A NATURALISTIC INVESTIGATION OF WOMEN'S DECISIONS TO LEAVE SCHOOL: APPLICATION OF THREE THEORIES TO THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE WITHDRAWAL

by

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(ABSTRACT)

The problem investigated in this study was which of three theories of withdrawal best explained why some community college students voluntarily disengaged from school. The theories examined were Clark's (1960, 1980) "cooling-out" theory, Ogbu's (1974, 1978) "job ceiling" theory, and Willis' (1977) "counter-culture" theory. Eleven white females who originally attended the same institution in the southeastern United States primarily as full-time students and later voluntarily withdrew were selected on the basis of those who would have ordinarily been expected to persist to graduation and those who would not have been expected to do so. These two groups were also sub-divided by lower and higher social class standing. Data were collected through four interviews to provide a life history of the educational and occupational experiences, attitudes, aspirations, and beliefs of each participant. Domain

analysis, a method recommended for qualitative, text-based data, was used to analyze the transcribed interview responses.

The findings indicate that the three theories providing the conceptual framework do not fully explain why the women in this study chose to withdraw from college. These women did not seem to perceive that the institution had encouraged them to lower their aspirations and to relocate in the curriculum (Clark). The women also did not seem to consider the job ceiling in making their own occupational decisions (Ogbu). Further, they did not seem to be attracted to a counter-culture set of beliefs and behaviors, and in fact, seemed to accept the beliefs and behaviors of the school (Willis).

Rather, the women in this study demonstrated goal confusion and indecision, confusion about the relationship between education and work, and ambivalence about the identities and roles they wanted for themselves. Although they all wanted "something special" as an occupation, they gradually narrowed their options by acting upon the messages they received from significant others and from their observations about the role of education and work in people's lives. The decision to withdraw from college was but one of the choices they made as they narrowed their

options. Factors which remain unexplained by the three theories and recommendations for community colleges hoping to improve retention rates are discussed.

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Looking for homes by following inaccurate directions, being urinated upon by a puppy in one interview, getting caught in a torrential downpour and having my steering wheel lock on me as I travelled a street six inches deep in water, interviewing an institutional representative with a lens missing from my glasses, coping with cancelled interviews, coding data for hundreds of hours at the typewriter, accidentally erasing a computer file of coded data, and listening to the horror of rapes and suicide attempts and alcoholism and trying to silently scream it out of my system so that I could return to the horror on another day--these are some of the humorous, serious, and painful moments that make up the backdrop of this study.

Maintaining emotional equilibrium in the midst of these moments was prerequisite to maintaining an appropriate investigative stance during the study. I owe special thanks to my committee members who shared their smiles and jokes with me, who provided guidance and feedback and encouragement, who gave their personal time to talk with me, who helped me stay in balance. They were both teachers and friends to me: Dr. Darrel Clowes and Dr. Margaret Eisenhart, my co-chairs; Dr. Charles Atwell and Dr. Robert Sullins of the Community College Program Area; and Dr.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Through its policies of open admissions, geographic proximity, and low tuition, the American community college has actively recruited and has succeeded in enrolling many students who might otherwise have been unable to attend college. Unfortunately, the community college has been less successful in retaining these students; many leave school before they complete degree requirements. Researchers exploring the problem of student withdrawal in the community college have identified a number of characteristics describing dropouts, the reasons students give for leaving, and numerous factors associated with withdrawal, but the question of how students come to make the decision to withdraw from school remains largely unanswered.

To date, few researchers have used a theoretical framework to guide their investigations of students' decisions to withdraw from the community college. The purpose of this study was to assess the power of three major theories of withdrawal to explain the decision of a small sample of white female community college students to withdraw voluntarily from school. The findings suggest that the three theories do not fully explain the withdrawal decisions of the sample. These theories are discussed in light of the findings, and implications for the community

college and for future research are presented.

The Problem of Community College Withdrawal

The phenomenon of students leaving school is common to institutions at all educational levels. The community college, however, has been particularly vulnerable to student withdrawal through what Cohen and Brawer (1982b) have called its policies of "ease of access" and "ease of exit." Over the past twenty years, an increasing number of students have entered the open doors of the community college, but a large number of these students have left through the same doors without completing degree requirements. For many students, the "open doors" have become "revolving doors" (Cross, 1974).

Because attrition, the general term used to include both voluntary withdrawal from school and academic and disciplinary dismissal, is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, measurement of it has proven difficult. Estimates of the magnitude of community college attrition have varied with the definitions of attrition guiding the studies (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a; Cope, 1968; Jackson & Macmillan, 1976; Peng & Fetters, 1978; Spady, 1970; Summerskill, 1962; Tinto, 1975, 1982). Attrition experts and authorities on the community college have estimated that 39% to 75% of entering students withdraw from their programs of study and their institutions before completing degree

requirements (Cope & Hannah, 1975; Monroe, 1972; Zwerling, 1976). It is unclear in these estimates how many students have been dismissed and how many have voluntarily withdrawn from their institutions. Tinto (1982), however, states that most dropout from higher education is voluntary withdrawal. For the purposes of this study, the terms "withdrawal" and "dropout" are used interchangeably whenever "voluntary" disengagement from school is meant. "Attrition," the more general term, is used whenever the meaning is more general or is unclear.

Despite these inconsistent estimates, experts do agree that the community college has higher rates of attrition than four-year colleges and universities (Astin, 1972; Cope, 1978; Fetters, 1977; Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980). More specifically, Astin (1972, 1975) contends that community college attrition figures are higher than they should be, even for the types of students enrolled.

Although some attrition is to be expected and leaving school is sometimes congruent with students' objectives (Cope, 1978; Jackson & Macmillan, 1976; Timmons, 1977; Tinto, 1982; Walleri, 1981), students who leave school are a major cause for concern, no matter what the educational setting might be. Attrition wastes the time, effort, and money that students and institutions alike have invested in the educational process (Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980; Peng

& Fetters, 1978). In addition, enrollment-driven funding, particularly in higher education, is affected by the numbers of students leaving; this factor has become increasingly important in recent years as inflation and declining enrollments have interacted to create serious problems for education (Pantages & Creedon, 1978; Peng & Fetters, 1978). Retention programs which are ineffective are also costly (Beal & Pascarella, 1982). For the student, leaving school may create a number of personal setbacks (Peng & Fetters, 1978) and close off options for the future (Astin, 1977; Willis, 1977). Finally, as Blai (1972) has stated, attrition is a cause for concern because of "the extinguished hopes of young people deprived of the opportunities and advantages of a higher education" (p. 2).

Until now, most research on attrition from higher education in general and from the community college in particular has attempted to describe those who leave college, to identify students' reasons for leaving, to identify institutional factors associated with dropout, and/or to predict future dropouts (Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980; Pantages & Creedon, 1978; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Spady, 1970; Summerskill, 1962; Tinto, 1975). Such studies have yielded useful statistical summaries of the demographic characteristics of dropouts and identified a number of factors correlated with the dropout. Findings,

however, have been inconsistent across studies and thus hard to generalize. Neither have these studies resulted in programs that have significantly lowered attrition rates (Cope & Hannah, 1975).

In response to the indicators of high attrition and to the characteristics or problems of students identified in the literature, community colleges have developed various strategies to enhance the success of students and to improve their chances of persisting to graduation. Many of these strategies have been targeted toward identifying and helping "high risk" or underprepared students; such strategies have included placement testing, developmental/remedial education programs, early-warning systems, study skills courses, and tutoring programs (Beal & Noel, 1980; Cross, 1976; Lukenbill & McCabe, 1978; Roueche & Kirk, 1973). Other strategies have been aimed at returning adults, handicapped students, and minority students (Beal & Noel, 1980). Financial aid has also been made available to students with financial difficulties (Morrison & Ferrante, 1973). Finally, retention strategies have been directed toward the student population in general and have included mandatory orientation classes, expanded academic and career counseling, and the addition of extra-curricular activities (Beal & Noel, 1980).

Research on these efforts, however, indicates that

community college students do not voluntarily seek help from academic support programs, from counselors, or from financial aid offices and that they have little time to devote to extra-curricular activities (Cockerill, 1970; Friedlander, 1981, 1982; Sutton, 1975). Indeed, many retention programs have failed or had only modest success for the target groups within each institution (Jones, 1969; Kulik, Kulik, & Shwalb, 1983; Losak, 1968; Sherman & Tinto, 1975; Skidmore, 1979; Snyder & Blocker, 1970b). Overall, attrition figures in the community college remain high. Failure of such programs to effect a significant decrease in attrition rates suggests the need for new directions in the study of student withdrawal. Some believe that the consistently high withdrawal rates suggest the need for more understanding of the inter-relationship of various factors and student characteristics and their contribution to withdrawal decisions (Bean, 1980; Lea, Sedlacek, & Stewart, 1979).

To this end, a number of researchers have called for local studies that take the peculiarities of a certain group and a certain setting as the grounded data necessary to better understand the withdrawal decision (Hoyt, 1978; Lea, Sedlacek, & Stewart, 1979; Lenning, 1982; Tinto, 1975, 1982). Tinto (1982), for example, suggests that existing data on attrition point to a number of potential differences

among various sub-groups of college students; others suggest that the dropout process may vary across college careers in different types of institutions (Lenning, 1982; Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980). In particular, Cope (1968, 1978) calls for more differentiation in how males and females approach the withdrawal process, and Turner (1970) and Cohen and Brawer (1970) suggest that more research should be focused specifically on dropouts from the community college. Finally, Beal and Noel (1980) and Walleri (1981) argue that if colleges want to improve retention, they must identify the local factors which contribute to persistence and attrition: "The research on student retention indicates that many variables affect whether the student decides to stay or leave, variables that are linked to the circumstances of a particular institution and its student body" (Beal & Noel, 1980, p. 5).

Experts in the field have also suggested that the beliefs, attitudes, goals, and experiences of the individual should be included in future research as part of the grounded data necessary for understanding the withdrawal decision. Tinto (1982) emphasizes that leaving school is an individual act and that future studies should therefore investigate the movement of individual students through the educational system rather than focusing so much on "aggregate movements of individuals and the role of

institutional and aggregate-level phenomena in their patterning" (p. 13). Arguing that "the meanings a student attritubes to his or her withdrawal behavior may differ substantially" (p. 4) from those of the institution, Tinto recommends further that inquiries into student withdrawal should go beyond "simply noting goals and/or intentions with which the person entered the higher educational system" (p. 5); they should also investigate the individual's experiences at the institution and determine whether those experiences "are seen by that person as a failure to do or complete what he or she came to the institution to do" (p. 5).

Macmillan (1970), in recommending future lines of inquiry on the dropout problem in the community college, stresses that the contribution of individual attitudes, experiences, and beliefs over time to the decision to leave school should be investigated in depth:

> . . . considerations of family attitude and values, expectations of students, patterns of affiliation and reinforcement, and qualities of the college environment need much more thoughtful investigation in the development of a model for understanding community college attrition . . . The attention needs to be on how the student perceives himself, and the pressures he experiences from the environments represented by college, peers, and family. (pp. 26-33)

Along the same lines, Cope and Hannah (1975) call for attrition studies and research methodologies which provide

"qualitative insights originating with individuals in their setting" (p. 31) and focus on how "the feelings, experiences, and perceptions of leavers influence withdrawal decisions" (p. 45). Finally, Hoyt (1978) suggests that before meaningful retention efforts can be designed, more needs to be known about students' personal and vocational goals and about their values.

In addition, experts have stressed the need for theory to guide research on student withdrawal. In the past, few researchers have used a theoretical framework to guide or focus their inquiries (Bean, 1982; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Sherman & Tinto, 1975; Spady, 1970; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1978; Tinto, 1975). Such a theoretical framework would provide a guide for systematically investigating the relationship of "individual, institutional, and interactional variables to each other and to the end-point of educational attainment" (Sherman & Tinto, 1975, p. 28). Without such a guide, inquiry remains unfocused and noncumulative.

Several researchers have posited theoretical explanations for withdrawal from higher education institutions and from secondary schools, but to date, these theories have rarely been explored in the community college setting. In addition, although Blocker, Plummer, and Richardson (1965) have proposed a general model relating

socioeconomic level and educational attainment with respect to community college students, no theoretical explanation particular to community college withdrawal has been developed. Existing theories share some commonalities, but each differs (a) in its emphasis on particular aspects of the students, their background, their social interactions, and the school setting; and (b) its description of how the decision to leave school comes to be made. These differences make them competing theories. Sherman and Tinto (1975) argue that the assessment of competing theories of attrition is prerequisite to "finding alternative ways of attacking the problem" and to establishing "guidelines for the development and evaluation of intervention programs" (p. 28). To date, no single study has examined the power of these competing theories in the community college setting.

The present study is a "local" study which focuses on certain individuals within particular sub-groups, a particular setting, and the personal views of former students. Specifically, this study has been designed to assess the power of three competing theories to explain why a small group of white female community college students, representative of those who would have been expected to persist and those who would not have been expected to do so, chose voluntarily to withdraw from a community college in the southeastern United States. Each of the three theories

was derived from previous ethnographic or case studies which examined the lack of student success in various academic settings. Each of these theories is introduced below and discussed in more detail in Chapter II.

Three Rival Theories of Withdrawal

One potential explanation for community college attrition is the "cooling-out" theory. Clark (1960a, 1960b, 1980) postulates that certain students, who are academically unprepared for the schools they attend, account for withdrawal rates. Clark contends that academically inept students with unrealistic educational and occupational aspirations encounter various counseling practices that eventually encourage these students to lower their aspirations and to revise their curricular goals. The negative effects of these practices are camouflaged with the idea that what is being done is best for the student. Clark describes the process as one of letting hopes down "gently and unexplosively" (1960a, p. 574). Students may choose to withdraw once they realize they will have considerable difficulty pursuing their original goals. Several writers claim that these counseling strategies are aimed specifically at students from lower social class categories.

Willis' "counter-culture" theory of the reproduction of social status via schooling offers another potential explanation of withdrawal from the community college.

Willis (1977) suggests that the organization and structure of the school operate together with the social class and cultural experiences of students to develop their attitudes toward schooling and its relationship to work. Some students, repeatedly frustrated by low grades and expectations, reject the school activities, authorities, and reward system that discourage them and look elsewhere, i.e. to a counter-culture, for rewards. As part of this rejection, they may withdraw from school.

Finally, the "job ceiling" theory may explain why community college students withdraw from school. According to Ogbu (1974, 1978), members of low-status groups come to believe that the job ceiling, or level of occupations available to them after completing school, is low compared to the level of jobs available to members of higher-status groups. Lower-status groups adapt to the discrepancy between (a) the jobs available to their group members and (b) the promised benefits of education by devaluing the role of schooling in job attainment. Their adaptation may be expressed in repudiating those behaviors deemed necessary for success in school or by withdrawing from school altogether.

Although these three theories differ with respect to the emphasis or perspective placed on various factors influencing the withdrawal decision and how the process of

deciding to withdraw works, they share several features. All three stress the contribution of students' aspirations, their beliefs about the relationship between education and work, their values, and their experiences over time to the withdrawal decision. In addition, all three consider the role of significant others in students' decisions to leave school. All three theories also suggest systematic differences in the withdrawal decision by socioeconomic status. All three consider academic ability or performance as a major factor in differentiating those who withdraw from those who do not. Finally, all three either ignore the gender factor or treat it as a secondary consideration.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to assess the power of Clark's cooling-out theory, Willis' counter-culture theory, and Ogbu's job ceiling theory, to explain the decisions of a small group of white female students, carefully differentiated by socioeconomic status and academic proficiency, to withdraw voluntarily from Benson Community College.

Data collection and analysis have been guided by the following primary research questions. Secondary research questions are located at the end of the detailed discussions of each theory in Chapter II.

1. How powerful are the cooling-out theory, the

counter-culture theory, and the job ceiling theory in explaining the withdrawal decision of eleven white female community college students chosen to represent those who would be expected to persist and those who would not be expected to persist?

2. If none of these three theories adequately explains the withdrawal decision of the sample, what explanation emerges from the data?

Significance of the Study

Withdrawal from school continues to be a problem in higher education, particularly in the community college. The present study has attempted to address some of the problems of earlier research on withdrawal by using a conceptual framework to guide the inquiry and by focusing on the individual withdrawal decisions of a particular subgroup, white female drop-outs, within a single community college setting. Previous researchers have frequently provided students with pre-determined lists of statements that assessed their characteristics, attitudes, and reasons for leaving. In contrast, this researcher has employed a methodology which has allowed students to express in open-ended but theory-sensitive inquiry their beliefs about, and the meanings they attach to, education and its contribution to their lives.

By focusing on the withdrawal decision as

conceptualized by the dropouts themselves (i.e., those who took the action and could reverse it), this study has generated data which allow for the simultaneous assessment of the power of three competing theories of withdrawal. Assessing the power of these theories is important for both practical and theoretical reasons. First of all, from the practical perspective, the results provide the local institution with a potential framework for offering assistance to its students, where appropriate. Specifically, the results provide a means of determining which voluntary withdrawals the local institution might have some control over and which might be forfeited as positive choices made by the student. The results also provide a framework for making changes in the local institution that students can recognize.

From a theoretical perspective, the results provide an understanding of the ways in which cultural and school experiences, as well as individual belief systems and attitudes about self, affect students' decisions to remain in school or to leave. This understanding is fundamental to an appropriate balance between (a) the goal of the community college to retain and graduate as many students as possible and (b) the specific needs and beliefs of the students themselves. Further, in addressing the question of why these white women voluntarily chose to leave a community

college before they completed degree requirements, this study and its assessment of three theories have contributed to an understanding of those factors which contribute to withdrawal by females, as well as to an understanding of the actual withdrawal process. Finally, this study has contributed to an understanding of how white females conceptualize the role of education and its relationship to the world of work.

Overview of Presentation

This study is divided into five chapters. In the present chapter, the rationale for the study has been discussed. Chapter II reviews the literature on the general characteristics of the community college, the general and prototypical characteristics of students attending the institution, the study of attrition in the community college, and the theoretical explanations of withdrawal used as the conceptual framework for this study. In addition, secondary research questions are appended at the end of the discussion of each theory. Chapter III discusses the sample, methods, and procedures employed in this study. In Chapter IV, the findings of the study are presented in the form of themes and associated patterns contributing to the decision to leave school. Interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations based on these findings are presented in Chapter V. Finally, correspondence with the institutional

personnel and the participants involved in the study, the interview schedules, a list of categories used in analysis, an extended example of the data analysis, and other related materials are included in the appendices.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter first introduces the American community college and discusses the diversity of its students. Next, studies of the community college attrition problem are summarized. Finally, the three competing theoretical explanations which provided the conceptual framework for this study are discussed in detail. Secondary research questions are included at the end of the discussion of each theory.

General Characteristics of the Community College

Occupying a unique position in the American system of higher education, the community college is a public, non-residential two-year institution of post-secondary education committed to equal access to higher education for a diversity of learners (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a). Its goal of providing universal access has been most clearly expressed in its policies of open admissions, economic accessibility through low tuition, and geographic proximity. This goal has also been expressed in its emphasis on various programmatic options, on a variety of instructional techniques, and on support services (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a; Monroe, 1972).

Originally called a junior college and designed to offer "two years of instruction of strictly collegiate

grade" (Bogue, 1950, p. xvii), the community college today is a comprehensive institution which serves four general curricular functions (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a; Monroe, 1972; Reynolds, 1969). First, it provides students with preparation for transfer to four-year institutions; those who complete college transfer degree requirements in the community college earn either the Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree. The community college also provides preparation for work through various occupational or vocational programs; students completing degree requirements earn an Associate in Applied Science degree, while those who complete requirements for programs of shorter duration and less curricular requirements earn diplomas or certificates. A wide variety of programs falls into the preparation-for-work category, including nursing, secretarial science, allied health, automotive and diesel mechanics, engineering, horticulture, agricultural science, hotel-restaurant management, and data processing.

In addition, the comprehensive community college provides remedial instruction in basic skills necessary for academic survival in the institution (Morrision & Ferrante, 1973). Completed coursework in such basic skills courses as English, mathematics, and reading does not, of course, earn students a degree but, in many cases, allows students to enter the main curricula.

A fourth curricular function is that of continuing education or community services instruction. Again, completion of courses offered through continuing education programs does not lead to degrees, although in some cases, students do earn certificates indicating that they have received training in certain occupations.

Because the community college is a commuter college and because there is limited student involvement in, and provision for, extracurricular activities on campus, the teaching and counseling components have been its chief points of focus. As a result, the community college has been noted for its use of innovative instructional methods and tools, including cooperative-work study programs, programmed instruction, dial-access audio systems, instruction by telephone, the use of film and radio, gaming and simulation, and computer-assisted instruction (Johnson, 1969). The guidance and counseling services of the community college include academic, career, and personal advising; orientation of new students; recruitment; financial aid information; and student development in general (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a; Beal & Noel, 1980). These services have evolved out of recognition of the types of students entering its open doors and concern for enhancing their collegiate experience.

The preceding list of attributes characterize the

American community college in general. However, each individual institution varies somewhat in the programs it offers, the student population it serves, the personnel who administer and teach in its various courses and programs, and the local setting of the college. As Beal and Noel (1980) and Walleri (1981) point out, the influence of these local factors may contribute to inconsistent findings in previous studies on such issues as attrition or withdrawal. In-depth study of a single community college with problems of student withdrawal is an appropriate line of inquiry which might shed new light on why students voluntarily choose to withdraw from school.

Community College Students

Student characteristics. The most accurate word to describe those students enrolled in community colleges is diversity; in other words, there is no "typical" community college student. Nevertheless, a number of general descriptors serve to characterize these students. Many of these general characteristics also support the contention that students attending community colleges differ in many respects from those attending four-year colleges and universities.

Age is one of those descriptors which reveals the heterogeneity of the community college student population. Among full-time students attending community colleges in

1978, the average age was 21.5 and the median age was slightly over 19 years. In contrast, the average of part-time students from the same year was 30.4, with 27.5 as the median age (Hyde, 1980). The part-timers are thus older than the full-timers, a fact that is often used to indicate that the "typical" community college student is the older adult. Because over half of community college students are part-timers (AACJC, 1983), there is some justification for this contention. The average age for all community college students, both full-time and part-time, is 25.4, almost five years greater than those students in the lower divisions of four-year institutions (Hyde, 1980). However, the modal age for students attending community colleges is 19 (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a; Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982).

The fact that a large number of community college students attend school on a part-time basis and are more likely to be older adults explains the tendency for many students to combine employment and schooling, to be married heads of households, and to have other family responsibilities. However, it is also true that more full-time and younger community college students than four-year college students are likely to have these same tendencies (Hyde, 1980).

Although enrollment figures vary somewhat each year, many "nontraditional" students attend community colleges.

Of all ethnic minorities attending higher education institutions, 40% attend community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a). Women students constitute approximately 53% of the community college enrollment and about 49% in four-year institutions (Hyde, 1980). In addition, more handicapped students attend community colleges than they attend four-year institutions (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982).

Evidence suggests that community college students are less economically advantaged than those students attending four-year colleges. Approximately two-thirds of community college students work while attending school, compared to about one half of the students attending senior colleges (Hyde, 1980). In part, this figure is high because of the large number of older, part-time students who combine school and work. In addition, the income of the students or of their parents is lower than for those students who attend four-year institutions (Karabel, 1972; Hyde, 1980; Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982). Community college students are also less likely than senior college students to receive financial assistance worth $600 or more from their parents (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982). On the other hand, many community college students come from more economically advantaged backgrounds (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982; Ericson & Robertshaw, 1982), and some researchers have suggested that the community college primarily serves

students from the middle class (Clowes & Levin, 1980; Peng, 1977).

Another characteristic marking the diversity of community college students and differentiating them from students in four-year institutions is their academic ability. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), which annually surveys full-time freshmen attending college for the first time, reports that many more students attending community colleges have ranked in the lower 60% of their high school class than have those attending four-year colleges and universities (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982). The same data reveal that significantly more community college freshmen, as compared to senior college freshmen, have received high school grades of "C plus" or below. Studies which have examined the entering academic skill levels of college students indicate that many students entering community colleges lack the basic skills necessary for academic success; in addition, their skills level is considerably lower than the norm for all college students (Combs, 1978; Cross, 1974; Lach, Kohl, & Wellman, 1979).

At the same time, a large number of high ability students enroll in the community college (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982; Ericson & Robertshaw, 1982; Medsker & Tillery, 1971; Olivas, 1975; White, 1975). CIRP data indicate that over one fourth of first-time community

college freshmen in 1982 had been in the top 20% of their high school classess (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982).

Despite the economic and academic disadvantages which characterize many community college students, as a group they have high educational and occupational aspirations. According to Karabel (1972, p. 531), "high aspirations among community college students, at least upon entrance, is one of the most consistent findings in research on the topic." Data suggest that the majority of community college students enter the institution with aspirations of going beyond the degrees awarded by that college (Astin, Hemond & Richardson, 1982; Cross, 1968; Lach, Kohl, & Wellman, 1979). At the same time, approximately 20% plan to complete their education with an associate degree (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982).

Like their counterparts at four-year institutions, community college students attend college primarily for occupational preparation (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982; Gold, 1979; Montgomery College, 1974), but there is some evidence to suggest that community college students may be more pragmatic and career-oriented than those students attending senior institutions (Astin, Hemond, & Richardson, 1982; Brawer, 1973; Cross, 1974; Monroe, 1972; Montgomery College, 1974).

Typology of diversity. At a conceptual level,

understanding the types of students attending the community college requires more than identifying their demographic characteristics; it must also incorporate two other dimensions: (a) the range and complexity of their motives for enrolling, their attendance patterns, their goals and aspirations, and their college performance; and (b) their participation within one of the curricular options described at the beginning of this chapter. Researchers in a recent three-year study of over 6500 students attending 15 California community colleges have developed a typology which includes all three of these dimensions (Hunter & Sheldon, 1980a, 1980b; Sheldon, 1981; Sheldon & Grafton, 1982).

Eighteen different types of students attending college in three general curricular classifications were identified: college transfer, vocational, and special interest (lifelong learning or continuing education) programs. (A list of all 18 prototypes is provided in Appendix A.) These prototypes, or categories of students, provide empirical evidence that community college students use the institution for their own purposes, regardless of overall mission and functions (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a). Furthermore, the identification of these student types suggests that problems and issues confronting the community college might benefit from a better understanding of students' aspirations, intentions, beliefs,

and attitudes. Although the prototypes were originally established on students attending a community college, two of these prototypes have provided the conceptual framework for the sample of dropouts chosen for this study. The prototypes of Undisciplined Transfer Students and Career Program Completers were chosen (a) because the former group bears marked theoretical resemblance to the "latent terminal" students described in Clark's cooling-out theory and (b) because the latter group serves as an appropriate contrasting group. These two prototypes are described in detail in the following paragraphs and summarized in Table 1.

The prototype of Undisciplined Transfer Students includes those students who plan to transfer to another institution, but their poor academic skills and/or their lack of self-discipline limits the probability of their accomplishing their goal. According to the California study, students in this group have the following characteristics:

(a) they are less than 20 years old;

(b) they have a grade-point average of less than 2.0;

(c) they are enrolled in general education courses;

(d) they are enrolled in 3 to 8 courses per term; and

(e) they have passed few courses during their

Table 1

Prototypical Characteristics of Undisciplined Transfer Students and Career Program Completers

Validating Criteria	Prototypes	
	Undisciplined Transfer Students	Career Program Completers
College objective	Transfer to senior college	Complete job skills (1st career)
Course type	General education	Vocational
Courses enrolled	3 to 8 per term	3 or more
Courses passed	Few	Most
Cumulative GPA	Less than 2.0	3.0 or better
Age	20 years or less	30 years or less
Additional	Pattern of course withdrawals	May work 30 hours or more per week

Note. The above information is taken from the SLS Student Prototype Manual (1980).

college attendance.
(SLS Student Prototype Manual, 1980, p. 14)

The prototype of Career Program Completers includes those students whose objective is career development (as opposed to training for second careers or for maintaining or improving skills in current job). The likelihood of their meeting their college objective is increased because they have stronger academic skills and show more self-discipline. In addition, the California study established the following characteristics of the Career Program Completers:

(a) they are less than 30 years old;

(b) they have a grade-point average of 3.0 or better;

(c) they are enrolled in vocational programs, usually either one-year certificate or two-year degree programs;

(d) they have enrolled in 3 or more courses per term; and

(e) they have passed most of their courses.
(SLS Student Prototype Manual, 1980, p. 15)

As contrasting groups, these two groups obviously differ with respect to several dimensions: the degree to which they are expected to meet their college objectives; their college performance; the types of courses/programs they enroll in; the number of courses they take each term; and their ages, with Career Program Completers tending to be slightly older students. In addition, the Career Program Completers may be working 30 or more hours per week.

Attrition in the Community College

Because the community college is a relative newcomer to higher education, the study of attrition in this institution has had a shorter history than that in senior institutions and is still in an initial stage of development. No comprehensive synthesis of the studies relative to community college attrition exists, and no theoretical explanation for community college withdrawal has been posited.

Definitions and attrition rates. The act of leaving school is a complex phenomenon involving a multitude of behaviors, types of students, and types of institutions; as a consequence, various definitions have guided studies of the dropout problem. Definitions of who the dropout is have included those who have been dismissed for academic or disciplinary reasons as well as those who have voluntarily withdrawn either permanently or temporarily (Tinto, 1975); those who are forced by institutional policy to enroll officially in programs although their goal is to take only a few courses (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a); those who leave to continue education in another institution (Tinto, 1975); those who leave school at different points in their college careers (i.e., early or late, during or between school terms); those who have been enrolled full-time or part-time or both; and those who have been lost to a particular division or department within the college (Summerskill,

1962). Furthermore, not all researchers have identified what types of students were being included as dropouts in their studies (Cope, 1968; Peng & Fetters, 1978; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975, 1982).

Because of these definitional problems, it is unclear exactly what the attrition and withdrawal rates for community colleges are. Monroe (1972, p. 208), for example, has said that a two-year college is relatively successful if it can get 50% of its students to return for a second year. Cope and Hannah (1975, p. 2) have estimated that only about 20% stay on to complete program or degree requirements. Zwerling (1976, p. 35) has claimed that national dropout rates among community colleges range up to 75% during a two-year period whereas four-year college rates range up to 50% over a four-year period. Fetters (1977, p. 23) has found that two-year colleges have a 39% withdrawal rate as compared to a 24% withdrawal rate in four-year colleges. Despite these inconsistencies, however, experts have agreed that two-year public colleges have higher attrition than any other type of higher education institution (Cope, 1978; Fetters, 1977; Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980; Zwerling, 1976) and that too many community college students leave school. In particular, Astin (1975) has contended that community college attrition figures are higher than they should be for the types of students enrolled, even after controlling for

all other variables.

Approaches to the study of attrition. To date, discussion of attrition in the community college has followed three general approaches. The first consists of a body of literature focusing on the deficiencies or problems of the students themselves (Zwerling, 1980). In these works, writers have addressed such factors as lack of academic preparation, lack of motivation, negative self-concept, unrealistic aspirations, and unclear goals as contributing to lack of educational attainment (Cross, 1974, 1976; Moore, 1970, 1971; Roueche & Kirk, 1973; Roueche & Mink, 1982). These writers portray the potential community college drop-out as disadvantaged socially, academically, culturally, and economically.

The second major focus in community college attrition research has been on identifying the predictor or descriptor variables related to withdrawal. Studies on the community college dropout phenomenon in both single and multiple institutions have investigated such demographic and pre-matriculation factors as students' age, sex, race, socioeconomic status, ability as measured by high school grades and achievement test scores, and parental educational attainment (Astin, 1972, 1975, 1977; Baker, 1980; Baratta, 1978; Chickering, 1974; Cohen & Brawer, 1970; Collins & McMaster, 1980; Macmillan, 1970; MisSIS, 1980; Morganstein &

Strongin, 1970; Peng & Fetters, 1977, 1978; Slark, 1978; Turner, 1970; Willner, 1980). For the most part, however, only low academic ability or performance has proved to be a fairly consistent descriptor or predictor of dropout, and the relationship of academic ability to voluntarily withdrawal from college is unclear (Astin, 1975).

The dominant line of research on community college dropouts has been surveys of students' reasons for leaving. As in the identification of correlates of withdrawal, the findings are inconclusive (Cohen & Brawer, 1982a); reasons for leaving have varied across institutions. For example, Wiegel (1969) reports that the primary reasons students give for withdrawing are that another school had more to offer in what they want and that they are not getting anywhere in school. Snyder and Blocker (1970a) report transfer to another college, military service, the decision to get a job, and objectives being met as the top four reasons students give for leaving. Bucks County Community College (1973), Martin (1974), and Baker (1980) list employment, conflict between work and study, or job pressures as the most common reasons for leaving, while the MisSIS study (1980) lists personal problems as the primary reason students give for leaving. Collins and McMaster (1980) report "I decided to take a semester or two off" as the most frequently cited reason.

More comprehensive studies have also surveyed students' reasons for leaving, and findings are just as inconsistent. For example, Davis (1970) has reported in his study of dropouts in three Florida community colleges that many dropouts are critical of their college experiences, particularly the counseling services and the lack of faculty interest. However, Davis also notes his perception that these students actually blame themselves more than the college. Macmillan (1970), in his study of 22 California community colleges, has reported that the major reasons students give for leaving are the decision to take a job and the lack of motivation. Hunter and Sheldon (1980a, 1980b), in their report on 15 California community colleges, have listed a variety of reasons students gave, with job conflicts, finances, personal problems, lack of study time, transfer to another school, and indefinite motivation being the most frequently cited.

Responses to inconsistent findings. In response to the inconsistent findings of descriptor and predictor studies of the dropout problem, various researchers have made recommendations for future research which are of particular relevance to this study. First, Beal and Noel (1980) and Walleri (1981) suggest that inconsistent findings in predictor studies may reflect the influence of local factors related to a specific institution and its students. In

addition, Cope and Hannah (1975) argue that quantitative studies have limitations which might be addressed by qualitative research:

> Quantification obscures the human dimensions, the nonquantifiables such as uncertainty and ambivalence, questing for independence, reassessments, and experiential learning. For analytic purposes the usual research also tends to isolate quantifiable student characteristics leading to general predispositions to drop out (those characteristics that are viewed as providing problems for any student) without providing qualitative insights originating with individuals in their setting. (p. 31)

Lenning (1982) expresses a similar view in regard to surveys of students' reasons for leaving; he argues that "since we basically know what most dropouts will say, little special time and effort should be devoted to planning such self-report studies" (pp. 47-48). Others suggest that although dropouts' perceptions of why they leave school are important (Lenning 1982; Pantages & Creedon; Terenzini, 1982), students may give what they feel are socially acceptable reasons for leaving school and they may not themselves be aware of the real reasons they left (Astin, 1975; Demitroff, 1974; Demos, 1967; Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980). They caution that future research should go beyond conventional checklists surveying students' reasons for leaving. As one alternative approach, Lenning (1982) suggests that post-withdrawal interviews be conducted with those who have chosen to leave college.

Furthermore, several researchers of college attrition and of inequalities in educational attainment have suggested that understanding of individual students' motivations, goals, attitudes and values, experiences, and peer and family pressures may ultimately be of more importance than the identification of predictor variables (Cope & Hannah, 1975; Pascarella, 1982; Thomas, Alexander, & Eckland, 1979; Tinto, 1982). Macmillan (1970) summarizes the feelings of several researchers:

> The factors of age, sex, socioeconomic status, ability . . . will probably not yield very promising results if they are used as predictors in themselves. What seems to emerge more clearly is that considerations of family attitude and values, expectations of students, patterns of affiliation and reinforcement, and qualities of the college environment need much more thoughtful investigation in the development of a model for understanding community college attrition . . . . The attention needs to be on how the student perceives himself, and the pressures he experiences from the environments represented by college, peers, and family. (p. 26-27)

Probably the most consistent recommendation for future research on students who leave school is that it be guided by theory which attempts to relate various variables to one another and to the act or process of withdrawal (Bean, 1982; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Sherman & Tinto, 1975; Spady, 1970; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1978; Tinto, 1975). However, although various theoretical explanations for withdrawal from higher education have been posited, few have been

explored in the community college setting, and no single study has examined competing theories of withdrawal. In addition, no study has systematically employed qualitative methods to investigate the dropout problem from the individual perspective among community college students.

Theoretical Explanations for Withdrawal

In the past 20 years, a number of theories and models of attrition have been proposed, including Tinto's (1975) Social Integration Model; Spady's (1970, 1971) Interaction Model; Holland's (1966, 1973) Personality/Environment Types Theory; and Cope and Hannah's (1975) Congruence Formulation, among others (Lenning, Sauer, & Beal, 1980). In general, these theories emphasize that withdrawal from college is the result not of individual or institutional factors but rather of the interaction between these factors; dropout from college occurs when there is "poor fit" or "lack of congruence" between the student and the institution (Lenning, Sauer, & Beal, 1980). Although each of the theories incorporates the various characteristics of students and the institutions they attend, the basic focus of these interaction models is on what happens once the student arrives on campus.

In contrast, the three theories of withdrawal providing the conceptual framework for this study emphasize the aspirations, experiences, and beliefs of individuals over

time and their contribution to students' decisions to withdraw from school. Although interaction between the students and the institution and its personnel is acknowledged as playing a role in students' decisions to withdraw, these three theories give special prominence to the educational and occupational beliefs, values, aspirations, attitudes, and experiences that students bring with them to college. Because these three competing theories remain relatively unexplored in higher education in general and in the community college setting in particular, especially as they relate to women and their educational and occupational attainment, they were chosen to inform the conceptual framework of this study. In the following pages, each theory and the secondary research questions derived from the theory are presented.

The cooling out theory. One potential explanation for why community college students fail to complete their programs of study is the theory of "cooling out." Deriving his theory from research conducted in a California community college, Clark (1960a, 1960b) claims that community colleges enroll a large number of "latent terminal students," students who unrealistically aspire to transfer to four-year institutions for a bachelor's degree but are destined to conclude their education at the community college. In essence, the cooling-out process is an incremental movement

of the academically inept student toward curricular relocation. According to Clark, the latent terminal student is allowed to enroll in the college parallel program but is encouraged to lower his educational, and thus his occupational, aspirations through a series of counseling strategies. The goal of these strategies is to convince the student to pursue other alternatives judged more "realistic." The strategies encountered by the students in Clark's (1960a, 1960b) study consisted of the following:

(1) an orientation-to-college course which emphasizes vocational planning and requires students to look at their goals in terms of what is realistic and what they have the ability to do;

(2) counseling interviews before the beginning of each term to assess student progress and to discuss realistic goals;

(3) a referral system which notifies both counselors and students when unsatisfactory progress is being made;

(4) achievement testing and assignment to remedial classes when progress is slow or when previous high school performance indicates poor preparation;

(5) various stages of probation which give students a chance to reconsider their options and to make program changes before they are dismissed.

Clark claims that this procedure of cooling out, at its best, is a method of letting "down hopes gently and unexplosively" (1960a, p. 574) in contrast to the harsher methods of four-year colleges which choose selection,

failure, and dismissal to weed out academically weak students. The community college, then, in this view, provides students with alternatives rather than dismissing them; this process is what Clark calls a "soft" approach to cooling out.

Although the above-stated stages characterize one college's process of cooling out students, Clark (1960a) generalizes to all community colleges by listing the following cooling-out features:

1. alternative achievement: "Substitute avenues may be made to appear not too different from what is given up, particularly as to status . . . one does not fail but rectifies a mistake." (p. 574-575)

2. gradual disengagement [from the original goal]: "By a gradual series of steps, movement to a goal may be stalled, self-assessment encouraged, and evidence produced of performance." (p. 575)

3. objective denial: "A record of poor performance helps to detach the organization and its agents from the emotional aspects of the cooling out work . . . . The college offers opportunity; it is the record that forces denial" (p. 575). Thus, the student blames himself rather than the institution and its personnel.

4. agents of consolation: "Counselors are available who are patient with the overambitious and who work to change their intentions." (p. 575)

5. avoidance of standards: A cooling-out process avoids single sets of standards usually found in four-year colleges and deals instead with the idea that many kinds of ability are valuable if given proper classification and treatment. (p. 575)

Finally, Clark stresses that the cooling-out function must be kept relatively hidden or secret so that deficiencies of the system are not exposed and disruptions are minimized. He states:

> The cooling out process in higher education is one whereby systematic discrepancy between aspiration and avenue is covered over and stress for the individual and the system is minimized . . . [It] is an important device for alleviating the stress consequent on failure and so preventing anomie and deviant behavior. (1960a, p. 576)

He further suggests that students may cooperate in their own cooling out and "keep this function concealed by wishful unawareness" (1960a, p. 576). In a later article, Clark (1980) concludes that

> Any system of higher education that has to reconcile such conflicting values as equity, competence, and individual choice . . . has to effect compromise procedures that allow for some of each. The cooling-out process is one of the possible compromises, perhaps even a necessary one. (p. 30)

Clark (1960a) emphasizes that the cooling-out process focuses on those students who are unable academically to cope with the more intellectual activities and the higher standards of college-level work. However, Zwerling (1976), an out-spoken critic of the cooling-out process, argues that it is students' lack of confidence and their feelings of negative self-worth, rather than their lack of ability, which makes them candidates for cooling out. These feelings

of inferiority are a result of being at odds with the educational system for years. Zwerling further charges that cooling-out strategies are aimed specifically at working-class and minority students and that one of the means of lowering their educational aspirations is to take advantage of their feelings of inferiority by placing them in remedial classes. Counselors are responsible for convincing students to be realistic in their career goals and for persuading them that the faculty and staff are doing everything possible to help them. Then, if students fail, they are likely to blame themselves, rather than the institution, for their failure. According to Zwerling and Park (1974) as they describe a prototypical student, the result can be devastating:

> Accepting the blame for his own relative failure in the educational process has the effect of paralyzing Angelo's motivation. Precisely because he sees it as his fault and not the system's, he finds it increasingly difficult to believe in his own self-worth. With a severely diminished sense of self-confidence, even the most elementary verbal and mathematical transactions can be incomprehensible. (p. 16)

London (1978) disagrees with Clark that the cooling-out process serves to resolve disappointment and resentment of students. "To the contrary," he says about his findings in another community college, "stress and anomie and deviant behavior were evident in the students' resistance to their schoolwork, in their absenteeism, in their 'assault' on

teachers, and in their self-criticisms" (p. 153). Despite the disagreement, the outcome is the same: students drop out.

In their discussion of the cooling-out function, Clowes and Levin (1978) describe the "soft" cooling-out process as having both informal and formal components. The informal component consists of interactions of students with faculty and staff in unstructured classroom-related activities (and perhaps in more "social" situations at school); in these interactions, faculty and staff convey their attitudes about appropriate career goals for the students. The informal component also includes the interactions of students with their peers in shared curricular activities. The interactions in both cases can facilitate redirection and goal revision. In the formal component of cooling out are those activities in which counselors and teachers act as advisors on learning difficulties that arise and on educational and occupational aspirations; these situations would be generally those features specified by Clark (1960a, 1960b).

Clowes and Levin (1978) suggest that the informal component influences full-time and younger students more than it influences part-time and older students, primarily because full-time students spend more time on campus. The formal component also has less influence on part-time, adult

students because counselors are frequently not on campus at night when most older students attend, because faculty who teach adult students tend to be part-timers with less involvement in school procedures, and because adult students have other priorities and responsibilities which decrease their time on campus and thus their opportunities to interact with faculty.

Other than presenting statistical evidence of cooling out and/or charging that the process is a means of keeping low-status students from achieving upward mobility (Karabel, 1972, 1974; Pincus, 1980; Zwerling, 1976), few researchers and community college experts have gone beyond a general acceptance of cooling out or approval of its more positive features (Baird, 1971; Blocker, Plummer, & Richardson, 1965; Monroe, 1972; Simon, 1967). Moore (1975), however, has explored the cooling out of two-year college women with both traditional and nontraditional career choices. She has extended the agents of the cooling-out process to include parents, uncontrollable circumstances, and the college itself, as well as the counselors discussed by Clark.

Moore reports that parents generally supported career choices of their daughters if the career was one parents had desired for them, if it was one they felt was appropriate for their daughters, or if it was one in which one of the parents was already employed. Parents, particularly

fathers, were most often negative in their influence if their daughters chose nontraditional careers; mothers generally were neither strongly enthusiastic or directive in regard to their daughters' career choices. Uncontrollable circumstances acting as "coolers" included the students' concern for the financing of their educations and initial setting up in business, and concern for competition with both males and females for future jobs. The institution itself acted as a cooling-out agent through the perpetuation of sex-stereotyped curricula and impassive discouragement of females wanting to enter male-dominated majors. Finally, many of the females in the study reported negative impressions of their high school counseling experiences and thus actively avoided their college counselors. If they had seen college counselors, they regarded counselors as setting up "obstacles in the path of career and educational goals" (p. 582).

Moore does not specifically apply the cooling-out process to the decision to withdraw from college. She does, however, conclude that cooling out is a method of "discouraging women from achieving their educational and vocational aspirations" (p. 578).

Clark also does not specifically describe the cooling-out process as an explanation for student withdrawal; however, it is clear that he (1960b) sees the two phenomena

as somehow related:

> Students with transfer intentions for the most part do not transfer, but neither do they complete terminal [occupational] curricula. Most terminate their education while in college but do so as dropouts while pursuing transfer work . . . . In short, the public junior college tends to be a classification and distribution center from which large numbers of students leave education after a relatively short stay. (1960b, pp. 84-85)

Karabel (1974) is more direct than Clark in associating the cooling-out process with eventual withdrawal from the institution. Counselors, he says, may "talk so tough" to their students that they decide to leave. However, a more forceful explanation, according to Karabel, is "that the students come to gain a bachelor's degree and upon realizing that they are being tracked into something less desirable, simply decide to leave" (p. 15).

To assess the power of the cooling-out theory to explain why some white community college women voluntarily chose to leave school, the following questions must be addressed:

a. What were the students' aspirations and expectations in regard to education, occupations, and the future when they entered the community college?

b. In what ways have curricular, occupational, and future options been presented to these students?

c. In what ways did counselors and others acting in a counseling capacity present these options to the students?

   --How was what is "realistic" presented?

--What happened during orientation sessions?

--What kinds of feedback did they receive about school performance?

--What happened during counseling sessions?

--What tests were given and how were they used?

--What substitute avenues were presented?

--What forms of probation or checkpoints in the sequence of steps toward program completion were used and how were they presented?

d. What steps did these students actually take to redefine their educational, occupational, and future options while in the community college?

e. In what sense are any redefinitions lower-status?

f. How do these students explain the substitute avenues or redefinitions?

g. In what way are redefinition strategies related to social class and academic proficiency?

h. What do these students now believe about their own educational, occupational, and future options?

i. What reasons do the students give for their decision to leave school?

The counter-culture theory. Willis (1977) offers a second potential explanation for why community college students choose to leave school before they complete degree requirements. As a result of his ethnographic study of 12 working class "lads" (a self-chosen title) in a non-selective secondary school for boys in England, Willis concludes that some students develop an oppositional stance to the world of education primarily because of the organization of the school and secondly because of their

nonschool cultural experiences and observations. These two forces operate together to lead these students (a) to reject the mental activity and the behaviors praised and rewarded in the school and (b) to reject "qualifications" or credentials needed to get a good job upon graduation. In this rejection, they resist "cooperating" with the school and its authorities and thereby ensure that they will be "qualified" for manual work only.

At the heart of Willis' counter-culture theory is the basic academic paradigm. Willis characterizes the basic teaching model as one which relies on a "fair exchange" between teachers and students. Teachers hold a superior position as dispensers or withholders of knowledge and qualifications for future employment. In contrast, students are in a subordinate position because they lack the knowledge and skills needed for credentialing. In exchange for "cooperation" from their students through deference and yielding to authority, teachers provide the knowledge and credentials needed. Willis describes some of the characteristic behaviors of the school as an agency for promoting conformity to and respect for authority:

> The school is the agency of face to face control <u>par excellence</u>. The stern look of the inquiring teacher; the relentless pursuit of "the truth" set up as a value even above good behavior; the common weapon of ridicule; the techniques learned over time whereby particular troublemakers can "always be reduced to tears"; the stereotyped deputy head [assistant principal], body poised, head lowered,

> finger jabbing the culprit; the head [principal] unexpectedly bearing down on the group in the corridor--these are all tactics for exposing and destroying, or freezing, the private. What successful conventional teaching cannot tolerate is private reservation. (p. 65)

The major goals of this paradigm, Willis argues, are not the dispensing of knowledge but, instead, control and the teaching of the "right attitude."

Vocational guidance fits into this basic paradigm by advising students that if they do not develop the right attitudes, they will not succeed in the world of work. As Willis puts it, "The totalising theme of preparation for work . . . often joins the embattled theme of 'cooperation'" (p. 92). Students, for example, may be told:

> If you're resentful of authority here and have a bad attitude towards discipline, it will carry on at work, it will show there and they won't have time for it . . . your attitudes at school here now will make it that much harder for you when you get to work. (p. 92)

Many students choose to abide by this exchange system. Some students, however, refuse to submit to a system which declares that social mobility is attained through the acquisition of knowledge and credentials and conformity to the rules of the school. These students, in Willis' words, become "differentiated" from the institution and its goals. As Willis defines it, "differentiation" is

> the process whereby the typical exchanges expected in the formal institutional paradigm are reinterpreted, separated and discriminated with respect to working class interests, feelings, and

> meanings. Its dynamic is opposition to the institution which is taken up and reverberated and given a form of reference to the larger themes and issues of the class culture. (p. 62)

The major source of conflict with the school's goal of controlling students through dispensing of knowledge in exchange for proper attitudes and behavior is the students' own cultural experiences. At home, they hear stories glorifying the work culture experienced by their parents, and they witness their parents' strategies for overcoming the oppression of factory work. What they discover is a different set of values in the "real" world of work, as opposed to those values advocated by the school. They come to believe that "real men" work at physical labor, that practical jokes and other forms of humor are ways to subvert authority, and that practical skill is superior to theoretical knowledge.

Willis stresses that the opposition which develops is not a mechanistic reaction to cultural experiences, for some students have the same experiences but decide to conform, to one degree or another, to the exchange system of the school. He does argue, however, that these experiences play a major role in the formation of an oppositional stance against the school. The conflict which arises is one in which teachers and other school personnel stress that certain skills and attitudes are ones which will bring success in the world of work, whereas counter-culture students believe that the

behaviors and attitudes constituting their oppositional stance are the ones which will facilitate success on the job.

Seeing no continuity between what the school says they need and what they believe they need, counter-culture students reject the mental work and qualifications stressed by the school. They view qualifications as both a reward for mental labor and the ticket to jobs requiring mental labor, and they decide not to pursue such work. Their opposition to the school culture comes in the form of absenteeism, refusal to do assignments, ignoring scheduled events, taunting of teachers and of students who conform to the rules and policies of the school, and subverting of school activities. In more extreme form, they may express their opposition through non-conformist appearance and language and in illegal activities inside and outside of the school setting. In turn, the personnel of the school apply more pressure on these students to abide by the behaviors and attitudes expected of them; the increased pressure serves to intensify the opposition.

Willis believes that the informal peer group is a primary factor in the formation and continued development of the oppositional culture. Students initially seem to yield to authority but gradually "come out." As each begins to express an opposition to the policies of the school, they

join hands, so to speak; it becomes a kind of honor to be part of a group which expresses the same ideology. Members of the group encourage each other to be more daring in their opposition to authority, and daring behavior becomes the raison d'etre and modus operandi of the peer group.

According to Willis, it is at the group, rather than the individual, level that the lads reject the school, its authorities, and its mental work. They come to understand unconsciously that although working class individuals can succeed in school and later in the occupational structure, schooling does not operate to benefit the working class as a whole. This unconscious insight into "the conditions of the existence of its members and their position within the social whole" (p. 119) is what Willis describes as cultural penetrations. However, because there are also limitations which "confuse and impede the full development and expression" (p. 119) of the insights gained by working class groups, the penetration is only "partial." Each of the lads ironically participates in his individual victimization, so to speak, by rejecting on the group level the schooling which might help him rise out of his working class culture. In this opposition to schooling, counter-culture groups of working class youth unknowingly cooperate in the reproduction of social class structure and condemn themselves to working class jobs.

Willis' focus is primarily on the countercultural behaviors of working class males. In an afterword to his book Learning to Labor (1977), he stresses that the resistance expressed by working class females is a more complex question and thus generalizations from his work to females must be approached with caution. He suggests that females may experience opposition to male dominance and to the gender roles displayed by the school staff; their oppositional aims may be achieved either by manipulating the compliant aspects of the stereotypical female role or by adopting behavior which imitates masculine styles or "exaggerates the overtly sexual elements" of the female stereotype (p. 209). At the same time, these females may also be in opposition to the intellectual endeavors encouraged by the school and to the emphasis on upward mobility through credentials. Willis notes that females are supported in this opposition by the cultures of romance and femininity (often transmitted through mass media); they are also supported by the school itself which encourages the development of the traditional female roles of domesticity and motherhood and preparation for future low-status jobs through such courses as typing and home economics. In their oppositional behaviors, Willis suggests, these females are possibly condemning themselves to dual exploitation in low-status jobs and wife/motherhood.

In his ethnographic study of a newly opened community college in Boston, London (1978) has discovered many of the same behaviors manifested by the "lads" in Willis' (1977) study. Absenteeism, cheating, taunting of teachers and even of their own peers, and minimal effort among the predominantly white working class students in this college, he says, are examples of the resistance to the middle-class values stressed in school.

Both "liberal arts" and "training program" students of the working class, in London's view, display these resistant behaviors because they are caught in a dilemma. On one hand, they believe that it is each person's responsibility to use individual ability and drive to achieve social mobility; the mechanism for achieving social mobility is to cooperate with and yield to teachers' definitions of the world and to their subsequent demands. On the other hand, these working class students come to the college filled with doubts about their ability; when they compare themselves "against a vaguely defined middle class reference, they [find] themselves wanting" (p. 15). They have accepted to some degree what they see as their own limitations; however, they are unwilling to accept any reminders of their shortcomings. Teachers' emphasis, especially in general education classes taken by all students regardless of their programs, on intellectual work and on theory rather than on

practical application is viewed by these students as both a put-down and a reminder of their inferiority. It then becomes a badge of honor to defend themselves against these real or imagined put-downs. Any individual resistance is not only applauded but also required by peers.

According to London, then, the conflict is between (a) doing well by displaying behavioral characteristics incompatible with one's working class identity and (b) doing poorly in school and thus reaffirming one's inferiority. In other words, students are caught in a double bind: they fear success in school because they see intellectual work as the means of access to middle-class positions, but they also fear failure and its companion, loss of mobility. The solution, was resistant behavior similar to that of Willis "lads":

> The common solution was to redefine the institutional definition of doing well in a manner that protected students' sense of honor. This code of honor was expressed through behavior that symbolically put forward a claim to both peers and teachers that one was a person possessed of dignity and self-esteem in that one's unwilling compliance was not cheaply given. . . [T]he students' informal code of honor redefined the official expectations . . . specifically, where attendance was expected, absenteeism prevailed; where enthusiasm, low levels of effort; where honesty, cheating. (p. 66)

For the present study, London's negative cases provide additional insight into counter-culture behavior. Students who were older or already employed full-time in the

occupation for which they were seeking a degree manifested less oppositional behavior: they had an immediate incentive to do well in school because graduation meant an increase in pay and possibly a promotion. In addition, secretarial science students, 95% of whom were women, exhibited less oppositional behavior than other occupational students, but they tended to disrupt the vocational training classes rather than the general education classes. London explains that the majority of these women were from wealthier communities and lived with their parents and thus represented higher social status but a less certain fate than the students who were already employed. These women were more concerned with "detaching themselves from the uncomplimentary implications of their work--specifically that the low status value of a secretary's 'mechanical' work implies downward or no mobility." (p. 87).

London also found that women enrolled in liberal arts and human services programs were less inclined to oppositional behavior than males because they felt more comfortable with intellectualizing and with their desire to have something better. These women, he explains, felt less allegiance to their current lifestyles than did the males in either the training programs or the liberal arts programs.

There are several similarities between Willis' counter-cultural theory and London's findings in his study of one

community college. Both emphasize similar patterns of resistance among working class students, and both see this resistance as related to a struggle between the values of the working class and those of the middle class who control the school. In addition, both see the influence of the peer group as it applauds and even expects evidence of individual resistance. Like Willis, London discusses the students' equating of physical labor with masculinity, finding this phenomenon especially true among working class males. Finally, London also indicates agreement with Willis that these students, in their patterns of resistance, are "working at cross-purposes with themselves" and "in effect, ensuring the very defeat they wished to avoid" (London, 1978, p. 91).

One factor which appears to be a point of difference between Willis and London is their description of the feelings of superiority or inferiority experienced by those students who display oppositional behaviors. Willis stresses that these students acquire an oppositional stance because they believe that physical labor is superior to mental labor. London maintains that students take on an oppositional stance because they come to believe themselves to be of inferior ability but resent being reminded of it by their teachers. At the same time, however, London does point out in at least one example that working class people

often think of themselves as superior to anyone who does not do physical labor (p. 92).

Neither writer stresses dropping out of school as an act of resistance. However, it seems reasonable to argue that once students find themselves and their values in direct opposition to those of the school system, the ultimate decision is one of disengagement from the situation which creates the conflict.

Weis (1983), who has explored the "lived culture" of black students in an urban community college in the northeastern United States, provides additional insights to Willis' and London's findings. In contrast to Willis' white "lads" and London's white community college students, the black male and female students in her study viewed the community college they attended as a "way of escaping aspects of their immediate environment" (p. 259) of poverty and street life. Rather than rejecting the idea of teachers or the content of the curricula, the students in her study equated knowledge with power. Although they criticized teachers, they focused on what they considered the lack of a fair exchange: teachers did not seem to care enough or to work hard enough to see that students learned. The students in her study were also critical of the chronic absenteeism of others but were themselves often actively engaged in the same practice. Weis points out that the absenteeism in

Willis' and London's studies is consistent with the white working class students' opposition to knowledge and schooling, while the absenteeism among her black students contradicted their faith in schooling as a way to escape the poverty around them.

In conclusion, Weis argues that black students at Urban College have "penetrated the unequal reality they face . . . they unconsciously and correctly at the group level realize that schooling at this level will not work for them as a class" (p. 255). However, these cultural penetrations are prevented from developing into organized political activity because of the limitations or contradictions within their own lived culture: in this case, the collective faith of the black students in knowledge and education. Their faith in education is itself oppositional to the broader black community, and dropping out of school reinforces the broader cultural community; the students are left with no one to blame but themselves. Weis concludes that

> Schools are best seen as sites where cultures and ideologies are produced and dominant ideologies may ultimately be maintained. This logic operates differently by race, class, and gender in different types of institutions, times, and national contexts. (p. 257)

To assess the power of the counter-culture theory to explain why some community college women choose to leave school, the following questions must be addressed:

a. What were these students' entering aspirations and expectations in regard to education, occupations, and the future?

b. What beliefs do these students hold about the skills they need for work?

c. What values do these students have about work and what do they believe they can achieve through work?

d. What values do these students hold about school and what do they believe they can achieve through schooling?

e. In what ways do these students view the relationship between education and work?

f. What are the structures of the teaching paradigm as viewed by these students?

g. What are the peer groups of these students?

h. What values do these peers have about school and work and what do they believe can be achieved through each?

i. What values do their parents hold about schooling and work, and what do they believe can be achieved through each?

j. What oppositional behaviors or attitudes exist in the school?

k. In what ways have these students demonstrated such oppositional behaviors as absenteeism, tardiness, taunting of teachers, and refusal to do assignments?

l. What are the sources/dynamics of the oppositional culture?

m. What have been students' experiences in part-time and full-time work, and how do they compare these experiences to their school experiences?

n. What reasons do these students give for leaving school?

<u>The job ceiling theory</u>. Ogbu (1974, 1978) explains

students' poor school performance and lack of persistence in education as a reaction to the discrepancy between (a) the rewards and benefits of education promised by society and the educational system and (b) the actual occupational or opportunity structure of the society. Ultimately, he claims, students' lack of persistence is an adaptation to their awareness of this inconsistency; it is the job opportunities available to them after the completion of formal education which most influence their efforts in education. In America, he says, jobs are reserved on the basis of ascribed membership to one of two general groups or castes: the dominant caste or the minority caste.

Although much of Ogbu's work focuses on black Americans as caste minorities, he extends his theory to cultures outside the United States and suggests that the dominant-minority caste dichotomy is not confined solely to "race" in the literal sense (Ogbu, 1978). Rather, he stresses that one of the key criteria of his caste theory is that the society be "more or less stratified along birth-ascribed status, so that education does not necessarily serve the dominant and minority groups equally effectively as a vehicle of social mobility" (p. 3). It is possible then, although Ogbu does not include them in his discussions, that the job ceiling theory can help explain the lower educational and occupational attainment of females in

American society and the high number of female community college dropouts.

Limits to the upward social mobility of the minority caste operate through what Ogbu calls the "job ceiling," which he defines in the following way:

> The term means that (a) members of castelike minorities are not permitted to compete freely as individuals for any types of jobs to which they aspire and for which they are qualified; (b) castelike minorities are either excluded from the most desirable occupations or not permitted to obtain their proportionate share of such jobs, solely because of their caste status rather than because they lack the requisite training; and (c) as a result of these restrictions, castelike minorities are confined largely to the least desirable jobs. In castelike societies, occupations are thus divided into broad categories: those above the job ceiling and those below it. (1978, p. 29)

Thus, the dominant caste occupies the upper levels of the occupational hierarchy and works in professional, managerial-proprietary, and clerical-sales positions. In contrast, the caste minorities occupy those positions found in the lower levels of the occupational structure: semi-skilled labor, personal and domestic service labor, and common and farm labor (Ogbu, 1978).

The egalitarian ideology of American society and its educational system, Ogbu (1978) maintains, fosters the belief that education is the means to upward and economic mobility: the more education a person gets, the better his chances are for the material rewards of high-status and

higher-paying jobs. For the dominant caste, this belief and the behaviors it promotes are reinforced and rewarded by the actual acquisition of occupations above the job ceiling. The same belief and qualifications held by the minority caste, however, do not yield the same positive rewards as they do for the dominant caste.

Ogbu (1978) argues that the educational system, as a reflection of society and a vehicle for socializing young people into the adult roles they are expected to hold, discourages minority groups from achieving the qualifications for social and economic mobility. Various aspects within the school setting have historically served as ways to discourage minorities and to depress their aspirations: segregation; tracking; watered-down curricula; biased materials and textbooks; stereotyped treatment and expectations; and different evaluations and rewards for the acquisition of the same skills that the dominant caste has acquired. In effect, education received by the minority caste differs from that received by the dominant caste; it is "one of the mechanisms, although a very powerful one, by which the job ceiling is sustained" (p. 177).

Minority caste parents, who have become disillusioned about the material rewards of education through their own educational and occupational experiences, also play a part in socializing their children into the roles they feel are

expected of them in adult life. By failing to emphasize the importance of education and to reinforce such behavioral characteristics as initiative, competitive spirit, and perseverance, they are encouraging their children to adapt to the occupational positions which fall to their caste. Ogbu (1974) also suggests that parents may teach their children contradictory attitudes about schooling: on the one hand, they might emphasize the need for more education; on the other hand, they demonstrate to their children through their own experiences that "making it" in school does not necessarily ensure "making it" in society.

According to Ogbu (1978), minority caste students learn in various ways about the job ceiling and make decisions about their academic behavior based on their observations and their own experiences with the occupational and educational structures:

(1) direct or indirect instruction by parents and other minority adults;

(2) observation of the job experiences of adults around them;

(3) evaluation and assimilation of adults' reactions to the job ceiling and to schooling;

(4) being guided by career/guidance counselors into traditional minority jobs and being discouraged by school officials to take

courses that prepare them for entry into competitive colleges or jobs;

(5) experiencing job discrimination personally as they look for part-time work; and

(6) generalizing their observations, the reactions of others, and their personal experiences to all caste members, rather than limiting their judgments to adults around them. (p. 194)

An awareness of the job ceiling, coupled with the barriers presented by the educational system, has destructive effects on the performance and persistence of minority caste students:

> Because caste minorities perceive their future chances for jobs and other benefits of education as limited, they are not so strongly motivated as the dominant-group members to persevere in their school work. The perception of schooling as it relates to limited opportunities may be largely unconscious for many caste minority members, but it is an important factor in their relative lack of serious attitudes and efforts in school. (1978, p. 41)

Believing that education does not help them to the same degree as it helps members of the dominant caste to achieve jobs, promotions, salaries, and social status in the community, they may respond by repudiating the educational expectations of the schools and the society. This repudiation may take the form of truancy, poor attitudes, refusal to do school work, delinquency, and withdrawal from school (p. 196). Ogbu stresses that these behaviors are an

adaptation to the lower positions assigned to them in the occupational structure, positions which do not require high educational credentials. He stresses further that members of all social classes within the minority caste are aware, to one degree or another, of the job ceiling and that this awareness influences their approach to schooling.

To date, Ogbu's job ceiling theory has not been examined as an explanation for the high rates of withdrawal in the community college setting.

To assess the power of the job ceiling theory to explain why some community college women choose to leave school, the following questions must be addressed:

a. What were these students' entering aspirations and expectations in regard to education, occupations, and the future?

b. What are the job ceilings for these students?

c. In what ways do these students explain their choices of college programs?

d. What opportunities have these students had to observe others like themselves in jobs?

e. What experiences have these students had in looking for jobs and in working?

f. What messages have these students received from teachers, peers, parents, counselors, and family about education, occupations, and the future?

g. What exposure have these students had to curricular tracking, segregated coursework, watered down curriculum, and teacher expectations?

h. What beliefs do these students hold about the value of education?

i. What evidence is there that these students question the value of education or have repudiated educational expectations?

j. In what ways do these students view the relationship between education and post-education work? What differences are there in the two groups?

k. What reasons do these students give for leaving school?

Summary

Withdrawal rates remain high in the American community college, an institution which serves a unique and diverse student population. Although various factors have been found to be associated with college withdrawal, their inter-relationships and contribution to community college withdrawal have rarely been explored within a theoretical framework. Clark's cooling-out theory, Ogbu's job ceiling theory, and Willis' counter-culture theory have provided the conceptual framework guiding the present study. These three theoretical explanations of school withdrawal describe the withdrawal decision as one influenced by the educational and occupational experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of students as these are related to educational settings and occupational alternatives. Questions generated from these three theories have guided the collection and analysis of data in this study. The research design and methodology are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

In an attempt to address the questions generated from the three theories discussed in Chapter II, this study employed a methodology which allowed for in-depth investigation of the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of a small number of white female dropouts. The sample, methods, and procedures are discussed in the following sections.

Site

All participants in this study were dropouts from Benson Community College (see Note 1). Benson Community College is a comprehensive, state-supported two-year institution of higher education located in the southeastern United States. Serving a population of approximately 250,000 Benson offers a variety of programs leading to the Associate in Arts Degree, the Associate in Science Degree, and the Associate in Applied Science Degree. In addition, students may earn diplomas in two-year non-degree curricula, as well as certificates in approved, non-degree curricula requiring less than two years of study. Benson currently enrolls almost 6,000 students, and an estimated 70% of these students attend on a part-time basis. It employs approximately 200 full-time and part-time faculty who teach in 51 programs of study. Dropout statistics published by

the Admissions Office at Benson indicate that 1446 of the curriculum students registered in curricular programs/courses for winter, 1983 did not re-enroll for spring, 1983 courses; it was impossible for the researcher to determine how many of these non-returns were due to academic suspension or dismissal and which were voluntary withdrawals. Approximately 59% of these non-returning students were women.

Among its other services, Benson Community College provides academic assistance to its students through a learning lab, developmental/remedial courses, and math and writing centers. In addition, it provides student support services through its counseling office and testing program, the financial aid office, a career and placement office, a federal government-sponsored Special Services program for disadvantaged students, and its student activities office. Newly enrolled students are required to take a one-hour-credit orientation course which introduces these programs and services and aids students in their personal, social, and academic adjustments and in career exploration.

According to the student handbook published by Benson, students with strong academic records are acknowledged by honor rolls. Students with weaker grades are given notice of their academic standing or progress on their transcripts: academic warning, academic probation, academic suspension,

and academic dismissal. Only the last two levels of academic standing may result in mandatory interruption of enrollment.

Theoretical Sampling

For qualitative research, Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Denzin (1978, p. 79-80) recommend theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling involves the purposeful selection of those people who offer the most theoretical relevance to the situation and concepts under study. When comparison groups are used, theoretical sampling also serves the purpose of providing

> simultaneous maximization or minimization of both the differences and the similarities of data that bear on the categories being studied. This control over similarities and differences is vital for discovering categories, and for developing and relating their theoretical properties, all necessary for the development of an emergent theory. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 55)

Two comparison groups served as the major focus of this study. One group of dropouts represented the prototype of Undisciplined Transfer Student. The second group represented the prototype of Career Program Completer. These two prototypes, chosen from the total of 18 suggested by Hunter and Sheldon (see Chapter II), were selected for several reasons. First, it seemed reasonable to assume that these two prototypes can be found in most community colleges. More importantly, by definition, they represent polar positions in terms of curricular choices and of

others' expectations of their potential for program completion. The Undisciplined Transfer Student would generally be identified as a student with little chance of completing program and degree requirements; the Career Program Completer would generally be perceived as a student with strong chances for persistence to graduation. Finally, because patterns exhibited by contrasting groups have more validity than those exhibited by single or similar groups (Denzin, 1978), the use of contrasting prototypes provided a means of discovering patterns of withdrawal common to community college dropouts in general rather than of particular groups. In contrast to the students prototyped by Hunter and Sheldon (1980a, 1980b), the prototypes in this study were applied to students who had withdrawn from college.

An additional group was included in the study for purposes of contrast. This group, designated as the Undisciplined Occupational Student, had the same general characteristics of the Undisciplined Transfer Student but differed in one respect: their goal was to complete a two-year terminal program as preparation for a job. Only superficially acknowledged as a group in Hunter and Sheldon's prototypes, this group was strongly in evidence in the transcript analysis stage and was thus included as a minor group for study.

Because each of the three theories being investigated in this study included socioeconomic status as a factor related to the withdrawal process, each of the three prototype groups was sub-divided into groups representing higher and lower social class for purposes of comparison. White females were chosen for this study for two reasons: first, because of the potential for rapport between them and the white female researcher; and second, because little research on the withdrawal process and on the relationship between education and work has focused specifically on women. Former Benson students who had attended local high schools (within the city and county where Benson is located) and had lived all or the majority of their lives in the local community were chosen because of the importance of cultural location or setting to the theories being investigated, particularly the counter-culture theory.

Selection of Sample

On May 24, 1983, the researcher received informal notification that the dean of instruction at Benson Community College had approved the study. Formal approval of the study was received shortly thereafter (see Appendix B). On May 25, the researcher met with the coordinator of admissions at Benson, who gave permission to examine the transcripts of female dropouts.

The examination of transcripts involved several steps.

First, a computer print-out provided a listing of all curriculum students who had enrolled in the winter quarter of 1983 but had failed to re-enroll during spring quarter 1983. As a means of identifying female dropouts, the researcher selected all students whose names suggested female gender. (Race and gender identities were not included on the print-out.) Using the social security number of each of these students, the researcher then examined each person's transcript on a computer screen.

The transcript provided an efficient means of identifying those characteristics which would eliminate students from the study. Students were excluded as potential informants if (a) they were not Caucasian; (b) they were under academic suspension or dismissal; (c) they had graduated from an out-of-state, out-of-county, or out-of-country high school; and (d) they were enrolled in the summer, 1983 quarter. In addition, students were screened out as potential informants if their patterns of attendance failed to meet the criterion of full-time enrollment for at least two quarters.

In addition, the researcher eliminated all students whose course-taking patterns suggested that they did not fit the characteristics of the two prototypes central to the study. For example, students whose course work consisted primarily of remedial courses were eliminated because they

appeared to fit the Basic Skills Student prototype suggested by Hunter and Sheldon (1980a, 1980b). Students who had consistently enrolled in occupationally related course work and had avoided taking any general education courses were also excluded, the justification being that they most likely were Job Upgraders or Career Changers, as defined by Hunter and Sheldon.

From this examination came a group of 64 females who generally fit the characteristics of either the Undisciplined Transfer or the Career Program Completer prototype. Included in this group of 64 dropouts were a few whose course-taking patterns demonstrated a confusion in college goals and shifts in program options, thus making it difficult to determine whether they were college transfer or occupational students. Each of these 64 women then received a letter from Benson Community College which introduced the researcher, briefly described her study, and encouraged each of the selected women to participate in the various stages of the study (see Appendix C). The letters were mailed on July 28, 1983.

Beginning on August 9, 1983, the researcher began calling each of the 64 women to conduct a brief telephone interview. The interview schedule consisted of questions which would help in the final determination of the prototype and socioeconomic status for each of the former students

(see Appendix D). These questions were adapted from the extensive protocol used in the Statewide Longitudinal Study of students attending California colleges (SLS Data Element Dictionary, 1978).

The telephone interviews were conducted over a period of twelve days. Each of the 64 women was called a minimum of six times if there was an indication that she still lived in the area. Of the original 64 women, 21 were screened out for various reasons during this stage: three, because a faulty address had been recorded; six, because the phone had been disconnected; one, because she had moved from that address and now had an unlisted number; one, because she lived outside the sample area and had been included in the pool by error; and five, because they had already graduated. In addition, six women who participated in the telephone interviews were dropped as potential informants because they indicated they would prefer not to participate any further; in general, the reasons they cited were upcoming marriages or time constraints due to work. Finally, seven additional women were excluded from the study because they could not be reached, despite repeated efforts. Of the original 64 female dropouts chosen for telephone interviews, 30 were ultimately considered for inclusion in the study.

Because socioeconomic status was a factor in each of the three theories and in the research design, additional

information was needed for determining the general socioeconomic status of each potential participant. In order to establish an accurate picture of the social class for each of these 30 students, 1980 census data for the city and county of concern in the study were obtained from the local Regional Planning Commission. The street address of each woman was used to locate her neighborhood within the context of the census tracts designated for both the city and the county. Data related to median and mean income distribution, occupational distribution, distribution of types of housing, and rental and owned-home worth medians were then obtained for each census tract where the 30 women currently lived and/or had grown up.

As a means of validating the assignment of each informant to higher or lower social class, additional information was later obtained from each informant selected for the study: the estimated worth of her family or present home; rent paid by informants; the level of education achieved by parents and husbands; parents' and husbands' past and present occupations and salaries; financial aid in college; and welfare aid received in the past and present. Statements made voluntarily by the informants about their social class standing were also considered. Finally, the parents' and informants' past and present occupations were used as the basis for determining their socioeconomic status

(SEI), defined by Hauser and Featherman (1977) as the "status accorded to the individual as the incumbent of a particular occupation role. The status (SEI) is not correlated highly with either the individual's own years of schooling or the person's earnings" (p. 51). Although there was not enough information available from each informant to determine the definitive SEI of their parents according to Hauser and Featherman's instructions (pp. 54-55), the occupations they reported provided some basis for identifying a rudimentary measure of socioeconomic status. This measure, along with the other data collected from census reports and the informants themselves, provided the information needed to assign students to higher and lower social class (see Appendix E for summary of information used to assign informants to social class categories).

The information received from the telephone interviews and the census reports determined the final sample of 11 informants. Those dropouts who were interviewed by telephone and not chosen, as well as those selected for the study, were notified by letter as to their status (see Appendices F and G). Those who were selected were also asked for permission to obtain high school and college transcripts, and they contracted with the researcher in an informed consent form (see Appendix H). Each informant was promised confidentiality, and code names were assigned to

protect their anonymity.

The Sample

General characteristics of the informants. All participants in this study were enrolled at Benson Community College during winter quarter, 1983, but either withdrew from all courses during that quarter and/or failed to re-enroll both spring and summer quarters, 1983. This withdrawal (see Note 2) was a second dropout for some of the participants. Since the beginning of the study, some of these students have returned to classes at Benson or another college on a part-time basis. In addition, all students grew up in the county or city where Benson Community College is located, and all attended Benson primarily as full-time students. Full-time enrollment was defined as a minimum of 9 credit hours. With the exception of Darlene, all the informants lived with their parents during most or all of their enrollment at Benson. Sally, Sandra, and Brenda enrolled in their initial classes during 1978-1980; the remaining students enrolled in their first classes in the fall of 1981 or 1982.

The five Undisciplined Transfer Students (UT's) in this study ranged in age from 18 to 24 at the time of withdrawal. Each reported that her original objective in attending Benson was to enroll in a college parallel program for the purpose of transferring eventually to a four-year

institution to earn a bachelor's degree, with or without an associate degree. For each informant in this prototype, the cumulative grade-point average at the time of withdrawal, with the exception of Sandra (see Note 3), whose grade-point average was slightly above 2.0, was well below a 2.0 on a four-point scale. In general, the transcripts of this group displayed such characteristics as a pattern of D's, F's, course withdrawals, and/or Re-enrolls (for developmental courses not completed); off-and-on enrollment patterns; primarily day-time attendance; and generally full-time enrollment.

At the time of withdrawal, each UT student had attended Benson for at least two quarters. Two of the informants in this group had attended a four-year institution (the same one) prior to enrolling at Benson and had had unsuccessful experiences at that university. The five students chosen to represent the Undisciplined Transfer Student included Charlotte, Katrina, and Sandra from a higher social class, and Roseann and Brenda from a lower social class. All five students in this group have since re-enrolled at Benson, either on a part-time or full-time basis. Robin, representing lower social class, was dropped from the study when she was admitted to a psychiatric center.

The four Career Program Completers (CPC's) in this study initially enrolled at Benson in a two-year

occupational program with the purpose of earning Associate in Applied Science degrees. All CPC's had at least a 2.0 cumulative grade-point average at the time of withdrawal. Their transcripts indicated consistent movement toward a degree; in other words, they took both general education and occupational program requirements rather than having restricted themselves to the occupationally oriented courses. The CPC's included in this study ranged in age from 20 to 22 at the time of withdrawal. While they attended college, their attendance was primarily full-time and during the day. At a point close to their withdrawals, each CPC manifested a change in her overall academic behavior or performance: a movement from full-time to part-time enrollment and/or a lowering of course grades. None of the CPC's was ever enrolled in developmental courses while in attendance at Benson. Each was working either part-time or full-time at the time of withdrawal, and each had attended Benson for at least five quarters. None of the CPC's has returned to college since withdrawal. The five students selected as Career Program Completers included Dianne, Kay, and Sally from a higher social class, and Margaret and Dottie from a lower social class. Dianne withdrew from the study after the first interview, citing job conflicts as the reason.

The two Undisciplined Occupational Students (UO's) in

the study were characterized by their enrollment in two-year occupational programs leading to an Associate in Applied Science degree; both students had below a 2.0 cumulative grade-point average and a pattern of D's, F's, Re-enrolls (for developmental courses not completed), and course withdrawals. Both students had always been in full-time attendance during the day and had attended at least seven quarters at the time of withdrawal. One student was 20; the other was 31 at the time of withdrawal. Neither was employed at the time of withdrawal, and only one has returned to a college setting. In this latter case, the college enrolled in is not Benson. This same student had also attended two other colleges prior to enrolling at Benson. Both UO's had been placed on academic warning or academic probation, but only Carla recalled this circumstance. The two students chosen to represent this prototype were Carla from a higher social class and Darlene from a lower social class.

The prototypes as used in this study differed slightly from those established in Hunter and Sheldon's study (see Chapter II). First, the Career Program Completers had a lower cumulative GPA than those specified in the "pure" prototypes. Secondly, the Undisciplined Transfer Students in this study were slightly older than the Career Program Completers, the reverse of the pure prototypes. Finally,

both major groups in this study included students who worked part-time while in college, but none worked as much as 30 hours per week - a characteristic of the pure CPC's in the California study. These modifications were necessary because the prototyping was being applied to dropouts, rather than to students enrolled (the sampling condition in the original study). In addition, the SLS Student Prototype Manual (1980) stresses that the prototyping descriptors are not absolute.

In the following pages, each of the eleven women participating in this study and representing one of the three prototypes is described individually. Characteristics of the women included in the Undisciplined Transfer Students prototype are summarized in Table 2. Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of the women representing the Career Program Completers prototype. Table 4 summarizes the characteristics of the women included in the study as Undisciplined Occupational Students.

The Undisciplined Transfer Students. Sandra is a 24-year-old single woman with a higher social class background. Sandra ranked 154th in her high school graduating class of 507, but she took the last several weeks of her senior year from a rehabilitation center. The fourth child in a family of six children, she presently lives with her parents. Sandra comes from a relatively well-educated

family. Her father has a master's degree and is an educator, and her mother has one year of college attendance. She estimates the combined yearly income of her parents to be $46,000. Her siblings have attended college in varied amounts, but only one of them has finished college with a bachelor's degree. Sandra, her father, and two of her brothers are alcoholics.

Sandra has dropped out of college three times: the first time from a state university, the last two times from Benson Community College. Each of these three withdrawals was associated in some way with her drinking problems. Sandra made 1050 on her SAT's, and her original goal in attending college was to become a teacher. She attended Benson five quarters as a part-time student and two quarters as a full-time student before her last withdrawal in winter, 1983. Her cumulative GPA at the point of the last withdrawal was 2.03, and her average for the quarter last attended was 2.10. As of her last withdrawal, Sandra had completed 34 of 50 credit hours attempted. Since that withdrawal, however, Sandra has again enrolled at Benson and completed several additional courses as a part-time student working on a degree in secretarial science. At the conclusion of the study, she was working as a part-time secretary, but she had experience working in a number of part-time positions, including waitressing and clerking in

several businesses.

Charlotte, an 18-year-old single woman from a higher social class background, lives with her parents. She ranked 227th in her high school graduating class of 432, and she reported making 960 on the SAT. She attended Benson for two quarters as a full-time student before her winter, 1983 withdrawal and was enrolled in the general studies curriculum. She completed 7 of 19 credit hours attempted. Her cumulative GPA at the time of withdrawal was .58, and her average for the last quarter attended was 1.00. She has since re-enrolled and dropped out again as a part-time student in the same curriculum. Charlotte's father is vice-president of an advertising agency, and her mother works part-time as a clerk in a department store. She estimates the combined yearly income of her parents to be $48,000. Her mother has a high school education, and her father completed two years of college. Charlotte has three older half-sisters, all of whom are enrolled in college with two of them working on their master's degrees; a younger brother is in high school. During her enrollment and after her withdrawal, she worked as a part-time waitress. At the conclusion of this study, Charlotte was still unclear about what she wants out of her college education but was considering enrolling at a small out-of-state four year institution to study business and travel management.

Katrina is a 20-year-old single woman living with her parents; she comes from a higher social class background and is the oldest of four daughters. She ranked 434th in her high school graduating class of 468 and completed requirements for graduation in the summer following her senior year. At the time of this study, her parents were unaware of her college and her course withdrawals, and Katrina had re-enrolled at Benson in the general studies curriculum with plans to transfer to a four-year college to study nursing. At her last withdrawal from Benson, she had a 1.24 cumulative average; her GPA for the last quarter enrolled was 0.00. However, her grades have improved in her current enrollment. Katrina's mother is primarily a housewife, although she recently began part-time work, for the first time, as a salesclerk in a clothing store. Her father holds an upper-level administrative assistant position. She estimates the combined yearly income of her parents to be $46,000. Katrina herself has had limited part-time work experience in a day-care center. Katrina's mother is a high school graduate, and her father completed two years of college at a state university. Katrina, like Sally, went to a nationally ranked high school in an upper-income neighborhood. Before her last withdrawal, Katrina had attended five quarters at Benson, four of these as a full-time student. At the time of this withdrawal, she had

completed 24 of 40 credit hours attempted.

Roseann is a 21-year-old single woman currently living alone in a one-room apartment, although she lived with her parents during her college attendance. She represents a lower social class background. The oldest child of three, Roseann ranked 292nd in her high school class of 500. Her father is a minister with a bachelor's degree; her mother completed three years of college. Her parents' joint income is around $17,000 per year. Roseann is currently employed as a vault teller at a bank and has also worked as a receptionist and a drive-in teller at the same bank. She received BEOG aid while attending Benson as a full-time student. She has currently re-enrolled part-time at Benson through the American Institute of Banking, which funds her classes as long as she makes at least a C on each course.

Roseann was originally classified in this prototype because of the course work she took during the first three quarters of attendance and her stated objective of transferring after earning an associate degree in business administration. However, before she withdrew, she moved into the accounting program; currently she is enrolled in an "upgrading employment skills" program. Roseann's grades during the first three quarters before she dropped were low, primarily D's. Her cumulative average when she dropped out was 1.40 and she remained out for almost two years, came

back for one quarter for a course through the American Institute of Banking and made an A in it, left for another year, and then re-enrolled. Roseann points out that her grades, once she started attending part-time through AIB, have been much better. Still, she has only a 1.79 cumulative average. When Roseann withdrew in winter, 1983, she had attended five quarters at Benson and completed 45 of 48 credit hours attempted.

Brenda is a 23-year-old young woman who has been married for several years; she represents a lower social class background. She ranked 40th in her high school class of 450. She is the youngest child of four. Her father is now retired but has been employed as a sales representative and a nurse's aide. Her mother has been employed as a bookkeeper and a secretary; she also is retired now. Brenda was unable to provide an estimate of her parents' income. Currently, Brenda is a customer service representative in a bank; her husband is a sales representative. Both parents have a high school education, and her siblings have varying amounts of college attendance, with only one having graduated with a bachelor's degree.

Brenda's record at Benson was poor. She attended Benson for four quarters, two of these as a full-time student. She has withdrawn twice from the college, the first time after the fall quarter of 1979, and the second

time after winter, 1983. The last two quarters of her attendance (fall, 1979 and winter, 1983) were taken as a result of encouragement from the bank where she works; the courses are American Institute of Banking courses paid for by the bank. Before that time, she was enrolled in the general studies curriculum with plans to transfer to a four-year college. Her cumulative GPA at the time of the 1983 withdrawal was 1.765, and she had passed 14 of 32 credit hours attempted. Since her last withdrawal, Brenda has again returned to Benson for one course.

The Career Program Completers. Kay is a 21-year-old newlywed from a higher social class. Kay ranked 132nd in her high school class of 483. She started out and continued in the commercial art program at Benson. Her grades fluctuated in the five quarters she attended college, and she made a movement from full-time to part-time student in the last two quarters she attended. At the time of drop-out, she had a cumulative grade-point average of 2.10, and her GPA for the last quarter attended was 4.0. She had passed 47 of 53 credit hours attempted. She reports that she has always been determined to major in commercial art, yet she did not perform well in her college art courses, receiving primarily C's with two D's and one F in these courses.

At present Kay works in the bookkeeping department of a

Table 2

Characteristics of Undisciplined Transfer Students at Time of Withdrawal from Benson Community College in Winter, 1983

	Informants				
Descriptor	Brenda	Roseann	Charlotte	Katrina	Sandra
Social class	Low	Low	High	High	High
Age	23	21	18	20	24
Marital Status	Married	Single	Single	Single	Single
College Major	General Studies	Business Admin.	General Studies	General Studies	Educ.
Cumulative GPA	1.765	1.667	0.579	1.235	2.028
Credit Hours Passed	14	45	7	24	34
Credit Hours Attempted	32	48	19	40	50
Developmental Hours Attempted	0	0	5	8	5
Quarters Attended	4	5	2	5	6

Note. "Credit hours attempted" reflects courses attempted, failed, and withdrawn from.

bank; she has had part-time jobs in a beauty parlor and in sales. Her mother is now a library clerk and was at one time a secretary. Her father is in real estate sales and has worked in insurance sales and been a bank branch manager. Kay estimates her parents' joint income to be about $50,000 per year. Both parents have had two years of study in a business college. None of her three younger siblings has attended college as yet; however, one sister is attending a vocational program in nursing through the city schools. Kay's husband, whom she married shortly after her withdrawal from Benson, completed one year at Benson and works with a general contracting company. The couple live in a relatively new duplex in an otherwise aging neighborhood.

Sally is a 22-year-old single woman from a higher social class. Sally attended a nationally ranked high school in an upper-class neighborhood and ranked 136th in her senior class of 460. She was living with her parents at the time of this study, and she also lived with them during much of her attendance at Benson. She has had a number of jobs, primarily in waitressing and bartending, but she also has done some modeling and retail work in a department store. Sally first attended a state university and did well her first semester there but poorly thereafter. After taking several electives at Benson, she decided to go into

the nursing program. She has had several career plan changes over the years; toward the end of this study, she enlisted in the Army to study satellite repair. Her interests have leaned toward the scientific as well as the humanistic aspects of life. At the time of drop-out, Sally had a cumulative GPA of 2.20; her GPA for the last quarter of attendance was 1.33. She attended Benson for 11 quarters, with the last six quarters in full-time attendance in the nursing program; at the time of her withdrawal from Benson, she had successfully completed 91 of 114 credit hours attempted. Sally comes from a well-educated family. Her mother is a retired registered nurse with a bachelor's degree; her father also has a bachelor's degree and is a staff engineer in one of the local colleges. Before her mother's retirement, her parents had an estimated joint yearly income of about $50,000. Two of her older siblings have master's degrees; a third one is near completion of a bachelor's degree. Sally is the youngest child.

Dottie is a 20-year-old newlywed from a lower social class background. Presently she works as a desk clerk in a department store. Her mother is retired but was formerly a waitress and later worked in the knitting department of a factory. Her father is now disabled but has been a coal miner, insurance salesman, painter, carpenter, sawmill worker, and mechanic. Her parents were divorced when she

was very young, and the mother raised six children alone. The family moved constantly during Dottie's youth, as evidenced by her attendance in 11 different schools. At one time, the family was on welfare. Dottie was unable to give an estimate of her parents' yearly income. Like her parents and several of her five siblings, Dottie is a high-school dropout, but she obtained her GED shortly after she left high school. Her high school grades were generally below average. Dottie's husband, whom she married shortly after her withdrawal from Benson, is a ladle helper at a factory, and the newlyweds live in a small frame house they recently bought. Dottie's cumulative GPA at the time of drop-out was 2.21, and her GPA for the quarter of drop-out was 1.00. Dottie was enrolled in mental health technology when she withdrew. She attended 6 quarters as a full-time student and completed 41 of 53 credit hours attempted. Dottie has a mild handicap, a crossed eye, which caused her to be the brunt of childhood jokes.

Margaret is a 21-year-old newlywed from a lower social class background. She graduated from high school with the rank of 50th in a class of 264. Her mother has a GED and is a teacher's aide; her father has a ninth grade education and is currently a railroad engineer. Margaret was unable to provide an estimate of her parents' joint income. Both of her older sisters are high school graduates. Margaret's

husband, whom she married shortly after her withdrawal from Benson, is a truck driver and has completed two years of college at a private, four-year institution. At the time of withdrawal, Margaret had attended Benson eight quarters and had completed 81 hours of credits. Her cumulative GPA was 2.60, and her GPA for the last quarter she attended was 2.0. Her last two quarters of attendance were as a part-time student. Margaret was enrolled in the secretarial science curriculum at the time of her withdrawal. Presently, she works as a word processor operator for a small law firm. She and her husband live in a new house.

The Undisciplined Occupational Students. Darlene is a 31-year-old woman who is currently separated from her second husband. She comes from a lower social class background. She has two children, an illegitimate daughter born prior to her first marriage and a son born during her first marriage. Darlene is the second in a family of five children. Her high school grades consisted of C's, D's, and F's, and she failed the tenth grade. She currently is an unemployed mechanic and lives on welfare aid and child support. She has had numerous jobs in greenhouse work, small engine and appliances repair, plumbing, carpentry, and mechanics, jobs similar to those held by her father. Darlene was unable to report an estimate of her father's yearly income but noted that it fluctuated from year to year. Her mother, now

Table 3

Characteristics of Career Program Completers at Time of Withdrawal from Benson Community College in Winter, 1983

	Informants			
Descriptor	Dottie	Margaret	Sally	Kay
Social class	Low	Low	High	High
Age	20	21	22	21
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Single
College Major	Mental Health Tech	Secretarial Science	Nursing	Commerical Art
Cumulative GPA	2.208	2.595	2.188	2.094
Credit Hours Passed	41	81	91	47
Credit Hours Attempted	53	100	114	53
Developmental Hours Attempted	0	0	0	0
Quarters Attended	6	8	11	5

Note. "Credit hours attempted" reflects courses attempted, failed, and withdrawn from.

completed only the math courses. At the time of her withdrawal, she was officially enrolled in the accounting program, but earlier she had been enrolled in a "personal satisfaction" curriculum in which she was taking general education types of course work. She is now enrolled in a proprietary business college near her home. Her mother is a retired bookkeeper; her father is a car salesman. Before her mother's retirement, her parents had an estimated joint income of $30,000 per year. Both parents have a high school education, and her older sister is a college graduate. Carla has a hearing handicap and wears a hearing aid in one ear. Her work experience has been limited to part-time work as a sales clerk in a clothing store and summer work in a hot dog stand.

Rapport with informants. From the very beginning of the study, five informants were particularly open and detailed in their responses: Darlene, Carla, Sandra, Sally, and Dottie. They remained responsive and frank throughout the study. Slightly less detailed and responsive but nevertheless cooperative in the interviews were Margaret, Roseann, Kay, and Brenda. There was no indication that these informants were hostile to the questioning or the study; in fact, all except Brenda were self-described as reserved and less than assertive in their dealings with people. Charlotte and Katrina were more difficult to

deceased, had an eighth grade education, and her father completed high school. Three of her siblings completed high school, and one sister earned a GED. Darlene failed three grades in public school. At the time of withdrawal, Darlene was enrolled in the automotive technology program at Benson, and she had attended seven quarters as a full-time day student. Her cumulative GPA was 1.71, and her GPA for the last quarter she attended was 1.46. She had completed 78 of 85 credit hours attempted. In addition, she had taken developmental courses in English and math but had completed only the math course.

Carla is a 20-year-old single woman living with her parents. She represents a higher social class background. The younger of two daughters, Carla dropped out of public school, attended a parochial high school and dropped out, and finally obtained her GED. Her high school grades consisted primarily of C's and D's. Prior to attending Benson, Carla attended a denominational college for a few days and a business college for several weeks. At the time of her withdrawal from Benson, she had attended 8 quarters, primarily as a full-time day student. Her cumulative GPA at that time was 1.44, and her average for the last quarter of attendance was 0.00. Of the 71 credit hours attempted, she had successfully completed 47 hours. In addition, she had taken developmental course work in math and English and had

Table 4

Characteristics of Undisciplined Occupational Students at Time of Withdrawal from Benson Community College in Winter, 1983

Descriptor	Informants	
	Carla	Darlene
Social Class	High	High
Age	20	31
Marital Status	Single	Separated
College Major	Accounting	Automotive Technology
Cumulative GPA	1.435	1.713
Credit Hours Passed	47	78
Credit Hours Attempted	71	85
Developmental Hours Attempted	15	18
Quarters Attended	8	7

Note. "Credit hours tried" reflects courses attempted, failed, and withdrawn from.

interview, and both responded only briefly to most of the interview questions. Katrina, in particular, revealed more about herself when the recorder was stopped and casual conversation began than when the structured interviews were being conducted.

Methods

The following section provides a brief introduction to naturalistic inquiry in general and to the ethnographic research methods used in this study.

Naturalistic inquiry and ethnographic methods. The general method of research used for this study was naturalistic inquiry, defined as a search for meaning and understanding in "naturally occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring states" (Patton, 1980, p. 4). The advantage of naturalistic inquiry is that it allows people to present themselves in their own language and behavior and thus to reveal how and what they feel, know, and believe (Denzin, 1978; Spradley, 1979, 1980). The stance of the naturalistic investigator is that meaning exists in the people and situation being studied, that this meaning is context- or situation-specific, and that meanings understood by people in a particular situation can be discovered and understood by researchers who take the time to develop relationships, listen to the participants, and observe their behavior (Spradley, 1979, 1980).

More specifically, the method of data collection for this study drew on models of ethnographic research used in anthropology. Like the work of many anthropologists (e.g., Dobbert, 1982; Ogbu, 1974, 1978; Spradley, 1979, 1980; Willis, 1977), this study focused less on predicting behavior per se and concentrated more on discovering the patterns of meaning or reasoning held by those who exhibited the behavior of leaving school.

In ethnography, the primary instrument of the research is the researcher, who attempts through open-ended inquiry to take the perspective of the people under study and to learn from them (Dobbert, 1982; Spradley, 1979, 1980). The ethnographer guides the inquiry through the use of informed questions; these questions grow out of theory or previous studies which "shed light on the problems, issues, or structures being examined" (Dobbert, 1982, p. 5).

Ethnographic research employs informants, "ordinary people with ordinary knowledge" (Spradley, 1979, p. 25) who communicate in their own terms. Research with informants attempts to discover the knowledge they share about their common experiences and the concepts and definitions they use to organize or describe these experiences (Spradley, 1979). The participants in this study, each one a dropout from the same community college, served as informants on the withdrawal experience.

Ethnographic inquiry may employ several strategies: (a) participant observation, where the investigator serves the dual roles of participant in and observer of a social situation, attempts to become a part of the situation, and records what actually happens; (b) interviews and life histories, which attempt to record what people recall about their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs; (c) document analysis, which attempts to determine "official" stances; and (d) journals, which record the researcher's personal accounts (Denzin, 1978; Spradley, 1979, 1980). For the purposes of this study, a modified form of document analysis provided the means for selecting informants during the initial phase of data collection. The researcher's journal and fieldnotes on each interview provided a method of recording investigator observations and responses, as well as student reactions during the interviewing. Participant observation was used only in the sense that the researcher participated in the interviews as a social exchange and recorded her feelings and observations at the end of each interview. Life history interviews constituted the primary method of data collection.

Ethnographic research is a particularly appropriate means of investigation for this study. The three competing theoretical explanations for why people decide to leave school address withdrawal as a complex, developmental

process influenced by a number of factors. Many of these factors and their relationships to one another may have non-quantifiable dimensions (Cope & Hannah, 1975). Ethnographic research methods provide a systematic means of discovering these non-quantifiable dimensions from the perspective of individuals in a particular setting. In addition, the research questions derived from these theories require a method of examining in-depth the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of those who have left school. Through in-depth questioning and response, patterns of meaning or reasoning associated with the process of attrition can be discovered.

Document analysis. Public or official documents can provide information not otherwise available or not available in objective form from the informant. In this particular study, records of the informants' past academic performance and types of classes taken both in high school and in college were used in two ways: (a) in the initial phase, students' college transcripts were used as the basis for selecting potential informants; and (b) in the actual study, both high school and college transcripts confirmed informants' reports of past performance and served as a vehicle for further questioning. Data reported by the local Regional Planning Commission for the 1980 census were also used in the initial phase of the study; in this case, demographic data describing the informants' neighborhoods

provided indirect measures of the social class of both the neighborhoods and the informants themselves.

Journal and field notes. Because the primary focus of this study was the interviewing of dropouts, rather than the observation of students in the process of dropping out of college, the use of participant observation as a method of data collection was limited to observations made during the interviews. The interview is a social event involving at least two participants, the interviewer and the informant (Spradley, 1979). The interviewer not only asks questions of the informant but also listens and responds to the informant and observes her during the interaction. Ethnographic interviewing requires that the researcher, as the instrument of research, record her observations, the changing roles of the interviewer and the informant, reactions of the informant, and details of the interview and its setting. These details can provide clues to the validity of the data and additional clues to the attitudes, beliefs, and lifestyles of the informant. Thus, the interviewer serves as both participant in and observer of a social event and must record the information she gathers. At the end of each interview with the informants and after each visit to the college, observations and personal accounts were recorded in the researcher's journal and field notes.

Life histories. Life histories are essentially case studies which present "the experiences and definitions held by one person, one group, or one organization as this person, group, or organization interprets those experiences" (Denzin, 1978, p. 215). Although autobiographical in nature, the life history is not a conventional autobiography. The underlying assumption of the life history approach is that each person has her own unique subjective inner life; the purpose of the life history is to get a record of this inner life from the person's point of view (Denzin, 1978, p. 215).

In this study, it was assumed that each person would have educational and occupational experiences and aspirations, significant others, and attitudes and reactions different from another person's; it was also expected that patterns would emerge across individual responses. An additional assumption was that students are not always aware of the real reasons they decide to withdraw from school or of the complexity of factors contributing to that decision. Life histories provide an appropriate and useful means of eliciting from the informants a body of focused information, information generally unavailable in conventional questionnaires or surveys, which can reveal patterns in the developmental movement toward the decision to drop out of school.

Life histories are sometimes considered unreliable sources of data on previous actions (Denzin, 1978); however, they offer several advantages for this study. First, they allow individuals to present themselves, their experiences and beliefs, and their reasoning over time, in ways that are meaningful and familiar to them (Denzin, 1978, p. 216; Plath, 1980, p. 30; Eisenhart, in press). Life histories can provide information on meaningful events in people's lives and thus suggest clues to the way routine institutional experiences and processes are understood and acted upon by individuals. In studies such as this one, where the primary purpose is the discovery of patterns in a process as they are understood and reconstructed by the persons involved in the process, the life history approach is "a method *par excellence*" (Denzin, 1978, p. 250).

The elicitation of life histories can take several different forms. The approach used in this study was that of an interview focusing on particular aspects of each informant's life; this method is the *topical life history* (Denzin, 1978, p. 218). Three topical life histories were elicited from each of the informants and were designed to emphasize informants' experiences, aspirations, and attitudes prior to, during, and after college attendance.

Data Collection

Life history interviews. Life history interviews were

conducted with each of the informants between September and November, 1983, in three cycles. Each interview lasted at least two hours, with some interviews extending into four or more hours. All interviews were conducted in the informants' homes, were taped, and were later transcribed for analysis purposes. Approximately 70 hours of interview data were collected during these three interview cycles.

Questions used in each of the three major interview cycles were designed to elicit information relative to each of the secondary research questions (see Chapter II). Two general approaches were taken in designing these questions. First, several questions were developed to address a single research question. For example, questions 7, 13, and 22 from Interview #1, question 21 from Interview #2, and questions 2d, 14, 15, and 17-a-b-c from Interview #3 elicited information important to answering the following research question and its sub-parts: In what ways did counselors and others acting in a counseling capacity present future options to the students?

In other cases, a single interview question or series of questions elicited information applicable to more than one research question. For example, questions 28, 29, and 30 from Interview #1, questions 1-7, 18, 27, 29 from Interview #2, and questions 25, 29, and 30 from Interview #3 were developed to answer the following research questions:

(a) What beliefs do these students hold about the skills they need for work? (b) What values do these students have about work and what do they believe they can achieve through work? (c) In what ways do these students view the relationship between education and post-education work? (d) What opportunities have these students had to observe others like themselves in jobs?

Collection cycles. In the first cycle of data collection, the life history interviews focused on the educational and occupational experiences and aspirations of the informants prior to their going to college (see Appendix I). A range of questions was asked during this interview. For example, informants initially listed their occupational aspirations as they were growing up, as well as the jobs they had held prior to going to college. In addition, they were asked to describe their pre-college educational successes and failures, and the role of others in their educational and occupational experiences.

The second cycle of the life history interviews focused on the occupational experiences and goals once the informants had graduated from high school (see Appendix J). Again, students listed and described their occupational experiences, explained the influence of others in these experiences, and discussed the role of others in their developing aspirations. In addition, informants were asked

to clarify statements made during the first interview.

In the third cycle of data collection, the life history interviews focused on the educational experiences of the informants while they attended college (see Appendix K). In cases where students had attended colleges other than Benson Community College, they were asked to describe their experiences at that college as well. In general, informants responded to questions dealing with their successes and failures at Benson, the role of others in these experiences and in the formation of attitudes toward schooling, and their view of the relationship of education to the world of work. Questions for clarification of responses made in the second cycle were also asked.

A final follow-up interview with each of the informants was conducted by telephone between April and June, 1984. Only Sally, who entered military service in January, 1984, was unavailable for this final interview. The purposes of this interview were to clarify statements made during previous interviews and to identify those who had returned to college and/or made changes in their educational and occupational plans in the six months or so since the third interview cycle. Approximately nine additional hours of recorded interview data were collected in this final phase.

Data Analysis

Method. Analytic induction, a systematic process of

scrutinizing qualitative, text-based data and determining, first of all, categories of behavior and knowledge common to participants, and secondly, patterns of meaning, was used to analyze the data. Denzin (1978) defines analytic induction as

> a search for propositions that apply to all cases of the problem under analysis . . . . This strategy not only forces the careful consideration of all available evidence . . ., but makes necessary the intensive analysis of individual cases and the comparisons of certain crucial cases. (p. 194)

In this study, all data were transcribed and then subjected to domain analysis, a method of analytic induction recommended by Spradley (1979, 1980) for ethnographic data. Domain analysis requires that the researcher examine all data, assign the data to categories of meaning, determine patterns that are common to the cases under study, and determine why differing cases do not follow the patterns.

Spradley (1979, 1980) describes domain analysis as a search for the parts or elements of cultural meaning and how they are organized. It requires that the researcher search for categories of meaning, or domains, embedded in what people say. Each domain consists of three basic elements: cover terms, which are the names for the domains; included terms, which are the items or data particles from the interview which fit inside the domain; and semantic relationships, which link the cover term and the included

terms.

Spradley believes that most meaning can be stated in one or more of the following nine semantic relationships. In the following list of these relationships, "X" represents the included term (data particle), and "Y" represents the cover term (domain of meaning):

1. Strict inclusion: X is a kind of Y
2. Spatial: X is a place in Y; X is a part of Y
3. Cause-effect: X is a result of Y
4. Rationale: X is a reason for doing Y
5. Location-for-action: X is a place for doing Y
6. Function: X is used for Y
7. Means-end: X is a way to do Y
8. Sequence: X is a step/stage in Y
9. Attribution: X is an attribution or characteristic of Y (Spradley, 1980, p. 93)

Coding of data. Approximately 925 pages of transcribed interview data were submitted to domain analysis. Domains, or categories of data, emerged from two sources. First, each interview question was converted into a domain. For example, the interview question, "In what ways would you describe your personal behavior in elementary school?" became the domain of "personal behavior in elementary school." The question, "Tell me about your post-high school job experiences which you remember as particularly

successful or satisfying," became the domain of "successful/satisfying post-high school job experiences."

Secondly, those responses and details which did not fit appropriately or accurately into any of the domains established from the interview questions provided the second source of domains. Because informants repeatedly referred to certain details, a pattern or category of data was apparent. Several domains, including "informant's comments about self-image" and "extra-curricular activities in high school and college," were thus added to the domain list. A total of 155 domains was used in the analysis (see complete domain list used in coding in Appendix L).

Coding of the data consisted of the following steps. First, the transcribed question and response were read carefully. The researcher then determined which of the nine semantic relationships the response or parts of the response fell into for that particular question and domain. For example, the following excerpt is part of Roseann's response to the question, "In your opinion, what can be gained by earning a college degree?"

> You have more of a chance of having the job you want. Along with that would come pride in yourself. You would achieve something and of course there is always the thing that you can make more money if you have a better degree and all that. I think you feel better about yourself if you go ahead . . .

The phrases "having more of a chance of having the job you

want," "pride in yourself," "achieving something," "you can make more money if you have a better degree," and "feeling better about yourself" were coded into the semantic relationship "kinds of" within the domain of "things to be gained by earning a college degree." (A lengthy excerpt and the coding applied to it are provided in Appendix M). Frequently, a particular phrase or sentence in the response was applicable to more than one relationship within a domain or to more than one domain, regardless of the question asked. When these instances occurred, responses were coded into all relationships and domains applicable.

For every sentence or sentence particle coded into a semantic relationship within a domain, the researcher provided the following information: (a) the informant's name, interview tape number, and transcription page number; (b) the data particle; and (c) the semantic relationship and domain applicable to that data particle. For purposes of simplifying the task of sorting the data once the coding was completed, each domain was assigned a number between 1 and 155 and each semantic relationship was abbreviated to a key word denoting the entire phrasing of the relationship. The following data entry illustrates this process:

Roseann, t8p1
no longer wanting to be a nurse because I don't know if I could handle all that blood
reason-04

Translated, the above entry was taken from the first

interview with Roseann, located on tape #8 and page #1 of the transcription. The data particle is coded as a "reason for changes in her occupational aspirations." This system shortened the coding time and provided a means of tracking the information for future reference. An additional advantage was that it provided a means of sorting the data by hand or by microcomputer.

Pattern and theme identification. Although pattern identification is not a particularly linear process, it basically followed three general stages in this study. First, once domain analysis was applied to all interview data collected from a single informant in the three interview phases, the researcher wrote a synthesis paper which noted events, attitudes, beliefs, and ways of viewing education and work that were repeated or noted as significant by the informant. The synthesis also described the informant in general terms. This stage continued until all data collected from all the participants had been coded and synthesized. The result was a picture of patterns particular to each informant.

In the second stage, the researcher searched for patterns across individuals. Drawing upon the individual lists of patterns and descriptions, the researcher was able to identify similar events, beliefs, and viewpoints common to two or more informants. Thus a more comprehensive list

of patterns across individuals, prototypes, and classes was developed.

Finally, the coded data for each informant was grouped by domains with similar focus (for example, those domains related to others' occupational expectations of the informants). The purpose of this stage was to identify patterns which might have been overlooked and to confirm that patterns were missing in some cases. A synthesis paper summarizing these patterns across prototypes and social classes was then written. Once this process had been completed, it was apparent that "umbrella" patterns or themes were not congruent with prototypical or social class distinctions but instead were evident in some form among all or the majority of informants. These themes and the patterns associated with them are discussed as findings in Chapter IV.

Validity and Reliability

This study explores the occupational and educational experiences of eleven white female community college students who originally attended the same institution in southeastern United States primarily as full-time students between fall, 1978 and winter, 1983 and voluntarily withdrew from that college. The women were selected to represent those likely as well as unlikely to complete their programs and to represent either higher or lower social class

standing. Interview data were collected and analyzed by a single researcher.

These characteristics of the study obviously limit its generalizability. However, by selecting participants to represent those expected to succeed as well as those expected to fail and by searching for patterns characteristic of both groups, the researcher attempted to extend the generalizability of the findings on withdrawal, despite the small sample. Second, by establishing close personal relationships with the participants and visiting them on several occasions, the researcher attempted to strengthen the validity of the responses.

In addition, the researcher also attempted to strengthen the validity of the findings by recording in field notes and a journal the informants' non-verbal reactions and behavior during the interviews, details of the interview setting, changes in the roles of the researcher and informants, and other details which provided clues to understanding the informants and their withdrawal decision. Copies of the transcribed interviews were also given to each informant to check for accuracy and to give each a chance to make additional comments. Finally, by presenting considerable detail from the interview transcripts in Chapter IV, the researcher attempted to allow the reader to assess both the data and the interpretations of the author.

For reliable assessment of the three theories explored in this study, a much larger sample and suppporting data from informants' peers, family, teachers, and counselors are needed. Although organizing of the data was conducted by a single researcher and thus there was no measure of inter-researcher reliability, all data bits were indexed by original source, date of collection, and tape and transcription location. This indexing of the original data and subsequent manipulations of the data make it possible for other researchers to check for reliability.

Summary

This study used ethnographic research techniques to investigate the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of white female community college dropouts for the purpose of determining which of three theoretical explanations was the most powerful in explaining their voluntary decision to leave school. Two major contrasting groups of individuals who had attended a single institution on a full-time basis were studied, the Undisciplined Transfer Students and the Career Program Completers; a third and smaller group of Undisciplined Occupational Students was also included. Each group was further sub-divided into those representing lower and higher social class. A total of 11 dropouts participated in the study; each was interviewed extensively in open-ended but theory-sensitive inquiry. The dropout

process and the factors contributing to the withdrawal decision as conceptualized and presented by the 11 informants are discussed in the following chapter.

Notes

1. Benson Community College is a pseudonym for the college attended by the participants in this study. A pseudonym was used as a means of protecting the privacy of the informants and the confidentiality of their responses.

2. The terms withdraw and withdrawal are not meant to imply withdrawal in any formal or official sense of the word. In some few cases, the informants went through the formal procedures of withdrawing from a class but none officially withdrew from school. They simply left during one quarter or failed to return the next quarter.

3. The names assigned to each of the informants are pseudonyms and serve to protect the privacy and anonymity of all the participants.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

The interview questions derived from the theoretical framework guiding this study elicited informants' responses on two major types of themes: (a) those related to occupational aspirations, experiences, and beliefs; and (b) those related to educational aspirations, experiences, and beliefs. A third set of themes emerged from the analyzed interview responses of the informants: (c) those related to personal roles, identities, and conflicts. These themes and related patterns are discussed below, and unless otherwise noted, are applicable to all of the dropouts participating in the study. The quotations used to support the discussion have been taken from the four interviews with the participants (See Notes 1 and 2).

Occupational Aspirations, Experiences, and Beliefs

The themes related to occupational aspirations, experiences, and beliefs were consistent across all prototypes and social classes represented in this study. However, some individual, prototypical, or social class differences in patterns within these themes existed; where applicable, they are noted in the following discussion.

Confusion about Occupational Futures

In discussions of their occupational aspirations from early youth to the present, all eleven informants

demonstrated confusion and indecision about choosing what they eventually wanted to do in the world of work. Several patterns of indecision, varying across and within the particular prototypes and social classes represented in the study, emerged in their discussions. Regardless of the specific patterns, however, most of the informants by the end of the study had in some sense either forfeited their original occupational goals or lowered their higher-status goals, and many remained undecided and confused about their occupational futures. The various patterns of confusion and indecision are described below within a chronological framework.

Before college. All nine UT's and CPC's reported that in their youth they considered traditional women's careers as nurses and/or teachers. In addition to these aspirations, each of the informants in these two groups also considered other helper occupations such as missionary, secretary, wife and mother, psychiatrist, and counselor. Several also mentioned such "glamour" occupations as actress, stewardess, artist, ballerina, writer, and model.

In both groups, consideration of these early career options was influenced in two general ways. First, many of the informants indicated that idealized versions of occupations influenced their consideration of choices. These versions included portrayals of various occupations on

television and in films, their observations of others being happy or interesting in their occupations or roles, childhood role-playing, and the appeal of fame or glamour that they associated with some of these choices. Another general influence in these considerations was that the choice appeared to them to be a "worthwhile" or "nice thing to do" and was guided by a desire to help others.

Roseann, for example, considered becoming a nurse, a teacher, and a missionary. Asked what influenced her desire to become a nurse, she replied:

> I don't know. I don't have any idea about that at all. I don't know if it was just something all of us wanted to do, all little girls wanted to do. I don't know . . . . I think we had a couple of nurses in the church or Mom and Dad knew some nurses. That's probably where I got the idea, I don't know.

She also considered becoming a missionary through her association with a visiting missionary at her church:

> I don't know, he was just so interesting and . . . the way he talked about Puerto Rico sounded so exciting and all. And, I don't know, that just sounded like a nice thing to do. It could help people a lot that way.

Later, in fifth grade, she briefly considered becoming a teacher; she had a "favorite teacher, a man teacher, the first one I ever had . . . The way he taught, I enjoyed it."

Three patterns of early occupational decision-making were evident in the interviews with these nine informants. Margaret, Roseann, Dottie, Brenda, and Charlotte provided

little evidence of having seriously considered any option; each had dismissed her various choices by the time she had entered junior high or high school for vague reasons: "it's not what I wanted to do," "I lost interest," "it was just a childhood thing," "I'd rather be doing [something else]," and "my options are still open." Some also suggested, as Roseann did, that they believed that particular career options required "a special type of person; I'm not sure I'm that special person." These informants continued through public school to be unclear about what occupations they would eventually pursue.

Two other informants, Sally and Sandra, eliminated many of their early career considerations for similar reasons but also gave serious consideration to some of their options. Sandra, for example, considered becoming a nurse but eliminated that option on two levels: (a) the choice was "a childhood kind of thing . . . . a passing kind of thing" and (b) "I realized . . . [that] being around hospitals . . . was such a painful experience for me and I knew I couldn't, I wasn't cut out for that . . . . I don't think I could have done the actual handling of the patients." Instead, she decided in high school that she wanted to become an elementary education teacher. Sally had similar experiences but decided during her high school years that she wanted to go into the "health field" in some capacity. Both she and

Sandra indicated that they preferred "professional careers" over "menial jobs."

Finally, Katrina and Kay demonstrated a third pattern of early decision-making, both deciding as children what they wished to become: Kay, a commercial artist; Katrina, a nurse. Like the rest, they too had dismissed earlier considerations for vague reasons but, in contrast, gave little indication of having seriously considered choices other than the ones they made before they entered high school. They continued to maintain these aspirations throughout their public school years.

The two UO's in the study offer a contrasting picture of early occupational aspirations. Neither woman, unlike the UT's and CPC's, reported considering the traditional and the more idealized occupational roles. Darlene, whose occupational aspirations and experiences involved labor stereotypically associated with males, was influenced by her father, and later on in high school, by her male peers. She suggested that she was always interested in making and doing things with her hands, and these activities were a means of gaining attention from, and closeness with, her father. Later, as she became more and more alienated from her family and sought to escape the "hellhole at home," she began interacting with males who worked on cars during lunch and other breaks at school. Because she was able to work on

cars as well as her male peers, she was accepted by them. Despite the different influences on her occupational choices, however, she knew before she left high school that she wanted to go into a field where she could work with her hands.

On the other hand, Carla never really had, during her public school years, a specific occupational aspiration. She reported that as a child, she considered music, art, architecture, and later business, but she was unable to specify any particular occupational position that she had considered. Like most of the informants, she gave little serious consideration to these general areas of work and never seemed to gain a strong sense of an occupation to aim toward.

In college. Nine of the eleven informants enrolled at Benson Community College as a second-choice, second-chance, or last-minute selection with finances, past academic performance, or boyfriends as their reasons. In several cases, they either had already been accepted at, or had actually attended, four-year institutions. Only Dottie and Darlene had not considered other particular institutions. Regardless of their earlier institutional choices or lack of them, however, all clearly enrolled at Benson firmly attached to the belief that the major purpose of higher education is preparation for a job or career and that

education would help them achieve "something better," something "more than a menial job," or "something special" in the occupational world.

Charlotte, for example, discussed her reasons for going to college in the following excerpt:

> It's important to go to school to learn to do something or to do a job and learn to get the education that relates to a job you want to do because once you get out of school and you get a job, you need the background . . . You can learn a whole lot more about that job, moreso than say a person that's got the same job but hasn't been to school . . . you know a lot more and more likely you'll get paid more.

Roseann discussed her desire to "move up" in the occupational world and her reasons for valuing college attendance and a degree:

> You have more of a chance of getting the job you want. Along with that would come pride in yourself. You would achieve something, and of course, there is always the thing that you can make more money if you have a better degree . . . I think you feel better about yourself if you go ahead . . . It is just so hard any more to get into any type of profession other than say . . . a department store clerk, but I would rather have something that is a little more special than that, something that not everybody can do . . . . Most people can work at McDonald's . . . I would just like to be able to do something a little bit better and maybe a little bit more specialized than the average person.

Despite their view that a college education would prepare them for "something special," however, most of the informants were vague or uncertain about the specific occupations or fields they wished to pursue. Without clear

goals in mind, they chose either to enroll in programs at Benson that related to something they knew about or were interested in or to enroll in a general curriculum which would prepare them for transfer. Margaret and Brenda, for example, had no idea what they wanted to become. Margaret chose to enroll in secretarial classes because she had taken some business courses in high school and knew something about the secretarial field; Brenda chose to take "general stuff" in preparation for transferring to a major state university. Only three informants entered Benson with concrete occupational goals: Darlene, who wanted to become an auto mechanic; Katrina, who wanted to become a registered nurse; and Kay, who wanted to be a commercial artist. Darlene, unlike the other two, chose to go into the auto mechanics field because the CETA program did not sponsor horticulture, the program which was her first choice.

During their attendance at Benson, no drastic changes in occupational goals occurred for the informants. Instead, generally in the absence of advice or guidance from others, most found themselves clarifying their goals, or at least attempting to do so. Charlotte, for example, had originally enrolled in the administration of justice program because the catalog description sounded like what she wanted in terms of working with juvenile delinquents; after two days, she discovered that it was not what she had in mind and

switched to the general studies curriculum so that she could decide on what she wanted and could simultaneously prepare for transfer to another college. Roseann switched from a business administration major in the college transfer curriculum to an accounting major in the occupational curriculum because her original choice did not emphasize accounting and "had too many things like history in it." However, she was still unclear exactly what she would do with the degree.

Two of the informants entered Benson after unsuccessful stays at a state university. During Sally's attendance at the university, she had considered various options, including the field of psychology and the communications field. Once she decided to attend Benson, however, she returned to her earlier "health field" choice; during her enrollment there, she gradually clarified her occupational goals and moved from health field to radiology to nursing and toward the end of her enrollment had decided on obstetrics. Sandra, who had attended the same state university with some sense that she wanted to become an elementary education teacher, enrolled at Benson still committed to that goal. However, while at Benson, she changed her mind and decided that her short-range goal was to become a secretary, but insisted that "I don't want to be a secretary for the rest of my life." Although she

officially changed her curriculum option only once, in her mind she fluctuated between the two options constantly. Her indecision was influenced by her need to become independent and to make money, her disappointment that Benson's education program prepared students to work only in nursery schools, her doubts about being able to last four years in preparing herself for teaching, the encouragement of the head of the secretarial science department, and her personal and her family's desire for her to be a teacher.

Although all of the informants were enrolled in specific programs of study at Benson, only two more (in addition to the three who had already made decisions) seemed to have made firm occupational commitments to "something special" during this clarification process: Margaret, secretarial work; and Sally, obstetric nursing. Katrina, Kay, and Darlene, all of whom had entered Benson with specific goals, maintained these goals and their belief that they would eventually achieve their goals. These three, however, apparently did little during their enrollment to further clarify their occupational intentions; Katrina, in particular, reported that she "never really thought about what exactly I wanted to do in nursing - just to be a nurse." For most of the informants, occupational goals remained unclear and perhaps became even more confused. Dottie, for example, observed, "I moved from not knowing

what I wanted to thinking I'd made up my mind to finding out I really wasn't sure after all."

After withdrawal from Benson. Approximately six months after withdrawing from Benson, the informants continued to manifest much of the same indecision, confusion, and lack of clarity about their current and future occupational goals and expectations. For four of the informants, their desires and expectations for occupations in the next five years reflected either the programs they had been enrolled in when they withdrew from school or the full-time jobs they currently held. Darlene, for instance, was unemployed but expected to be working as an auto mechanic in the next few years. In contrast, Brenda, who had had unclear goals in college, was working in a bank and planned to continue in banking as a career.

However, most of the eleven informants either remained vague about their occupational futures and were still looking for "something special" for themselves or had begun to fluctuate between their original choices and new options created by their current jobs or other circumstances. Charlotte is an example of those who were still searching; though she had some sense that she wanted a job which would allow her to travel, she was also somewhat interested in running her own business. She had made no specific decisions. Carla still reported the general goals of

"making more than $20,000 a year and having a couple of months off each year." Roseann, on the other hand, knew she wanted a degree in accounting but could not decide whether to continue in banking and aim for a branch manager position or to leave banking altogether and become a certified public accountant.

In fact, the informants were generally uncomfortable in specifying their own "expectations." Dottie, for example, indicated that she had not yet decided what her goals were: "I want to make a career of something, but I don't know what. I'm sort of debating and deliberating and just trying to put my feelers out and really start thinking about it because I want to move on." Later, she commented that she expected to "have a job that I feel is equal to my abilities . . . doing the will of God and leaving the future to Him." Sally remarked that she had "no expectation--just a hope."

Asked to indicate their strongest wishes and their expectations about jobs twenty years in the future, the women responded with idealistic answers such as being "tops in my field" but expressed skepticism about their ability, motivation, or desire to be working at a certain occupation by that time. Katrina, for example, expressed doubts that she would be working as a nurse in twenty years because she felt she could not be "dedicated to both family and nursing at the same time." Brenda wanted to become a branch manager

some day but doubted her motivation to work toward that goal; she also questioned whether she really wanted that position "because it's hard to keep people happy all the time with all the personalities." Furthermore, they had difficulty identifying the ways they would prepare themselves for these future occupational roles and tended to list generalized methods, such as finishing their education, taking the "right kinds of classes," or proving themselves through hard work.

The three informants who had entered Benson with clear goals still maintained these goals. However, Kay described as "more or less a dream," her desire to become a commercial artist by "getting ahead in the bank and making enough money that I can save and go back to school without having to work . . . but I don't think that will happen."

<u>One year after withdrawal</u>. Slightly over a year after they withdrew from Benson, the informants had begun to make new decisions about their occupational futures. Several, all from the undisciplined prototypes, had decided to continue with their education at other institutions or at Benson and had chosen fields that they wanted to concentrate in: Carla was attending a proprietary business college and was majoring in computer programming, and Charlotte was hoping to attend a small state liberal arts college in another state to enroll in a travel and management program

within the business curriculum. Roseann and Brenda, employees at different banks, were taking and planning to take additional courses related to banking through the American Institute of Banking at Benson. None of these four, however, had clear or definite pictures of the specific occupations they were preparing for. Roseann also raised the possibility that she might get married soon, leave banking altogether, and buy a farm with her prospective husband.

Three of the CPC's were working but looking for new jobs; all were in some way disgruntled with the working conditions of their current jobs or discouraged with the lack of opportunities available where they worked. Kim, for example, was looking for jobs outside the bank where she worked and was considering a secretarial position with a finance company. Nevertheless, she still wanted to become a commercial artist. Margaret, employed as a word-processing operator in a law firm, and Dottie, employed as a part-time customer services clerk in a department store, had also been looking for other jobs; both had turned down offers because the jobs were not high-paying enough and they did not "feel right" about the positions. As with those who had returned to college, these three also lacked clear pictures of jobs or careers they wanted.

Four of the informants had made drastic occupational

decisions. Despite her earlier commitment to becoming an auto mechanic and to planning an occupational future she considered nontraditional, Darlene was not working and was not planning to: "Women," she said, "have the option to work or to stay at home, and I'm staying home." Katrina was back in school at Benson and making plans to transfer to a small state university. Doubting her ability to "handle that kind of thing," she had changed her original occupational goals of becoming a nurse to majoring in sociology, but she was unclear about what she would do with the degree. She had also changed her mind about not working the rest of her life and explained her change of mind: "I feel if I work for it, I should be able to have it and I do want to work for it." Thus, although Darlene and Katrina had entered Benson with firm goals, they too had altered their original plans in the year following their winter 1983 withdrawal.

Finally, the two students who had originally entered universities with professional goals and had later transferred to Benson had made somewhat surprising choices. Sally had changed her goals of becoming a nurse, had enlisted in the Army, and was training in satellite communications equipment repair. Sandra had taken a secretarial position in a law office and given up all plans of becoming a teacher.

Narrowing of Occupational Options

At approximately the same time that the informants were experiencing confusion about their occupational aspirations, they were also limiting opportunities for future occupations or jobs with varying degrees of awareness about what they were doing. On a very conscious level, they were eliminating certain lower-status jobs generally assigned to women: waitress or restaurant work, clerk and cashier work in department or grocery stores, and in two cases, secretarial work. Their rejection of these jobs was related in large part to their part-time job experiences. On a less conscious level, they were eliminating those jobs which they wanted but which required more education or commitment than they were willing to give. Finally, the informants seemed to restrict unconsciously their career opportunities by viewing marriage and motherhood as conflicting with their occupational goals or the jobs themselves. The consequence of their rejection of jobs on these different levels was a narrow range of occupations available to them, jobs which lacked some of the "demeaning" aspects of lower-status jobs but at the same time provided them with some sense of status or prestige and an income. The patterns related to the theme of narrowing of occupational options are discussed below.

Part-time job experiences. The part-time jobs the

informants held before they attended college, during their college attendance, and after their withdrawal were those jobs typically available to female teenagers: babysitting, salesclerk positions, "waitressing," modeling, candy striper work, and clerical positions. Only Darlene differed significantly in this pattern, with all of her jobs falling into manual labor positions: carpentry, electrical repair, auto repair, and greenhouse work. In recounting their part-time job experiences, each woman, except for Darlene, stressed what they considered the "demeaning" or undesirable aspects of these jobs: hard physical labor, "menial tasks," irresponsible or gossipy workers, monotony of the work, low pay and benefits, low prestige, dealing with irate customers, "feeling like a servant," and feeling that a person is not very bright if she likes that kind of work. Sandra summarized many of these factors in her discussion:

> I had a job . . . as a sales clerk . . . It was really just a lot of hard work. . . . The women I worked with . . . didn't want to work; they wanted me to do all the work, and so finally I complained about it and my boss talked to them but whereas before they were unpleasant, they were real unpleasant after I complained. They had to be civil to me, but that was it. . . . A lot of them had been there several years, but I found out that kind of work is very, very degrading, very demeaning. You're not even on the status with the customer . . . . They're constantly holding up the fact that you're supposed to meet a quota, and they're really not interested in you as a person . . . and the customer is always right . . . I think that the mentality of most of the people who work there, they weren't real bright, and . . . that was

> the best they could do. . . .I'm not sorry I did it, at least I know that that's something I wouldn't ever want to do again, and I know that I couldn't do it . . . I don't mind dealing with the public; it was just feeling like a servant, just not my idea of a good time.

Like Sandra, each of the informants consciously rejected these jobs and stressed they were "something I wouldn't ever want to do again" and "something I did for money." Thus, in their youth the informants did not seriously consider jobs on the upper end of the occupational spectrum and later eliminated certain jobs on the lower end because they were "demeaning," believing that education would help them achieve "something better" or "something special" in the middle range of the hierarchy.

Full-time work experiences. In addition to their lack of serious consideration in youth about jobs on the upper end of the spectrum, the informants' full-time work experiences during college attendance and after their withdrawal also seemed to be a factor in limiting their occupational options and in eliminating those opportunities which required more experience, more assertiveness, or more schooling than they had or wished to pursue. In general, these were jobs they aspired to once they began full-time work, particularly with those employed full-time in banks, but they were jobs perceived as difficult to achieve unless they earned college degrees and were males, more assertive in making their goals known, or willing to sacrifice their

values. However, each of the women working in banks found it difficult or undesirable to return to school on either a part-time or full-time basis to pursue education related to their current jobs.

Kay, for example, indicated that if she remained in banking, she hoped eventually to gain a supervisory position in some department, preferably in the marketing department because of its connection with her artistic skills. However, she discussed her unwillingness to sacrifice her values to gain this or any other position:

> This is going to sound awful. A lot of people succeed [at the bank] because they have a brown nose. If you don't have a brown nose, then you have to have tons of determination and initiative. You just have to prove you can handle whatever anybody gives you . . . . I just have to get people to see that I really am a hard worker, that I do whatever I have to in the way of work to get what I want . . . . In the past year [though] . . . I haven't seen any promotions because of hard work. But you had better be able to; that's the only way I am going to get anywhere. I am not going to do anything other than hard work . . .

Like the rest of the work-experienced group, Kay talked of performing on-the-job tasks which would make them "look good" on their evaluations; "looking good" might win them promotions. Kay also indicated that if she ever went back to college, it would be on a full-time basis to pursue her commercial art degree rather than to take courses related to banking.

Brenda, another bank employee, agreed that a degree,

additional course work, and/or more experience would "help me move up" in the bank where she worked but found it difficult to find the time and energy for it:

> I don't know how motivated I am. I would like to think I could be a branch manager, to work towards it, but when I think about the classes you have to take and the hours you have to put in . . .

She also possibly limited her opportunities to "move up" to branch manager and to her twenty-year goal of becoming a bank vice-president by thinking small: in discussing various job postings and additional courses she needed, she focused on clerical skills:

> If I had a degree or was experienced in [the area being advertised], they would look at me more . . . Some of the job postings that have come out recently require shorthand . . . I see so many of them that come out that require shorthand or a certain amount of speed as far as typing goes, and they are good jobs.

In their refusal to take additional course work or to pursue a degree related to their jobs, they found themselves between a rock and a hard place: the desire, on one hand, to "move up"; and, on the other hand, relatively low-status jobs they continued to work at.

Concerns about marriage and family. Most of the informants in this study rarely discussed their future roles as wives and mothers. However, various comments made during the four interviews demonstrated that concern for these roles created still another, more unconscious barrier to

their career aspirations. All eleven informants observed that they could not imagine themselves staying home to be housewives exclusively without a job they could call their own. Even Darlene, who made the decision to "stay home" a year after her withdrawal from Benson, still talked about working with cars on a part-time basis. In fact, all the informants used the word career to describe their occupational goals; if pressed to define the difference between job and career, the informants repeatedly defined career in terms of the life-time characteristics of a job that they enjoyed doing.

Despite their emphasis on working at a career over a life-time, however, most of the informants suggested that careers would stop or would be less of a priority if they were married or had a family. Brenda, for example, emphasized her need to work outside the home:

> I couldn't stay home and not work. I think I would go bananas because I did that once; I quit my job . . . before I went to college . . . . I couldn't stand it; there was nothing to do. You can only stay home for so long.

Although she had aspirations of becoming a branch manager and even a bank vice-president and discussed the number of years required to achieve either position, she also conceded that not working might be a possibility if she were to have a child: "If I had a family, had a little kid, baby or something, it would probably be different."

Margaret, who wanted in twenty years to be "tops in my field," also reflected on her concern about marriage and family:

> [Twenty years from now] is when I'm going to have my independence and work two days and stay home three [she chuckles] . . . . I'd like to have a family. I want to stay home with my family while they're young. I do still want to work a little bit while they go to school, I mean if financially we can afford it, but when they go to school, I'd like to maybe work and then be home when they're home.

Margaret was also unwilling after her withdrawal and her full-time job as word processing operator to return to college to complete the few courses she needed for a degree because school would conflict with her married life.

Of the eleven informants, Katrina was perhaps most outspoken in discussing the relationship of family to career. Questioning at one point whether she would be working in twenty years at a "real job," she discussed her belief in three interviews that women cannot or do not devote the time to their careers that men do:

> I wouldn't be working. I'd have a family, and I would be doing volunteer work or something, something that wouldn't require so much of my time, something that I could give a little something [to].
>
> As for nursing, I feel like that fits into things because if you want to get married or if you want to have kids, you can always just stop and then it's something that you can always sort of fall back on or go back to.
>
> It seems like [women] care about different things than men do . . . If they are married, I

> guess they would care about their family before they would their jobs, and even if they aren't married, I think you put things on higher priorities than you do your job. Men are more oriented, I think, . . . toward careers.

Women's Roles at Work as Limited

The pattern of concerns about marriage/family and occupational goals discussed above is related to the theme of limited opportunities for women at work. In their discussions of opportunities available to women in the workplace, the informants revealed degrees of understanding about these opportunities in the context of their work experience. Despite the differences in their work experience and their view of opportunities available, however, all the informants received the same messages about women and work from their parents and others. This theme of limited opportunities is presented and illustrated in the following pages.

Opportunities available to women. Two patterns in terms of understanding opportunities available to women in the workplace existed across the prototypes and socioeconomic groups in this study. The less work-experienced and the higher social class informants expressed a more optimistic view of women at work. The informants in this group all suggested that women face salary discrimination but felt that job opportunities for women and attitudes about women at work are "changing."

For most of the women in this group, "moving up" in terms of their occupational goals seemed to be narrowly defined. Margaret, for example, who was already employed as a word processing operator in a law firm, had a goal of becoming the "head" of a small word processing department. Viewed from the perspective of goals closely related to current positions and only a few notches above present jobs, then, job opportunities were not seen as limited. In addition, as Margaret also pointed out, opportunities are not that limited for women in secretarial positions because it is a "woman's job" and thus lacks competition with men. The students with this more optimistic view included Margaret, Dottie, Charlotte, Katrina, Sandra, and Carla. At the same time, however, at least one informant in this group was partially aware of attitudes about women some women face: Margaret painfully described her experience of being called a "space cadet" at her first major part-time job in a law office and noted the cruelty of the "girls" she worked with, as well as some of the attorneys, in making fun of what she regarded in herself as naivete and a cheerful outlook on life.

In contrast, another group of more job-experienced informants expressed a more conscious awareness of problems women face at work. The women in this group included Roseann, Kay, Brenda, Darlene, and Sally. These women

conveyed a sense of vulnerability they experienced as females at work, particularly during their teenage years and during college. Several commented about domineering or sexually aggressive bosses or employees. Kay, for example, noted two different occasions when her bosses made sexual advances; she chose to quit one job because her refusal to become sexually involved with her supervisor had prevented her from gaining a minor promotion. Sally, with a great deal of experience as a waitress, discussed dealing with the "crude" and "sexual comments" from male employees that women in restaurant work generally experience:

> Often women [working in restaurants] have to go to the management or higher authority to get what they want, even if it's politeness and courtesy, but if you do, men resent you and make it even harder. A woman is better off trying to deal with things on her own.

The majority of the informants in this group, however, seemed to feel just as vulnerable to females as they did to males. In fact, all of the work-experienced informants discussed female supervisors who "took their authority too far," "rode me constantly," or were overly critical and demanding of their employees. Brenda, for example, discussed reporting for work as a salesclerk despite the fact that she was suffering with her menstrual cycle. She felt that she could handle the "floorwork" she knew she was assigned to that day. Her female supervisor, however,

changed Brenda's assignment to the stockroom doing heavy lifting, even though she protested that she was sick. Later, the supervisor reprimanded her for not doing good work in the stockroom, failing to acknowledge that she was sick and that she had been doing good work before.

Roseann, Kay, and Darlene all discussed female supervisors who seemed to want "to be head honcho over everything" and to resent the knowledge or skills of their employees. Kay, for example, described the manager of an interior decorating shop where she had worked part-tiem: "She didn't like me because the woman that owned the shop was always calling on me to help her with [color and arrangement] rather than the manager . . . . I made more sales than anybody there." In similar conflicts, Darlene and Roseann reported that the female supervisors loaded them down with unreasonable amounts of work, found fault with what they did, and did not allow them to perform tasks they knew how to do. For Roseann, the situation ended in what she considered an unfair review of her performance, and for Darlene, the situation ended in a confrontation and her decision to leave a nurse's aid job.

Once they began full-time work, the work-experienced informants seemed to experience more awareness of the limited opportunities for women. The three informants working in banks, for example, cited specific examples of

discrimination against women at work. All three pointed out that women do not progress as much through the ranks; Kay claimed that

> some [men] have a two-year degree in textiles . . . just a ridiculous degree . . . Just about everything in the bank you can be trained to do . . . they could bring a woman off the city market and train her to do the same thing we train men to do . . . Some of the men do have [relevant] degrees, but then the same number or more women have the degrees too but they don't get the jobs that the men do.

She continued to point out that women are not considered smart enough to handle the things that men are, that there is a kind of unspoken dress code requiring women to spend more money on clothes than they can afford, and that men working in banks patronize women. Roseann and Brenda generally agreed with this assessment, and Roseann charged that "being a working woman is hard. You are under a lot of pressure because men won't accept women and because you're expected to be perfect and mistakes are rubbed in more." Roseann also commented on what she considered two additional forms of discrimination against women where she worked. First, she felt that women frequently lose out to black candidates for jobs and promotions. Secondly, she felt that women are prevented from moving up through the ranks in banking because they are good in what they do, in contrast to men who are rewarded with promotions for their performance:

> I think another problem could be you want to do better, you want to grow in your job and you're being held back because there's no position or . . . since you know what you're doing and they like the job you're doing, they keep you in your position. That's what happened to me . .. I want to learn as much as I can and they try to hold you back. They've held me in the same job for two and a half years now and I want a change . . .

Darlene, however, with the most nontraditional work experience and work goals of the informants, was the most outspoken about problems working women face; she was also the only informant besides Carla to report negative looking-for-jobs experiences. She frequently spoke from an economic perspective:

> Women traditionally have not gotten paid for manual skills repair jobs. They did it at home and on farms but when they went to school to excel in those careers, men decided they didn't like it. My generation of women are more self-reliant and realize exactly what we can do; we don't have to have a man around to do things for us . . . . I want to go back to work but everywhere I apply they don't want women. There is a lot of prejudice against women working and getting paid for working. Most people believe women work for luxuries and men work for necessities, but I believe most women are working for necessities.

Darlene also discussed her frustration and anger in working as the only female tire changer in the auto repair department of a major department store. Her supervisor forced her to throw tires over an eight-foot wall, refusing to open the gates for her to roll them in, a standard procedure followed for men of similar size. The black males

she worked with were sympathetic and would help her behind the boss' back, but the white males refused to help her. She also reported being reprimanded for taking her smoke breaks with the black males. In addition, although she was promised schedule accommodations to attend college, she never got them while the male students working in the same department did. Like the rest of the work-experienced group, Darlene also believed that women have to be more capable than men to be accepted at work, to gain jobs, and/or to achieve promotions:

> [To succeed in the automobile business, a woman] has to have the knowledge to back her up, something in black and white, a degree. I really believe that any male that can pick up a wrench and knows how to use it can become a mechanic in this world, but a female really has to show her stuff and prove she can do it.

All in the work-experienced group agreed that although the basic abilities and characteristics <u>needed</u> by both men and women are the same for the same jobs, women have to know more, have more education, and "go overboard to prove myself" on the job.

The work-experienced women also discussed various concerns about appropriate behavior for women on the job. Two of these concerns have been discussed in previous sections: Sally was not always sure how to handle the comments of male employees, and Kay resented the "brown-nosing" behavior that seemed to be rewarded where she

worked. Darlene, who commented at length about the "grody" behavior of men at work--consisting of cursing and sexual put-downs of wives and girlfriends and each other, also expressed her confusion about what role to take:

> [Men are] different from women. I know some women that think that way and act that way, but I don't. I was taught to be a lady and maybe that's the way I react--as a lady would react.
>
> I am schizophrenic [laughs] . . . . I tend to be a very mothering type of person to other people . . . and yet . . . I can be very domineering and very masculine . . . . I can be just as feminine as feminine can be and take care of the typical female things and do a good job at it, and yet I can also get under the hood of a car and rebuild an engine. That's very scary for most men . . . . [A woman] definitely has to be masculine on the job [in auto shops] . . . because she is going to be working basically with males. In order to be accepted by a man, you have to be strong and masculine-appearing.

Brenda discussed two other questions of behavior on the job. She noted, first of all, a male who had worked at the same time as she did as a teller; he had similar education and experience but made more money than she did and was promoted quickly. She was unsure of what she would do if she again discovered a similar case of discrimination where she was involved. In this particular case, she had done nothing. But as she discussed this example and other examples of males being promoted much more quickly than women with many years of experience, she commented that she had just discovered, in her talking about it, what males do

that females generally do not do: they make their goals known. In a later interview, she reported with obvious pleasure that she had discussed her goals with her immediate supervisor (a female), who had expressed some surprise that she wanted to advance to management positions, apologized for the lack of attention, and agreed that Brenda was capable. Although Brenda did not philosophize about her point, she seemed to be saying that women have to learn how to present themselves if they want job advancement:

> I wish I had made it known earlier in what I'm doing now as well as what I would have liked to have, like . . . when I was in retail, if I could have moved to assistant manager, maybe I'd still be in retail and be an assistant manager, but I never expressed that . . . . I never did that. I'm to the point now where I do because I don't think you're going to get ahead . . . people will leave you where you're at if they think you're happy or that you don't want to go any further, so I think sometimes you have to speak up and say what you want.

Messages from parents. One factor contributing to the view of limited opportunities for women in the world of work and confusion about the roles they should take was the messages the informants received from their parents. On one hand, all the informants noted seeing their fathers working "long and hard," enjoying their work, and/or even being "married" to their jobs. This perception was particularly intense for those who were close to their fathers: Katrina, Sandra, Margaret, Sally, Charlotte, and Darlene. At the same time, only about half of the informants witnessed their

mothers at work outside the home as they were growing up; in most of these cases, their mothers worked as waitresses, cafeteria workers, factory workers, or secretaries. A couple of the informants had mothers who went to work as part-time salesclerks after the informants were grown. In contrast to seeing their fathers tired from working hard at jobs they enjoyed, the informants reported that their mothers did not particularly enjoy their work and either "liked" or would have preferred being at home. Those with working mothers generally saw their mothers having to work out of economic necessity or deciding to work part-time in their mid-adult years as a way of having something to do and being around other people.

For the most part, the informants cited no positive female role models who worked. The few who did were from the higher socioeconomic group. Sally, whose mother was the only one to work professionally, was the only informant to describe her mother as committed to work that she enjoyed. Sandra talked at length about her admiration and love for her grandmother and great-aunt, both of whom had been active professionally, particularly her great-aunt. Charlotte reported that her three half-sisters were college graduates, with two of them back in graduate school, but also mentioned that they were not working in the fields they had been trained in. However, she gave no indication that she wished

to model herself after them.

Sandra, whose father is an educator and whose mother recently went to work as a part-time salesclerk, discussed the different messages she received from her parents in the following interview excerpts:

> My mother didn't have to work ever when she was growing up. She was from a wealthy family. She wasn't expected to do anything but what she wanted to do, and she was real pampered and [she went to work for the first time when] she was 45 . . . as a salesclerk because all the kids had grown up, and she wanted something to do. She had all this time on her hands and no more little children, so she went to work, but I know she has always viewed work in a different light from my father. She likes being independent as in having her own checking account and not having to rely on him any more for her money, and she made friends at work. She likes it, but I don't think she sees it as necessary.
>
> [My father has] always been real big on work, and everyone should work, and you can't be a whole person without having a job . . . He likes what he does, and so he feels good about it, and he's oftentimes said to me that . . . it's not important how much money you make; it's how happy you are with what you're doing. And he sees that as the way it is, that you shouldn't do anything unless you're happy with it, and so he's never been real materialistic; he's never been concerned about making a whole lot of money.

Although Sandra was more articulate and perhaps more consciously aware than most of the informants about the differences in the way their mothers and fathers approached work, all of the informants indicated that their experience was that men should work and enjoy it; women need not.

Vague Vocational Advice and Desire for Independence

All eleven informants consistently reported receiving little occupational advice from important others in their lives. A multi-level dilemma, however, emerged in their discussions of the various people influencing them. On one hand, the informants seemed to expect occupational guidance from school and college personnel, particularly from counselors, and were resentful when they did not receive the expected help. At the same time, their counselors and teachers seemed to expect that their students initiate any discussions of their occupational interests or concerns. The informants interpreted this approach as an uncaring, uninterested one. According to the informants, friends and family also seemed to expect that the informants make up their own minds and sent repeated messages that happiness should be the chief criterion for their occupational decisions. Finally, although the informants voiced a need for someone to guide them, they also suggested throughout their discussions that they were independent thinkers and might well disregard any guidance or advice they received. The lack of specific vocational advice from significant others and the patterns associated with this theme are discussed in the following pages.

High school and college counselors. All the participants in this study reported receiving little

occupational advice from their counselors. In general, they described high school counselors as having stressed the importance of going to college, but several informants reported, as Sally did, that they "never talked with my counselor about jobs." In fact, the informants had difficulty in expressing their counselors' occupational expectations of them. When asked what work their counselors expected them to do some day, the informants responded consistently in one of two ways: (a) the academic or schooling expectations that counselors "thought" they would or should do; or (b) their feelings that counselors "wanted" them to follow up on whatever the informants were interested in at the time. Kay, for example, when she was asked about her counselor's occupational expectations of her, replied that her high school counselor "wanted" her to be an honor student by taking chemistry. Sally reported that her counselor "wanted" her to go into a health field as an occupation because Sally had expressed a strong interest in that area.

The informants gave several reasons for this lack of career advice from their high school counselors. Katrina, for example, reported that her high school counselors "didn't have time to spend with individuals." Charlotte, who characterized herself and many of her friends as "mind-changers," reported that "they would sort of leave it up to

you to come in and talk to them; they'd ask you what you wanted to do and just left it up to you; they wouldn't suggest anything at all." In fact, several of the informants expressed some resentment about the lack of guidance they seemed to expect from their high school counselors and described their counselors as uncaring and uninterested. Brenda, for example, discussed her counselor:

> It was like she didn't have time for you or didn't care, I guess. I went to her on several different occasions asking her where I could go to get financial aid, and this and that, and she never really steered me in the right direction . . . . I know financial aid was out there, and I feel like I probably could have gotten it, being my parents were divorced . . .

Sandra also expressed some resentment of her high school counselors: ". . . She had so many other students that I don't think she took any real personal interest in me, and I thought that they were pretty much a waste of time . . . . I really didn't know what their function was either . . ." Finally, several of the informants reported that they had little to do with counselors unless they had questions about courses to take or about colleges.

According to the informants, college counselors also offered little occupational advice. All eleven participants in the study repeatedly voiced disregard for their college counselors and questioned their role. Nine of them rarely sought advice or guidance of any kind from their counselors, and when they did, they found the counselors unavailable.

Roseann, for example, commented:

> The reason I didn't have any contact with the counselor is because when I needed them, they were so busy with other things that I couldn't talk to them. If I talked to them, they had five minutes or I would try to make an appointment. Well, I couldn't wait during and between classes that long before I was going to be late or miss a class. I think you do need to talk to somebody about what you want to do . . .

Several of the informants never talked to college counselors at all except, as Charlotte discussed, "to sign up for classes." Charlotte also suggested the source of tension between counselors and students: students expect help in making occupational decisions while counselors rely on students to make their own occupational decisions prior to enrollment:

> Most community colleges are designed to help people who don't know what they really want to do, and the counselors . . . will talk to you . . . . I think the counselors will help you if you sit down and tell them exactly [what you want]--like when I went in, I was just registering; we didn't talk.
>
> They expect you to have your mind made up about what you want to take when you go in, especially if you are [already] in a curriculum.

Dottie elaborated on this idea in two of her interviews by suggesting the dilemma undecided students experience:

> . . . I guess they assume that because you are able to get [into college], you know what you are doing and know what is going on and don't need any help . . .

> . . . as far as a person sitting down and working with me and saying, "Well, you know, Dottie, you're good in this area," . . . I don't feel like I was the kind of student you could sit down with and guide me because I didn't know what I wanted myself.

In contrast to the other nine informants who did not seek and did not receive occupational guidance from either their high school or college counselors, both UO's actively sought help from their college counselors but were unhappy with their experiences. Darlene considered the advice she got to be erroneous: "They didn't seem to have knowledge of the vocations or were more interested in the English or math I was taking, as opposed to my vocational goals." She went further to state that her counselor tried to enroll her in auto mechanics courses requiring courses that she had not yet taken. She also complained that her CETA counselors tried to talk her out of enrolling in auto mechanics "because I'm a female and would have a difficult time." Carla claimed that one counselor asked her, "Why don't you be a model?" - a comment she considered offensive - and charged that counselors "try to play God."

High school and college teachers. The informants also reported receiving little occupational advice from their high school teachers. According to the informants, most teachers stressed going to college and getting a good education; occasionally some would suggest particular schools relevant to students' interests. Charlotte

explained this lack of advice: " . . . it was a big school and most weren't really interested in what you wanted to do; they were interested in you being in class, taking tests, showing up, doing your work. Most never talked to any of the students . . ." Her explanation was a common refrain among the informants.

All the informants stressed "none" in terms of the occupational advice they received from their college instructors. Only three modified this assertion. Margaret, who was enrolled in the secretarial science program at Benson, reported that some of her instructors encouraged students to finish their classes and get a job related to what they were doing while they were still in college, presumably to gain experience. Both Sally and Sandra asked questions of some of their instructors to clarify what associate degrees in their chosen major would lead them to. Sandra was befriended by the head of the secretarial department, who encouraged her to become a secretary.

High school and college friends. According to the informants, friends both in high school and college also provided little career advice. Before high school graduation, the discussion among friends usually revolved around going to college, rather than career goals. As Charlotte reported, "We never really talked about future jobs." The informants reported that friends either had no

occupational expectations of each other, simply reinforced or supported whatever individuals expressed as interests or possibilities, or projected their own general goals on others. Margaret, for example, stated that her high school friends expected her to be married with a family "because I was that way." Kay's friends expected her to become a commercial artist and Sandra's friends expected her to become a teacher because that is what they told their friends they wanted to be. Roseann explained further: "They never said; there was no pressure about the job you had . . . . Friends don't expect certain jobs anymore." Katrina offered a parallel explanation: "Whatever you want, they agree and support."

Once in college, the informants did not discuss career goals with friends, except to state what they were studying in college. Occasionally, the informants had some doubts about their college friends achieving their occupational goals, but these matters were not discussed, a situation explained possibly by their resistance to expectations and their belief in free choice. As Dottie suggested, "I didn't plan their lives." Sally's description seemed to summarize the experiences of most of the informants in terms of friends' occupational expectations:

> They ask what you're doing and what you're going to do, and as long as you're doing that, that's what they expect you to do, and when you change, they change [their expectations].

Parents and family. The informants repeatedly emphasized that, prior to college, their parents and family "never pushed me" or "never pressured me" regarding future jobs. Several informants reported that "They never said, 'I want you to be this or that.'" Margaret, Roseann, and Dottie emphasized this point in reporting that their parents never said or "even joked" about their becoming a "doctor or lawyer or whatever." Instead, their parents seemed to rely on their daughters to choose careers or jobs they were interested in. Katrina remarked on a consistent refrain among the informants: her parents advised her to "show some inkling of what I want to do and they'll back me." Kay commented that her parents "wanted me to go to college and wanted what was best for me which was whatever I thought was best or wanted to do." Dottie agreed, "They left it up to me and would agree with what I chose."

Fathers tended to give more advice than mothers, although the advice was generally unfocused. For example, Charlotte's father "told me about what he did as a kid and how he changed his mind as he got older and that I would too and that's okay." Sandra's father "stressed that he wants me to finish school but also that it's important for me to be happy." Only Darlene's father, in spite of her interest in working with her hands, openly stressed the more traditional role of being a wife and mother "because I

didn't have the capacity for anything else."

The general advice and the lack of pressure continued once the informants enrolled in college. If parents gave any advice at all, they encouraged their daughters to stay in school, to do the best they could, and to take as many classes as they could. Only after the informants indicated an interest in some field or selected a college major did parents seem to "expect" that their daughters would work in a certain field or occupation. In fact, the informants seemed particularly resistant to others' occupational expectations of them, evidenced in large part by their consistent conversion of the word "expected" to "wanted" when they responded to interview questions related to others' expectations. For example, the informants reported that when parents did express interest or provide feedback about jobs, they indicated that they "wanted" their daughters to have a job that would make them happy and that they would support them in whatever they chose.

Almost all of the informants suggested in their responses that their parents did not actively discourage high aspirations but rather focused on happiness as the chief criterion for job selection. Like Dottie's family, informants' parents seemed to feel that it "wasn't so much what we did but that we were happy." Roseann commented that her family wanted . . . whatever I thought I'd be happiest

in. They never really pushed me to go into anything at all." Sally went so far as to comment that her parents and family wanted her to have a "job that would make me happy" but "never expected anything because they are intellectual enough to realize that expectations are people's downfall."

Informants as independent. One of the most consistent patterns throughout the four interviews with the informants was their focus on independence or their need for it. In addition to their resistance to using the word expected when discussing others' expectations of them, the importance of their freedom of choice or their independence was manifested in a number of other ways.

First of all, practically all of the informants described themselves at some point as an "independent person," "I've always been independent," or "I've always had a mind of my own." In addition, all gave examples of their independent behavior or decisions, whether or not they actually used the adjective "independent" to describe themselves. This independent behavior was particularly apparent in their discussions of decisions to go to college, the selection of the college they attended, and their ultimate decision to leave college. Almost all of the informants, for example, stressed that no one influenced them in their decision to go to college or in selection of college; instead, they reported that "I decided on college"

or "it was a decision I made solely on my own." In addition, almost all reported that they discussed their decisions to leave Benson with no one until after they had made the decision to leave or had actually left, noting that "it was my decision to make." Even those who did talk with their parents or boyfriends emphasized that they had made their own choices, despite the advice or desire of others for them to remain in school.

Their need for independence was also demonstrated, at least for some of the informants, in their refusal of financial help from parents or family members while they attended college. Roseann, Brenda, Dottie, and Kay were among those who discussed this decision. Others accepted their parents' help but felt guilty about it. In the following excerpt, Kay discusses how she handled the financial aspects of college:

> I was paying part of it and my parents were paying part of it. I never asked them to pay for all of it. They wanted to put me through college, and I didn't tell them how much the books cost and things like that. I would go ahead and pay for them and they might pay for one or two books because they were expensive. I didn't want them to know how much I had to pay for them . . . . I have always been real independent. There were four kids in the family and my parents aren't rich . . . I would like them to be able to do things with their money they want to do and not have to spend it all on me and school.

For some of the other informants, their need for

independence was revealed in their equating college attendance with leaving home and being on their own. Although several mentioned their frustration in living with their parents and their eagerness to finish school and find jobs so that they could be independent, those who had attended a state university and later returned to live with their parents to attend Benson were especially emphatic about their need to be on their own. Sandra, for example, observed:

> I'm tired of living here . . . I feel old for living here with my parents. I'm tired of having to answer to someone about what I'm doing. If I don't want to come home, I know I can't just not come home because that's not the way it works, and I know that while I'm living here, I have to abide by their rules because it's their house. And I'd like to have my own place, but right now financially it's not possible. But as soon as it is, I'm going to move out.

Finally, the informants emphasized that they saw working and jobs as ways to become independent, particularly when they discussed their part-time jobs during high school and college. Margaret, for example, reported that she went against her parents' wishes in taking a part-time job in college; her job, she said, gave her a sense of independence from them because she was able to buy things on her own. In at least one case, the need to be independent over-rode the informant's strong career goals: Kay reported that she went against her parents' wishes in high school to take an unpaid

apprenticeship with a commercial advertising firm, choosing instead to take a part-time job which paid her enough money to buy gas and other things that she wanted and did not want to ask her parents for. For those who had been unable to find part-time jobs, not working and having their own money seemed to be frustrating also. Carla, in particular, noted her drive to find a job that was equal to her abilities so that she could earn both skills and money, an investment, she felt, against her parents' eventual deaths.

Despite various comments made by the informants that perhaps things would have been different if there had been an "authority figure," "more structure," or parents who "pressured me," these examples of independence suggest that the informants may have ignored or resented any directive advice offered by significant others in their lives. What the informants seemed to be expressing, in fact, was the need for someone to believe in them or to express an interest in their goals. Sally commented on one of her college professors at the four-year university she attended before she enrolled at Benson:

> He wanted me to go into psychology. Maybe if he'd pushed a little harder, maybe I would have, but he didn't believe in doing that, not at all, so of course he wouldn't have done it. But if he had, maybe I would have [gone into psychology]. Because . . . for him to do that, for him to urge me, it would have meant that he believed in me . . . it takes somebody else saying 'I believe in you' for me to have the confidence to say, 'Well, maybe I can do it; if

they think I can do it, maybe I can.'

These examples also suggest the possibility that advice was given but that the informants' need to view themselves as independent agents colored their perceptions.

Receptiveness to open-ended questioning. Even though the above evidence suggests that the informants might not have followed, and perhaps would have resented, directive guidance regarding their futures, they did indicate their receptiveness to non-directive counseling. This was readily apparent at the end of the interview cycles when the informants were asked to discuss the effects of the study on them. Every informant observed that the study had "made me think" about her experiences, goals, and/or selves. Darlene, for example, stated that the study had "made me think more about myself and brought me out of my shell," and Dottie observed the following:

> It has made me start to think, 'Do I really want to go back to school; do I really want to stay home?' . . . It helped me to realize I still have some hurdles to get over and I still want to learn and still want to reach my peak; I still want to be able to overcome . . . the problems I've had in the past with learning and attending, and I still feel like there is something missing. I need some more satisfaction.

Several commented on the interview questions themselves. Brenda, for example, described her reactions to the study:

> It has made me think. You've asked some

> questions that I have never really thought about, and I'm surprised at some of the answers. I've realized that when I left Benson, I never thought 'Why? Why didn't you change your major and go into something else?'

Charlotte also felt the study was helpful in terms of being able to talk to someone about things she had never discussed:

> It's made me think a lot more about my goals and what I want to do and more about taking college seriously because just sitting here listening to myself talk about stuff I never talked to anybody else about . . . made me realize that I'm going to have to go through college and I can't just be lazy about it and give up. It just made me realize a lot of stuff that I'd never really thought about myself . . . never talked to anybody about.

Only two of the informants reported any discomfort with the open-ended questions; their discomfort seemed to be centered in what they were discovering about themselves. Margaret commented that she "felt bad about myself" as she came to the realization that she had not tried as hard as she could have to make "straight A's" and to remain in school. Katrina explained why the questions made her nervous in the following dialogue:

> K: I'm afraid that I'm going to say something that is going to reveal too much sometimes.
>
> NV: Reveal too much to me?
>
> K: About to me. Some things I would rather not think about, but I have to sometimes.

Despite the discomfort these two felt, however, they both

also reported that they were glad they had participated because the interviews had "made me think a lot more about school and everything."

Educational Aspirations, Experiences, and Beliefs

The themes related to educational aspirations, experiences, and beliefs were generally consistent across all prototypes and social classes represented in this study. However, some individual and prototypical differences in patterns within these themes existed; where applicable, they are noted in the following discussion.

Ambivalence toward Relationship between Education and Work

The informants relied on repeated messages from those around them that work is necessary and that education prepares people for jobs or careers. However, they also observed and believed that this assumption did not always hold true. Their simultaneously held beliefs about the relationship of education and work are not just evidence of their own confusion regarding "something special" for themselves. These conflicting views also may have further contributed to their confusion and indecision. The patterns related to the theme of ambivalence about the relationship of education and work are discussed in the following pages.

Messages about education and work. From their parents, the informants learned that work is "vital," and

"necessary," and that "you have to work to survive." From them they also learned that "what education's really for is to get out into the working world." They were told that if they wanted to have a good job, they would have to stay in school and that "the more education you have, the better." Katrina, for example, described her parents' beliefs: "You need education to work; if you don't have an education, you're just going to have to settle for something less than what you want." Carla indicated that her parents stressed that "if you get the education, you eventually get the job." Only Sally and Sandra's parents stressed a more open attitude toward the relationship between education and work. Sally described her parents as being "different from those people who can point to college graduates who have poor jobs; they feel the proper thing to do is get a professional education." Sandra indicated that although her parents had "the realistic attitude that you have to get the education in order to get the job, that you have to be skilled and have learned something that will enable you to be a productive working person," her father particularly stressed the importance of "getting a good education." Most of the parents seemed to encourage going to college, but Roseann and Darlene indicated that their parents felt they should have "at least a high school education" in order to get a good job.

From their friends, the informants received a similar perspective. As Margaret described it, "They knew that to get a good job, they'd have to go to school" and Kay reported that her friends believed that ". . . you're being educated so you can work, so that you can get the type of job that you want." Roseann's friends thought "high school education is fine but there's no need to do more than that . . . although some of them are beginning to realize what I am now, a little too late, that if you want a particular job, you have to go to school to get it . . ." Charlotte pointed out that her current friends "think that they need to take classes related to their work; they don't think it is wasting time to take different classes, but they do think it is important to take stuff their job is related to."

Despite this emphasis on education as the avenue to a job, however, the informants simultaneously observed that schooling did not always lead to a good job or to job advancement. As discussed in a previous section, many of them observed that women did not advance as quickly as men at work, even though they had similar, or even more, education and/or experience. In addition, several cited examples of friends who had graduated with bachelor's degrees and were unable to locate high-status jobs. They also cited examples of the reverse, friends who had not gone to college but had achieved "good jobs" through diligence

and hard work. Brenda, for example, spoke of a friend whose career goal had been "to work with the government" in some capacity but had ended up working in a discount store as a salesclerk, despite her bachelor's degree. Another of Brenda's friends had not graduated from high school but had "worked her way up . . . [from] the bottom of the totem pole" in a retail store and had eventually become a sales manager making "pretty good money."

Ambivalence. As a result of their own job experiences and various messages and observations, the informants held conflicting views about the relationship between education and work. On one hand, they believed that education would help them to locate appropriate jobs or careers for themselves and to prepare for these occupations. They also believed that some degree of status and/or mobility at work is related to educational preparation; they seemed to feel, as Katrina described it, that

> if I couldn't go to school, then I just wouldn't want to work at all. There's really very little that you can do if you don't go to school and you [wouldn't] get paid very much and you don't really get to use any of your imagination or such; you [would] sort of have to do what's expected.

Although they clearly associated schooling with job preparation and mobility, at the same time they questioned this association by pointing to people who had good educations but poor jobs or by lamenting too much employer

emphasis on college degrees. Margaret, for example, stated that "education is not as important to some jobs as others. There are some things you can learn without going to college, but everyone should go as much as they can." Sally stressed that most jobs require bachelor's degrees and criticized the emphasis placed on degrees in the following excerpt:

> I don't know how many jobs I see in the paper, and, you know, it looks like you could do the job and all. Then it says, 'bachelor's degree required,' even if it doesn't even apply to the damn field. I mean . . . they don't care; they just want a bachelor's degree. You could have a bachelor's degree in English and be working as a sales rep for a chemical company. Great money, but you gotta have that degree, even if it doesn't apply to it.

Some of the informants were more open in their questioning of the relationship of school to work, particularly those from the lower social class groups. Darlene, for example, noting that she was either over-qualified or under-qualified for jobs she was interested in, described her feelings:

> I don't think getting a job has anything to do with education whatsoever--it's who you know. It doesn't matter how much education you've got because we've got some real dummies out here in the work force that don't have a brain and don't think about people. All they think about is . . . numbers on paper and they're not real good at that either.

Dottie, a very religious young woman, questioned the relationship between education and work from still another

perspective:

> You can do anything through God; if you don't have an education, it really doesn't matter because what He wants you to be, He's going to give you everything that you need to be that with . . . . Getting education is fine, a person should get all he can, but in the final analysis, I don't see that as related to what kind of job you get because it's God's will that you be something and you don't have to have the education to be that thing.

All the informants, however, saw a college degree as almost exclusively related to work. Darlene's pragmatic view of college attendance is representative of the views expressed by the other informants:

> College attendance shows an employer you really want to be in that particular field; you are interested in it and it's worth your time. It shows more with a piece of paper than with just tinkering on a car in your back yard. There is also more money involved. You're more employable.

At the same time, the informants sometimes expressed resistance to the value of a college degree, stressing instead the value of experience - regardless of their observation of lack of rewards for either degree or experience for women at work. Dottie described her resistance to a degree in the following excerpt:

> If you want a college degree and it would make you feel better as a person, go for it even though all you want to do is stand on the corner and shine shoes. But you don't have to have a college degree to succeed. It's great to be a learned person, but a degree is not completely necessary unless a job requires it. You can have a degree and still not know

> anything--it depends on the individual, what your goals are, what you feel inside. You can do anything you want to do even without a degree. If you want a certain job and there is no way out of it, a degree or college attendance would help. College can help a person feel better or worse about themselves, either learn more or become more confused about what they thought they knew.

These conflicting views of the relationship between education and work, in fact, seemed to correspond with the informants' continuing confusion about their occupational goals. Few seemed to have thought much about the relationship between schooling and a specific occupation, other than that education is necessary for achieving a particular job once it is decided upon. Katrina seemed to express the views of many of the informants when she stated that she thought "things are just going to sort of fall into place."

Acceptance of the Academic Paradigm

Throughout their discussions of school, the informants demonstrated a general acceptance of the academic paradigm, revealed in their attitudes about teachers, the school curriculum, the grading system, and even other students. In their acceptance of the school structure, however, they complained when their expectations were not met in particular incidents or in general. They also indicated, particularly in their discussion of school subjects, that "liking" certain aspects of school content created problems

for them if they could see no relationship between what they "liked" and what they hoped to establish for themselves: an occupation or occupational goal. The patterns related to the acceptance of the school structure are discussed below.

Attitudes toward teachers. Although the informants varied in their involvement with the academic aspects of school during their public school and college years, they demonstrated agreement in their attitudes toward teachers. Throughout their discussions of public schooling, the informants generally reported that their relationships with their teachers and instructors were "good" or "okay" and "a student-teacher kind of thing." Nevertheless, they consistently had trouble recalling many of their teachers unless (a) the teacher had granted some favor, shown some personal interest in them as students or individuals, or displayed the human side of their lives or (b) the teachers had not lived up to their expectations of being caring, prepared, interested, and interesting instructors.

Several students, for example, noted that a teacher had invited them to spend the night with them and a few other students during elementary school; they interpreted this invitation as being accepted or liked by the teacher. Roseann reported being pleased when an elementary school teacher gave her a special nickname. Kay recalled being a "teacher's pet" throughout her early school years and being

asked "to do all the bulletin boards" because of her artistic talents. Others praised teachers for using humor or personal experiences as teaching tools. Some of the informants reported occasional close relationships with teachers that lasted for the school year; often these teachers were described as "real sweethearts" and "people who cared." In the following excerpt, Brenda discusses why she admired her high school journalism teacher:

> . . . she was always there. I knew she cared. I could go to her with a personal problem or a school problem or anything else . . . I respected her. I knew she had her head on her shoulders . . . and she tried to point us in the right direction . . . and, oh, she was strict. As a matter of fact, she caught me skipping one day and turned me in [laughs].

Although most of the informants reported occasional conflicts with a teacher, only two focused on disagreements with teachers in their public school years: Carla cited several examples of teachers "not understanding" her or not giving her the extra help she wanted, and Darlene cited several serious conflicts with some of her teachers. In the following excerpt, she describes one of those incidents:

> When I was about nine years old, I developed very quickly: I went from a flat chest to a 38-C in about four months. That was devastating . . . . The teacher I had thought I was wearing a bra . . . and she assumed that my bra was stuffed and one day she took me in the clock room and wanted me to take off my bra, and I didn't have one . . . she told me that . . . she knew I had it stuffed full of socks . . . she had long fingernails and I wouldn't

> unbutton my blouse and she unbuttoned it . . . . I just had a slip on underneath and she pulled my slip out and looked at my breasts and never said anymore . . . and she never bothered me again, but it just embarrassed me really bad . . . .

Despite these conflicts, both Carla and Darlene praised several of their teachers for paying them particular attention or complimenting them. Carla, for example, noted a teacher who sometimes talked with her after school, and Darlene praised a teacher who had created lessons in knitting "stocking caps" to help her learn to count and to keep her mind on what she was doing. These examples indicate some ambivalence on their part in their years of public schooling.

In college, the informants tended to be less involved with their instructors and to cite few examples of teachers they felt close to or admired. In fact, only four informants cited specific teachers for their work. Kay praised her art teachers because they were able to create an atmosphere of constructive criticism without students being hurt. Sandra noted that the head of the secretarial science department, a friend of the family, took a special interest in her and helped her in various ways. Sally felt strong admiration for some of her nursing instructors; even though they were very strict with their students, Sally interpreted this behavior as a caring way of preparing student nurses

for their future jobs. The most surprising person to discuss her college instructors favorably was Darlene, who indicated her final acceptance of teachers and their roles. In the following excerpts, she discusses her teachers and singles out one specifically:

> I liked a lot of the instructors. They were good, kind people. They made you think. They made me think. Let me make that perfectly clear: they made me think. I thought a wide variety of opinions about things, and I understood a lot of things.
>
> Most of them encouraged me; they helped me. They did a lot of things for me. One of them even let me cry on her shoulder.
>
> [Asked who she would reward for having the most influence on her during her college attendance]: My transmissions instructor . . . because he, of all my instructors, . . . was fascinated with the knowledge I had . . . he told me repeatedly I fascinated him [with my logical mind].

The informants were rarely critical of teachers' roles as authority figures or dispensers of knowledge. Instead, what they tended to criticize in both public school teachers and their college instructors was a certain kind of behavior which indicated that they did not care about their students. The informants specifically complained about those teachers who were "uppity," "snobby," "snotty," "abrupt," or "huffy." Margaret, for example, described one of her teachers in high school as "abrupt" and "The Sergeant." Later, she also criticized a college instructor for being "abrupt." Roseann

also criticized a college instructor for similar behavior:

> Something about his attitude I didn't like . . . . Kind of, not really snobby, maybe more uppity . . . it is like if you don't get it the first time, I can almost see him saying, 'You dummy, why didn't you get it?' Kind of makes me feel dumb . . . I've heard people ask questions and it's just the way he answers; it's kind of like he's trying to make them feel dumb, inferior.

Some also criticized teachers for not always meeting their obligations in dispensing knowledge to students and seemed to feel that this behavior was evidence of the teachers' lack of concern. Again, Roseann commented on both high school and college instructors in general in the following excerpt:

> I think there's got to be a way to get people more interested in studying and there's got to be a way to make people want to learn and enjoy learning and a lot of teachers go about it their way--they're going to teach it one way and if you get it, good; if you don't, forget it, too bad. A lot of people have to have things explained to them three or four times, which, you know, would take studying on their own also . . . . I think a lot of teachers tend to . . . kind of talk above your head . . . they expect you to know more than you do . . . . I once tried to get some extra help from an English teacher, but she couldn't or wouldn't.

Like Roseann, many of the other informants offered suggestions for making the dispensing of knowledge more interesting and more meaningful: the use of more visual aids in class to demonstrate points, the use of personal experiences to make things more interesting or to clarify the material, less reliance on lectures, and more emphasis

on class discussions, group work, and individual attention. Finally, Roseann suggested that some teachers did not seem to care about their work: "They get up in the morning, they go to school, they teach all day, they go home, and they forget it . . . sometimes they must have just thrown it together; they were making it up as they were going along . . . They need to be prepared."

Attitudes toward the curriculum. All but one of the informants reported that their favorite courses in high school and in college were those which fell into the liberal arts or humanities category: foreign language, art, English, government, and psychology. For the most part, these courses were the ones they made A's and B's in throughout their schooling. They liked such courses because "you seem to know the stuff already," because they "had a lot to do with me," or because there was "a lot of discussion" and teachers seem less structured or rigid in classroom management. Darlene, for example, reported that even though her favorite courses in high school were "lunch and home economics," in college she liked some of her general education courses because they "got me to thinking and made me more aware" and "I get something from every class I'm in." Dottie reported a similar feeling: "Each course was interesting in that there was something new to learn."

Despite these positive feelings about such courses, however, all the informants rejected them as vocational specialties in favor of more practical, skills-oriented aspirations. Roseann, Sandra, and Brenda, gave clues to the reasoning behind this choice when they discussed their re-enrollment at Benson Community College and found themselves happier and more successful students: they were taking courses specifically related to their current jobs or to a specific occupational goal they had finally determined, they found themselves with students who had similar interests and/or work experience and goals, the course work was specifically related to what they were interested in on the job, and the teachers were in the same general fields they were pursuing and could relate more easily to the students in the class and the concerns they had with the course content. These points suggest that although the informants liked and even preferred general education types of courses, they had difficulty becoming committed to them without seeing a clear connection between their coursework and future occupations.

Attitudes toward grading. Grades did not seem of utmost importance to the informants in grades 1-12, but all except Darlene and Carla reported that they did "real well" in their elementary school years, with the exception of Roseann who said she could not remember her grades but was

an average student. By junior high school, grades for all the CPC's and UT's had begun to slip a little, with occasional C's showing up on their report cards. Only Katrina reported (confirmed by transcripts) that she "did horrible" during these junior high years. By the time the informants had reached high school, they reported that their grades continued to slip some but all maintained average or above average grades, except for Katrina and Dottie. Katrina's work was so poor during her senior year that she had to finish high school in August to make up for failed work, and Dottie maintained average grades until high school when she finally dropped out and obtained her GED. In contrast to this pattern, Carla and Darlene, the UO group, started off with "fair" or "very poor" grades and maintained this pattern throughout their twelve grades of school.

Almost all of the informants reported that they "didn't do as well as I could have done" in their grades in both public school and college, and for many, their grades fluctuated with interest in particular courses. When they made what they considered poor grades at Benson, they blamed themselves in general for not studying enough, for thinking school was going to be easier than it was, for getting distracted by boyfriends. However, when they made F's in courses, they tended to split hairs and to talk about how they "<u>really</u> did not fail it, I just quit going." In the

main, most had fairly positive attitudes about grading and being graded while in college, either having no complaints or feeling that grading is necessary and that the grading system at Benson was fair. In fact, Sally praised the nursing system, with its objectives and evaluative criteria.

Four informants, however, expressed frustration with grades; all had generally poor grades in both high school and college. Dottie, for example, pointed out that grades are not always an indication of what people really know. She was supported in this view by Darlene, who remarked that grading "tends to put people in categories and they have poor opinions of themselves anyway if their grades are generally poor. It makes them feel worse." Katrina disliked grading because of her fear of evaluation; grades only served to exacerbate her fear of school.

Attitudes toward other students. The majority of the informants made various comments throughout their interviews which indicated not so much their criticism of other students as their own acceptance of the academic paradigm and their disgruntlement with those who did not demonstrate the same acceptance. Two examples from their responses illustrate this pattern. Roseann criticized her classmates in high school who did not pay attention in class and were involved in various forms of misbehavior such as passing notes and throwing paper airplanes. She also criticized

many of the day students in college for their immaturity:

> They are more serious, it seems at night. During the day, it is mostly your eighteen-year-olds, mostly people who are freshmen and they are the ones that goof off in the hall and act like a bunch of idiots . . . When I was going there during the daytime, . . . they didn't take it very seriously; it was like they were in high school again and they could goof off--not do their homework, whatever. I think it was a continuation from high school; the same way they acted there, they acted at Benson.

Darlene was also critical of other students' behavior and demonstrated in her criticism her own acceptance of the school paradigm. In the following quotation, she has just commented on her belief that she could learn something in each class; she then proceeds to contrast herself to other students:

> A lot of the people in the classes, though, were there to get through that class. They didn't care if they retained anything or not . . . . A lot of the people in the college weren't what I consider intelligent people and I can't understand--these were people who made good grades in high school and didn't have a drop of common sense. They couldn't think for themselves. I just couldn't understand these people.

Movement Away from Academics

Despite their acceptance of the academic paradigm and their emphasis on schooling as a means of "getting a job or a better job" and of not having to "settle for something less," the informants seemed to begin during their high school years to place less emphasis on academics and to

place more importance on the social aspects of school life. This theme was manifested in various individualistic ways, but three patterns consistent with the prototypes represented in the study were evident, at least in their public schooling. Later, when they enrolled at Benson with the goal of finding "something special" for themselves in the occupational world, they manifested again a gradual movement away from an emphasis on academics as work and boyfriends created conflicts with schoolwork. These patterns suggest that the informants had difficulty remaining engaged with the educational process unless they could clearly see that learning activities were moving them toward a job. This theme and its related patterns are discussed below.

High school. Consistent with their academic performance both in high school and college, the Career Program Completers all noted their satisfaction in making good grades throughout their public school years, as well as being recognized publicly for their academic talents or accomplishments. Sally, for example, was pleased that she was chosen to present her science project at a nearby university and expressed her pride in being able to formulate a hypothesis and carry out an experiment that was considered worthy.

However, academic success was important enough for

these students that it sometimes created stress for them. Sally, for example, expressed her disappointment in not being able to speak Spanish after taking the course for three years and her frustration with and hatred of geometry; these courses presented unaccustomed obstacles for her. Margaret discussed several incidents where she did not feel successful and thus "cried a whole lot." One event she recalled was accidentally cutting a hole in the dress she was making for her home economics class; she was so upset over the incident that she had to call her parents to come get her. Dottie, however, discussed her difficulties from a somewhat different perspective: constantly changing schools throughout her public school years, she found it difficult "to maintain the same level of performance because I was the new kid so much"; she went from "being the kid picked for all the teams to being the last one and wondering who would pick me." This loss of academic success and popularity was painful for her, for she had earlier been "at the top of the class" and popular among her schoolmates at the school where she had spent three years.

In discussing their attitudes about school over the years, the informants in this group indicated that they moved from "liking school" when they first began to "still liking it okay" in high school, but they expressed either their "fatigue" with the academic side or indicated they had

problems with procrastination and lack of self-pacing. In addition, all reported that their grades gradually "slipped" over the twelve years of schooling and indicated that the work was harder and they were studying less. Margaret even said that although she was "not lazy," she frequently chose to go to bed rather than study for a test during her high school years. Kay explained that she liked school "less each year because it required more effort."

The Career Program Completers also indicated that they began in high school to find that schoolwork conflicted with other interests. Sally, for example, commented that although she took "satisfaction in starting at the bottom [in a course] and moving up," schoolwork was "sometimes a pain" and she preferred going out with her friends and "partying" to doing her lessons. Dottie repeated throughout her interviews that although she liked school and found the work easy enough that she did not have to study much, at least initially, she found herself in high school "always interested in everything but schoolwork" and would choose any alternative over doing her work until the "last minute." Margaret began "coming out of my shell" during her high school years and was delighted in her senior year when she won various awards and other forms of recognition voted on by faculty and students; this recognition gave her evidence that she was not "backward" or "abnormal" as she had earlier

suspected.

In contrast to the Career Program Completers, the Undisciplined Transfer Students tended to be less involved with the academic aspects of school throughout their public schooling, particularly in high school. Although all but Katrina made average or above average grades during these years, they never cited high grades or academic accomplishment as their most successful or most rewarding experiences. Instead, they emphasized their involvement with school activities or with friends. Brenda, for example, listed several accomplishments that she considered successful experiences: being involved in a student exchange program, being chosen news editor in her journalism class, being student government president in the ninth grade, and being the "leading lady" in the ninth grade play. One disappointment that she still discussed with some regret was not being chosen cheerleader. Roseann was also fairly active in school activities and cited being picked to play in an all-county band as a major experience for her, although she eventually chose not to participate.

Although Katrina and Charlotte seemed to have been less active in school activities than the other Undisciplined Transfer Students, they too emphasized the "atmosphere" of school as very important to them, with atmosphere consisting of being with their peers and attending school dances and

sports activities. Katrina, for example, stated that although "school always scared me," she "liked going; it seemed like there was always something to be excited about at school, especially when I was a sophomore and everything was new." The "excitement," however, was not enough to help her overcome her fear of school, for she was particularly anxious over test-taking and would skip school for days to avoid taking a test.

Sandra was the only informant to admit that she saw school primarily as a "social thing," although it was apparent that the Undisciplined Transfer Students all felt similarly. The following excerpt from one of her interviews discusses this view:

> School was more or less a social event. I didn't really like it ever. I didn't find the work difficult. I was just bored with it, for the most part, and I didn't place as much importance on it as I [now] realize I should have, because I really just saw it as a way to see all my friends. I don't think I was a real discipline problem, but I did . . . skip classes with friends . . . . I was more interested in the social aspects of school life and seeing friends and having fun and talking . . . I wasn't . . . spending time on what I should be . . . I knew what I was supposed to be doing. I sometimes chose not to do it, but I did know that I was there to learn and that's what it was all about.

Like the CPC's, the Undisciplined Transfer Students found their grades "slipping" over the twelve years of public schooling; they emphasized that throughout their

schooling their other interests usually took precedence over studying. In fact, these students rarely reported any negative experiences regarding the public school experience, except as it related to the change in school atmosphere or loss of friends and popularity. This circumstance was especially true of Sandra, who lost favor with some of her friends and their parents as she became more deeply entrenched in alcohol and drug abuse in high school. Charlotte and Brenda, although they reported that they were not personally involved, were unhappy when a race riot on one campus and racial unrest on another campus disturbed the calm. They stated that this unrest decreased their interest in the social aspects of school considerably but were able to maintain personal friendships that sustained them.

Unlike the other informants, Carla and Darlene from the Undisciplined Occupational Students group reported being alienated from the social aspects of school during most of their public schooling. Nevertheless, the social life of the school versus their own alienation played a prominent part in their memories of school. Carla, who blamed her alienation on the fact that she was different and had a hearing handicap, indicated that the "kids were always teasing me" and that she "was unable to ignore it." Even when she switched to a private school during high school to bring up her grades and to escape the discomfort she felt

with her peers, she indicated that the teasing and heckling continued and discussed the "kids trying to figure out who they'd get next" and being "nosey" about her private life. According to her, she became "selective" about friends and purposely chose not to get involved with her peers because she did not want to get hurt and did not need friends. She also did not "believe school is a . . . place to get to know people and make friendships like some people do. I was there for one reason: to learn."

Darlene also reported that she had few friends during most of her school years, at least not until she got involved with working on cars during school breaks in high school; then, most of her friends were males. She also described being "ousted from the mold because I wouldn't make fun of kids who were different or minorities." In addition, Darlene indicated that because she had to go home after school to do housework, she had no time to socialize with her peers. Finally, she reported that she disdained attending any of the school activities, such as sports and dances, claiming that she was not interested in those activities at the time and that they were a waste of time.

Rather than "slipping," the grades of these two informants remained consistently low throughout most of their school years. Carla indicated that she became more and more alienated from most aspects of school during her

high school years, and she suggested that peers, parents, sister, psychiatrists, and teachers were at fault for her unhappiness. Darlene, however, manifested a different pattern from all of the other informants: she found herself gradually warming up to the academic side of school over the years, although she never became completely absorbed in schoolwork; she still consistently made below-average grades and even repeated three grades. Describing herself as a "difficult student" throughout her public schooling and giving several examples to support that claim, she moved from "not caring" about any aspect of school to seeing that teachers "were good to me" and that some even "sparked a fire" in her. Occasionally, she found that she enjoyed particular aspects of her schooling, particularly when she could display her homemaking skills or her thinking skills in class discussions. Toward the end of her public schooling, she reported feeling better about school and herself, as indicated in the following excerpt:

> I did not have a teacher I did not like in high school. They kind of inspired me in a lot of ways. I didn't make the grades because I just didn't do the work, but they made me feel better about myself. And I began to realize that I could do better than I was doing. I didn't do any better, but I knew I could . . . I began to separate who I was from the grades that I made. Before then, I equated grades with this is who you are . . .

<u>In college</u>. In search of "something special," the

informants reported that they were excited and enthusiastic about their new independence and about going to college when they first entered Benson Community College. Typical of people entering a new stage in their lives, however, they were also scared of being "on your own" academically and socially. Roseann expressed these conflicting feelings, as others did, in the following excerpt:

> It was exciting meeting new people and learning new things and a little scary because in high school you could get help from teachers if you had a problem and they would go over it, but in college you usually have to get it the first time; it's more up to you in college to learn and to do your best. No one holds your hand and parents don't make you do your homework.

However, as in their high school experiences, their initial excitement and pleasure with being in college changed. Several indicated that their attitude change was related to conflicts with other priorities. Roseann, for example, said that as she continued in college, "Homework became drudgery since I had accounting homework every night; I had started working and it seemed like I didn't have enough time to get everything done. College was harder than high school." Kay had begun college "glad I was going and with every intention of finishing college; I liked it." But as she suggests in the following excerpt, she began to feel that she was not moving quickly enough toward her career. Other priorities began to conflict with her homework:

> People who have the money to spend to go to

> college just because they want to keep learning and don't want to feel stagnant should, but for me going to college would be as a career . . . I was working at the same time I was in school, and it was a whole lot of strain just trying to work full-time and go to school and then get my homework done somewhere in between.. I didn't like school any more, was ready to get out and make my money now. I didn't want to take fewer classes because it would take longer to finish. I now believe in going to school full-time, not part-time, but taking a course or two along in banking is no problem because I'm working in it and staying on top of things.

For Dottie, too, priorities were in conflict. Finding herself confused about what she wanted to do and unhappy with the "Freudian psychology" emphasis in the human services program she was enrolled in, she described herself as having "got to the point where I just gave up, just stopped going . . . In the last quarter I was in love and didn't care about anything else, even with papers and exams due at the end." "Being in love" also created conflicts in priorities for Kay and Margaret.

For others, changes in attitude seemed to be related either to their not knowing what to expect from college or to their finding that college was not what they had expected. Charlotte, for example, had thought going to college would be easy because she met class only three hours a week; she also assumed the work would be easy because she had heard derogatory remarks about "Kiddie College" and its lack of rigid academic requirements. She thus cut class a great deal and got behind. Katrina, on the other hand, was

surprised by the "leniency" of the college and also adjusted to it with poor attendance and poor study habits. Shortly before her withdrawal, she began to believe that "I wasn't ever going to get anywhere or that it would take too long." From a different perspective, Brenda had expected more of a "college atmosphere" and had difficulty adjusting to what she considered the lack of it at Benson. At one point in the interviews, for example, she commented that although she was an "outgoing" person, she had had difficulty making friends at Benson. Later, she elaborated on why she had been unhappy:

> I didn't feel like I was in college. I was not involved with activities, just classes. I didn't feel it was a college because of the atmosphere . . . there were no dorms, party life, groups of girls. The classes are as hard as they'd probably be anywhere. I just got unenthusiastic with it, not really bored--just not liking it.

For two of the informants, their change in attitude was related to the "run-around" they felt they were getting from the counseling department. Otherwise happy in college and discovering that she had something to offer, Darlene found herself "working my butt off to make C's" and she requested tutorial help but was denied it. According to her, the males in the auto mechanics department were getting tutors when they needed them, but she was questioned about why she wanted to be in that program in the first place. Despite repeated efforts, she was refused a tutor yet was told by

one counselor in particular that if she did not pull up her grades, she would lose her financial aid and would be on probation. Feeling discriminated against because she was female and was not a rich student with good grades, she became disgruntled with school.

Carla became unhappy because she felt she was being tracked into "crip" courses and was getting nowhere toward earning a degree; she discussed her feelings in the following excerpt:

> I had so many times between the . . . counselors where they talked about who they thought I was or what they thought I needed. They'd sit there and make me go through the run-around. I mean, they'd make--it's like a maze, and they'd make me start at the end of the maze, at the beginning of the maze, where I was already three-fourths of the way through the maze . . . They'd make me take crip courses which I didn't like. It aggravated me and frustrated the heck out of me . . . . And it wasn't funny, because it just, it made me kind of have, it was a cross between being bored and being . . . in mental anguish.

Like their pattern in high school, as the informants became more confused about their college experience, their occupational goals, and their other interests, their attendance and grades seemed to reflect their changes in attitude. For some, just not going to class became a pattern shortly before their withdrawal. For others, giving up on a course and withdrawing from it, either officially or unofficially, was their way of handling their problems. For

all of the informants, grades began to drop and did not reflect either their high school record or their previous college work. However, none talked to any of their instructors, counselors, or parents about their feelings.

Lack of Educational Planning

Related perhaps to the informants' lack of clarity about occupational or career goals, the lack of educational planning in terms of college was strongly apparent in their discussion over the four interviews. Despite their insistence that they had always known they were going to college or had always wanted to attend, the informants gave little evidence that they had given serious consideration to the college they would eventually attend or to preparing themselves for going to college. In addition, there was also strong evidence to suggest that the women in this study decided on college and on Benson specifically with little information about what to expect from college, what programs were available at various institutions, or what colleges were available to them. This theme and its patterns are discussed below.

Reasons for going to college. When asked their reasons for going to college, all the informants except Darlene reported that they had "always wanted to go" or had "always known I was going to college." Although each stressed that it was her decision to go to college, several factors seemed

to influence the informants. Most reported that their parents either "wanted" them to go "if we wanted to go," "expected" them to go, "felt at least one of their children should go . . . and I was the only one left," or "expected all of their chidren to go to college." The expectation that all of the children in the family would go to college was particularly evident in the informants who came from higher social class families. Charlotte further noted that she felt "I couldn't let my dad down by not going to college" because he and her three half-sisters were college attendees.

Friends also seemed to play a role in decisions to attend college, at least for six of the informants. Roseann remarked, for example, that "most friends just expect you to go when you graduate [from high school]." Margaret noted that her friends had some influence on her decision because "I didn't want to feel like I wasn't smart enough to go."

In addition, those with family members who had attended college cited these people as influencing them to attend, not in any direct way for the most part, but rather in "setting an example." Sandra, Charlotte, Katrina, Carla, Sally, and Roseann all had one or both parents who had attended college or siblings who had attended. Only Sally, however, in this particular group had a mother who had earned a college degree. Several in this group also

mentioned cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandparents who had attended or graduated from college.

Other informants indicated almost an air of resignation or inevitability about college attendance. Katrina, for example, observed that she decided on college because there was "nothing I wanted to do that could be done without a degree." Kay reported that she had known since junior high school that "that's what is after high school." Roseann commented that she "just went like I'd gone to school the other twelve years."

According to the participants in this study, the people in their lives most directly involved in schooling played little or no role in their decisions to go to college. Sandra said, for example, that teachers did not play a role except that "they asked where I was going, but I don't think they were really concerned." She noted further that a counselor had given her some college brochures to look at and had made some suggestions about colleges to consider but that no further guidance was offered. Margaret, Dottie, Katrina, Darlene, Carla, and Roseann all said that they never discussed college with their teachers or counselors. Brenda, Kay, and Sally each cited one teacher encouraging them in a particular field of study: Kay, for example, said her art teacher encouraged her to go to college.

Despite their insistence that they had always known

they were going to college, however, the informants gave little evidence of having planned for, prepared for, or anticipated going to college in any concrete way. As a matter of fact, taking college-preparatory classes in high school seemed to be the only way that students felt they had prepared themselves: all except Dottie and Darlene reported that they took college-preparatory classes in school, despite transcript evidence that such was not necessarily the case. Some, for example, noted that they took "A" classes, which they defined as "college-bound" courses or that they changed from college-prep classes to "general diploma" classes which were not as hard but would still allow them to get into college if they desired. Other than taking what they considered college-preparatory classes, a small number of informants reported that they made visits to campuses, studied college catalogs, or worked part-time to save money for college. Only Sally and Sandra, who initially entered four-year colleges, took SAT's.

Reasons for choosing Benson. All except Darlene and Dottie had thought about, applied to, or actually attended other colleges, particularly four-year colleges. Although none reported being denied admission to other colleges, Benson, in fact, was a second-chance, second-choice, or last-minute selection for all the informants, again with the exception of Darlene and Dottie.

Several examples clarify the context in which most of the informants made their decisions to attend Benson. As indicated earlier, several had applied to and, in some cases, had already been accepted at four-year institutions. However, in wanting to demonstrate their independence, they refused the financial support of their parents in terms of paying their tuition and school expenses and chose to stay at home to attend college. Kay and Margaret had also considered attending other colleges but had "fallen in love" and wanted to remain near their boyfriends. Carla, Sandra, and Sally had attended other colleges and had had unsuccessful experiences at these institutions; they chose to attend Benson because staying at home would either keep them away from the social activities they had become involved in or would provide them with a support system. Others decided that they probably could not get into another school because of their high school grades or that they were not ready to "go away" to school.

However, all eleven informants reported specific reasons for choosing to attend Benson: proximity and not wanting to leave home or boyfriends, its open admissions policy for those with low grades or GED certificates, the availability of financial aid, cheaper tuition, cheaper living expenses because they could live at home, and the availability of specific or strong programs.

Lack of information. Despite these concrete reasons, however, most of the informants suggested that they had made their choices in the absence of information about colleges; a couple also indicated that they had chosen Benson on the basis of faulty information. In part, this situation was suggested by their lack of visiting campuses and of perusing college catalogs and brochures.

Sandra, for example, observed that she had applied to only one college, a state university, because it was located in a city "where the action was"; she visited it several times before she enrolled but did not visit any other campuses or consider any other colleges. Once she dropped out of that institution, she enrolled at Benson by what she considered default. Katrina indicated that she had not investigated what she would need to transfer to another institution to pursue nursing; she believed that the nursing program at Benson would not transfer and thus enrolled in the general studies program to bring up her grades for transfer without consulting with anyone on campus about it. Both Roseann and Brenda were accepted at a small liberal arts college but decided on Benson because of its closeness and cheaper tuition without considering its programs or requirements. Dottie felt, but did not investigate, that no other institution would accept her because of her GED. Darlene assumed that she could not get training in auto

mechanics at any other place nearby but did not investigate that possibility. Margaret described her moment of panic at high school graduation: thinking "I needed to go to college," she chose Benson, explaining that she "did not know that I had more choice." Carla commented that "it was a mistake not to shop around for schools because you have to find out what type of college it is and what counselors are there."

Of all the informants, Sally was the only one who indicated that she "carefully considered my choices of schools" both when she enrolled at a state university and when she later selected Benson because of its strong nursing program. Only she and Darlene seemed to have chosen Benson because of a particular program offered there.

The lack of information continued once the informants enrolled at Benson. Although Sally and Sandra, perhaps because of their earlier experiences at a state university, asked questions of their instructors about what their programs of study would lead to in the occupational world, the remainder of the informants seemed to learn about specific programs of study through trial-and-error. As indicated in earlier discussion, most of the informants entered curricular programs because of their experiences in high school courses, because the programs sounded like something they were interested in, or because they felt the

general studies program specifically would help them to transfer later or to decide on what they wanted. None of the informants who had been enrolled in the general studies curriculum mentioned the more rigorous liberal arts transfer program as an option they considered or were advised to take. All indicated that there was no exchange between them and college personnel regarding career or educational plans, other than being told specific courses they needed to fulfill the requirements of the degree they had enrolled in. In addition, only Charlotte reported using the college's career center, where students can examine college catalogs, take various tests, and use the computer for information about jobs. The rest of the informants seemed unaware of this center.

Furthermore, the required orientation course specifically designated as an introduction to college and for career planning seemed to be of little value in communicating information needed to determine career and educational goals, at least from the perspective of the informants. This was true, first of all, because five of the informants had not even taken the course. Sally and Sandra explained that they did not have to take the course because they were transfers into Benson. Katrina, Brenda, and Dottie had also not taken the orientation course at the time of their withdrawal. The remaining six had taken the

orientation course; all had made a grade of C on it (Margaret maintained that C was the only grade given in the course, but the accuracy of this assertion was not verified.) Charlotte, Roseann, Margaret, and Darlene had enrolled in the course during the first quarter of their attendance; Kay took the course in the second quarter and Carla in her fifth quarter of attendance.

Benson allows students to take its orientation course in a one-day session or in several sessions over the entirety of the quarter. Four of the students who had taken the course took it in the one-day session and had difficulty recalling much about the course. In general, they indicated that a campus tour was taken, that parking rules and registration procedures were discussed, and that students introduced themselves and the high schools they had attended. Charlotte discussed what she remembered about the course:

> Nothing really--it was kind of weird. I didn't see it related to school. They showed us around, talked some about study skills and stuff on how to apply to colleges.

Both Carla and Darlene took the course over the duration of a quarter, but they too had trouble recalling what occurred in the course; what they recalled was quite different from each other's report and also from the reports of the informants who took the course in one day. Carla reported that she had to write papers on her occupational

goals, the type of person she is, the income she would like to make, and the inter-personal relationships she considered important on the job. In contrast, Darlene listed the following topics as those discussed in her class: "How to dress, how to act, how to be polite, how to dress for an interview, how to study . . . what buildings were where, and that's about it." Other than Carla, none of the informants suggested that any advising or counseling occurred in the course.

The students could also recall little about the placement tests they took, other than that the testing took most of the day and focused on reading, writing, and mathematics. In regard to the advising they received relative to their scores on the tests, several reported that they just picked up the scores and the rest indicated, as Katrina did, that the scores were "just laid out in front of you and they told you what courses you needed to take."

Finally, the informants gave little evidence that they had received detailed information about the programs they were enrolled in from either their counselors or program advisors. Most of the informants reported that they followed checklists indicating courses they needed for the program or for transfer to another institution; others copied off a blackboard what their program advisors had written as courses the students in the program should

register for in the following quarter. Two of the informants, Katrina and Sandra, said that their fathers helped them to determine what courses they should take next. None suggested that they received career counseling from their program advisors.

Personal Roles, Identities, and Conflicts

Although the original emphasis in this study was on the educational and occupational aspirations, experiences, and beliefs which contributed to the withdrawal decision, one other type of theme emerged consistently in the informants' discussions: the problems and conflicts they had experienced regarding their personal selves. Three major themes, consistent across the prototypes and social classes represented in the study, described these feelings: (a) problems of self-identity (b) personal dilemmas, and (c) blaming self for problems. These themes and the patterns associated with them are presented below.

Problems of Self-Identity

The informants repeatedly identified doubts or concerns about their personal identities throughout their years of schooling. Three different self-identity problems existed, regardless of prototype or social class distinctions. All three self-identity problems included characteristics of the self that made it difficult for the informants to get all they could from school and sometimes from their work

experiences. The problems of identity are detailed in the following discussion.

The quiet, shy type. Kay, Katrina, Margaret, and Roseann described themselves as "quiet" and "shy" throughout their years of schooling, from elementary school through college and even into the present. In addition, they frequently described themselves as "prim and proper," "model students," and "very polite" in terms of their school behavior. Their quietness and shyness, however, often prevented them from full participation at school. For example, they were generally not involved in school-related extracurricular activities. Only Margaret differed in her involvement in school-related activities; through concerted effort on her part, she became more involved in such activities during her last two years of high school. Roseann gave an example of how shyness limited her active participation in the learning process: she resisted asking questions in class both in public school and college and, if necessary, would wait after class to ask questions of her teachers about something she did not understand. In particular, the junior high school years were difficult ones for the shy informants, with all but Margaret reporting that they were more withdrawn during these years.

For Kay and Katrina, the junior high school years were especially painful. Kay found herself victim of peer

harrassment in the form of rumors because she refused to participate in sex and drugs offered to her by some of her friends. The rumors, she reported, contributed further to her shyness and lack of self-confidence. She described the incident in the following excerpt:

> I had some real mean nasty friends. They had been good friends, but . . . because I wouldn't start getting into the things that they were into, they started making up rumors about me . . . and I became withdrawn in junior high school . . . . sex and drugs and sweet little me didn't do anything like that . . . . And then the rumors that they spread about me, which were all completely untrue, stayed with me through high school, which I lost a lot of my real good close friends that I'd been friends with from first grade . . . . They said that I had, I guess you'd say 'fooled around' with a guy that was dating somebody else which I'd never even kissed anybody except in first grade [she laughs]. That was the big thing . . .

Katrina's identity problems were less related to peer pressures, but she envied her classmates, particularly in junior high, because they were prettier and made better grades. According to Katrina, shyness and feelings of inferiority had crippling effects, including lack of involvement in physical activities at school, skipping school, conflicts with her mother, poor academic performance, math and science anxiety, and test anxiety. The following excerpts from three interviews describe some of her feelings and their sources:

> I was always really shy, and when I was in

> junior high, I was so overweight, like now, and I was always very self-conscious so I think that's why my grades weren't very good then because I felt so insecure, and there was a lot of times that I just would not go. Like I would say that I was sick and stay home for like two weeks; that was really bad. And then in high school, I lost a lot of weight and I felt better about it; I liked [school] a lot more . . . . It's better when I feel better about myself . . . like in high school, I weighed about 95 to 100 . . .
>
> I felt different most of the time than other kids . . . . I didn't get to do the things that they did, physical--it seemed like in elementary school, I wasn't allowed to take gym and things like that and I didn't know how to do other--ice skate, I never did . . . I just couldn't because I had foot operations and a heart operation . . . [My foot] was just deformed . . . When I was born . . . I had a coerctation of the aorta and [they had to put in an extra valve] when I was two.
>
> My mother has always been critical . . . she sees what she wants us to be and when we're not, she can't help but to be disgusted . . . She wants me to be more independent, lose weight . . . I don't know really what she wants me to be. I do know that she does not like me being so much overweight, because she is not . . . My sisters are different than I am; they are much more outgoing and none of them are overweight and they are all tall and she doesn't really worry about them as much.

All of the shy informants struggled in one way or another with their feelings of inferiority and anxiety over the years. Margaret, in particular, chronicled her years of growing up from the perspective of her shyness and "coming out a little" more from year to year; she was proud of her involvement in clubs and other activities, as well as various forms of recognition she received during her senior

year in high school, as indications that she was overcoming some of her shyness and that she "wasn't abnormal" or "backward." At the conclusion of the study, Margaret and the rest of the shy informants were still making conscious efforts to be more assertive.

The socializers. Charlotte, Brenda, Sally, Dottie, and Sandra were all self-described "talkers" in school and found themselves being "punished" in minor ways for this characteristic. All were involved with school social life, particularly student government, cheerleading, clubs, and/or peer group activities. Like the shy group of informants, however, they too experienced feelings of shyness and inferiority. Sally, for example, described her junior high school years as a period when she was "outgoing" with friends but shy and "spending a lot of time on my own."

As with the shy group, real or perceived handicaps caused problems for the socializers. Brenda, for example, discussed her sensitivity about being overweight in junior high and later in her senior year; in particular, she recalled her hurt when a male high school teacher walking down the hall behind her said, "Brenda, I am going to have to put a 'wide-load' sign on your butt . . . I didn't know you got the middle-age spread until you were in your thirties."

Sometimes the handicaps combined with peer ridicule

created additional hurt for this group of informants. Dottie discussed her handicap, peer pressure, and how she handled it:

> I have a problem with having one eye crossed, and when I was little, that really caused a lot of problems because the kids would make fun of me and call me names; it just put a lot of bitterness into me, in my heart, and there for a while I thought the world owed me something because I hadn't been dealt the best of blows . . . . I'd go outside and I'd just sing and I would sorta make up things . . . sing to the trees and sing to the sky . . .

"School atmosphere" was of particular importance to these women during their public school years. All were drawn to the social aspects of school and several noted problems with school atmosphere that bothered them personally; such problems included changes in policy by the principal, a major race riot on campus, and attitudes of their peers. Charlotte expressed such a concern in discussing her junior high school:

> . . . a lot of students wouldn't come to class and skipped a lot . . . They acted like they didn't care; they acted like they were doing the teacher a favor for being there. And there was a lot of problems with drugs in our school, and . . . a lot of like little cliques there ... people separated into different kinds of people, and there was racial problems . . . like they were separated into whether you did drugs or not . . . the liberal, open-minded people who just hung around, and then there were the real smart people . . . There were about 30 or 40 of us who hung around together who weren't really into any of that . . . a lot of people there we thought were phony so we didn't hang around with them that much.

For both Brenda and Sally, school atmosphere was so important that when it changed drastically at their schools, their attitudes changed to one of no longer caring about school. Brenda described in great detail a major race riot which occurred on her high school campus and her reaction to it:

> . . . They were throwing rocks at the cars, and they had all the entrances blocked off, even so the ambulances couldn't get in, and I came back home so hysterical that my mom had to come home from work . . . The parents that were sitting at the bus stop waiting for their children to come in the cars were just seeing their kids being attacked . . . I blamed my principal for not having undercover cops . . . after that [happened], all I wanted to do was just get through my senior year and get out . . . . it was just like I didn't care . . .

As socializers influenced greatly by peers and the atmosphere of the school, the informants sometimes got into what they themselves, in retrospect, considered undesirable activity. Brenda, for example, got into a fight with a black girl during junior high school, skipped school some during her senior year, and even "had words" with one of her senior teachers and was "thrown out" of class for a while. In fact, all the informants in this group except Charlotte mentioned skipping school but stressed that they rarely got caught. Charlotte, however, reported "cutting classes a lot" in college.

All the socializers discussed problems in public school with self-discipline, always choosing the social aspects, or

as Dottie put it--"anything else," over the academic requirements. All reported, for example, choosing television, going out with friends, and putting off reading and writing assignments and studying for tests; all attributed their lack of academic success or doing as well as they felt they could have to their lack of self-discipline and to their procrastination. Dottie repeatedly described her problem of self-discipline:

> [I had] the problem about having to learn how to do things in steps and pacing myself and making myself do an assignment. If I could have been more disciplined and could have gone half the time, I feel like I could have made straight A's in everything . . . Growing up in the atmosphere that I did as a child, my mother not being there . . . not having an adult around to encourage and put down the rule . . . moving around a lot, I don't think that was very helpful because you were always changing schools and you were having to make new friends and you just learned how to do it this way and now you're doing it another . . . . Maybe a lot of it was lack of interest . . . a lot of it was myself, not being able to overcome all of that . . .

For Sandra, however, "socializing" and her lack of self-discipline led into more extreme behavior. Self-described as "shy," "felt inferior," and a "big talker," Sandra was influenced by her male peers in junior high school to drink alcohol with them; by age 15, she was having alcoholic blackouts, skipping school, and experimenting with pot, LSD, barbituates, and narcotics.

> . . . when I was growing up, all my friends drank beer and then drank liquor when it was

> available . . . and almost all of my friends smoked pot . . . . And I think a lot of it was peer pressure, influenced by slightly older boys . . . and for some reason I was always attracted to kind of the negative side of things . . . because things were illegal and I was doing illegal things, I got kind of a charge out of that, and I know that's very common with drug addicts and people with drug problems but . . . the knowing that you're doing something wrong is kind of a high in itself, and I was fooling with things at such an early age that I should have never been into and got so fascinated with that side of life. It was like I had a double life; when I was in school, I was entirely different from when I was out, and when I was away from home, out of my parents' eyes, I was an entirely different person . . . . But this is why . . . I never . . . invested the time in worthwhile activities such as school work, school-related activities, because I was into . . . such deviant behavior . . .

Sandra's drug and alcohol habits continued throughout her high school and college years, requiring her to graduate from high school through a treatment center, leading her into accidents, hospitals for treatment, living with a junkie, college withdrawals, and dealing drugs herself on the side of town where people, as she described it, "carried guns." Finally, near death, she voluntarily entered a treatment center where she began to learn how to cope with her problems. In the interviews with Sandra, she described herself as a "recovering alcoholic."

<u>The abused</u>. Darlene and Carla reported many of the same personal problems as the informants in the shy and socializing groups, but their emphasis was on the

psychological and/or physical abuse they had endured and the consequences of this abuse.

Much of what Darlene had to say about her childhood emphasized the violence aimed at her by her parents. Once, for example, she described how "I got the hell beat out of me" because the school counselor had visited her home to find out why the parents would not or could not buy the glasses she badly needed. Her visiting grandmother stopped her father from beating her against the wall, took her to live with her, saw to it that she got glasses, and provided for her other needs. Darlene remembered her stay with her grandmother as one of the few pleasurable incidents in her childhood. She was also victim of sexual abuse as a child and described how it began:

> My mom started out physically abusing me, and my dad tried to compensate for that physical abuse, and when he tried to compensate, he went overboard and started using me sexually when I was six years old . . . I was totally turned off to sex until I was about twenty years old. I did not, you know, enter into a relationship with a man. And then when I did, I just went whole hog. I wanted a baby.

Darlene did have a baby, an illegitimate daughter. Later, she married another man, who had "an illicit relationship with my daughter . . . he molested her . . . I didn't want to put a child through . . . what I'd been put through . . . so I saw it, I reported it." There were also, according to Darlene, other rapes, robberies, and beatings

over the years. She also discussed suicide attempts, miscarriages, an operation for an intestinal by-pass to treat obesity, a divorce, and a second husband who abandoned her.

Although she saw school as a "break" from the "hellhole at home," Darlene also experienced harrassment from her peers for what she called "marching to a different drummer":

> I was laughed at by a lot of the other children. Because I wasn't the same, and it bothered me. When I was about 13, I got enormously fat. I just started putting on weight . . . it had a lot to do with what was going on at home and what was going on at school. A lot of the kids in school held things against people, like if we'd get a new student, they'd harrass them and I didn't like that. I don't like being harrassed and I don't like to harrass anybody else. That's what I considered it, punishment of the other children . . . I don't fit that mold; I live and let live . . . . I was more or less a loner; that bothered me a lot . . .

Carla was a victim of rape during her attendance at Benson, but unlike Darlene, she was not physically abused while growing up. Instead, she consistently pictured herself as victimized by the lack of understanding from family, teachers, counselors, and peers. The following example illustrates her firm conviction that others either misunderstood her or were "out to get" her, resulting in a number of "emotional setbacks" which hindered her scholastic success:

> I'd tell my [college] counselor things about what irritated me and how much of a strain it

> was for me to concentrate knowing my instructor had a bad attitude . . . I had more problems after I started wearing my hearing aid. I'd always had the problem where . . . if I explained how I felt and said 'Please don't do that . . . that's hurting me emotionally,' I've had times where I've cried and cried and cried because I couldn't get the understanding I needed . . . and it made me suffer emotionally . . . . At [Benson], I'd go in there [to the counselor] and he'd say things to me and it'd get to the point where I couldn't take any more and then I started; I would actually start raising my voice back to him . . . . No one has the right to tell 'You can't do this, you can't do that' because if there are any other counselors or teachers that tell people that may be just like me who have it to be a very good student but yet maybe they're suffering some kind of peer pressure or pressure within the family or maybe . . . just the teacher's poor attitude just irritates the heck out of them, anything.

As suggested above, much of Carla's emotional energy was spent in "fight[ing] for what I want" and "fight[ing] whatever it was I was trying to fight."

Personal Dilemmas

Each of the informants experienced a conflict or dilemma which she cited as having directly influenced her decision to withdraw from Benson Community College. In addition to those conflicts which directly contributed to their leaving school, the informants also presented other on-going dilemmas which may have indirectly influenced their decision to withdraw, and, in some cases, new dilemmas growing out of their post-withdrawal work experiences. All the dilemmas concerned role or identity decisions, and every

informant revealed at least two dilemmas she was dealing with. This theme and related patterns are discussed below.

Multiple-role conflicts. For Margaret, Dottie, Kay, Sally, Roseann, Brenda, and perhaps Sandra, dropping out of school was a conscious decision between two or more roles, in most cases a choice between homemaker or job/career and school. All stressed that they could not "handle" being student and worker or student, worker, and wife simultaneously; according to them, they purposely and consciously chose working or working wife over schooling. For some, working was already something they were doing and it was necessary to continue working so that they could get married. For others, a job presented itself and they chose it over continuing in school. From their perspective, the roles interfered with each other, and it was impossible to do all simultaneously. Kay, one of the three informants who had entered Benson with firm goal commitments, is representative of this viewpoint:

> . . . I was working full-time . . . and I didn't have as much time for school as I wanted. I felt like I was being pushed, kind of torn from three sides . . . I had responsibilities to my family and to [Bob]--I was dating [Bob] at the time, had responsibilities at work, and then had all my homework and everything to do too.

Once the role decision was made and these informants dropped out of school, however, work experiences and/or unfulfilled goals often tilted the scales in favor of

schooling again. Roseann, Carla, Sandra, Katrina, Charlotte, and Brenda eventualy found ways to return to school, either on a part-time or a full-time basis. Sally sought and found a resolution to her dilemma of not being able to re-enter the nursing program at Benson by joining the military, initially to train in nursing but ultimately to go into satellite communications equipment repair. For Margaret, Dottie, and Kay, the dilemmas were unresolved; all wanted to return to school but saw difficulties in terms of time, money, or goal indecision as obstacles. Kay revealed her frustration about unfulfilled aspirations:

> I would like to expect to be in the commercial art field. I don't know if I will be able to do it . . . . I don't really want to be in banking. It's just that right now, that's the only place I can be and make money and be able to get ahead and make more money and yet there's a future in banking even though it is not really what I want for my future. That's the real struggle. I would love for someone to just hand me the money and tell me to go to college. Give this report to some rich person. Tell them that Kay needs the money.

Identity or value conflicts. For those informants with role conflicts, there was the additional dilemma of identity or value conflicts. Identity conflicts seemed to arise out of the problems of identity discussed previously. Margaret is representative of those informants whose on-going concerns with personal identity created dilemmas in whatever role they chose:

> I'm just tender-hearted; the least little thing makes me cry, and so I've had some rough times and things I've had to realize . . . . I'm slowly working on it now, trying to stand up for myself or not let people run me over . . . . Sometimes I wonder if I should go back to being the quiet young girl I was. I don't know. Sometimes I wonder - I don't want to be too brassy, to be hateful . . . I don't want to be overpowering. I still want to be a feminine lady with a little bit of spunk, but then I want to be, I don't know, sort of half and half. I want to stand up for myself; then I don't want to be too loud and overpowering.

Other informants revealed that they had multiple identity conflicts, as well as role conflicts. For several, a conflict existed between what they acknowledged as their "ability" or "potential" and their love of socializing or lack of self-discipline. Sally, whose job responsibilities and lack of self-discipline contributed to her decision to withdraw, expressed this dilemma shortly before she left for her military duty; for her, the decision to enlist was an attempt to resolve her dilemma:

> . . . the schooling with me and the time organization that you need has always been a problem for me, and I think the regimentation [of the military] is something I really need . . . When you said 'What particular factors were involved in your dropping out,' . . . I had to say it was me; it was the fact that I'm not able to organize my time. I don't have enough self-discipline to say 'No, I can't go out with you tonight on a date because I have to do homework.' I could never say 'no' to the more pleasant thing. I'd always rather play before work, and you're not gonna get ahead in life [if you do that] . . . I'm 23 years old, Lord knows I should have discipline now. I still do not feel that I am capable of going back into the college and working and getting the good

> grades . . . I always have to choose, and there's just too much to go to school and work and usually have a relationship with somebody I'm dating . . . [The military] controls the decision-making to a great extent . . . This way, I don't have a choice . . .

Both those informants with role conflicts and those with identity or value conflicts often cited these conflicts as contributing to their withdrawal from school, as Sally suggested in the above excerpt. Dottie, in particular, repeated several times over the course of four interviews her multiple conflicts and how they contributed to her decision to withdraw. On one hand, she emphasized her ability and "potential" but pitted these against her lack of self-discipline and her inability to pace herself. At the same time, falling in love and wanting to get married conflicted with her role as student. Finally, she saw her religious values and her desire to be a good Christian conflicting with the program she was enrolled in:

> . . . I have certain religious convictions, and I didn't agree with the way some of the things were being taught. In other words, I saw human services as a way of reaching out, of caring or encouraging and loving another person, helping them. But . . . there were certain things that I didn't agree with . . . like how you really weren't able to guide a person per se . . . you weren't allowed to communicate your opinion of them, of what they were involved in. In other words, whatever [the clients] were doing, you had to accept it, and I couldn't do that because I just didn't think that some things were right . . . I didn't think that I could keep my religious convictions and be a human services worker, and it wasn't a question of learning, I knew I could learn it, but I didn't

know if I could practice it.

In addition, several informants revealed a conflict in terms of what they expected college or "real" college to be like versus what they actually found Benson Community College to be. Citing this conflict only as a source of their dissatisfaction with college, they never directly attributed this conflict to their withdrawal. Charlotte, for example, stressed the differences between Benson and four-year colleges and, at one point, cited such derogatory names as "Harvard on the Hill" and "Kiddie College" that people used to describe Benson. Kay also cited her problems with finding something different than what she expected or wanted:

> [Asked what she would have changed about her school experiences] I would have gone on to college . . . a four-year college . . . In a four-year college . . . all the people are interested in is just what they're interested in [laughs]. And they're really working on academic--I can't describe it . . . . At [Benson] . . . it's all different types of people . . . that are just going to school just to take up a little extra time; the classes are a lot bigger . . . You get a lot of people that aren't really interested in what they're doing; it's just a cheap way to do something else . . . . I don't think going to a community college where I can still be socializing as much as I do now and being right here with my family, I don't think you get the education at a community college as you would a four-year college, just because the teachers aren't as experienced; they change teachers a lot more, I think, than a four-year college.

<u>Serious emotional problems</u>. For three of the

informants, identity or role conflicts led to more serious emotional problems that were intensified by the additional stresses of being a student. Over the years of public schooling and college, all three had, at various points, received psychiatric treatment in some form.

For Darlene, there was a conflict between the feminine and masculine sides of her personality and aspirations. On one hand, she wanted to work with her hands and be accepted in a basically all-male occupational world - but accepted as a female. She also sought full expression of her femininity with males she was involved in, in her role as a mother, and in her picture of herself as a good housewife. Her previous experiences with her family, her lovers, and school personnel had created emotional problems which she had not completely resolved at the end of this study. For Sandra, there were the emotional and physical problems leading to or stemming from her alcoholism. At the end of the study, Sandra was a "recovering alcoholic" who had spent years in various institutions trying to come to terms with her problems. For Carla, there was a conflict between what she perceived as her ability and the obstacles or "emotional setbacks" presented by those in authority over her. At the end of the study, she still felt considerable anger toward those she perceived as having stood in the way of her accomplishing what she felt she could do.

Blaming Self for Problems

Most of the informants clearly blamed themselves for their deficiencies both in high school and college and for their lack of college completion. They consistently blamed their "bad" experiences throughout their schooling on themselves in such statements as "it was definitely my fault," "direct failings of my own self," "I just can't blame anybody else [but myself]," and "I'm the only one to blame." As Sally said, "You're responsible for your own actions and experiences." All discussed adjustment problems in college in relation to their personal identity problems or their role conflicts. Margaret and Dottie, for example, talked of their inability to "push" or "pace" themselves; others spoke of their fear of speaking in class because they did not want to appear dumb. Still others found the pressures of college work tiring and would choose sleep over studying. In addition, several spoke of their inability to deal with the realities of college as compared to their expectations (or in Katrina's case, not knowing what to expect), and associated their poor attendance and study habits with their misunderstanding or immaturity.

In terms of the responses they cited as having directly influenced their decisions to leave school, all but two reported reasons which reflected their concerns with roles and identities. Only Carla and Darlene reported conflict

with school counselors and school policy as reasons for withdrawal. However, even in these two cases, how they perceived themselves and wished to be perceived by others was linked to their problems with school counselors and school policy. Sandra quit over drug- and alcohol-related problems, choosing eventually to enter a rehabilitation center. Katrina quit because she was not studying, was depressed over her weight and uninterested in school, and was feeling that "I would never get to where I wanted or that it would take so long." Brenda, Charlotte, and Roseann left for full-time or part-time jobs. Dottie left because she had fallen in love and could not concentrate and because her religious values conflicted with the program she was enrolled in. Kay and Margaret reported that trying to handle full-time work and school assignments, plus their other obligations to family and boyfriend, were too much. All reported, however, that no one influenced them in their decision to withdraw from Benson; the decision was theirs to make.

One extended example illustrates how the informants attributed their decision to withdraw from Benson to their own personal failings. Sally, who was well into her nursing program at Benson, withdrew at the direction of her nursing instructor but blamed herself entirely for the event. She described the circumstances of the situation in detail; part

of that discussion is included below:

> I had . . . left my work at home, and rather than come into the hospital without having my work with me, I chose to turn around halfway . . . and come back and get the work, which I realize now was probably the major reason for her . . . getting mad at me when I got there and saying, "Leave." It made me cry and everything . . . What I should have done is gone ahead and explained . . . to her I was very sorry but I left my work at home and asked my mother to bring it over to me. But I was giving medications that day, and that's one reason she was angry that I was late, because not only was I late in relation to having to be there at a regular time--when you give meds you've got to be there at six o'clock in the morning, just because you've got a lot of preparation work to do . . . . The work that I forgot . . . was my medical cards, my drug cards, and so I felt like I couldn't give the medication without my drug cards being with me, and she was going to quiz me on them.

Discussing the matter further, she reported that she was told to report to the head of the nursing department at Benson and to tell the head that she would have to take the rotation over; but when Sally called to make sure the woman would be in her office, a secretary told her that the nursing head was not coming in that day. Sally assumed that her situation had already been discussed with the nursing head and that there was no further point in trying to get in touch with her. Later, she found out that the nursing head <u>had</u> <u>been</u> waiting for her and had been puzzled as to why Sally did not report to her that day. Sally blamed herself for not "going over" to the school and "waiting around" for the nursing head and suggested that her "not showing up" was

an indication of her lack of responsibility and of not "wanting it bad enough."

Despite the informants' independently made decisions to withdraw from Benson, their responses to their withdrawal indicated continued self-blame. Many of the informants expressed feelings of anger, disgust, and/or failure which they aimed at themselves, rather than at others. Darlene, for example, described her feelings: "I miss going to school because I felt like I was doing something with my life; emotionally, I feel like a failure." Dottie commented that she felt "bad" because "I never reached my full potential and therefore I feel like I am still seeking. Katrina said she felt "disgusted with myself" for withdrawing, for not revealing it to her parents, and for having to cope with feelings of duplicity. All the informants expressed regrets, at least initially, for having left college, but Sally reported the most severe reaction to not being able to return:

> The event blew me out of the water. I felt lost when I found out I couldn't return. I'd expected to graduate in 1984 and made plans about what I'd do, where I'd work, where I'd live--plans for the next five years. I was depressed . . . I had to stop and look at myself and ask what I was going to do and face the fact that I was getting older.

Only Carla aimed anger at both herself and school personnel. However, the anger she expressed toward school

personnel was not limited just to those at Benson, where she "ate a mouthful of dirt," but was extended to personnel at other institutions she had attended in high school and in college before enrolling at Benson. In the following excerpt, she comments further about her withdrawal, her "setbacks," and her continued "fight" with the educational system:

> Leaving has hurt me academically and personally. It's hurt me because I'm 21 and don't have any savings. Now I'm going to have to work to get things done double time--it's like you break the law and you have to serve ten years when everybody else serves five.

The advice that the informants said they would give to potential students at Benson reflected the problems they had in school, as well as the blame they directed toward themselves. Their advice to potential dropouts is a compendium of solid advice that the best of counselors would give and for the most part does not reveal any kind of major dissatisfaction with the college. Ironically, it is advice which they would not, or did not, follow when they were in college. Almost all the informants regretted not making school the top priority, not locating people to talk with about particular problems, and not thinking seriously about the consequences of leaving college.

Summary

This chapter has presented in detail the themes and

related patterns in the post-withdrawal interview responses of eleven white female dropouts from Benson, a pseudonym for a community college in the southeastern United States. These findings reveal the complexity of factors which contribute to the withdrawal decision. In the chapter which follows, these findings will be discussed in more detail in terms of why the eleven informants decided to leave school. In addition, the relevance of these themes and patterns to each of the three theories of withdrawal considered in this study will be discussed.

Notes

1. Translating the spoken work to the written page can never be a completely satisfactory task. Certain accommodations must be made to achieve clarity and to aid the reader. Several minor modifications of the quoted responses of the informants were thus routinely applied in this study:

   (a) Stuttering and stumbling over words have been omitted , as have such filler words as "uh," "um," and "you know."

   (b) Groping for words, repetition of comments already quoted, and other comments irrelevant to the point being discussed in the text have been omitted. Such omissions are indicated by ellipsis periods.

   (c) Underlining has occasionally been used to indicate words stressed vocally by the informants.

   (d) Dashes have been used to indicate situations where informants interrupted their own statements.

   (e) In statements where pronoun references were unclear in the quoted response or where the informants gave bits of information in broken phrases, the researcher has inserted the topic or the summarized details within brackets.

   (f) Informants' pauses between words and statements have been omitted to provide a smoother reading.

   (g) With these minor exceptions, the quotations cited are the verbatim responses of the participants.

2. All quoted words and phrases in this chapter are excerpts from the informants' responses. Quotation marks have not been used for any other purpose.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three theories of withdrawal from school have provided the framework for studying why a small sample of white female students chose voluntarily to withdraw from a community college located in the southeastern United States. The previous chapter discussed a number of themes and patterns related to the occupational, educational, and personal experiences and beliefs of eleven former students representing three different groups from lower and higher social class: the Undisciplined Transfer Students, the Career Program Completers, and the Undisciplined Occupational Students. This chapter first provides a summary of the findings of this study. Next, the themes and patterns are discussed in light of the theories informing the conceptual framework for this study, with emphasis on those factors which remain unexplained by the three theories. Finally, recommendations for community colleges hoping to improve retention rates and implications for future research are presented.

The Dynamics of White Female Community College Students' Withdrawal Decision

The decision to withdraw from college for the dropouts in this study must be understood in the context of confused aspirations and gradual narrowing of occupational options.

From childhood to the present, the women in this study demonstrated confusion about what they wanted to do occupationally and gradually eliminated jobs/careers on both the upper and lower ends of the occupational spectrum, leaving them with a narrow range of occupational options. No one specific factor accounted for this confusion and narrowing of options; rather, a network of factors contributed to the confusion, indecision, and narrowing of options. The decision to leave college is consistent with this pattern which began before they enrolled in college and continued during their enrollment and after their withdrawal from Benson Community College.

One factor that contributed to the ambivalence and indecision and narrowing of occupational options was the students' view that significant others in their lives did not meaningfully encourage them to pursue occupations requiring professional or long-term study. Instead, both school and college personnel seemed to expect these students to initiate any discussions about occupational and educational goals, whereas the students have seemed to expect that counselors and teachers initiate the discussions. The lack of voluntary guidance from these people was interpreted by the students as evidence of lack of interest and concern. At the same time, they received messages from their parents that it was up to their

daughters to make their own decisions about their futures and that happiness should be the chief criterion by which to make their occupational decisions.

Observations of the experiences of important others around them also contributed to their ambivalence about the relationship between education and work. They observed that their fathers worked at jobs they enjoyed while their mothers, if they worked at all outside the home (usually in the low-status jobs that the students had rejected as demeaning), preferred staying at home or were not particularly happy in their jobs. Few of the students had female role models, other than school personnel, who attended and completed college and then channeled their education into careers; on the other hand, some did have fathers who attended, and in some cases, graduated from college prepared for a career in a particular field. In addition, the women in this study observed that some people they knew got good jobs when they attended, or graduated from, college and some did not; other people they knew did not go to college and sometimes did not even graduate from high school but still got good jobs.

Having been told consistently by public school teachers and counselors that they should go to college and having accepted the assumption that college naturally follows high school, the students relied on the repeated messages from

their family and friends that the purpose of college is to prepare people for the world of work. Having also learned from their part-time job experiences during high school and from their observations of their mothers at work that there were certain demeaning jobs that they wished to avoid as life-time occupations, the students came to believe that college attendance is the ticket to a job or to better jobs. They began a search, generally during the high school years, for the "something special" in their occupational futures that would make them happy, accord them some status, and give them a sense of independence.

Lacking specific guidance in terms of their occupational and educational planning and lacking clear occupational goals, however, these students found it difficult to make educational choices, including choice of college and choice of degree or program. They enrolled at Benson Community College as a second-choice, second-chance, or last-minute decision, hoping that there they would be able to locate the right something for themselves. Still acting in the absence of much information, constructive guidance, or clear outcome once they enrolled, the students found that the community college experience was not particularly enlightening or useful in resolving their confusion and indecision. On their own and independent of others' advice (i.e., they did not pursue vocational

guidance and it was not voluntarily offered), these students entered a clarification process which can best be seen as a trial-and-error way of learning what they wanted to do: they enrolled in programs which sounded interesting to them, which were related to coursework they had taken in high school and found useful, and/or which would allow them time to think about their goals and simultaneously prepare for transfer to another institution.

During their enrollment at Benson, several factors contributed to their indecision and to their ambivalence about the role of education in their lives. Having generally experienced school as a social event in the past, they found that college was not what they expected; or if they did not know what to expect of college, they were somewhat disappointed in what they did find: it was difficult to make friends because most students left campus to return home or to go to work after and between classes, and social activities were either limited or offered at times which conflicted with their own class and work schedules and family responsibilities. In addition, personal problems or characteristics which they had experienced in the past, including inability to discipline themselves, procrastination, shyness, and/or lack of confidence, became more problematic for them. Having entered college with the purpose of identifying a job to

train for, not necessarily the job, they either became discouraged if they had not decided on what they wanted to do or came to believe that it would take too long to prepare for a particular job if they had made some commitment to an occupational goal.

At the same time, they equated having a job, being able to pay their own expenses, and being able to leave home with independence, and they clearly wanted to see themselves as independent adults. Experiencing doubts about themselves, about where education would lead them, and how long that process would take, other interests and priorities became more attractive to them and they found themselves on the horns of various role and identity dilemmas. Less than completely satisfied with the community college experience and still unclear about the relationship between education and work, they opted for the side of the dilemmas which did not favor education: they chose job, marriage, religious beliefs, and/or independent identity over the multiple role/identity of student/daughter/wife/worker. They decided to drop out. From their viewpoint, dropping out was the only real choice at the time they made the decision, although for many it was made with pain and regret.

Once they dropped out of school to pursue other alternatives and/or to think about what they wanted to do, the pattern of confusion and indecision continued. However,

the pattern was expressed in two quite different ways. The Career Program Completers, the ones originally most expected to persist to graduation, did not return to college (at least, not for a year after their withdrawal), even as part-time students. The CPC's, regardless of their earlier college goals or even their occupational goals requiring further education once they located jobs, felt secure in having located that "something special" that met at least one of the following criteria: it made them happy or they enjoyed what they were doing; they believed there were chances for advancement for themselves; they associated some degree of status or prestige with the job; they had their independence and were on their own financially, even though most were married; and the job allowed them to fulfill the role they had chosen in dropping out of school, that of wife/working woman.

However, for those who were employed full-time, new dilemmas reflecting their continuing ambivalence, negative self-identities, and narrowing of occupational options arose. On one hand, they saw that if they wanted to move up occupationally, they might have to finish their college education; at the same time, they were still unsure of what they wanted to move up to, what degrees or courses were necessary, and how to use their education and work experience to achieve their general goal of upward job

mobility. Observing that many women where they worked did not receive major promotions despite their education and experience and doubting whether they themselves really wanted, or had the ability to handle, higher-status jobs, they resisted returning to college. Instead, they convinced themselves that hard work and determination would help them advance on the job; in fact, most of the full-time employed women cited with pride how far they had come since their initial employment, despite their lack of a college degree. Furthermore, although all insisted that they wanted careers as opposed to jobs and associated the idea of careers with life-time work, they indicated that if they had children or in one case got married, they might not want to attempt wife, mother, and worker roles simultaneously. Finally, the jobs they aspired to within their particular work organizations were still relatively low on the occupational hierarchy overall and within that particular workplace; they tended to aspire to jobs only a few incremental positions above what they were presently doing. In these perceptions and decisions, they unconsciously restricted themselves to the lower rungs of the work organization.

In contrast, the informants in the two "undisciplined" groups, with the exception of Darlene, did return to take classes, either on a full-time or part-time basis. However, they still had no specific idea about what they wanted to do

with their lives; if they were working, they were working at those jobs which they had already rejected as demeaning, ones which they did not want to do for a lifetime. During their absence from college, some decided on occupations they wanted and others decided on the general area they wanted to major in or a general occupational field they wished to pursue; they returned to college, whether at Benson or elsewhere, and described themselves as happier and more successful students. Others, however, had still not determined what they wanted to do but missed school and felt that college provided them with the hope of escaping those jobs which they considered beneath their potential or ability; they returned to college. Once they got back in college, however, they did not receive any specific vocational guidance and did not themselves pursue any of the avenues open to them within the college to help them make occupational and educational decisions. Although in some cases they had resolved some of their personal problems or dilemmas during their absence from school, other conditions with themselves and with the college remained as they were before their withdrawal. In this study, these particular women dropped out of college again, still unclear about what they wanted to do in their futures.

Theories of Withdrawal

The students participating in this investigation

differed in several respects from those studied by Clark (1960a, 1960b), Ogbu (1974, 1978), and Willis (1977). The differences in students are presented below, and then the three theories of withdrawal providing the conceptual framework for this study are examined in light of the themes and patterns presented in Chapter IV.

Students in this study. The students interviewed in this study differed in several ways from those participating in Willis', Ogbu's, and Clark's studies. First, the students in this study are young female adults, in contrast to the public school males and females in Ogbu's investigations and to the high school males in Willis' study; Clark's study and London's (1978) ethnography include a consideration of community college students in general and do not focus on gender. Unlike the students investigated by Ogbu in his two studies, the women in this study are white and thus representative of the majority caste in America. The students in this study also lived in different states and country from students in the original studies from which the three theories of withdrawal were derived.

Furthermore, the women in this study chose to continue in their schooling beyond high school with some degree of belief in the opportunities available to them through more education; this belief is in contrast to the students in Willis' and Ogbu's studies, who oppose any further

credentialing and education. Unlike the students in Willis' and Ogbu's studies, their college enrollment was not legally mandated. The students in this study were also less involved with peer groups on campus than those in Willis' and Ogbu's studies; this condition was partly inherent to their living at home, to their leaving campus between classes to go home or to work, and to their maintaining friendships with students who were still in high school or who had left town to attend college elsewhere. They also had frequently established romantic relationships which provided much of the peer support they needed. Like the younger students in the other studies, most of the informants in this study lived at home with their parents during their college enrollment but were making their transition into adulthood.

In addition, the women in this study attended a community college which could probably be best described as serving students primarily from the mid-income bracket, as opposed to the working-class and blue-collar backgrounds of the students participating in the studies by Clark, Ogbu, Willis, and London. The students in this study also differed in that they were purposefully chosen to represent contrasting social class categories, contrasting curricular choices, and contrasting expectations about their chances for persistence to graduation.

Theoretical considerations. Theories of voluntary school withdrawal must be able to account for a multitude of factors. The following list of factors is derived from the three theories considered in this study and from the findings of this investigation. They will be used as a means of assessing the adequacy of explanations for why the students participating in this study chose to leave Benson Community College.

1. The students may have been influenced by counselors and other school personnel acting in a counseling capacity to re-locate in the high school and college curricula; or they may have experienced watered-down curricula, tracking, segregation, and lower teacher expectations. To these students, the relocation in the curriculum may represent a movement to lower-status options or goals. Discouraged and/or blaming either themselves or the institution, they may decide to withdraw from school. (Clark, Ogbu, and Vandett)

2. The students have observed others like themselves in lower-status, non-degree jobs and/or may believe the job ceiling is low for people like them; thus, they may question the link between education/degree and job attainment and decide to leave school. (Ogbu, Willis, and Vandett)

3. The students have received mixed or specific messages from parents and/or significant others regarding the relationship between job attainment and education; valuing work more than schooling and/or seeing no relationship between education and work that is beneficial to them, they decide to drop out of school. (Willis, Ogbu, and Vandett)

4. The students may deny the validity of the basic teaching paradigm, reject school and the mental labor and credentialing associated with

school, and decide to drop out. (Willis and Vandett)

5. The students have been encouraged to oppose the school by their peers, their own cultural observations, and their occupational and educational experiences; observing that there is a more attractive alternative outside school, they may decide to leave. (Willis, Ogbu, and Vandett)

6. The students demonstrate continuing confusion and indecision about what they want in their occupational, and thus their educational, futures; not being able to decide what to study, they may choose to withdraw from school. (Vandett)

7. The students have not been meaningfully encouraged by significant others to pursue occupations requiring professional or long-term study, nor have they had clear role-models in both education and work who can set examples for them to follow. Lacking encouragement and role-models, they gradually narrow their options on both the upper and lower ends of the occupational spectrum. In so doing, they may see the link between more education and better jobs less clearly and decide to leave school. (Willis and Vandett)

8. The students contribute, through the choices they make, to their own narrowed options; one of these choices is to drop out of school. (Willis and Vandett)

9. The students express a strong need for seeing themselves as independent adults; equating school with dependence (i.e., the opposite of work which is equated with independence), they may decide to withdraw from school. (Vandett)

10. The students experience personal identity and role dilemmas; these dilemmas make it hard to continue in school or make leaving school an easy thing to do, and thus they may decide to drop out. (Vandett)

11. The students may or may not decide to re-enroll; i.e., dropping out is not necessarily

forever. (Vandett)

Clark's theory of cooling out as an explanation for the voluntary withdrawal of students from school, as well as the theoretical insights offered by other researchers and theorists, suggests that both direct and indirect counseling strategies are used to convince students who are deemed academically inept or are perhaps from lower social class to relocate in the curriculum, particularly if they are enrolled in college transfer programs of study. Because such relocations may lead students to enroll in courses they demean or are not interested in, students may decide to drop out rather than pursue their goals.

Examination of the data gathered during this study, however, suggests (a) that the relocation the informants experienced once they enrolled at Benson occurred primarily through an individualistic trial-and-error way of discovering what might be an appropriate occupational and educational goal to pursue; and (b) that most of the informants had few meetings with instructors and counselors for either formal or informal counseling. Furthermore, the responses of the informants suggest that many of their educational and occupational decisions were made in the absence of much information and that they did not pursue and were not directly offered specific guidance relative to their goals.

The cooling-out theory gives special prominence to the role of various personnel of the institution in encouraging students to relocate in the curriculum to lower-status options or goals. However, in this study, the institution did not seem (at least in the informants' eyes) to have created obstacles for the students or encourage them to consider other options. Rather, the informants suggested that they had gradually lowered and narrowed their occupational and educational goals over an extended period of time, beginning in their early youth and continuing until the present. This gradual limiting of options outside the school curriculum is not directly addressed by the cooling-out theory.

For only two students did there seem to be direct pressure from the counseling department and indirect pressure from instructors to relocate them in the curriculum or to delay them from entering specific programs of study. One of these was Darlene, who entered a non-traditional program of study for women against the advice of various counselors with whom she had contact. In her view, she was also prevented from getting badly needed tutorial help because she was a female enrolled in a typically all-male program of study. Although Darlene was generally happy with her experiences at Benson, it was this latter event that discouraged her and precipitated her withdrawal. Carla, on

the other hand, was very critical of her experiences at Benson and felt that she was being put through a "maze" of "crip" courses to prevent her from entering a specific program of study. She charged that none of her teachers and counselors understood her and that they talked about her behind her back and created obstacles for her to overcome. In perceiving that she was not advancing toward a degree and that the counselors were responsible for this situation, she chose to withdraw from school.

In contrast to Carla, none of the other informants blamed the institution for their failings or their withdrawal. Instead, they tended to blame themselves, and their responses suggest that this self-blame arose out of their own identity problems and their conflicting roles, rather than out of institutionally imposed obstacles.

The dropouts in this study did express negative feelings toward two types of school personnel acting in a counseling capacity: teachers and counselors, particularly the latter group, on both the public school and college levels. However, it was the specific lack of vocational and educational counseling and guidance, rather than direct interference, from these two groups that the majority of the informants criticized. Examination of the data with regard to the "blaming" criterion of the cooling-out theory indicates a finding not directly suggested by Clark and his

study: counselors and others acting in a counseling capacity may unconsciously and unintentionally create an "obstacle" to getting career and educational counseling by expecting students to have made their decisions before they enroll, assuming that students want to make decisions on their own regarding their futures, and/or expecting students to initiate discussions about education and occupations.

The findings of this study also suggest that some counselors may not be aware of the goal confusion, its sources, and its dynamics that some students face; counselors may be, in effect, asking students to make occupational goal decisions first before offering their help to students. The student who comes to college expecting otherwise may perceive counselors and others in the institution negatively if the expected guidance is not provided.

According to Ogbu's job ceiling theory, women may have experienced watered-down curricula, tracking, segregation, and/or lower teacher expectations. Except for Darlene and Carla, there appeared to be little evidence of watered-down curricula or tracking for the informants. Most of the informants felt that they had been enrolled in college-preparatory classes during high school with some "extras" thrown in. Some, however, had enrolled in business and/or home economics courses which were primarily attended by

female students. The informants also gave little evidence to support the contention that they had experienced lower teacher expectations. Instead, they believed that teachers rarely expressed their expectations, except that their students should go to college.

The women in this study, like the students in Ogbu's studies, had opportunities to see others like themselves in lower-status, non-degree jobs. They observed few women who went to college and channeled their education into good jobs or careers. Instead, they cited various people they knew who did not get good jobs as a result of college and others who obtained good jobs despite their lack of high school diplomas or college attendance. In their own families, they observed fathers who went to work that they enjoyed and sometimes generated careers or jobs out of their college attendance or degrees. On the other hand, they observed their mothers who either had not attended college or in some cases had not finished high school until recently, or they had dropped out of college without obtaining a degree. Furthermore, with one exception, those with mothers who had attended college generally did not work until recently and then went to work in part-time jobs that the informants rejected, out of their own experiences, as "demeaning." From their observations, they also gathered that many women do not enjoy their work except as a means of socializing

with peers and that some women would, in fact, prefer, or "like," being at home.

The women in this study demonstrated varying degrees of awareness of occupational opportunities for women. On one hand, they consciously rejected as demeaning and beneath their ability and potential those lower-status jobs which they and their mothers had experience in. In addition, they observed the limited mobility of women once they obtained entry-level jobs. However, they seemed to deny a job ceiling for women, at least for themselves. Even though they gave evidence that women do not seem to advance on the job as quickly as men and that there is discrimination against women in terms of certain jobs and positions, they insisted that hard work, making their goals known, and personal determination could help them overcome any of the barriers against women that they perceived. They believed that things could be different for them; they could make "it" happen. On still another level, however, they admitted doubts about their individual ability and motivation to achieve their aspirations.

Unlike the students described in Ogbu's job ceiling theory, the women in this study were strongly committed to the belief that education leads to jobs or better jobs. Their difficulty, however, was in finding "something special" for themselves in the occupational world that could

be pursued through education.

Like the students studied by Ogbu, the women in this study received mixed messages from their parents and significant others regarding the role of education and work in their lives. Parents, for the most part, seemed to have yielded to the school (perhaps unconsciously) the responsibility of providing educational and occupational guidance; they themselves were not viewed as providing active encouragement of specific aspirations for their daughters. Rather, they seemed to encourage their daughters to make their own decisions and to choose something that would make them happy. Parents, friends, and school representatives emphasized that going to college is necessary to prepare people for the world of work, yet, as noted throughout the informants' discussions, meaningful guidance was not provided by significant others.

Unlike Willis' "lads," the dropouts interviewed in this study did not consistently value work more than schooling. Rather, they expressed a firm belief that education leads to jobs or better jobs. Their decision to choose jobs and other attractive alternatives over their own program completion was, in part, a reflection of their own confusion and indecision about what specific occupation they wanted. It was also a reflection of specific identity conflicts arising out of the cultural messages they have received.

The students in this study also generally did not reject the authority of teachers, the grading system, or school knowledge, as did Willis' "lads." Rather, the women generally accepted teachers in their various roles, considered grading and specific grading systems as fair, and accepted the mental work of school. They were even critical of those students who did not demonstrate similar beliefs. Furthermore, they did not reject mental labor or the credentials obtained through mental labor. In fact, they preferred those courses which taught them something about life and allowed for thought and discussion; they cited favorite courses as those generally considered to be liberal arts or humanities courses. However, because they viewed education primarily as the avenue to a job, liking such courses seemed to become problematic for them; it was difficult for them to see how such courses were related to an occupation or to getting a job. Furthermore, it was difficult for them to become absorbed in schooling when they had not yet determined what it was they wanted to become.

Instead, like the black students in Weis' (1983) study, what they seemed to resent was the lack of fair exchange between faculty/staff and students. They were critical of their teachers and counselors for not fulfilling their end of the bargain: for not making things interesting, for not being concerned or interested in their students, for not

fulfilling the expected obligations of their position (i.e., counselors were expected to counsel, but the informants felt that their counselors did not counsel; teachers were expected to show a personal interest in students, but these students felt that some teachers did not demonstrate caring about individuals). This criticism is not a disavowal of the importance of education or mental labor, as was true with Willis' "lads." Rather, the women in this study, by making suggestions for improving the exchange of knowledge between teacher and study were, in effect, demonstrating their acceptance of mental activity and the school's role in dispensing knowledge.

The informants in this study did, however, have partial insights into the way things are for women in the occupational world. For example, they sometimes questioned whether education leads to a good job, for they could all cite people who proved the generalization wrong. However, unlike the "lads" in Willis' study and the students in London's study, they maintained their belief that education would help them to find "something special" in the occupational world and to "move up" once they located entry-level jobs. At the same time, they observed women at work who did not move up, even though they had both experience and education; the informants denied that this phenomenon would happen to them. In fact, they all believed that

things are improving for women, yet most of them were able to cite specific examples of discrimination against women. Again, they denied that they would be victims of discrimination. The exception, of course, was Darlene, who had seen much discrimination in her pursuit of a non-traditional occupation.

Like the "lads" in Willis' study, the women in this study also seemed to contribute unconsciously to their own limited opportunities (or to cooperate with the way things are) by making certain choices. On the job, they tried to choose a middle ground of behavior and wanted to avoid appearing too brassy, too masculine, or too aggressive. They indicated that although they were interested in lifetime careers, jobs and careers might be interrupted for marriage and family; some also suggested that despite their career aspirations, they conceived of their current or future jobs as "something to fall back on." In addition, in discussing their occupational aspirations, particularly after they obtained entry-level jobs, they thought in limited terms about preparing themselves for future options: they hesitated to return to school once they became somewhat rooted in the occupational world, and they took pride in having jobs that had status above that of waitress or grocery clerk. Finally, they allowed their own self-doubts and self-image problems to conflict with both academic

persistence and occupational aspirations. However, they remained generally unaware of their personal contribution to their narrowed options. Unlike Willis' "lads," however, their own contribution to lower-status options seemed less related to their social class than to their goal indecision and identity confusion.

Although the theories of school withdrawal proposed by Clark, Ogbu, and Willis shed light on the findings of this study, several major factors are not addressed by these three theories. These factors are discussed below.

Self-esteem was of particular importance to these informants: they wanted to feel independent and self-confident. As is true for most people, they all shared doubts about themselves, but these particular women seemed to allow their self-esteem dilemmas to play a particularly large role in their educational and occupational endeavors. Although they felt good enough about themselves to reject what they considered low-status futures, they did not feel good enough to pursue high-status futures. At the same time, they felt superior to many of the students who attended the community college with them and were particularly critical of those who misbehaved, were not committed to their studies, were there just to have something to do or because their parents wanted them there, or were not very bright.

Another major factor not directly addressed by any of the three theories considered in this study was the goal confusion and indecision experienced by the informants throughout most of their lives. Although they were firmly attached to the belief that through education they would identify and/or prepare for "something special" in their occupational futures, various factors seemed to prevent them from finding what they considered appropriate for themselves in the world of work.

Primary among those factors was the lack of meaningful guidance and specific role-models which would give them some idea of how to make decisions and how to act most appropriately once those decisions were made. Their own experiences and their observations of others told them that there were certain low-status occupations that they did not wish to follow, but they had no way by which to judge high-status occupations, except in terms of the job requiring a special person that they did not perceive themselves to be. In fact, they seemed to have given little consideration to these high-status occupations and, further, were not actively encouraged by others to consider them. Rather, they were told in various ways that they should judge for themselves what they wanted to become and that they should consider happiness as a major standard by which to make their decisions. These messages, coupled with messages from

significant others that they should go to college and prepare for a job, created various dilemmas which they chose to act upon, often to the detriment of themselves or their goals.

In contrast to the findings in Willis' (1977) and London's (1978) studies, however, these women did not demonstrate oppositional behavior through absenteeism or misbehavior during college but rather demonstrated oppositional behavior in a form which can be seen as stereotypically appropriate behavior for women. They gradually lowered their aspirations, limited their options, and took on roles that are typical of women in the home and at work. Even though they were working and expressed a desire to move up in the occupational world, they unconsciously opposed that possibility through their choices.

The underlying assumption of the job ceiling and the counter-culture theories, and to some extent, the cooling-out theory is that there are some definite adult roles that people can go into. From the perspective of Ogbu and Willis, some students choose to lower their aspirations on the basis of cultural messages and experiences to fit the existing mold for adults like themselves; these students may <u>under</u> -aspire in terms of their own capabilities. From Clark's perspective, some students choose to <u>over</u> -aspire in

terms of their capabilities; these students rely on messages from those around them that anyone can go to college, succeed there, and obtain a good job. In this view, students pursue the dream of holding jobs with higher prestige than those held by adults like themselves.

However, the women in this study seemed to have had few well-defined adult role-models within their range of vision. Instead of under-aspiring or over-aspiring in terms of what they observed in the world around them, these particular women were confused about what they wanted to do and how to go about making up their minds. Lacking clearly defined adult roles for women which could provide them with a sense of how to proceed in making choices and plans and lacking specific guidance or encouragement from significant others, they seemed to flounder.

Although the cooling-out theory, the job-ceiling theory, and the counter-culture theory explain why some students may choose to leave school, the women in this study seem to present a somewhat different situation.

Discussion

Previous attrition and withdrawal studies in the community college have replicated studies conducted in the four-year college setting by investigating and establishing the demographic characteristics of students who leave, their reasons for going to college, and their reasons for leaving.

However, these studies have not merged this body of research findings into an explanation for withdrawal or used the model of student characteristics as a way of addressing the community college's mission and role or any of its major concerns or problems.

Furthermore, while the characteristics of those who attend and those who drop out of the community college are fairly well-established, how and why these characteristics may work to encourage or discourage persistence to graduation has not been investigated to any great extent. In this study, two major groups of drop-outs, plus a minor group for purposes of contrast, were chosen to meet selected criteria representative of some major characteristics of community college students. Although the participants as individuals had different personalities and lifestyles, it was clear from the analysis that they shared certain experiences and beliefs regarding education and current or future occupations. In fact, the themes presented in the previous chapter were generally consistent across the prototypes and social classes participating in the study. Although the theories of withdrawal informing the conceptual framework of this study provide insights into some of the factors influencing the informants' decisions to withdraw, none adequately explains why these particular women chose to leave school.

As southern white women born primarily in the early 1960's, the women participating in this study have grown up during a period of rapid social and economic change in the national scene. In particular, the women's movement of the last two decades has emphasized the right of women to pursue their educational and occupational goals and interests, as well as equal pay for equal jobs. Moreover, recessions and depressions in the national and local economy have necessitated dual incomes in many families, a fact pointed out repeatedly in the media.

However, on a more regional or local level, the traditional ways of viewing women have been slower in changing; "a woman's place is in the home," especially as it applies to white women, is still a fairly common belief in the South and in the locality where these women grew up. For the most part, these women have witnessed, from their specific viewpoint, their fathers going to work and enjoying it and frequently having developed a career out of their college attendance or college degree. On the other hand, they have observed their mothers (a) who have not needed or wanted to work and preferred staying at home until later in their lives when they sought part-time jobs mainly as something to do or something that yielded social benefits, or (b) who have had, as single mothers, to work for economic survival. Few have observed women who worked out of

commitment to themselves and to a lifelong career, and it is clear from this study that few have given serious consideration to occupations requiring professional or long-term study.

These conflicting messages, coupled with the emphasis in American society and from the significant others in their lives that everybody should go to college and that education leads to a good job, are aspects of the cultural scene which have influenced the women in this study. As individuals living in this culture, they have had to interpret, work out, and act upon these contradictions for themselves. In essence, as members of a new generation of women who have more opportunities available to them but few role-models to follow, the informants have set out on uncharted territory and have had to rely on the messages they have received from others, on their observations of others, and on their own experiences to make their choices.

Interpretations of their own experiences have encouraged the women in this study to make certain choices. From their part-time work experiences during high school, their observations of their mothers' work at home and outside the home, and later their own work experiences during college, these women have decided that some jobs are demeaning and unpleasant to them. They consciously reject these jobs as possible permanent occupations for themselves.

Deciding on some level of conscious awareness that they do not want to remain in the home as traditional housewives and mothers, they subsequently begin a search during their high school years for "something special" in the occupational world to avoid settling for what they view as "something less." The "something special," according to their definition, must meet certain criteria: it must be associated with some status or prestige, the people who work in these jobs should not be considered dumb or unpleasant types to work with, and the work must involve some use of their intellectual capacities. Even Darlene, who chooses a non-traditional occupation, associates some sense of status with being a female working at a "man's job" and views the field of auto mechanics as one which requires problem-solving and thinking skills.

During their high school years and as they approach high school graduation, the women in this study also receive messages that they are nearing young adulthood and that adulthood means independence. Being told that work is necessary for survival or is vital, they come to equate work and having their own money with independence; further, in the absence of any other strong message about college, they attach themselves firmly to the belief that going to college is the ticket to locating and preparing for the "something special" in their occupational futures.

Opposing cultural messages, however, both reinforce their beliefs and confuse them. From their viewpoint, they receive little specific guidance from school personnel, and their parents and friends encourage them to make their own decisions about occupational and educational goals. Furthermore, parents and friends do not encourage them in specific occupations and instead indicate that happiness is the standard by which they should determine their goals. The informants interpret these messages as lack of concern from school personnel and evidence from family and friends that they are independent agents capable of determining their own futures. "Happiness" is added to their list of criteria for the "something special" they are seeking.

As they approach the time of reckoning in terms of going to college, other factors interact to create additional confusion for the young women in this study. Most have not determined what their "something special" is; those who have chosen their general occupational goals are still unclear about the specific jobs they will prepare for in college. Most find it difficult to make educational choices and plans without clearly established occupational goals, and they are still receiving no specific guidance from others.

In the midst of this confusion, personal role and identity conflicts seem to take precedence over educational

and occupational goals or planning. For some, whether or not they have decided on "something special," being in love and wanting to be near their boyfriends presents a choice they feel they have to act on. With "happiness" as their guide, they decide to remain at home and to attend the local community college, although they previously may have wanted to go to a four-year institution and may have even applied to and/or been accepted elsewhere.

For others, the desire to be independent and the wish to be where they consider the action is determines their selection of a four-year college, even though they too may not have decided on "something special" to pursue; what will make them happy in the shortrun is their guiding standard. Later, when their independence and over-involvement in the social life of the institution they attend leads them into serious academic and/or emotional problems, they choose to return home to attend the community college because living at home will provide them a sense of structure and because they will have less opportunity to overdo their social life.

For still others, past academic achievement, uncertainty about what they specifically want to study in college, uncertainty about the wisdom of "going away" to college, and/or not wanting to be viewed as not smart enough to go to college influences their decisions to enroll in the local community college while, or until, they make decisions

about their educational and occupational goals. Finally, some choose to attend the local community college, even though they have been accepted at or wanted to attend four-year institutions, because they want to demonstrate their independence by paying their own way; they can refuse their parents' financial help, stay at home, and attend the community college more cheaply.

It is apparent in these choices that attending the local community college is a second-choice, second-chance, or last-minute decision, yet it is equally clear that these women do not perceive the community college as a second-rate institution, at least not at the point of their initial enrollment. Rather, they choose to enroll in the community college out of their own ambivalence about their futures and/or out of their desire to be independent, happy, or both.

Once enrolled in the community college with the primary goal of identifying what they want to do occupationally and then training for that particular job, the women in this study act on their beliefs, their emerging identities, and the messages they receive from those around them and from their work experiences. In making these choices, however, they are unconsciously and unintentionally contributing to a developing pattern of narrowed options. Initially, they find themselves operating at a disadvantage because they

cannot or have not made up their minds about their occupational goals, for many of their educational choices must be based on their occupational decisions. They both believe and expect that their college instructors, counselors, and advisors should take a personal interest in them and their goals; but finding that this interest is not expressed in ways they recognize, they become convinced that, like their high school counselors and teachers, these people do not care. In fact, their public school experiences encourage them in their decision to avoid approaching counselors and instructors about any of their concerns.

At the same time, counselors and instructors, who may not be aware of their confusion, its sources, and its dynamics, wait for students to initiate discussions of such issues and/or to make their own decisions. The students' belief that they must make their decisions independent of others is thus reinforced, and they continue to enroll in programs and courses in the absence of little information or guidance, hoping to find "something special" as they continue their enrollment. For some students, this trial-and-error process of clarification seems to work in that they find a general occupational area that they are happy with. However, the majority of the students in this study seem unable to establish clear occupational outcomes.

Convinced that education leads or should lead to a job but finding little specific guidance, they become increasingly ambivalent about their roles as students. As other attractive alternatives come into prominence, they again find themselves having to choose between various roles and identities. These role and identity choices are part of a general pattern of shyness, feelings of inferiority as students, and lack of self-confidence experienced since elementary school.

Finding that the college atmosphere in terms of social life is not what they expected and that it is difficult to be engaged with coursework with occupational goals undecided and with other alternatives presenting themselves, they choose what they consider more attractive alternatives over remaining in school. In dropping out of school, they unconsciously again contribute to the narrowing of their educational and occupational options.

Once they leave school, role and identity dilemmas continue, although in the work setting rather than the school setting. The informants who become full-time employees consistently and unconsciously contribute to the narrowing of their options by making choices that do not favor either high educational or occupational goals and futures. For example, though they insist they want careers in "something special," they indicate that marriage and

family might be allowed to interrupt or halt their participation in the workforce. Despite their desire to move up in the work organization, they set their sights relatively low on positions only a few notches above their present positions. Furthermore, although they agree that education might help them move up in position more quickly, they are not willing to return to college because of the time, commitment, and money involved.

Certain observations at work allow them to "penetrate" partially how things are for women. They learn that women with experience and education do not necessarily get ahead at work as men do with the same qualifications. This is perhaps further encouragement not to return to school. However, although they understand that education does not work in the same ways for women and men, they insist that such a thing will not happen to them, believing that as individuals they can get ahead if they apply hard work and determination to that goal. But again their own self-images and identities are allowed to come into play, and they question their own ability and motivation to move ahead in the work organization. In addition, like some of those still enrolled in part-time jobs that they find unsatisfactory, they persist in wondering about what role or identity is most appropriate in the workplace. In the year or so after their last withdrawal from the community

college, the women are trapped within a small range of job options conventionally designated as women's jobs, and they continue to act on choices in such a way that they contribute to their narrowed opportunities and to their emerging role as wife and working woman. In general, they are secure in jobs that offer some degree of limited advancement, require use of their intellectual skills, lack the demeaning features of jobs they have rejected, and make them happy.

For those who have not found full-time employment, returning to school seems more plausible, for they are still in search of "something special" and, despite their previous experience, still believe they will be able to make decisions if they are back in school. Some have resolved some of their identity conflicts, and some have not; some have decided on a general occupational field they wish to pursue, and others have not. Once they return to college, those who are still completely undecided about their goals find that many of the same conditions in their own lives and at school still exist, and eventually they drop out again. Those who have at least decided on a general vocational field describe themselves as happier and more successful students. At the end of this study, it was unclear whether they would be able to remain in school.

Although they are critical of counselors and teachers

for not living up to obligations expected of them, the women in this study tend to blame themselves, not other people or the schools they have attended, for their weaknesses, failings, and decisions. This self-blame is consistent with their desire to see themselves as independent adults. In believing that students are on their own academically once they enroll in college, that individuals must make their own decisions regarding their futures, and, later, that women can move up in the workplace if they as individuals apply hard work and determination to the goal of upward job mobility, they really have no other choice but to blame themselves, for they are placing control and decision-making in the hands of the individual acting independently of others. By believing that they are acting on their own, they can believe that they have reached independent adulthood.

This belief serves to perpetuate a denial of what they see happening to women in general; it acts as a limitation to their full understanding of the limited opportunities for women. However, in attempting to avoid what they see as limited opportunities for women in general by placing emphasis on their ability to "make it" as individuals, they ironically are making choices that limit their own opportunities. They are unaware of their personal contribution to their narrowed options; in fact, most do not

seem aware that their options have been narrowed.

Regardless of ability and social class, the women in this study are influenced by significant others and by the schools to reproduce an underclass. Like the "lads" in Willis' study, however, there is more at work than cultural and educational influences: these women have contributed to their own narrow range of opportunities through the choices they have made. This process of decision-making consists of the working-out of various cultural experiences, observations, and messages as they conflict or reinforce personal identities.

This study suggests that for some women in the eighties, the collision of stereotyped ways of acting with (a) the emphasis on education and careers and (b) ways of viewing the personal self may result in their unconsciously and unintentionally limiting themselves to low-status positions in our society. Although the women in this study clearly have accepted schooling as a means of identifying and preparing for the "something special" in their lives that would provide them with a sense of status, accomplishment, and fulfillment, they have experienced self-doubts and have been unable to negotiate the educational and occupational systems they have participated in. Furthermore, they have suffered a kind of "benign neglect" from significant others in their educational, occupational,

and personal lives who have been perhaps unaware of the confusion and indecisiveness these women are experiencing. Without clear guidance and role-models, some women may act on the new opportunities and emerging roles for women in ways that limit their own options.

Implications for the Local Institution

The pattern of confusion, indecision, and narrowing of occupational options demonstrated by the dropouts interviewed in this study reflects influences both inside and outside the institution they have attended, before, during and after their withdrawal. As such, Benson Community College, other schools these women have attended, and significant others in their lives have been unable to push them past the problems of educational and occupational goal confusion and indecision and personal problems and dilemmas, i.e., choosing job, marriage, religious values, identity formation, and independence over remaining in school. These problems are not ones which can be resolved in one brief counseling session or even in a one-day orientation-to-college session.

Two questions arise: First, should the community college, in this case Benson Community College, attempt to resolve these problems by finding appropriate methods to help such students (a) to establish occupational and educational goals and (b) to recognize the limits they

impose on themselves by the role and identity choices they make when they leave school? Second, to what extent should college programs be designed to "push" students rather than to provide opportunity; should these programs be proactive rather than reactive?

The answers to these questions seem to lie in the community college philosophy and mission. If the mission of Benson Community College, as expressed in its college catalog, is to remain that of serving the educational needs of its community, it should recognize that some students come to the community college needing and expecting specific guidance in both their educational and occupational futures. If the institution does not address these issues in a way recognized by the students, then it may have failed in its mission and cannot but expect that withdrawal rates will remain high.

Furthermore, if one of the major emphases continues to be the provision of vocational preparation and trained manpower for the local community, as is the current emphasis in American community college leadership, Benson and other community colleges should examine the message they send to the community of students they serve. It may be that too much emphasis on vocational preparation undermines the community college's goal of providing an avenue to higher-level educational and occupational opportunities and is,

instead, unintentionally encouraging students to exit the institution once a job becomes available.

In addition, if a goal of the community college is to graduate as many students as possible, Benson and other like institutions should examine those programs which offer both hope and help to disadvantaged students from the viewpoint that disadvantage may extend beyond academic, social, and economic difficulties. Regardless of ability or social class, the women in this study operated at a disadvantage because they did not know what their goals were, did not know how to make decisions and plans about the future, did not have any previous role models that made higher aspirations in both education and career more accessible, and did not know how to get the information they needed to make wise decisions and choices.

More specifically, the guidance program, as one of the chief non-curricular functions in the community college, needs to determine how many students enroll with no specific goals other than finding "something special" for themselves in the occupational world. It also needs to determine the extent to which current career counseling courses and workshops are not addressing the concerns of the students or are not using techniques appropriate to students in transition to adulthood. It should also investigate to what extent these structured counseling sessions are not long

enough in duration, are not known about by students, or are perhaps being avoided by some students for some reason.

The community college, and specifically Benson Community College, must also determine what is special about its students, e.g., it may need to recognize that the drive for independence as represented by leaving home and finding a job can be a major concern for young adults. Furthermore, it should become more aware of the implications for students of staying in the hometown and attending the local community college: conflicts may arise for those students who live at home with their parents or spouses; and jobs, marriage, and family may be seen as attractive alternatives, especially if students are near the end of their programs or if they have not yet decided what career or particular job they are working toward. Counseling sessions, whether formal or informal, should focus more on helping students to identify and understand the sources of their ambivalence, indecision, and conflict. In addition, counselors and others acting in a counseling capacity should consider providing more support for making the wisest decisions; or if students do not make wise decisions, counselors need to be available for further counseling support when the students decide to return. These counseling sessions should be designed in such a way that students not only recognize their value but also understand that they are being asked to think for themselves

in response to key questions and issues concerning their lives.

Two potential sources of help in improving retention rates and helping students to make wise decisions about education and occupations should also be pursued by Benson Community College and other community colleges with problems of student withdrawal. First, those who have dropped out can offer excellent insights into (a) what they should have done while they were enrolled to prevent the withdrawal decision and (b) what they needed and did not get. The counseling department should investigate, on a broader basis and through methods which encourage open-ended responses, the views of other types of students who have dropped out of college. Furthermore, it should consider using these dropouts in organized peer counseling sessions to initiate discussions about issues and concerns from those who are still enrolled but are possibly considering leaving school.

The community college in general and Benson in particular should also be more direct in identifying potential dropouts, rather than surveying people once they have left or attempting to predict who will drop out. Because students seem to avoid approaching counselors and teachers about their concerns and do not voluntarily discuss their possible withdrawals with school personnel, the best way to identify potential dropouts might be simply to ask

them, "Are you thinking about dropping out of college for a while or permanently?" This approach might be particularly helpful with those students who are giving visible evidence of confused goals and personal dilemmas, including sudden drops in grades and changes in attendance and enrollment patterns previously demonstrated. If the answer is "yes," the students should be contacted immediately by teachers, counselors, or other college personnel who can express genuine interest and concern and can provide appropriate guidance for making the best decisions.

Implications for Future Research

Obviously restricted to the examination of why particular sub-groups of white female community college students chose voluntarily to withdraw from one institution, the generalizability of the findings of this study should be approached with caution. However, the dynamics of the withdrawal decisions, as presented by these women, raises questions appropriate for future research.

First, this study should be replicated with similar sub-groups of women in different community college settings to determine how different factors operate in different localities at different times to facilitate or encourage withdrawal from college. This study should also be replicated with other groups and sub-groups in other settings, e.g., white and black males and black females to

determine if there are similar factors that contribute to the withdrawal decision. Of particular interest would be the question of whether changing roles and cultural norms and the growing emphasis on college credentials have created dilemmas for black students. Another useful question to explore is whether males experience the same kinds of goal confusion and indecision and whether the factors contributing to their confusion are similar to or different from those experienced by the females in this study. For example, do males experience similar identity or role dilemmas and do they act upon these dilemmas in ways similar to the women in this study? The 18 prototypes established by Hunter and Sheldon (Hunter & Sheldon, 1980a, 1980b; Sheldon & Grafton, 1982; SLS Student Prototype Manual, 1980) might be useful bases for establishing theoretical samples for consideration with these theories.

Further research should also be conducted with groups of women with prototypical characteristics similar to the women in this study but should include those who choose to persist to program completion or graduation as well as those who choose to leave school. Of major concern in such a study would be those factors that account for the differences in educational attainment in women of similar characteristics.

Moreover, future studies with the theories providing

the conceptual framework for this study might also include the perspectives of counselors, parents, friends, and teachers. One question of concern might be whether messages sent are similar to messages received by the dropouts being studied. Future researchers might also consider examining in-depth the aspirations, experiences, and attitudes of students from the time they enroll until they drop out or graduate from college; comparison of those who might be expected to drop out of college and those who might be expected to persist to graduation as they progress through the institution might shed further light on the three theories of attrition and might additionally help to explain what factors encourage or discourage students.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that more research needs to be conducted on the tasks related to making the transition from teenager to adult and how these tasks may create conflicts for the college student that interfere with college persistence, particularly for those who live at home while they attend college. An additional question to investigate would be the differences and similarities in how these tasks are approached by two-year and four-year college young adults.

Summary and Conclusion

In order to assess the three theories of withdrawal proposed by Clark (1960a, 1960b, 1980), Ogbu (1974, 1978),

and Willis (1977), this study has examined the occupational and educational aspirations, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of white female Career Program Completers, Undisciplined Transfer Students, and Undisciplined Occupational Students representing higher and lower social class who dropped out of a community college in the southeastern United States.

From the perspective of the eleven participants (representing those who would have been expected to persist to program completion and those who would not have been expected to persist) in this study, Clark's cooling-out theory, Ogbu's job ceiling theory, and Willis' counter-culture theory do not fully explain their decisions to withdraw from Benson Community College. Rather, the findings of this study suggest that ambivalence about the role of education in some students' lives, particularly as it relates to indecision about occupational goals, and ambivalence about self-identity create choices that students act upon. Unconsciously and unintentionally, they may gradually narrow their options over time. Withdrawal from college is but one step in this long process, a process contributed to, in part, by the mixed cultural messages they receive.

Factors which remain unexplained by the three theories informing the conceptual framework for this study are

discussed, and recommendations for community colleges wishing to improve retention rates are presented. Finally, implications for future research on voluntary withdrawal from college are discussed.

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Appendix A
List of Prototypes of Students Attending California Community Colleges

A three-year longitudinal study of 15 California community colleges and approximately 6500 students established 18 different types of students enrolled in three curricular functions. The three functions and 18 prototypes of students are listed below. Definitions and validating criteria are available in Hunter and Sheldon (1980a, 1980b), Sheldon (1981), Sheldon and Grafton (1982), SLS Student Prototype Manual (1980), and SLS Data Element Dictionary (1978).

I. THE COLLEGE TRANSFER FUNCTION

A. The Full-Time Transfers

B. The Part-Time Transfers

C. The Undisciplined Transfers

D. The Technical Transfers

E. The Intercollegiate Athletes

F. The Financial Support Seekers

G. The Expediters

II. THE VOCATIONAL FUNCTION

A. Career Program Completers

B. The Job Seekers

C. The Job Upgraders

D. The Career Changers

E. The License Maintainers

III. THE SPECIAL INTEREST FUNCTION

A. The Leisure Skills Students

B. The Education Seekers

C. The Art and Culture Students

D. The Explorers/Experimenters

E. Basic Skills Students

F. Lateral Transfers

Appendix B
Letter Granting Approval of Study

Benson Community College
May 23, 1983

Ms. Nancy M. Vandett

Dear Ms. Vandett:

Your proposed study of attrition of community college students is quite interesting and I am happy to report that you may use Benson Community College as the focus for the research. It will be necessary for you, however, to work out the details with my office. I would be happy to discuss the project with you when a mutually convenient time can be worked out.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dean of Instruction

Note: In order to protect the identity of the college and the informants participating in this study, the original letter of approval is not appended. The above letter, with the name of the institution disguised and the name of the Dean of Instruction omitted, is otherwise a copy of the letter of approval received.

Appendix C
Letter Mailed to Potential Informants

Benson Community College
July 27, 1983

Dear Student:

Ms. Nancy Vandett of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University has recently received approval from Benson Community College to conduct a research study of female students who have previously attended our institution. You have been chosen as one of the potential participants in this study.

In a few days, Ms. Vandett will contact you by telephone to ask you a few brief questions. You are under no obligation to answer her questions; however, we encourage you to cooperate with her in this phase of her research. The telephone interview should take only a few minutes of your time and will consist of such questions as your birth date, your goals while you were enrolled in college, your parents' occupations, your occupation, the location of your home and the high school attended before you enrolled at BCC.

On the basis of these questions, twelve students will be selected to participate in Ms. Vandett's research study. During the telephone conversation, she will ask if you are willing to participate in a series of three interviews to be conducted in August and September. You will be involved in a research project designed to gather new information about female community college students. If you do agree to participate as one of the twelve students in Ms. Vandett's study, she will ask you to grant permission for her to obtain copies of your school records. You will be assured of anonymity during all phases of the research, particularly in the final report.

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Coordinator of Admissions
& Records

Appendix D
Telephone Interview Protocol Used
to Establish Sample

1. Name _____

2. Current mailing and street address_____
_____
_____
Current phone #'s: Home_____ Office _____

3. Are you enrolled at Benson Community College during the current summer? _____ IF YES, STOP INTERVIEW HERE & THANK INTERVIEWEE.

4. What is your birth date? _____

5. What is your current occupation? _____
_____
If not currently working, what has been your previous occupation?
_____

6. Mother's occupation_____

7. Father's occupation_____

8. What elementary school did you attend? _____
_____Located in what part of town?
_____

9. What high school did you graduate from? _____
_____

10. What neighborhood/street did you live on during your childhood? (Get as accurate a picture of where interviewee lived as possible, although exact address is unnecessary--street helpful).
_____

11. What was your college objective as you began your college work at Benson Community College? (Ask for student to respond; then mark appropriate answer below.)

    a. pre-employment training
    b. preparation for transfer to another school
    c. in-service training

d. re-training
e. self-enrichment
Notes: _____

_____

12. What were your reasons (up to 3) for continuing to come to college after your first quarter of attendance? (Ask interviewee to respond; interviewer will mark appropriate points made.)

a. transfer to four-year college
b. extra courses while at four-year college
c. prepare for a job
d. prepare for a new job (re-training)
e. skill for home or hobby
f. personal exploration
g. personal enjoyment
h. it's a habit, going to school
i. to kill time
j. not applicable
k. get financial aid
l. to please someone else
m. don't know what else to do
n. other
o. only wanted two-year degree
p. improve skills in present job
q. couldn't get a job, so went to school
Notes: _____

_____

13. Interviewee's top two reasons for attending as of last quarter of attendance: (Elicit response of interviewee, then mark most appropriate item below.)

a. transfer to a four-year school
b. preparation for employment right after college
c. more skills for present job
d. decline to state
e. preparation for another job or career
f. personal interest
Notes: _____

_____

14. What curriculum/program did you wish to enroll in when you first began at Benson Community College?

_____

15. What curriculum/program did you first enroll in at Benson?

_____

_____

16. What curriculum/program were you enrolled in at the time of winter quarter, 1983 (the last quarter you attended)?

_____

17. When you attended school at Benson, did you attend primarily during the day (before 5:00) or during the evening (after 5:00)? _____

    Why? _____

18. Did you work while attending Benson Community College? _____ Doing what? _____
    Approximately how many hours per week? _____

19. Did you receive financial aid while attending Benson?

    _____
    In what form? _____

20. Would you be willing to participate, if selected, in a research study with me between now and the end of September? (Explain series of 3 interviews approximately two hours each--recorded, confidentiality and anonymity, types of questions).

    _____
    _____
    _____

    Times that would be more convenient for interviewing

    _____

    Would it be possible to interview you in your home?

    _____

21. Would you be willing to have your high school and college records released to me during the process of this research, again with confidentiality and anonymity maintained?_____

22. If response to above two questions is favorable, tell interviewee that she will hear from me within the next two weeks if she has been chosen to be a part of the study.

Appendix E
Information Obtained through the Regional Planning Commission and from Informants to Determine Social Class Standing

The following pages provide a summary of data collected from the local Regional Planning Commission, from interviews with the informants, and from the researcher's observations of their homes and neighborhoods during the course of this study. These data were used as the basis for assigning each informant to either high or low social class standing. Definitions and sources of each criterion indicative of socioeconomic class are appended at the end of the data summary.

Criteria	Informants: Carla	Informants: Charlotte
Parents' combined salary	$30,000	$48,000
Father's job & SEI	car salesman, 39.0	VP of advertis- agency, 66.2
Mother's job & SEI	bookkeeper 50.8	salesclerk 39.0
Father's education	12	14
Mother's education	12	12
Mean family income by tract	$21,000	$22,000
Occupational distribution by tract	A, B, D, E, H, J	A, B, D, E
Median value of owned homes by tract	$34,000	$44,000
Rent/worth of present home	$50,000	$65,000
Financial aid received	none	none
Researcher's observations of neighborhood	middle class but decaying	middle class
Researcher's observations of home interior	middle class	middle class
Informant's comments	considers self middle class	considers self middle class
Social class assignment	high	high

Criteria	Informants: Sally	Informants: Sandra
Parents' combined salary	$50,000	$46,000
Father's job & SEI	electrical engineer, 84	college instructor, 84
Mother's job & SEI	registered nurse, 44.3	salesclerk, 39.0
Father's education	B.S.	M.A.
Mother's education	B.S.	13
Mean family income by tract	$30,000	$31,000
Occupational distribution by tract	A, B, D, E,	A, B, D, E
Median value of owned homes by tract	$73,000	$62,000
Rent/worth of present home	$100,000	$100,000
Financial aid received	none	none
Researcher's observations of neighborhood	middle class	middle class
Researcher's observations of home interior	middle class	middle class
Informant's comments	considers self middle class	considers self middle class
Social class assignment	high	high

Criteria	Informants: Katrina	Informants: Kay
Parents' combined salary	$46,000	$56,000
Father's job & SEI	assistant to VP of company, 82.0	realty agent, 62.0
Mother's job & SEI	sales clerk, 39.0	library clerk, 44.0
Father's education	14	A. A.
Mother's education	12	A. A.
Mean family income by tract	$31,000	$21,000
Occupational distribution by tract	A, B, D, E,	A, B, D, E H, J
Median value of owned homes by tract	$62,000	$34,000
Rent/worth of present home	$100,000	$240 per month
Financial aid received	none	none
Researcher's observations of neighborhood	upper middle class	middle class but decaying
Researcher's observations of home interior	upper middle class	middle class
Informant's comments	considers self middle class	considers self middle class
Social class assignment	high	high

Criteria	Informants: Margaret	Informants: Roseann
Parents' combined salary	didn't know	$17,000
Father's job & SEI	railroad engineer, 58.2	minister, 52.0
Mother's job & SEI	teacher's aid, 26.0	school cook, 15.0
Father's education	9	B. A.
Mother's education	GED	15
Mean family income by tract	$19,000	$19,000
Occupational distribution by tract	E, H, J, K	E, H, J, K
Median value of owned homes by tract	$34,000	$33,000
Rent/worth of present home	$35,000	$110 per month
Financial aid received	none	BEOG
Researcher's observations of neighborhood	modest	modest
Researcher's observations of home interior	modest	very modest
Informant's comments	considers self lower middle class	considers self lower middle class
Social class assignment	low	low

Criteria	Informants: Brenda	Informants: Dottie
Parents' combined salary	didn't know	didn't know
Father's job & SEI	nursing aide engineer, 58.2	coal mine worker, 16.5
Mother's job & SEI	receptionist 44.0	factory worker 5.9
Father's education	12	8
Mother's education	12	8
Mean family income by tract	$26,000	$18,000
Occupational distribution by tract	A, B, D, E H, J, K	E, H, J, K
Median value of owned homes by tract	$37,000	$29,000
Rent/worth of present home	$42,000	$26,000
Financial aid received	none	BEOG, welfare as child
Researcher's observations of neighborhood	lower middle class	modest
Researcher's observations of home interior	middle class	modest
Informant's comments	considers self middle class	deprivation imagery
Social class assignment	low	low

Criteria	Informant Darlene
Parents' combined salary	didn't know
Father's job & SEI	independent manual laborer, 27.0
Mother's job & SEI	housewife, never worked outside, no SEI
Father's education	12
Mother's education	8
Mean family income by tract	$14,000
Occupational distribution by tract	E, H, J, K, M
Median value of owned homes by tract	$17,000
Rent/worth of present home	$225 per month
Financial aid received	BEOG, Vela, CETA, food stamps
Researcher's observations of neighborhood	very modest
Researcher's observations of home interior	very modest, spartan
Informant's comments	deprivation imagery
Social class assignment	low

Definitions and Sources

parents' combined salary--an estimate provided by the informants on the last-held (if no longer working) or current jobs of their parents.

father's and mother's jobs and SEI--the jobs last held (if no longer working) or currently held by the mothers and fathers, as reported by the informants, and the estimated socioeconomic index of those jobs as assigned by the researcher (see Featherman & Hauser, 1977).

father's and mother's education--highest year of schooling completed by each parent, as reported by the informants.

mean family income by tract--the average family income of the census tract the informant lived in as a child, with address obtained from the informants and the income data obtained from the Regional Planning Commission (based on the 1980 census). In most cases, the informants were still living in the same home and/or census tract at the time of this study. In the few cases where the informants had moved out of parents' homes, the average family income of the census tract where they were currently residing was obtained; in all cases, the average income of the two census tracts was similar and thus both incomes are not reported here. Value is rounded off to nearest thousand.

occupational distribution by tract--based on childhood addresses reported by the informants and 1980 census data organized by census tract by the local Regional Planning Commission, the predominant occupations (as measured by percentages of the total working population in the tract) are summarized by the following letter designations:

A. executive administrative, and managerial occupations
B. professional specialties
C. technicians and related support
D. sales positions
E. administrative support including clerical
F. private household service positions
G. protective service positions
H. service positions other than F & G above
I. farming, forestry, and fishing occupations
J. precision production, craft, and repair occupations
K. machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors
L. transportation and material moving
M. handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers

median value of owned homes by tract--based on childhood addresses reported by the informants and 1980 census data organized by census tract by the local Regional Planning Commission. In cases where informants had moved to a different census tract than the one where they grew up, the values varied little from the census tracts they had moved from. Value is rounded off to nearest thousand.

rent/worth of present home--the informant's estimate of the worth of her parent's present home, or in cases where informants had married, the rent they themselves currently pay or the estimated worth of their own homes.

financial aid received--informant's report of financial aid received during college, as well as other government aid.

researcher's observations of neighborhood and home interior--brief summary of detailed observation notes based on visits to the former and present neighborhoods of the informants and on interviews in their present homes.

informant's comments--brief summary of comments made by informants during the interviews indicating their views of their socioeconomic standing.

social class assignment--the assignment of each informant to high or low social class standing based on the data collected.

Appendix F
Letter Sent to Telephone Interviewees
Not Selected for Final Sample

September 6, 1983

Dear :

Your recent cooperation in the initial phase of my research study has been of great help to me. I appreciate your willingness to share with me your college and occupational goals and plans.

As I told you in the letter I sent you about a month ago and in our telephone conversation, I interviewed a number of community college women with the purpose of choosing twelve to interview in depth at a later date. I have finally completed this first set of interviews and have selected the women who will participate in the last phases of the research. Unfortunately, I was unable to include you as one of those women. Please understand that my goal was to choose women from a variety of backgrounds; your not being chosen was not due at all to "incorrect" answers. I wish I had the time to interview everyone in more detail, but I simply cannot do so.

Thank you for allowing me to interrupt your busy schedule to talk with you. I hope I have not inconvenienced you too much. If you have further questions about the study I'm conducting, please feel free to write or call me (phone number).

Sincerely,

Nancy M. Vandett
Doctoral student
Virginia Tech

Appendix G
Letter Sent to Former Students
Selected for Study

September 6, 1983

Dear :

Your recent cooperation in the initial phase of my research study has been of great help to me. I also enjoyed talking with you and learning about your college and occupational plans.

You have been selected as one of the women who will participate in the remainder of my study. As I told you in our recent telephone conversation, your participation will consist primarily of three in-depth interviews conducted over the next two months. These interviews will focus on your pre-college school experiences; the influence of your parents/family, your friends, and your teachers; the process by which you have chosen your educational and occupational goals; your school experiences, etc. The interviews will be taped, and you will be encouraged to listen to the tapes or read the transcriptions of each of the interviews at some future point; any changes or additions which you wish to make will be noted.

It is important for you to understand that you will remain entirely anonymous throughout this research. In all papers and reports based on my research, I will use a code or "pretend" name to disguise your identity.

In a few days, I will be calling you once again to confirm that you are willing to participate in my study. I will also set up with you a time (convenient for you) for our first interview. We will schedule the other interviews at a later time. If you have any questions concerning the study you will be involved in, I will be happy to answer them for you during this phone call. Finally, I want to get directions to your home or our meeting place.

Attached you will find two sheets which will allow me to obtain copies of your high school and college grades. If you are willing to participate in the study and to grant me access to your records, please sign the sheets (your full name please) and mail to me in the enclosed stamped envelope.

I am excited about getting to know you and learning about your experiences and goals. If you wish to call me for any reason, please call me collect at . I can usually be reached after 5:00 each evening.

I will be in touch with you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Nancy M. Vandett
Doctoral student
Virginia Tech

Enclosures

APPENDIX H
Informed Consent Form

I consent to participate in the study of community college women who have recently withdrawn from school being conducted by Nancy M. Vandett, doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. I understand that I will be asked questions about my background, my educational and occupational experiences, and my plans for the future. I understand that my responses will be compared to those of other women for the purpose of establishing cross-cultural differences and similarities. I understand that my responses, along with those of others, may be used in presentations and articles (as well as a dissertation) prepared by Vandett. Further, I understand that: (1) my exact identity will be kept completely confidential; (2) I may ask questions regarding the study at any time; and (3) I may choose to leave the study at any time.

_____ _____

Print Name Date

_____ _____

Signature Researcher's Signature

Appendix I
Interview Cycle #1
Pre-College Educational and Occupational Aspirations and Experiences

1. _____ (informant's code name), all of us, as children, have dreamed about what we would like to become when we grow up. Would you list for me all those things you wished to become when you were growing up? (Obtain list; then go back to each one in turn to ask the following questions.)

   a. What influenced your desire to be (to do) _____ when you grew up?
   b. Who influenced your desire to be (to do) _____? In what ways did _____ influence you?
   c. Do you still plan to be (to do) _____? If answer is "no," ask: Why not?

2. Working is an experience all of us share. Would you list for me all those jobs you had <u>before</u> you went to college? (Find out if these jobs were for pay or if they were volunteer jobs.)

   After list of jobs has been elicited, ask the following questions:
   a. Tell me about your pre-college job experiences which you remember as particularly successful or satisfying.
   b. Tell me about your pre-college job experiences which you remember as particularly unsuccessful or unpleasant.
   c. How did you feel about work when you first began? <u>Probe</u>: How would you describe your attitudes about work as you moved from one job to another?
   d. In what ways did your parents and other family members prepare you for work? (<u>or</u> for going to work?)
   e. How would you describe your family's attitudes about work?
   f. In what ways would you describe your success in these jobs?
   g. In what ways would you describe your personal adjustment to the pre-colleges you have had?

3. When you were growing up, what kind of job did your parents expect you to have as an adult?

4. What kind of job did other family members expect you to have as an adult?

5. What kind of job did your friends expect you to have as an adult?

6. When you were growing up, what kind of job did your teachers expect you to have as an adult?

7. What kind of job did your high school counselors expect you to have as an adult?

8. What kinds of career goals did your school friends have?

9. How would you describe your school friends' attitudes about work?

10. What kind of job did you expect your school friends to have some day?

11. Do you have any brothers or sisters? If "yes," ask: What kind of job did you expect each one to have when they reached adulthood?

12. If you could change anything about working or your work experiences, what things would you change?

13. What kinds of vocational advice did you receive from your counselors in grades 1 through 12? From your parents? From other members of your family? From your friends?

14. I'd like to find out a little about your school friends, if I may. Think about the people you usually did things with in school. If you were asked to list their names, approximately how many people would you list?

    a. How many of these were females?
    b. How long have you been friends with these people?
    c. Where did you meet most of these people?
    d. What are most of these people doing now?

15. Like working, going to school is also an experience all of us share.

    a. How did you feel about school when you were in it? <u>Probe</u>: How would you describe your attitudes about school as you moved from grade to grade?

b. In what ways did your parents and other family members prepare you for school?
c. How would you describe your school friends' attitudes toward school?

16. Tell me about your pre-college school experiences which you remember as particularly successful or satisfying.

17. Tell me about your pre-college school experiences which you remember as particularly unsuccessful or unpleasant.

18. If you had one person, one thing, or one series of events to blame for any unhappy experiences you had in school, who or what would you blame?

19. How would you describe your relationship with your elementary school teachers? Your junior high school teachers? Your high school teachers?

20. How would you describe your academic performance in elementary school? In junior high? In high school?

21. In what ways would you describe your personal behavior in elementary school? In junior high? In high school?

22. What part did counselors play in your school life before you went to college?

23. What kinds of courses did you take in high school? Why did you take these courses as opposed to others?

24. What subjects were your favorites in school? Why?

25. What subjects were your least favorites in school? Why?

26. If you could change anything about school or your school experiences, what kinds of things would you change? Why?

27. If you could reward the person or the people who had the most positive influence on you when you attended school, who would you reward? Why?

28. How do you think your family views the connection between education and work?

29. How do you think your school friends viewed the connection between education and work?

30. How do you view the connection between education and work?

Appendix J
Interview Cycle #2
Post-High School Occupational Aspirations and Experiences

1. _____ (informant's code name), in our last interview you discussed the job experiences you had before you went to college. Today, I'd like to discuss with you those job experiences which you have had since high school.

   a. First of all, would you list for me all those jobs you have had since high school? (Find out if these were voluntary or for pay.)
   b. What were your responsibilities for each of these jobs? (Refer to each job elicited from the informant.)

2. Tell me about your post-high school job experiences which you remember as particularly successful or satisfying.

3. Tell me about your post-high school job experiences which you remember as particularly unsuccessful or unpleasant.

4. How did you feel about work when you first began these jobs? Probe: How would you describe your attitudes about work as you continued to work or moved from one job to another?

5. In what ways would you describe your success in these jobs?

6. In what ways would you describe your personal adjustment to these jobs?

7. If you could change anything about work or your work experiences, what would you change?

8. As you began college, what kind of job did your parents expect you to have when you finished? Other family members? College instructors? College counselors? Friends?

9. I'd like to learn more about the friends you had while you were attending college. (NOTE: These same questions may have to be asked in the present tense

because some of the informants are currently back in college.)

a. Think about the people you usually did things with while you were attending college. If you were asked to list their names, approximately how many people would you list?
b. How many of these were males? How many were females?
c. How long have you been friends with these people?
d. Were these people primarily people who attended college with you or were they people you knew in some other way?
e. How did you meet most of these people?
f. What are most of these people doing now?

10. Of those people you usually did things with while you were attending college, what kinds of career goals did they have? (Make sure to ask also about those friends they may have had who were not attending Benson.)

11. How would you describe your friends' attitudes toward work? (Also ask about those friends they may have had who weren't attending Benson.)

12. What kind of job did you expect your college friends to have some day?

13. What kind of job did you expect other friends outside college to have some day?

14. What were your occupational goals when you first enrolled at Benson? Why?

15. What program did you initially enroll in? Why?

16. In what ways did you feel that this program would help you to achieve your occupational goals?

17. What changes did you experience in your occupational goals after you first enrolled in college? Tell me about them.

a. What influenced your decision to change from _____ to _____?
b. Who influenced your decision to change from _____ to _____?
c. Do you still plan to do/to be/to become _____? If no, why not?

18. Why did you choose Benson to help you achieve your occupational goals?

19. What kinds of vocational advice did you receive from your college counselors? From your college instructors? From your parents? From other members of your family? From your friends?

20. What are your occupational goals now that you have left college (<u>or</u> now that you have returned to college)?

21. In light of your talents and experiences, how appropriate do your parents feel your present occupational goals are? Your friends? Your college instructors? Your college counselors?

22. For a person to succeed in _____ (informant's present occupational goals), what characteristics would she have to have? Why?

23. For a person to succeed in this occupation, what abilities would she have to have? Why?

24. What characteristics would a male have to have to succeed in the same occupational goals? Why?

25. What abilities would a male have to have to succeed in the same goals? Why?

26. If you could have your strongest wish in terms of working, what job would you be doing five years from now? Why? What job would you be doing twenty years from now? Why?

27. How would you prepare yourself to get this job?

28. What job do you expect to be working at five years from now? Why? What job do you expect to be working at twenty years from now? Why?

29. In what ways would you prepare yourself for this job?

30. As you think about your progress toward your future occupational goals, what person's or people's opinions are most important to you? Why?

Appendix K
Interview Cycle #3
Educational Experiences and Aspirations
During the College Years

1. _____ (informant's code name), in our previous interviews we have discussed your educational and work experiences and plans. Today, I'd like to focus primarily on your college experiences in our discussion. First of all, why did you decide to go to college?

2. Who influenced you in your decision to go to college?

   a. What role did your parents and family play in this selection?
   b. What role did friends play?
   c. What role did high school teachers play?
   d. What role did high school counselors play?

3. What events influenced you in your decision to go to college?

4. When did you first think about or know you were going to college?

5. How did you plan for college?

6. What colleges have you attended? (Elicit list.)

   a. For each college named, ask: What were your educational goals when you enrolled at _____?
   b. How would you describe your attitudes or feelings about going to college when you first began? As you continued attending, how would you describe your attitudes or feelings?
   c. For each college named other than Benson, ask: Why did you leave _____?
   d. In what ways are these colleged different from Benson? (Ask even if she hasn't been to other colleges.)
   e. In what ways are these colleges similar to Benson? (Ask even if she hasn't been to other colleges.)

7. How would you describe your academic performance at _____ (each college named, including Benson)?

8. How would you describe your personal adjustment or behavior at _____ (each college named, including Benson)?

   a. In what ways would you describe your attendance habits at each of these colleges?
   b. In what ways would you describe your study habits at each of these colleges? Where did you do most of your studying?

9. How would you describe your relationship with your college instructors (at each college attended)?

10. Tell me about your college experiences which you remember as particularly successful or satisfying.

11. Tell me about your college experiences which you remember as particularly unsuccessful or unpleasant.

12. If you could blame one person, one thing, one series of events for any unhappy experiences you had in college, who or what would you blame?

13. What changes did you make in your educational plans <u>after</u> you enrolled at Benson?

    a. When did these changes occur?
    b. Who influenced these changes in your educational plans?
    c. What events influenced these changes in your educational plans?

14. When you enrolled at Benson, you probably took some tests and talked with some counselors and perhaps some instructors. Tell me about these experiences.

15. I know that Benson offers a course which serves as an orientation to college. Have you had this course? If so, tell me about your experiences in this course.

16. What kinds of courses did you take while you were attending Benson? (Ask also about other colleges named earlier.)

    a. What did you like about these courses?
    b. What did you dislike about them?
    c. What were your feelings about being graded?
    d. How would you describe your attitudes or feelings about grades?

e. If you had the power to make changes in these courses, what would you change?

17. Why did you withdraw from Benson?

Probes

a. What events influenced you to make this decision?
b. Who influenced you to make this decision?
--What role did your counselors play?
--What role did your instructors play?
--What role did your friends play?
--What role did your family/parents play?
c. What role did school rules and policies play in your decision?

18. What are your educational plans now that you have withdrawn from Benson? (NOTE: Ask also of those who have returned to Benson or some other college.)

19. In what ways has your withdrawal from college affected you?

20. If you could give advice to someone thinking about going to college at Benson, what would you tell them?

21. If you could give advice to someone thinking about withdrawing from Benson, what would you tell that person?

22. If you could change anything about your college experiences or about college in general, what would you change?

23. If you could reward the person or the people who had the most positive influence on you while you attended college, who would you reward? Why?

24. In your opinion, what can be gained by earning a college degree?

25. How can going to college help you achieve your occupational goals?

26. How can going to college interfere with your work?

27. What difference do you think it makes to be a woman working?

28. In what ways would you describe your experiences in looking for a job?

29. What can you learn from school that you can't learn at work?

30. What can you learn at work that you can't learn at school?

31. In what ways would you describe your self-image over the last 15 to 20 years? (Ask of those who have not volunteered much information relative to this.)

32. Why did you agree to participate in this study with me?

33. In what ways has the study affected you?

34. In the last three interviews, we have covered a lot of territory in regard to your school and work experiences and your aspirations. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think might help me as I analyze the data? Is there anything that you have thought of since I asked you about it and would like to add now?

Additional Questions
(answers written, not taped)

1. Approximately how much money do you make per year on your job?

2. If you are married, how much money approximately does your husband make per year?

3. If you rent your home, how much rent do you pay per month?

4. If you own your home, how much did your home cost when you bought it?

5. If you own your home, when did you buy it?

6. Approximately how old is your home?

7. Approximately how much do you think your home would sell for today?

8. If you live with your parents, approximately how much is their home worth on today's market? Or, how much did

the home cost when they bought it, and how long have they lived in this home?

9. Did you receive financial aid while you attended college? If so, what kind?

10. If you didn't receive financial aid in college, did you apply?

11. Approximately how much money per year does your father make? How much does your mother make?

Appendix L
Domain List Alphabetically Arranged*

* "I" represents "informant"

abilities a male needs to succeed in I's current occupational goals

abilities needed to succeed in current occupational goals

academic performance at each college attended

academic performance in elementary school

academic performance in high school

academic performance in junior high school

advice to someone thinking about attending Benson

advice to someone thinking about withdrawing from Benson

attendance habits during college

attitudes or feelings about going to college as attendance continued

attitudes or feelings about going to college when first enrolled

attitudes or feelings about grading or grades while in college

attitudes toward post-high school work

attitudes toward school (pre-college)

blame for unhappy college experiences

blame for unhappy pre-college school experiences

career goals of friends during I's college years

changes in educational plans after enrollment at Benson

changes in occupational aspirations

changes in occupational goals after enrollment at Benson

changes I would make in college courses

changes I would make in college or college experiences

characteristics a male needs to succeed in I's current occupational goals

characteristics needed to succeed in current occupational goals

college counselors' occupational expectations of I

college instructors' occupational expectations of I

college friends' attitudes toward education

colleges I has attended

courses taken at Benson

courses taken at other colleges attended

courses taken in high school

current educational plans

current occupational goals

cultural location

differences it makes in being a woman working

educational goals when I enrolled at each college attended

events influencing Benson withdrawal decision

events influencing changes in educational plans in college

events influencing decision to go to college

experiences in orientation classes at Benson

extra-curricular activities in school and college

family's attitudes toward work

family's attitudes toward education

family's occupational expectations of I as college began

family's pre-college occupational expectations of I

family's views of connection between education and work

favorite subjects in grades 1-12

friends during college attendance

friends' (during college) attitude toward work

friends in grades 1-12

friends' occupational expectations of I as college began

friends' views of connection between education and work

grades made in college courses

I's views of connection between education and work

job expected 5 years from now

job expected 20 years from now

jobs I expected adult friends to have some day

jobs since high school

least favorite subjects in grades 1-12

looking-for-job experiences

most influential female while growing up

occupational aspirations while (I) was growing up

occupational expectations for pre-college friends

occupational goals at initial enrollment in college

others' feelings about appropriateness of I's present occupational goals

parents' occupational expectations of I as college began

parents' pre-college occupational expectations of I

people influencing Benson withdrawal decision

people influencing changes in educational plans in college

people influencing decision to go to college

people who influenced changes in occupational goals during college

people who influenced occupational aspirations while growing up

people who had most positive influence on I during college

people whose opinions matter most in future occupational goals

people with most positive influence on I (pre-college)

period when changes in college educational plans occurred

personal adjustment in pre-college jobs

personal adjustment to post-high school jobs

personal adjustment or behavior at each college attended

personal behavior in elementary school

personal behavior in high school

personal behavior in junior high

pre-college attitudes toward work

pre-college counselors' occupational expectations of I

pre-college friends' attitudes toward work

pre-college friends' attitudes toward education

pre-college friends' occupational expectations of I

pre-college jobs

present circumstances of friends during college years

present circumstances of friends from grades 1-12

present circumstances of siblings

program initially enrolled in at Benson

reasons Benson chosen over other institutions

reasons for deciding to go to college

reasons occupational goals are different now

reasons for participating in this study

reasons for withdrawal from Benson

reasons for withdrawal from each college attended other than Benson

reasons occupational goals are different now

relationship with elementary school teachers

relationship with high school teachers

relationship with instructors at each college attended

relationship with junior high teachers

responsibilities of jobs since high school

role of pre-college counselors

role of college counselors

school rules/policies influencing Benson withdrawal decision

self-image

strongest wish for work 5 years from now

strongest wish for work 20 years from now

study habits during college

success in pre-college jobs

success in post-high school jobs

successful/satisfying college experiences

successful/satisfying pre-college job experiences

successful/satisfying pre-college school experiences

successful/satisfying post-high school job experiences

teachers' pre-college occupational expectations of I

testing/counseling experiences at beginning of Benson enrollment

things disliked about college courses

things liked about college courses

things that I would change about school

things that influenced changes in occupational goals during college

things that influenced occupational aspirations while growing up

things to be gained by earning college degree

things to change about pre-college work and experiences

things to change about post-high school work and experiences

things you can learn at school and not at work

things you can learn at work and not at school

unsuccessful/unpleasant college experiences

unsuccessful/unpleasant pre-college job experiences

unsuccessful/unpleasant pre-college school experiences

unsuccessful/unpleasant post-high school job experiences

ways Benson could help I achieve occupational goals

ways college attendance can help in achieving occupational goals

ways family prepared I for school

ways family prepared I for work

ways going to college can interfere with your work

ways I planned for college

ways other colleges are different from Benson

ways other colleges are similar to Benson

ways program could help I achieve occupational goals

ways study has affected I

ways to prepare for job expectations

ways to prepare for strongest job wish

ways withdrawal from college has affected I

when I first considered going to college

vocational advice from college counselors

vocational advice from college instructors

vocational advice from family and parents (pre-college)

vocational advice from family during college

vocational advice from friends (pre-college)

vocational advice from friends during college

vocational advice from high school counselors

vocational advice from high school teachers

vocational advice from parents during college

Appendix M
Example of Coding of Interview Data

The following passage is excerpted from the first interview with Dottie, conducted on October 13, 1983, in her home. The excerpt is lifted from pages 12-14 from tape 15. Following the passage is a list of semantic relationships and domains coded from this passage only. In this excerpt, "N" represents the interviewer and "I" represents the student being interviewed.

A. Excerpt

N: How did you feel about work when you first began?

I: Work? OK. I liked it. It was something new, it was a challenge, and I loved having money because as I said, my mom raised us all, and within our budget, it was just unheard of to be able to have 40 or 50 dollars of your own to spend on whatever you wanted, and I just liked the money. I loved having my own money and being able to do what I wanted to do with it, and then too, it made me feel good inside to work. It made me feel like I was accomplishing something, that I had a purpose, and my life had a meaning. I just, I really liked it.

N: As you continued working and as you moved from one job to another, how would you describe your attitudes about work?

I: They changed, of course. It's like, sort of like buying a toy: when you first get it, you're so excited and you play with it from daylight to dusk and then pretty soon, you sort of get something else that you like better, and then you start leaving this toy in the toy chest and going on to something else. And I realized that not only was having money nice, but it was necessary and my attitude about money changed because I, I just spent it - like I'd buy clothes for me and everybody in my family and things like that. And then I started having bills like gas money for school and things like that, and it was more or less something like, something that I <u>had</u> to do; if I wanted to have this, I had to do that, and, but, I don't dislike it. I think that it's, that it's what you make of it, and unless you're financially well off, all of us have to work, so why gripe and complain and grunt about it, but some days you can't help it. But I'm just saying overall, why dread it when it's just something you're going to have to do. And so my attitude about the purpose of it changed, and my attitude about money changed, and, then too, as I began working with people, I started understanding a little bit more, and learning to have patience, and things like that. So it helped me grow as a person.

N: How would you describe your family's attitudes about work?

I: My mother, when my mother and father separated when we were very young, we came to [this city] and really we just had the clothes on our back. We didn't have any furniture or anything else, and my mom went out and got a job, and she always worked long, hard hours and sacrificed a lot, and work was sort of a dignified thing. It wasn't anything to be ashamed of; it was something to be proud of, and it was something to look forward to, a way of bettering yourself, of bettering your life, and, so really, our attitude about work, if I could sum it up, would be betterment, a way of improving your life, your conditions, a way of going on. See, it's like when you start so low, I think you have more zeal, more desire to accomplish, and the mundane things that other people might--who were more fortunate financially--might look at as "big deal," to you it's a big accomplishment. And, you have a greater desire to press on because it's like having a dinner with a lot of courses and you didn't get everything you wanted in one course, so you're still hungry for the others. And I think that's what it - the way we looked at work, was like something dignified, something to be proud of,

something that wasn't always easy, and something that you had to make sacrifices for, but it was a way of survival, a way of getting better, and better clothes, living conditions, just a way of upgrading yourself. That was our attitude of work.

B. Domain List

In the list of coded data which follows, the first line indicates the assigned name of the informant, the tape number of the interview, and the transcript page number on which the data are located. The "x" is the data particle taken from the informant's response, and the "y" is the semantic relationship and domain that the data particle is assigned to.

Dottie, t15p12
x: having loved work when I first began
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p12
x: having loved having money when I first began work; I liked money
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p12
x: having liked having money when I first began work because in my situation, it was unheard of to have money of your own to spend on whatever you wanted
y: reason for pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p12
x: my mom raised us all, and within our budget, it was just unheard of to be able to have 40 or 50 dollars of your own to spend on whatever you wanted
y: characteristic of cultural location

Dottie, t15p12

x: its having made me feel good inside to work [when I first began]
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p12
x: its feeling good inside to work because it made me feel like I was accomplishing something; I had a purpose and my life had a meaning [when I first began]
y: reason for pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p12
x: attitude about work having changed as I continued working
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p12
x: attitude about money having changed from its being something to buy nice things with to something that was necessary to have to paying bills [as I continued working]
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p12
x: working becoming more like something I had to do if I wanted to have this or that [as I continued working]
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p13
x: not disliking work but thinking that it's what you make of it and unless you're well off financially, all of us have to work so why gripe and complain as I continued working
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p13
x: not disliking work but thinking that it's what you make of it and unless you're well off financially, all of us have to work so why gripe and complain
y: kind of attitude toward post-high school work

Dottie, t15p13
x: my attitude about the purpose of work having changed and my attitude about money changed [as I continued working]
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p13
x: as I began working with people, I started understanding a little bit more and learning to have patience; working helped me grow as a person
y: kind of pre-college attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p14
x: my parents separating when we were all very young
y: characteristic of cultural location

Dottie, t15p14
x: after my parents separated, we came to this city with just the clothes on our back
y: characteristic of cultural location

Dottie, t15p14
x: my mom having always worked long hard hours and sacrificed a lot
y: characteristic of family's attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p14
x: working being a sort of dignified thing; it wasn't anything to be ashamed of but something to be proud of, something to look forward to, a way of bettering yourself, of bettering your life
y: kind of family's attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p14
x: my family believing work is a dignified thing, my parents separating and my mom having to work long hard hours to support us
y: reason for family's attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p14
x: my family believing work is a way to betterment because when you start so low, I think you have more zeal, more desire to accomplish, and the mundane things that other people who are more fortunate financially might look at as no big deal, to you it's a big accomplishment
y: reason for family's attitude toward work

Dottie, t15p14
x: working being something dignified, something to be proud of, something that wasn't always easy, something that you had to make sacrifices for, but it was a way of survival, a way of getting better clothes and living conditions, a way of upgrading yourself
y: kind of family's attitude toward work

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