# An Exploratory Study of the Effects of Cultural Capital on the Successful Completion of a Two-Year Honors Program

by

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B.S., Stephen F. Austin State University, 2003
M.S., Kansas State University, 2008

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2017

# Abstract

It has been assumed that community college students are comprised of students who are either not ready for the rigors of a four-year college experience and/or students who are only interested in receiving a degree in a technical field. With concerns of rising debt, largely associated with colleges being forced to turn to tuition as a major revenue source, the validity of these assumptions merits a better understanding to how the economic atmosphere has changed the demographics of students at a two-year institution, let alone the demographics of an honors student population. Further, little-to-no analysis has looked at the effects of the ascriptive characteristics of students beyond parent's income and occupation in determining academic success in a two-year honors program. To answer these concerns, I examine how institutional, family, and individual level factors affect the successful completion of an honors program by students attending a two-year junior college.

It is the objective of this research to arrive at a better understanding of two primary questions: first, what are the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college; second, what are the determinants of academic success at a two-year honors program? It is hypothesized that exposure to cultural capital by students, prior to and while attending junior college, is important in facilitating academic success. Quantitative methodology is used to examine the research questions and test the study hypotheses concerning the effects of cultural capital on successful completion from a two-year college honors program. Data were collected from college students enrolled in the honors program at Tyler Junior College, a two-year college located in Tyler, Texas. The findings report that exposure to culture capital does have a positive effect on students' graduating from a two-year college honors program.

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It has been assumed that community college students are comprised of students who are either not ready for the rigors of a four-year college experience and/or students who are only interested in receiving a degree in a technical field. With concerns of rising debt, largely associated with colleges being forced to turn to tuition as a major revenue source, the validity of these assumptions merits a better understanding to how the economic atmosphere has changed the demographics of students at a two-year institution, let alone the demographics of an honors student population. Further, little-to-no analysis has looked at the effects of the ascriptive characteristics of students beyond parent's income and occupation in determining academic success in a two-year honors program. To answer these concerns, I propose looking at institutional, family, and individual cultural capital effects upon successful completion from a two-year college honors program.

It is the objective of this research to arrive at a better understanding of two primary questions: first, what are the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college; second, what are the determinants of academic success at a two-year honors program? Quantitative methodology is used to examine the research questions and test the study hypotheses concerning the effects of cultural capital on successful completion from a two-year college honors program. Data were collected from college students enrolled in the honors program at Tyler Junior College, a two-year college located in Tyler, Texas. The findings report that exposure to culture capital does have a positive effect on students' graduating from a two-year college honors program.

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# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my academic advisor, Dr. Richard Goe, for his assistance and guidance throughout my graduate studies at Kansas State University. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Goe for his comments and advice, which proved enormously important in completing my doctorates.

I would also like to thank Dr. Lazlo Kulcsar for an early summer phone call that changed my life by making me realize that I could finish what I believed could not even be started.

I would like to thank the other members of my advisory committee, Dr. Matthew Sanderson and Dr. W. Spikes whose comments and suggestions were invaluable in completing my dissertation.

Thanks to my fellow students, faculty and staff at Tyler Junior College for their support. Special gratitude is owed to Andrea Button and Emily Keane for their comments on my dissertation, and encouragement during my studies. I would also like to thank Darbian, TheMexicanRunner, and LackAttack24 for helping me keep my sanity over the last two years. I am forever grateful to my family and friends, whose love, patience, and care provided me with the strength to accomplish this work.

# Dedication

To Roger and Sheila Button for allowing me to ask why and never letting me be satisfied with any one answer. To Jackson Button for giving me the strength to finish. I have often wondered how individuals come to Sociology, and for myself I must blame you.

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

In the post-World War II period, public two-year and four-year colleges were a key institution underpinning the achievement of social mobility in the U.S (Haveman and Smeeding, 2010, Ogilvie & Raines, 1971). These institutions provided higher education at a reasonable cost, which allowed generations of working-class Americans to achieve upward social mobility and economic success. Then, in 1980, the election of Ronald Reagan initiated a movement toward political conservatism in the U.S. Reflecting the ideological principle of "limited government," real government funding for public higher education has been cut on a long-term basis in many states.

Another critical issue facing graduates of two-year and four-year colleges is whether jobs are available at the pay and skill levels commensurate with an advanced education. With U.S. workers competing with those from China, India, and Mexico, among other nation states, as part of the so-called process of globalization, the wages and salaries of U.S. workers are likely regressing toward the global average. Despite these structural disincentives, earning a college degree is still perceived by many as the principal means of achieving social mobility and economic success in the U.S (Haveman and Smeeding, 2010). Against this backdrop, two-year colleges have expanded by offering lower cost college degrees that are typically more narrowly targeted toward specific occupational skills.

## Outcomes of Degree Completion and Educational Attainment

While campaigning for the Republican nomination during the 2016 presidential election, Senator Marco Rubio stated that, "Welders make more money than philosophers. We need more welders and less philosophers." Interestingly enough, the Labor Department tracks salaries for 800 jobs, and states that the median wage for welders is $37,420 while the median wage for

philosophy professors is $63,630. Senator Rubio's comment attempts to advance a system of evaluating the worth of a college degree solely by the average starting salary, thereby eschewing any non-monetary benefits that might be gained by students or society. In effect, higher education is being narrowly reframed as a process by which students acquire knowledge and skills for specific jobs. Two-year and four-year college degrees that do not lead to specific jobs with sufficient salaries are portrayed as having little to no value.

Educational attainment is an increasingly important determinant of economic and social success in the United States (Haveman and Smeeding, 2010). Improving college completion rates among students who are traditionally disadvantaged in higher education is a promising tool to improve social mobility. The most obvious link between education and life outcomes stems from the strong correlation between educational attainment and labor market outcomes (i.e., earnings, occupational status, amount of time spent unemployed, etc.). When education through a four-year college is unattainable, a two-year college degree can be a bridge to labor force opportunities and access to social networks associated with higher-status occupations.

Educational attainment protects workers from low-wage jobs and unemployment. During the 2008 recession, the least-educated workers (those without a high school diploma) were four times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed (Hout, 2012). Between 2007 and 2009, workers aged 35 to 54 who had earned a high school degree had an unemployment rate of approximately 6%, compared with 2.8% for college graduates (Hout, 2012). Acquiring additional education beyond high school corresponds to an annual income increase of 20% per educational level; those with "some college" earn 20% more per year than those with a high school diploma; and, those with an associate degree earn 20% more than those with some college (Hout, 2012). Importantly, Torche (2011) shows that for Americans who obtain a college degree,

economic success is independent of their socioeconomic background. However, according to John Reeves from the Brookings Institute (2017), this is not the case for people who lack college degrees. Non–college graduates from low-income families face difficulty overcoming their limited social, cultural, and monetary resources, constraining their opportunities for economic and occupational success.

Postsecondary education also improves non-financial outcomes. Research shows that attending college is associated with increased marriage stability, improved parenting practices, and improved health outcomes (Attewell & Lavin, 2007; Herd, Goesling, & House, 2007; Schwartz, 2010). "Educational homogamy" -- having similar educational backgrounds as one's significant other -- is likely to occur among college attendees and reduces a couple's probability of divorce (Schwartz, 2010). College enrollment also affects the way women raise their children. For example, mothers from poor backgrounds who attend college invest more time and resources into children's education (Attewell & Lavin, 2007). This investment, including time spent helping with homework and the presence of books and other educational resources in the home, translates into better educational outcomes for the next generation (Attewell & Lavin, 2007). In addition, greater educational attainment appears to suppress the onset of health problems (Herd et al., 2007). Research suggests that formal education informs healthy living and develops habits that promote good health (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003).

Research suggests increasing postsecondary opportunities through broader access results in greater equity in college attendance in an American context. Attewell and Lavin (2007) tracked women who entered the City University of New York (CUNY) between 1970 and 1972 under its open admissions policy. Under the policy, every high school student in the city was guaranteed a seat in the CUNY system, which includes two- and four-year colleges and, at the

time, offered free tuition. High school graduates with a GPA of 80% in college-prep classes or ranking in the top 50% of their graduating class qualified for a spot at one of the four-year colleges. Those who did not meet at least one of these criteria were able to enroll at a two-year college.

Admitting students who are otherwise unlikely to attend college has important implications for their life outcomes. Students who are least likely to attend college appear to benefit more from degree attainment than their peers (Attewell & Lavin, 2007; Brand & Xie, 2010). Women admitted only under CUNY's open-door policy gained more from college than those who met previous selection criteria, showing a larger boost in earnings and homeownership 30 years after enrollment (Attewell & Lavin, 2007). The admissions policy also improved the rate of college attendance among their children by 5 percent (Atwell & Lavin, 2007).

Today, more Americans attend college than ever before. Between 1985 and 2011, the number of Americans enrolling in college increased by almost 60 percent, from 10.6 million to 18.1 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), undergraduate enrollment is projected to increase 14 percent from 17.3 million to 19.8 million students between 2014 and 2025. While two-year colleges increase educational access, they also "effectively maintain" inequality—they give the illusion of increasing opportunity while still preserving a top tier of postsecondary education (elite four-years) that are out of reach for all but a few (Lucas, 2001). As larger shares of high school graduates reached some form of higher education, socioeconomic class differences in access to selective colleges in the United States have grown. Affluent youth are more likely to attend selective four-year institutions, while the less privileged increasingly attend lower prestige institutions, including two-year colleges (Alon, 2009).

Sociologists describe the stratifying processes resulting from differences in quantitative and qualitative aspects of higher education as "vertical" and "horizontal" stratification (Charles & Bradley, 2002; Gerber & Cheung, 2008). The vertical dimension refers to the level or quantity of education received, number of years or "highest" degree. The different quality of education received (e.g., institutional selectivity, field of study, etc.) at a particular level represents the horizontal dimension.

Because two-year college degrees represent fewer years of education than bachelor's degrees, the stratification between these institutions is a form of vertical stratification. However, if two years of attendance at a four-year college or university are not equivalent to two years at a community college, then there is also horizontal stratification. Horizontal stratification may occur due to ascribed qualitative differences between two-year and four-year institutions and the type of degrees they yield. For instance, two- and four-year colleges offer different programs of study, with two-year colleges providing more vocational programs and general academic programs (e.g., "liberal arts and sciences," "general studies," and "humanities" majors) that may result in sub-baccalaureate degrees, but also in credits not easily transferred to earn a bachelor's degree (Bahr, 2010; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Roksa, 2006, p. 502).

The value of returns to years of education at two-year versus four-year institutions remains unclear. Gerber and Cheung (2008) theorize that heterogeneous returns for the same number of years of postsecondary schooling -- for instance, receiving a greater earning boost from attending one year at a public four-year college versus one year at a two-year college -- may occur for several reasons. In this case, four-year colleges may effectively develop students' human capital (e.g., cognitive and non-cognitive skills) or social capital (e.g., network connections). Furthermore, differences between the students attending the institutions influence

labor market returns, independent of the institutional quality, making it difficult to detect differential returns across colleges and sectors (Gerber & Cheung, 2008).

It is also very likely that differential returns to the same number of years of education may stem from a "signal effect" (Spence, 1973). Attendance at a four-year institution may signal greater ability or knowledge to potential employers than attendance at a two-year college, regardless of whether the education at the institution actually imparted skills more efficiently (Gerber & Cheung, 2008). Perceived differences in quality can translate into negative connotations of two-year degrees. Recent research suggests that employers perceive associate degrees as an indication of a lack of academic ability, initiative, or skill compared with bachelor's degrees, particularly when the local labor market is saturated by applicants with bachelor's degrees (Van Noy & Jacobs, 2012).

## The Role of the Two-year College

Since the 1970s, critical education theorists contemplated how schooling both mitigates and reproduces social and economic inequities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Gerber & Cheung, 2008; Van Noy & Jacobs, 2012). Sociological research on two-year colleges focuses on the tension between the democratizing mission of these institutions and the somewhat meandering route they offer as a path to social mobility. While these institutions increase college access by enabling more students to enter postsecondary education, they also exhibit low rates of degree attainment and transfer to four-year colleges. Two-year colleges are thus portrayed as a contested institution in which inequality is simultaneously mitigated by increasing educational opportunity and exacerbated by failing to improve equity in college completion across key demographics, such as race and socioeconomic status.

To better describe this tension and investigate underlying causes for the reproduction of social inequality in American postsecondary education, sociologists use history, culture, and social structure and examine the institutional development and functions of two-year colleges (Brint, 2003). They interpret individuals' educational decisions within the contexts of social processes. This stands in contrast to the traditional human capital viewpoint of economists, which holds that individuals make decisions about continuing their education based on anticipated gains in income, skills, knowledge, or the costs of investment, but do not fully consider the influence of social processes on individual preferences. For instance, sociologists acknowledge the roles that cultural capital (knowledge and attitudes that demonstrate belonging) and social capital (social ties of mutual acquaintance and recognition) play in sorting students into institutions and offering advantages to improve college success.

While sociology offers a compelling theory suggesting that two-year colleges aid in both the social reproduction of inequality and in opportunities for social mobility, empirical testing of these theories is complicated by students' "choice" of postsecondary institutions (Gerber & Cheung, 2008; Hout, 2012). Stratification in outcomes across students who enter two-year and four-year colleges is difficult to interpret due to systematic variation across two-year and four-year enrollees. While the word "choice' is highlighted, it must be noted that much of selection into postsecondary institutions stems from factors outside of the students' control, like family background and socioeconomic status. Students who initially enroll in two-year colleges are more likely to be first-generation college students, come from low-income backgrounds, and work for pay during college (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Characteristics like these are highly correlated with dropout behavior. For this reason, one of the key methodological concerns in the literature is the problem of selection bias.

Evidence for how best to capture selection into college type is unresolved. Evidence suggests that the effect of income returns to college education varies by race, class, gender, and cognitive skills (Beattie, 2002). To the extent that students are aware of these differences, group membership alters students' calculated returns and their subsequent educational decisions. Because most models of selection into college fail to statistically account for the interaction between individual background characteristics and expected labor market returns, most selection models are best suited for white men with lower socioeconomic origins and cognitive skills -- the students for whom the standard cost–benefit expectation of increased earnings through educational attainment apply -- and do not align well to the diverse student populations who attend two-year colleges (Beattie, 2002).

The disinvestment in higher education by states creates a new context through which sociologists will interpret the shifts in postsecondary access and completion patterns. In conjunction with disinvestment, there is a growing rhetoric of the importance of two-year colleges and the value of increasing educational attainment for all Americans. Recent evidence suggests that the American working class perceives an "absence of choice" at a "time when work is unpredictable, families are fragile, social safety nets are shrinking, and the future is uncertain" (Silva, 2013, p. 30). Students go to college, swayed by the college-for-all culture, but find themselves haplessly navigating complex bureaucratic structures, ultimately accumulating debt and failing to meet their educational goals.

Empirical research needs to acknowledge the economic and social contexts of two-year college students' experiences. Analytic models that do not consider the external pressures and obligations students face are incomplete. Students, particularly those from working-class

backgrounds, encounter a host of circumstances outside the classroom walls that make it increasingly difficult to remain enrolled and on track.

## Organization and Summary of Chapters

It is the objective of this research to arrive at a better understanding two primary questions. First, what are the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college? Second, what are the determinants of academic success at a two-year honors program? Upon examination of the literature review, it has been noted that educational attainment is determined by both the agency of the student and the structure in which the student is embedded. This finding indicates multiple levels of analysis. Although levels of analysis are not necessarily mutually exclusive, there are three general levels into which social science research may fall: macro-level, meso-level, and micro-level.

In chapter two, I will explore the relevant literature concerning the historical relevance of community colleges and honors programs. This chapter will further focus on exploration into the sociology of education followed by macro-level analysis to establish a contextual atmosphere by which universities as social actors interact.

In chapter three, I will turn to meso- and micro-level perspectives on education and educational attainment, including leading theories on the role of education in stratification and socioeconomics, followed by the characteristics of two-year college students, what determines their success in a program, in general, and in an honors program, in particular.

Chapter four will include a statement of research questions and study hypothesis. The findings of the literature review will then be applied to these questions. The key purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the relevant points of the literature review, describe their implications for this research, and state the research questions and/or hypotheses that will be tested in this

research. As noted above, these key questions concern: What are the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college? What are the determinants of academic success at a two-year honors program? From the literature review I will propose a number of cultural capital variables while accounting for, both ascriptive and achievement-based variables that influence individual students in pursuit of successful completion with an honors education.

The fifth chapter will describe the research methods that will be used to address these questions. Here I will discuss the research design, unit of analysis and study population. This will be followed by a description of the methods that will be used for sampling, data collection, and measurement of study variables and the analysis of study data. Chapter six will contain analysis of descriptive characteristics of honors students followed by regression analysis of the predictiveness of cultural capital variables upon individual ability to successfully graduate from an honors program. Chapter seven will explore a general discussion of the findings, summary of the hypothesis results, as well as, implications for future research.

# Chapter 2 - Education, Honors Programs, and Historical Relevance

## History of Community Colleges

The foundation for the creation of the community college system was first laid when congress passed the Morrill Act in 1862 (Ogilvie & Raines, 1971). This piece of legislation was founded under the belief that all citizens should have access to higher education through a philosophy focused on "helping people to help themselves" (Ogilvie & Raines. 1971, p. 426). The Morrill Act allowed for the creation of colleges in the United States by using proceeds from federal land sales, giving them the name of land grant institutions. These newly formed universities were given the mandate to prepare students for careers in agriculture, engineering and military science.

In his paper, "An Early Upward Extension of Secondary Education", Haggard notes that it became apparent that some means were needed to bridge the span between high schools and universities (Ogilvie & Raines, 1975). Students who sought a traditional liberal education could easily sign up to public and private colleges. However, Haggard notes two problems concerning these public and private colleges. First, these traditional institutions generally did not address the need for trained workers to serve the industries that were emerging in the first decades of the 20$^{th}$ century (Ogilvie & Raines, 1975). Further, they did not provide enough enrollment to capture the new demand caused by additional citizen's seeking a higher education (Ogilvie & Raines, 1975). This growing pressure to train workers, combined with the growing importance of science and technology, gave rise to the creation of two-year colleges that combined traditional liberal arts education with college level vocational instruction that prepares people to work in a trade or craft. These newly formed two-year institutions were usually branches of either local school districts or universities.

It is within this context that Tyler Junior College, the population from which the subjects were surveyed for this research, was established. According to the History & Heritage section from the TJC website, "On Sept. 17, 1926, TJC officially opened its doors in Tyler High School, with 93 students and nine faculty members… TJC gave residents of the Tyler area access to quality higher education, offering limited courses in traditional liberal arts and pragmatic courses in public school music and home economics."

Nationally, but specifically in Texas, contemporary community colleges face numerous challenges as they enter their second century of service. Haggard notes that American higher education is evolving from a European based model to something that has not yet been fully defined (Ogilvie & Raines, 1975). However, while the contemporary role of community colleges role has not yet fully materialized, Gleazer contends that that the historical ability of these institutions to adapt to changing conditions may be their greatest property. Gleazer argues that the hallmark of community colleges has always been their ability to respond in a flexible and rapid fashion to learners' needs (Ogilvie & Raines, 1975).

The concerns of Haggard and Gleazer in 1975 have largely come to fruition in the contemporary economic period. Presently, community colleges are being forced to rapidly adapt to significant challenges in the form of limited funding in combination with substantial enrollment growth. According to Mathew Watkins (2017) article "Universities Face Funding Cuts of 6 Percent to 10 Percent in Senate Plan" in the *Texas Tribune*, "community colleges collectively now get about $900 million a year from the state, accounting for less than a quarter of their budgets, which are mostly funded by tuition and property taxes. That amount would drop by about $18 million under the budget passed by the Texas House in 2017, and the Senate budget would cut almost $20 million." According to the Community College Research Center (2017)

under their Community College FAQs, "in Fall of 2015, 38 percent of undergraduate students attended public and private two-year colleges. Among all students who completed a degree at a four-year college in 2015–16, 49 percent had enrolled at a two-year college in the previous 10 years. Texas had the most former community college students among bachelor's degree earners in 2015-16, with 75 percent." Because of the changes in the economic environment, community colleges have had to find new ways to lure in students from new demographics in an atmosphere of increasing competition for valuable tuition dollars. One such strategy, that has historically produced success, is the creation of a community college honors program. In the next section I will cover the history and creation of the honors program.

## The Development of Modern Honors Programs

Long (2002) provides an initial analysis of honors programs that has helped to frame the investigational approach used in this current study. Honors programs exist at both two-year and four-year institutions, and the incentive to attract "high-achieving" students in order to create both a strong academic core within the institution, as well as the desire to produce a successful labor market participant to demonstrate the effectiveness of the institution, are part of the overall ranking of higher education as a rational response to the demands of an increasingly specialized workforce – an area I address later in this chapter.

Modern honors programs were established in U.S. institutions of higher education in the 1920's and were initially based on the vision of Frank Aydelotte, president of Swarthmore College. It was Aydelotte's desire to diversify and individualize college programming in order to allow the best and brightest students to excel within a growing enrollment and increasingly homogenized program that catered to the average student (Carnicom, 2011). Aydelotte had

noticed that as college enrollment grew, expansion came at a cost, particularly for students of high ability (Carnicom, 2011).

Since this time there have been two periods of growth in the number and scale of these programs. In his article "Attracting the Best: The Use of Honors Programs to Compete for Students", Long (2002) notes that the first period of growth happened during the buildup of the Cold War as a U.S. response to the launching of the Soviet's Sputnik satellite. The second expansion occurred during the latter half of the twentieth century, when colleges began to view honors programs as a way to draw talented students to their campuses during a time of increased competition for students (Long, 2002; Baker, Reardon, & Riordon, 2000). Today, according to the National Collegiate Honors Council, there are nearly 1,000 honors programs in practice in public and private colleges nationwide.

Honors programs generally exist in two forms -- university-wide honors and departmental honors. University wide programs are open to all academically eligible students regardless of major or department and primarily focus on general education requirements. In contrast, departmental programs target students in a specific field or area of study. The focus of this research will be university-wide programs, particularly at two-year institutions.

Competition among states for the best students has grown substantially in recent decades, due in part to a shift in policy from traditional need-based aid to merit-based support. According to McPherson and Schapiro (1998), during the 1980s, non-need-based aid grew 13 percent at private colleges, while need-based aid grew only 10 percent. This trend was more prevalent at public four-year institutions, where non-need-based aid grew at an annual rate of 12 percent while need-based aid grew only 6 percent. Increasingly, state legislatures have voiced fears about losing their best students to other states during and after the college years. The authors note that

according to a 1999 report from the Education Commission of the States, sixteen states had initiated some form of performance-based college tuition assistance program, ten of which have been started since 1997 (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998).

Increased competition has placed greater emphasis upon the attainment and retention of high-quality students. In order to attract, retain, and fully engage the most academically talented students, many colleges afford them an opportunity to enroll in an honors program (Baker, Reardon, and Riordan, 2000; Denk 1998; Geiger, 2000, 2002; Popova and Zakharova, 2011; Robinson, 1997). Modern honors programs are typically characterized by small classes and more rigorous courses of study, often taught by senior faculty who can challenge students and promote engagement, thereby fostering thinking, creativity, and a deeper appreciation and understanding of the subject matter.

Admission to these programs is typically competitive. The decision to accept or reject a candidate, in most cases, rests primarily on the strength of the student's academic record -- their high school grade point average (GPA), class rank, and scores on standardized college admissions tests such as the SAT and the ACT (Achterberg, 2005; Austin, 1970; Brown, 2001; Driscoll, 2011; Jenkins-Friedman, 1986; Stoller, 2004). Some programs also base decisions, in part, on additional criteria, such as involvement in extracurricular activities, letters of recommendation, interviews, or a personal essay (Freyman, 2005). Generally, a minimum grade point average and/or a minimum test score is required for admission (Brown, 2001; Long, 2002; Pehlke, 2003), but programs vary considerably in what is considered acceptable (Achterberg, 2005; Digby, 2005; Geiger, 2002; Kaczvinsky, 2007).

Perhaps the one generalization that can be made is that students eligible for enrollment in a particular college's honors program must be in some way superior to candidates acceptable for

admission into the institution's regular program (Achterberg, 2005; Stoller, 2004). On average, an honors program represents only about 6 percent of the total enrollment of the institution (Driscoll, 2011). Furthermore, the relative importance placed on grade point average versus test scores is not uniform across programs. When the applicant's credentials are inconsistent, programs differ on whether exceptional performance on the one criterion can offset poor performance on the other (Stoller 2004). While some admissions officers might consider inconsistencies as a red flag, other programs may be more lenient in admissions criteria. Articulation agreements outlining consistent requirements in honors program admissions and participation may play a role in gradually closing the gap between various colleges' honors entrance criteria.

Honors programs, in their modern form at both four-year and two-year colleges, have a relatively recent history. The use of these programs by host institutions is, in part, connected to the larger historical process of two-year and four-year colleges transforming from serving local markets to a centralized national one. In addition to the increased number of "standard" students as higher education evolved to meet increased needs, the ability to distinguish between the types of students in a standardized market also became important.

Honors programs at two-year institutions, in particular, help to prevent the "brain drain" that can occur when high-achieving high school students begin to look for post-secondary school options. This advantage, however, can also potentially harm standard students that find themselves unable to access the institutional resources (faculty, courses, and research training) that has been reserved for honors students (Long, 2002). From Long's research, the majority of two-year colleges that have honors programs have a relatively short history – on average, the age for established programs is only 11 years. In addition, less than ten percent have any honors

programs at all, and the majority were established within the past decade. These programs contribute to a larger student population at public two-year colleges, and are disproportionately located in the Mideast, Great Lakes, and Southwest regions – the most recent programs are located in the Plains and Southwest (Long, 2002). Finally, the use of scholarships and competitive nature of the programs does indeed contribute to the ability to attract high-achieving students from both the immediate rural and closer (larger) metro areas (Long, 2002).

## Macro-Level and Context

In the preface to his book, *Perspectives on the Community-Junior College*, Ogilvie (1971) states, "To interpret written material out of the context of time and place, especially when that material is related to community college movement, can lead to misconceptions of the developmental pattern and current status of the community college." I agree heartedly with Ogilvie's statement and it is for this reason that I must introduce the literature aimed at the very product for which institutions of higher education exist-- specifically the "creation" of the university student (high-achieving or otherwise).

A review of the literature indicates that there are a number of macro-level studies with applicability to understanding the two research questions guiding this research concerned. Macro-level analyses generally trace the outcomes of interactions, such as economic or other resource transfer interactions over a large population. An important concern at the macro-level is the role of education in society and as a factor related to the class structure in which the student is embedded. This literature provides a framework for understanding the role that two-year colleges serve in the U.S. stratification system as linked to public policy and the form of capitalism that is currently practiced in this country.

## Theoretical Orientations to the Sociology of Education

As early theorists who addressed sociological issues related to education, Emile Durkheim (1956, 1961, & 1977) and Max Weber (1946) focused on issues relating to social control, concentrating their efforts on establishing how educational systems produced competent citizens, reinforced dominant ideologies, and provided status markers for individuals.

Lawerence Saha (1997) notes that Durkheim was both a sociologist and a pedagogist, a combination that provided him with keen insights into the crucial role of education in societies. The sociology of education was birthed in the work of Durkheim, particularly his work *Education and Sociology* (1956). Durkheim provided keen insight into the relationship between societies and their educational structures. Durkheim believed that education was central to the continuation of a society; therefore, his writings centered on social order, the factors that gave rise to social order, and the social consequences when that order breaks down. He also examined the connections between education and social institutions such as religion. Durkheim promoted a functionalist view, and his analyses of the roles of education in socialization have provided countless research and theoretical articles.

Although Weber did not specifically address education in his writings, his work on bureaucracy and rationalization does pertain to education (Corwin 1970). School systems in the United States rapidly became more bureaucratized in the first half of the twentieth century; and, Weber's writings about bureaucracy and the salience of rationalization played a central role in analyzing how school systems were organized. Corwin notes that Weber added to Marx's class analysis as the basis of society by using power and status. Education played an important role in generating power and status, but also fueled conflict with those who had less. Weber's notion of *Verstehen* encouraged sociologists to look at the subjective meanings people experience,

including that which emerges from membership in organizations; this orientation has yielded many sociological studies on the inner lives of schools and teachers (Metz, 2000). Lawerence J. Saha and J. Zubrycki (1997:17) concluded, "Weber has been relatively neglected by sociologists of education" because "he never developed a unified theory of society". This assertion may be somewhat overstated given all the studies employing Weber's ideas on bureaucracy and rationalization and his differentiation of class, status, and power.

In his analyses of capitalism, Marx (1964; 1977) provided little direct analysis of education other than to note its role in perpetuating unequal class systems. It is also noteworthy, that Marx's views on education included aspects of functionalism in that he believed that economic institutions dominated and education served an important socialization function in capitalist societies (Saha and Zubrzycki, 1997). Within societies organized under the capitalist mode of production, schools inculcate appropriate values and socialize students of different class positions with the appropriate knowledge, discipline and skills required to be productive workers in the capitalist market economy and reproduce the class structure. Marx did recognize, however, that the cost of training (i.e., education) was a component of the value of labor (Marx, 1977: p.375). As capitalism evolved and became based on more complex technology, education became increasingly important in the development and maintenance of the "productive" worker under capitalism. This analysis has elucidated two important facets of the relationship between the educational system and the capitalist market economy. First, the educational system must train students with the capacity, skills and discipline to become productive workers in the capitalist market economy. This need provides a structural incentive for owners of capitalist firms to attempt to control and shape the educational system to meets their needs for productive workers and knowledge that can lead to innovation and productivity gains. Second, the cost of

education affects the amount of surplus value produced and ultimately the amount of profit realized by owners of firms. This creates a structural incentive to lower the overall cost of education at a macro level. I now turn to examining how stratification and inequality within the educational system are shaped by the needs of the capitalist economy.

In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith (1776) formulated the basis of what was later to become the science of human capital. Over the next two centuries, two schools of thought emerged. The first school of thought distinguished between the acquired capacities that were classified as capital and the human beings themselves, who were not. A second school of thought claimed that human beings themselves were capital. In modern Human Capital Theory, all human behavior is based on the economic self-interest of individuals operating within freely competitive markets. Other forms of behavior are excluded or treated as distortions of the model. Socio-Economics studies how economic activity affects and is shaped by social processes. The "Socio-Economic Perspective" refers to theoretical arguments that emphasize the role of education as a means of preparing workers for participation in a capitalist market economy.

Key proponents of socio-economic perspective include Bowles and Gintis (1976), who argued that schools of the modern world create personality types which are compatible with the relationships of dominance and subordination within a capitalist economy. Utilizing their labor potential, pupils exchange the product of their labor (i.e., school work) for grades or examination certificates which basically represent metaphors for future wages (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Thus, students are transformed via education into commodities (i.e., trained laborers) to be sold in the market place.

According to Bowles and Gintis, the problem with human capital theory is that it neglects the unique inequalities of labor, and fails to distinguish between labor and labor power, thus

obscuring the asymmetric relationship between capital and labor, and eliminating the concept of class from the economist's understanding and analysis (Bowles and Gintis, 1975). As a result, neoclassical theory is poorly suited to explaining the wage structure, the valuation of personal characteristics in the labor market, and the social relations of schooling. The ability of their alternative theory to explain the phenomena hinged on the Marxian distinction between labor and labor power. Labor power is the maximum level of performance evincible from the worker by the capitalist; in the employment relationship, the worker agrees to accept the employer's direction of his/her time, but the "labor" or actual work done by the individual depends on control mechanisms embedded in the labor market and the social and political structure of the firm. In the language of their most recent work, the labor process is a "contested exchange" (Bowles and Gintis, 1994). This assumes that there is equality in the system of education.

Because of the political conflict between workers and owners over the labor process, employers value ascriptive characteristics of workers, such as race, sex, age, demeanor, and credentials. These can divide the workforce and inhibit the development of solidarity between workers. Educational credentials, in particular, legitimate inequality by providing an open, objective, and seemingly meritocratic mechanism for assigning individuals to unequal occupational positions. Therefore, ascriptive characteristics must be taken into account in further analysis of degree assigning institutions.

Bowles and Gintis (1975) further argued that the educational system fundamentally stratifies students according to their future positions in the workplace hierarchy, through the "correspondence principle". Schools do not just teach more or less; they teach different things to different people. Starting as early as elementary school, in working-class schools, students are rewarded for memorization, and learning and following the rules, while in the schools of

professional/managerial families, students are rewarded for creativity and independent thought. For most students, these behaviors will be necessary for securing employment in their adult occupational positions as working class members.

Bowles and Gintis have been charged with functionalism, and their book often seemed to suggest that the relations of schooling developed as they did because of the need of the capitalist class to fragment the workforce. Their argument drew heavily on the work of Melvin Kohn and others, which showed that parents usually demand the type of education for their children which will teach behaviors rewarded in the parents' own experience of work (Kohn, 1969). Thus professional/managerial parents stress independence and creativity, while more subordinate working-class families feel their children must learn to take orders. This is an example of how the cultural capital of the parents is indirectly reinforced in the socialization of their children through the parent's direct actions in directions of the child's choice of post-secondary institutions of learning.

Bowles and Gintis supported their theory with extensive empirical work. First, in a paper in the *Journal of Political Economy* (1972), Bowles disputed the sociological status attainment model, which purported to show that earnings were not significantly related to socioeconomic background when the respondent's schooling was controlled for in a regression equations (Bowles, 1972). These studies typically measured the respondent's social background with father's education and occupation. Bowles argued that the importance of education was systematically overestimated, and that of social class was underestimated, in these models. Bowles cited two reasons: the improper specification of socioeconomic background, in particular the omission of variables such as mother's education and occupation, parental income, wealth, and position in the work hierarchy; measurement errors, especially those arising from respondent

reporting of father's occupation and education. Including a measure of parental income and deploying an errors-in-variables model, Bowles found that the partial relationship of schooling to income fell by 43 percent compared to the conventional model. He concluded that the contribution of education to income had indeed been overestimated and the intergenerational transmission of class had been underestimated in the conventional formulation (Bowles, 1972). In understanding the influence of the student's socioeconomic background, future research must take in to consideration both parents influence in their children's social capital, paying particular attention to indicators beyond occupation and degree.

Similarly, Rothschild and White (1993) applied the idea of "production function" from economics to the role of students. The authors note that in economics, a production function describes the process of how inputs are used to create an output, arguing that high-achieving students enter both sides of the equation as an input as well as an output (Rothschild and White, 1993). As an input, high-ability students offer positive peer effects for their classmates and may also influence the school's appeal to attraction and retention of other students, faculty, and staff members. As an output, their successes in the labor market contribute to the outcomes one often uses to judge the effectiveness of an educational program. Therefore, viewing higher education as a process of production, high-achieving students make important contributions and colleges have incentives to attract them.

According to Randall Collins, understanding credentialism can help explain class-based differences in educational attainment. In his 1979 book The Credential Society, Collins argued that public schools are socializing institutions that teach and reward middle class values of competition and achievement. In this system, Anglo-Protestant elites are selectively separated from other students and placed into prestigious schools and colleges, where they are trained to

hold positions of power. By teaching middle class culture through the public education system, the elite class ensures a monopoly over positions of power, while others acquire the credentials to compete in a subordinate job market and economy. In this way, schools of medicine, law, and elite institutions have remained closed to members of lower classes.

Collins's review of the literature points to an American diploma "inflation" of unique proportions in the twentieth century and, his data also show that "better educated" individuals-are not more productive or profit producing than are less educated ones (Collins, 1979). This analysis also held true during the decades of the 1960 and 1970s across both societies and time frames. The author argues that instead, most of what is formally learned is soon forgotten and is superseded by other, more relevant job skills and lore or is outright useless. "What is learned in school has much more to do with conventional standards of sociability and propriety than with instrumental and cognitive skills" (Collins, 1979 p. 19), except for what is needed to succeed in educational institutions themselves, some science, and some related organizations. Also, the reward of political rather than technical talent characterizes most routes to post-education organizational success in the society at large: "The one who makes it to the top is the organizational politician, concerned above all with informal ties, maneuvering toward the critical gate-keepers", not the mastery of technical skills (Collins, 1979 p. 31),… “not those who have learned technical skills, …struggles in which membership in a cultural group is the crucial weapon” (Collins, 1979 p.48).

Credentialism refers to the common practice of relying on earned credentials when hiring staff or assigning social status. Instead of directly evaluating an individual's abilities, evaluators study that person's credentials as a shortcut to estimate their competencies. Collins notes, that besides attesting to one's abilities, credentials may also grant the holder access to restricted areas,

information, or activities (Collins, 1979). Credentials are attestations of qualification, competence, or authority issued to an individual by a third party with a relevant or de facto authority to do so. Common examples of credentials are academic diplomas, academic degrees, certifications, security clearances, and licenses (Collins, 1979). Credentials are often represented by documents, such as diplomas, certificates, or membership cards.

The academic world makes very extensive use of credentials, such as diplomas, certificates, and degrees, in order to attest to the completion of specific training or education programs by students, and to attest to their successful completion of tests and exams. Receiving these credentials often leads to increased economic mobility and work opportunity. However, this research places an importance again on the cultural capital that a student acquires through the given social networks provided by the institution. Employers also commonly use credentials. For example, an employer may require a diploma, professional license, or academic degree. In some cases, employers may require formal credentials, such as an advanced academic degree, for a job that can be done perfectly well by applying skills acquired through experience or informal study. Collins argues, this type of credentialism is common in white-collar jobs, which require workers to have difficult-to-measure skills such as critical thinking and diplomacy (Collins, 1979). Rather than measure or evaluate those skills directly, employers assume that anyone able to earn a credential must possess those skills.

Over time, credentials may lose value, especially as more and more people earn that credential. This process is referred to as credential inflation. A good example of credential inflation is the decline in the value of the U.S. high school diploma since the beginning of the twentieth century, when it was held by less than 10 percent of the population. At the time, high school diplomas attested to middle-class respectability, and for many years, even provided access

to managerial level jobs (Collins, 1979). More recently, however, the high school diploma barely qualifies the graduate for manual or menial service work.

Another indicator of credential inflation is the relative decline in the wage differential between those with college degrees and those with only high school diplomas. Jobs that were open to high school graduates a century ago now routinely require not just a bachelor's degree, but a master's degree as well, without an appreciable change in required skills (Collins, 1979). From this perspective credentials are a required necessity in concern to social mobility. Individuals entering into the field of higher education are forced to make decisions that weigh the cost of the pursued degree, and resulting debt, versus the rewards and resources provided by both the prestige of the degree entitled by the institution of education and social network embedded in the institution itself.

This decision-making process on the part of potential and actual students is made more complicated by the influence of federal and state policy with regard to higher education. Fligstein proposes a general approach to understand institutions in modern society called the political-cultural approach. Fligstein states that the key insight of the political-cultural approach is to consider that social action takes place in arenas, which may be termed *fields* (Fligstein, 2001: p.15). According to Fligstein, fields contain social actors who try to produce a system of domination by producing a local culture that defines local social relationships between actors within the field (Fligstein, 2001: p.15). These local cultures provide an interpretive framework for actors, define social relationships, and help individuals interpret their own position in a set of social relationships, which allow the actors to interpret the actions of others with whom they interact on a period-to-period basis (Fligstein, 2001: p.15). This theory is important with regard to the political influence on funding for higher education, due to the fact that these individual-

level actors – politicians and students – operate within this social field, though often from potentially opposing sides.

When applying the political-cultural approach to the institution of education, it must be noted that the nature of federal spending on higher education is very different from state spending: state funding is primarily for operating support to institutions, while federal spending is mainly for financial assistance to students, specific federal research projects, and veterans' education benefits. According to the State Higher Education Executive Offices Association, higher education is the third-largest allocation in state general fund budgets after elementary and Medicaid. In 2014, higher education accounted for 9.4 percent of state general funding: about half as much as general fund spending on Medicaid, and one-fourth of state K-12 education spending.

Measured in inflation-adjusted dollars per full-time equivalent student, states have been cutting this support for well over a decade, and spending cuts accelerated in response to the Great Recession. Between 2008 and 2013, states cut appropriation support per full-time equivalent student in the median public research university by more than 26 percent. In order to maintain and/or develop programs, public two-year and four-year colleges have raised tuition for students to offset the funding cuts. The cost of higher education has increased at a rate far beyond inflation. The value of a four-year college degree has come under attack by conservative politicians and a case can be made that disincentives have been created to earn such a degree.

Many students have been forced to take out loans in order to pay for their college education. Student debt has skyrocketed in the U.S, arguably sowing the seeds for a future financial crisis. According to the 10th annual report released by the Institute for College Access and Success, the average student debt at college graduation grew from $18,550 in 2004 to

$28,950 in 2014, a rise of 56 percent. The report further notes that, while the share of graduates with debt only rose slightly, from 65 percent in 2004 to 69 percent in 2014, the increase in the average amount of debt far outpaced inflation growth, which increased from 23 percent to 25 percent during that time. In effect, the future earnings of indebted college students are taxed as part of their effort to become further educated and achieve social mobility. In the past, these costs were distributed across tax paying citizens as it was presumed that it would be beneficial to the state and the country to have more highly educated citizens who would be productive members of the society.

It is in this political-cultural field that the importance of honors programs, must be considered. Such programs provide the potential for students to gain cultural and economic capital and increase their "value" as assets within the capitalist labor market.

# Chapter 3 - Review of Literature

## Meso- and Micro-Level Perspectives on Education & Educational Attainment

A review of literature indicated that a number of studies with applicability to understanding the two research questions guiding this research concerned micro-level and meso-level analysis. In the social sciences, the micro-level is the smallest level of analysis, focusing on the individual person in their social setting. Also referred to as the local level, populations studied at the micro-level are typically comprised of individuals in a specific social setting or a small group of individuals in a particular social context, such as the student's family environment or peer group. The literature reviewed along these lines examined the important role of the educational attainment of the individual as a determinant in social mobility or the position of the individual in the stratification system.

Another important line of inquiry looks at the individual-level factors that determine educational attainment and performance of the individual student. At the micro-level, family and peer groups play a role in educational outcomes. In general, a meso-level analysis indicates a population size that falls between the macro- and micro-levels, such as a community or an organization. However, the meso-level may also refer to analyses that are specifically designed to reveal connections between micro- and macro-levels. Along these lines, the characteristics of educational institutions have been found to have important effects on the educational attainment and performance of the individual student.

## Developments in Social Stratification Literature

Social stratification means that inequality has been hardened into a society, such that a system of relations has formed that determines the vertical mobility of an individual within the system. Developments in the study of social stratification have been a process of moving from

macro structural characteristics to a more micro approach of the study of stratification. At the heart of this analysis are developments in the understanding of the role education plays in social mobility and class formation. The amount of individual mobility in a system is largely controlled by two factors: ascription-- qualities out of the individual's control -- or by achievement -- which are qualities that are capable of being controlled by the individual.

## The Functionalist Model of Stratification

The functionalist theory of stratification argues that society is held together by the norms and values of the individuals that encompass the society and that stratification is a natural product and functional necessity of society. The objective is to explicate the basic assumptions of the functionalist theory of stratification as originally outlined by Davis and Moore (1945), and the extension of such logic by Herrnstein and Murray (1996). Upon doing this, I will then consider possible historical and theoretical arguments in order to come to a more complete understanding of the strengths and weaknesses this theoretical approach offers to the study of education.

In their article "Some Principles of Stratification", Davis and Moore (1945) propose that there are two separate questions that must be asked when confronting social stratification. The first is in concern to why different positions carry different degrees of prestige and the second is in concern to social mobility between the different positions. They propose that in order to understand the issue of mobility one must first consider the structure of the positions that are functionally a part of society (Davis & Moore, 1945).

Davis and Moore (1945) argue that certain positions are functionally more important and require special skills for their performance. Specifically, only a limited number of individuals have the appropriate talent or aptitude to acquire these skills to fill the positions. Further, this

conversion of talents to skills requires a period in which sacrifices are made by the individual in order to go through the adequate training and certification necessary to fulfill the requirements of the position. In order for the individual to undergo these sacrifices there must be some kind of a reward built into the position to entice the individual through the period of sacrifice, and that the differentiation of the reward must reflect the degree of prestige or esteem which the various positions require (Davis & Moore, 1945). Therefore, the scarce and desired goods must be positively correlated to the functional importance of the position in the structure of the society. The idea here is that the system has needs that are above the needs of the individual that make up the system. To keep the structure of the society functioning properly, Davis and Moore argue that society fills these positions by the reward inherent to the position, allowing for the rise of individuals, according to their cognitive ability or other skills, to simulate into the positions according to their individual performance.

In their book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, Herrnstein and Murray (1996) reify the logic of Davis and Moore's article by arguing that the emergence of a cognitive elite is justified because of such determining factors as geographic sorting caused by white flight, inheritance of intelligence, and mate selection upon the basis of cognitive ability. By contrasting the differentiation of manufacturing workers' and engineers' salaries as an example, Herrnstein and Murray were able to note the rise of engineers' salaries, starting in the 1950's, as an example of the rise of the value or need of intelligence or cognitive ability by employers to compete in the changing economic structure. Because of this change in the economic structure of the value of cognitive ability, those who had the degree were the ones who got the raise in pay as firms competed to hire more intelligent workers. Upon this

conclusion, they both assert that improving the educational system would have little or no effect in helping people with low wages.

Their justification for this conclusion is that it was not the education that the individual received that was the determining factor, but the individual's cognitive ability or IQ—estimated to be between 40 percent and 80 percent inheritable (Herrnstein and Murry 1996 p. 108)—that determined the level of education attainment which was, in turn, being rewarded by society. Further, that in society the range of IQs within a population or group would take on the characteristics of a normal curve. This means that most of the population would be located around the mean IQ of the population, while those with a higher or lower IQ would drift off towards the tails of the curve, according to the degree of their differentiation to the population's mean (Herrnstein & Murray, 1996).

After statistically controlling for environmental factors, the residual of individual IQ still displayed a moderately high correlation with that of parental IQ. This inheritance was further justified by the positive correlations between geographic sorting or white flight, and mate selection based on matching cognitive ability. Taking all these factors into consideration, a cognitive elite is produced. In the U.S., this cognitive elite is getting increasingly richer, more segregated, and increasingly likely to intermarry, therefore passing on their genes to the next generation of lucky cognitively advanced elite.

In a critique of the functionalist theory of stratification, Melvin Tumin (1953), points out a number of theoretical objections that cut to the foundation of Davis and Moore's theory. Tumin argues that in a functionalist society, all, not some, positions must be considered important in order for the society to function (Tumin, 1953). Further, these positions are filled in accordance to how the position is viewed by society, which requires a judgment about the importance of

each position. This judgment is often a reflection of cultural biases rather than an objective evaluation of the contribution to efficiency made by a position.

Tumin (1953) suggests that the very idea that there is a positive correlation between position and access to scarce and desired goods would limit access by those individuals of lower positions to resources that would allow them to convert their talents into marketable skills. This would invite the argument that the stratification of rewards itself leads to the inability or hindrance of individual social mobility and educational attainment.

In the book *Inequality by Design*, Claude Fischer (Fischer et al. 1996) notes some of the methodological problems that dispute Herrnstein and Murray's theory of a rising cognitive elite. Herrnstein and Murray's arguments rest on the inheritability of IQ or cognitive ability. Fischer points out that the survey on which they based their analysis of IQ—the Armed Forces Qualifying Test, or AFQT—was more of an indicator of individual ability to follow instructions than cognitive ability (Fischer, et. al., 1996). Even Herrnstein and Murray's own statistical estimate indicated that the AQFT scores only accounted for 5 percent to 10 percent to the differences in life outcomes. This lack of explanatory power by definition places emphasis on environmental factors of being primarily important in producing these differences (Fischer, et. al., 1996).

Fischer points out that if everyone had identical IQs there would still be 90 percent to 95 percent of the inequality we have today (Fischer, et. al., 1996). To understand why inequality exists, without relying on individual cognitive ability, he turns to a historical analysis of those factors that can influence the individual's environment, namely public policy. Policy (or laws) form the ground rules of a society in determining who gets what and how much. Arguments of nature are useless in trying to understand inequality in a society that is socially constructed. If

inequality is socially constructed, then the laws in which society is constructed must have inequality written into them.

Herrnstein and Murray also argued that inequality increased after 1970, mainly due to high skill jobs appearing that rewarded those who had high IQs. However, Fischer points out that from the 1930s to the 1970s, farm jobs dropped 17 percent, blue collar jobs dropped 4 percent, and professional jobs grew by 19 percent (Fischer, et. al., 1996). According to Herrnstein and Murray (1996), the increase in IQ demanded by the professional jobs, should have produced a rising level of inequality. In actuality, inequality decreased during this time due to progressive policies. It only started to increase in the 1970s after a considerable amount of policy change (Fischer, et. al., 1996).

Another factor to consider in the importance of environmental factors against the cognitive factors of the functionalist theory of stratification is the concept of cultural capital by Pierre Bourdieu and the extension of this concept as a process of exclusion by Lamont and LaReau (1988) in their article "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments". Cultural capital was first defined by Bourdieu (1984) as high status cultural signals used in cultural and social selection. These are signals that we are taught through the process of socialization by our family and peer groups at a young age. They are our informal academic standards and an indicator of our class position.

Lamont and LaReau (1988) noted that dominant groups maintain their cultural capital through the process of exclusion of those who do not share their own views. The environmental setting in which you are raised not only determines your own cultural capital, but also determines, through the process of exclusion, the group with whom you socialize. In concern to inequality and social mobility, those individuals of the rising cognitive elite outlined by

Herrnstein and Murray would be able to use their cultural capital to acquire the material capital of others for their own advancement in the social structure. This is the idea of what you know influences who you know.

## The Status Attainment Model of Stratification

The objective of status achievement research is to measure the exact mixture of ascriptive and achievement factors that determine the level of vertical mobility by an individual. The basis of the status attainment process is largely contributed by a path model of occupational attainment proposed by Blau and Duncan (1967). With the help of the United States Bureau of the Census, Blau and Duncan were able to compile a survey of the family backgrounds, educational experience, and job history of 2,000 males in the 1962 labor force (Blau and Duncan, 1967). Using these data, they developed a status attainment model of the occupational process of the American adult male population. Using the father's educational and occupational status as indicators of the independent variable of an individual subject's early stratification position, Blau and Duncan were able to account for 26 percent of the variance in the subject's educational attainment, 33 percent of variance in the first job, and 42 percent of the variance in occupational attainment (Blau and Duncan, 1967).

In their article, "The Educational and Early Occupational Attainment Process", Sewell and Haller (2001) added to Blau and Duncan's analysis by incorporating aspects of social psychology as independent variables. The method used by Sewell and Haller was a survey given to Wisconsin high school seniors in 1957 concerning individual occupational and educational aspirations (Sewell and Haller, 2001). In 1964, Sewell directed a follow up survey in order to collect data on the educational and occupational attainments of the individuals. The data collected for an individual at both 1957 and 1964 were used as the basis of their historical

analysis. The survey in 1957 was used as an independent variable of aspiration to see what variability was found in the individual's 1964 occupational and educational attainment.

The variable "significant others' influence (SOI)" was an indicator of the influence for educational achievement by significant others while in high school. SOI was measured as a dichotomous variable of whether parents and teachers encouraged the individual to attend college, and whether or not the individual's friends were going to attend college. The variable "socioeconomic status (SES)" was measured by the education of the subject's parents and the subject's perception of the family's economic status (Sewell and Haller, 2001). The variable "mental ability (MA)" was measured using Henmon-Nelson test given at the junior level of high school.

Sewell and Haller (2001) found that the variable of SOI was a powerful explanatory factor that directly influenced both the individual's educational and occupational aspiration, as well as educational attainment. Additionally, it was found that SOI was directly affected by SES and indirectly by MA through the individual's academic performance (Sewell and Haller, 2001). The results indicated that the influence of outside aspirations or attitudes upon a subject did affect the behavior of that individual in transferring external aspirations. This gives rise to another variable other than socioeconomic and mental ability. However, the type of significant other's influence could directly be related to the status of the individual and their cohort.

Kerbo (2006), in his book *Social Stratification and Inequality*, points out four categories in the critique of status attainment research. The first is that status attainment models have little explanatory power. Even after accounting for all the variables used in the models there was still 50 percent of variance that could not be explained in occupational status and 60 percent of variance that could not be accounted for in income attainment (Kerbo, 2006). This leaves ~ 50

percent of variance that could not be accounted for by the status attainment model. Further, on comparison of intergenerational attainment within occupational and income divisions, the data reflected that there was as much variance within categories as there was between them (Kerbo, 2006). Wright (1997), in his book *Class Counts*, argues that another reason for this lack of explanatory power is the focus of the models on the individual level of analysis. As a result, the models fail to account for structural economic forces such as property division and authority. In support of this point of critique, Wright (1997) demonstrated how income attainment differed between women and African Americans because of the effects of occupational authority (Wright, 1997).

The main problem with the status attainment model is that it focuses on the characteristics of an individual. Individual characteristics such as aspiration, education, intelligence, and job skills, cannot account for the differences in pay by regions in the United States. However, by focusing on the needs of corporate capitalist structure, rather than the desires of individuals, we can account for the needs of the position and how the structure of positions shapes the effects of the individual level variables.

Wright (1997), in his book *Class Counts*, proposed a different empirical strategy of studying status attainment which incorporates structural forces. This process focused on the likelihood of permeability events across the property, authority, and expertise boundaries. To measure dimensional permeability, Wright took seven class indicators and collapsed them into three dimensions of class structure boundaries (Wright, 1997). The property dimension consisted of employers, petty bourgeoisie, and employees. The authority dimension consisted of managers, supervisors, and workers. The skill dimension consisted of experts, skilled, and non-skilled. In this analysis, the cross of a property boundary would consist of a friendship between an

employer and an employee; whereas a friendship between a manager and a worker would represent the cross of an authoritative boundary. The argument is that the more capitalistic a society is, the more boundaries there would be in acquiring capitalist property, therefore the harder it would be to cross the property boundary.

Wright compared his data collected between four countries: The United States and Canada in North America, and the Scandinavian nations of Norway and Sweden. He hypothesized that the property boundary should be less permeable in North American countries than in Scandinavian countries and that the difference between the skill boundary and the property boundary should be greater in the North American countries than the Scandinavian countries. Therefore, this analysis would measure permeability among boundaries in different countries according to their level of being dominated by capitalist principles. When the analysis for the results of all four countries was combined, the permeability coefficient for authority was .92, skill .55, and property at .33 (Wright, 1997). This means that the authority boundary was the most permeable while both the skill and property displayed substantial barriers.

Upon an analysis of cross-national variation there was a significant difference of class-boundary permeability between the two North American countries and the two Scandinavian countries. The degree of property permeability, at a .05 level of significance, from least to greatest was the US (.25), Canada (.28), Norway (.41), and Sweden (.51) (Wright, 1997). The conclusion is that the property boundary is the least permeable followed by the skill and authority boundaries. Further, the more purely capitalistic a country is, the less permeable the property boundary will be in concern to intergenerational mobility.

While Wright's analysis does take into consideration the force of social structures that limit vertical mobility, such as the extent of the nature of a capitalist society, there are some

benefits that are provided by a status attainment model of analysis. The greatest benefit is that it does give us an idea about what role individual achievement does play in assessment of occupation attainment in that it could explain 50 percent of variation of occupational status and 40 percent of variance in income attainment (Wright 1997). By comparing the achievement level provided by the status attainment model with the ascriptive analysis of Wright's permeability-event matrix, a better understanding can be derived of not only the degree of permeability the boundaries of our system allows us to cross, but also the extent to which individuals are prepared by their families to assimilate into the positions that cross those boundaries. It is only through a combination of the two approaches that we are able to measure the exact mixture of ascriptive and achievement factors that determine the level of vertical mobility by an individual. One limitation is that neither approach examines the process or mechanisms that reproduce inequality in society, such as the institution of education.

## The Cultural Reproduction Model of Stratification

Social reproduction theory is the analysis of different mechanisms in the social structure that reproduce inequality in a society. This process expands and critiques the theory of the status attainment model by demonstrating how non-psychological variables, such as the educational system, determine why some individuals are more likely to attain a higher level of education and occupational status. Unlike the status attainment model, this analysis incorporates structural mechanisms that work in opposition to the vertical mobility of an individual based on the individual's internalized social class background.

Cultural reproduction is the transmission of existing cultural values and norms from generation to generation and refers to the mechanisms by which continuity in cultural experience is sustained across time. Cultural reproduction often results in social reproduction, or the process

of transferring aspects of society (such as class) from generation to generation. The "Cultural Reproduction Perspective" refers to theoretical arguments that emphasize how class position is determined by the acquisition of cultural traits that define upper class status. In this theoretical perspective, education is treated as a key variable that promotes the acquisition of such traits and is reciprocally influenced in return.

The concept of cultural capital was developed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) to analyze the impact of culture on the socioeconomic system and to understand the relationship between structure and agency. They defined cultural capital as the high status cultural signals in which an individual inadvertently communicates their cultural status to other individuals (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) studied the institution of education. They noted that the education system was not socially neutral in that schools adopted the habitus of the dominant class as the natural habitus and expected all students to have access to it. Students would enter the educational system with different social cues, represented by their class status, and were disenfranchised according to their lack familiarity with the dominant class habitus adopted by the educational institution (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Those individuals who were able to assimilate a number of the dominant social cues were less likely to be academically penalized. They would then replicate the social cues, which were recognized by the system, as their own and therefore reify the mechanism of social exclusion. Hence, different groups stand in different relationships to the schools, depending on their trajectory in relation to the dominant group (Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes, 1990). Traditionally, some groups have been able to use the school system to reproduce their class position while others have not (Harker et al., 1990). As education becomes increasingly widespread among all groups, other means are designed by elites in order

to maintain social differentiation (Harker et al., 1990). The most common of these strategies is to resort to alternative private schooling (Harker et al., 1990).

In their article "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments", Lamont and LaReau (1988) noted four major forms of exclusion by Bourdieu and Passeron. The first—self-exclusion—is when an individual adjusts their aspirations toward success by excluding themselves from participation because of the lack of familiarity with certain cultural norms (Lamont and LaReau, 1988). Over-selection is where individuals with less-valued cultural resources are subject to the same type of selection to which individuals of a privileged cultural background are subjected (Lamont and LaReau, 1988). Relegation is where those individuals with the least amount of cultural resources are placed into less desirable positions due to the lack of cultural resources from which to draw (Lamont and LaReau, 1988). The final form is direct exclusion where individuals are directly excluded by a higher status group because of the lack of familiarity they share with the dominant group. An example of this process is a "clique" that is normally formed at the high school level (Lamont and LaReau, 1988).

Consistent with the idea of social groups using cultural capital to reproduce their class position via education, Bernstein (1971) found that middle class students in Great Britain possessed a definite advantage in school performance over working class students because of their familiarity with both the formal language and its extended code and the public language with its restricted code. Bernstein notes that distinct forms of spoken language are associated with the organization of particular social groups (Bernstein, 1971). Linguistic differences, other than dialect, occur in the normal social environment and status groups may be distinguished by their forms of speech. This difference is most marked where the gap between the socioeconomic

levels is very great. In contrast, working class students had access only to the direct commands of the public language. The middle class student, who had control over both the codes, was found to have less difficulty in following the middle class teacher and middle class oriented textbooks (Bernstein, 1971). This research suggests that the cultural capital possessed by individual students influences their educational performance which, in turn, influences their reproduction of class position and the acquisition of additional cultural capital.

The educational and political theorist Michael Apple (1989) has pointed to the social processes that he believes have been responsible for constructing what he calls the "official knowledge." Apple argues that schools do not only control people; they also help control meaning by preserving and distributing what is perceived to be official knowledge via the school curriculum. Official knowledge is defined as the knowledge that "we all must have" (Apple, 1989). This "official knowledge" represents one dimension of the strategy by which children of the privileged class maintain an advantage in reproducing their class position via education. Apple (1993) argues that the selection and organization of knowledge in schools is an ideological process that serves the interests of particular classes and social groups. He notes that the social Darwinist thinking in U.S. education policy that emerged during the 1980s has promoted the view that educational underachievement is primarily the fault of the student and has little to do with differences in the quality of schools across local school systems. One sign of this shift in U.S. educational policy is that most of the existing tests and test materials in the educational system have been found to reflect the subculture of the privileged class in their emphasis on completion and individual achievement.

In their article "Cultural Capital, Educational Attainment, and Marital Status," DiMaggio and Mohr (1985), advocate the need to re-employ Weber's distinction between class and status.

They argue that researchers have been able to adequately measure class, which Weber defined as the individual's market situation. However, few researchers have been able to find ways of measuring status or participation in prestigious status cultures. To adequately measure status as a determinant of cultural capital they used a survey administered by Project Talent, which was unique in that it specifically asked questions that were geared toward an individual's attitudes, activities, and knowledge about high culture. The questions used as indicators of cultural capital consisted of: interest in attending symphony concerts, experience performing on stage outside of high school, attendance at art events, and a self-report of literature reading (only asked to women). The surveys were administered to a sample of 1427 men and 1479 women in 1960, while they were in the eleventh grade. They were later administered a second survey in 1979 (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985). DiMaggio and Mohr hypothesized that these indicators would have a positive effect on educational attainment, college attendance, college completion, graduate attendance, and marital selection for both men and women.

Their analysis found a strong, positive relationship between cultural capital and college attendance, college completion, attending graduate school, and educational attainment for both men and women (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985). I believe that DiMaggio and Mohr bring up a valid point regarding how we measure cultural capital to represent status instead of focusing on class. However, this analysis is still largely limited by the fact it does not incorporate structural mechanisms, like the educational system, as presented by Bourdieu and Passeron.

In 2004, *The British Journal of Educational Psychology* released a research report by Eirini Flouri and Ann Buchanan (2004) which examined the relationship between the involvement of parents in the lives of their children and their educational outcomes later in life. Prior to this study, little attention was given to the long-term contribution made by early parental

involvement to a child's later success in school. Flouri and Buchanan had three particular goals in mind while completing this research; to explore the role of early paternal involvement in children's later educational attainment independent of the role of early maternal involvement and other confounding factors; to investigate whether gender and family structure moderate the relationship between father's and mother's involvement and child's educational attainment. Third, to explore whether the impact of father's involvement depends on the level of mother's involvement (Flouri and Buchanan, 2004).

The study was provoked by the considerable amount of research conducted in the United States that suggested early paternal involvement would lead to positive outcomes in children. Flouri and Buchanan (2004) wanted to determine if this was true in the United Kingdom. Their results were as follows: paternal involvement in childhood is associated with both good father-child relations in adolescence and later marital satisfaction in adult life, even after controlling for maternal involvement, mother-child relations, and other confounding factors. Paternal involvement in childhood was negatively associated with adolescent delinquency in boys, even after controlling for maternal involvement and other relevant independent variables (Flouri and Buchanan, 2004). Paternal involvement in childhood protected both against psychological maladjustment in adolescents in non-intact families, and against psychological distress in women in adult life (Flouri and Buchanan, 2004). Paternal involvement in childhood was strongly related with later educational attainment. The information gathered did support the hypothesis that early involvement of the parent was beneficial to the scholastic assessment of children in the United Kingdom as well as the United States.

Supporters of the theory of social reproduction would particularly criticize the assumption of the functionalist theory of stratification that stratification and inequality are

reproduced by the distribution of cognitive ability in a society. By demonstrating how the educational system acts as a mechanism of reproducing inequality, it would be inadequate to hypothesize that the same system allowed for the mobility of individuals, through the educational system, to assimilate into different positions on the basis of cognitive ability. The point is to understand that individual's vertical mobility is not just limited by their cognitive ability but also by their cultural capital. There is little need to address any of the further points by Herrnstein and Murray due to the fact that stratification based on the distribution of cognitive ability is the primary basis of their argument.

The social reproduction theorist would further criticize the status attainment approach in that it only accounts for the role that social capital plays in the process of occupational attainment in a society. The advantage that the social reproduction model has over the status attainment model is that it takes into account both the psychological aspirations of the individual, cultural capital, and structural mechanisms that reproduce inequality in the educational system.

Advocates of social reproduction theory would critique Wright's (1979; 2000) structure of class analysis as being limited in explaining the role that cultural variables play in the occupational attainment process. While it does explain the degree of permeability of different class boundaries according to the form of capitalism practiced in a society, the model does not demonstrate specific mechanisms within a society that reproduce inequality. It is to this aspect that I want to add my assessment of the strengths of the structural reproduction approach.

Wright's analysis of the differentiation of the permeability boundaries among countries employing different models of capitalism gives us a better understanding of where to point out different mechanisms of the social reproduction of inequality. However, it does little to explicate

the cultural status of the individuals who are able to cross the different boundaries. This is where social reproduction theory is able to give us a different perspective of education.

## The Educational Attainment Model of Stratification

Education can exert a strong effect on occupational attainment regardless of the degree of institutional autonomy that specific schools enjoy. Indeed, when the school-to-work link is strong, those parents in the best position to do so are likely to press for educational allocation that reflects and reinforces status origins. Thus we must address the mechanisms that affect the allocation of educational opportunities and the distribution of educational attainment.

Advocates of the view that schools have gained an institutionally autonomous role (e.g., Jencks et al., 1972) have emphasized the modest proportion of variance in completed years of school that is attributable to students' status origins. Proponents of the view that educational attainment is ascriptively biased (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) have emphasized the substantial coefficients obtained in regressions of years of education on students' status origins.

Although these contrasting interpretations are based on different estimates of the relationship between status origins and educational attainment, they use the same body of evidence about educational achievement in the United States (Alexander, Cook, and McDill, 1978; Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin, 1075; Blau and Duncan, 1967; Duncan and Hodge, 1963; Featherman and Hauser, 1978; Jencks et al., 1972, 1979; Jencks, Crouse, and Mueser, 1983; Sewell and Hauser, 1975; Sewell, Hauser, and Featherman, 1976). Even the most technically sound of these studies attribute from less than one-fifth to over one-half of the variance in completed years of schooling to individuals' status origins (Bielby, 1981). The largest estimates have come from sibling studies in which the covariance of siblings' educational attainment is attributed to their similar family origins (Hauser and Mossel 1985; Jencks et al. 1972, 1979;

Olneck 1977). However, regardless of the proportion of variance that is explained by status origins, these studies have obtained statistically significant coefficients from regressions of educational attainment on origins. These coefficients show that social strata differ with respect to the probability of educational attainment.

Sewell and Hauser (1976), for example, studied the educational attainment of a large sample of young Wisconsin men. Although more than four-fifths of the variance in the educational attainment of their subjects was independent of status origins, the effects of status origins on educational attainment were considered substantial. Sewell and Hauser (1976, p. 13) summarized this finding as follows:

> "Whatever measure of socioeconomic stats we use—parental income, father's or mother's education, father's occupation, or any combination of them—we find enormous differences in the educational attainments of the socioeconomic groups. These differences are large regardless of how broadly or restrictively educational attainment is defined—whether it is defined as merely continuation in some kind of education beyond high school, college entry, college graduation, or professional and graduate study."

Dividing their index of socioeconomic status into quartiles, they found that the highest quartile had a 4-to-1 advantage over the lowest in entering college, a 6-to-1 advantage in college graduation and a 9-to-1 advantage in graduate or professional education (Sewell and Hauser, 1976).

In short, studies like Sewell and Hauser's have shown that in the contemporary United States, status origins have a powerful influence on the odds of attaining a given level of education. Even though the spread of the distribution of educational attainment within a social stratum is substantial to the extent that stratum membership is not a highly precise predictor of an individual's attainment, the central tendencies of these distributions are likely to be lower among lower strata and higher among higher strata. These differences often entail substantial

discrepancies in the odds of attaining given levels of education, which, in turn, suggests that individuals' status origins have a systematic biasing effects on their educational attainment.

There are three possible explanations for this difference of odds. First, personal traits that affect students' academic attainment may be related to their status origins. For example, if students of higher status origins have higher academic aspirations than others, they probably will work harder in school.

Second, students' access to educational resources may be biased according to status origins. This bias would result from preselection into schools or instructional programs within schools. For example, high schools in affluent suburbs may offer more subjects, more advanced courses, and a richer extracurriculum than high schools in less affluent urban areas. Similar resource differences may distinguish college preparatory tracts from other tracks in comprehensive high schools.

Third, school organization may be related to students' status origins in a way that produces ascriptively biased attainment. For example, lower-status high school students may find that course prerequisites or grade requirements bar the way from a vocational or general to a college preparatory track. High school teachers may spend more time with students of a higher than of lower social standing and give them greater encouragement to take college preparatory courses. High-status students may be more likely than others to have school friends who aspire to college.

These three sets of mechanisms may affect academic attainment independently, but they may also interact. For example, students who are more highly motivated may take greater advantage of educational resources and be more responsive to teachers' encouragement than students with weaker academic aspirations. In addition, the mechanisms may be causally related.

For example, resource-rich schools, more often than less well-endowed schools, may teach in ways that encourage students to do well.

The findings of the academic attainment literature are quite consistent. They suggest that the primary sources of individual differences in educational life chances arise more from the traits of students than from differences of access to school resources or exposure to school social organization. This literature consists primarily of studies that use data about American high school students to estimate predictive models. In these models, the criterion variables include intended or completed years of schooling, achievement test scores, or such measures of educational aspirations as plans for college attendance. Measures of status origins are exogenous and variously include parental occupational prestige, education, income, material and cultural aspects of the home, race, ethnicity, and gender. The intervening variables variously include academic ability and performance, the student's academic and occupational goals, sources of interpersonal support and influence, and school organizational variables.

Whatever the criterion variable, the effects of status origins on academic performance and college-attendance plans and activities are substantially mediated by the intervening variables that the model contains. In the dominant pattern, the largest of these indirect effects is transmitted by academic ability and prior academic performance (see Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin, 1975; Hauser and Featherman, 1976; Jencks, Crouse, and Mueser, 1983; Sewell and Hauser, 1976). Somewhat smaller effects are mediated by prior educational goals and parental and peer social support (Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin, 1975; Alwin, 1976; Hauser and Featherman, 1976; Jencks, Crouse, and Mueser, 1983; Sewell and Hauser 1976; Spenner and Featherman, 1978). The indirect effects of track placement, the school variable most often considered, are still smaller (Alexander and Cook, 1982; Alexander and Eckland, 1975;

Alexander, Cook, and McDill, 1978; Alexander and McDill, 1976; Alwin, 1976; Bain and Anderson, 1974; Hauser 1971; Hauswer, Sewell, and Alwin, 1976; Renberg and Rosenthal, 1978).

Despite the trend in these findings, it is hard to accept the conclusion that school resources or social organizations have only minor effects on academic attainment unless we assume that cognitive ability is a strong function of status origins as proposed by Herrnstein and Murray. Although Eckland (1967) has argued for the existence of genetically determined cognitive differences between socioeconomic strata, there is no convincing evidence for strong differences of this kind. In their absence, any relationship of status origins with academic ability, performance, persistence, or aspirations must be mediated by and therefore the cumulative result of, education and socialization in other settings, primarily the family.

The evidence does not let us disentangle the mediating action of early education from that of other forms of socialization in influencing educational attainment in college. However, a considerable part of the status origins-attainment relationship is undoubtedly a function of schooling, as a consequence of the distribution of educational resources and school social organization. Indeed, if the social organization of the school represents a basic allocation of the energies and activities of teachers and students, then opportunities for and constraints on academic attainment, including those that mediate status inheritance, must be distributed within the school's organization. In other words, status inheritance through education should be a strong function of status biases in the way schools distribute academic opportunities and constraints. Recent studies support this view, although they have not successfully described the mechanisms by which school resources or social organization have their effects.

Coleman et al. (1966) discovered that students' race had only a weak biasing effect on access to well or poorly endowed public high schools. However, more recent work has documented sharper differences in resource access between curricular tracks within comprehensive high schools. These studies report a strong tendency for students of lower socioeconomic origins and of minority status to enroll in the less-advantaged tracks (Heyns 1974; Rosenbaum, 1976; Vanfossen, Jones, and Spade, 1987).

Studying the educational trajectories of young people in five U.S. cities, Orfield and Paul (1987) found that because of differences in access to resources, teachers, and counselors, black and Hispanic youths encountered cumulative deficits of academic preparation in comparison to white youths. These deficits effectively blocked their enrollment in four-year colleges. We can reasonably conclude that a portion of the origins-attainment relationship arises from disparities in the distribution of educational resources and, hence, from status-based preselection of students into schools and tracks.

That school social organization may have its own status-biasing effects on students' attainment is suggested by the mediating effects of peer ties, as well as those of track placement, in models of educational attainment. In view of the strong tendency among youth to form socially hemophilic friendships (Cohen, 1983; Kandel, 1978), it is likely that school friendships channel interpersonal influence and social support in ways that encourage attainment among students of higher-status origins and discourage it among students of lower-status origins. Preselection of students into school or tracks may reinforce the effect of peer tendency to associate and bond with similar others. Alexander and Campbell (1965) observed an effect on students' educational aspirations seemingly produced by the socioeconomic composition of high school student bodies. However, they discovered that this effect could be traced to constraints of

student body composition on the probability of having school friends with high or low aspirations.

As for track placement itself, a tracked high school undoubtedly distributes resources, interpersonal ties (with teachers as well as peers), and instructional and related experiences in ways that translate differences of status origins into differences of attainment. Some years ago, Talcott Parsons (1959) argued that the differential distribution of educational experiences across high school tracks would yield a corresponding distribution of chances to learn subject matter, values, and motives (e.g., differences in the independence and initiative required by school work and consequent differences in students' capacities for independence and initiative). Subsequent studies have tended to support Parsons.

There is growing evidence that such differences affect attainment outcomes. The findings of Miller, Kohn, and Schooler (2006) imply that tracks differ in opportunities for the self-directed school work that affects occupational attainment. Enrollment in the college preparatory track, in contrast to either the general or vocational track, may yield more rapid and more complex cognitive development and subject-matter learning (Alexander and Pallas, 1984; Rosenbaum, 2006). Gamoran (2007), using a sample of the American high school student population, has demonstrated larger differences in cognitive development between tracks than between students and dropouts, implying a greater effect of being in one track versus another than the effect of remaining in high school past the school-leaving age. He could attribute a substantial part of this effect to between-track differences of course offerings. Lee and Bryk (2007) found that the public high school track has a significant effect on the probability of enrolling in courses that demand academic effort. They demonstrated that this relationship, in

part, mediates the association between parental social standing and students' academic accomplishment.

Vanfossen, Jones, and Spade (1987) found that between the sophomore and senior years of high school, study in a college preparatory track has positive effects on changes in students' educational aspirations, school performance, occupational aspirations, and post-high school enrollment. These effects remained after controlling for status origins and prior school performance and experience. Coupled with their findings of similar effects on course taking, liking for school, self-esteem, and friends' educational and occupational aspirations, these findings strongly suggest that tracks constitute distinctive environments for learning. This study is among those that document ascriptive preselection of students into tracks, so that there appears to be a systematic tendency for students of higher-status origins to enjoy the more favorable learning environments.

Curricular differentiation need not occur through formal means (e.g. tracks in high school) to have such effects. Lee and Eckstrom (1987) reported that in untracked high schools where students choose their own programs from an array of electives, preference for academically demanding courses is a function of status origins, irrespective of ability. This is the partially a result of differences in the provision of information about educational life chances by parents and counselors. In sum, there are good reasons to examine the proposition that ascriptive biases in educational attainment follow from ascriptive biases in the ways schools distribute educational resources and organize teaching and student life.

## Criteria for Academic Evaluation in Honors Program

For decades, the value of the two primary academic criteria that are used in the college admission process for incoming students, high school grade point average and college

admissions exam scores, has been hotly debated (Atkinson and Geiser, 2011; Hiss and Franks, 2014; Kohn, 2001; Zwick, 2007; Zwick and Green, 2007). Geiser (2009) contends that the relative importance placed on these two standards by different institutions creates ambiguity because these criteria represent measures of achievement that are philosophically different. Namely, proponents of reliance on previous achievement, as demonstrated by the student's grade point average, believe that not only can past academic performance predict future academic performance (for supporting evidence, see Atkinson and Geiser, 2011; Bowers, 2011; Geiser and Studley, 2002; Schuler, Funke, and Baron-Boldt, 1990), but this policy also has the added virtue of rewarding the effort that went into earning good grades. It thus provides an incentive for students to do well in high school. Moreover, a student's grade point average reflects years of assessment over the span of a high school career, by a range of teachers, using a variety of assessment instruments, whereas a student's SAT score is based on a student's performance using one instrument, on one day. In addition, a student's test anxiety, stereotype threat, bias in the test, or simply having a bad day on the scheduled day of the test can impair performance on the SAT. Thus, one performance can easily obscure a student's years of hard work (Bonaccio, Reeve, and Winford, 2012; Hannon, 2012).

The opposing point of view is that one should select on the basis of potential to profit from further education (i.e., aptitude) rather than relying on past achievements that may not necessarily be indicative of ability to perform in future educational endeavors. Grades are seen as very subjective measures, as is evident in the tremendous differences in the rigor of high school curricula and the stringency of grading policies from state to state, and within the same state, from district to district (e.g. Sadler and Tai, 2007). Also, with ever-rising grade inflation (e.g. Woodruff and Ziomek, 2004), some observers fear that the day may come when high school

grades will become totally meaningless. To adherents of this position, scores from standardized tests such as the SAT can provide a necessary common yardstick (Tam and Sukhatme, 2004). The counterargument is that the SAT and other standardized tests that purport to measure ability or aptitude, are in fact proxy measures that primarily assess socioeconomic status and test-taking skills (Kohn 2000). According to Guinier (1997), the SAT is merely a "wealth test" since SAT scores correlate more highly with demographic factors such as family income than with college grade point average (Atkinson and Geiser, 2011; Rothstein, 2004).

Admittedly, there is some truth to each point of view, and admission decisions rarely hinge on one criterion alone. It is generally a matter of which criterion receives the greater emphasis. Anecdotal evidence suggests that elite colleges place more weight on the SAT than on the grade point average (Hernandez, 1999; Marklein, 2013). This is true, despite the fact that numerous studies of the general student population have found that the high school record (grade point average, class rank) is a better predictor of college performance (college grade point average, graduation rates) than scores on college entrance exams (Geiser and Santelices, 2007). The combination of the two together in a weighted composite, however, is usually superior to either predictor used alone (Bridgeman, Pollack, and Burton, 2004; Burton and Ramist, 2001).

While a much more limited number of studies have addressed the value of these two predictors of outcomes with students in honors programs, they too point to the high school record as the better single predictor of performance in college (Allen, 2002; Campbell and Fuqua, 2008; Coursol and Wagner, 1986; Green and Kimbrough, 2008; Grier, 1997; Marriner, 2008; McDonald and Gawkoski, 1979; McKay, 2009; Roufagalas, 1993, 1994). In fact, in some studies (Green and Kimbrough, 2008), the SAT seems to be a much poorer predictor with honors program students than in the general population. This may be due to a restriction in range in the

SAT scores of honors program participants (Sackett et al., 2007). For instance, Green and Kimbrough (2008) reported that in the first cohort (n = 55) at an honors college in Texas, the correlation between SAT (mean SAT CR plus Math = 1220) and freshman-year college grades was .07 for the fall term and .09 for the spring term. In contrast, high school class rank (average = 12%) correlated .57 and .58, respectively, with these two freshman grades. Disturbingly, the seven students who dropped out before the start of the spring term had stronger average SAT scores than the ones who remained (1241 versus 1217), although the dropouts did have lower high school class ranks (21% versus 11%) (Green & Kimbrough, 2008).

Green and Kimbrough wrote that "these numbers were compelling enough for us to adjust our admissions formula for the second-year cohort. Although we still use standardized tests while considering applicants, success in high school now receives a greater weight in our decision making" (Green & Kimbrough, 2008, p.58). Khe (2007) also found the SAT to be poorly correlated with the college grade point average in an honors program at a regional public university. Surprisingly, however, the high school grade point average did not correlate with the college grade point average either (Khe, 2007). Due to such findings, some institutions are searching for predictors of success in honors that do not involve either the SAT or the high school grade point average (Scager et al., 2012; Weerheijm and Weerheijm, 2012).

In the research of Scager et al. (2012), evidence suggested that certain factors and characteristics beyond grade point average and college admissions test scores pointed to student success in honors programs when compared to non-honors students. The six factors identified by Scager et al. include intelligence, creative thinking, openness to new experience, persistence, the desire to learn, and the drive to excel. Scager's findings show that these factors were significantly different when comparing honors students to non-honors students with the

exception of persistence (Scager et al., 2012). Building off of the work of Scager et al. and other researchers, Weerheijm & Weerheijm (2012) attest that when recruiting for honors programs, three areas are the best indicators of success and excellence. The personal characteristics defined by Scager, along with motivation and study environment, are better predictors of future success than simply looking at grade point average or test scores (Weerheijm & Weerheijm, 2012). While a student's high school grade point average and test scores can be predictors of success, other measures that take into account factors like creative thinking and openness to new experiences might be better displayed in a personal essay, interview, portfolio, or other criterion for admissions into an honors program (Rinn & Plucker, 2004).

Proponents of honors programs claim that they yield many student and institutional benefits, including increased student retention (Austin, 1986; Schuman, 1999), enriched academic experiences (Ory & Braskamp, 1988; Tascha, 1986), increased graduation rates (Astin, 1993), greater institution prestige and fundraising capacity (Rothschild and White, 1993) and the purported raising of academic standards across the campus (Austin, 1986). Most of these benefits, however, are based upon descriptive or anecdotal evidence rather than empirical data (Outcalt, 2000).

Research on the retention aspects of honors programs has been very limited. The research that has been published only examined first-year retention rates (e.g. Pflaum, Pascarella, & Duby, 1985). In this study Pflaum et al. (1985) reported a higher freshman grade point average for honors students when statistically compared to students who are not in honors. The authors note that there was no honors advantage with respect to first-year retention. Previous studies that have examined the graduation rates of honors students did not compare honors students against a

control group of academically similar students who chose not to join these programs (Astin, 1993).

Astin (1993), in his regression analysis of student success in college, employed 135 "college environmental" measures and 57 "student involvement" measures to explain the variability in 82 outcome measures. One of Astin's student-involvement measures was enrollment in an honors program. Among the other involvement measures were participating in student clubs and organizations, talking with faculty, joining a fraternity or sorority, taking writing courses, studying abroad, and exercising. Astin found that honors students tended to fare better than students not in honors programs with respect to retention, desire to make a contribution to scientific theory, self-reported growth in analytical and problem solving skills, and admission to graduate school. In contrast to his earlier study in 1978, Astin found no association between honors status and college grade point average. Nor did he find associations with respect to self-reported growth in general knowledge, critical thinking skills, writing skills, leadership, or satisfaction with the overall college experience (Astin, 1993).

Over the past several decades, there has been systematic research conducted on the effects of being enrolled in an honors program (Pflaum, Pascarella, & Duby, 1985). Comparing matched groups of honors and non-honors students, Shushok (2002; 2006) reported a grade point average advantage in the first year of college that then disappeared by the fourth year. He also found that honors students were more likely to meet with faculty members, and discuss social/political issues with other students outside of class. He further found that honors students were also more likely to be involved in academic extracurricular activities than students not enrolled in an honors program (Shushok, 2002; 2006).

Cosgrove took a different perspective in investigating the effects of honors participation. Drawing on several institutions in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, he considered three groups of students: those who completed the honors program (n=30), those who started but did not complete an honors program (n=82), and "high ability" students who never participated in an honors program (n=108) (Cosgrove, 2004). Cosgrove found that those completing honors programs had significantly higher five-year graduation rates compared to that of the other two groups, with 100 percent for honors completers, 82 percent for partial completers and 76 percent for high-ability students not in honors programs (Cosgrove, 2004). Among those who did graduate within five years, honors completers required fewer semesters to do so than did the other two groups (Cosgrove, 2004). No statistical test of significance was reported for this finding (Cosgrove, 2004). Further, among students graduating within five years, honors completers earned a mean grade point average of 3.71, which was significantly higher than the 3.48 for partial completers and 3.36 for high-ability students not in honors programs (Cosgrove, 2004).

While institutions reap the benefits of recruiting higher-performing students with their honors programs, the academic rigor and high-quality teaching practices found in honors programs benefit students. Instead of a one-way transfer of information in a crowded lecture hall, most honors programs boast a low student-to-teacher ratio, where learning occurs as an open-ended exchange and discussion. In this context, new ideas, constructive criticism, and mentorship can naturally occur (Carnicom, 2011). Some of the opportunities described by honors program students include small classes, personal attention from faculty, academic freedom, and networking possibilities (Fisher, 1996; Lord, 1998; Samuels, 2001).

Honors programs may also present a financial appeal to students. Samuels argues that the past several decades have witnessed rapid increases in tuition that outpaced both inflation and the growth in family income (Samuels, 2001). For the high-achieving student, an honors program at a local college may present a desirable alternative to expensive Ivy League or out of state schools. Samuels' highlights the enriching opportunities presented by public colleges with honors programs so that "you in effect can go to the Ivy League at about half the price" (Samuels, 2001). For many students, honors programs offer a unique, high-quality educational experience at a reduced price tag.

Despite the growth and appeal of honors programs they remain a relatively understudied aspect of higher education. In their book *How College Affects Students*, Pascarella and Terenzini synthesized over 2,600 empirical studies conducted over 20 years concerning the impact of college on students. The authors note, that none of the cited studies had a focus on honors programs. Additionally, the few studies on honors programs that have appeared in educational journals have examined honors programs at four-year institutions. Much less attention has been given to these programs at two-year colleges.

# Chapter 4 - Statement of Research Questions and Study Hypotheses

As noted above, this research will center around two key research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college?

Research Question 2: What are the determinants of academic success at a two-year honors program?

It has been assumed that community college students are comprised of students who are either not ready for the rigors of a four-year college experience and/or students who are only interested in receiving a degree in a technical field. With concerns of rising debt, largely associated with colleges being forced to turn to tuition as a major revenue source, the validity of these assumptions merits a better understanding to how the economic atmosphere has changed the demographics of students at a two-year institution, let alone the demographics of an honors student population. Further, little-to-no analysis has looked at ascriptive characteristics beyond parent's income and occupation in determining academic success in a two-year honors program. To answer these concerns, I propose looking at institutional, family, and individual cultural capital effects upon successful completion from a two-year Honors Program.

## Factors Affecting the Successful Completion of a Two-Years Honor Program

The literature review indicated that education and educational attainment have been examined at multiple levels of analysis – macro, meso, and micro levels. Although macro theories pertain to the patterns associated with educational attainment, it is the intent of this research to narrow the focus of interest to the meso and micro levels. Therefore, in alignment with the literature review, educational attainment is viewed as being determined by both the

agency of the student and the broader meso and micro relations in which the student is embedded.

## Importance of Class Structure on Educational Attainment

The literature notes the importance of the class structure in which the student is embedded. The importance of class became a recurring theme throughout the literature review as a statistically significant indicator of educational attainment. Functionalist theorist focused on the cognitive ability of individuals in determining their social mobility. Cultural theorists focused on cultural capital or status signals learned through interaction in cultural and social selection. As attested by many of the authors, dominant groups maintain their cultural capital through the process of exclusion of those who do not share their own perspectives. Class provides an environmental context in which you are raised, determining your own cultural capital. But this context also determines, through the process of exclusion, the group with whom you socialize.

There are a number of problems with the basis of cognitive ability as argued in the functionalist theory of stratification. However, there are a number of insights that it also provides toward the understanding of education attainment and inequality. From a functionalist perspective, each position in the society plays a functional role in the stability of the overall social system. While cognitive ability does not adequately describe how the system allows for the rise of individuals to fill the functions of positions in society, this still does not diminish the functional importance of the position in contributing towards the stability of the society. It must be determined then what role is played by the mechanisms that reproduce inequality inherent to the different stratified positions in the educational structure. For example, while attaining skills through a college degree program, an individual also attains an element of prestige connected to the name and status of the college attended, as well as attaining valuable relationships and

networks with others attending the same college. Therefore, the institution itself acts as a mechanism of social differentiation. By understanding the function of these mechanisms we will be able to better understand the reasons and level of inequality in society and educational attainment.

## Importance of Student's Family Environment

In accordance with cultural theorists, family represents the primary agent of socialization where societies influence is internalized into the child through the process of interaction. The literature review revealed a number of attributes possessed by the parents that were determined to influence the educational attainment of their child. Key variables included a measure of significant others' influence, socioeconomic status, and mental ability.

Significant others influence was a powerful explanatory factor that directly influenced both the individual's educational and occupational aspiration, as well as educational attainment. Socioeconomic status was measured by the education of the subject's parents and the subject's perception of the family's economic status. Additionally, it was found that significant others' influence was directly affected by socioeconomic status and indirectly by mental ability through the individual's academic performance. The results indicated that aspirations or attitudes upon an individual do affect the behavior of an individual from transferring external aspirations into the individual.

## High School Tracking and Access to Cultural Capital

Texas high school graduation requirements, which have been updated in 2015, formerly divided students into three different tracks with three different sets of requirements: the Minimum, Recommended, and Distinguished Achievement High School Programs. The Minimum High School Program required only 22 credits to graduate, and was primarily for

students with significant academic difficulties or students who wanted to graduate early. The Recommended High School Program, the track taken by a significant majority of high school students, required 26 credits and included additional credits in science and social studies, as well as required electives such as speech and fine arts, among other differences. The Distinguished Achievement Program, designed for academically gifted students, required additional credits in areas such as foreign language, as well as meeting standards such as participation in college dual enrollment programs or high scores on AP examinations.

The current system, which was put into place in 2015, has changed the track system to a base set of requirements called the High School Foundation Program, to which students may add an endorsement in a particular area of study, such as STEM or Arts and Humanities. The new system also provides for "Enhancements", such as Distinguished Level of Achievement and Performance Acknowledgements that recognize student achievement in areas such as dual enrollment coursework, test scores, or bilingualism. Students graduating in 2015 or 2016 were allowed to graduate under either the old or new requirement standards, and therefore this research takes into consideration the implications and opportunities of both the old and new requirements. Additionally, in order to take advantage of Texas's top 10 percent automatic college admission law, which allows all public high school students automatic admission into a Texas public university if they are in the top 10 percent of their high school class based on GPA, a student must graduate with the Distinguished Level of Achievement Enhancement.

The literature review noted that tracked placements in high schools distributed resources, interpersonal ties, and instructional experiences in ways that translate differences of status origins into differences of attainment. As early as 1959, Parsons argued that differential distribution of education and its experiences across high school tracks would yield a

corresponding distribution, not only of opportunities for learning subject matter, but values and motives as well. Further, public high school tracks were determined to have a significant effect on the probability of students enrolling in advanced placement courses. Research demonstrated that this relationship mediates the association between parental social economic standings and students' academic accomplishments. A study in college preparatory tracks within high schools had notable positive effects on changes in students' educational aspirations, including school performance, occupational aspirations, and post-high school enrollment. Other results were listed, including liking for school, self-esteem, and friends' educational and occupational aspirations. Research strongly suggests that track systems constitute distinctive learning environments and that there appears to be a systematic tendency for students of higher status to enjoy the more favorable learning environments.

As Texas high school students selected their graduation plan, under either the old or new programs, they must navigate several difficult decisions that will affect their future. What fields of study will spark their interest for the next four years? What courses will lay the best foundation for future career aspirations? Are they interested in pursuing a more rigorous course of study? These decisions will not only lay an academic foundation, but affect their opportunities for building relationships, and opportunities for achieving cultural capital as well.

## Community College as Access to Four-Year Institution

Historically, two-year institutions have been viewed with low prestige as they represent the lowest attainable advanced degrees, such as an associate's degree or technical certification. However, with the rise in tuition, these institutions are becoming more enticing as an inexpensive option for students when compared to the high cost of four-year institutions. Two-year institutions find themselves under increased pressure to prove their value and viability as

students may utilize their low-cost classes and programs to further their goals of career advancement or transferring to another institution without graduation with a degree. Graduation rates are a key indicator for states as they evaluate the effectiveness of institutions for fund allocations.

Through open-access and low costs, community colleges aim to reduce inequality in educational opportunity by increasing postsecondary access and providing a bridge to achieve social mobility and higher status in the stratification system. According to recent cross-national research, greater access to education benefits everyone. Analyses of data from 15 countries indicate that, as access to higher education expands, all social classes benefit in terms of educational attainment (Shavit, Arum, & Gamoran, 2007). The results hold true even in cases of postsecondary privatization and differentiation. In the United States, the postsecondary system is both privatized, there are private colleges in addition to public and differentiated, institutions are stratified by prestige, resources, and selectivity of both faculty and students.

According to Shavit et al. (2007), the proportion of citizens attending higher education is much larger in countries with diversified systems, like the United States, than those with other systems. This is because the "expanding pie" of education is increasingly inclusive even if relative advantages are preserved (Shavit et al., 2007). The expanding pie metaphor, in which students who might otherwise not have attended college are now able to do so, describes the "democratization" of postsecondary education. Arguing that countries where the most advantaged already have significant access to higher education, educational expansion offers the greatest opportunity for the socioeconomically disadvantaged. The open-access policy translated into increased enrollment among students who otherwise would not qualify for admittance. The

more lax admission requirements drastically improved the accessibility of college education for racial minorities, including Blacks and Hispanics.

Most community colleges operate under similar broad-access admissions policies. They draw in students who would otherwise miss out on postsecondary educational opportunities, admitting students with very diverse skills and backgrounds and giving them "second-chance" access to higher education. Community colleges offer a cheaper alternative to four-year colleges. Furthermore, they are often dispersed throughout states, offering a local postsecondary option for residents without the financial, familial, or personal flexibility to "go away" to college.

## Individual Ascribed and Achieved Characteristics

Ascribed characteristics refer to characteristics over which an individual has little to no control. Examples of ascribed characteristics within the literature included race, ethnicity, gender, and class. Coleman discovered that students' race had only a weak biasing effect in access to either well or poorly endowed public schools. However, we see in more recent work that ascribed characteristics do affect students' access to different resource tracks within high schools. These studies report that there is a strong tendency for students from lower socioeconomic origins or minority status to enroll in less advantageous high school tracks. When observing students' educational trajectories over time, black and Hispanic youth encountered cumulative deficits in academic preparation in comparison to white youth, deficits which effectively blocked their enrollment in four-year colleges. These deficits could be accounted for because of differences in access to resources, teachers, and counselors from one educational track to the next. While race does still play a significant role in access to rewards and resources, research indicates that socioeconomic status may have an intervening affect accounting for good portion of race in statistical models.

Both the socioeconomic status and level of parental involvement were found to be important ascribed characteristics connected to student educational attainment. Parents' occupations and educations have been the focus of socioeconomic status with some researchers adding in a third criteria of students' perception of parents' income. Sewell and Hauser's research found strong effects of status origins on educational attainment. Socioeconomic status also affects student educational attainment by allowing some students to not work and thus focus more on classwork, while other students must work part- or full-time jobs while attending college. Parental involvement was found to strongly affect students as well. A strong correlation was found between paternal involvement in childhood and later educational attainment. Researchers found that early involvement of the parent was beneficial to the scholastic assessment of children in the United Kingdom as well as the United States.

There was a noted absence of research dealing with gender in the literature review. The literature did note that, when compared to male non-honors students, male honors students were more likely to be involved in academic extracurricular activities, whereas male non-honors students were more involved in sports.

It is best to view cultural capital in the same way that one would view economic capital, or property. Just as economic institutions are structured to benefit those who already possess economic capital, there are also social structures that benefit those individuals who already possess cultural capital, in the form of the dominant culture's habits or *habitus*. Individuals communicate the standard through the process of exclusion. Therefore, if an individual does not share in the cultural capital of a higher status, there is no need to educate them; they can simply be excluded on the basis of their social status. This suggests that the cultural capital possessed by

individual students influences their educational performance which, in turn, influences their reproduction of class position and the acquisition of additional cultural capital.

Achieved characteristics include those characteristics which are within an individual's control, such as grades or what classes they choose. Grades in high school and college are considered both measures of past success and predictors of future educational achievement, and are often used for placement in honors programs. The research noted that high school GPA was a better predictor of student success in college than scores on standardized tests such as the SAT. Further arguments were made that the SAT and other standardized tests are in fact proxy measures that primarily measure socioeconomic status and test taking skills. Further research noted that among students in honors programs, SATs were an even worse predictor for college success in the honors program when compared to non-honors students. Other factors noted by the research that could indicate future success in honors programs include intelligence, creative thinking, openness to new experiences, persistence, the desire to learn, and the drive to excel.

One way to look at cultural capital at the individual level is to look at students' choices of classes and extracurricular involvement. Classes that represent higher cultural status, such as participation in Advance Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or higher level academic classes, or participation in programs such as drama, speech and debate, or band, would represent the internalization of cultural capital by the student as socialized from their parent or peer group. Research noted that involvement in sports ranked lower on the scale of extracurricular activities when compared to academic activities when it came to predicting future educational success. I argue that other academic activities should be taken into consideration as predictors of future success, such as holding leadership positions, involvement in clubs and service organizations. Involvement in these organizations represents a desire to be successful, to

find ways to improve oneself and make a difference in the community, and to find networks of peers with similar desires and characteristics. It also represents the ambition of a student to make themselves a more desirable applicant to a higher educational institution.

Another signifier of student ambition and desire for achievement is taking larger class loads and more rigorous courses. This can be illustrated by high school tracks, such as those seen in the state of Texas, where students can graduate with distinctions for taking on higher level courses and earning more credits, which puts them in a better position for achieving enrollment into college. In college, the same can be seen with students who elect to take more advanced classes their first semester in college, rather than putting them off for an easier class load. First semester class load can also be an indicator of student ambition and motivation, and is a predictor of future educational success. Thus, looking at class loads and rigor of courses in both high school and college can be a measurable indicator of a student's determination or motivation, which can predict future success.

## Hypotheses Formation

Research in the field of education has amassed a large body of studies supporting the links between student performance in high school and college admittance, retention, and graduation. Primary predictors, as determined by this body of research, are high school GPA, and standardized testing scores including state testing and SAT tests. Education leaders and legislators go on in continuous research, reevaluation, and debate, changing and updating laws, standards, and assessments as they try to achieve greater outcomes. Meanwhile, the sociologist views the student, their ascribed and achieved characteristics, and the social system of the peer group, family, high school, and college as important predictors of both academic success and ultimately social mobility.

Little to no research could be found that specifically analyzed the effect of two-year community college honors programs and future educational attainment and success in life. The two-year community college stands as bridge between the high school and four-year college. Where a student may be lacking in assessment scores and achievement tests, a two-year college can provide them with opportunities to achieve through hard work and motivation, and to gain cultural capital unavailable to them otherwise. Involvement in a two-year college honors program can increase the opportunities for advanced placement within a four-year institution while simultaneously providing them a quality education at a discounted price.

The current study tests some of the existing research in the connections between the high school experience and success relating to college achievement. Additionally, the study analyzes the connection between other predictors for college success, and specifically the role of the two-year college honors program in student success. Therefore, the following hypotheses are tested:

College Cultural Capital

Hypothesis 1 It is hypothesized that involvement in College Fine Art courses by students will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Hypothesis 2 It is hypothesized that involvement in College Music Courses by students will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Hypothesis 3 It is hypothesized that involvement in College Performing Arts by students will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Hypothesis 4 It is hypothesized that membership in College Clubs and Organizations by students will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Hypothesis 5 It is hypothesized that membership in College Sports by students will be negatively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

College Involvement

Hypothesis 6 It is hypothesized that student's time entering in to discussions with professors outside of class will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Hypothesis 7 It is hypothesized that the support[1] students have received from their family will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Hypothesis 8 It is hypothesized that the support students have received from their peers in encouraging their success will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Hypothesis 9 It is hypothesized that the support students have received from the professors encouraging their success will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Hypothesis 10 It is hypothesized that the use of the honors study lounge will be positively related to successful completion of a community college honors program.

Conducting this study expands the literature on understanding the role that ascribed status, such as cultural capital play while accounting for factors associated with achievement, like class rank, GPA, standardized test and socioeconomic factors. This research improves on the vast wealth of specialized knowledge that has been created in two disciplines –sociology and education -- by advancing knowledge of an obvious overlap between the distinct fields of research.

[1] For this research "support" does not necessarily restrict itself to financial concerns, but is presented in a broader sense concerning giving assistance to or enabling to function or act.

# Chapter 5 - Research Methods

Quantitative methodology was used to examine the research questions and test the study hypotheses discussed in the previous chapter. Data were collected from college students enrolled in the honors program at Tyler Junior College, a two-year college located in Tyler, Texas. Tyler Junior College provides an appropriate site for this research for multiple reasons. First, I have direct access to the population, as I am the Capstone Coordinator for the program. This position allows me access to the student population. Second, that information and insight gained through this research can have direct positive effects upon both the TJC Honors Program and individual student success, by allowing for the testing of assumptions through statistical analysis. Information then can be used to detect any barriers within the program and make informed decision concerning the effective use of both resources and funding.

## Unit of Analysis and Study Population

The unit of analysis for this study consists of college students enrolled in an honors program at a two-year college. The study population for this research consists of all students enrolled in honors program at Tyler Junior College as of the Fall semester, 2016. The Honors program consists of two tracks -- Honors Participant and Honors Scholar with Distinction.

The Honors Participant track is designed to suit the needs of entering freshmen with 24 or more hours of dual credit, students entering professional or technical programs, and/or TJC students admitted to the Honors program after their freshmen year. This track includes a minimum of 11 hours of honors course work and 25 honors points to complete for graduation. The Honors points system is designed to enhance honors students' experiences by encouraging community involvement, cultural enhancement, service learning, and civic engagement. Honors Points are separated into two categories consisting of Honors Activities and Scholarly Activities.

Honors Activities include attendance at Honors Program sponsored events, while Scholarly Activities include student engagement beyond the classroom.

Honors Scholar with Distinction consists of a two-year track designed for students who wish to transfer to a competitive 4-year institutions and/or complete their bachelor's degree within Honors Colleges. This longer and more rigorous program track is suited to meet the preparatory needs of students who wish to excel as undergraduates in order to be competitive applicants in seeking scholarships, fellowships and advanced degrees. This track includes a minimum of 22 hours of Honors Course Work and 50 Honors Points.

What distinguishes the Honors Scholar with Distinction from Honors Participant, beyond the extra honors classes and points, is the accumulation of their knowledge in the completion of an Honors Capstone Thesis. The Honors Capstone Thesis is a comprehensive research effort of original scholarship. It offers students an opportunity to work closely with faculty members on advanced research topics or creative endeavors.

## Data Collection and Survey Methods

The focus of this research is to identify ascribed and achieved characteristics possessed by individual students that facilitate or determine their degree completion in general, their degree completion as an Honors Participant, and their degree completion in the Honors Scholar with Distinction Track. To accomplish this, I propose conducting a census of the entire honors student population at Tyler Junior College.

Tyler Junior College is an open institution, meaning that it has a type of unselective and non-competitive college admissions process in the United States in which the only criterion for entrance is a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. There is a set base of criteria for entering into the Honors Program at TJC. Graduating high

school students must meet one of the following criteria to be considered for the Honors Program: rank in the top 10 percent at the end of their junior year; rank in one of the "top ten" positions of their high school class at the completion of their junior year and demonstrate college readiness as defined through the Texas Success Initiative; achieve a 3.5 high school GPA (unweighted) and meet one of the following testing requirements: ACT - Composite score of 26 or higher with a minimum of 19 on each the English and Math sub-tests, or SAT - Combined score of 1200 on the Math and Critical Reading sub-tests, with a minimum of 500 on each. Along with this information, the Honors Program has access to full transcripts from the student's high school. While TJC's open admission policy would propose a lack of collected data on students, TJC honors students would be the exception to this as these students have already started to prepare for admission into a competitive four-year institution with much stricter admission criteria.

The survey, see Appendix A, was used to capture information concerning student, such as parent's income, parent's education, etc. The census captured multiple cohorts within the TJC Honors Program. The census also allow for the foundation of a base analysis of understanding the types of students enrolled within the program along with the students that have graduated and completed their chosen track.

I used Google Forms to distribute a survey to collect relevant information pertaining to the analysis of this research. I chose this particular program because it can be accessed by the students from their cell phone. While TJC has its own email system, the Honors Program has elected to use cellphone applications that allow for direct communication between the administration and students within the program. This method of communication has been successful in increasing participation in communication with students. Google Forms is a free web-based survey app that allows the administrator to form a questionnaire that can be exported

to a spreadsheet. It allows for both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Students do not need to have any special software to access the questionnaire and a link can be directly emailed to them.

*Research Question 1: What are the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college?*

This research question was addressed through a descriptive analysis of measures of student background characteristics collected through the survey. Questions were designed to measure characteristics of the students' parent's (educational backgrounds, occupational prestige, and income level), attributes of their high school education and high school peer group (types of classes taken, groups or clubs,). The objective of these questions was to build a composite profile of the background of students who have opted to attend a honors program at a two-year college to determine the ways in which it is consistent with theoretical perspectives concerning the stratification of educational opportunity.

*Research Question 2: What are the determinants of academic success at a two-year college honors program?*

This research question was addressed through the estimation of statistical models designed to identify the determinants of successful academic outcomes of students in the aforementioned study population.

## Measurement of Study Variables

### Dependent Variables/Outcomes

The survey contained questions that measured four types of successful academic outcomes: (a) transfer– the student was enrolled in the honors program, but did not complete their two-year degree; (b) completed two-year degree as an Honors Participant (defined above);

(c) completed two-year degree with Honors Distinction (defined above); and (d) a student's academic performance as measured by college grade point average.

## Independent Variables

The survey contains questions designed to measure the determinants of the three successful outcomes previously listed. These determinants have been placed into six different groups: Demographics, Social Economic Status, High School Academic Achievement, High School and College Cultural Capital, and College Involvement.

## Demographic Variables

The demographic background of students is marked as of a set moment in time. It is what students look like, where they are living, sex, race, family size and size of high school attended. Demographic characteristics may be subject to special attention in education policy from local to national levels, but, with the exception of the student's marital and parental status, are not subject to change.

Demographic variables are normally considered in the context of other aspects of student experience, behaviors, and attitudes when attainment of any kind (e.g., high school graduation, test scores, grades, college degree) is the dependent variable. This analysis proposes to treat the variables in the same way. However, this analysis further presents what happened to these variables once accounting for the addition of other individual characteristics. The following demographic variables were measured in the survey:

- FEMALE - A dichotomous sex variable, with female = 1 and male = 0.
- BLACK/HISPAN - A dichotomous race/ethnicity variable, with minority (African-American, Asian, and Latino) = 1 and White = 0. This created two new variables Black and Hispan.
- SIBS- Number of siblings.

## Measures of Socio-economic Status

The literature review measured social position by using an index composed of two indicators including; Parent's Education, Parent's occupation. I have also included as an economic indicator whether the student is employed while obtaining their degree.

- SOCPOS – Social position variable. Social position was created by a combination of the parent's education and occupation using Hollingshead Two-factor Index of Social Position (Miller 1991). Education was measured by respondent's perception of parent's degree completion. Occupation was quantified by using the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) Occupation Prestige Score. Scores were attributed by three different individuals using the respondent's perception of parent's occupation. I went with the classification that was cited the most when faced with inconsistencies in classification. I then computed a parental Index of Social Position which is based on the formula ((Occupation score x 7) + (Education score x 4)) (Hollingshead, 1971). The highest score between parents was used as a measure of social position.
- CAMJOB – Number of hours per week student works in an on campus job.
- JOB – Number of hours a week student works in an off campus job.

## Measures of Academic Achievement in High School

The academic intensity of the high school measures the number of advanced classes both offered by the students High School and the number of advance classes taken by the student. This model measured three different disciplines which allow the students the choice to move towards an advance placement within a particular discipline. High school achievement is used to gauge the personal achieved progress of a student in preparing for the diversity of college classes. These variables focus more on student achievement and were an addition to the

demographic model when compared to ascribed characteristics. The following measures were used:

- PRIVATE/HOME – A dichotomous variable indicating if the student attended a private school or was home schooled = 1 and students that went to public school = 0.
- HSRANK – An ordinal variable that asked the students High School UIL rank at the time of graduation. The range was from 1A to 6A.
- CLASSIZE – Asked the student the best estimate of the number of students in their graduating class.
- HSGPA – First it was determined what scale student's grade point average was based on (4.0, 5.0 or 100). Then students were asked what their graduating GPA according to their high schools scale. A new variable was calculated converting each GPA to a proportion.
- HSCLSRNK – High school graduation rank was measure as an ordinal variable.
- CIEXAM – College entrance exam was created by taking the students' scores on the SAT and ACT and calculating a proportion for each scores. An average of proportions was calculated for students who had taken both college entrance exams.

## Measures of Cultural Capital

As previously noted, DiMaggio and Mohr (1985) advocate the need to re-employ Weber's distinction between class and status. They argue that few researchers have been able to find ways of measuring status or participation in prestigious status cultures. To adequately measure status as a determinant of cultural capital they asked questions that were geared towards individual's attitudes, activities, and knowledge about high culture including: interest in attending symphony concerts, experience performing on stage outside of high school, attendance at art events, and a self-report of literature reading. The authors hypothesized that these indicators would have a positive effect on educational attainment, college attendance, college completion, graduate attendance, and marital selection for both men and women. Examples of cultural capital proposed for this research consist of student self-selection into extracurricular activities emphasizing high culture. A distinction was also be made between decisions made

through self-selection and attributes of cultural capital provided by parent's socioeconomic status. The following indicators of cultural capital were used to represent cultural capital at the high school and college level:

**Measures of Exposure to Cultural Capital in High School**

- HFINART - Indicates the number of years that a student participated in Fine Arts/Visual Arts courses. (Drawing, Painting, Photography)
- HSMUSIC – Indicates the number of years that a student participated in Music Courses or Programs. (Choir, Orchestra, Band)
- HSPEART - Indicates the number of years that a student participated in Performing Arts (Dance, Speech, Theatre, Forensics)
- HFORLANG - Indicates the number of years that a student participated in Foreign Language Study.
- HSCLUBS- Indicates the number of years that a student participated in Clubs and Organizations. (Advanced Studies, GT, Student Govt, ROTC, Clubs & Organizations, Leadership Roles)
- HUIL - Indicates the number of years that a student participated in UIL competition and Academic Teams.
- HSSPORT - Indicates the number of years that a student participated in sports.

**Measures of Exposure to Cultural Capital in College**

- CFINART - Indicates the number of semesters that a student participated in Fine Arts/Visual Arts courses. (Drawing, Painting, Photography)
- CMUSIC – Indicates the number of semesters that a student participated in Music Courses or Programs. (Choir, Orchestra, Band)
- CPEART - Indicates the number of semesters that a student participated in Performing Arts (Dance, Speech, Theatre, Forensics)
- CFORLANG - Indicates the number of semesters that a student participated in Foreign Language Study.
- CCLUBS- Indicates the number of semesters that a student participated in Clubs and Organizations. (Advanced Studies, GT, Student Govt, ROTC, Clubs & Organizations, Leadership Roles)

- CSPORT - Indicates the number of semesters that a student participated in sports.

### Measures of College Involvement

These variables were used to assess the level in which a student has embedded themselves in college life. I argue that students who are highly connected and embedded in campus life during college are more likely to be more successful than students that are more embedded outside of the college experience. Central to this explanation is time management. Students taking a larger load then their peers are more likely to understand the need for time management in concern to their larger school work load. Likewise, students that are more invested in extracurricular activities will be more likely to lose track of deadlines and assignments associated with their course load. The following indicators college progression were used:

- DISPROF – This is a Likert scale variable created to measure how often students engage with professors outside of the classroom
- FAMSUP - This is a Likert scale variable created to measure the level of support received by students from their family in encouraging their success at college.
- PEERSUP - This is a Likert scale variable created to measure the level of support received by students from their peers in encouraging their success at college.
- PROFSUP - This is a Likert scale variable created to measure the level of support from honors professors in encouraging their success at college.
- HRSSTUDY – This variable was created to measure how many hours per week the student uses the honors study lounge to study.

## Methods of Data Analysis

The statistical analysis for the current study consists of several steps. First, descriptive statistics were computed for the purpose of addressing the first research question. The general trends in the Demographics, Social Economic Status, High School Academic Achievement, High School and College Cultural Capital, Socio-Economic, and High School Achievements of the

honors students were assessed. A correlational analysis was completed to examine the inter-relationships among these variables. Finally, the second research question was addressed through the use of multivariate regression analysis. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to identify correlates of each of the first three dependent variables – transfer to another institution, graduate as an Honors Participant, and graduate with Honors Distinction. As noted in the previous chapter, the study hypotheses focus on the effects of cultural capital on these outcome. Each binary outcome variable was regressed on a set of independent variables, which included the indicators of cultural capital. This allows the study hypotheses to be tested.

Multivariate logistic regression analysis, as outlined by Scott Menard (2002), was seen as an appropriate statistical technique because it provides an alternative to ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis in cases when the dependent variable is a dichotomous measure. While OLS regression is arguably perceived as the most appealing statistical technique in the social sciences, the use of this technique with a nominal dependent variable violates several of the underlying assumptions of OLS regression. Logistic regression has many analogies to OLS regression: unstandardized logistic regression coefficients correspond to unstandardized slope estimates (b coefficients); standardized logit coefficients correspond to standardized slopes (or beta weights); and a pseudo $r^2$ statistic is available to summarize the explanatory power of the model that is analogous the $r^2$ coefficient. Unlike OLS regression, however, logistic regression does not assume linearity of relationship between the independent variables and the dependent, does not require normally distributed variables, and does not assume homoscedasticity.

The following logistic regression model was estimated to test the study hypotheses concerning the effects of cultural capital variables on successful graduation from the honors program:

Logit (Y) = $a + b_1X1 + b_2X2 + b_3X3 + b_4X4 + b_5X5 + b_6X6 + b_7X7 + b_8X8 + b_9X9 + b_{10}X10 + (b_{11}Z_1 + b_{12}Z_2 + \ldots + b_KZ_k)$

Where:

Y= Binary outcome from honors program ([a] transfer/not transfer; [b] graduation as honors participant/not graduate as honor participant; [c] graduation with honors distinction/not graduate with honors distinction)

a= Intercept

b= Coefficient to be estimated

$X_1$= CFINART - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Fine Arts Courses

$X_2$= CMUSIC - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Music Courses

$X_3$= CPERART - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Performing Arts Courses

$X_4$= CCLUBORG - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Clubs and Organizations

$X_5$= CSPORT - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Sports

$X_6$= DISPROF - Discussion with Professor Outside of Classroom

$X_7$= FAMSUP - Family Support Encouraging Success in Community College

$X_8$= PEERSUP - Peer Support Encouraging Success in Community College

$X_9$= PROFSUP - Professor Support Encouraging Success in Community College

$X_{10}$= HRSSTUDY - Number of Hours Using Honors Study Lounge

$Z_{1\text{-}12}$ = Control Variables

Multivariate linear regression analysis using OLS estimation was used to identify the correlates of honors students' graduating grade point average (GPA) as a measure of academic success. This is an appropriate statistical method to use since GPA is a continuous measure (Fox, 1991). The following regression model allows the effects of exposure to cultural capital in college on college academic performance (i.e., graduating GPA) to be estimated:

$Y = a + b_1X1 + b_2X2 + b_3X3 + b_4X4 + (b_{11}Z_1 + b_{12}Z_2 + \ldots + b_KZ_k)$

Where:

Y= The GPA of a student upon Graduation

a= Intercept

b= Coefficient to be estimated

$X_1$= CFINART - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Fine Arts Courses

$X_2$= CMUSIC - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Music Courses

$X_3$= CPERART - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Performing Arts Courses

$X_4$= CSUPORT - Numbers of Semesters Participated in Community College Sports

$Z_{1-9}$= Control Variables

The regression model was subjected to regression diagnostics in order to assess the extent to which key assumptions of the linear regression model have been met by the data (see, Fox, 1991). In particular, partial regression residuals plots and component plus residual plots were used to assess the assumption of linearity. Variance inflation factor (VIF) coefficients were computed to assess the presence of multicollinearity among the independent variables.

# Chapter 6 - Empirical Findings

Data were collected on the entire cohort of 71 students enrolled in the honors program at Tyler Junior College in the Spring Semester, 2016. As such, the dataset resulting from the survey represents the entire study population. In order to address the first research question – What are the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year colleges? -- a univariate analysis was conducted on indicators measuring the characteristics and backgrounds of the cohort of students. I begin this analysis with variables measuring the demographic characteristics of the honors student population.

## Univariate Analysis of Study Variables

### Demographic Variables

Demographic variables measured in the survey included sex, race, ethnicity and number of a student's siblings. The descriptive statistics for the demographic variables are displayed in Table 6.1. The sample consists of 71 honors students that graduated in the Spring of 2016. The findings indicate that the majority of the honors student cohort is female, white, and non-Hispanic, with an average of approximately 2 siblings.

**Table 6.1 Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables**

| Variable | Mean | Median | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (FEMALE) Student is Female | .69 | 1.0 | .466 | -.840 | 0 | 1 |
| (BLACK) Student is Black | .127 | .0 | .335 | 2.292 | 0 | 1 |
| (HISPAN) Student is Hispanic | .211 | .0 | .411 | 1.445 | 0 | 1 |
| (SIBS) Student's Number of Siblings | 2.15 | 2.0 | 2.150 | 1.414 | 0 | 9 |

The breakdown of the frequency of the gender of students in the honors program is displayed in Table 6.2. Male students represented a decisive minority within the program with only 22 students responding as male. Females made up the rest of the 71 individual respondents with 49 responding as female. The Annual Report to the Community by Tyler Junior College for

2015 listed among the total population of students that 41 percent of students were listed as males and 59 percent females. This would mean that the Honors program has a higher percent of female students when compared to the institution as a whole.

**Table 6.2 Frequency Table for Sex of Students**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student is Male | 22 | 31.0 | 31.0 | 31.0 |
| Student is Female | 49 | 69.0 | 69.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 present the frequencies of the racial and ethnic characteristics of the honors students. White respondents made up 47 students, or 66.2 percent of the total population. The study population of honors students is represented by minorities, with a combined Hispanic and Black population of 33.8 percent -- slightly over a third of the population. Table 3 indicates that approximately 13 percent of the student cohort listed their race as African American, while Table 4 noted that approximately 21 percent identified as Hispanic.

**Table 6.3 Frequency Table for Student is Black**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student is Not Black | 62 | 87.3 | 87.3 | 87.3 |
| Student is Black | 9 | 12.7 | 12.7 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Table 6.4 Frequency Table for Student is Hispanic**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student is Not Hispanic | 56 | 78.9 | 78.9 | 78.9 |
| Student is Hispanic | 15 | 21.1 | 21.1 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Demographics compiled by Peterson's College Guide for 2015 stated that among the total population of students at Tyler Junior College, 20.06 percent identified as Hispanic, 20.44 percent identified as African American and 52.46 percent listed their race as Caucasian. These data indicate that when compared to the larger institution, the honors program at Tyler Junior College has a slightly higher representation of Hispanic students, but a much lower

representation of African Americans. The vast majority of honors students identify themselves as White/Caucasian.

Table 6.5 lists the frequency distribution for the number of siblings of honors students in the study population. The modal number of siblings was found to be one, with 21 students indicating that they had either a brother or sister. Having two siblings was the second most frequent value with 17 respondents, followed by 12 students that responded as having three siblings.

**Table 6.5 Frequency Table for Student's Number of Siblings**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Siblings is 0 | 3 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| Number of Siblings is 1 | 21 | 29.6 | 29.6 | 33.8 |
| Number of Siblings is 2 | 17 | 23.9 | 23.9 | 57.7 |
| Number of Siblings is 3 | 12 | 16.9 | 16.9 | 74.6 |
| Number of Siblings is 4 | 6 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 83.1 |
| Number of Siblings is 5 | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 90.1 |
| Number of Siblings is 6 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 91.5 |
| Number of Siblings is 7 | 2 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 94.4 |
| Number of Siblings is 8 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 95.8 |
| Number of Siblings is 9 | 3 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

It is interesting to note that students with more than three siblings comprised 25.3 percent of the honors student cohort, with 6 students responding that they had more than seven siblings. As noted above in Table 6.1, the average number of siblings of students in the honors cohort is 2.15, with a median of 2, with values ranging from the minimum of 0 and maximum of 9.

## Measures of Socio-Economic Status

Indicators used to measure the socioeconomic background of the student included the students' parents' social position, as measured by occupational prestige, and two indicators of the extent to which students' worked while attending college – the average number of hours

worked per week in a job on-campus; and, the average number of hours worked per week in a job off-campus. Table 6.6 lists the descriptive statistics for these indicators.

**Table 6.6 Descriptive Statistics for Indicators of Socio-Economic Status**

| Variable | Mean | Median | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (SOCPOS) Student's Parents Social Position | 35.993 | 35.961 | 10.6114 | .282 | 15.2222 | 61.8699 |
| (CAMJOB) Student's Hours of Work Campus Job | 2.65 | .00 | 5.976 | 2.012 | 0 | 20 |
| (JOB) Student's Hours of Work Non-Campus Job | 13.838 | 12 | 13.8391 | .441 | 0 | 45 |

The average Occupational Prestige Score of the students' parents was approximately 36, indicating that honors students tended to come from a working class background. The cohort also listed a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 62. Within Hollingshead Index, 11 would represent the lowest possible score while 77 would represent the highest. Further, scores are arranged into five classes representing five number ranges. A median of 35.961 would indicate that the OPS of students' parents in the program would be representative of the lower end of the third class which ranges from 32 to 47. The indicator of students' parents' social position displayed only a slight positive skewness at .282. Table 6.7, which displays the quartiles for Student's parent's social position, shows a 6.757 point difference in socioeconomic status between the 25th and 50th percentile, while there is a 6.998 point difference between the 50th and the 75$^{th.}$ This even dispersion would indicate that there is little difference of OPS compared to the median from both the 25$^{th}$ and 75$^{th}$ percentiles**.**

**Table 6.7 Distribution of Student's Parents' Social Position**

| Minimum | 25$^{th}$ Percentile | 50$^{th}$ Percentile | 75$^{th}$ Percentile | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15.222 | 29.204 | 35.961 | 42.959 | 61.869 |

Table 6.8 displays the frequency distribution of the number of hours worked on-campus by honors students while attending school. The modal value for this variable was found to be zero. Only 13 of the honors students (18.3%) worked an on-campus job. Of the 13 students who

worked on-campus, 10 worked fourteen or more hours per week, with the most frequent value being 18 hours, per week. As noted above in Table 6, the average number of hours worked on campus by honors students was 2.65 hours per week.

**Table 6.8 Frequency Table for Student's Campus Job Hours**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Hours is 0 | 58 | 81.7 | 81.7 | 81.7 |
| Number of Hours is 6 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 83.1 |
| Number of Hours is 7 | 2 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 85.9 |
| Number of Hours is 14 | 3 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 90.1 |
| Number of Hours is 16 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 91.5 |
| Number of Hours is 18 | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 98.6 |
| Number of Hours is 20 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 6.9 displays the frequency distribution of the number of hours worked off-campus by honors students while attending school. The modal value for this variable was also found to be zero. However, in contrast to working on-campus, 59.2% (42/71) of honors students in the population worked an off-campus job while attending college. While students that hold campus jobs are not allowed to simultaneously hold an off campus job, a cross-tabulation was created to see if there were any students that had indicated having both a campus job and off campus job in different semesters. There were no reports of dual indicators and the variable is reported as being mutually exclusive.

As noted above in Table 6.6, the average number of hours worked off-campus by honors students was 13.84 hours per week. The median number of hours was 12 with a range from 0 to 45 hours per week. According to the Texas Department of Insurance, a full-time worker is anyone who works at least 30 hours per week. Thus, 21.1% (15/71) worked full-time off-campus, while also completing the honors program at Tyler Community College. Another 38.1% (27/71) worked part-time in an off- campus job. Taken, together, the data for hours of on-

campus and off-campus employment indicate that the majority of honors students deemed it important and/or necessary to earn supplemental income while attending community college.

**Table 6.9 Frequency Table for Student's Non-Campus Job Hours**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Hours is 0 | 29 | 40.8 | 40.8 | 40.8 |
| Number of Hours is 4 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 42.3 |
| Number of Hours is 7 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 43.7 |
| Number of Hours is 9 | 1 | 1,4 | 1.4 | 45.1 |
| Number of Hours is 12 | 4 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 50.7 |
| Number of Hours is 13 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 52.1 |
| Number of Hours is 14 | 2 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 54.9 |
| Number of Hours is 15 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 56.3 |
| Number of Hours is 16 | 2 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 59.2 |
| Number of Hours is 18 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 60.6 |
| Number of Hours is 20 | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 67.6 |
| Number of Hours is 22 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 69.0 |
| Number of Hours is 22.5 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 70.4 |
| Number of Hours is 23 | 2 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 73.2 |
| Number of Hours is 25 | 3 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 77.5 |
| Number of Hours is 28 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 78.9 |
| Number of Hours is 30 | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 85.9 |
| Number of Hours is 32 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 87.3 |
| Number of Hours is 33 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 88.7 |
| Number of Hours is 35 | 4 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 94.4 |
| Number of Hours is 37 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 95.8 |
| Number of Hours is 38 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 97.2 |
| Number of Hours is 40 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 98.6 |
| Number of Hours is 45 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Measures of High School Educational Background

Indicators used to measure a student's high school educational background included: (a) whether a student attended a private high school; (b) whether a student was home-schooled; (c) the UIL[2] rank of the student's high school at the time of graduation (d) the student's graduating

[2] The University Interscholastic League (UIL) is part of the University of Texas at Austin Department of Diversity and Community Engagement. It provides guidance and uniformity for educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music competitions. UIL member schools are divided into six conferences based on size of the school: 6A, 5A, 4A, 3A, 2A, and 1A.

class size; and (e) the student's high school grade point average (GPA). The descriptive statistics for these measures are displayed in Table 6.10.

**Table 6.10 Descriptive Statistics for Measures of High School Academic Background**

| Variable | Mean | Median | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (PRIVATE) Student Attended Private School | .04 | .0 | .203 | 4.650 | 0 | 1 |
| (HOME) Student Attended Homeschool | .06 | .0 | .232 | 3.932 | 0 | 1 |
| (HSRANK) High School UIL Rank at Time of Graduation | 3.24 | 3 | 1.744 | -.463 | 1 | 6 |
| (CLSSIZE) Student's Graduating Class Size | 203.20 | 149 | 174.947 | .844 | 1 | 600 |
| (HSGPA) Student's High School GPA | .9417 | .95 | .0542 | -1.217 | .7500 | 1 |
| (HSCLSRNK) Student's High School Graduation Rank | 4.0 | 5 | .697 | -.801 | 3 | 6 |
| (CIEXAM) Student's Average Combined College Entrance Exam Score | .7452 | .75 | .0936 | -.285 | .47 | .95 |

Table 6.11 displays the frequency distribution for type of high school attended by honors students in the population. These data indicate that only 4.2% of honors students (3/71) attended a private school while 5.6% (4/71) were home-schooled. In contrast, 90.2% (64/71) of the students were educated in a public school system.

**Table 6.11 Frequency Table for Type of High School Attended**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student Attended Public School | 64 | 90.1 | 90.2 | 90.2 |
| Student Attended Private School | 3 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 94.4 |
| Student Attended Home School | 4 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 6.12 displays the frequency distribution of the size rank of the high school attended by honors student. The modal category was 5A, which has between 1,060 and 2,099 students enrolled. Overall, 28.2% of the honors students attended a 5A high school. Another 23.9% of the honors students attended a 3A, which has between 220 and 464 students enrolled, while 14.1% attended a 4A high school, which has between 465 and 1,059 students enrolled. Only three students graduated from a 6A high school.

**Table 6.12 Frequency Table for Student High School UIL Rank at Time of Graduation**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High School Not Ranked | 8 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 11.3 |
| High School is 1A | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 18.3 |
| High School is 2A | 8 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 29.6 |
| High School is 3A | 17 | 23.9 | 23.9 | 53.5 |
| High School is 4A | 10 | 14.1 | 14.1 | 67.6 |
| High School is 5A | 20 | 28.2 | 28.2 | 95.8 |
| High School is 6A | 3 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

As indicated in Table 6.10 above, the average class size for of honors students graduating class was 203. The quartiles, minimum and maximum values are displayed in Table 6.13. These data indicate that the minimum high school class size among the honor students was 1 (home-schooled students) while the maximum was 600 students. The 1st and 3rd quartiles indicate that the middle 50% of the class size distribution ranged between 64 and 349 students.

**Table 6.13 Distribution of Student's Graduating Class Size**

| Minimum | 25th Percentile | 50th Percentile | 75th Percentile | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 64 | 149 | 349 | 600 |

As indicated in Table 6.10 above, the average high school GPA of students was .94 on a scale of 0 to 1. The quartiles, minimum and maximum values are displayed in Table 6.14. These data indicate that the minimum high school GPA among honors students in the population was .75 and the maximum GPA was 1. The first quartile and third quartile indicate that the interquartile range was .075 points as the honors students in the middle 50% of the distribution had high school GPAs between .905 and .980. In effect, the vast majority of honors students in the population had high school GPAs that represented an A level average.

**Table 6.14 Distribution of Student's High School GPA**

| Minimum | 25th Percentile | 50th Percentile | 75th Percentile | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .75 | .905 | .950 | .980 | 1.00 |

Table 6.15 lists the frequency distribution of the honors students' rank in their high school graduating class. The modal category was the 11th to 25th percentile. A total of 47 (66.2%) students in the student population stated their rank was in this interval. 16.2% were ranked in the top ten percent while 5.6% were the Valedictorian or Salutatorian in their graduating class. Only 8 of the honors students ranked lower than the top 25%, which accounted for 11.3% of the total cohort. Taken together, the GPA and graduation rank data indicate that honors students in the population tended to be relatively high performing students in high school.

**Table 6.15 Frequency Table for Student's Graduation Rank**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valedictorian/Salutatorian | 4 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 5.6 |
| Top 10% | 12 | 16.9 | 16.9 | 22.5 |
| Top 11% to 25% | 47 | 66.2 | 66.2 | 88.7 |
| 26% to 50% | 8 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 100.0 |
| 51% to 75% | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| 76% or higher | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

As indicated in Table 6.10 above, the average combined college entrance exam score for honors students in the population was .74 on a standardized scale of 0-1. The quartiles, minimum and maximum values are displayed in Table 6.16. These data indicate that the minimum college entrance exam score among the honor students was .47 while the maximum score was 1. The 1st and 3rd quartiles indicate that scores in the middle 50% of the college entrance exam score distribution ranged between .67 and .81. These findings indicate that honors students in the population tended to fall in the upper one-third of college applicants in terms of college entrance exam scores.

**Table 6.16 Distribution of Student's Average Combined College Entrance Exam Score**

| Minimum | 25th Percentile | 50th Percentile | 75th Percentile | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .47 | .67 | .75 | .81 | 1.0 |

## Measures of Exposure to Cultural Capital in High School

Table 6.17 lists the descriptive statistics for the indicators of exposure to cultural capital while attending high school. The survey included questions that asked students how many years that they participated in classes or activities that indicated exposure to a form of cultural capital while attending high school. It was found that the most extensive participation by the honors students was in high school clubs and organizations and foreign language courses. The honors student reported that they averaged 2.79 years of participation in high school clubs and organization and 2.25 years of participation in foreign language courses. Honors students reported averages of less than two years of exposure in high school to the other forms of cultural capital.

Table 6.17 displays the frequency tables for the number of years that honors students participated in high school courses and activities that provide exposure to the different forms of cultural capital. As indicated by the means in Table 6.17, participation in foreign language courses and participation in school clubs & organizations were the most frequent forms of cultural capital in high school to which the honors students were exposed. 85.9% of the honors students had exposure to foreign language courses in high school with the modal length of exposure being 3 years. In contrast, 84.5% of the honors had participated in a high school club or organization with the modal length being 4 years. The majority of honors students in the population also participated in high school academic competitions, fine arts courses, and performing arts courses. 64.8% of the honors students participated in a high school academic competition with the modal length being 4 years. 63.4% of the honors students participated in a fine arts course and a performing arts course, with the modal length being 1 year for each. As

indicated in Table 6.17, the mean length of participation in these activities and courses was 1.8, 1.13, and 1.72 years, respectively.

**Table 6.17 Descriptive Statistics for Indicators of Exposure to High School Cultural Capital**

| Variable | Mean | Median | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(HFINART) Number of Years Participated in Fine Arts Courses** | 1.13 | 1 | 1.17 | 1.013 | 0 | 4 |
| **(HSMUSIC) Number of Years Participated in Music Courses** | 1.27 | 0 | 1.698 | .791 | 0 | 4 |
| **(HSPERART) Number of Years Participated in Performing Arts Courses** | 1.72 | 1 | 1.532 | .419 | 0 | 4 |
| **(HFORLANG) Number of Years Participated in Foreign Language Courses** | 2.25 | 3 | 1.155 | -.746 | 0 | 4 |
| **(HCLUBORG) Number of Years Participated in Clubs/Organizations** | 2.79 | 4 | 1.548 | -.823 | 0 | 4 |
| **(HUIL) Number of Years Participated in Academic Competitions** | 1.80 | 2 | 1.635 | .206 | 0 | 4 |
| **(HSPORT) Number of Years Participated in Sports** | 1.70 | 1 | 1.719 | .267 | 0 | 4 |

In contrast, the majority of honors students did not participate in music courses or high school sports. 59.2% of the honors students did not take a music course. Of those that did, however, the modal length was 4 years. 43.7% of the honors students did not participate in high school sports. Of those that did, the modal length was 4 years. As indicated in Table 6.17, the mean length of participation in these courses and activities was 1.27 and 1.7 years, respectively.

In summary, the greatest rates of participation by honors students were by far in foreign language courses and high school clubs and organizations; and, honors students' also tended to participate in these activities for the greatest length of time. However, the majority of honors students also participated in high school academic competitions, fine arts courses, and performing arts courses. Activities with the highest rates on non-participation included music courses and high school sports. Honors students tended to participate in the latter two types of courses for the shortest length of time.

**Table 6.18 Frequency Tables for Number of Years Honors Students Participated in High School Courses and Activities that Provide Exposure to Cultural Capital**

**Fine Arts Courses**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Years | 26 | 36.6 | 36.6 | 36.6 |
| 1 Year | 23 | 32.4 | 32.4 | 69.0 |
| 2 Years | 14 | 19.7 | 19.7 | 88.7 |
| 3 Years | 3 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 93.0 |
| 4 Years | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Music Courses**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Years | 42 | 59.2 | 59.2 | 59.2 |
| 1 Year | 4 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 64.8 |
| 2 Years | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 71.8 |
| 3 Years | 4 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 77.5 |
| 4 Years | 16 | 22.5 | 22.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Performing Arts Courses**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Years | 19 | 26.8 | 26.8 | 26.8 |
| 1 Year | 22 | 31.0 | 31.0 | 57.8 |
| 2 Years | 6 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 66.3 |
| 3 Years | 8 | 11.2 | 11.2 | 77.5 |
| 4 Years | 16 | 22.5 | 22.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Foreign Language Courses**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Years | 10 | 14.1 | 14.1 | 14.1 |
| 1 Year | 4 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 19.7 |
| 2 Years | 21 | 29.6 | 29.6 | 49.3 |
| 3 Years | 30 | 42.3 | 42.3 | 91.5 |
| 4 Years | 6 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**High School Clubs/Organizations**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Years | 11 | 15.5 | 15.5 | 15.5 |
| 1 Year | 6 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 23.9 |
| 2 Years | 9 | 12.7 | 12.7 | 36.6 |
| 3 Years | 6 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 45.1 |
| 4 Years | 39 | 54.9 | 54.9 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Table 6.19 Continued Frequency Table for Number of Years Honors Students Participated in High School Courses and Activities that Provide Exposure to Cultural Capital**

**High School Academic Competitions**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Years | 25 | 35.2 | 35.2 | 35.2 |
| 1 Year | 8 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 46.5 |
| 2 Years | 13 | 18.3 | 18.3 | 64.8 |
| 3 Years | 6 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 73.2 |
| 4 Years | 19 | 26.8 | 26.8 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**High School Sports**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Years | 31 | 43.7 | 43.7 | 43.7 |
| 1 Year | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 50.7 |
| 2 Years | 8 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 62.0 |
| 3 Years | 8 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 73.2 |
| 4 Years | 19 | 26.8 | 26.8 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Measures of Exposure to Cultural Capital in College

Table 6.20 lists the descriptive statistics for indicators measuring an honors student's exposure to cultural capital while attending college. The survey contained questions that asked students how many semesters they participated in classes or activities that indicated exposure to a form of cultural capital while attending college. These questions were designed to replicate the same forms of cultural capital to which students could have been exposed while attending high school. While the high school cultural capital variables were measured in years -- with 0 being a minimum and 4 representing a maximum of years of participation -- the college capital variables were measure in the number of semesters of participation, with 0 and 4 representing the possible range of attributes since community college programs are typically two years in length.

The data in Table 6.20 indicate that honors students participated most extensively in school clubs and organizations and college level performing arts courses. Honors student reported that they averaged 0.86 semesters of participation in college clubs and organization and

0.68 semesters of participation in performing arts courses. In contrast to their high school experiences, the least extensive participation among honors students was in foreign language courses. This is likely due to the fact that foreign language courses are counted as an elective at the two-year level unless the student is getting an associates degree in foreign language.

**Table 6.20 Descriptive Statistics for Exposure to College Cultural Capital**

| Variable | Mean | Median | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (CFINART) Number of Semesters Participated in Fine Arts Courses | .42 | 0 | .601 | 1.118 | 0 | 2 |
| (CMUSIC) Number of Semesters Participated in Music Courses | .24 | 0 | .597 | 2.360 | 0 | 4 |
| (CPERART) Number of Semesters Participated in Performing Arts Courses | .68 | 0 | .841 | 1.421 | 0 | 4 |
| (CFORLANG) Number of Semesters Participated in Foreign Language Courses | .03 | 0 | .167 | 5.827 | 0 | 1 |
| (CCLUBORG) Number of Semesters Participated in Clubs and Organizations | .86 | 1 | .915 | .402 | 0 | 4 |
| (CSPORT) Number of Semesters Participated in Sports | .13 | 0 | .584 | 5.303 | 0 | 4 |

Table 6.21 displays the frequency tables for the number of semesters participated in college courses and activities that provide exposure to cultural capital. As indicated by the means in Table 20, the most extensive participation by honors students occurred in college clubs & organizations and performing arts courses. However, the modal value for honors students for both of these variables was zero semesters. 52.1% of the honors students participated in college clubs and organizations. Among these students, the most frequent length of participation was 2 semesters. 49.3% of the honors students enrolled in performing arts courses. Among these students, the most frequent of length of participation was 1 semester.

The vast majority of honors students in the population did not participate in foreign language courses, college sports, music courses and fine arts courses, respectively. 97.2% of the honors students in the population did not take a foreign language course, compared to 94.4% who did

**Table 6.21 Frequency Tables for Number of Semesters Participated College Courses and Activities that Provide Exposure to Cultural Capital**

**Fine Arts Courses**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Semesters | 45 | 63.4 | 63.4 | 63.4 |
| 1 Semester | 22 | 31.0 | 31.0 | 94.4 |
| 2 Semesters | 4 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 100.0 |
| 3 Semesters | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| 4 Semesters | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Music Courses**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Semesters | 60 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 |
| 1 Semester | 5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 91.5 |
| 2 Semesters | 6 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 100.0 |
| 3 Semesters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100.0 |
| 4 Semesters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Performing Arts Courses**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Semesters | 36 | 50.7 | 50.7 | 50.7 |
| 1 Semester | 25 | 35.2 | 35.2 | 85.9 |
| 2 Semesters | 8 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 97.2 |
| 3 Semesters | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 98.6 |
| 4 Semesters | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Foreign Language Courses**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Semesters | 69 | 97.2 | 97.2 | 97.2 |
| 1 Semester | 2 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 100.0 |
| 2 Semesters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100.0 |
| 3 Semesters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100.0 |
| 4 Semesters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**College Clubs/Organizations**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Semesters | 34 | 47.9 | 47.9 | 47.9 |
| 1 Semester | 14 | 19.7 | 19.7 | 67.6 |
| 2 Semesters | 22 | 31.0 | 31.0 | 98.6 |
| 3 Semesters | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 100.0 |
| 4 Semesters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**College Sports**

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Semesters | 67 | 94.4 | 94.4 | 94.4 |
| 1 Semester | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 95.8 |
| 2 Semesters | 2 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 98.6 |
| 3 Semesters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 98.6 |
| 4 Semesters | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 100.0 |
| Total | 71 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

not participate in a college sport, 84.5% who did not take a college music class, and 63.4% who did not take a fine arts class.

A comparison of the data in Table 6.21 to the indicators in Table 6.19 reveals that exposure to these forms of cultural capital was more extensive for the honors students during high school compared to college. Once honors students began attending a two-year college, their exposure to all these specific forms of cultural capital tended to decline. Particularly noteworthy here is the decline in participation in foreign language courses. However, student participation in clubs and organizations remained high displaying an average of 2.9 years in high school (Table 6.16) and an average of .86 semesters in college (Table6.20).

## Correlational Analysis

A correlation matrix was created to address the strength and direction of association between the variables examined thus far (i.e., selected independent variables). The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.22, which displays the correlation matrix for all independent variables. The discussion here centers on the direction and strength of the correlations between the independent variables. Any Pearson's r correlation between variables that produces a result between -.09 to .09 were considered to be a weak correlation. Pearson's r correlations between variables that range between -.1 to -.29 or .1 to .29 were considered to have a weak level of correlation. Pearson's r values between -.3 to -.49 or .3 to .49 were considered to be a moderate correlation. Correlations listing a value of Pearson's r between -.5 to -.9 or .5 to .9 were considered to have a high level of correlation. A -1.0 or 1.0 represents a perfect correlation between two variables. Upon examining the Pearson's r correlations in Tables 6.22, there were 12 moderate correlations detected and 2 correlations that were high. I will now discuss the strength and direction of those correlations that inform my analysis.

A moderate negative correlation (r = -.411) was found between a student's parents' social position (SOSPOS) and whether a student identified their ethnicity as Hispanic (HISPAN). This indicates that the parents of students that reported their ethnicity as Hispanic tend to have lower social positions compared to non-Hispanics, as measured by education and occupational prestige. A weak positive correlation (r= .199) was found between parents' social position and whether a student identified his/her race as African American (BLACK). Thus, there was a tendency for students who identified their race as African American to come from families where parents had higher social positions. Comparing the two, the trend for Hispanic students was stronger than that for African America students.

A moderate positive correlation (r= .355) was also found between a student identifying his/her self as African American (BLACK) and participation in college sports (CSPORT). A moderate negative correlation (r= -.367) was found between a student's hours of work in a non-campus job (JOB) and a student's hours of work in a campus job (CAMPJOB). This should be expected as one of the criteria for holding a campus job is that the student does not hold a job off campus. A moderate negative correlation (r = -.325) was found between hours worked in an off-campus job (JOB) and a student's participation in clubs and organization while in college (CCLUBORG). This suggests that one reason student participation in school clubs and organizations tended to decline in college was the need to earn extra income through employment. In contrast, a moderate, positive correlation (r =.289) was found between hours worked in a campus job (CAMPJOB) and participation in college clubs and organizations (CCLUBORG). Thus, students who worked more hours on-campus also tended to be more involved in campus clubs and organizations. One reason for this is that a number of on-campus job opportunities for students are within student organizations.

## Table 6.22 Pearson's r Correlations Coefficients for Independent Variables

| | Sex | Black | HISPAN | SIBS | SOSPOS | CAMPJOB | JOB | PRIVATE | HOME | HSRANK | CLASSIZE | HSGPA | HSCLSRNK | CIEXAM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Black** | .164 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **HISPAN** | -.101 | -.197 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **SIBS** | .192 | -.014 | .126 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| **SOSPOS** | -.020 | .199 | -.411 | -.199 | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| **CAMPJOB** | -.055 | -.170 | -.010 | .052 | .013 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| **JOB** | .035 | .146 | -.157 | .024 | .002 | -.367 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| **PRIVATE** | -.011 | .130 | -.109 | -.106 | .274 | -.094 | -.084 | 1 | | | | | | |
| **HOME** | -.100 | -.093 | .023 | -.028 | -.132 | .148 | -.139 | -.051 | 1 | | | | | |
| **HSRANK** | -.118 | .118 | .088 | -.098 | .001 | -.036 | .177 | -.272 | -.547 | 1 | | | | |
| **CLASSIZE** | -.069 | .205 | .264 | -.037 | .000 | .000 | -.081 | -.160 | -.275 | .737 | 1 | | | |
| **HSGPA** | .069 | .000 | -.021 | -.174 | .009 | .039 | .036 | -.016 | .095 | .105 | -.081 | 1 | | |
| **HSCLSRNK** | .189 | .032 | .027 | .152 | -.199 | .178 | -.014 | -.354 | .236 | .104 | .011 | .332 | 1 | |
| **CIEXAM** | .022 | .197 | -.044 | -.145 | .004 | -.086 | .074 | -.064 | -.066 | .116 | .034 | .065 | .147 | 1 |
| **HFINART** | .152 | -.114 | -.086 | -.095 | -.054 | -.083 | -.221 | .158 | -.079 | -.127 | -.093 | -.072 | -.219 | -.123 |
| **HMUSIC** | -.020 | .115 | -.062 | -.075 | .132 | -.155 | .112 | .008 | -.111 | .190 | .079 | -.003 | -.070 | -.023 |
| **HPERART** | .216 | .071 | -.176 | .039 | .057 | .098 | -.204 | -.053 | .045 | .172 | -.235 | -.044 | .075 | .078 |
| **HFORLANG** | .201 | .027 | -.084 | -.077 | .171 | -.084 | -.160 | -.046 | -.267 | .133 | .042 | .215 | .001 | -.236 |
| **HCLUBORG** | .205 | .107 | -.019 | .087 | .022 | .077 | -.002 | -.290 | -.284 | .246 | -.027 | .066 | .152 | .063 |
| **HUIL** | -.044 | .072 | -.086 | .018 | -.014 | -.004 | .025 | -.018 | -.271 | -.088 | -.307 | .084 | -.180 | -.017 |
| **HSPORT** | -.045 | .091 | -.072 | -.129 | .257 | -.170 | .295 | .036 | -.029 | .033 | -.120 | .136 | -.066 | .026 |
| **CFINART** | .117 | -.057 | -.020 | -.071 | .029 | .026 | -.214 | -.031 | .134 | -.166 | -.034 | .123 | -.032 | -.118 |
| **CMUSIC** | .177 | .132 | .082 | -.175 | .024 | -.124 | .043 | .033 | .211 | .068 | .107 | .103 | .064 | -.138 |
| **CPEERART** | .241 | .148 | -.047 | .009 | -.020 | .057 | -.011 | -.002 | .095 | -.024 | -.034 | .179 | .003 | -.040 |
| **CFORLANG** | .114 | -.065 | -.088 | -.099 | -.219 | 024 | .083 | -.036 | .328 | -.220 | -.156 | .011 | -.081 | .073 |
| **CCLUBORG** | .097 | .199 | -.148 | -.142 | .213 | .289 | -.325 | .110 | .105 | -.211 | -.140 | .036 | -.128 | -.026 |
| **CSPORT** | .094 | .355 | -.054 | -.054 | .174 | -.098 | -.086 | .196 | -.053 | -.044 | -.042 | .169 | -.087 | -.168 |

## Table 6.23 Pearson's r Correlations Coefficients for Independent Variables cont

| | HFINART | HMUSIC | HPERART | HFORLANG | HCLUBORG | HUIL | HSPORT | CFINART | CMUSIC | CPERART | CFORLANG | CCLUBORG | CSPORT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **HFINART** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **HMUSIC** | -.175 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **HPERART** | .068 | -.015 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| **HFORLANG** | .156 | .016 | -.145 | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| **HCLUBORG** | .117 | -.033 | .209 | .246 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| **HUIL** | -.039 | .040 | .206 | .065 | .107 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| **HSPORT** | -.159 | -.105 | .049 | -.070 | .207 | .035 | 1 | | | | | | |
| **CFINART** | .451 | -.084 | -.040 | .131 | .067 | -.016 | -.126 | 1 | | | | | |
| **CMUSIC** | .038 | .260 | .028 | -.048 | -.022 | -.068 | -.181 | .192 | 1 | | | | |
| **CPEERART** | .187 | .022 | .128 | .100 | .155 | .129 | -.018 | .105 | .128 | 1 | | | |
| **CFORLANG** | .128 | -.027 | .087 | -.186 | -.253 | .021 | .079 | .307 | .219 | .270 | 1 | | |
| **CCLUBORG** | .150 | -.150 | .216 | .102 | .190 | -.105 | -.027 | .084 | .115 | .144 | .026 | 1 | |
| **CSPORT** | -.087 | .009 | .184 | .079 | .046 | .131 | .237 | .049 | -.088 | .288 | -.037 | .007 | 1 |

In addition, holding an off campus job would limit the hours available to participate in clubs and organizations as jobs may be less likely to work around student schedules that do not involve credited courses that a student has paid for attending.

For students enrolled in the honors program, attending a private school (PRIVATE) was found to have a moderate negative correlation with the student's rank in their high school graduating class (HSCLSRNK, r= -.354) and their participation in high school clubs and organizations (HCLUBORG, r= -.290). Thus, if community college honors students attended a private school, they tended to rank lower in their graduating classes and participated less in high school clubs and organizations. The former may indicate that the private schools attended by the honors students have high levels of academic competition than other types of schools, thereby making it more difficult to achieve a higher academic rank in one's class. The latter may be the result of the private schools being smaller in size and offering fewer opportunities for exposure to this type of cultural capital (Note: the correlation between PRIVATE and high school size ranking [HSRANK] was found to be -.272).

An honors student being home schooled (HOME) was found to have a negative, moderate correlation with exposure to high school foreign language courses (HFORLANG, r= -.267), participation in high schools clubs & organizations (HCLUBORG, r= -.284), and participation in high school academic competitions (HUIL, r= -.271). A moderate positive correlation was found between being home schooled (HOME) and exposure to college foreign language courses (CFORLANG, r= .328). The negative correlations indicate three ways in which home schooling tended to limit exposure to cultural capital in high school among those honors that were home schooled. The latter positive correlation suggests that honors students

who were home schooled tended to make up for their lack of exposure to foreign languages by taking college level courses.

A moderate negative correlation (r= -.307) was found between size of a student's graduating class in high school (CLASSIZE) and student participation in academic competitions in high school (HUIL). This indicates that honors students' who graduated as part of a larger class tended to be less likely to have participated in high school academic competitions. This is likely because high schools can only submit a finite number of students to any particular competition and, regardless of the overall size of the high school. Therefore, the larger the size of a high school class, the less likely the participation of a particular student in such competitions.

Moderate positive correlations were also found between participation in fine art courses while in college (CFINART) and participation in fine art courses in high school (HFINART, r= .451), and participation in college foreign language courses (CFORLANG, r= .307). These findings indicate that honors students who took fine arts courses in high school also tended to take them at the college level. Moreover, they were also more likely to take foreign language courses at the college level.

## Determinants of Academic Success in Community College

The findings for the second research question -- What are the determinants of academic success at a two-year honors program? – are presented below. As discussed in Chapter 5 above, this investigation concerns two different facets of success in the academic outcomes from participating in an honors program while attending community college. The first concerns the outcome from honors program participation. The second is the honors student's cumulative grade point average (GPA) earned while attending community college. As noted above, there

are three possible outcomes from participation in the honors program at Tyler Junior College. The first outcome concerns the transfer of the honors student to another college before finishing the two-year degree. It is important to emphasize that this does not necessarily represent a successful outcome from the standpoint of the community college. However, if the objective of the student is to use community college attendance as a bridge to earn a four-year degree, then transfer to another college would represent a successful outcome from the standpoint of the student. The second outcome is for the honors student to graduate with a two-year degree as an "Honors Participant." The third outcome is for the honors student to graduate with a two-year degree with "Honors Distinction."

Recall that the Honors Participant track is designed to suit the needs of entering freshmen with 24 or more hours of dual credit, students entering professional or technical programs, and/or TJC students admitted to the Honors program after their freshmen year. Honors Scholar with Distinction consists of a two-year track designed for highly motivated students who wish to transfer to a competitive 4-year institutions and/or complete their bachelor's degree within Honors Colleges. What distinguishes the Honors Scholar with Distinction from Honors Participant, beyond the extra honors classes and points, is the accumulation of their knowledge in the completion of an honors capstone thesis.

I first present univariate statistics concerning the four dependent variables – honors students' grade point average, and the three outcome paths from participation in the honors program. This is followed by the results of multivariate logistical regression analyses designed to identify independent variables that are most important in influencing the probability of each of the three outcome paths. As noted in Chapter 5 above, the choice by students to follow each the three outcome paths is viewed as being influenced by student demographic characteristics,

family characteristics, academic performance in high school, exposure to cultural capital in college, and level of college involvement. Recall that it hypothesized that there would be positive association between all the independent variables and the dependent variables, with one exception. It was hypothesized that participation in college sports would have a negative effect on graduating with Honors Distinction.

Finally, I present the findings from a multivariate linear regression analyses designed to identify the independent variables most important in explaining the variation in the GPAs of honors students in the study population. As noted in Chapter 5 above, an honors student' GPA is viewed as being influenced by a student's demographic characteristics, family characteristics, academic background in high school, and exposure to cultural capital in college.

## Univariate Statistics for Dependent Variables

Table 6.24 presents descriptive statistics for the four academic outcomes that will serve as dependent variables in the multivariate regression analyses. The average community college GPA for honors students in the study population was found to be 3.60 on a scale of 0-4. The minimum GPA in the distribution was 2.42, while the maximum was 4.0. It was found that 21% of the honors students did not finish the honors program, but transferred to another college, 32% graduated as an Honors Participant and 46% graduated with Honors Distinction. In sum, honors students in the study population tended to earn an A average GPA in community college with the most common outcome being for them to graduate with a two-year degree with Honors Distinction.

**Table 6.24 Descriptive Statistics for Academic Outcomes**

| Variable | Mean | Median | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(CGPA) College Last Semester GPA** | 3.60 | 3.72 | .398 | -.984 | 2.42 | 4.0 |
| **(TRANSFER) Student Transferred to Another College** | .21 | .00 | .411 | 1.445 | 0 | 1 |
| **(PARTICIP) Student Graduated as Honors Participant** | .32 | .00 | .471 | .769 | 0 | 1 |
| **(DISTINCT) Student Graduated Honors Distinction** | .46 | .00 | .502 | .144 | 0 | 1 |

## Models Predicting Students Outcome Paths from the Honors Program

Tables 6.25, 6.26, and 6.27 contain the results of the logistic regression models for the three outcome variables. Given that these models were estimated for the population of honors students, the analysis will focus on answering three questions: (a) Are the signs of the coefficients in the hypothesized direction? (b) Which independent variables have the strongest effects? And, (c) "How good of an explanation does the set of independent variables provide?" The results of each model will be assessed in relation to these three questions and will be used to evaluate support for the study hypothesis

### Logistic Regression Model for Transfer Outcome

The results for the logistic regression analysis for the Transfer outcome are presented in Table 6.25. First, the signs of the unstandardized logistic regression coefficients (B) were found to be predominantly positive, as expected. The independent variables with positive logistic regression coefficients indicate that honors students are more likely to transfer if the student: (a) is female; (b) is Hispanic; (c) worked more hours in an off-campus job; (d) received Federal assistance to pay for college; (e) had a higher high school GPA; (f) ranked higher in their high school graduating class; (g) took more semesters of fine arts courses; (h) took more semesters of

music courses; (i) participated more in clubs & organizations; (j) received stronger support for their families for academic success; and (k) spent more hours in the honors student lounge.

Contrary to expectations, a number of the independent variables had negative effects on the likelihood of transfer. Honors students were less likely to transfer if the student: (a) is Black; (b) worked more hours in an on-campus job; (c) received financial assistance from their family to pay for college; (d) had higher combined college entrance exam scores; (e) participated more in college sports; (f) more actively engaged professors in discussions outside the classroom; and (g) received greater encouragement and support from peers for success in college; and (h) received greater support and encouragement from professors to succeed.

All standardized logistic regression coefficients were calculated according to a formula provided by Menard (1995: 46). These coefficients reveal that the five independent variables having the strongest effect on the likelihood choosing the transfer outcome were: (a) participation in sports; (b) hours worked in an off-campus job; (c) receiving encouragement and support from professors for academic success; (d) receiving Federal assistance to pay for college; and (e) receiving support and encouragement from family members for academic success.

In effect, all things being equal, students that participated less in college sports, worked more hours in an off-campus job, received less encouragement and support from professors for academic success, received more Federal financial assistance, and received greater support and encouragement from their families for academic success had the strongest likelihood of choosing to transfer prior to graduation. The Nagelkerke r-square coefficient for the logistic regression model was .422. This indicates that taken together, the independent variables have a moderately strong amount of explanatory power in correctly predicting an honors student's outcome on the dependent variable.

| Table 6.25 Logistic Regression Model for Transfer Outcome | | | Nagelkerke R Square = .422 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **B** | **Standardized b** | **Odds Ratio** |
| **Demographic** | | | |
| Student is Female | .831 | .048 | 2.296 |
| Student is Black | -.261 | -.011 | .771 |
| Student is Hispanic | .095 | .005 | 1.099 |
| **Family Characteristics** | | | |
| Student's Hours of Work-Campus Job | -.029 | -.021 | .972 |
| Student's Number of Hours-Non-Campus Job | .068 | .116 | 1.071 |
| Student is Receiving Federal Assistance Paying for College | 1.513 | .092 | 4.541 |
| Student is Receiving Family Assistance Paying for College | -1.366 | -.077 | .255 |
| **Academic Performance in High School** | | | |
| Student's High School GPA | 5.973 | .040 | 392.700 |
| Student's High School Graduation Rank | .323 | .028 | 1.381 |
| Student's Average Combined College Entrance Exam Score | -1.261 | -.015 | .283 |
| **Exposure to Cultural Capital in College** | | | |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Fine Arts Courses | .235 | .017 | 1.265 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Music Courses | .672 | .049 | 1.957 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Performing Arts Courses | .158 | .016 | 1.171 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Clubs/Organizations | .295 | .033 | 1.343 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Sports | -6.764 | -.485 | .001 |
| **College Involvement** | | | |
| Discussion with Professors Outside of Classroom | -.080 | -.011 | .923 |
| Family Support Encouraging Success in College | .885 | .080 | 2.242 |
| Peer Support Encouraging Success in College | -.098 | -.011 | .907 |
| Professor Support Encouraging Success in College | -1.317 | -.109 | .268 |
| Number of Hours Using Honors Study Lounge | .052 | .046 | 1.053 |

## Logistic Regression Model for Graduation as Honors Participant Outcome

Table 6.26 presents the results for the logistic regression analysis for the outcome of graduation as Honors Participant. The signs of unstandardized logistic regression coefficients indicate a mixed pattern of results with ten independent variables having positive effects and ten independent variables having negative effects. The independent variables with the positive effects indicate that an honors student is more likely to graduate as an Honors Participant if the student: (a) worked more hours in a campus job; (b) worked more hours in an off-campus job; (c) received family assistance in paying for college; (d) had a higher GPA in high school; (e) had a higher rank in their high school graduating class; (f) had a higher combined college entrance exam score; (g) participated more in college clubs & organizations; (h) engaged in more discussion with professors outside the classroom; (i) received greater support and encouragement from peers for academic success; and (j) received greater support and encouragement from professors for academic success.

In contrast, an honors student was less likely to graduate as an Honors Participant if the student: (a) is female; (b) is Black; (c) is Hispanic; (d) received Federal assistance to pay for college; (e) took more semesters of fine arts courses; (f) took more semesters of music courses; (g) took more semesters of performing arts courses; (h) participated more in college sports; (i) had greater family support and encouragement for success in college; and (j) spent more time in the honors study lounge.

**Table 6.26 Logistic Regression Model for Graduation as Honors Participant Outcome** **Nagelkerke R Square = .598**

| Variable | B | Standardized b | Odds Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Demographic** | | | |
| Student is Female | -.919 | -.040 | .399 |
| Student is Black | -1.227 | -.038 | .293 |
| Student is Hispanic | -.627 | -.024 | .534 |
| **Family Characteristics** | | | |
| Student's Hours of Work-Campus Job | .063 | .035 | 1.065 |
| Student's Number of Hours-Non-Campus Job | .039 | .050 | 1.040 |
| Student is Receiving Federal Assistance Paying for College | -.142 | -.007 | .868 |
| Student is Receiving Family Assistance Paying for College | 1.647 | .070 | 5.191 |
| **Academic Performance in High School** | | | |
| Student's High School GPA | 1.306 | .007 | 3.691 |
| Student's High School Graduation Rank | 1.144 | .074 | 3.138 |
| Student's Average Combined College Entrance Exam Score | 5.761 | .050 | 317.683 |
| **Exposure to Cultural Capital in College** | | | |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Fine Arts Courses | -.922 | -.051 | .398 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Music Courses | -11.186 | -.618 | <.001 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Performing Arts Courses | -2.179 | -.170 | .113 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Clubs/Organizations | .435 | .037 | 1.544 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Sports | -.739 | -.040 | .477 |
| **College Involvement** | | | |
| Discussion with Professors Outside of Classroom | .065 | .007 | 1.067 |
| Family Support Encouraging Success in College | -.040 | -.003 | .960 |
| Peer Support Encouraging Success in College | .888 | .074 | 2.431 |
| Professor Support Encouraging Success in College | .508 | .032 | 1.661 |
| Number of Hours Using Honors Study Lounge | -.152 | -.102 | .859 |

The standardized logistic regression coefficients indicate that the five independent variables having the strongest effect on the likelihood of choosing the graduation with Honors Participant outcome in order of importance were: (a) participation in music courses; (b) participation in performing arts courses; (c) time spent in the honors study lounge; (d) peer support encouraging success in college; and (e) high school graduation rank. In effect, all things being equal, students took less semesters of music and performing arts courses, spent less hours using the honors study lounge, had more support and encouragement from peers in encouraging academic success, and ranked higher in their high school graduating classes had the strongest likelihood of graduating as an Honors Participant. The Nagelkerke r-square coefficient for the logistic regression model was .598. This indicates that taken together, the independent variables have a strong amount of explanatory power in correctly predicting an honors student's outcome on the dependent variable.

## Logistic Regression Model for Graduation with Honors Distinction Outcome

Table 6.27 presents the findings of the logistic regression analysis for the graduation with Honors Distinction outcome. Recall that it was hypothesized that each independent variable would have a positive relationship with the dependent variable distinction, excluding the independent variable of participation in sports. The signs of unstandardized logistic regression coefficients indicate a larger number of positive effects as expected. While participation in college sports was found to have a positive effect, ten additional independent variables were found to have positive effects. Nine of the independent variables were found to have negative effects.

| **Table 6.27 Logistic Regression Model for Graduate with Honors Distinction Outcome** | | | **Nagelkerke R Square = .417** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **B** | **Standardized b** | **Odds Ratio** |
| **Demographic** | | | |
| Student is Female | 1.165 | .172 | 3.206 |
| Student is Black | 1.077 | .115 | 2.937 |
| Student is Hispanic | .581 | .076 | 1.789 |
| **Family Characteristics** | | | |
| Student's Hours of Work-Campus Job | -.070 | -.132 | .933 |
| Student's Number of Hours-Non-Campus Job | -.075 | -.330 | .928 |
| Student is Receiving Federal Assistance Paying for College | -.339 | -.053 | .713 |
| Student is Receiving Family Assistance Paying for College | -.724 | -.106 | .485 |
| **Academic Performance in High School** | | | |
| Student's High School GPA | -5.633 | -.097 | .004 |
| Student's High School Graduation Rank | -.636 | -.141 | .530 |
| Student's Average Combined College Entrance Exam Score | -2.897 | -.086 | .055 |
| **Exposure to Cultural Capital in College** | | | |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Fine Arts Courses | .250 | .048 | 1.283 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Music Courses | .401 | .076 | 1.494 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Performing Arts Courses | .742 | .198 | 2.100 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Clubs/Organizations | -.122 | -.035 | .885 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Sports | .768 | .142 | 2.155 |
| **College lnvolvement** | | | |
| Discussion with Professors Outside of Classroom | .067 | .024 | 1.070 |
| Family Support Encouraging Success in College | -.699 | -.163 | .497 |
| Peer Support Encouraging Success in College | -.172 | - .049 | .842 |
| Professor Support Encouraging Success in College | .954 | .204 | 2.595 |
| Number of Hours Using Honors Study Lounge | .011 | .024 | 1.011 |

The independent variables with the positive effects indicate that an honors student is more likely to graduate with Honors Distinction if the student: (a) was female; (b) was Black; (c) was Hispanic; (d) took more semesters of fine arts courses; (e) took more semesters of music courses; (f) took more semesters of performing arts courses; (g) participated more in college sports; (h) more actively engaged in discussion with professors outside the classroom; (i) received greater support and encouragement from professors to succeed; and (j) spent more time using the honors study lounge.

In contrast, an honors student was less likely to graduate with Honors Distinction if the student: (a) worked more hours in an off-campus job; (b) worked more hours in on-campus job; (c) received Federal financial assistance to pay for college; (d) received financial assistance from their family to pay for college; (e) had a higher GPA in highs school; (f) ranked higher in their high school graduating class; (g) had higher composite scores on college entrance exams; (h) participated more extensively in school clubs & organizations in college; (i) had greater family support and encouragement for success in college; and (j) had greater support and encouragement from peers for success in college.

The standardized logistic regression coefficients indicate that the five independent variables having the strongest effect on the likelihood of choosing the graduation with Honors Participant outcome in order of importance were: (a) number of hours worked in an off-campus job; (b) encouragement and support from professors for academic success; (c) participation in performing arts courses; (d) being female; and (e) support and encouragement from family for academic success. In effect, all things being equal, students who received more encouragement and support from professors, worked less hours in off-campus jobs, participated more in performing arts courses, were female, and received less support from their families had the

highest likelihood of graduating with Honors Distinction. The Nagelkerke r-square coefficient for the logistic regression model was .417. This indicates that taken together, the independent variables have a moderately strong amount of explanatory power in correctly predicting an honors student's outcome on the dependent variable.

## Model Predicting Honors Students Graduating Grade Point Average

Table 6.28 presents the results of the multivariate linear regression analysis for predicting honors students' graduating grade point average. Regression diagnostics revealed that the assumptions of the regression model (Berry 1993: 12) were reasonably well met by the data. No re-specification or modifications to the model were deemed to be necessary.

**Table 6.28 Multivariate Linear Regression Model for Honors Students Final GPA at Tyler Junior College** **r-square = .1806**

| Variable | B | Beta |
|---|---|---|
| **Demographic** | | |
| Student is Female | -.0004 | -.0005 |
| Student is Black | -.0292 | -.0246 |
| Student is Hispanic | -.1867 | -.1929 |
| **Family Characteristics** | | |
| Student is Receiving Family Assistance Paying for College | -.0653 | -.0755 |
| Student's Parents Social Position | .0003 | .0093 |
| **Academic Background in High School** | | |
| High School UIL Rank at Time of Graduation | .0204 | .0893 |
| Student's Graduating Class Size | -.0001 | -.0239 |
| Student's High School GPA | 1.9332 | .2634 |
| Student's High School Graduation Rank | .0566 | .0991 |
| **Exposure to Cultural Capital in College** | | |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Fine Arts Courses | .0292 | .0442 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Performing Arts Courses | .0218 | .0460 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Music Courses | -.0387 | -.0580 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Sports | .0606 | .0889 |

The findings from the linear regression model indicate that honors students tended to have higher GPAs if the student: (a) was male; (b) was White; (c) was not Hispanic; (d)received

less financial assistance from their parents to pay for college; (e) had parents with higher social positions as measured by occupational prestige; (f) came from high schools with a higher UIL rank; (g) came from smaller graduating classes in high school; (h) had a higher GPA in high school; (i) ranked higher in their high school graduating class; (j) took more semesters of fine arts courses; (k) took more semesters of performing arts courses; (l) took fewer semesters of music courses; and (m) participated more in college sports.

The standardized partial regression coefficients indicate that the five independent variables having the strongest effect in predicting high school GPA in order of importance were: (a) high school GPA; (b) whether or not the student was Hispanic; (c) high school graduation rank; (d) high school UIL rank; and (e) participation in college sports. In effect, all things being equal, students who had higher high school GPA, were not Hispanic, were ranked higher in their high school graduating classes, came from high schools with higher UIL ranks, and participated more in college sports tended to earn the highest GPAs in the population of honors students at Tyler Junior College. The r-square coefficient for the linear regression model was .181. This indicates that taken together, the independent variables have a moderately low amount of explanatory power in correctly predicting the GPAs of honors student's in the population.

# Chapter 7 - Review of Research Questions and Implications for Future Research

## Summary and Review of Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college?

In regard to the first research question, a summary of the univariate analysis is discussed to understand what the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college are like. Recall that variables were grouped into five categories consisting of demographics, socioeconomic status, high school educational background, cultural capital in high school and cultural capital in college. Analysis included measures of central tendency, dispersion and correlation between the variables. A summary of those findings follows.

The honors cohort was decisively represented by a female majority, with females accounting for 69% of the total population of the cohort. Race demographics displayed that the majority of the cohort was white, with African Americans and Hispanics consisting of 34% of the population. Students making up the cohort came from a variety of different family sizes. While 29% of students came from a family where they only had one sibling, over 42% indicated that they came from a family with three or more siblings. In the correlational analysis, it was noted that, was a tendency for students who identified their race as African American to come from families where parents had higher social positions. Further, that parents of students that reported their ethnicity as Hispanic tend to have lower social positions compared to non-Hispanics, as measured by occupational prestige. Comparing the two, the trend for Hispanic students was stronger than that for African America students.

Students in the honors program tended to come from working class backgrounds. The measure of social position ranges between 11 and 77, with the honors cohort displaying a mean of 36. This indicates that the majority of students fell to the bottom range of the middle index. Even though honors students receive free tuition as a member of the honors program, a large majority of students in the program seek employment. 76% of students in the cohort indicated that they were employed, with 18% indicating that they worked in on-campus jobs while 58% worked off campus. Further, while a limit of 20 hours a week is placed on students working an on-campus job, 32% of students working in an off-campus job indicated that they were working more than 20 hours a week. It would seem that from the employment indicator alone, employment is one of the major areas that students have to divide their time while pursuing a college degree.

Students predominantly attended public schools, with only 9% having either attended private schools or were home schooled. Students in the honors cohort could mostly be described as having come from a diverse range of school sizes within the public school system. They were predominantly high succeeding students, represented by having A level GPAs and graduating in the top 25% of their class, who tended to fall in the upper one-third of college applicants in terms of college entrance exam scores. The correlational analysis, indicated that students that came from private schools tended to rank lower in their high school class when compared to students that came from public schools. This may be the result of the private schools attended by the honors students having higher levels of academic competition that other types of schools, thereby making it more difficult to achieve a higher academic rank in one's class. Students that were home schooled were less likely to have been exposed to foreign language, clubs and organizations, and UIL competition before entering the honors program. This suggests three

ways that being home schooled may limit exposure to cultural capital. There was a positive correlation between being home schooled and attendance in college foreign language courses. This suggests that honors students who were home schooled tended to make up for their lack of exposure to foreign languages by taking college level courses.

While in high school the honor students gained diverse exposure to forms of cultural capital, largely through clubs and organizations, foreign language, UIL competition and performing arts. The greatest rates of participation by honors students were by far in foreign language courses and high school clubs and organizations; and, honors students' also tended to participate in these activities for the greatest length of time. However, the majority of honors students also participated in high school academic competitions, fine arts courses, and performing arts courses. Exposure to these forms of cultural capital was more extensive for the honors students during high school compared to college. Once honors students began attending a two-year college, their exposure to all these specific forms of cultural capital tended to decline. Particularly noteworthy here is the decline in participation in foreign language courses. However, student participation in clubs and organizations remained high.

There were a number of moderate correlations between student employment and their participation in college courses representing cultural capital. Of specific interest was the difference in comparison of correlations between whether a student held employment in an on-or off-campus job and their choice to enroll in courses providing exposure to cultural capital in college. Findings suggest that the decline in participation in clubs and organizations while in college was largely associated with the need to earn extra income through employment. Alternatively, students who worked more hours on-campus tended to be more involved in

campus clubs and organizations because student organizations offer a number of on-campus job opportunities.

## Summary of the Hypothesis and the Results of Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What are the determinants of academic success at a two-year honors program?

### Results of the Graduation Track Models

In regard to the second research question, a summary of the outcomes of the hypothesis tests is presented in Table 7.1. The first hypothesis stated that involvement in College Fine Art courses by students will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. The hypothesis was partially supported by the model results. A positive relationship was found between student involvement in college fine arts and the Distinction and Transfer outcomes. This independent variable was found to have the fourth strongest effect in both the Distinction and Transfer Model among all the variables measuring exposure to cultural capital in college. The effects of this variable were stronger in the Distinction Model than in the Transfer Model. Comparing all three models, Participant had the highest standardized logistic regression coefficient of -.051. One possible reason for this is that, students pursuing a degree in fine arts may feel the need to graduate with Honors Distinction and take on the rigors of completing a capstone thesis as their discipline focuses more on performances and exhibitions. Completion of a capstone thesis would create a product, capstone thesis, more in-line with measures of academic success that can be used to apply towards four-year colleges and in particular honors institutions within four-year colleges.

The second hypothesis stated that involvement in college music by students will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. The model

results partially support the hypothesized positive relationship. Again, participation in college music had a positive relationships with both the Distinction and Transfer outcomes. In the Distinction Model this independent variable was found to have the third strongest effect on a student choosing to graduate through the Distinction track. Further, participation in music courses in college was found to have the strongest effect in the Participant Model. In line with the previous ex post facto argument concerning fine art majors, students invested in a music course are more likely a part of a program associated with disciplines that see a need for completing a capstone thesis project as their discipline is more performance based.

**Table 7.1 Summary of the Hypotheses Results**

| Hypothesis | Result |
|---|---|
| Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that involvement in College Fine Art courses by students will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Partially Supported |
| Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that involvement in College Band Program by students will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Partially Supported |
| Hypothesis 3: It is hypothesized that involvement in College Performing Arts by students will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Partially Supported |
| Hypothesis 4: It is hypothesized that membership in College Clubs and Organizations by students will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Partially Supported |
| Hypothesis 5: It is hypothesized that membership in College Sports by students will be negatively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Partially Supported |
| Hypothesis 6: It is hypothesized that student's time entering in to discussions with professors outside of class will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Fully Supported |
| Hypothesis 7: It is hypothesized that the support students have received from their family will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Not Supported |
| Hypothesis 8: It is hypothesized that the support students have received from their peers in encouraging their success will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Partially Supported |
| Hypothesis 9: It is hypothesized that the support students have received from the professors encouraging their success will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Fully Supported |
| Hypothesis 10: It is hypothesized that the use of the honors study lounge will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. | Partially Supported |

The third hypothesis stated that involvement in college performing arts by students will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. The findings from the logistic regression analyses did partially support this hypothesis. Not only did participation in college performing arts have a positive relationship with graduating with Honors

Distinction, but it also had the strongest independent effect upon this outcome. In other words, participation in fine arts had the strongest effect on the probability that an honors student would graduate with Honors Distinction. In contrast, this variable was found to have negative effect in the Participant Model. Again, as mentioned in previous ex post facto explanations, participation in a performance based disciplines may encourage students to take on the additional commitment to time associated with completing an academic research based project.

The fourth hypothesis stated that membership in college clubs and organizations by students will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. This hypothesis was partially supported by the findings as the logistic regression analysis indicated this independent variable had a negative effect on graduation with Honors Distinction. This indicates that students who participate more in college clubs and organizations are less likely to choose to graduate through the Honors Distinction track. Interestingly, students who participated in clubs and organization were found to be more likely to choose graduating through the Participation track. Consistent, with previous explanations, time investment and management may play a role in determining these results. Students who commit to graduating through the Distinction track may either be discouraged towards membership in clubs and organizations because of the time requirements involved in committing to these organizations. Clubs and organizations may act as a distraction.

The fifth hypothesis stated that membership in college sports by students will be negatively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. The model results did partially support this hypothesis. The logistic regression coefficient reported for participation in sports in the Distinction Model was positive, indicating that students that participated in college sports were more likely to gradate with Honors Distinction. Participation

in sports was found to have a negative effect on graduation as an Honors Participant, and had a negative effect on the Transfer outcome. In addition, participation in sports was found to have the strongest effect on the decision to transfer. In other words, participation in sports had the strongest effect in impeding the transfer of honors students to another institution.

The sixth hypothesis stated that student's time entering into discussions with professors outside of class will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. This hypothesis was supported by the findings. The logistic regression findings indicated that discussion with professors outside of the classroom had a positive relationship with both the Distinction and Participant outcome. In other words, honors students who graduated with distinction and participant tended to engage in more discussions with professors outside the classroom. Students that transferred tended to engage in less discussion with professors outside of the classroom. One possible reason for this finding is that honors students who graduate with Honors Distinction or Participant may be more engaged with professors than students who transfer because students who transfer may not feel the need to build such relation as their goal is to transfer to another institution.

The seventh hypothesis stated that the support students have received from their family will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. This hypothesis was not supported by the model. Student's perceived support from family was found to have a negative effect on graduation with both Honors Distinction and Participant. The standardized coefficients indicated this variable had the second strongest effect upon whether a student chose to graduate through the Honors Distinction track and the weakest effect upon whether a student chose to graduate through the Honors Participant track. The Honors Transfer Model displayed positive standardized coefficients for this variable. These findings suggest that

support from family members for academic achievement is not an important aspect of successfully negotiating the honors track at the community college level.

The eighth hypothesis stated that the support students have received from their peers in encouraging their success will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. This hypothesis was partially supported by the findings of the logistic regression model for graduating with Honors Distinction. Student's perceived support from their peers in encouraging success in college had a weak negative effect upon a student choosing to graduate through the Honors Distinction path. However, this variable was found to have a positive relationship with graduation through the Participant track. Additional explanation supporting this finding that is in line with previous ex post facto explanations concerns time and embeddedness of students that are a part of different groups and organizations on campus. As mentioned before, students that are embedded in organizations that require strict meeting or practices would also formulate friendships and support within those groups. Honors students choosing to graduate through the honors with Distinction track have less ties to these other organizations and would therefore may feel that such ties formulate a distraction.

The ninth hypothesis stated that the support students have received from the professors encouraging their success will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. This hypothesis was fully supported by the findings. Honors students who received support from professors in encouraging their success were found to be more likely to graduate on the Honors Distinction track. This independent variable was found to have strongest effect in the Distinction Model and the third strongest effect in the Participant Model. Further, this variable displayed the strongest negative standardized logistic regression coefficient among the College Involvement variables in the Transfer Model.

The final hypothesis stated that the use of the honors study lounge will be positively related to successful completion of a two-year college honors program. This hypothesis was partially supported by the logistic regression findings. Use of the honors study lounge was found to have a weak positive relationship with students choosing to graduate through the Distinction track or transfer. In contrast, use of the honors study was found to be negatively related to graduation as an Honors Participant. One possible reason for this pattern of findings is that students graduating from the Participant track may be more involved in extracurricular activities, such as clubs and organizations or involvement with their peers.

## Results of the Grade Point Average Model

The regression model indicated that it had a moderately low amount of explanatory power in correctly predicting the GPAs of honors student's in the population. The relationships of the independent variables are consistent with previous research.

Recall, that the standardized partial regression coefficients from the linear regression model indicate that the five independent variables having the strongest effect in predicting high school GPA in order of importance were: (a) high school GPA; (b) whether or not the student was Hispanic; (c) high school graduation rank; (d) high school UIL rank; and (e) participation in college sports. In effect, all things being equal, students who had a higher high school GPA, were not Hispanic, were ranked higher in their high school graduating classes, came from high schools with higher UIL ranks, and participated more in college sports tended to earn the highest GPAs in the population of honors students at Tyler Junior College.

As noted by the ranking of standardized coefficients, high school GPA is still the strongest predictor of future success. This was followed by whether or not the student was Hispanic. Graduating from high schools that had higher UIL ranks may be an indicator of

resources and higher levels of competition created by the previously mentioned strength in high school rank. Participation in college sports among honors students is also justifiable as students that are involved in sports constantly have their GPAs evaluated by their coach to make sure their future eligibility is not in question.

## Discussion

The first research question required the exploration of the characteristics and backgrounds of honors students at a two-year college. Though largely descriptive in nature, the correlational analysis was revealing and helped in the construction of ex post facto explanations of the regression models associated with research question 2. Of particular importance was the difference in opportunities available to students concerning employment. Other than school attendance, employment seems to take up most of students' most limited resource -- time. With the responsibilities of school courses, employment and organizations embedded in academic courses, students entering the honors program are presented with a series of choices that may be decided more by their allegiance to organizations than a rational weighted decision that considers the optimal benefits of available options.

There were a number of outcomes from this research that require further discussion. First, the findings do not indicate strong support for the importance of the college cultural capital and college involvement variables. The models indicate that cultural capital variables are more likely to predict a student choosing the Distinction track or transferring to another institution than graduating through the Participant track. One interesting outcome was the similarities between graduating through the Distinction track and transferring to another institution. Displayed in Table 7.2 below are the standardized logistic regression coefficients for the college cultural capital and college involvement variables for the three logistic regression models. When

comparing the models both the Distinction and Transfer Models displayed the same signs for the three cultural capital variables that were measured by college courses. I argue that time and involvement play crucial roles in understanding these findings. Students graduating from the Distinction track and transferring demonstrate similarities when it comes to course work.

All of the courses require students to commit to an extra amount of time and work through projects, performances and practices. Fine arts consist of courses such as ceramics, photography, painting and sculpture. All require open labs where students have to manage their time to complete course projects on top of numerous hours of independent practice learning the craft. Music courses mostly consists of band and choir. Both require numerous practices for independent performances and college functions, such as sports events. Performing arts also commits students to a number of hours outside of the classroom, as the theatre department holds multiple stage performances in each semester. Participation in sports, like other courses previously mentioned, also require numerous practices and team meetings that embed student time within their academic pursuits.

**Table 7.2 Summary of Standardized Coefficients within the Three Logistic Regression Models for Graduation**

| | Distinction | Participant | Transfer |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Exposure to Cultural Capital in College** | | | |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Fine Arts Courses | .048 | -.051 | .017 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Music Courses | .076 | -.618 | .049 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Performing Arts Courses | .198 | -.170 | .016 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Clubs/Organizations | -.035 | .037 | .033 |
| Number of Semesters Participated in Sports | .142 | -.040 | -.485 |
| **College Involvement** | | | |
| Discussion with Professors Outside of Classroom | .024 | .007 | -.011 |
| Family Support Encouraging Success in College | -.163 | -.003 | .080 |
| Peer Support Encouraging Success in College | - .049 | .074 | -.011 |
| Professor Support Encouraging Success in College | .204 | .032 | -.109 |
| Number of Hours Using Honors Study Lounge | .024 | -.102 | .046 |

Students graduating through the Participant track displayed a higher association with clubs and organizations as well as support from their peers. This may indicate that students involved in these peer based organizations may be more concerned with the benefits of social networking instead of pursuing an academic end.

Finally, another interesting outcome of the research concerned the negative relationships of the variables measuring College Involvement on the program outcomes. As noted, in Table 7.2, students transferring to another institution displayed mostly negative relationships within the College Involvement variables, most notably with interactions with professors. Consistent with the ex post facto explanation posited above, I argue that students that choose to transfer enter into the program guided by a completely different outcome than those who choose to graduate through either the Distinction or Participant track. These students largely do not view graduation from the program as an end, but instead use the program's honors classes as a way to bolster their resume for entering a technical program, nursing, dentistry, radiology, or sonography program. These programs are highly competitive and only allow a finite number of students to enroll each fall semester. While this research did not look at outcome variables past graduation from the program, it is something that should be included in future research of the performance of the program.

Also interesting, was the student's use of the honors study lounge being negatively related to the student choosing to graduate from the Participant track as opposed to the positive relationship with graduating from the Distinction track or transferring to another institution. There could be a number of confounding factors affecting the use of this service by honors students. One possible explanation is that the study lounge provides an environment that is conducive to higher levels of academic achievement and its use as a social lounge is highly

discouraged. This atmosphere may be inviting to both those students wishing to transfer or graduating from the honors program with Distinction but it may also deter individuals that are more concerned with socializing with their peers.

## Study Limitations, Future Research & Application

While this research contributes to the exploration and understanding of student choice of graduation tract within a two-year college program, it does have its limitations. One limitation concerns the use of student recall in the measurement of a number of variables (e.g. parent's social economic status, which asked students to estimate their parent's income). This contributes to measurement error in the data. A second limitation is that the study focused on one cohort of honors students in a single community. This severely limits the generalizability of the findings.

There are a number of implications for future research and suggestions for structural changes to the honors program. First, I see the need to restructure the capstone course to allow for different types of projects apart from the formal thesis. This course could easily be adapted to allow for capstones projects that are more conducive to performance and maker disciplines. Instead of focusing on presentation of an academic poster as a central criterion of successful completion of the capstone, criteria could include an exhibition, which would be more in line with projects in the performance arts.

Model changes are also necessary. There is a need to capture the disciplines or degree plans that the students are taking in order to understand the effects or limitations placed by degree plans on student's choice of graduation path within the honors program. I would also like to reassess the GPA model to include college entrance exams so as to assess their predictive power in concern to graduating GPA. Research has posited that high school GPA is a better predictor of success, but I feel that it still should have been included in the model as it is a

requirement for entrance into the honors program. Finally, the model concerning graduation track outcomes needs to be adapted to understand how course requirements impose time restraints on students. This could be accomplished by implementing new variables which measure the amount of time that students spend outside of the classroom in concern to specific performing arts programs and clubs and organizations.

There are a number of practical implications of the key research findings for practice in community college in general and honors programs at community colleges in particular. First, it has been established that cultural capital does have an effect upon graduation from the honors program through the distinction track. While we cannot force student participation in courses associated with cultural capital, we can provide internal opportunities for student involvement in campus activities as part of the honors experience that are more academic than social in nature. This reassessment of Honors Points to be more in line with Service Learning could allow for students to socialize while giving them the necessary goals and structure to help guide them and their time towards the honors program. This could be applied at both the college level and in particular within the honors program.

Flexibility when taking the honors capstone must also be addressed. The main difference between graduation from the Honors Participant and Honors Distinction tracks is the successful completion of the honors capstone research thesis. Currently the Honors Capstone course is only offered in the spring semester, as it is the intention of the program that students can elect to take the course during the final semester of their second year. Limiting this course to the final semester could cause several problems. First, students that may want to take the capstone course may decide against enrolling because of commitments to other programs and organizations that may require more time commitment. Further, students have little input in what they take their

final semester. They are finishing up their degree plans and the courses they have to finish are usually more advanced in nature. Opening up the Capstone course so that it may be taken during the spring semester of their first year could help avoid these structural problems.

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# Appendix A - Student Survey

## Cultural Capital Factors Affecting the Successful Completion of a Two-year Honors Program Study Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study of how college students ascribed and achieved attributes effect their likelihood of successful graduating from the honors program. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to learn how student's ascribed and achieved characteristics prepare them for successful completion of the honors program. The questions pertain to your personal background and your experience in high school and college. The data collected will be used to analyze and understand the relationship between a college student's background and successful completion of the honors program. Your input is incredibly valuable to making the TJC Honors program to work better for the students it serves. All information is kept completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the honors administration. The survey takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. You may have to look up some information. Please be as accurate as possible.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, you may follow the link at the bottom of this email and finish the survey. The survey will include questions about your family background, your high school achievements, your college achievements, the number and type of classes you take at Tyler Junior College (TJC), how much you study, social and leisure activities, and your future plans upon leaving TJC. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete.

Risks and benefits: I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. The TJC Honors Program is a very demanding place to be a student and we hope to learn more about students who work while earning degrees.

Compensation: Four respondents will be picked from all respondents and given a $50 gift card from an establishment of their choice.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to take part, it will not affect your current or future relationship with TJC Honors Program. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time. The completion and return of the survey implies consent to participate in the research.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Ryan Button and Dr. Richard Goe. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Ryan Button at rbut2@tjc.edu or at 936-615-4204. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 785-532-3224 or access their website at http://www.k-state.edu/comply/.

First, you will be asked questions about your

**Family and Educational Background.**

1. First Name, Last Name *

2. Please type in your Apache ID Number (A#) *

3. Select your sex *

Mark only one oval.

Male

Female

4. Which of the following best describes yourself? *

Mark only one oval.

African American

Hispanic/Latino

American Indian/Alaskan Native/Samoan

Asian

Caucasian/White  Non-hispanic

5. Are you bilingual? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

6. Language Spoken at Home *

7. How many siblings do you have? *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15+

8. How far is your family (parents) home from Tyler Junior College? Please respond with a numerical answer in miles. *

9. Have one or both of your parents completed college? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

10. Mother's Highest Education Level/Degree *

Mark only one oval.

Some high school or less

High School

Some College

Technical Training/Trade/Certification

Associates Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctorate Degree

11. Father's Highest Education Level/Degree *

Mark only one oval.

Some high school or less

High School

Some College

Technical Training/Trade/Certification

Associates Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree
Doctorate Degree

12. Please list your mother's occupation and describe what she does at work. *

13. Please list your father's occupation and describe what he does at work. *

14. To the best of your knowledge, what was the total income of your parent(s) or guardian(s) last year? Add up your guardians income. *
Mark only one oval.
Less than $25,000
$25,000 to $49,999
$50,000 to $99,999
$100,000 to $249,999
$250,000 or above I do not know

## High School Experience

Next, you will be asked questions about your experience in High School. Please answer as accurately as possible.

15. Select what type of high school you graduated from *
Mark only one oval.
Public
Private
Alternative/Homeschool Charter
GED

16. High School UIL Rank at time of graduation *
Mark only one oval.

1A

2A

3A

4A

5A

6A

Not Applicable

17. Number of students in your graduating class (Best estimate) *

18. Graduation Plan in High School *

Mark only one oval.

Minimum Plan Recommended Plan

Distinguished Achievement Plan

Not Applicable

19. What scale was your high school GPA based on?

Mark only one oval.

4.0

5.0

100 point scale

20. High School Graduating Grade Point Average (GPA) according to the previous scale *

21. Graduation Rank *

Mark only one oval.

Valedictorian/Salutatorian

Top 10%

Top 11% to 25%

26% to 50%

51% to 75%

76% or Higher

22. Did you take the SAT? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

23. If yes, then what was your composite (all three) score?

24. Did you take the ACT? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

25. If yes, then what was your composite (all three) score?

26. How many college credits did you receive in high school from dual credit/AP tests/etc? Any course that you received college credit for. *

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses

Dual Credit Courses

International Baccalaureate (IB) Program

Honors Program

Gifted & Talented Program Advanced Studies

Other:

28. Select all science courses taken in high school *

Check all that apply.

Biology

Integrated Physics and Chemistry (IPC) Physics

Chemistry

Anatomy And Physiology

Aquatic Science Astronomy

Earth and Space Science

Environmental Systems

AP Biology

AP Chemistry

AP Physics

AP Environmental Science

IB Chemistry

IB Biology

IB Physics

IB Environmental Systems Lab Courses

Any TJC Science Dual Credit Course

Other:

28. Select all math courses taken in high school *

Prealgebra

Algebra I

Geometry

Algebra II

Pre-Calculus

Mathematical Models

Independent Study in Mathematics

Advanced Quantitative Reasoning (AQR)

AP Statistics

AP Calculus AB

AP Calculus BC

AP Computer Science

IB Mathematical Studies Standard Level

IB Mathematics Standard Level

IB Mathematics Higher Level

IB Further Mathematics Standard Level

Mathematical Applications in Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (CTE)
Engineering Mathematics (CTE)
Statistics and Risk Management (CTE)
Any TJC Math Dual Credit Course Other:

30. Select all English courses taken in high school *
Check all that apply.
English I
English I for Speakers of Other Languages / ESL English II
English II for Speakers of Other Languages / ESL
English III English IV
Research and Technical Writing Creative Writing
Practical Writing Skills Literary Genres Business English (CTE)
Journalism
AP English Language and Composition
AP English Literature and Composition
Any TJC English Dual Credit Course Other:

## High School - Extracurricular Activities

Please, answer as accurately as possible.

31. During high school, did you participate in any of the following activities? (Select all that apply) *
Check all that apply.
Athletics/Team or Individual Sports JROTC
Art
Choir/Glee Club
Orchestra Program
Concert Band Marching Band

Cheerleading

Newspaper

Yearbook

Pep Squad Dance/Drill Team

Campus Academic Clubs/Organizations

Literary Magazine

Community Service Organizations (Key Club, etc)

Vocational Organizations (FFA, etc)

Political Organizations

Student Government

Theater

Competitive Speech/Debate Teams

UIL / Academic Competition Teams Other:

32. Number of years of participation in Fine Arts/Visual Arts Courses (Drawing, Painting, Photography, etc.) *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

33. Number of years of participation in Music Courses or Programs (Choir, Orchestra, Band, etc.)

*

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

34. Number of years of participation in Performing Arts (Dance, Theater, Forensics, Speech, etc.)
*
Mark only one oval.
0
1
2
3
4

35. Number of years of participation in Foreign Language Study *
Mark only one oval.
0
1
2
3
4

36. Number of years of participation in Clubs & Organizations *
Mark only one oval.
0
1
2
3
4

37. Number of years of participation in Sports (Team and Individual Athletics, Cheerleading, etc.)
*

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

38. Number of years of participation in Academic Competition/University Interscholastic League (UIL) *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

39. How many elected/teacher nominated leadership positions did you hold in high school (example: secretary, treasurer, president, etc.)? *

## College Experience

This section will ask you questions about your college experience. Please answer as accurately as possible.

40. Including this semester. How many semesters have you been in the honors program? *

Mark only one oval.

1

2

3

4

5

41. Including this semester. Number of semesters of participation in Fine Arts/Visual Arts Courses (Drawing, Painting, Photography, etc.) *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

42. Including this semester. Number of semesters of participation in Music Courses or Programs (Choir, Orchestra, Band, etc.) *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

43. Including this semester. Number of semesters of participation in Performing Arts (Dance, Theater, Forensics, Speech, etc.) *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

44. Including this semester. Number of semesters of participation in Foreign Language Study *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

45. Including this semester. Number of semesters of participation in Clubs & Organizations *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

46. Including this semester. Number of semesters of participation in Sports (Team and Individual Athletics, Cheerleading, etc.) *

Mark only one oval.

0

1

2

3

4

47. How are you paying for college? (Select all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

Federal Student Aid

Presidential Honors

Faulconer

Family assistance

Working

48. Please select the semesters that you have lived in the dorms. *

Check all that apply.

1st Semester

2nd Semester

3rd Semester

4th Semester

5th Semester

Not Applicable

49. How concerned are you about taking on debt as you pursue your education? *

Mark only one oval.

Not concerned 1 2 3 4 5 Highly concerned

50. Do you hold a campus job or work study position? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

51. If yes, then how many hours do you work per week? (Numerical answer only)

52. Do you work at a job off-campus? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

53. If yes, then how many hours do you work per week? (Numerical answer only)

54. Did you enroll in and complete an advanced math course your first sememster at TJC? Pre- Calculus or Higher *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

55. How often do you engage in discussions with professors outside of the classroom? *
Mark only one oval.
Never 1 2 3 4 5 Very Often

56. Which of the following best describes the level of support you have received from your family in encouraging your success in college? *
Mark only one oval.
Not Supportive 1 2 3 4 5 Highly Supportive

57. Which of the following best describes the level of support you have received from your peers in encouraging your success in college? *
Mark only one oval.
Not Supportive 1 2 3 4 5 Highly Supportive

58. Which of the following best describes the level of support you have received from your honors professors in encouraging your success in college? *
Mark only one oval.
Not Supportive 1 2 3 4 5 Highly Supportive

59. How many hours do you typically spend per week studying for your college classes? Please list a numerical answer. *

60. How many hours do you typically spend per week studying in the honors lounge? Please list a numerical answer. *

## Future Plans

This is the last section and covers your future plans. Please answer as accurately as possible.

61. Are you returning to TJC this Fall? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

62. If you could do it all again, would you choose to go to TJC?

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

63. Why? *

64. Would you recommend the honors program to students from your high school? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

65. Why?

66. Are you pleased with your experience with the scholarship office? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

67. If "No", then why?

68. Have you been challenged academically? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

69. How do you plan on leaving TJC?

Graduate with associates degree from TJC with Honors Distinction

Graduate with associates degree from TJC as Honors Participant

Graduate with associates degree from TJC (non-honors)

Transfer to four-year university without graduating from TJC

70. Have you ever enrolled in Honors Capstone? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

71. If "No", Then Do you plan to enroll in Honors Capstone?

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

72. Do you plan to attend another university after TJC? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

73. Have you applied and been accepted by another institution? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

74. If yes, what institution do you plan on attending?

75. Which of the following best describes your level of satisfaction with your overall experience in the Tyler Junior College Honors Program? *

Mark only one oval.

Unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Satisfied

76. Which of the following best describes your level of satisfaction with your overall experience in Tyler Junior College Honors Courses? *

Mark only one oval.

Unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Satisfied

77. Which of the following best describes your level of satisfaction with Tyler Junior College Honors Course Faculty? *

Mark only one oval.

Unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Satisfied

78. What are your career aspirations once you have finished your college education? *

79. What is one change that you would make to the Tyler Junior College Honors Program? Please be specific. *

80. Please enter a valid email so that I may contact you after graduation to record your final graduating GPA? *