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TRANSFER STUDENTS AND THE MISMATCH HYPOTHESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study uses the National Longitudinal Study of Freshman to analyze the different factors that affect a student's decision to transfer from an NLSF institution. Several arguments against affirmative action rest on the assumption that minority students are more likely to leave selective institutions if admitted. This analysis found no evidence to support claims that that race plays a role in transfer decisions. The study provides the counterintuitive finding that students who did not feel self-conscious about their race were more likely to transfer. This study found no support for the mismatch hypothesis at the institutional or individual level.

Keywords: Race, transfer students; mismatch hypothesis, affirmative action.

Introduction

In recent years, affirmative action has been a hotly contested topic in the study of higher education. Although there are many types of affirmative action, such as preferential admission for children of alumni and athletes, the main focus of this debate concerns race-conscious admissions (Espenshade, Chung, and Walling, 2004). Minority preference in admissions usually gives a race-based admissions advantage to African-American and Hispanic students (Bowen and Bok, 1998). There is an opportunity cost involved in affirmative action, as the decision to admit certain students necessarily eliminates the opportunity for other students to attend the university in question (Espenshade and Chung, 2005). "The affirmative action debate is particularly relevant to the discussion of admissions at selective institutions. Less-selective institutions admit the majority of applicants; therefore, only applicants and selective institutions face fierce competition for a spot in their desired university's freshman class (Espenshade, Chung, and Walling, 2004). Proponents of racial affirmative action argue that admission to college, especially for elite institutions, is not, and has never been, decided solely on the merit of applicants (Espenshade, Chung, and Walling, 2004).

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They believe that race-based affirmative action helps to even the playing field for students who might not have received the same advantages as white students; as well as to add diversity to the cohort of students that will eventually produce our nation's future leaders (Bowen and Bok, 2008). However, opponents of affirmative action believe that race-based affirmative action puts unnecessary weight on an applicant's race. Furthermore, opponents believe that race-conscious admissions have the potential to thrust minority students into an academic environment for which they are not prepared (Thernstrom and Thernstrom, 1997).

An especially controversial provision of the affirmative action debate has been the "mismatch hypothesis," which critics of race-based affirmative action have championed as evidence that the practice of affirmative action is not only unsubstantiated, but in fact harmful to the very students that it is designed to help (Alon and Tienda, 2005). If the mismatch hypothesis true, we should find racial minorities withdrawing from selective schools at higher rates than white students. Therefore, the presence or absence of racial differences in the type of students who transfer schools is an important component to this debate. Multiple attempts have been made to examine the various factors that affect student decisions to transfer schools, with varying degrees of success. However, most literature on this topic has focused on the transfer of students from community

colleges to four-year universities; and little attention has been paid to the students, who begin at a four-year university, and subsequently decide to transfer.

The debate over affirmative action and the academic evidence that supports or disproves its value has real-world consequences. In 1998, due to outcry over affirmative admissions, the state of California passed Proposition 209, which abolished the use of preferential admissions on the basis of race, sex, or ethnicity for California public universities. The passing of this Proposition resulted in an immediate drop in minority student applications to California public schools; especially to more selective schools in this system, such as the University of California at Berkeley (Antonovics and Sander, 2009). The decline in racial diversity at public flagship universities will have an adverse impact on economic opportunity for previously discriminated against minorities of color. Additionally, as the Supreme Court noted, it will reduce diversity among America's leaders, from the corporate world to the military (Grutter v. Bollinger, 2003). In addition to the impact on American society, this debate over minority students has lessons for institutional policy. If minority students at selective universities are more likely to leave school, it could be construed that these students are not a good investment for the university; the institution might be better served by admitting students with race-blind criteria. Experts in the sociological community have provided contradictory evidence in this debate, with findings that both support and undermine the concept of the mismatch hypothesis.

THE CURRENT LITERATURE

The majority of the existing literature on college transfer students focuses on students who transition from community colleges to four-year institutions. The literature that is not centered on community colleges often focuses on racial differences in students at selective universities, and the possible effect that these differences might have on academic performance. The "mismatch hypothesis" refers to the hypothesis that racial minority students who attend very selective higher education institutions as a result of affirmative action policies will not succeed due to a lack of "fit" with peers and academic standards at elite universities. Proponents of this hypothesis argue that minority students enter selective universities with a lower level of preparation than their peers, and this lack of preparation results in lower performance and lower

completion rates (Alon and Tienda, 2005). Related to this hypothesis is the idea that the admittance of minority students to more selective institutions results in these minority students transferring out of their original institutions at disproportionate rates (Alon and Tienda, 2005).

Longitudinal studies have shown that minority students are more likely to drop out or transfer from their first institution than white students (Rhee, 2008). In *The Source of the River*, Massey et al. discuss the possibility of stereotype vulnerability, which they believe causes a self-defeating reduction in performance by minority students due to the fear of fulfilling negative stereotypes (Massey et al., 2003). This vulnerability is believed by some researchers to give rise to "mismatches" between students who benefitted from affirmative action and their universities. Massey et al. conducted further research on the effects of minority status in college with *Taming the River*, which found support for the mismatch hypothesis at the institutional level (Massey et al., 2009). Their analysis showed that the greater the difference between the SAT scores of minority students and other students at an institution, the lower the grades of the minority students in comparison to the reference groups. This difference in achievement was significant and negative, indicating that an analysis of institutions participating in the NLSF may provide support for the mismatch hypothesis (Charles et al, 2009).

While Massey et al. provide support to the mismatch hypothesis on grade disparities, their research was inconclusive on whether there was an effect on withdrawing from a student's first college. In their examination of the factors that affect student decisions to leave college, the authors of these works did not distinguish between students who dropped out or simply left college, and students who transferred to different universities. This lack of categorization undermines the researchers' ability to separate transfer effects by the students who chose to leave their university for another institution, and students who chose to leave their university with no intention of enrolling at another school.

Several other studies have provided support for the mismatch hypothesis in higher education, with relation to racial minorities. Rhee completed an analysis of minority and institutional characteristics, and their effects on whether students transfer. Her research showed that minority students are more likely to

transfer or drop out of their university than to persist, in comparison to white students (Rhee, 2008). The same study also found that greater institutional diversity results in lower transfer and dropout rates for minority students. This could provide support for the mismatch hypothesis at the institutional level, due to the fact that many selective universities are predominantly white (Rhee, 2008). In addition, research shows that recipients of Pell grants are more likely to transfer schools; and Pell grant recipients are more likely to be minority students (Dai, 2010).

Despite the assertion by some scholars that racial effects create an unhealthy environment for minorities that encourages them to leave school, research has shown that institutional mobility is becoming more common in higher education. Examination of college student movement using the National Educational Longitudinal Study has shown that nearly one-third of students who are enrolled in a four-year university transfer schools at least once before graduation (Goldrick-Rab and Pfeiffer, 2009). Another study by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center reported that nearly one-third of total college students transferred at some point in their college career (2012). Some students even enter college with the intent to transfer eventually, and treat their freshman institution as a “stepping-stone” of sorts (Okun et al., 2008-2009). The increasing institutional mobility of college students raises the question of whether there is truly a racial component to college transfer decisions, or whether transferring is simply the current norm among college students.

Several studies have suggested the possibility that students transfer for a variety of reasons, including school preference and finding a better academic “fit,” as well as for financial reasons. An analysis showed that the most-cited reasons for transferring from four-year institutions were personal and academic reasons (Wintre and Morgan, 2009). The NELS shows that where a student falls in the socioeconomic range has a significant impact on whether they decide to transfer, as well as the type of institution to which they decide to transfer (Goldrick-Rab and Pfeiffer, 2009). Institutional characteristics have also been found to significantly affect students’ decisions to stay or depart from their universities. These characteristics can include type of institution, the institution’s treatment of students, and more (Rhee, 2008). Institutions that provide constructive activities for their students, such as service learning, are more likely to

retain students from their first year to their second year (Kuh et al., 2008). In addition, parental education has been shown to influence a student’s decision to transfer or remain at their original institution (Wintre and Morgan, 2009). The presence of these various factors could either moderate or negate the effects of race on transfer decisions.

DATA AND ANALYTICAL METHODS

For the purposes of this study, the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshman was utilized. This survey collected data from students at selective institutions, and therefore, it is ideal for a test of whether the mismatch hypothesis has an effect on transferring. Selective institutions such as those found in the NLSF are the most likely to produce the effects that support the mismatch hypothesis. Massey et al. previously found mismatch effects for the grades of minority students using NLSF data, which means that an analysis using NLSF data is likely to provide results that support the mismatch hypothesis (Massey et al. 2009).

The National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen was conducted using a sample of freshmen taken from 28 selective universities. These institutions were generally selective, and the sample included a mix of public research universities, private liberal arts universities, and private research universities. 4,573 students were propositioned to complete the NLSF, and 3,924 participants completed the survey. The participants were surveyed before the start of their freshman year of college, and continued to be monitored through the spring of their senior year, with a total of five waves administered.

For the purposes of this study, we defined transfer students as students who responded to the NLSF saying that they had left their original institution, and were currently enrolled at another university. These respondents were classified as students who transferred from their original, four-year university, to another university. We recoded students who reported leaving school and re-enrolling at another four-year institution into a dichotomous variable to represent transfer students (Appendix A).

The NLSF dataset provides a comprehensive examination of the various socioeconomic, racial, and background variables that could prove useful in determining why students ultimately decide to transfer out of their original institution. In addition, this data includes multiple categories of institutions, such as liberal arts and private research universities. This enables us to determine

whether the observed outcomes are specific to a particular type of institution, or if the outcomes are common. Every student who participated in the NLSF gave background information on their race, socioeconomic status, and background, as well as their educational experiences and their attitudes towards education.

This study used the NLSF to analyze the characteristics of students who transfer from their original school. A binomial logistic regression was used to complete the analysis. Models included controls for socioeconomic variables such as parents' education, as well as controls for income, gender, type of institution, social integration, etc. The recoding of these variables is addressed in Appendix A. For our dependent variable in these regressions, we utilized our previously-described dichotomous "transfer students" variable.

If students transfer from selective universities for reasons that are not related to race, this could provide evidence that other factors than those suggested by the mismatch hypothesis are more important in determining transfer decisions. For the purposes of this study, it is hypothesized that there are no racial differences between students who transfer from NLSF institutions.

We predict that other factors, such as socioeconomic status and social integration, will have a significant effect on whether students transfer from these institutions.

Several binomial logistic regressions were completed in order to obtain our analyses. We began by isolating racial and socioeconomic variables, in order to see if there was a basic effect of race on transfer students. We next ran a binomial logistic regression in which we added variables concerning students' feelings and attitudes concerning their acceptance at their institution, in hopes of determining whether these factors would affect decisions to transfer. The purpose of this regression was to determine whether transfer students faced any stigmas or attitudes which may have affected their desire to stay at their original institution. Finally, due to the existence of literature that cites campus integration as well as personal events for reasons why students transfer, we completed a model with social integration variables, as well as life events that might affect the decision to transfer (Wintre and Morgan, 2009). For this model, we wished to see whether, when controlling for background variables, these factors remained significant for students at NLSF institutions.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Gender, race, institution type, freshman GPA, number of schools admitted, feelings of preparation from high school, income.

		Variables in the Equation					
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	Female	.891	.342	6.775	1	.009	2.437
	race_black	-.276	.427	.416	1	.519	.759
	race_asian	-.591	.475	1.553	1	.213	.554
	race_hispl	-.147	.427	.119	1	.730	.863
	edm_somehs	.111	1.070	.011	1	.917	1.118
	edm_ba	-.417	.402	1.076	1	.300	.659
	edm_adv	.018	.419	.002	1	.965	1.019
	edf_somehs	-.165	1.077	.023	1	.878	.848
	edf_hs	.220	.400	.304	1	.582	1.247
	edf_adv	-.243	.384	.400	1	.527	.784
	liberal_arts	.477	.437	1.193	1	.275	1.611
	private_research	-.258	.334	.599	1	.439	.772
	fres_gpa	-.221	.118	3.495	1	.062	.802
	one_to_three_schools_admitted	-.465	1.051	.196	1	.658	.628
	four_to_six_schools_admitted	.111	1.139	.010	1	.922	1.118
	hs_prepared	.171	.313	.298	1	.585	1.186
	problems_finaid	-.276	.345	.638	1	.425	.759
	Lowinc	-.070	.390	.032	1	.858	.932
	Upper	.814	.562	2.098	1	.148	2.258
	Constant	-2.498	1.208	4.279	1	.039	.082

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: female, race_black, race_asian, race_hispl, edm_somehs, edm_ba, edm_adv, edf_somehs, edf_hs, edf_adv, liberal_arts, private_research, fres_gpa, one_to_three_schools_admitted, four_to_six_schools_admitted, hs_prepared, problems_finaid, lowinc, upper.

This regression examines the effects of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and selected institutional and academic variables on the “transfer” variable. This regression shows a significant effect of gender. Females in NLSF institutions are 2.437 times more likely to transfer than males when controlling for socioeconomic

status, type of institution, and race. No racial effect is found for transfer students in this model. Therefore, when controlling solely for socioeconomic variables, academic performance, and institutional characteristics, race has no impact on a student’s likelihood of transferring.

Table 2. Gender, race, institution type, freshman GPA, number of schools admitted, feelings of preparation from high school, income, feelings about race from other students and professors, attitudes towards school.

		Variables in the Equation					
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	Female	.931	.347	7.210	1	.007	2.536
	race_black	.034	.471	.005	1	.943	1.034
	race_asian	-.422	.484	.761	1	.383	.656
	race_hispl	.042	.440	.009	1	.924	1.043
	edm_somehs	-.025	1.086	.001	1	.982	.975
	edm_ba	-.361	.409	.782	1	.376	.697
	edm_adv	.112	.426	.069	1	.793	1.118
	edf_somehs	-.321	1.083	.088	1	.767	.725
	edf_hs	.313	.406	.593	1	.441	1.367
	edf_adv	-.274	.388	.499	1	.480	.760
	liberal_arts	.571	.455	1.571	1	.210	1.769
	private_research	-.214	.340	.397	1	.529	.807
	fres_gpa	-.259	.123	4.485	1	.034	.771
	one_to_three_schools_admitted	-.421	1.065	.156	1	.692	.656
	four_to_six_schools_admitted	.245	1.153	.045	1	.832	1.278
	hs_prepared	.140	.319	.192	1	.661	1.150
	problems_finaid	-.186	.354	.277	1	.599	.830
	Lowinc	-.006	.394	.000	1	.989	.995
	Upper	.806	.573	1.979	1	.160	2.238
	never_self_conscious_race	.868	.398	4.742	1	.029	2.381
	sometimes_self_conscious_race	.088	.618	.020	1	.887	1.092
	often_self_conscious_race	.555	1.032	.289	1	.591	1.742
	prof_never_self_conscious	-.596	1.386	.185	1	.667	.551
	prof_sometimes_self_conscious	-.217	1.402	.024	1	.877	.805
	reflects_positively_race	-.102	.321	.100	1	.751	.903
	less_well	-.686	.338	4.116	1	.042	.504
	important_good_grades	-.269	.396	.462	1	.497	.764
	Constant	-2.216	1.823	1.479	1	.224	.109

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: female, race_black, race_asian, race_hispl, edm_somehs, edm_ba, edm_adv, edf_somehs, edf_hs, edf_adv, liberal_arts, private_research, fres_gpa, one_to_three_schools_admitted, four_to_six_schools_admitted, hs_prepared, problems_finaid, lowinc, upper, never_self_conscious_race, sometimes_self_conscious_race, often_self_conscious_race, prof_never_self_conscious, prof_sometimes_self_conscious, reflects_positively_race, less_well, important_good_grades.

This analysis adds variables concerning students’ feelings regarding their academic performance and the importance of grades. Students who say that they are doing less well in school than they would like are significantly less likely to transfer than students who did not respond affirmatively to this statement. The analysis also adds variables concerning respondents’ comfort with their race, and how they are treated at their

institution as a result of their race. Students who say that their peers have never made them feel self-conscious about their race are 2.381 times more likely to transfer than students who have felt self-conscious about their race, according to this regression. With the addition of these variables, freshman GPA becomes significant at the $p < .05$ level. Gender becomes more highly significant when the additional variables are added.

Table 3. Gender, race, institution type, freshman GPA, number of schools admitted, feelings of preparation from high school, income, feelings about race from other students and professors, attitudes towards school, campus integration, disruptive life events.

		Variables in the Equation					
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	Female	.768	.359	4.566	1	.033	2.155
	race_black	-.076	.488	.024	1	.876	.927
	race_asian	-.491	.494	.988	1	.320	.612
	race_hispl	-.005	.453	.000	1	.991	.995
	edm_somehs	-.210	1.120	.035	1	.851	.811
	edm_ba	-.417	.415	1.006	1	.316	.659
	edm_adv	.127	.434	.086	1	.769	1.136
	edf_somehs	-.366	1.135	.104	1	.747	.694
	edf_hs	.206	.414	.248	1	.618	1.229
	edf_adv	-.379	.393	.927	1	.336	.685
	liberal_arts	.624	.465	1.799	1	.180	1.866
	private_research	-.194	.344	.317	1	.573	.824
	fres_gpa	-.272	.124	4.788	1	.029	.762
	one_to_three_schools_admitted	-.707	1.078	.431	1	.512	.493
	four_to_six_schools_admitted	-.073	1.168	.004	1	.950	.930
	hs_prepared	.229	.325	.494	1	.482	1.257
	problems_finaid	-.232	.360	.415	1	.519	.793
	Lowinc	-.005	.402	.000	1	.990	.995
	Upper	.896	.585	2.348	1	.125	2.449
	never_self_conscious_race	.853	.404	4.454	1	.035	2.346
	sometimes_self_conscious_race	.125	.631	.039	1	.844	1.133
	often_self_conscious_race	.396	1.036	.146	1	.702	1.486
	prof_never_self_conscious	-.492	1.427	.119	1	.730	.611
	prof_sometimes_self_conscious	.050	1.467	.001	1	.973	1.051
	reflects_positively_race	-.053	.328	.026	1	.871	.948
	less_well	-.796	.348	5.226	1	.022	.451
	important_good_grades	-.270	.406	.443	1	.506	.763
	varsity_sports	-.942	.756	1.554	1	.213	.390
	intramural_sports	-.698	.466	2.244	1	.134	.498
	religious_group	-.455	.408	1.243	1	.265	.634
	family_lost_job	-.482	.631	.583	1	.445	.618
	parents_divorced	-1.221	1.057	1.333	1	.248	.295
	r_ill_or_disabled	1.556	.508	9.386	1	.002	4.742
Constant	-1.576	1.880	.703	1	.402	.207	

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: female, race_black, race_asian, race_hispl, edm_somehs, edm_ba, edm_adv, edf_somehs, edf_hs, edf_adv, liberal_arts, private_research, fres_gpa, one_to_three_schools_admitted, four_to_six_schools_admitted, hs_prepared, problems_finaid, lowinc, upper, never_self_conscious_race, sometimes_self_conscious_race, often_self_conscious_race, prof_never_self_conscious, prof_sometimes_self_conscious, reflects_positively_race, less_well, important_good_grades, varsity_sports, intramural_sports, religious_group, family_lost_job, parents_divorced, r_ill_or_disabled.

This analysis adds campus integration effects, such as membership to an athletic team or religious group. In Massey’s analysis, membership to campus organizations positively predicted students remaining at their university (Massey et al., 2009). However, no campus integration effects were found in this analysis. The regression also includes potentially disruptive life

events. Respondents who reported becoming ill or disabled in the previous year were 4.74 times more likely to transfer than participants who did not report experiencing this life event. Freshman GPA remained significant, as did gender, students’ lack of feeling self-conscious about race, and belief that they were doing less well in school than they would like. We still observe

a lack of significance for race variables, which indicates that race does not play a role in determining whether or not a student will transfer.

FINDINGS

Race Effects: Contrary to the findings in *The Source of the River*, no race effects were found in the analysis of factors affecting transfer students. No race effects were found when examining only racial and socioeconomic effects, and race effects did not become significant when variables for social integration and disruptive life circumstances were added into the model. In fact, respondents who reported that they had never been made to feel self-conscious about their race due to their peers were significantly more likely to transfer than students who reported that their peers had sometimes or often made them feel self-conscious about their race. This effect stays significant when controlling for various other factors, such as socioeconomic status, type of institution, and social integration. Therefore, contrary to previous findings, minority students are not more likely to leave school; and when they do, it is not due to the fact that they feel self-conscious about their race. In fact, never feeling self-conscious about one's race positively predicts the decision to transfer. In addition, a respondent's belief that it is important for their performance in school to reflect positively on their race was not statistically significant.

Gender Effects: Females were significantly more likely than males to transfer. Females transfer at 2.155 times the rate of males.

Socioeconomic Effects: Socioeconomic status did not appear to affect student decisions to transfer. Neither income nor parents' education was significant in our analysis. In addition, respondents reporting with financial aid failed to be a significant predictor of the decision to transfer.

Social Integration Effects: Contrary to the existing literature, no campus integration effects were found. Students who were members of an intramural or varsity athletic team or a religious group were not less likely to transfer. *Taming the River* found that students who were involved in campus groups were less likely to leave school; however, no significant findings to support or disprove this statement were found in this study. *Taming the River's* analysis did not separate students who dropped out from students who transferred schools, which suggests that the effects of campus

integration might be more important to students who drop out than to students who transfer.

Academic Performance: Freshman year GPA had a moderately significant association with transfer students when controlling for only socioeconomic and race variables. However, when controlling for other factors, such as racial attitudes and the student's feelings about their academic performance, freshman year GPA becomes highly significant. The type of institution that a student attends was not significant at any point.

Students who felt that they were doing less well in school than they would like were significantly less likely to transfer than students who felt like they were doing well in school. Students who indicated that they would like to do better in school were half as likely as students who were satisfied with their performance to transfer. In addition, high school preparation for college was not statistically significant.

Other Effects: Respondents who had suffered a serious illness or had become disabled within the previous year were significantly more likely to transfer. These students were 4.742 times more likely to transfer than students who had not suffered an illness or disability in the past year. This effect was present when controlling for race, socioeconomic status, etc.

CONCLUSION

The effects of minority status for respondents were not significant at any point in the regression analysis. This is a counterintuitive finding, due to the fact that both *The Source of the River* (Massey et al., 2003) and *Taming the River* (Massey et al., 2009) found that minority status has a significant effect on whether or not students leave school. Students who said that their peers have never made them feel self-conscious about their race were twice as likely to transfer, even when controlling for race. This provides evidence that the mismatch hypothesis is not being supported by the actual experiences of minority students at NLSF schools. In addition, a respondent's belief that it is important that their academic performance reflects positively on their race was not statistically significant. Were this significant, it would provide support for the "stereotype threat" of minorities feeling pressure to perform academically; however, its lack of significance means that this study can give no support to this theory. Another component of the mismatch hypothesis is the assumption that minority students will be less prepared for selective institutions, and will therefore have a

poorer academic performance. However, when controlling for race, students who responded that they felt prepared for college by their high school were not significantly more or less likely to transfer.

This analysis provides no support for either the mismatch hypothesis or the concept of “stereotype threat” at selective institutions, and therefore provides no evidence to support claims that affirmative action results in detrimental effects for minority students. Our hypothesis that racial effects would not be significant in determining the type of student that transfers from NLSF institutions was supported by these findings.

The finding that GPA is a significant predictor of students transferring was consistent with existing literature that names first-year GPA as a predictor of transferring (Allen et al., 2008). The finding that type of institution was not significant was counterintuitive, due to research suggesting that institutional characteristics are important in predicting which students transfer (Rhee, 2008). Students who indicated that they were doing less well in school than they would like were half as likely to transfer as students who believed they were doing well in school. This could relate to the literature that shows that students often transfer for upward mobility in terms of institutional quality. This is also consistent with Wintre and Morgan’s finding that finding that students often transfer for academic reasons, and often cite a higher quality of academic programming at the institution that is their destination as a reason for their decision to transfer (Wintre and Morgan, 2009).

Our finding that females are significantly more likely to transfer than males could be linked to the fact that females generally earn higher grades than males in college, and therefore would have more transfer options available to them (Okun et al., 2008-2009). The finding that no socioeconomic effects were present for transfer students was counterintuitive, due to the fact that much of the existing literature cites socioeconomic factors in the decision to transfer (Goldrick-Rab and Pfeiffer, 2009).

This study suggests that for transfer students at NLSF institutions, background variables, such as family income and parents’ education, are less important in determining whether students at NLSF institutions transfer. More important are disruptive life events, gender, freshman year grades, and the students’ feelings regarding their academic performance, and students’

feelings that they are accepted by their peers with regards to their race.

The absence of racial effects contradicts Massey, et al.’s findings that minority students leave NLSF institutions at higher rates (2009). This provides validity for our decision to separate students who left NLSF schools in order to transfer from students who left NLSF institutions for other reasons. Further research could delve more deeply into the NLSF participants who dropped out or stopped out of school, in order to see whether there are different effects present for students who left school for these reasons.

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