

## Chapter One: Introduction

Belize is a small Central American country located just south of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. It is bordered by Guatemala on the south and west and the Caribbean on the east. European colonists first settled in Belize when British sailors shipwrecked off the coast in 1637. However, Britain did not officially begin to colonize the area until 1862. Under British rule a Governor acted on the behalf of the Queen of England. This British crown colony was called British Honduras until 1981, when Belize was granted independence. Politically Belize is democratic, with a two-party political system based on the English parliamentary model.

The Belizean economy is based on agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. Substantial employment is also found in the public utilities sector including communications, energy, and water production. Belize's chief trade partner is the United States, and the country has pegged its currency Belizean dollars (Bz.\$) to the U.S. dollar at a rate of two to one. The Belizean unemployment rate is lower than other Caribbean countries at 12.8%, but unemployment remains a serious problem for the nation (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2002).

The Belizean educational system is based on the British model. The Belizean educational system has traditionally been a partnership of church and state, and schooling is compulsory through Standard 6 or age 14 (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994). The two political parties support this church-state educational partnership and have worked with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports to implement national educational standards and policies. Although the Belizean education system is historically based on the British model, it has several recent features at the upper levels that resemble the U.S. educational system. For example, the new University of Belize has a four-year bachelor's degree curriculum, rather than the three-year program of the British system (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994). As another example, the Belizean

6<sup>th</sup> Form is similar to the U.S. junior or community college. The mix of British and U.S. educational models into a unique Belizean system is intended to serve the particular needs of Belize as an emerging nation. At least one educator has raised the question, however, whether a British style college preparatory curriculum at the secondary level is, in fact, a good fit for students who want to go directly into the workforce after high school and for a nation with a high unemployment rate (D. Satchwell, personal communication, May 23, 2002).

Currently, no graduate programs in education exist in the nation of Belize. All students desiring a master's or doctoral degree in education must study at an institution of higher education outside Belize. Educational research and assessment skills are typically not taught until the graduate level. These facts explain in part why there is virtually no scholarly literature about Belizean education, although there have been some descriptive studies conducted by the government, which will be summarized in Chapter Two. Recent research has shown that studies conducted in developed nations may not apply to developing nations such as Belize (Babb, 2002). For Belizean educational administrators efficiently and effectively to allocate the country's scarce resources for education, additional information is essential. In particular, there are no existing data about the postsecondary plans of Belizean high school students. The nation of Belize needs this information in order to make wise use of the nation's resources as it develops opportunities for postsecondary training, education, and employment. This study was developed in response to this need.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to explore the post-secondary plans of Belizean high school students. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What do Belizean high school students want to do after graduation?
2. What do Belizean high school students believe they will probably do after graduation?
3. What factors contribute to the difference between preferred plans and probable plans for Belizean high school students?
4. What training or educational options would Belizean high school students like to pursue that are not currently available in Belize?
5. Where do Belizean high school students who are planning to attend a university prefer to study?
6. What careers or jobs do Belizean high school students want to pursue?
7. Are there differences in responses between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> form students?
8. Are there differences in responses based on gender?
9. Are there differences in responses based on ethnicity?

### *Setting*

Belize is one of seven countries in Central America, the others being Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama (Campbell et al., 1997.) The eastern coast of the country is met by the Caribbean Sea, which is home to hundreds of small islands falling under the political jurisdiction of Belize. The second largest barrier reef in the world is approximately 281 kilometers long, and located directly off the coast of Belize. See Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Map depicting the location of Belize with relation to Northern and Central America.

The barrier reef is significant to the history of Belize because it caused the shipwreck of British buccaneers who then settled on the coast in 1637. For this reason Belize became an English speaking country and to this day remains the only country in Central America whose national language is English. Belize was colonized by Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the name British Honduras, and was politically governed by Britain until 1964 when Belize was granted internal self-government. In 1961 England realized the need to grant Belize its independence, but ongoing border disputes with Guatemala delayed independence for years. On September 21, 1981, Belize became fully independent (Campbell et. al., 1997).

The population of Belize has grown to an estimated 262,999 (Emulate Me, 2002). The population is multi-ethnic consisting of Caucasian, Creole, Garifuna, German/Dutch, Ketchi, Mayan, Mestizo, and Syrian (Babb, 2002). Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy. The second largest economic activity is services related to tourism. Belize imports more than it exports each year. In April of 1998, Belize had an unemployment rate of 12.8% though estimates of the unemployment rate vary greatly (CIA, 2002).

### *Definitions and Glossary*

This section provides definitions for this study, and offers descriptions of terms and organizations particular to the educational and political system of Belize.

*Belizean Association of Principals of Secondary Schools (BAPSS)* is a formal organization that provides principals of schools at the secondary level the opportunity to meet and share information about their schools.

*Form* refers to a student's secondary grade level. This study focuses on 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-form students. In the United States these students would be in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade respectively.

*Standards* refer to a student's grade level in primary school. There are six standards in primary school. Standards can be equated to the United States grade levels by taking the standard number and adding two. For example a Belizean student in Standard 1 would be the equivalent of a United States student in third grade.

*Infant* classes refer to the first two years of a students' education in primary schools. Belizean school children in Infant 1 and Infant 2 are the equivalent of United States school children in first and second grade.

*College* refers to some of the secondary schools. College is another term used in Belize to that refers to the high school years of education. These schools traditionally provide 1st through 4th form education (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades).

*Centers for Employment Training (CET)* are Belizean educational vocational centers that provide skill training in functional areas to support the job market. Examples of CET programs are woodworking, tourism, and cake decorating.

*Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports* is the official Belizean governmental body that oversees assessment, planning, and policy regarding education and sports. Frequently in Belize, and in this document, this ministry is referred to as merely the Ministry of Education.

*Sixth form* refers to a postsecondary educational level for Belizean students. Several programs include Belize Teachers College, School of Nursing, and Belize School of Agriculture. Sixth form is similar to the United States junior or community college system.

### *Significance of the Study*

Future professional practice, research, and policy development might benefit from the results of this study. In terms of practice this study might be of value to the Ministry of Education, and to administrators at participating secondary schools.

First, the Belizean Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports oversees education and training to support both personal development and national purposes (Belizean Ministry of Education, 2003). This ministry develops and implements programs for all students attending government-run and government-aided schools. This ministry might use the findings from this study to assess the appropriateness of the educational programs they offer Belizean students and to support funding and policy decisions to match post-secondary education and training opportunities to the student needs identified in this study.

Second, administrators at participating secondary schools might benefit from this study. Each school's results will be given to that school. The administrators can use the results to evaluate the appropriateness of their curriculum for their own students and to support any needed changes.

The study also has significance for future research. My study examined Belizean high school students' post secondary plans and explored the differences in these plans across various demographic categories. Future researchers could extend this study to a longitudinal research design. Such a study would explain how a student's post-secondary plans develop during secondary school.

Future studies could also focus on expanding research into other areas that this study does not address. One of these might be to examine social factors that impact Belizean high school students' postsecondary plans. Such a study would provide additional information to educational administrators and politicians on social factors that affect the need for various postsecondary options.

This study also has significance for future policy development. Results from this study provide information about 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Form Belizean high school students' postsecondary plans.

The Ministry of Education will gain information that may influence future educational policies and funding decisions for post-secondary educational opportunities. This will help focus the country's scarce resources on the areas of greatest need.

Additionally, the University of Belize might be impacted by the results of this study. The results of this study might assist the University of Belize in developing programs and policies to recruit and serve Belizean high school students.

### *Delimitations*

This study is based on the self-reports of teenagers. Developmentally many of them may be unable or unready to make a decision about their own future that will last past their high school graduation. Further, many of their choices will be limited by adult constraints of which they may be totally unaware. Therefore, the results of this study must be understood as only one side of a needs assessment for postsecondary education and training. The responses of these students should be considered in the context of other evidence about the needs and choices that Belizean high school students make.

Further, this study asked only about preferences and not about motivations. Those who make administrative decisions from the results of this study may need to infer motivations in order to understand the responses reported here and translate them into appropriate concrete actions.

Despite these delimitations, this study has value for the nation of Belize. It provides information that has not previously been available in Belize and which will be valuable to educators and policy planners.

### *Organization of the Study*

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter One was designed to give the reader a general introduction to the study, to describe the setting for the study, and to describe its delimitations and its possible significance. Chapter Two provides a literature review. Chapter Three describes the methodology, including the sampling techniques used, the instrument, the data collection procedures, and the procedures used to analyze the data. Chapter Four presents the results of the study. The fifth and final chapter discusses the meaning of the results and their implications for future research, policy, and practice.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

To explore the postsecondary plans of Belizean high school students, first it was necessary to understand the cultural context. This chapter presents information about the following aspects of Belize: location and geography, economy, political history, the people, and the education system.

### *Location and Geographic Regions*

Belize is located in Central America, between Mexico and Guatemala. Seven countries are located in Central America; they are Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama (Campbell et al., 1997.) The Caribbean Sea borders Belize on the east coast.

The total area of Belize is 22,966 square kilometers, consisting of 22,806 square kilometers of land, and 160 square kilometers of water. This makes Belize slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Massachusetts (Central Intelligence Agency, 2002). Belize has a 386 kilometer coastline with the Caribbean Sea. Belize also has a combined total of 516 kilometers of land borders, including 226 kilometers with Guatemala, and 250 kilometers with Mexico (Emulate Me, 2002). In 1992 Belize passed the Maritime Areas Act, which claimed the “territorial sea” under the political jurisdiction of the country (CIA, 2002).

Belize has a tropical climate that is typically hot and humid year round. The average temperature is 78° Fahrenheit near the Belizean eastern coastline, and approximately 63° Fahrenheit in higher levels of elevation around the Mayan Mountains (Campbell et al., 1997). Belize has two primary seasons; the rainy season and the dry season. The rainy season is approximately seven months long, beginning in May and ending in November, while the rest of the year is the dry season (World Fact Book, 2002). The seven-month rainy season can have 115

to 170 days of precipitation (Campbell, 1997). Situated next to the Caribbean Sea, Belize is vulnerable to hurricanes. Hurricane season is usually from August to November in Belize, and has devastated parts of the country throughout its history (Campbell et al., 1997).

Although Belize is a relatively small country, the geographic landscape varies immensely. Terrain consists of swampland, flat plains, rainforests, and mountainous regions. Elevation ranges from sea level at the coast to 3805.77 feet at Victoria's Peak (CIA, 2002). Geographically, Belize is divided into four regions: Northern Belize, the Mayan Mountains, Southern Belize, and the Coastal Zone (Campbell, p. 46).

Northern Belize is located in the northern third of the country, north of the Mayan Mountains. Northern Belize has several hill lines, but is mostly dominated by plains. This area is covered with forests consisting primarily of pine. The soil of Northern Belize is fertile and used for much of the country's agricultural production. This region's soil benefits from the rain runoff of the Mayan Mountains (Campbell et al., 1997).

The Mayan Mountain region is situated in the south-central portion of the country. The region is geographically dominated by a rise in elevation and mountainous terrain. Geologic minerals prevalent in the region are granite and quartzite. Many of the country's rivers originate on the northern side of the Mayan Mountains and flow through the Northern Belize region (Campbell et al., 1997).

Southern Belize is located in the south, but has some terrain similar to the Mayan Mountains, including mountainous terrain, which declines in elevation to the hillside and plains territory also native to this region. Southern Belize and parts of the Mayan Mountain regions are home to the Belizean rainforest inhabited by hundreds of animal and plant species (Belize Botanic Gardens, 2003). Geologically, this region has a limestone mineral base which, combined

with the wet climate, fosters many sink holes and caves. Additionally, the Southern Belize region is situated in an earthquake-prone area (Campbell et al., 1997).

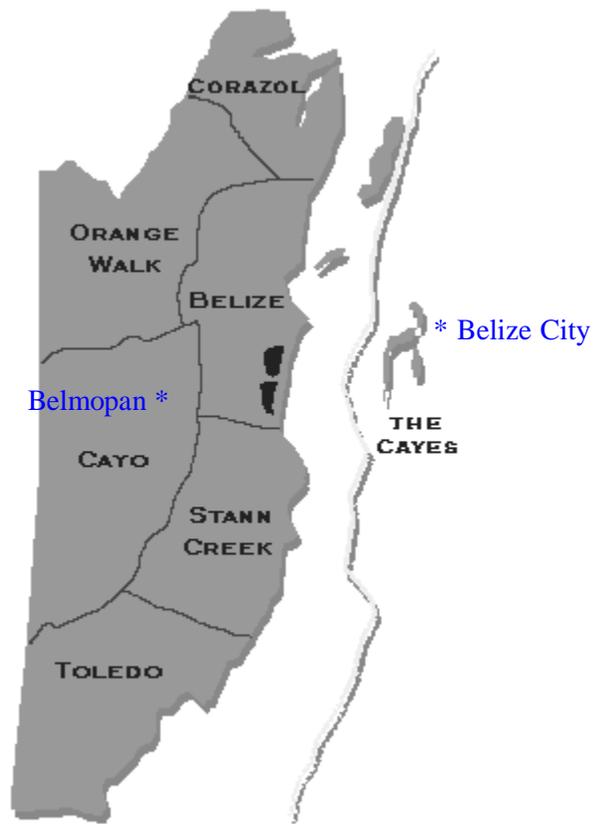
The final geographic landscape region is the Coastal Zone, located on the eastern border of Belize. The Coastal Zone includes the “lower coastal plain, inner lagoon, the barrier reef, and the islands off the coast” (Campbell et al., 1997, p. 50). The lower coastal plain areas consist mostly of swamp land. The inner lagoon, barrier reef, and islands of Belize are very popular destinations of tourists, providing the country with an economic revenue stream (Campbell et al.). The barrier reef is the second longest in the world. Only the Great Barrier Reef of Australia is longer.

Belize uses its varied geography in many ways. Only 10% of the land is arable, and a tiny 1% is used for permanent crops, while 2% has been adapted for the use of permanent pastures. The majority of the land (84%) is covered with forests and woodland (CIA, 2002).

### *Political Districts*

Politically, the country is divided into six districts. These districts are divided along geographic and population boundaries (Campbell et al., 1997). The districts are Belize, Cayo, Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek, and Toledo. The population of Belize is greatest through the two central districts of Belize and Cayo. Figure 2 shows a map of Belize divided into six political districts.

The Belize district is located on the eastern border of the country on the Caribbean Sea, in the Coastal Zone. The capital of the district is Belize City, which served as the national capital until 1970, when the capital was moved inland to Belmopan, which is less vulnerable to hurricanes. With a population of 68,197 this district is the most populous of all Belizean districts (Central Statistical Office, 2000).



*Figure 2.* Map of Belize divided into the six political districts.

Most of the Cayo district is in the Mayan Mountains geographic region. Its capital is Belmopan, which also serves as the national capital of Belize. Previously, the district capital was located in San Ignacio, but it was moved to Belmopan in 1990. Cayo is centrally located (north to south), and lies on the western border of the country. The Cayo district also has the largest area of all districts, with approximately 5,338 square kilometers, and it has a population of 52,564 (Central Statistical Office, 2000).

Corozal is situated in the northern tip of the country, in the Northern Belize region, with a population of 32,708 (Central Statistical Office, 2000). The Corozal district capital is Corozal City.

The Orange Walk district is located between Corozal and Cayo districts, and lies on the western border of the country also within the Northern Belize geographic region. The Orange Walk district capital is Orange Walk, and the district has a population of 38,890 (Central Statistical Office, 2000).

Stann Creek district is located south of the Belize district on the eastern seaboard of the country. Stann Creek has the second smallest district population, 24,548 (Central Statistical Office, 2000). Dangriga is the district capital. Stann Creek lies in the Southern Belize geographic region.

The Toledo district is located in the southernmost tip of the country, also in the Southern Belize geographic region. Toledo also has the smallest population of any district, with 24,297 people (Central Statistical Office, 2000). The Toledo district capital is Punta Gorda.

### *Economy*

The Belizean economy is based in four main economic activities: agriculture, manufacturing, service, and public utilities. Currently, tourism and agriculture form the “two

pillars” that support Belize’s economic growth (Task Force on Services, 1999). Tourism, part of the service industry is influenced by the geographic layout of the country. The Coastal Zone and Mayan Mountains are home to some of the most desirable tourist beaches and ancient Mayan ruins (Task Force on Services, 1999).

The principal agricultural crops are sugar cane, bananas, and citrus. Sugar cane is the country’s largest export, representing nearly half of all exported crops. The banana industry is essential to the Belizean economy and is one of the country’s largest employers (CIA, 2002). Other common agricultural products include rice, vegetables, and livestock, and other main agricultural activities include fishing and forestry (National Human Development Advisory Committee [NHDAC], 1998).

A second category of the Belizean economy is manufacturing. Much of the nation’s manufacturing derives from agricultural production – for example, processing related to citrus, sugar cane, and fisheries. Other major Belizean manufacturing includes the processing of soft drinks and beer (NHDAC, 1998).

Third, the Belizean economy is supported through services. The service industry includes “public servants” such as government officials, police, banking, real estate, construction, and transportation. The largest increase in the service industry has recently come from tourism and the government’s active involvement to enhance tourism’s stimulation of the economy (NHDAC, 1998). A national task force on services recently examined opportunities for further development and expansion of the services sector of the Belizean economy, which accounts for 61% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product and employs 57% of the country’s labor force (Task Force on Services, 1999). In 2002 the government opened a new tourist village in Belize

City, with shops to welcome cruise ship passengers. This new tourist village created educational opportunities for the tourist industry, and increased the entertainment industry.

Public utilities are the final major sector of the Belizean economy. The public utilities sector includes electricity, telecommunications, sewage, and water (NHDAC, 1998). Belizean electrical production is based on fossil fuels (57%) and hydroelectricity (43%; CIA, 2002). The Belizean communications industry provides the country with internet service, telephone service, and radio/television broadcasts.

Belize has a trade deficit, importing Bz\$505 million in goods while exporting only Bz\$239.6 million (estimated for 2001; Emulate Me, 2002). This trade deficit of more than two to one elevates the importance of the country's trade partners. The United States is the country's largest trade partner, with the United Kingdom in second position (NHDAC, 1998).

In 1999 Belize exported approximately Bz\$307 million in goods. The largest purchaser of Belizean goods was the United States at 42%; the United Kingdom purchased 33% of all Belizean exported goods. The rest of the European Union (minus the United Kingdom) purchased an additional 11% of Belizean exports (NHDAC, 1998). Belize exports mostly bananas, citrus, sugar, lumber, and fish (CIA, 2002).

Belize imported approximately Bz\$650 million in goods in 1999. The largest provider of imports to the country of Belize is the United States; 49% of all imported goods were purchased from the U.S. (NHDAC, 1998). Mexico also provides a major source of imports to Belize with approximately 11%, while the rest of Central America provides about 5%. The most commonly imported commodities include machinery and transportation equipment, manufactured goods; food, beverages, tobacco; fuels, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals (CIA, 2002).

Belize has an approximate labor force of 90,000 people out of a total population over 260,000 (Emulate Me, 2002). The unemployment rate of Belize has been quoted anywhere between 10% and 15% over the past three years based on various sources. Though the unemployment statistic may be uncertain, in 1999 a third of the country's population lived below the poverty line (CIA, 2002). In 2001 the country's labor force was approximately divided into the following areas: services 55%, agriculture 27%, and manufacturing 18%. (Emulate Me, 2002). Belize lacks skilled labor in all economic areas (Task Force on Services, 1999).

### *Political History*

Belize is currently a parliamentary democracy and has been self governed since independence in 1981. From European encounter to the country's independence the struggles of many helped to define present day Belize. This section of the literature review will briefly discuss the political movement surrounding Belize, but will focus primarily on the current political system.

Indigenous to Belize were the Mayan civilizations. The Mayan cities are estimated to have been established around 200 A.D. and to have flourished throughout this area until 1000 A.D. (Leslie, 1997). The Cuello community is believed to be the earliest known settlement of the Mayans in present day Orange Walk district, settled as early as 2000 B.C. (Leslie, 1997). The rich Mayan culture developed complex systems of writing, mathematics, agricultural, religion, and astronomy. The Mayans built magnificent cities such as Altun Ha during the peak of their civilization in Central America (Leslie, 1997). Currently, the Mayan ruins serve as a major tourist attraction and revenue source to the Belizean economy. Most are located throughout the Mayan Mountain region of Belize.

Both Spain and Britain once claimed parts of the territory that is now Belize. The Spanish first arrived when their conquistadors fought the Aztecs and Mayans throughout Central America during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The British began to settle in Belize in 1637 when a shipping vessel wrecked on the barrier reef located off the shore of Belize. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries British settlers in Belize logged timber – primarily mahogany and logwood (Leslie, 1997). The Spanish and British had frequent armed conflict throughout the 1700s in Belize. Most of the conflict surrounded trade and the British logging of timber. These countries signed several treaties that related to Belize, but violence continued until the Battle of St. George’s Caye in September 10, 1798 (Humphreys, 1961). This armed conflict marks the last documented attempt of Spanish troops to control Belize. The British named this area British Honduras.

From the early 1700s through 1838, the country had African slave trade. In 1838 the British emancipated slaves throughout their empire (Leslie, 1997). Much of the Americas had slavery throughout the 1500s to 1800s with most of those who were enslaved being brought from Africa.

Throughout the British colonial period the people of Belize began an underlying movement toward nationalism and eventually independence. The 1920s and 1930s saw colonialism throughout the world begin to dissolve from India to Vietnam; many countries were gaining their independence (Leslie, 1997). After World War II the British government realized the importance of Belizean independence. However, the process toward independence was slowed by the fact that Guatemala claimed Belize as its own territory until 1992, when it recognized Belize as a country. The disputes with Guatemala delayed Belizean independence by almost 20 years, from 1962 to 1981 (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2001).

The modern Belizean government is loosely modeled after the British system. The Belizean governmental design is a representative parliamentary democracy, with the national capital located in Belmopan (Leslie, 1997). The modern government was officially established on Belizean Independence Day, September 21, 1981; but in fact Belize was moving toward self-government much earlier than its date of independence and the country has in effect been self-governed since 1964.

Belize has a two party political system consisting of the People's United Party (PUP) and the United Democratic Party (UDP). There are three governmental branches: executive, legislative, and judicial (Central Intelligence Agency, 2002). These three branches have oversight responsibility for each other, providing internal checks and balances within the government. Belize has universal suffrage at age 18.

The official head of state of Belize continues to be Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. The queen is represented in Belize by the governor general, who is presently Sir Colville Young. The governor general is appointed by the queen, but nominated by the Belizean government. The governor general's role is largely ceremonial. He serves as the queen's representative to the country (Government of Belize, 2000a).

The head of the government and the executive branch is the Prime Minister, who currently is Said Musa; he has served since August 27, 1998. The Prime Minister is the leader of the majority party in the House of Representatives and is formally appointed by the governor general. Cabinet members are appointed by the governor general, but are selected by the Prime Minister and the majority party. Main functions of the executive branch include executing laws and administering public affairs (Government of Belize, 2000b).

Members of the legislative branch are the elected body that is empowered to make, change, or repeal laws of the country that are affirmed and approved through the judicial and executive branches (Government of Belize, 2000b). The legislative branch is known as the National Assembly, which consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each member of the House of Representatives and the Senate serves a five-year term. The Senate is made up of eight members. These include five appointed by the prime minister, two appointed by the leader of the minority party, and one appointed by the governor general. The House of Representatives consists of 29 seats, these positions are filled by a direct popular vote (CIA, 2002). The election in August of 1998 resulted in the PUP taking 59.2% of the popular vote, while the UDP received 40.8%. The House of Representatives seats were filled by this election with the PUP taking 26 and the UDP 3. Even though the two parties have alternated in winning national elections in the past, this pattern was broken in the March 2003 election, when the PUP once again won the majority of the popular vote.

The final branch of the government of Belize is the Judicial Branch. The Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals head the judiciary system. The governor general on the advice of the prime minister appoints members of the Supreme Court. There are three Supreme Court justices including one chief justice. Justices may serve until they are 62 years of age or until it is determined that they are unable to serve (Government of Belize, 2003b). The Privy Council is the final court of appeal, which is situated in the United Kingdom and made up of members from the British House of Lords (Government of Belize, 2003b).

### *People*

The population of Belize was estimated at 262,999 in July of 2002 (Emulate Me, 2002). The only official number supported through the Central Statistical Office of Belize is the 2000

census data, which counted the nation's population at 240,204. The 2000 census figure represents nearly a 40% increase from the 1991 census, which indicated a total population of 189,392. The country has the smallest population of all countries in Central America and in 1998 had a population close in size to smaller Caribbean islands such as Barbados (NHDAC, 1998).

In 1998 the NHDAC calculated the population density for each administrative district in Belize. Population density refers to the number of residents per square kilometer. The population densities per district are as follows: Belize 16.33, Cayo 9.52, Corozal 17.48, Orange Walk 8.54, Stann Creek 9.38, and Toledo with 5.13. Corozal has the highest population density because of the small size of the district. At 1,860 square kilometers it is all most half the size of the next smallest district. Most of Corozal's territory is taken up by its capital, which is more highly populated than the surrounding rural areas (NHDAC, 1998). The overall population density for the country is approximately 10.5 people per square kilometer (NHDAC).

Data about the age structure of the Belizean population from the 2000 government census are not available. The Central Intelligence Agency has made estimates for 2002 concerning the age structure. Children from birth to age 14 comprise 41.6% of the total population. About 51% of these are male and 49% female. The working-age population, between ages 15 and 65, comprises 54.9% of the total population. Again, about 51% of these are male and 49% female. Finally, the group of Belizeans over age 65 is only 3.5% of the total population. In this age category, the gender distribution is reversed, with 49% being male and 51% female (Central Intelligence Agency, 2002).

As these data demonstrate, the population of Belize is extremely young; an asset to the country is their youth. At the other end of the age range, the group over 65 years old is small, but

the average life expectancy has been estimated between 71.5 years (Emulate Me, 2002) and 74 years (NHDAC, 1998).

The birth rate in 1998 was 27 births per 1,000 in the overall population, and the death rate was 5.7 per 1,000 population. This difference yields an overall population growth rate of 3.6% per year. Rates have been estimated for 2002. The birth rate was estimated at 31.08 per thousand, while the death rate was estimated at 4.6 deaths per thousand, yielding an overall population growth rate of 2.65% (CIA, 2002). Infant mortality rate is estimated at 24.31 deaths per thousand live births (Emulate Me, 2002). Fertility rates among women are approximately 4 children born per woman.

Belize has many different ethnic groups, including Caucasian, Creole, Garifuna, German/Dutch, Ketchi, Mayan, Mestizo, and Syrian (Babb, 2002). The largest ethnic groups represented in Belize are Mestizos and Creoles. Approximate percentages of ethnic groups in relationship to the Belizean total population are Mestizo 49%, Creole 25%, Maya 11%, Garifuna 6%, and a mix of other smaller minority groups equal to the remaining 9% of the total population (Emulate Me, 2002). Different sources cite differing percentages for these groups, but they agree that Mestizos are the largest group, Creoles second largest, Mayans third, and Garifunas fourth.

The national language of Belize is English, with much of the population also speaking Spanish as a first or second language. Additionally, Mayan, Garifuna (also referred to as Carib), and Creole are prevalently used throughout the country (Central Intelligence Agency, 2002).

Belize has many established Christian churches throughout the country. Roman Catholic is the most commonly practiced religion in the country. Anglicans, Methodists, and Mennonites are also well represented in the population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2002).

An important concern is the unemployment rate, as well as the related issue of the educational level of the work force. The National Human Development Report (NHDAC, 1998) commented, “The quality of the employed population in terms of education is extremely important to monitor. Sad to say, the data show that Belize’ s employed population seriously lack adequate formal education. It is therefore no wonder why so many jobs are elementary and in the agricultural sector” (2.09). The eligible work force is estimated around 90,000 out of a population currently estimated at 262,999. This official work force includes only 62% of the working age population of Belize, which would be 144,650, based on the age structure data cited above. The National Human Development Report (NHDAC, 1998) stated that 25% of the employed work force had no formal education. Additionally, 45% of the employed work force only completed primary education.

### *Education System*

The educational system of Belize is based on the British education system. This system is comprised of the following three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The Belizean educational system is compulsory for all children through primary school, and is free to those students. Primary education begins with two years of “infant” classes, followed by six “standards.” Belize had 234 government-run and government-aided primary schools during the 2001-2002 academic year. These primary schools enrolled 56,767 total Belizean children of which 51.2% were male and 48.8% were female (Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, 2002).

At the end of Standard 6, students take the Primary School Examination (PSE). Students who score high enough on this exam are permitted to go on to secondary education if they wish

and if they can afford it. All other students go directly into the work force at the end of Standard 6, at approximately age 14.

Secondary education is not open to all students, nor is it free to them. Students must academically qualify for secondary schooling (based on PSE scores) and also pay a fee for the schooling. Secondary education is divided into four forms, roughly equivalent to the United States high school system (9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades). Some Belizean secondary schools are called high schools and others are called colleges. The secondary level has three different types of schools, they include: those managed by the church, community schools managed through a board system, and government schools (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994). In 2001-2002 there were 36 secondary schools, 13 were completely managed by government. The total number of students enrolled in the secondary schools were 13,799, males comprised 49% and females 51% (Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, 2002).

At the tertiary level many qualifying students enroll in 6<sup>th</sup> Form, which is similar to a United States junior or community college, providing a program that awards certificates and associate degrees. Qualifying students may also study at the University of Belize. Students may enter the university either directly from secondary schools or from 6<sup>th</sup> Form. The University of Belize awards a four-year bachelor's degree. Its 2002-2003 enrollment was 2,773 students.

With governmental officials noticing a lack of skilled workers in every economic area and an extremely young national population, the educational system will play an essential role in future of Belize. Belize has invested great financial resources into its educational system; in 1998 the country put 22.5% of the national budget into education (NHDAC, 1998). Currently, the country is facing serious educational issues relating to “quality, access, efficiency, the state of facilities, and financing at both the primary and secondary levels” (NHDAC, 1998, chapter 2.16).

These issues affecting education hinder the country's ability to accomplish the Ministry of Education's mission "giving all Belizeans the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for full and active participation in the development of the nation" (Marlow-Ferguson, 2001).

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has described the land and people of Belize and their education system, which provide the context for this study. The following chapter presents the methodology that guided it.

## Chapter Three: Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the post-secondary plans of Belizean high school students. For this purpose, I developed the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument* (Appendix A). This is a self-report instrument that determines what Belizean high school students' *want* to do and what they believe they will *probably* do upon graduation.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What do Belizean high school students want to do after graduation?
2. What do Belizean high school students believe they will probably do after graduation?
3. What factors contribute to any difference between preferred plans and probable plans for Belizean high school students?
4. What training or educational options would Belizean high school students like to pursue?
5. Where do Belizean high school students who are planning to attend a university prefer to study?
6. What careers or jobs do Belizean high school students want to pursue?
7. Are there differences in responses between 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students?
8. Are there differences in responses based on gender?
9. Are there differences in responses based on ethnicity?

### *Instrument*

When I was in Belize in the spring of 2002 I conducted preliminary investigations for this study. The people I consulted included the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Education, Dean Barrow; the opposition Member of the Parliament who has been nominated for the position

of Minister of Education, Patrick Fabar; the Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Belize, Martin Cuellar; and the General Manager of the Anglican school system, Carol Babb.

I developed the instrument for this study with the help of local experts. Three educators in the Anglican school system assisted me in refining this instrument. General Manager Carol Babb, high school principal Derek Satchwell, and high school teacher (and Member of Parliament) Patrick Fabar each reviewed it for content and language. In addition, Martin Cuellar, Vice President of Student Affairs at the University of Belize, made extensive comments on both content and form.

I piloted this instrument at Anglican Cathedral College in Patrick Fabar's third form class, which included 11 boys and 5 girls. Based on the results of the pilot and on the further advice of experts I refined the instrument.

*The Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument* is a locally developed, one-page (front and back), pencil-and paper survey. It has nine self-report questions designed to determine Belizean high school students' post graduation plans. The first question asks students what they want to do after graduation (Question 1A) and also what they expect they will probably do (Question 1B). The second question asks students the reasons for any differences in their preferred and probable plans. The third question asks participants what training or education they would like to pursue after high school. Question 4 asks participants what career or job they would like to pursue. Question 5 asks students who want to go to university where they would prefer to study. Questions 6 through 8 ask demographic questions (school form, gender, and ethnicity). The final question asks the name of the student's school. This question was included so that responses could be grouped in order to provide feedback to the participating schools on how their students responded. This feedback was promised to the general managers and

principals as a condition of their agreement to participate in the study. To preserve the confidentiality of the individual schools, which was a condition of their participation, no separate analysis by school is reported here.

*Validity.* Validity is the “degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure” (Borg, & Gall, 1989, p. 255). To enhance validity, expert review was incorporated in the development of the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument*. The panel of experts reviewed a draft of the survey. I incorporated their suggestions into the final document to enhance face validity. I then piloted the survey in a 3<sup>rd</sup>-Form class from Anglican Cathedral College. Students who took the instrument made suggestions on the content and ease of completion. These suggestions were then incorporated in the development of the instrument.

*Reliability.* Reliability is “the level of internal consistency or stability of the measuring device over time” (Borg, & Gall, 1989, p.257). I measured the test-retest reliability of the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument* during the regular data collection process. One 3<sup>rd</sup>-Form class and two 4<sup>th</sup>-Form classes from Anglican Cathedral College repeated the survey one week after the original data collection. I compared pre- and posttest responses for each class separately using chi-square analysis.

#### *Sample Selection*

I used a modified two-stage cluster sampling process (Borg & Gall, 1989). Cluster sampling is typically defined as a type of random sampling. In this study, I selected clusters for participation at both stages of the sampling process (schools in Stage One and classrooms in Stage Two), but I used purposive sampling rather than random sampling. In Stage One, I selected specific schools to be invited to participate in the project as described below. In Stage Two, I identified the approximate number of classrooms needed to participate within each school,

expressed as a percentage of the expected enrollment of 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>- form students. The goal was to achieve a final sample that was as nearly as possible representative of the national population of 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>- form high school students. At both stages, my sampling process was mediated by the professional judgment of Carol Babb, who served as the field researcher in charge of data collection for this study.

In Stage One, I used purposive sampling to select schools to be invited to participate in the project. I selected these schools based on enrollment data of students in Belizean secondary schools taken from the *Education Statistical Digest 2000-2002* (Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, 2002). I sought an overall sample that was representative by district and that would include different types of schools by management, urban/rural location, and academic/technical focus. I avoided single-gender schools so that the final sample would have a good mix of both males and females.

Belize has 36 secondary schools enrolling 13,779 students in four forms. To have a total sample of close to 1,000 students that was representative by district, I needed about 400 participants from Belize District, 200 from Cayo, 100 from Corozal, 100 from Orange Walk, 100 from Stann Creek, and 50 from Toledo. I selected the following schools to be invited based on the district in which they are located: Anglican Cathedral College (Belize), San Pedro High School (Belize, offshore on the Cayes), Wesley College (Belize), Belize Rural High School (Belize), Belmopan Baptist (Cayo), Belmopan Comprehensive School (Cayo), Corozal Comprehensive School (Corozal), Orange Walk Technical College (Orange Walk), Stann Creek Ecumenical (Stann Creek), and Toledo Community College (Toledo).

In Stage Two, I estimated the number of 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students who attend each of these schools, based on general enrollment information. Then I computed the approximate

number of students at each school who could be invited to participate in the study, along with the percentage of that school's 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form enrollment that this number would comprise. Table 1 shows the sample numbers I requested from each school.

I requested participation from these schools via an email message to Carol Babb. However, I recognized that it might not be possible to get participation at each of these schools, that I might have misestimated the number of students enrolled in 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form, and that my requested number of participants might be impractical for reasons I could not anticipate or control. I asked her to try to get a sample as close to my requested sample as she reasonably could and to use her professional judgment to make substitutions as necessary.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

Before data collection began, I sought permission from the Institutional Review Board for Projects Involving Human Subjects (IRB) at Virginia Tech. A copy of the approval letter appears in Appendix B.

Upon approval from the IRB, I mailed 1,000 copies of the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instruments* to Carol Babb. I separated the instruments into 40 packets. Each of the packets included 25 surveys, 25 student informed consent forms (Appendix C), and one letter to the teacher (Appendix D). All the instruments, informed consent forms, and teacher letters were placed into individually labeled manila envelopes so that each class selected for the study would have all needed documents in 1 envelope, assuming a normal class enrollment of about 25 students.

Table 1

*Number of Survey Participants Requested from Each School Invited to Participate in the Study*

School	Estimated <i>N</i> of 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Form Students	Students Requested <u>for the Sample</u>	
		N	(%)
Anglican Cathedral College	150	150	100 %
San Pedro High School	100	100	100 %
Wesley College	200	100	50 %
Belize Rural High School	35	35	100 %
Belmopan Baptist School	60	60	100 %
Belmopan Comprehensive School	380	130	33 %
Corozal Comprehensive School	275	100	33 %
Orange Walk Technical School	345	100	33 %
Stann Creek Ecumenical School	220	100	50 %
Toledo Community College	220	50	25 %

*Note.* Number of desired students represents 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students only. Percent of Total = the estimated percentage of requested 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form participants compared to the estimated total number of 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students enrolled in each school.

Additionally, I created 25 sets of sample documents for general managers and principals. These included a letter addressed to the general manager or principal (Appendix E), one copy of the letter addressed to the teachers, one informed consent letter addressed to the students, and one copy of the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument*. These four documents were paper-clipped together for each general manager or principal. Then all 25 of these paper-clipped general manager/principal packets were placed into one labeled manila envelope.

I sent all documents to Carol Babb's office in Belize City via United States Postal Service during the first week in March 2003. She delivered each of the 40 packets to the schools we had previously identified for the sample, or to another similar school if necessary. She explained to the general manager or principal the research study being conducted and asked for his or her assistance.

Principals and general managers then took the packets to the requested number of 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form classes in their schools. Teachers were asked to read the following statement to all their students:

The questionnaire you are about to complete will provide the Ministry of Education and the University of Belize important information on the educational opportunities that Belizean students need. Please read the pink form before completing the questionnaire.

(Appendix D)

Teachers were instructed to hand out one Informed Consent for Participants form and one survey instrument to each student in their class. Each Informed Consent for Participants form was paper clipped to the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument*. The informed consent form was printed on pink paper to draw attention to it.

Upon completion of the instruments by the students, the teacher was instructed to collect completed surveys and place them into the manila envelope in which they were delivered. Teachers were then instructed to return the envelope of completed surveys to the principal or general manager. The principal or general manager returned all class envelopes to Carol Babb. She gave each participating school two weeks to complete the instruments and return them to her. All but one school returned the instruments to her within the two-week period. At the final school, she visited personally to retrieve the instruments. Carol Babb mailed the completed instruments back to the United States during the first week of April 2003. They arrived in the United States on Virginia Tech's campus on April 24, 2003.

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

I entered the response data in an Excel spreadsheet. For questions 1A, 1B, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, I simply assigned a numeric code to each response option and entered into the spreadsheet the code for the response selected by the participant. Questions 3 and 4 were open-response questions and could not be coded in the same way because specific responses could not be anticipated. Therefore, for these questions I used inductive coding. At the end of the instrument there is a box that provides spaces for participants to comment on anything related to their future plans or the instrument. I copied these comments into a Microsoft Word document for future reference. (See Appendix F.)

Survey questions 1A and 1B asked students to choose only one response from a list. Some students gave multiple responses. Since it was not possible to know which of these was the first choice, these responses were invalid and I discarded these cases entirely.

Questions 3 and 4 asked students to supply one response free-form. Some students gave multiple responses. In this case it was possible to determine students' first response, so I coded and analyzed first responses only for these questions.

I next imported the Excel spreadsheet into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 11.0. I used SPSS for all analyses. I used two-tailed tests and an alpha level of .05 throughout.

Research Question 1 asks what Belizean high school students want to do after graduation. Responses to the first portion of Question 1 on the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument* (here referred to as 1A) answer this research question. I generated frequency distributions for all respondents to determine the numbers of students who chose each post-graduation option.

Research Question 2 asks what Belizean high school students believe they will probably do after graduation. To answer this research question I generated a frequency distribution of responses to the second portion of Survey Item 1 (here referred to as 1B).

Research Question 3 asks what factors contribute to any differences between the preferred plans and probable plans of Belizean high school students. I answered this question by generating a frequency distribution of responses to Survey Item 2 for students whose responses to 1A and 1B were different from each other.

Research Question 4 asks what training or additional educational options Belizean high school students would like to pursue. Question 3 on the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument* is designed to answer this research question. I answered Research Question 4 by generating a frequency distribution of first responses to Survey Item 3.

Research Question 5 asks where Belizean high school students who are planning to attend a university upon graduation prefer to study. Responses to Question 5 on the instrument answer this research question. Students were able to make one of four responses: the University of Belize, a university in the United States, a university in the United Kingdom, and another university. I answered this research question by generating a frequency distribution of responses to Survey Item 5 for students who indicated in Question 1A or 1B that they would attend a university either directly after high school or following 6<sup>th</sup> Form.

Research Question 6 asks what jobs or careers Belizean high school students want to pursue. Question 4 on the *Belizean Post-Graduation Planning Instrument* asks participants what career or job they most want to pursue. I answered this research question by generating a frequency distribution for first responses to Survey Item 4.

Research Question 7 examines whether there are differences in responses between 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students. Survey Item 6 provided the demographic information by which responses to previous survey items were grouped. I answered this research question by using chi square analysis to determine any differences in the pattern of responses between third and fourth form students. For this research question and the next two as well, the large number of response options for the demographic questions made meaningful interpretation of chi-square results for all options virtually impossible. Further, some cell sizes were too small to be appropriate for chi-square analysis. Therefore, for these last three research questions I grouped data and collapsed categories and omitted response options altogether when they had very small cell sizes. The specifics of this grouping are described in detail in Chapter Four.

Research Question 8 asks whether there are differences in responses based on gender. Survey Item 7 provided the demographic information by which responses to previous survey

items were grouped for this research question. I answered this research question by using chi-square analysis to determine any differences in the pattern of responses between males and females, again using the modified non-demographic variables as described in Chapter Four.

Research Question 9 asks whether there are differences in responses based on ethnicity. Survey Item 8 provided the demographic grouping information. Because of the large number of ethnic groups, and the small cell sizes for some of them, I compared responses only for the two largest ethnic groups: Mestizos and Creoles, again using the modified non-demographic variables mentioned above.

### *Conclusion*

This study was designed to learn what Belizean high school students plan to do after high school graduation, so that the Ministry of Education, University of Belize, and Belizean high schools can make appropriate resource allocation decisions. The methods described in this chapter enabled me to answer my research questions. The results appear in the next chapter.

## Chapter Four: Results

This chapter summarizes the results of this study. First, a description of the sample is provided. Next, the results of the test-retest analysis to determine reliability are presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with the results of the analysis for each research question in this study.

### *Sample Description*

From the 1,000 instruments I mailed to Belize, I received 978 completed instruments, for a 98% response rate. Of the total 978 instruments received, 78 were discarded as unusable because they had multiple responses to Question 1A and/or 1B, leaving 900 usable instruments. This unusually high response rate is probably due to two main factors. First, Belizeans have not been asked to complete many surveys, so response rates have not been reduced by assessment fatigue. Second, the Belizean culture is relatively compliant, particularly in a school setting.

Table 2 shows the requested sample by school compared to the actual sample. Out of the 900 usable responses, 481 were from 3<sup>rd</sup>-Form students and 408 were from 4<sup>th</sup> Formers, while 11 students did not identify their Form. By gender, 417 respondents identified themselves as male and 469 as female; 14 did not identify their gender. Students of nine defined ethnicities participated in this study with the most common groups being Mestizo (32%) and Creole (27%).

### *Test-Retest Analysis*

I used chi-square analysis for test-retest reliability because the data in this study are nominal level. Table 3 shows the chi-square results for questions 1A, 1B, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8. same in pre- and posttest for all participants. There were no significant differences in pre- and posttest responses for either 3<sup>rd</sup>- or 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students, indicating that the instrument had appropriate test-retest reliability for 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form Belizean students.

Table 2

*Number of Students in the Requested Sample and Actual Sample by School*

School	Sample Requested	Actual Sample
Anglican Cathedral College	150	57
San Pedro High School	100	0
Wesley College	200	66
Belize Rural High School	35	30
Belmopan Baptist	60	59
Belmopan Comprehensive School	130	113
Corozal Comprehensive School	100	113
Orange Walk Technical	100	93
Stann Creek Ecumenical	100	120
Toledo Community College	50	172
Sacred Heart College	0	77

*Note.* Sacred Heart College was substituted for San Pedro High School based on the professional judgment of the field data collector, Carol Babb.

Table 3

*Chi Square Results for Test-Retest Analysis by Form*

Survey Item	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Third Form (n = 42)			
1A. What do you want to do after graduation?	.98	5	.965
1B. What will you probably do after graduation?	2.42	5	.788
2. If there is a difference, what contributes to it?	.85	3	.836
3. What education or training do you want after high school?	12.44	14	.570
4. What career or job do you most want to pursue?	3.53	11	.982
5. If you intend to go to a university, where would you go?	1.69	3	.638
7. What is your gender?	.38	1	.537
8. What is your ethnicity?	2.03	5	.845
Fourth Form (n = 74)			
1A. What do you want to do after graduation?	4.54	5	.474
1B. What will you probably do after graduation?	1.73	6	.943
2. If there is a difference, what contributes to it?	1.60	3	.659
3. What education or training do you want after high school?	12.75	18	.806
4. What career or job do you most want to pursue?	6.33	14	.957

Table 3 (continued)

*Chi Square Results for Test-Retest Analysis by Form*

Survey Item	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
5. If you intend to go to a university, where would you go?	.47	1	.493
7. What is your gender?	.15	1	.701
8. What is your ethnicity?	2.53	4	.639

*Note.* Question 6 relates to students' Form level. Since the data were analyzed separately by Form, these responses were therefore the same in pre- and posttests for all participants.

### *Results for Research Questions*

Research Question 1 asks what Belizean high school students want to do after graduation. I generated a frequency distribution of all responses. The most common preferred destination for these students immediately after high school was 6<sup>th</sup> Form. Almost half (46.3%) of students indicated they wanted to go into the 6<sup>th</sup> Form and then attend a university. An additional 12.6% reported that they want to go to 6<sup>th</sup> Form and then to work. Only 4.7% of students reported that they had not yet decided what they want to do after high school graduation. Table 4 shows the numbers and percentages of all respondents to survey item 1A.

Research Question 2 asks what Belizean high school students believe they will probably do after graduation. To answer this question I generated a frequency distribution of students' responses to survey item 1B. About the same number of students reported that they believe they will actually go to 6<sup>th</sup> Form as those who said they want to go there. However, in this question, more students said they believe they will go to work after 6<sup>th</sup> Form instead of going on to university, which was their preference. In general these data show that fewer students believe they will attend the university (either directly or after 6<sup>th</sup> form) and more students will go to work (either directly or after 6<sup>th</sup> form) as compared to their preferences. Table 5 shows the numbers and percentages of all responses to survey item 1B.

Research Question 3 asks what factors contribute to any differences between the preferred plans and probable plans of Belizean high school students. I ran a frequency distribution of responses to Survey Item 2 for all respondents whose responses to Survey Items 1A and 1B were dissimilar. About half (49.1%) of these students reported that they might not be able to afford their first choice. Table 6 shows the numbers and percentages of factors contributing to differences in preferred and probable plans.

Table 4

*Number and Percent of Responses to Survey Item 1A\* by All Respondents (N =856)*

What Students Want to Do after Graduation	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Go to university directly	226	26.4
Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form, then to university	396	46.3
Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form, then go to work	113	12.6
Go to CET, then go to work	11	1.3
Go to work directly after high school	51	5.7
Stay home without paid employment	2	.2
Become a full-time homemaker & parent	1	.1
Other	14	1.6
I have not decided yet	42	4.7

\*Item 1A: Below are some things that you might choose to do after you complete high school.

Check the option you would pursue if you could do anything you wanted to do.

Table 5

*Number and Percent of Responses to Survey Item 1B\* by All Respondents (N =811)*

What Students Will Probably Do After Graduation	<i>n</i>	%
Go to university directly	145	17.9
Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form, then to university	309	38.1
Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form, then go to work	188	23.2
Go to CET, then go to work	14	1.7
Go to work directly after high school	87	10.7
Stay home without paid employment	4	.5
Become a full-time homemaker & parent	2	.2
Other	14	1.7
I have not decided yet	48	5.9

\*Item 1B: Below are some things that you might choose to do after you complete high school.

Check the option that you think you probably will do.

Table 6

*Number and Percent of Responses to Survey Item 2\* by Students Whose Responses to Item 1A\*\* and 1B\*\*\* Were Dissimilar (N = 523)*

Contributing Factors	<i>n</i>	%
I might not be able to afford my first choice	227	49.1
I might not qualify academically for my first choice	106	22.9
My parents' preferences are different from mine	95	20.6
Other	34	7.4

\*Item 2: If what you *want* to do is different from what you will *probably* do, check the most likely reason for this difference.

\*\*Item 1A: Below are some things that you might choose to do after you complete high school. Check the option you would pursue if you could do anything you wanted to do.

\*\*\*Item 1B: Below are some things that you might choose to do after you complete high school. Check the option that you think you probably will do.

Research Question 4 asks what training or additional educational options Belizean high school students would like to pursue. I generated frequency distributions for the first response given by students to Survey Item 3. Belizean high school students most frequently requested training or additional educational options in subjects related to business, such as accounting, economics, finance, and banking. Table 7 shows the numbers and percentages of all responses to Survey Item 3.

Research Question 5 asks students who are planning to attend a university where they prefer to study. I ran frequency distributions of responses to Survey Item 5 for students who indicated either a preference or expectation for studying at a university. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (66%) stated they would prefer to study at the University of Belize. Table 8 shows the numbers and percentages of all responses to Survey Item 5.

Research Question 6 examines what jobs or careers Belizean high school students want to pursue. Frequency distributions were conducted only for the first response given by students to Survey Item 4. Twenty-two percent of respondents stated they wanted to pursue a job or career in business. Table 9 shows the numbers and percentages of all responses to Survey Item 4.

Research Questions 7, 8, and 9 ask for comparisons of responses to the non-demographic questions on the survey by various demographic groups (Form, gender, and ethnicity). Because the data for the non-demographic questions are nominal level, this comparison must be done through chi-square analysis. However, the large number of responses available for each variable makes it difficult if not impossible to discern meaningful differences across the cells. Therefore, I created new variables for each of the non-demographic questions on the survey, and also for the ethnicity question. In these new variables I collapsed similar categories of responses and omitted altogether those that received the fewest responses so that most of the students' responses to the

Table 7

*Number and Percent of First Responses to Survey Item 3\* by All Respondents (N = 709)*

Educational/Training	n	%
Business	122	17.2
University	63	8.9
Computers	61	8.6
Tourism Studies	42	5.9
Sixth Form	40	5.6
Engineering	38	5.4
Trade/Vocational/CET	36	5.1
Teacher	35	4.9
Medicine	31	4.4
Legal Study	28	3.9
Biological Study	23	3.2
Nursing	23	3.2
Electrical Wiring	16	2.3
None	16	2.3
Pilot/Aviation	14	2.0
Anthropology	10	1.4
Architecture	10	1.4

Table 7 (continued)

*Number and Percent of First Responses to Survey Item 3\* by All Respondents (N = 709)*

Educational/Training	n	%
Office Staffing	9	1.3
Cosmetology	8	1.1
Environmental Science	8	1.1
Social Work Training	8	1.1
Chemistry	7	1.0
Physics	7	1.0
Science	7	1.0
Communication/Journalism	6	.8
Military Training	6	.8
Musical	6	.8
Agricultural Study	5	.6
Archeology	4	.6
Design Training	4	.6
Language	3	.4
Psychology Study	3	.4
Acting/Theater	2	.3
Hair Styling Certification	2	.3
Construction	1	.1

Table 7 (continued)

*Number and Percent of First Responses to Survey Item 3\* by All Respondents (N = 709)*

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Educational/Training	n	%
Geography	1	.1
Political Science	1	.1
Professional Athletic Training	1	.1
Special Education Training	1	.1
Technical Drawing	1	.1

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\*Item 3: What training or additional study would you like to pursue after high school?

Table 8

*Numbers and Percentage of Responses to Survey Item 5\* by All Respondents (N = 832)*

University/Location	<i>n</i>	%
University of Belize	457	65.6
A University in the United States	171	24.5
A University in the United Kingdom	18	2.6
Another university	51	7.3

\*Item 5: If you intend to go to university, check the choice you are most likely to make.

Table 9

*Numbers and Percentage of First Responses to Survey Item 4\* by All Respondents (N = 828)*

Job/Career	<i>n</i>	%
General Business	184	22.2
Teacher	69	8.3
Doctor	66	8.0
Engineering	53	6.4
Lawyer	46	5.6
Computer Technician	43	5.2
Office Assistant/Secretary	40	4.8
Career in Tourism	39	4.7
Marine Biologist	38	4.6
Civil Service	24	2.9
Nurse	23	2.8
Architect	21	2.5
Pilot	20	2.4
Trade Worker	19	2.3
Electrical Wiring	13	1.6
Not Sure	12	1.4
Social Work	12	1.4
Farmer	12	1.4
Acting/Theater/Entertainment	11	1.3

Table 9 (continued)

*Numbers and Percentage of First Responses to Survey Item 4\* by All Respondents (N = 828)*

Job/Career	<i>n</i>	%
Journalist	10	1.2
Hair Stylist/Cosmetology	9	1.1
Entrepreneur	6	.7
Military	6	.7
Mechanic	5	.6
Pro Athlete	5	.6
Scientist	5	.6
Chemist	4	.5
Health Industry Professional	4	.5
Lab Technician	4	.5
Veterinarian	4	.5
Archeologist	3	.4
Biochemist	3	.4
Biologist	3	.4
Environmental Scientist	3	.4
Designer	2	.2

Table 9 (continued)

*Numbers and Percentage of Responses to Survey Item 4\* by All Respondents (N =828)*

Job/Career	<i>n</i>	%
Child Care	1	.1
Contractor	1	.1
Counselor	1	.1
Psychologist	1	.1
Physics	1	.1
Special Education Teacher	1	.1
Volunteer Work	1	.1

\*Item 4: What career or job do you most want to pursue?

questions could be represented by two, or at most three, options for each variable. The revised variables and their new levels are displayed in Table 10, along with the number of responses represented by the original variables and the revised variables. Using these revised variables for the demographic comparisons made it possible for me to make reasonable judgments about the pattern of responses I observed. The specificity lost by collapsing categories and omitting some infrequent responses was more than made up by the improved ability to interpret the analysis of the remaining categories.

Research Question 7 asks whether there are differences in responses between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Form students. Survey Item 6 provided the demographic information by which responses to previous survey items were grouped. Chi-square analysis determined differences in the pattern of responses between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Form students. Table 11 shows the chi square results for responses to the revised survey items by Form.

As Table 11 shows, there were significant differences between the responses of 3<sup>rd</sup>-Form Form and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students only on the questions of ultimate career and location for university study. Third-Form students were more likely than their 4<sup>th</sup>-Form classmates to want to pursue a career in Professions (30% vs. 20%), or Business and Tourism (30% vs. 28%), and less likely to want a career in Life Sciences (16% vs. 21%) or Engineering and Computers (11% vs. 15%). Further, 3<sup>rd</sup>-Form students (35%) were more likely than 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students (17%) to want to study at a university in the United States as opposed to the University of Belize.

Research Question 8 asks whether there are differences in responses based on gender. Survey Item 7 provided the demographic grouping information. Chi-square analysis determined differences in the pattern of responses between males and females. Table 12 shows the chi-

Table 10

*Comparison of Number of Responses and Levels for Original Variables and Revised Variables*

Survey Item	Original Variable Levels	Revised Variable Levels
1A. What do you want to do after graduation?	<i>n</i> = 856 Go to university directly Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form, then to university Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form, then go to work Go to CET, then go to work Go to work directly after high school Stay home without paid employment Become a full-time homemaker & parent Other I have not decided yet	<i>n</i> = 735 Go to university Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form
1B. What will you probably do after graduation?	<i>n</i> = 811 Go to university directly Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form, then to university Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form, then go to work Go to CET, then go to work Go to work directly after high school Stay home without paid employment Become a full-time homemaker & parent Other I have not decided yet	<i>n</i> = 643 Go to university Go to 6 <sup>th</sup> form
2. If there is a difference, what contributes to it?	<i>n</i> = 462 I might not be able to afford my first choice I might not qualify academically My parents' preferences are different Other	<i>n</i> = 428 Finances restrict I might not qualify academically My parents' preferences are different

Table 10 (continued)

*Comparison of Number of Responses and Levels for Original Variables and Revised Variables*

Survey Item	Original Variable Levels	Revised Variable Levels
3. What education or training do you want after high school?	<p><i>n</i> = 709</p> <p>Training in medicine</p> <p>Training in engineering</p> <p>General Business</p> <p>Legal studies</p> <p>Training to become a teacher</p> <p>35 additional categories*</p>	<p><i>n</i> = 518</p> <p>Life Sciences</p> <p>Engineering &amp; Computers</p> <p>Business &amp; Tourism</p> <p>Professions</p> <p>Trades</p>
4. What career or job do you most want to pursue?	<p><i>n</i> = 828</p> <p>Doctor</p> <p>Marine Biologist</p> <p>Mechanic</p> <p>General Business</p> <p>Office Administration</p> <p>38 additional career/jobs categories*</p>	<p><i>n</i> = 756</p> <p>Life Sciences</p> <p>Engineering &amp; Computers</p> <p>Business &amp; Tourism</p> <p>Professions</p> <p>Trades</p>
5. If you intend to go to a university, where would you go?	<p><i>n</i> = 832</p> <p>University of Belize</p> <p>University in the United States</p> <p>University in the United Kingdom</p> <p>Another University</p>	<p><i>n</i> = 752</p> <p>University of Belize</p> <p>University in the United States</p>

Table 10 (continued)

*Comparison of Number of Responses and Levels for Original Variables and Revised Variables*

Survey Item	Original Variable Levels	Revised Variable Levels
8. What is your ethnicity?	<i>n</i> = 882 Mestizo Maya East Indian Arab Multi-racial Creole Garifuna German/Dutch Chinese Other	<i>n</i> = 531 Mestizo Creole

\* A complete list of all responses to Survey Items 3 & 4 paraphrased in this table can be found in Tables 7 and 10.

Table 11

*Chi Square Results for Responses to Revised Non-Demographic Survey Items by Form*

Survey Item	<i>N</i>		$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Form	4 <sup>th</sup> Form			
1A. What do you want to do after graduation?					
University	117	108	.18	1	.673
6 <sup>th</sup> Form	269	232			
1B. What will you probably do after graduation?					
University	87	56	2.57	1	.109
6 <sup>th</sup> Form	261	229			
2. If there is a difference, what contributes to it?*					
I might not be able to afford my first choice.	33	22	3.11	2	.211
I might not qualify academically for my first choice.	13	15			
My parents' preferences are different from mine.	22	10			
3. What education or training do you want after high school?					
Life Sciences	50	40	1.36	4	.851
Engineering and Computers	53	46			
Business and Tourism	89	74			
Professions	58	38			
Trades	38	34			
4. What career or job do you most want to pursue?					
Life Sciences	65	75	11.44	4	.022
Engineering and Computers	44	52			
Business and Tourism	121	102			
Professions	120	73			
Trades	52	52			
5. If you intend to go to a university, where would you go?					
University of Belize	257	294	33.32	1	.000
A University in the United States	193	58			

\* This question was analyzed only for respondents who gave dissimilar answers to 1A and 1B.

square results for responses to the revised survey items by gender. There were significant differences between males and females on Survey Items 3 and 4.

Survey Item 3 related to what additional training or educational option Belizean high school students wanted after graduation. Males (31%) were more likely than their female classmates (9%) to want to study Engineering and Computers. Females were more likely than males to desire additional training and educational options in Business and Tourism (39% vs. 22%) and Life Sciences (20% vs. 15%).

Question 4 related to what job or career option Belizean high school students wanted to pursue after graduation. Similar to responses on Survey Item 3, males (24%) are much more likely to want to pursue a career in Engineering and Computers as compared to their female (3%) classmates. Females (34%) are more likely to pursue a job or career in Business and Tourism than males (24%). Additionally, females were more likely than males to pursue a career or job in Life Sciences (20.8% vs. 15%).

Research Question 9 asks whether there were differences in responses based on ethnicity. Survey Item 8 provided the demographic grouping information. For this analysis the revised ethnicity variable was used, comparing only the two largest groups, Mestizo and Creole. Table 13 shows the chi-square results.

The only significant difference in the responses of Mestizo and Creole students was for Survey Item 5, concerning where would you like to attend a university. The majority for both ethnic groups indicated a preference to study at the University of Belize. However, Creole (33%) students were more likely to want to study in the United States than Mestizo students (16%).

Chapter Four has explored the results of the data collected for this study. These findings and their implications for future practice and research are discussed in Chapter Five.

Table 12

*Chi Square Results for Responses to Non-Demographic Survey Items by Gender*

Survey Item	<i>N</i>		$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male	Female			
1A. What do you want to do after graduation?					
University	103	121	.00	1	.996
6 <sup>th</sup> Form	230	270			
1B. What will you probably do after graduation?					
University	69	73	2.36	1	.124
6 <sup>th</sup> Form	203	288			
2. If there is a difference, what contributes to it?*					
I might not be able to afford my first choice.	24	31	2.43	2	.296
I might not qualify academically for my first choice.	16	12			
My parents' preferences are different from mine.	12	20			
3. What education or training do you want after high school?					
Life Sciences	35	55	46.46	4	.000
Engineering and Computers	73	26			
Business and Tourism	52	108			
Professions	40	57			
Trades	38	34			
4. What career or job do you most want to pursue?					
Life Sciences	54	84	73.23	4	.000
Engineering and Computers	83	13			
Business and Tourism	84	139			
Professions	81	112			
Trades	48	56			
5. If you intend to go to a university, where would you go?					
University of Belize	253	100	1.41	1	.235
A University in the United States	296	96			

\* This question was analyzed only for respondents who gave dissimilar answers to 1A and 1B.

Table 13

*Chi Square Results for Responses to Non-Demographic Survey Items by Ethnicity*

Survey Item	<i>N</i>		$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mestizo	Creole			
1A. What do you want to do after graduation?					
University	79	49	3.35	1	.067
6 <sup>th</sup> Form	159	146			
1B. What will you probably do after graduation?					
University	44	33	.39	1	.532
6 <sup>th</sup> Form	167	147			
2. If there is a difference, what contributes to it?*					
I might not be able to afford my first choice.	20	12	.93	2	.627
I might not qualify academically for my first choice.	9	8			
My parents' preferences are different from mine.	11	11			
3. What education or training do you want after high school?					
Life Sciences	29	21	1.86	4	.761
Engineering and Computers	30	25			
Business and Tourism	54	53			
Professions	24	28			
Trades	26	21			
4. What career or job do you most want to pursue?					
Life Sciences	49	28	4.66	4	.324
Engineering and Computers	27	26			
Business and Tourism	78	70			
Professions	51	55			
Trades	38	31			
5. If you intend to go to a university, where would you go?					
University of Belize	195	143	16.62	1	.000
A University in the United States	38	70			

\* This question was analyzed only for respondents who gave dissimilar answers to 1A and 1B.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the post secondary plans of Belizean high school students. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What do Belizean high school students want to do after graduation?
2. What do Belizean high school students believe they will probably do after graduation?
3. What factors contribute to any difference between preferred plans and probable plans for Belizean high school students?
4. What training or educational options would Belizean high school students like to pursue?
5. Where do Belizean high school students who are planning to attend a university prefer to study?
6. What careers or jobs do Belizean high school students want to pursue?
7. Are there differences in responses between 3<sup>rd</sup> - and 4<sup>th</sup> - Form students?
8. Are there differences in responses based on gender?
9. Are there differences in responses based on ethnicity?

The sample for the study was selected through a modified two-stage cluster sampling process, with purposeful sampling of schools so that the final sample would be as nearly as possible representative of the nation. A locally developed instrument called the *Belizean Post Graduation Planning Instrument* was administered in 3<sup>rd</sup> - and 4<sup>th</sup> - Form classes. Of the 1,000 instruments mailed to Belize for this study, I received 978 completed instruments in return (98% response rate), and 900 of these were usable. I analyzed the data using frequency distributions and chi-square analysis.

This chapter discusses the results, limitations, and implications of the study. The first section discusses the results of each research question, and any significant findings. The following section comments on possible limitations in this research process and discusses how the results may have been affected by these limitations. Finally, the last section addresses the implications this study may have for Belize.

### *Findings*

Research Question 1 asked what Belizean high school students want to do after graduation. Almost 95% of the survey respondents reported a specific plan for their lives following graduation. Eighty-six percent of students who responded to this survey indicated that they wanted to attend either 6<sup>th</sup> Form or university after high school, with 60% wanting to attend 6<sup>th</sup> Form. The responses indicate the desire of most Belizean high school students to continue their formal education after graduation.

Research Question 2 asked what Belizean high school students believe they will probably do after graduation. There is a marked difference between what students in this study said they want to do and what they said they will probably do. The majority of students said that they want to go to 6<sup>th</sup> Form (59% for preferred plans and 61% for probable plans). However, 46% of students reported that they want to go to 6<sup>th</sup> form and then to university, whereas only 38% said that they will probably do this. In contrast, only 13% said that they prefer to go to 6<sup>th</sup> Form and then to work, while 23% indicated that this is likely the course they will take. More than one-fourth (26%) of the respondents reported that they want to go directly to university study after high school, but only 18% said that they believe they will, in fact, do so. Only 6% of students said that they want to go to work directly after high school, but 11% indicated that they will probably go directly to work after graduation. Taken together, these responses indicate that

Belizean students want more formal education than they are likely to get. They believe they will have to enter the workforce before they would like to do so – either directly after high school, or after going to 6<sup>th</sup> Form.

Student responses show a continual theme of belief that they will not be able to do what they most want to do with their lives. This is a dilemma that is facing the 3<sup>rd</sup> – and 4<sup>th</sup> – Form students in Belize. I fear that the repercussions of a young population who believe they will not get to live their lives the way they most want could be detrimental to both the country the individuals themselves. This is of course a fact of life that is much more common in developing countries than in developed ones. Belize may not be able to do much at this present time to help change this sentiment of their student population, but it is an ethical and educational point that should not be lost.

Research Question 3 asked what factors contribute to any differences between the preferred plans and probable plans of Belizean high school students. Responses to Survey Question 2 show that financial issues are most likely to be responsible when Belizean students will not be able to do what they most want to do after high school. This is congruent with the pattern of responses to Questions 1A and 1B, which showed that students will enter the workforce before they would like to. Some students wrote comments about their concerns regarding finances. For example, one student wrote this comment: “Is the Ministry of Education going to provide scholarships for us after we graduate?” A second student said, “We need more student loans!”

Research Question 4 asked what training or additional educational options Belizean high school students would like to pursue. Participants in this study indicated a long list of options

that they would like to have. The most common educational interest was in fields related to business and tourism (23%), with engineering and computer fields (14%) in second place.

In Chapter Two the economic planning of the country was discussed. One central pillar of the country's economic development is expansion of tourism (Task Force on Services, 1999). The Ministry of Education's mission is to provide education and training that supports both personal development and national priorities. The students' preferences for education in business and tourism match the nation's interest in developing the tourism sector of the economy. The Ministry of Education is in a position to support both personal development and national priorities by assuring that these students have opportunities for education for business and tourism.

Research Question 5 asked students who are planning to attend a university where they prefer to study. About two-thirds (66%) of Belizean high school students reported a preference for the University of Belize over a university in the United States, the United Kingdom, or elsewhere. However, third form students (35%) were more likely than 4<sup>th</sup> Form students (17%) to intend on going to a university in the United States. Further, Creole students (33%) were more likely than Mestizo students (16%) to respond they would like to attend a university in the United States. Third form students may be less realistic than their older classmates about their ability to afford study abroad. Creole students may be more likely than Mestizo students to have family ties in the United States that would encourage and enable them to study there.

Research Question 6 examined what jobs or careers Belizean high school students want to pursue. The major finding related to this research question was that Belizean high school students wanted to pursue jobs that typically require formal post secondary education. The most frequent responses fell into three categories of business and tourism, engineering and computers,

and professions. Most Belizean high school students do not want to go directly into the workforce and relatively few want to pursue skilled trades.

Chapter One included this question from a Belizean educator: whether a British style college preparatory curriculum in the secondary school level is appropriate for a student population preparing to go directly into the work force and a country with a high unemployment rate. Responses from this study suggest that the college preparatory curriculum is appropriate for students' goals. It remains to be seen whether this curriculum can be appropriate for a nation whose economy does not at present have professional level positions to match these students' ambitions.

A mismatch currently exists between what the students' postsecondary goals and the ability of the economy to absorb them as professional-level workers. Unless the nation can expand its workforce or the students themselves can create entrepreneurial opportunities, they may find themselves with skills that do not match the opportunities available to them, and the investment of time and money in their educations will not be appropriately repaid.

Research Question 7 examined whether there were differences in responses between 3<sup>rd</sup> - and 4<sup>th</sup> - Form students. The results of this study showed that 3<sup>rd</sup> - Form students (35%) were more likely than 4<sup>th</sup> - Form students (17%) to want to study at a university in the United States. The older 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students may be more sensitive than the 3<sup>rd</sup>-Form students to the financial limitations of their families. This would lead them to be less interested in study abroad and more interested in studying in Belize.

Research Question 8 asked whether there were differences in responses based on gender. The results showed a significant difference between male and female respondents concerning the education and careers they want. Males (24%) were much more likely to want to pursue a career

in engineering and computers as compared to their female (3%) classmates. Females (34%) were more likely to want to pursue a job or career in business and tourism than males (24%). Additionally, females were more likely than males to want to pursue a career in life sciences (21% vs. 15%). These career responses are stereotypically gendered and suggest that (a) the nation will benefit from the skills and expertise of women as it grows the tourism sector of the economy, and (b) the need for technically skilled workers could be met in the future by encouraging girls to pursue careers in engineering and computers.

As mentioned in Chapter One, these results are based on self-reports of teenagers, who may be poorly informed or who might change because of normal development. However, they provide a first order needs assessment for tertiary educational placements when results from this sample are extrapolated to all secondary students in Belize.

Since the sample for this study was comprised of approximately one-fifth of the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students in all of Belize, the results of the study can be extrapolated with some caution to the nation as a whole. That is, the responses of 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students can be multiplied by 5 to estimate the number of students who believe they will take specific educational options next year.

Fifty-six of the 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students in this study reported that they expect to go directly to university after high school graduation. This implies that approximately 280 Belizean students (56 x 5) expect to go to university next year. Since about two-thirds of the students in this study who are college-bound report a preference for the University of Belize as compared to a university in the United States, this implies that about 187 Belizean students expect to study as first-year students at the University of Belize next year. By a similar analysis, about 1,145 Belizean 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students expect to attend 6<sup>th</sup>-Form after graduation. Belizean administrators

should compare these numbers to the actual enrollments of this class of Belizean students in fall 2003 to test the accuracy of the students' predictions about their own educational behaviors. This comparison will give policy makers a tool for understanding the expressed preferences and plans of future Belizean secondary students.

The curricular preferences that these students expressed can guide the nation's resource allocations for training and hiring faculty in various fields. In particular, the largest group of students expressed a desire to study in fields related to business and tourism, and this matches national priorities for expanding the tourism sector of the economy, so national resources could be wisely used to expand this academic field.

### *Limitations*

*Communication.* In any study, certain limitations are present that may affect the results. The first limitation of this study was related to cross-cultural communication. Conducting a study in another country necessitates communicating from a distance and encountering language differences. The purpose statement and directions accompanying this study may not have been explained clearly through the chain of communication I used. If this occurred, participants may have misunderstood the intent of some question. I made reasonable efforts to avoid this problem through use of a panel of Belizean experts and through pilot testing the instrument. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that these communication issues may have caused confusion for some students.

*Instrumentation.* Second, there is a limitation that relates to the instrument itself. The instrument was written in English and has not been translated to any other language. The national language of Belize is English, but many other languages are prevalent (Creole, Spanish, Garifuna, and several others). For the majority of students English is a second language, which may impact their comprehension skills in English (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994). If this

occurred, participating students' interpretations of questions on the instrument may have been affected, which would also affect the results in an unknown way.

*Cultural Bias.* A third limitation of this study was related to the researcher's culture. My understanding of education in a developing country was limited to my literature review and a two week field study in Belize to observe the educational system. The perspective I brought to this study was from the United States educational model. Superimposing my own educational paradigm onto the analysis of these results, conscious or unconsciously, may have colored my discussion of the data.

My ability to project appropriate implications was also limited because of my physical distance from Belize. My ability to understand and explain the implications this study should be supplemented by the judgments of experts in Belize itself.

*Sample.* Schools were invited to participate in this study based on their district, size, school management type, technical/vocational focus, and urban/rural location. However, the actual sample was somewhat different from the one I envisioned. Based on the difference between the requested and actual samples some geographic districts were overrepresented and others underrepresented within the final sample. Readers should be aware that the final sample is not perfectly representative of the country. However, this concern is mitigated by the very high return rate and the fact that all types of schools and demographic groups were included in the final sample.

Despite these limitations, this study was important. It produced useful information on the post secondary plans of Belizean high school students. It examined what students want to do and what students feel they probably will do after graduation from high school. This study also examined what additional education or training Belizean high school students want, and

determined what careers or jobs they want to pursue. This study was the first of its kind in Belize and the results will provide important evidence to guide the development of Belizean post-secondary educational options.

### *Implications for Practice*

The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice. These implications extend to the personnel involved in secondary school administration, 6<sup>th</sup> Form administrators, administrators of the University of Belize, and officials in the Ministry of Education.

*Secondary school administrators.* This study has significance for all participating secondary schools. Administrators at the participating secondary schools will receive a report of the study as a whole and also specific results for their own schools. They will be able to use these results to shape curriculum. For example, if most students at a particular high school intend to pursue vocational education after graduation, and few students intend to go to university, the principal could use the results to support a curricular shift toward vocational courses at the secondary level.

*Sixth Form administrators.* The large percentage of Belizean high school students who want to attend 6<sup>th</sup> Form upon graduation is a major finding of this study. Providing appropriate opportunities for these students at the 6<sup>th</sup> Form level should be a high priority. Sixth Form administrators can use the results of this study to be sure that their curriculum complements the goals and educational needs of Belizean students.

*Administrators at the University of Belize.* The University of Belize may take advantage of the results of this study by shaping its curriculum and resource decisions to match the students' expressed desires for further study. In particular the students' desire to study

engineering and computers and to prepare for some of the professions may be best suited to the university level.

Further, the University of Belize benefits from the strong attraction that high school students feel toward this institution. This is particularly true among 4<sup>th</sup>-Form students and Mestizo students. Further, since financial issues are such strong motivating factors for high school students, university administrators can stress the lower cost of attending university in Belize as opposed to studying abroad, and they can work with national officials to develop financial aid options for students who study at the university.

*Ministry of Education.* Based on the results of this study, the Ministry of Education may decide to place greater financial resources in the future into the 6<sup>th</sup> Form and University of Belize. Financial concerns were the overwhelmingly stated reason for students' not expecting to do what they most want to do after high school. The government may seek to provide additional financial aid packages, grants, or scholarships to help students attain the level of post secondary education they desire, particularly where the students' educational goals match the nation's priorities. For example, loan programs could be established to help students finance their education, with the loans to be repaid after graduation.

Taking advantage of the of the country's most valuable resource, its people, is essential to the health of the economy and of the nation. Educating the youth and adults of the population will aid the economic development Belize is trying to pursue. The Human Development Task Force (NHDAC, 1998) determined that 25% of the workforce had no formal education at all and 45% of the workforce had only a primary level education. An untrained and uneducated workforce holds Belize's economy back, and investments in the further education of today's high school students can go a long way toward overcoming this barrier to economic development.

Chapter Two discusses the age structure of the Belizean population, which is relatively young. Forty-two percent of the total Belizean population is between the ages of 1 and 14. The age structure now implies an urgent need and opportunity to grow the economy by preparing the young workforce as they enter their productive years. If this opportunity is missed the economic consequences for both the nation and the students themselves would be a great loss, but if the opportunity is taken the educated workforce could provide one engine – along with continued capital investment – for national economic development.