, **As student ability and accomplishment increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase**, I failed to reject the null hypothesis, and concluded that community college students with high GPAs are not necessarily predisposed to transferring to a baccalaureate institution.

For Hypothesis 4, **As parents' and significant others' expectations and encouragement increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will also increase**, I rejected the null hypothesis, and concluded that community college students’ predisposition to transfer increases with increased levels of encouragement and expectations from parents and significant others.

For Hypothesis 5, **As personal educational expectations and aspirations increase, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will also increase**, I rejected the null hypothesis, and I concluded that community college students’
predisposition to transfer is significantly and positively influenced by the students’ personal educational expectation/aspirations.

For Hypothesis 6, As the involvement in college activities increases, community college students’ predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase, I did not reject the null hypothesis, because the data showed that for community college students, involvement in college activities is not correlated with predisposition to transfer.

For Hypothesis 7, Female students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transferring to a four-year institution, the null hypothesis was substantiated and therefore I failed to reject it. I found that females are more likely to be predisposed to transfer; however, the correlation is not statistically significant.

For Hypothesis 8, Black students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than white students, I rejected the null hypothesis of no association, and concluded that African American students are more likely to be predisposed to transfer than their white counterparts.
For Hypothesis 9, **Nontraditional-age students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transferring to a four-year institution**, I rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that nontraditional-age students at community colleges are not as predisposed to transfer as traditional-age students.

**Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis**

The hierarchical logistic regression procedures utilized in this study involved entering the nine independent variables included in this analysis in sequence according to the formulated conceptual model. The analyses focused on the patterns of significant relationships and tested Hypothesis 10 which determined the overall explanatory power of the model as additional predictors were added.

The logistic regression analyses results indicated that Models 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Further, standardized parameter estimates showed that when all nine variables were included in the hierarchical regression analysis, EXPECT 2 (students personal educational expectations and aspirations) and AGE were the only statistically significant predictors. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis.
and concluded that the explanatory power of the expanded Hossler and Stage model of predisposition was statistically significant.

Summary of Qualitative Research Findings, Conclusions and Discussion

The qualitative results of this study were based on the findings of four focus group interviews of 26 students at a two-year, urban community college in south Louisiana. Using a predetermined categorical scheme and a conversational-guide approach, I addressed four areas during the interviews with traditional- and nontraditional-aged African American and Caucasian students. They were: Background Characteristics, Expectations and Encouragement Factors, Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation, and Transfer Behavior and Intentions.

Background Characteristics

The community college participants included in the four focus group interviews represented a cross section of the population from the research site. Of the 26 students involved in the qualitative phase, male students reported higher socioeconomic levels than did female students and African American students reported higher income levels than Caucasian students.
Traditional-age African American and Caucasian students reported higher parent education levels than did their nontraditional-age equals.

The qualitative sample also included 14 singles, six married, two widowed, one engaged and three divorced students. Sixteen of those were parents and ten were not. For nontraditional-age students, marital status influenced why these students attended the community college and motivated their decision to transfer to a four-year institution to pursue the baccalaureate degree. For both traditional- and nontraditional-age students, family factors (the students' personal parental responsibilities) were found to influence their predisposition to transfer.

**Expectations and Encouragement Factors**

The findings show that mothers exerted the greatest amount of influence on the current attendance patterns of traditional-age students. However, the educational expectations of mothers and other significant individuals did not directly impact upon the transfer plans of 2-year college students. Despite the desires and expectations of parents and significant others, once 2-year college students were enrolled in the community college, their transfer behavior was determined by the expectations and
goals they had developed for themselves. Female students had a greater commitment to transfer and had made definitive plans to further their education beyond the community college.

A significant life change or dramatic personal event, such as death of a spouse, divorce, or career changes, influenced the attendance patterns of nontraditional-age students, a finding that is consistent with that of Aslanian and Brickell (1980). Additionally, significant others played a more prominent role in the lives of students who were 25 years of age and older than did their parents. A reason may be that nontraditional-age students had moved away from home, married, and/or support themselves. Also, parents may not be as insistent as they once were about their "grown children's" educational plans. Many nontraditional-age students also reported that their parents were deceased.

Community College Involvement and Academic Preparation

For the majority of traditional- and nontraditional-age African American and Caucasian students, there was no room for involvement in community college activities. These students allowed work, school, and family obligations to take precedence over extracurricular involvement.
However, I discovered that this finding was inconsistent with what previous researchers had found. The quantitative results suggested that African Americans tend to be more active in extracurricular involvement at this particular institution, but the qualitative data did not support that claim. Further, male students were expected to be more involved in activities than female students. Of the participants in the focus group interviews who reported active involvement in community college activities, one was male and the other female.

Nontraditional-age students also boasted higher grade point averages than traditional-age students. That not withstanding, fewer nontraditional-age students expressed an interest in furthering their educational pursuits. This was surprising since previous research has found that high school students who have higher GPAs are more likely to be predisposed to attending college than those with lower averages.

Further, the majority of nontraditional-age students who participated in the focus group interviews indicated that their attendance at the community college was terminal. Some stated that they had no intentions of even completing the associate degree. Of those who intended to persist...
to complete the associate degree, most indicated "that was it," and others stated that they were content with their financial situation and a bachelor's degree could not substantially enhance their socioeconomic level.

One nontraditional-age student, an African American female, indicated that she was predisposed to transferring, but she was undecided if and when she would actually follow through with her transfer aspiration and plans. Her initial plans to attend college were deferred because of family responsibilities which had since been satisfied. Interestingly, the role that she had previously played in the college choice decisions of her children was now being assumed by them in her educational pursuits.

Other nontraditional-age students pointed out that they were attending the community college to 1) acquire skills that were mandated or necessary for a raise, promotion, or other job-related reason, 2) gain knowledge in an area of self-fulfillment, 3) satisfy a previously interrupted educational goal, and 4) overcome the results of a life changing situation or event.

Transfer Behavior and Intentions

Hossler (1985) reported that after students complete the predisposition phase of the college choice process, they conduct extensive
searches before selecting the institution in which they will enroll and matriculate. Bers and Smith (1990) reported that for nontraditional-age students, the search and choice phases were collapsed into one step of deciding to return to college and deciding which college to attend. The findings in this work relative to the transfer behavior of community college students, traditional- and nontraditional-age, are consistent with the findings of Bers and Smith (1990). The traditional-age students who were predisposed to transfer had already decided which college they would attend. For students who were undecided about transferring, the search and choice stages of the college choice process would be employed. Students who were undecided, for example, indicated that they would “take it one semester at a time” and if they decided to go on to a four-year institution, they would evaluate those universities to see which one best fit their needs. Cost, proximity, course offerings, and acceptance of course credits already earned were cited as factors in determining to which institution they would transfer.

Intersection of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results

Qualitative methods have been used to add breadth, depth, and detail by offering an explanation of what was found in the quantitative portion of
a given work. Patton (1990) maintains that qualitative research offers richer meanings to those areas under study, and “can put flesh on the bones of quantitative results, bringing the results to life through in-depth case elaboration” (p. 132).

For the purposes of my research, the qualitative component was included to elucidate what survey respondents may have meant by the responses they offered in the quantitative section. This section shows how the results from both the qualitative and quantitative sections intersect to illustrate how the research fits together as a whole.

Quantitatively, several discoveries were made. The qualitative findings in some cases corroborated these findings, but in other cases the qualitative results were inconsistent with the quantitative findings. For example, SES and GPA were shown to have a positive and statistically significant correlation. The results of the focus group interviews concur with this finding and suggest that the higher the socioeconomic status the higher the grade point average is likely to be.

Parents’ education level (PAREDUC) was found to have a statistically significant positive effect upon students’ personal educational
expectations and aspirations (EXPECT 2). The focus groups revealed that to some extent this was true for traditional-age students, but for nontraditional-age students parents’ education did not appear to influence the personal expectations of these students at community colleges.

The correlation between parents’ and significant others’ expectations (EXPECT 1) and 2-year college students’ personal educational expectations (EXPECT 2) yielded a statistically significant positive r value. However, the qualitative findings illuminated that although parents and significant others encouraged students at community college to transfer to baccalaureate institutions, ultimately these two-year college students were motivated by their personal educational expectations and aspirations or some other event or occurrence.

Male students were found to have higher income levels than female students, producing a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.1170. In the focus group setting, the male participants each reported medium, medium high, or high socioeconomic levels. Of the students who reported low income levels, all were female.
In the quantitative portion of this study, nontraditional-age students indicated that they maintained higher academic standings than did traditional-age students, producing an r value of .2397. This finding was confirmed in the qualitative portion of my research. Of the 26 students who participated in the focus group interviews, the average grade point average among the traditional-age students who participated in the interviews was 2.67 on a 4.0 scale, and for nontraditional-age students the average GPA was 3.43.

Although nontraditional-age students boasted higher GPAs, the correlation between AGE and TRANSFER showed that these students indicated lower personal educational expectations and aspirations and were less predisposed to transfer than were traditional students. The relationship between AGE and TRANSFER yielded a statistically significant r value of -.1012 and a probability value of .0001. During the interview phase this finding was documented. Overwhelmingly, nontraditional-age students indicated that transfer was not in their future plans.
According to the correlation between AGE and PAREDUC, younger students indicated that their parents had received more education than did older students. This relationship produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of -.1472. The focus group findings were compatible with the quantitative results. The majority of the younger students at community colleges identified high school graduation, college attendance, or college graduation as the parents' highest level of completion. Older students indicated grade school, some high school, GED, or that they did not know of the educational level of their parents.

White students indicated higher levels of education for their parents than did African American students. This was verified in the focus group researcher; however, only two of the 26 students were predisposed to furthering their education beyond the community college.

The correlation between RACE and EXPECT 2 indicated that African Americans showed higher levels of personal educational expectancy (r=.0808) than did their Caucasian counterparts with respect to transfer. This research and the work of Hanson (1990) found that African American students are more predisposed to transfer than their Caucasian
counterparts; however, few of these students follow through with their initial aspirations. The qualitative portion of this work concurs with Hanson's finding if only African American traditional-age students are considered. When age is held constant the evidence is less definitive. Regardless of race, nontraditional-age students showed very little desire to continue their education beyond the community college.

Although male and African American students indicated a greater amount of involvement in activities than did their female and white counterparts in the quantitative data analysis, I discovered through the interviews that of the three students who indicated involvement in activities, two indicated an active involvement and one expressed a moderate involvement. Of these students, there was one African American female, one Caucasian female and one Caucasian male. Based on the focus group interviews, this finding was inconsistent with the survey results.

The relationship between PAREDUC and SES indicated that the higher the level of education for parents/significant others the greater the income level. According to the focus group interview findings, this is true
of traditional-age students, but nontraditional-age students’ socioeconomic levels were not predicated on the educational levels of their parents or significant others.

The quantitative and qualitative findings in this work move us closer to understanding the college choice process in which community college students engage. However, because college choice is a complex and developing area of study and the community college populace has not been fully investigated, the need for additional research in this area is critical to increasing the understanding of broad-based postsecondary educational plans of all students, generally, and the predisposition phase of this process, specifically, as it applies to students at two-year colleges.

This study supports the findings of previous educational researchers, while at the same time the applicability of their findings to a community college population rendered previous findings to be inconsistent with some of the conclusions reached here. The usefulness of the models introduced here to expand the body of research in the college choice literature should be further explored. In the final sections of this chapter, I discuss the limitations of this study, implications for future research, and policy and theory development.
Limitations of the Study

This study is not without limitations. First, the sample was drawn from a single community college in south Louisiana due to cost, availability, and time restrictions. Therefore, the results are severely limited in their generalizability to other states (and perhaps to other areas in Louisiana). Moreover, my conclusions are, at best, tentative.

Second, the sample for this research consisted only of African American and Caucasian American students at the 2-year college, because the state of Louisiana does not have significant numbers of other ethnics in the population. Further, this sample contained more African Americans (48%) than it did White students (36.8%), even though the population was comprised of 40.2% Black students and 46.1% Caucasian American. As a result, the generalizations from this work, in this regard, should be cautious and limited only to include these two ethnic groups.

Third, the quantitative data analyses are based on correlational statistics which cannot establish cause and effect relationships between and among the variables being correlated. However, the data are useful in identifying the possible relationships between the dependent variable and
the independent variables. Moreover, this work provides the basis for future theory-testing studies in which causality can be explored.

Finally, Patton (1990) explains that qualitative interviewing methods have limitations, because the perceptions and perspectives reported by the participants are always subject to distortion due to personal biases, anger, anxiety, prevailing conditions and/or lack of awareness. These things notwithstanding, this work relied on the dual procedures using quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to help minimize the impact of these limitations.

**Implications**

**Implications for Practice**

Not withstanding necessary caution, the results found herein have some implications for state and federal policy makers responsible for developing policies related to student financial aid, administrators at community colleges and baccalaureate institutions, those responsible for the enrollment management and recruiting functions at both two- and four-year institutions, and educational researchers who study student college choice, specifically the predisposition phase of the process.
State and federal policy makers can use the information found in this work to project the levels of resources that will be needed for various financial aid programs in future years. This is particularly germane when one considers the increasing numbers of nontraditional-age students who are exercising the option of entering college for the first time, returning to complete a program begun at an earlier period, or seeking the ability to acquire the skills necessary to satisfy employers' need for a different, or more technologically advanced workforce.

With recent changes in policies governing social programs, this research will also allow policy architects to design programs that will better meet the needs of individuals whose status is altered by changes in these social programs. For example, nontraditional-age welfare recipients would probably be more likely drawn to a community college campus to satisfy the requirements for a general equivalency diploma (GED) than to the local high school, because of the environmental comfort level they would experience because of their commonalities with other college-age students. Policy makers, desiring to trim social programs, and community college administrators, desiring to elevate the educational attainment levels
and socioeconomic status of the communities the institutions serve, can
design cooperative agreements whereby each could achieve an expressed
goal or purpose.

Maintaining a decreasing level of public support for a public
services recipient (who becomes a two-year college student) could be tied
to a social agency's expectancy of the student's continuation in a skills
enhancement or academic program in the community college and beyond
which would lead to future self-sufficiency and independence from the
public support while preventing the adoption of more a negative social
lifestyle, such as the shoplifting of food and clothing, drug dealing, etc.
My research model can then be used to determine the predisposition of
such students to further their education and to isolate the extent to which
the research factors contribute to their predisposition.

In a sector where success is based on graduation rates, this research
and these expanded models offer the opportunity for higher education
officials to redefine the parameters by which attrition is reassured and
educational goals achieved. Further, for administrators at community
colleges and baccalaureate institutions, this research provides an important
means by which they can project and design important support programs that will undergird the matriculation of both traditional- and nontraditional-age students, without regard to ethnicity.

Considering the number of nontraditional-age students who are entering community colleges and baccalaureate universities, these university officials can better plan for curriculum development in the areas of continuing education, distance learning, technology programs, evening/weekend school, traffic and parking controls, transfer programs, articulation agreements; and also the planning of lifelong learning programs and nontraditional services, such as day or evening care for children and the elderly, after hours food, police and security services, recreational and relaxation outlets and student and personal services.

This work has implications for enrollment managers and recruiters at both two- and four-year institutions. The results of this research point to the need for recruiters to give some consideration to the areas in which they will seek potential students. Community college recruiters can work with human resource officials at local and regional workplaces to determine their current and future training needs to better plan for the
provision of evolving workforce needs. Individuals currently in the workforce desiring to maintain their current status or to enhance their future marketability can find the community college to be a more accessible, less intimidating academic environment in which to begin or resume a training program or degree pursuit.

Recruiters from baccalaureate institutions must give consideration to broadening their recruitment efforts by including the community colleges as a fertile recruitment base. Information about college fairs, recruitment visits, and available academic, training and testing programs which have traditionally been shared only with high school guidance counselors and through other community outlets, should also be channeled to appropriate community college offices. Brochures, pamphlets, posters, and recruitment paraphernalia should be developed and widely disseminated to attract traditional- and nontraditional-age students and the multi-ethnic population found in both high schools and community colleges.

This work also presents some definite implications for student affairs administrators at community colleges. This and previous research point to the fact that two-year college students generally do not get involved in
activities at community college. Officials in this area are cautioned to attempt to assess the needs which nontraditional-age students may have for services, activities and programs which may best meet their needs. This is especially true with the finding from this research that this populous of students do not have a keen interest in participating in general extracurricular activities.

Implications for Theory

For educational researchers who study student college choice, this work opens a new door to study the predisposition of a previously unexplored student population. Because the body of literature that exists on the educational plans of students is devoid of information regarding the processes which affect the choices of community college students, this work and future work like it are essential to raising questions regarding ways of better serving the entire body of the college-going populous of students.

Student college choice is a complex process that deserves further investigation, especially in the area of two-year college students’ attendance patterns and transfer behavior. For decades, community
colleges have received a negative reputation. Early opponents of junior colleges noted that there was a tendency for these institutions to operate as diverters, removing from the mainstream those students whose ambitions society was unable or unwilling to incorporate (Clark, 1960). In order to substantiate or reject such contentions, the continued expansion of theory-based studies of the college choice process engaged in by community college students is encouraged. Since college choice research has primarily concentrated on status attainment and postsecondary attendance patterns of high school students, the absence of researched data sufficient to examine the college choice process undertaken by two-year college students leaves a void in the literature in this area.

Further theory-based research using these expanded models may prove that previous theories advanced in this regard to be flawed because of the absence of correlation of the appropriate variables when assessing the intent of the college-bound population, especially those attending community colleges.

**Implications for Future Research**

The present finding that two-year college students duplicate the college choice process that they previously undertook as high school
students indicates that future studies should look closely at the outcomes of this subsequent process. This study reveals that the factors which motivate the college choice decisions of community college students tended to be different between the time that this process was first undertaken following high school and when it is subsequently completed. Additional research is required to further investigate the resulting differences evolving from the two processes and to identify the variables which strongly and most frequently influence community college students' predisposition to continue their educational pursuits in a four-year institution.

Since this research was limited to a single populous of students, expanded research which subjects the models offered here to a larger, geographical cross-section, and multi-racial population of two-year college students would enhance the body of available data from which college choice generalizations can be posited.

It is important that further research includes more in-depth theory-testing of the cause and effect relationships which exist between the variables offered in this expanded model to determine the impact that they
have on the college choice process engaged in by two-year students, especially in the predisposition to transfer stage. Other researchers (Cohen and Brawer, 1987; Brint and Karabel, 1989; Cohen, 1990) consistently observed that community colleges were failing in the transfer function, an area which had at one time been preeminent.

Brint and Karabel (1989) and Folger, et. al (1970) observed that during the 1960s and 1970s fewer than half of the community college students transferred to four-year colleges. In 1977, the U. S. Department of Health Education and Welfare (HEW) reported that by the late 1970s fewer than one fourth of those entering community colleges would actually transfer to four year colleges (as cited by Lee, Mackie-Lewis and Marks, 1993). However, this body of research does not attempt to explain why there is the lack of a propensity on the part of community college students to transfer to four-year institutions. Four-year college and university officials have not demanded an explanation for this action by these students and researchers have not shown an interest in providing one.

Although this work opens the door in this area, future research is recommended which will more broadly explore the educational plans of
one of the fastest growing college populations. For example, there is a tremendous void in the literature to explain and understand the inability of, or the reasons for, the failure of African American community college students to carry out their main educational plans or to explain why their Caucasian counterparts are more reluctant to make lofty educational plans beyond those that satisfy an immediate life need, especially as they advance in age.

Additionally, since the various phases of the college choice process which are undertaken by this population of students have not been fully studied, this research reveals that there is a need to understand the factors which influence the decisions that community college students make to continue on to pursue higher degrees or to terminate their educational pursuits. The furtherance of this research will, without doubt, add to the resources available to those who must plan for the future in the higher education arena.

The positive effects that the expectations and encouragement of parents and significant others were found to have on the college choice decisions of community college students should be further investigated to
determine if there is a residual effect of this variable in the college choice process engaged in by community college students during later periods in their lives.

The expanded model of predisposition tested and the expanded three-stage model of college choice offered in this study also provide a foundational framework for further research on community college students' educational plans and college choice processes. The furtherance of this research will certainly add to the resources available to those who must plan for the future in the higher education arena.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY INSTRUMENT
Directions: Please put an X in the box before the selection that indicates your response. Please answer the questions as accurately and as honestly as possible.

### Part I: Personal and Family Background Demographics

1. Please indicate your gender.
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

2. Please indicate your ethnicity.
   - [ ] Black/non Hispanic
   - [ ] White/non Hispanic
   - [ ] Asian/Pacific Island
   - [ ] Hispanic, surname
   - [ ] Native American
   - [ ] I choose not to indicate

3. Indicate the highest number of years in school completed by your father.
   - [ ] 0 years
   - [ ] Bachelor's Degree
   - [ ] 1-8 years
   - [ ] Master’s Degree
   - [ ] 9-11 years
   - [ ] Master’s plus additional hours
   - [ ] High school graduate
   - [ ] Specialist’s Degree/Certificate
   - [ ] Some college
   - [ ] Doctorate or other terminal degree
   - [ ] Associate’s Degree

4. Indicate the highest number of years in school completed by your mother.
   - [ ] 0 years
   - [ ] Bachelor’s Degree
   - [ ] 1-8 years
   - [ ] Master’s Degree
   - [ ] 9-11 years
   - [ ] Master’s plus additional hours
   - [ ] High school graduate
   - [ ] Specialist’s Degree/Certificate
   - [ ] Some college
   - [ ] Doctorate or other terminal degree
   - [ ] Associate’s Degree

5a. Please indicate your means of support.
   - [ ] Parents/guardians
   - [ ] Self
   - [ ] Other _________________

b. From the list below, please indicate your parents’ or guardians’ combined income.
   - [ ] $12,000 or less
   - [ ] $12,001 - $21,000
   - [ ] $21,001 - $40,000
   - [ ] $40,001 - $70,000
   - [ ] $70,001 - $100,000
   - [ ] Over $100,000

6a. Provide information about parents. (Mark all that apply)
   - [ ] both alive and living together
   - [ ] unknown to you: O father O mother
   - [ ] both alive but living separately
   - [ ] divorced
   - [ ] deceased: O father O mother
   - [ ] never been married

b. Please indicate your marital status. (Mark all that apply)
   - [ ] single: O never been married O divorced O widowed O with a child/children
   - [ ] married: O but separated O with a child/children

c. Please indicate your living status.
   - [ ] living alone
   - [ ] living with partner
   - [ ] living with parents/guardians
   - [ ] living with roommate
7. Please indicate your age category.

- □ 17 - 19 years  
- □ 20 - 24 years  
- □ 25 - 29 years  
- □ 30 - 39 years  
- □ 40 - 49 years  
- □ 50 - 59 years  
- □ 60 - 69 years  
- □ 70 years  
- □ Other - Specify ________________

Part II: Personal and Parental Level of Educational Expectation

8. Please indicate the educational level your parents/guardians (or significant other) expect or encourage you to attain.

- □ no expectation/encouragement  
- □ Trade School  
- □ Certificate Program  
- □ Associate’s Degree  
- □ Bachelor’s Degree  
- □ Master’s Degree  
- □ Master’s plus additional hours  
- □ Specialist’s Degree/Certificate  
- □ Doctorate or other terminal degree

9a. Please indicate the highest educational level you expect to complete.

- □ Trade School  
- □ Certificate Program  
- □ Associate’s Degree  
- □ Bachelor’s Degree  
- □ Master’s Degree  
- □ Master’s plus additional hours  
- □ Specialist’s Degree/Certificate  
- □ Doctorate or other terminal degree

b. Are you more motivated now to go on for an additional degree (e.g. bachelors, masters, doctors, etc.) than when you first enrolled at Nubian.

- □ yes  
- □ no

10. Please indicate your future educational plans to transfer to a baccalaureate (4-year) institution.

- □ no plans to transfer  
- □ transfer immediately (6 mo - 1 year)  
- □ transfer within 1 - 3 years  
- □ transfer within 3 - 5 years  
- □ transfer beyond 5 years

Part III: Community College Involvement and Preparation

11. Are you a member of any of the following activities at the community college? (Mark all that apply)

- □ Student Government Association  
- □ Athletics  
- □ Debate Team  
- □ Drama Club  
- □ Band or Choir  
- □ Newspaper or Yearbook Staff  
- □ Service Organization  
- □ Professional Organization  
- □ Other (list) ________________

12. Please indicate any honors or awards you have received since you have been enrolled as a community college student. (Mark all that apply)

- □ Honor Society  
- □ Dean’s or Chancellor’s List  
- □ Honor Roll  
- □ Who’s Who Among Comm. College Students  
- □ Class Officer  
- □ Organization Officer  
- □ Other (list) ________________

13. What is your cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale?

- □ 3.5 - 4.0  
- □ 3.0 - 3.4  
- □ 2.5 - 2.9  
- □ 2.0 - 2.4  
- □ 1.5 - 1.9  
- □ 1.0 - 1.4  
- □ Less than 1.0
14a. Please indicate your admission status.

- □ First-Time Freshman
- □ Transfer student ○ from 2-year college ○ from a 4-year college
- □ Continuing student
- □ Readmit student

b. How many semester hours have you completed at Delgado?

- □ 0 (entering student) □ 32 - 47 hours
- □ 1 - 15 hours □ 48 - 63 hours
- □ 16 - 31 hours □ More than 63 hours

c. Please indicate your enrollment status.

- □ full-time
- □ part-time

15. Indicate which form(s) of Financial Aid do you receive? (Mark all that apply)

- □ grants
- □ student loans
- □ college work study

- □ Other ____________________________

16. In which program are you enrolled?

- □ Certificate Program
- □ Associate of Arts
- □ Associate of Applied Science
- □ Associate of Business Studies
- □ Associate of General Studies
- □ Associate of Science

- □ Other ____________________________

Part IV: Level of Support and Encouragement of Parents and Significant Others

17. Identify the level of support and/or encouragement you receive from the following persons regarding your educational goals by darkening the appropriate number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>very supportive /encouraging</th>
<th>somewhat supportive /encouraging</th>
<th>not supportive /encouraging at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings (brothers or sisters)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part V: Final Section

You are asked to participate in a follow-up interview that is related to this survey. So, please be sure to fill out the information below so that you can be contacted during the semester. (PLEASE PRINT)

NAME: ____________________________________________________________

ADDRESS: __________________________________________________________

Street ____________________________________ Apartment #

City ____________________________ State ________________ Zip Code

PHONE: ________________________ - ________________________

Daytime Nighttime

Thank you very much for your honest and sincere responses to this questionnaire. During registration, please hand deliver this completed form to the designated survey table in the registration arena or directly to:

Lisa M. Smith-Vosper, Doctoral Student
(Louisiana State University - Department of Educational Administrative & Foundational Services),
who will be in the registration arena
January 15 - 17, 1997 and January 21, 1997

or after registration hand deliver by January 31, 1997 to:

The Registrar
Nubian Community College
Juba Hall, Room 123L
555 School First Drive
Somewhere, LA.
APPENDIX B: LETTER OF REQUEST
January 10, 1997

Dear Nubian Community College student:

My name is Lisa Smith-Vosper and I am a graduate student in the Department of Administrative and Foundational Services at Louisiana State University. Presently, I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation on the educational plans of community college students. Specifically, I am interested in determining what factor influence community college students' predisposition (aspirations, desire, etc.) to transfer to a four-year institution. As part of my research, I am asking you to participate by responding to the attached Postsecondary Educational Plans survey. It should take approximately 5 - 10 minutes to complete your responses.

I will keep your identity as a respondent to this survey confidential by assigning it a code that will be assessable to me only. Additionally, you are asked to participate in a follow-up interview that is related to this survey. So, please be sure to complete the last page of the instrument, so that you can be contacted during the semester. The survey includes instructions for completing and returning it to me.

Thank you in advance for your accurate, complete and sincere responses to this very important survey.

Lisa M. Smith-Vosper
Ph. D. Student

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APPENDIX C: TABLES
Table A: Cross-Group Analysis of Background Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>MHE</th>
<th>FHE</th>
<th>Child(ren)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American Traditional-age Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Ashley</td>
<td>24 - female</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable Calvin</td>
<td>22 - male</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild Monica</td>
<td>24 - female</td>
<td>medium high</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dashing Diana</td>
<td>23 - female</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicking Kiva</td>
<td>19 - female</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackin Mohammed</td>
<td>21 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough Tammy</td>
<td>21 - female</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caucasian Traditional-age Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectable Roy</td>
<td>20 - male</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>h.s. grad</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool Connie</td>
<td>22 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving Leslie</td>
<td>18 - female</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Jonathan</td>
<td>21 - male</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowdy Rachel</td>
<td>19 - female</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>h.s. grad</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flirty Franklin</td>
<td>24 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American Nontraditional-age Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest Hazel</td>
<td>42 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>h.s.</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud Larry</td>
<td>49 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>d.k.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughing Lydia</td>
<td>47 - female</td>
<td>medium high</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handy Hamilton</td>
<td>36 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouncing Bertha</td>
<td>57 - female</td>
<td>medium high</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>d.k.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic Ethel</td>
<td>51 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caucasian Nontraditional-age Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazzy James</td>
<td>54 - male</td>
<td>medium high</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>7th or 8th</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magpie Minty</td>
<td>29 - female</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>h.s. grad</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic Carl</td>
<td>32 - male</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind Karla</td>
<td>38 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some col.</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polished Pamela</td>
<td>52 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>some h.s.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman George</td>
<td>48 - male</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>col grad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merry Melissa</td>
<td>64 - female</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>widowed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Table B: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Intersection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hyp</th>
<th>Quantitative Results</th>
<th>Qualitative Results</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>failed to reject</td>
<td>1 not sup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>rejected the null</td>
<td>not sup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>failed to reject</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>rejected the null</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>failed to reject</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>failed to reject</td>
<td>not sup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>rejected the null</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>rejected the null</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>rejected the null</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>rejected the null</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Results: Failed to reject the null hypothesis, Supported. Qualitative Results: Rejected the null, Not Supported.

1=traditional-age African American 2=traditional-age Caucasian 3=nontraditional-age African American 4=nontraditional-age Caucasian na=not applicable

Hypothesis 1: As socioeconomic status increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.
Hypothesis 2: As parent education increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.
Hypothesis 3: As student academic achievement increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.
Hypothesis 4: As parents and significant others' expectations and encouragement increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.
Hypothesis 5: As a student's personal expectations increase, their predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.
Hypothesis 6: As the involvement in college activities increases, community college students' predisposition to transfer to a four-year institution will increase.
Hypothesis 7: Female students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than will male students.
Hypothesis 8: African American students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than will white students.
Hypothesis 9: Nontraditional-age students at community colleges will be more likely to be predisposed to transfer to a four-year institution than traditional-aged students.
Hypothesis 10: The explanatory power of the expanded Hossler and Stage predisposition model for community college students will be statistically significant overall.
VITA

Lisa M. Smith-Vosper holds bachelor and master's degrees from Southern University and Agriculture and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In 1995, she received a full fellowship and was inducted into the first class of Huel D. Perkins Doctoral Fellowship Recipients at Louisiana State University, where she completed her doctoral pursuits in Educational Leadership and Research with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration in 1997.

Ms. Smith-Vosper's specific concentration has been in community college administration. The areas of curriculum development, articulation, and transfer have been her primary foci. As a graduate intern and subsequent graduate assistant in the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services at the Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC), she was instrumental in coordinating the curriculum development process for the new college; assisting in the development of academic policies, procedures and programs; and initiating processes that will lead to articulation and transfer agreements between BRCC and other state colleges.

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Additionally, Ms. Smith-Vosper has enjoyed a diverse work background including experience as a Legislative Assistant to a Senator; a seventh grade English and Drop-Out Prevention teacher; a community college instructor; a Tri-State Regional Coordinator hired to help revitalize impoverished areas in the Arkansas-Louisiana-Mississippi Delta regions and to evaluate the quality of life of its residents; part of the development team for the organization of a worldwide ministry; and as a consultant, motivational speaker and presenter in the areas of religious and community relations, health care and governmental affairs, economic development, and education and educational research. She is published and has presented at national conferences.

Ms. Smith-Vosper resides in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and is the second of the four children of Attorney Frances Robinson Smith and Attorney Joe Louis Smith.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Lisa M. Smith-Vosper

Major Field: Educational Leadership and Research

Title of Dissertation: Educational Plans of Community College Students: An Expansion of Two College Choice Models

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination: June 6, 1997