LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

EDUCATIONAL SELECTION IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

BY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which socioeconomic status affected the decision of a post-secondary candidate to attend either the university or the community college located in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

The sample consisted of 159 university students and 181 community college students. The quota sampling technique was applied to each population to extract the desired sample size.

The results revealed that the socioeconomic compositions of the two populations were similar. This suggested that socioeconomic status might not affect the decision of a post-secondary candidate to select a particular post-secondary educational institution.

The two samples were then subjected to comparison with respect to age and sex composition, community of origin, family size, parental encouragement, peer group influence, self-concept of academic ability, academic ability, perception of the labour market opportunity structure, and reasons for attending a post-secondary institution.

Notable differences were found to exist between the two student populations when the relationships of educational selection to parental encouragement, peer group influence, community of residence, family size and self-concept of academic ability were observed. The results indicated that these differences were as prevalent within each socioeconomic category as they were between each socioeconomic category. This finding calls into question

the theoretically proposed relationship of socioeconomic status to conventional background variables.

Extreme differences were found to exist between the two student populations when the relationship of educational selection to perception of the opportunity structure and reasons for attending a post-secondary institution were observed while controlling for socioeconomic status. In each socioeconomic status category, substantially larger percentages of community college students than university students were optimistic about obtaining a related occupation and were pursuing higher education for utilitarian reasons. University students lacked such optimism and pursued higher education for academic reasons.

The most significant finding was the similarity of the SES backgrounds of the students of the two institutions. The reasons for this similarity may be attributed to the hinterland character of Northwestern Ontario and/or the much publicized belief that university graduates have great difficulty finding gainful employment.

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THE PROBLEM AND THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

I. THE PROBLEM

Researchers who have directed their work towards understanding the forces which influence an individual's decision to select a particular institution of higher learning have primarily focussed their attention on the socialization process. The outcome of the socialization process, especially the attitudes and aspirations toward educational achievement was understood to vary with intelligence, sex, family structure, degree of parental encouragement, peer group influence, self-concept, physical or geographical location, and socio-economic status background (Pavalko, 1971; Porter, Blishen, and Porter, 1973; Sewell and Shah, 1967; Kahl, 1953).

Numerous educational studies conducted throughout Canada and the United States during the 1960's and early 1970's examined the relationship of all the above mentioned variables to levels of educational aspiration (Porter et al., 1973; Sewell and Shah, 1968a; Brookover and Gottlieb, 1964; Breton, 1972; Bishop, 1965). The findings of these studies indicated consistently that variations in levels of educational aspirations were directly related to variations in levels of socioeconomic status.

In addition to producing similar results, these studies were significantly consistent in two other ways. First, the majority of the studies examined pre-post-secondary populations. Second,

the majority of these studies were conducted during the decade of the 1960's or the era of "mass education". The time frame is particularly significant since the inability of the labour market to absorb post-secondary graduates was not an experience of that decade. In this decade (1970's) however the assumption of the inability of the labour market to absorb university graduates is well known and highly publicized (Collie, 1977: 5; Litchfield, 1977: 3; Stead, 1977: 1; Lipovenko, 1978: 5; The Chronicle Journal, June 9, 1978: 13).

The present day effect of this labour market condition has created a limited number of jobs for upwardly mobile people for which all graduates, particularly those from the university, must compete. The effect of this labour market condition on levels of educational aspiration or post-secondary educational selection has never been fully considered. Previous researchers have never had good reason to examine the effect of an individual's awareness or perception of the opportunity structure or reason for attending a post-secondary institution on levels of educational aspiration and educational selection.

Traditionally, the attainment of higher education, particularly a university education, had been viewed as a means to achieving upward mobility. Community colleges, on the other hand, by American example, have acted as dikes to prevent the lower class from entering the universities (Karabel, 1974; Pincus, 1974). A Canadian study conducted by Porter, Blishen and Porter suggested

that students aspiring to attend a community college were more predominantly from lower SES backgrounds than those aspiring to attend university. Indirectly, Porter et al., had associated community college students with relatively low levels of educational aspiration and low SES backgrounds (1973: 48).

The career choices left open to the community college student, as a rule, have not provided as much opportunity for upward occupational mobility as those traditionally reserved for the university population. Thus, universities and community colleges have functioned to stratify society by taking part in the division of labour process (Lockhart, 1977). The present labour market condition, however, limits occupational opportunities and by doing so may have prompted post-secondary candidates to re-examine the relationship of higher education to existing occupational opportunities and to select an educational institution on the basis of this re-examination.

The university can no longer promise that what it sells will give the holder an excellent opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a high status occupation. The lack of this guarantee may have further prompted individuals to seek educational alternatives which may not grant upward occupational mobility but which may ensure a relatively secure economic existence.

II. THE PURPOSE

The principal purpose of this study is to determine the degree to which the community college and university student populations are different with respect to socioeconomic composition. In addition to comparing the socioeconomic composition of the two populations, the study compares the two populations using a multitude of independent variables that have been theoretically proposed to effect levels of educational aspiration and post-secondary educational selection.

A second reason for this study is to compare the two student populations regarding their general perspective of the labour market opportunity structure.

Post-secondary candidates are now faced with the problem of a labour market condition which cannot sufficiently absorb post-secondary graduates, particularly those from the university (Canada Department of Manpower and Immigration, 1970; Harvey and Charner, 1975; Harvey, 1979). The effect of this condition on levels of educational aspiration and educational selection is as yet unknown.

A third reason for this study is to provide a variation in the approach to educational aspiration and/or educational selection research. Most status attainment studies have examined high school student populations in terms of what post-secondary institution they plan to attend as compared to actually observing the students in one. This study will examine students who have already realized the high school-held post-secondary school educational aspiration.

The remainder of the thesis is organized in the following way:

Chapter II - Review of the Literature,

Chapter III - Research Methodology,

Chapter IV - Findings,

Chapter V - Summary and Discussion.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although a great number of scholars have conducted a variety of studies throughout parts of North America to determine the strength of the association between the post-secondary plans of high school students and variables such as socioeconomic status, sex, intelligence, community of residence, parental encouragement, peer group relations, and family size, few, if any, have studied the similarities and/or differences between the Canadian Community College and University freshmen populations.

It is then not surprising to find a limited amount of literature directly associated with a comparative study of this nature.

However, since this study will be dealing specifically with high school students who have just realized their educational aspirations, previous studies that have dealt with high school student educational aspirations will be discussed.

Due to the vast array of relevant literature, the following section headings will be employed for organizational convenience:

(1) Social Class and Educational Aspirations;

(2) Community of Residence and Educational Aspirations;

(3) Family Size, Sex, Birth Order and Educational Aspirations;

(4) Parental Encouragement and Educational Aspirations;

(5) Peer Group Influences and Educational Aspirations;

(6) Self-Concept of Academic Ability and Educational Aspirations;

(7) Other Related Studies and Literature.

(1) Social Class and Educational Aspirations

Every study that has ever been conducted in regard to what high school students plan to do after high school clearly shows a relationship between their educational aspirations and their social class position (Porter, Blishen, Porter, 1973: 42). This relationship has been so firmly established as R. Breton stated, "that any study which did not yield it would probably a priori be considered methodologically deficient" (1972: 137).

Does Money Matter?, the M. Porter, B. Blishen and J. Porter study, published in 1973, is no exception to the rule, and is perhaps the most pertinent study to this project.

This study was primarily orientated towards isolating the socioeconomic factors that impede universal accessability to the Ontario university; thus, a large portion of the study was concerned with examining the relationship of social class to the student's educational aspiration level.

They began their study by using the updated Blishen Occupational Scale (based on the composite index of Father's occupational prestige, income, and education) to construct six distinct occupational classes (Blishen, 1971). Class I constituted the professional occupations, Class II the managerial occupations, Class III included second level managerial and lower paid professionals, Class IV consisted of skilled workers, Class V of semi-skilled workers,

and Class VI of unskilled workers (Porter et al., 1973: 43). Next, they sampled 8,548 Ontario students, 2,722 from Grade 8, 2,964 from Grade 10, and 2,862 from Grade 12 (Porter et al., 1973: 37).

The first illustration of the relationship of social class to educational aspirations was obtained by asking Grade 12 students at what grade they hoped to leave high school. From the answers to this question a relationship was found to exist between a student's social class background and his educational aspiration level. The percentage of each socioeconomic status[1] level choosing to terminate their academic careers after Grade 12 rose from 24% in Class I to 57% in Class VI (Porter et al., 1973: 44). Similarly, they found that the percentage planning to complete Grade 13 decreased from 76% in Class I to 43% in Class VI.

Another question was asked of Grade 12 students regarding future plans following the end of their high school career. Again the results indicated the existence of a close relationship between socioeconomic status and level of educational aspiration. From just two of the nine optional categories employed, "going to work" and "going to university", they found that only 11% of those in Class I expressed an interest in going to work after high school as opposed to 26% of those in Class VI. While 63% of those in Class I wanted to go to university, only 28% in Class VI expressed a similar desire (Porter et al., 1973: 47).

For our purposes, it is also interesting to note the percentage from each class category who expressed a desire to attend a Community College rather than a University. In Class I, 10% aspired to Community College, 63% to University; in Class II, 9% aspired to Community College, 55% to University; in Class III, 12% aspired to Community College, 46% to University; in Class IV, 16% aspired to Community College, 43% to University; in Class V, 16% aspired to Community College, 28% to University; and lastly, in Class VI, 14% aspired to Community College and 28% to University (Porter et al., 1973: 48).

The third illustration of the relationship of social class to educational aspirations was brought forward by examining a student's socioeconomic status and selection of high school subjects. The percentage of Grade 10 students who chose their school subjects on the basis of university expectations decreased with each class category from 37% in Class I to 15% in Class VI. Conversely, those students choosing subjects orientated towards work and an earlier labour market entry increased from 29% in Class I to 52% in Class VI (Porter et al., 1973: 58).

Still another relationship was found to exist between the student's socioeconomic background and choice of high school program. Students who entered the 5 year Arts and Science program decreased from 78% in Class I to 40% in Class VI. Those students in the 4 year Business and Commerce and Science, Technology and Trades programs increased from 8% in Class I to 39% in Class VI

while those in the 4 year Arts and Science program increased with each class level (I-VI) but not as significantly as with the 4 year B. and C. and S.T.T. programs (Porter et al., 1973: 58).

A further illustration of this relationship was provided by examining the relationship of high mental ability[2] to educational aspirations while controlling for socioeconomic status. They found that by Grade 12, 41% of the students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds and high mental ability to leave school at the end of Grade 12 compared to 18% of the high mental ability students from the higher classes. Further, they noted that 73% of low mental ability students from high socioeconomic backgrounds expected to finish Grade 13 while only 59% of those students with high mental ability from low socioeconomic backgrounds held similar aspirations. From these findings they concluded that social class background had a greater impact than I.Q. in determining when a child will leave school (Porter et al., 1973: 85). Similar conclusions were drawn from other studies of the Canadian student population by Bishop (1965), Pavalko and Bishop (1966a), Pavalko (1971), and Porter (1965), during the mid-point of the last decade.

The Pavalko study attempted to isolate the variables that were most crucial to the individual's decision to attend or not to attend a post-secondary institution. After an intensive study of his 839 grade twelve student population, located in Thunder Bay, Ontario, he was able to conclude that children

from higher socioeconomic backgrounds with given intelligence levels were more likely to attend a university than students with similar intelligence levels from middle and low socio-economic backgrounds (1971: 312).

David Bishop in his study of Grade 12 and 13 students in the Thunder Bay area concluded that the college plans of Grade 12 students regardless of sex or level of intelligence were directly related to the socioeconomic status of their respective families. Data collected for the Grade 13 student segment of the population, however, only partially supported the hypothesis that college plans are directly related to the socioeconomic status of the student. He found that a larger percentage of boys with high mental ability from high socioeconomic backgrounds planned on college than did students of a similar intelligence level from a low socioeconomic background. This was reversed for the low intelligence category with a larger percentage of low intelligence boys from low socioeconomic backgrounds planning on college than boys from a high socioeconomic background with a similar intelligence (1965: 24). For girls, regardless of the level of intelligence, the hypothesis that college plans are directly associated to the socioeconomic background of the student's family was supported.

Raymond Breton, in his study of high school students across Canada, arrived at rather similar conclusions. From his Canadian wide sample of 150,000 high school students drawn from all grade

levels, he concluded that social class had a greater impact than I.Q. among the more intelligent students for both males and females. The less intelligent are not as likely to pursue a post-secondary education despite their social class background, however, bright students from high socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely than their lower class counter-parts to have university aspirations (1972: 141).

Studies of the American high school student population have produced similar results and conclusions. W. H. Sewell, A. O. Haller, and A. Straus set out in 1957 to test the general hypothesis that levels of educational and occupational aspirations of both sexes were associated with the socioeconomic status of their families. In conjunction with testing this hypothesis, they had also hoped to lend support to the sociological claim propounded by H. Hyman that values specific to different social status positions influenced and determined variations in educational and occupational aspirations (Hyman, 1953: 427).

From a sample of 4,167 Wisconsin high school seniors, Sewell, Haller and Straus were able to conclude that levels of occupational and educational aspirations for boys and girls were strongly associated with socioeconomic status. Their results also functioned to furnish evidence to support Hyman's claim that values specific to different status positions significantly influenced levels of educational and occupational aspiration levels (Sewell _et al._, 1957: 73).

Sewell and Shah conducted a similar study in 1967 for the purpose of determining the relative influence of socioeconomic status and measured intelligence on the attainment of higher education for a randomly selected cohort of Wisconsin high school seniors seven years after their graduation (1967: 4). For females, it was discovered that the relative effect of socioeconomic status was greater than that of intelligence with the reverse being the case for males (1967: 23). However, Table II of the Sewell and Shah study clearly indicates that larger percentages of low intelligence males and females from high socioeconomic backgrounds planned on college than did males and females of low intelligence from low socioeconomic backgrounds (1967: 11).

Summary of Section I

The most efficient means of summing up this section would be to quote Dael Wolfle who states, "the probability of enrolling in College decreased more sharply as one goes down the ability scale for children from economically and socially less favored homes than it does for children from more favored homes" (1954: 163).

(II) Community of Residence and Educational Aspirations

During the period of 1949-1950 the University of California's Institute of Industrial Relations collected data for their project,

the Oakland Mobility Study. After carefully subjecting this data to a secondary analysis, S. M. Lipset concluded that the larger a person's community of orientation the more likely he is to be upwardly mobile (1955: 227). From this conclusion, he attempted to construct a theoretical model that would account for this apparent association. He assumed that the lack of upward mobility for small community or rural farm individuals who had migrated to the urban centers was due to their having relatively low levels of occupational and educational aspirations. In turn, these low levels of educational and occupational aspirations were a direct result of prolonged exposure to structural elements particular to rural society. These elements ranged from a lack of immediately visible occupational roles to poor educational facilities, collectively functioning to limit the rural youth's awareness of non-agricultural occupational roles and the available means of achieving them (1955: 222).

Haller concluded from his review of related research literature that, in general, past research had tended to refute Lipset's assumption that the level of educational aspiration is negatively correlated with farm or rural residence (1958: 358). For instance, the results of the Sewell and Haller study of 5,000 Wisconsin high school seniors conducted during the academic year of 1947-48 indicated that neither educational nor occupational aspirations were significantly related to residence for females (1957: 411). Further, males coming from rural farm communities

tended to have similar occupational aspiration levels to those who did not but lower educational aspiration levels than non-rural students (1957: 411).

Another study by Middleton and Grigg was conducted to test Lipset's hypothesis that youths from rural backgrounds generally achieve less mobility in the urban setting than their urban peers as a result of lower occupational and educational aspirations (1959: 347). Their findings, unlike those of the Sewell and Haller study, partially supported Lipset's thesis. In regards to occupational aspirations, it was found that rural white males were significantly less inclined to seek white collar occupations than urban white males with intelligence controlled (1959: 354).

The occupational aspirations for girls from urban and rural backgrounds was not significantly different. With respect to educational aspirational levels there was a significant difference in favor of urban girls (Middleton and Grigg, 1959: 354).

The difference noted in the results of the Sewell and Haller study and that of Middleton and Grigg can be accounted for by looking at the proximity of their samples to industrialized centres. According to L. G. Burchinal, "in communities with high levels of industrialization and which include contiguous rural areas, occupational and educational aspirations of farm and non-farm youths may be similar. Likewise, if the educational aspiration levels of youths from rural areas with low levels of industrialization

are compared to those from urban areas one would expect distinct rural-urban differences" (1961: 109).

Burchinal's study of 220 grade 10 and 12 students from Iowa indicated that the lowest levels of educational and occupational aspirations were observed for farm boys while the highest levels were found for the metropolitan boys at each grade level (1961: 107).

Sewell's study of 10,321 Wisconsin high school seniors indicated that for girls residential differences in college plans largely disappeared when intelligence and socioeconomic status were partialled out. On the other hand, differences between farm, village and urban males generally remained sizeable. Boys of high socioeconomic status and I.Q. showed the largest rural-urban differences with the next largest difference of educational aspiration levels in the middle I.Q./high socioeconomic category. In all cases, a greater proportion of able urban boys planned on college than did able rural boys (Sewell, 1964: 35; Sewell and Orenstein, 1965: 551).

A further study of Wisconsin high school seniors by Sewell and Haller indicated without exception that the percentage planning on college increased for both sexes as the size of the community increased with the greatest differences existing for boys. The most noticeable of differences was that between the rural and urban youth's plan to attend college, with 21% from farms, 28% from villages, and 37% from cities having such plans (1965: 151).

Thus far, studies initiated in the United States have indicated that adolescents from smaller communities tend to have lower educational aspirations. The Breton study conducted throughout Canada is no exception (1972). Even by controlling for mental ability, rank, socioeconomic background, and language, Breton concluded that there was indeed a strong association between college plans and community of residence. This relationship, however, was found to be much stronger with boys and negligible with girls (1972: 133).

The other Canadian study pertinent to this section conducted by Porter, Blishen and Porter, looked at the post-secondary plans of grade 8, 10, and 12 students from four distinct community size categories viz., the Toronto Megalopolis including Metro Toronto east of Oshawa and west of Hamilton, major urban areas over 100,000, communities between 100,000 and 10,000, and those less than 10,000 (1973: 68).

The results of this comparison indicated that for all grade levels 42% of the metro students had plans for college while only 27% of those students from rural communities had similar educational plans. Taking it a step further, by dividing the Metro-rural categories into the different social class levels, they found that for each level of urbanization the lower the social class, the lower the educational aspiration. Generally speaking, however, the aspirations were lower for the rural category for each of the social classes. Those students from high social class backgrounds were the exception since similar

proportions of them from all the community size categories were found to have plans for college (Porter et al., 1973: 70).

Summary of Section II

From the above studies, it appears that the educational aspiration levels exhibited by rural youth depends largely upon the proximity of their residence to an industrialized centre. For the most part, the farther away that residence is from an industrialized centre, the more likely the rural youth's educational aspiration level tends to be lower than his/her urban peer's. This is particularly true for the rural male regardless of his social class background except for the highest class category in which similar proportions from all community sizes were found to have college plans.

(III) Family Size, Sex, Birth Order and Educational Aspirations

Variables such as sex, family size, and birth order have been shown by several researchers to significantly influence the educational aspiration level of high school students (Porter et al., 1973; Breton, 1972; Elder, 1965; Turner, 1962; Rosen, 1968; Koch, 1955; Synge, 1977; Lucas, 1971).

The Porter, Blishen and Porter study clearly indicates that educational aspiration levels are related to family size, birth order and sex but that variations of this effect should be understood as resulting from variations in socioeconomic status. For instance, of the high classes, I and II, 44% of the children

from families of five or more children expected to go to university compared to 61% of high socioeconomic status two children families. At the medium socioeconomic status level, classes III and IV, 30% of the children from five children families expected to go to university compared to 50% of those students from two children families. The statistics for the low classes, V and VI, are as follows, 16% of those from five children families expected to go to university compared to 28% from two children families (1973: 61).

Educational aspirations of bright students by sex were found to be similar between males and females in class I. However, such was not the case for those classes below class I. In all instances, but most notably in classes V and VI, fewer girls than boys expected to go to university.

Despite the fact that education is more accessible in urban areas there is evidence to suggest that a reversal of the pattern outlined in the Porter et al., findings exists. That is, while urban males are more likely to plan on attending post-secondary institutions than urban females, a larger proportion of rural females than urban females have such plans (Synge, 1977: 302). This may be a result of restricted occupational choices open to rural females combined with the academic orientation and high commitment to post-secondary training by the rural high schools (Breton, 1972: 133; Lucas, 1971: 298).

There have also been a number of studies with respect to the ambition and achievement levels of first born children. Generally

speaking, the majority of the studies support the hypothesis that first born children express higher levels of aspiration than others (Turner, 1962; Rosen, 1968; Breton, 1972; Koch, 1955). The Porter team results indicate that the younger the child is in relation to his siblings, the less likely he is to expect to go to university (1973: 65).

Elder's study indicates that the only child in a middle class family does not have higher educational goals than first born children of two child families. In addition, his results suggest that a lower class youth with no siblings is much more college orientated than adolescents who are older than their siblings (1965: 83).

According to Breton, oldest children tend to have higher educational aspirations because they tend to rank higher in mental ability (1972: 185). Breton's findings also strongly suggest that the absence of a parent has a negative effect on the educational aspiration of the offspring. Breton further states that the absence of the mother has an extremely negative effect on boys while the absence of both parents tends to depress the educational aspirations of girls (1972: 185). Finally, Breton's findings support the general hypothesis that family size is negatively correlated with educational aspirations but that this effect is greater among those who rank low in mental ability and in socioeconomic status (1972: 185).

Summary of Section III

Past research in this area indicates that first born children are most likely to have the highest level of educational aspiration. Family size has been found to have a negative effect on educational aspiration levels but variations of this effect do exist and are dependent upon variations in mental ability and socioeconomic status. Urban males were found to have higher educational aspirations than urban females but rural females were found to exhibit higher educational aspiration levels than their urban female peers.

(IV) Parental Encouragement and Educational Aspirations

The results of a study of 6,000 Pennsylvania sophomore students conducted in 1963 by Rehberg and Westby indicated that educational aspirations regardless of social class vary positively with the level of parental occupation and education, the frequency of parental educational encouragement, and negatively with family size (1967: 362). They concluded that the negative relationship of educational aspirations to family size was due to a reduction in the frequency with which the parents encouraged their offspring to continue their education beyond high school. They further state, "parental encouragement comes close to being a necessary condition for the continuation of education beyond the high school level in all strata and not just in the lower classes" (1967: 371).

Kahl's study of 24 "Common Man Boys", drawn from a larger

sample of 3,971 Boston public high school students suggested the importance of parental encouragement on the educational and occupational aspirations of youth. By examining his sub-sample of 24 intelligent "Common Man Boys", or boys with fathers belonging to minor white collar, skilled and semi-skilled occupational groups, he was able to demonstrate that the factor crucial to the youth's desire to continue education beyond high school was strongly associated with positive parental encouragement (1953: 190).

Bordua, in his study of 1,529 high school students, came to a similar conclusion. He introduced the variable, parental stress on college and found that the effects of socioeconomic status on college plans was reduced but not eliminated (Sewell and Shah, 1968a: 561).

Simpson's study of 743 white male high school students from the southern states led him to conclude that parental advice was a much better prediction of high ambition than a boy's social class (Sewell and Shah, 1968a: 661).

The findings of Sewell and Shah's study of 10,318 Wisconsin seniors in 1957 support the claim of other investigators that parental encouragement is a powerful intervening sociopsychological variable between socioeconomic class background and intelligence of the child and his educational aspirations (1968a: 571). They further state that although parental encouragement does not explain social class differences in aspiration levels it

does help to explain them (1968a: 571). Similar results were found by Breton (1972) and by Sewell and Shah (1968b) in a later study.

Although parental encouragement acts as an intervening variable Gilbert feels that it is largely a reflection of socio-economic status in Canada. He states that socioeconomic status and parental educational aspirations for the child are related so that the higher the socioeconomic status the higher the parental educational aspiration for the child (1977: 292).

Finally, Burchinal discovered in his study of 312 grade 10 and 12 Iowa high school students that farm orientated boys (boys wishing to continue farming after completing high school) least frequently reported definite encouragement from either parent, non-farm orientated farm boys were next lowest, small town boys were third lowest or second highest, and urban boys most frequently reported definite parental encouragement. However, Burchinal did not control for social class (1961: 116).

Summary of Section IV

Parental encouragement appears to be a crucial factor in determining whether or not an individual will pursue an educational career beyond high school. Variations in the degree to which parents encourage their offspring to continue their education beyond high school can be understood as resulting from variations in the value systems particular to given social classes and

variations in communities of residence along the rural-urban continuum.

(V) Peer Group Influences and Educational Aspirations

The attempt to determine the relative importance of the effects of specific family background and peer influences on the college plans of high school students can be viewed as a means of measuring the relative effect or the differential impact of these two socializing agencies in the formulation of adolescent careers. It was precisely this measurement, although transformed into college aspirations, that McDill and Coleman were attempting to obtain. They sampled 612 senior students from six different Illinois high schools, placed them into categories of high or low social status within the high school social system, and compared their results with a larger sample of freshmen students while controlling for parental expectations and level of education (1965: 113).

Their findings indicated that by the end of the senior year a student's status within the high school social system contributed more to the variation in college plans than did parent's educational level and slightly less than parental encouragement. In sum, their findings may challenge the position that socio-economic background is a more important source of educational aspiration variation than the peer group influence (McDill and Coleman, 1965: 125).

Unlike the McDill-Coleman study which attempted to test the strength of association of peer influence and socioeconomic status vis-a-vis college plans, Alexander and Campbell set out to test the hypothesis that the college plans of a student's best friend will affect, (1) the strength of his desire to attend college, if he plans to go, and, (2) even though he does not expect to go, how strongly he would like to attend college given the opportunity (1964: 570).

From the results of their sample of 1,410 male North Carolina high school seniors, they concluded that students at a given level of parental education are more likely to expect to or want to go to college if their best friend does. This holds even if the individual does not expect to attend college (Alexander and Campbell, 1964: 575).

The majority of studies dealing with peer group influences on college plans have consistently demonstrated that the student's status in the school system combined with the educational plans of his close friends have played a part in formulating his own educational plans but the extent to which it plays a part is still largely unknown (Alexander and Campbell, 1964; Haller and Miller, 1963; McDill and Coleman, 1963).

Pavalko and Bishop became quite interested in the apparent relationship of peer influence and educational aspirations in 1966. They examined the student's own plans for college and those of his close friend while controlling for sex, measured

intelligence, and socioeconomic status. Their sample consisted of grade 12 high school students from six high schools located in Thunder Bay, Ontario (1966b: 192).

Although their findings provided a great deal of support for the hypothesis that post-secondary plans are significantly influenced by the plans of their peers there was one very important qualification to be taken into account. The educational aspirations of females from low socioeconomic backgrounds with high intelligence were relatively uneffected by their friends who had college expectations which indicates that peer influences on educational aspirations do not operate uniformly across all socioeconomic statuses and sex groups (Pavalko and Bishop, 1966b: 199).

Summary of Section V

For the most part, the college plans of a student's best friend seem to make an independent contribution to his or her own post-secondary educational plans. However, the extent to which peer influence takes part in the actual formulation of another's college plans has not as yet been firmly established. Different methodological approaches applied by the various researchers mentioned above to test the strength of the association between the peer influence and one's college plans have largely accounted for this inability to determine with confidence the relative influence of the peer group (McDill and Coleman, 1965; Bishop

and Pavalko, 1966b). It is known however, that the effect of the peer group on college aspirations may be reduced by the independent contributions made by sex, measured intelligence and/or socioeconomic status.

(VI) Self-Concept of Academic Ability and Educational Aspirations

In the past, studies directed towards explaining the differences in the learning ability among children tended to focus on concepts of intelligence, aspirational levels, aptitude tests, and sensory impairments. Very little attention was given to the interaction between the social-psychological variables in the socio-cultural environment and the individual (Brookover, Erickson, and Joiner, 1967). Instead, the concept employed to explain variations in learning ability is that of measured mental intelligence which is presumed to be relatively fixed, easily measured and predetermined by heredity (Singh, 1977: 320). This belief in fixed ability gave birth to the United States mental ability industry (Singh, 1977: 321).

Another school of thought regarding learning ability came to the forefront in the 1960's during the mass education era in the United States. Instead of a fixed biological model of academic ability, a social-psychological approach, drawn out from the work of Herbert Mead, was put forward by Brookover, Paterson, and Thomas in 1962 (Singh, 1977: 322).

Their theory recognized that the most important ideas

affecting people's behaviour were those they had about themselves. They further stated, "that within the limits set by the physiological and neurological structures of the organism, variations in behaviour are influenced by variations in socialization" (Brookover, Erickson, and Joiner, 1967: 3; Brookover and Gottlieb, 1964: 471).

J. W. Kinch maintains that the responses of others towards the self influences the individual's perception and conception of him/herself which, in turn, directs his/her behaviour (Singh, 1977: 323). Brookover adds that the self-concept of ability is not a fixed personality trait brought into the educational setting but a result of a previous environmental influence (1967: 25).

This perception and/or conception of self is actually the result of the way in which the individual perceives what his/her significant others think, evaluate and expect of him/her. Singh's study of 1,219 grade 7 Newfoundland students supported Brookover's hypothesis that a student's self-concept of ability is a powerful intervening variable between perceived evaluation by others and academic achievement (1977: 328).

The Porter, Blishen, and Porter study indicated that there was a strong relationship between self-concept of ability and student educational aspirations. More significantly, however, the results further indicated that for both grade 10 and 12 students the proportion having a high self-concept of academic

ability decreased from over one-half of the high socioeconomic students to less than one-third of the low socioeconomic status students (1973: 66). This finding is supported by Singh who concludes, "Inequality leads to differentiated social expectations and different socialization patterns. Children and adults from less privileged groups learn negative self-concepts"(Singh, 1977: 329).

Summary of Section VI

The self-concept of ability is crucial to a student's level of academic achievement and this, in turn, is rather instrumental in the formulation of post-secondary educational aspirations. There is evidence to suggest that self-concept of ability varies from one class to another with larger proportions of students having a high self-concept of ability from the high socioeconomic category than from all others.

(VII) The Educational System, Structured Inequalities, Educational Aspirations and Social Stratification

Thus far, we have looked at a number of variables that appear to significantly influence the development of post-secondary aspirations. We have repeatedly found that the social class variable more than any other has had the greatest effect on the formulation of these aspirations. But how and to what extent does the educational institution take into account and measure the relative effect of this variable, or does it simply

measure a derivitive of the economic variable and proceed to foster aspirations in line with this measurement?

A number of scholars have attempted to answer this question. Bowles and Gintis have provided an interesting historical-contemporary thesis of the way in which the educational institution functions to legitimize an authoritarian, hierarchical, stratified and unequal economic system of production (1974: 8-9).

They state that I.Q. tests, the objective criteria by which individuals are classified within the school, indirectly produces the hierarchical division of labour. A higher level of education is seen as a major determinant of economic success and a legitimate method by which rewards are to be allocated. However, since the I.Q. tests have a middle-class bias a rather large proportion of children from lower class backgrounds are not going to score as high. Thus, children who come from "underprivileged" class backgrounds run the risk of receiving a negative label, learn to be "stupid", learn to be "slow learners", learn to be "non-verbal", and "culturally deprived". These negative self definitions, in turn, perpetuate the structured inequalities and the cycle continues (Singh, 1977: 329).

Christopher Jencks arrived at several conclusions that help to further explain the differences in the class proportions attending American Universities (1968). First, the expense of the education immediately eliminates a large percentage of students who do not have adequate financial support. Second,

with all other things being equal, children with rich, clever, and well educated parents are more likely to attend than those who do not come from a similar environment. Third, children from the upper-middle strata, for fear of becoming downwardly mobile, are highly motivated towards attending university, whereas not going to college does not necessarily imply downward mobility for the lower class youth. Fourth, genetic differences persist, that is, children born into the upper social strata have a slightly more favourable gene pool than those born into the lower strata.

However, the genetic differences are relatively small and the class differences in measured intelligence, physical and mental health are largely a result of the environment from which the children originate. The educational institution, by measuring I.Q. or the relative effect of the socioeconomic cultural environment and by allocating people on the basis of this measurement, maintains and fosters structured inequality (Jencks, 1968: 297).

J. Karabel and F. Pincus in their discussions of the American community college arrived at similar conclusions to those of C. Jencks and D. Riesman who describe the community college "not as an alternative to the top for individuals but rather a safety valve releasing pressure that might otherwise disrupt the dominant system" (Karabel, 1974: 14).

The cooling out process through the deliberate attempt to channel working class students aiming for four year degrees to

two year high school extention programs implies that a considerable effort is being put forth to modify working class student aspirations. This cooling out process functions to protect social and academic upper-class portals by diverting working class students from the pathways to upper-middle class status and privilege (Clark, 1960).

Summary of Section VII

The I.Q. ideology acts to reinforce the prevailing system of stratification. Using the educational system as the host and I.Q. testing as the instrument to label individuals, self definitions of a negative or a positive nature develop. The results of the I.Q. test are crucial in that they legitimize the streaming of individuals into either terminal or prolonged educational careers, and, in as much as economic success is based upon achieved levels of education, I.Q. testing functions to eventually stratify all individuals into various grades of occupational activity.

In sum, levels of educational aspiration may very well depend upon the I.Q. score and since this score is simply a reflection of a student's environment, students from privileged backgrounds continue to score relatively high while those from less privileged backgrounds continue to score low. Thus, through the present educational system, the system of stratification perpetuates itself by unequally distributing negative

and positive self definitions-probable sources of high and low educational aspirations.

Summary and Conclusions of Chapter II

The absence of a uniform concept or definition of the term social class in the analysis of educational aspirations has led to variations in the findings of a number of researchers. Several researchers used parental education as a social class index, others used father's income and still others employed a composite index of father's income, occupational prestige and education. While this poses a problem in the actual analysis of the data, it does not prevent one from formulating accurate or valid conclusions with respect to literature reviewed above. These conclusions or summarized points have been provided below.

1. (a) Generally speaking, high post-secondary educational aspirations can be expected to be found for larger proportions of students from high socioeconomic backgrounds than from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

(b) Males and females from high socioeconomic backgrounds have similar educational aspiration levels but males from middle and lower socioeconomic backgrounds have higher educational aspiration levels than females from the same class background.

2. (a) Males and females with high mental ability are more likely to attend a university than males and females with low

mental ability.

(b) Males and females with low mental ability from high socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to attend a university than high mental ability males and females from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

(c) Males and females from a high socioeconomic background at given intelligence levels are more likely to attend a university than males and females from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with similar intelligence levels.

3. (a) Generally speaking, the larger the community size, the more likely males and females are going to attend a university except for the high socioeconomic class category where equal proportions of this category attend a university regardless of their community of residence.

(b) Urban males are more likely to attend a university than rural males and females.

(c) Larger proportions of rural females aspire to attend university than urban females (this represents a variation in findings).

4. (a) First born children are most likely to have the highest level of educational aspiration and to attend university.

(b) Family size has been found to have a negative effect on educational aspirations levels but variations of this effect do exist and are dependent upon variations in mental ability and socioeconomic status.

5. (a) Parental encouragement is positively correlated with educational aspirations. Children who received positive parental educational encouragement are more likely to attend university than children who do not receive such encouragement.

(b) Variations in parental encouragement exist and can be understood as resulting from variations in the value systems particular to given social classes and variations in communities of residence along the rural-urban continuum.

6. (a) Individuals are more likely to attend university if their best friend plans to attend university.

(b) The effect of the peer group on high educational aspiration levels is reduced by the independent contributions made by sex, measured intelligence and/or socioeconomic background.

7. (a) Students with a high self-concept of ability are more likely to attend a university than students with a low self-concept of ability.

(b) Self-concept of ability varies from one class to another with larger proportions of students from the high socioeconomic class category having a higher self-concept of ability than all others.

8. (a) Students who receive a high I.Q. score are more likely to develop a positive self definition, become high achievers, and have high educational aspirations than individuals who receive low I.Q. scores.

(b) A negative label received by the school for a low I.Q. score is more common to the lower class than to the middle and

higher class categories.

(c) The school consciously streams individuals into various programs on the basis of I.Q. scores and thereby plays a vital role in the formulation of educational aspirations levels.

(d) There are proportionately more students in community college preparation and terminal programs from the lower socio-economic class category than the middle and higher class categories.

FOOTNOTES OF CHAPTER II

1. Socioeconomic status was measured by grouping the student sample by father's occupation into six categories of the Blishen Occupational Scale. The Scale ranks occupations in the 1971 census of Canada by education, income, and prestige.

2. The IPAT Culture Fair Mental Ability Test was administered by Porter *et al.*, to determine mental ability.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology employed in the study. Specifically, it describes and provides an explanation for the selection of the samples and the construction of the research instrument. Further, it describes the pilot study, sampling procedure, method of analysis, and the hypothesis.

I. THE HYPOTHESIS

The initial purpose of this study was to determine whether the university and community college populations located in Thunder Bay were similar with respect to socioeconomic composition. Studies that had been conducted locally by D. Bishop and R. Pavalko in 1965 indicated that there was a direct relationship between levels of educational aspiration and socioeconomic status (Bishop, 1965; Pavalko, 1971). Students from high socioeconomic backgrounds tended to have high educational aspirations and expected to go to university while students from low socioeconomic backgrounds tended to have low educational aspirations and did not expect to go to university.

Similar findings were established provincially (Ontario) by J. Porter, B. Blishen, and M. Porter in 1973 and nationally by R. Breton in 1972 (Porter et al., 1973; Breton, 1972).

American studies conducted by W. J. Sewell, A. Haller and V. Shah throughout the 1950's and 1960's were not exceptions to this rule (Sewell and Haller, 1965; Sewell and Shah, 1967). All of these studies (Canadian and American) largely ignored the possibility of students aspiring to attend a community college. Students were categorized as having low or high educational aspirations according to their aspirations to attend university or seek employment following graduation.

Work by F. Pincus in 1974 and J. Karabel in 1974 suggested that American community colleges by example acted as dikes to prevent the lower class from entering the universities. A study by Garry indicates that the Ontario community college system was established to provide less academically inclined students with an opportunity to obtain a post-secondary education and at the same time lower the tensions between non-university bound secondary school graduates and the existing social institutions (1975: 5). These findings led to the development of two very important questions. Are Canadian community colleges still performing this same function? Do they attract students who are predominantly from a low socioeconomic status background?

Given the above, it was hypothesized that the student's decision to attend either the University or the Commmnity College would not be related to his or her socioeconomic background and thus the socioeconomic composition of each institution's student population would be rather similar. The hypothesis

was then tested.

II. THE SAMPLE

The purpose of the study demanded that samples be drawn from two distinct and separate populations. The first of these populations consisted of "first year" community college students. The second population chosen to sample consisted of university "freshmen". Both populations were located within the city limits of Thunder Bay, Ontario.

There were several advantages to selecting these particular populations. First, in terms of cost and access to the samples, both populations were located within the city and less than five kilometers from one another. These factors cut transportation costs to a minimum and facilitated frequent contact with each population. Secondly, the "Open Door Policy" of Confederation College provided ideal conditions for gaining access to the community college sample. Such a policy meant that the administrative machinery of the college was willing to participate and facilitate access to the sample and questionnaire returns. Thirdly, by attending Lakehead University as a student, the researcher had ready access to the university sample.

The total first year population at Confederation College amounted to 789 persons. The freshmen population at Lakehead University totalled 737 persons. The research technique of quota sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was employed

to select and sample approximately 200 students from each educational institution (Babbie, 1973: 107). Briefly, quota sampling permits the researcher to determine in advance how many units to interview for each cell of the classification. The sample is drawn by specifying the characteristics desired in the subjects to be interviewed so as to make the sample representative with respect to those criteria thought to affect the measured values most. This method was chosen for two principle reasons. First, in terms of cost and the time factor, this method proves to be extremely economical and efficient when compared to other methods (such as random sampling) using questionnaire schedules. Second, students were already divided or classified by program and division. This eliminated the need to arbitrarily specify characteristics by which the samples were to be selected. This acted to keep the subjectivity at a minimum and increased the probability of obtaining a relatively representative sample.

Post-secondary enrollment statistics of first year college students and freshmen university students were obtained from the Registrar's office at each institution. These enrollment statistics or sampling frames categorized both institutional populations on the basis of discipline and program. In addition, first year community college students were also categorized by division. With categories already established the quota sampling technique was applied to proportionately sample students by program at each

post-secondary institution. In this manner, a relatively representative sample was achieved.

III. THE INSTRUMENT

In order to determine the extent to which the social class background variable does or does not influence a student's decision to attend a specific type of educational institution, it was necessary to examine and determine the extent to which other variables such as sex, community of residence, family size, peer group influence, parental encouragement, self-concept of academic ability, senior year high school grade point average, the student's perception of the present and future occupational opportunity structure and the student's reasons for attending a post-secondary school, influence that same decision.

A sixty-two item questionnaire was administered to approximately 220 students at Confederation College and 215 students at Lakehead University. The use of a structured questionnaire rather than an interview schedule was employed because of its advantages as a short term and relatively efficient means of gathering data for a combined approximate sample size of 435 students.

The first section of the questionnaire (1-11) pertains to the student's personal history. It provides a base for a construction of the student's profile and introduces the independent variables of age, sex, community of origin, population size and geographical location, and ethnic or cultural background.

The second section of the questionnaire (12-16) is concerned with the student's family structure. It introduces the independent variables of family size and parental marital status.

The third section of the questionnaire (17-22) was designed to retrieve information related to the educational history of the entire nuclear family. It introduces the independent variable of the highest level of education achieved by the respondent's father, mother, and siblings.

The fourth section of the questionnaire (23-27) was designed to extract respondent information regarding the occupation and income of the respondent's father, mother, and siblings. It introduces the independent variable of socioeconomic status by providing information which can be mapped on to and measured by the Blishen Occupational Scale (Blishen and McRoberts, 1976: 71-79).

The fifth section (28-39) was designed to gain information regarding the respondent's personal education history. It introduces the independent variables of the respondent's high school program and the person(s) whom the respondent believed significantly influenced his or her decision to attend the present educational institution.

Section six (40-43) was designed to provide information related to what the community college student sees as the most important advantage of attending a community college as opposed to a university, whether or not the respondent thinks he or she

could complete a university program, and whether or not the respondent believes that a college education as opposed to a university education would be more likely to guarantee the student a related job opportunity following completion of the academic program. This section introduces aspects related to self-concept of academic ability and perception of the occupational opportunity structure.

Section seven (44-48) concerns the university sample. Respondents of this sample were asked questions similar to those in Section six but from a reversed perspective. In addition, a question of how many years they were planning to attend was asked to provide a measurement of the freshman's educational aspiration level.

Section eight of the questionnaire (49-57) was designed to extract information related to the student's perception of the relevance of his present studies to future occupational plans, his/her perception regarding present related occupational opportunity, his/her perception regarding future related occupational opportunity, and whether the student had a job waiting for him or her after the program had been completed. In this way, the independent variable, perception of the opportunity structure was introduced into the study.

Section eight also provided information related to whom the student believed influenced him/her the most in thinking about future education and whether or not parental approval or encouragement

had been received by the student. The information extracted through these questions functioned to introduce the parental encouragement independent variable.

Lastly, Section nine asked questions pertaining to peer group influences and self-concept of academic ability and, thus, introduced two more significant independent variables to be considered.

IV. PILOT STUDY

Questionnaires were administered to 45 freshmen university sociology students during November, 1977. The pilot study sample was pre-selected in consultation with the Thesis Advisory Committee. The purpose of the pilot study was to have the survey instrument critically examined by a pilot sample representative of the target population. Questionnaire weaknesses such as a lack of clarity, failure to answer questions, multiple answers to single answer questions, and the inability of respondents to follow questionnaire format directions were examined carefully.

The results of the questionnaire indicated that the questionnaire lacked some clarity. Less than 0.5 percent selected a number of answers to single answer questions and missed some questions. However, the frequency with which given questions were answered improperly or not at all was less than 3 percent. These minor problems did not affect the main purpose of the

questionnaire which was to extract useful and meaningful data. Questions orientated towards gaining information concerning significant independent variables were answered without difficulty.

Questions which were not answered properly or were accompanied by direct respondent comments were re-evaluated for their contribution to the main purpose of the study. Several questions were eliminated from the questionnaire. Directions typed in capital letters were provided to increase the probability of having all questions answered properly.

V. SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Personal contact was made with Mr. R. V. Murray, Chairman of the Academic Committee at Confederation College during mid October, 1977. Permission was granted to sample first year Confederation College students. Shortly after, the Registrar, Mr. Guthman, was contacted so that an idea of the total first year college student population could be obtained. The researcher was provided with a table of the Post-Secondary Enrollment Statistics pertaining to the Confederation College student populations. The first year community college population totalled 789 students with 37.9% of these in the Applied Arts and Health Sciences Division, 32.1% in the Business Division, and 30% in the Technology Division.

An approximate total sample of 220 first year community college students was selected by using the non-probability

sampling technique of quota sampling. A sampling schedule accompanied by the number of students to be sampled by Program and Division was constructed in consultation with Business Division Personnel.

A letter of permission signed by Mr. R. V. Murray along with the date at which individual classes of students were to be sampled was forwarded to the appropriate first year college student instructors.

The sampling of first year college students began Monday, November 21, 1977, and ended Thursday, November 24, 1977. The size of the required program sample normally dictated the number of students to be sampled in a given class. In the majority of cases, the number of the students in a given class corresponded to the desired program sample size. Where this was not the case the entire class would be sampled or volunteers selected randomly.

In the majority of cases, the researcher administered the questionnaires, instructed the respondents to fill them out and answered any questions pertaining to the questionnaire or the study. When this was not possible, the instructor had the students fill them out and return them to the Business Division Office - the designated questionnaire collection centre. A response rate of 90% was achieved at the community college.

The quota sampling technique was also applied to the

university freshmen population. A statistical breakdown of university freshmen by discipline and program was obtained from Mr. McDermott of the Registrar's Office in November, 1977. The university freshmen population numbered 737. From this figure, a total sample of approximately 215 was drawn from the parent population. Seven percent of the total sample was drawn from the Education Program, 26% from the Arts, 16% from the Science, 12% from the Honours Business Commerce, 7% from the Bachelor of Administration, 13% from the Bachelor of Forestry Science, 13% from the combined Physical Education, and 5% from the Nursing degree programs.

Questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the appropriate freshmen sample size per degree program late November, 1977, early December, 1977, and January, 1978. In most cases, the total number of students in each class was sampled. To obtain a relatively representative sample, over sampling of various programs was necessary. A response rate of 80% was achieved at Lakehead University.

The initial analysis of the questionnaires indicated that several respondents did not fall into any of the Blishen Socioeconomic Status categories. Some fathers were unemployed, others had retired, and several had died. Individuals whose father fell into any of these categories were excluded from the study. This gave a total community college sample of 181 and a total university sample of 159.

VI. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of socioeconomic status background, the independent variable, to education selection, the dependent variable.

To achieve this purpose, the respondent's answers were pre-coded and transferred from the questionnaire to punch cards which, in turn, were processed by the Lakehead I.B.M. computer. By means of the SPSS program, the elaboration model was applied to compiled data. Contingency tables were constructed and provided to give clarity to the progression of the findings.

The tabulated results of the bivariate relationship of socioeconomic status and educational selection was initially observed. Following this observation, the independent or test variables of sex, self-concept of academic ability, community of residence, parental encouragement, family size, peer group influence, senior high school grade point average, perception of the occupational opportunity structure, and advantages of attending a post-secondary institution, were systematically introduced into the original relationship of socioeconomic status and educational selection.

The results of this procedure are to be found in the multivariate contingency tables provided in Chapter IV. This procedure was applied to both the community college and university samples.

The ordinal nature and the use of several questionnaire items to give a composite measurement of the peer group influence,

self-concept of ability, family size, parental encouragement, and perception of the opportunity structure independent variables necessitated the construction of composite index scores.

Four separate questions were asked to arrive at a composite measurement of peer group influence. These were questions 37, 55, 58, and 59.

Question 37 carried a weight of one (1) and was awarded if the respondent selected the second, third, or fourth choice. Question 55 carried a weight of one (1) and was awarded if the respondent selected the seventh choice. Question 58 carried a total weight of three (3). Three points were awarded if the respondent selected the third choice, two if the second, and only one if the first choice was selected. Question 59 carried a total weight of three points. The method used to award points for question 58 was used for question 59. In sum, the total number of points that could be awarded ranged from a low of zero to a high of eight.

The results of the initial data analysis revealed that the cell frequencies were extremely low for three of the possible scores. This had the effect of distorting the chi-square and eta values. To correct this problem the data was collapsed. The numerical expression zero (0) was recoded to equal one (1) and scores ranging from six to eight were recoded to equal five (5). This gave a new value range of one to five.

Values towards the low end of the numerical range indicated that a low or very low degree of peer group influence has been experienced by the respondent to attend his or her respective post-secondary institution. Values towards the high end of this range indicated that a high or very high degree of peer group influence had been experienced by the respondents to attend his or her respective post-secondary institution.

Three separate questions were asked to arrive at a composite measurement of the self-concept of academic ability variable for the community college students and two for the university student sample. University students were exempted from answering question 41 and automatically awarded two points by virtue of the fact that they were already attending university. Community college students, on the other hand, were requested to answer question 41 which asked, "Do you think you have the ability to complete a university degree?" If the college respondent replied, "yes", two points were awarded. In all other instances no points were awarded.

Questions 61 and 62 each carried weights of five points and were answered by both the university and college student samples.

Five choices were given for question 61. Five points were awarded if the respondent selected the first choice, four for the second and so on until the fifth choice, in which case, only one point was awarded. The same point weights were assigned to the choices in question 62, thus giving a total index of twelve and a value range of one to twelve.

The analysis of this data revealed that the cell frequency for several scores at the extreme ends of the value range were again extremely low. This problem was overcome by collapsing the data. The values of one to six were recoded to equal seven and the values of ten to twelve were recoded to equal nine to give a new value range of seven to nine.

A score of seven indicated that the student had a low self-concept of academic ability; a score of eight indicated that the student had a medium self-concept, and, a score of nine indicated that the student had a high self-concept of academic ability.

The next composite variable constructed was the family size variable. Each respondent was requested to answer questions 12 and 13. Question 12 asked the respondent to state the number of brothers, and question 13 to state the number of sisters he or she had. The answers to these questions were added to give a value range of one to four or more siblings.

The composite measurement for the parental encouragement variable was obtained by collectively evaluating the results of questions 37, 55, and 56.

If the respondent chose the fifth, sixth or seventh choice of question 27, one point was awarded. In all other cases, no point was awarded. If the respondent chose the first, second, or third choice of question 55, one point was awarded. In all other cases, no point was awarded. Question 56 carried a weight of two points and was awarded to a university respondent if he or

she selected the second choice and to a community college respondent if he or she selected the first choice.

The value range for this variable was one to four. A score of one indicated that the respondent had received a low degree of parental encouragement to attend his or her respective post-secondary institution. A score of two indicated that the respondent received a medium degree of parental encouragement and a score of three indicated that the respondent had received a high degree of parental encouragement to attend his or her respective post-secondary institution. The initial analysis indicated that none of the respondents obtained a score of four.

The composite measurement for the respondent's perception of the opportunity structure variable was obtained by adding the results of question 51 to question 52 and dividing by two to give a value range of one to five.

If a respondent selected the first choice of question 51, one point was awarded. If the respondent selected the second choice, two points were awarded and so on until the fifth choice, in which case, five points were awarded. Points were awarded in a reversed order for question 52. If the respondent selected the first choice, five points were awarded. If the respondent selected the second choice, four points were awarded and so on until the fifth choice, in which case, only one point was awarded.

A score of one indicated that the student felt that his or her chances of obtaining a job were very low. A score of two

indicated that the student felt that his or her chances of obtaining a job were low, a score of three, medium, a score of four, high, and, a score of five indicated that the student felt that his or her chances of obtaining a job were very high.

Another ordinal independent variable employed throughout the study was social class or socioeconomic status background. Constructing an index to give a composite measurement of this variable was not necessary for one had already been constructed. The researcher employed the updated Blishen occupational scale which ranks 480 occupations by education, income, and prestige (Blishen and McRoberts, 1976: 71-79).

As in the Porter, Blishen, and Porter study, student samples were grouped by their fathers' occupation into six categories of the Blishen scale (Porter et al. 1973: 43). Most professional occupations are in Class I. Class II occupations are mainly managerial. Class III includes second level managerial and lower paid professionals. Skilled workers are in Class IV, semi-skilled in Class V and unskilled in Class VI (Porter et al. 1973: 43).

VII. DEFINITIONS

Utilitarian Reasons - Respondents who selected occupationally or labour market related responses to questions regarding their reasons for attending a post-secondary institution were classified as having utilitarian reasons for attending.

Academic Reasons - Respondents who selected academically orientated responses to questions regarding their reasons for attending a post-secondary educational institution were classified as having academic reasons for attending.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine differences in the community college and university populations located in Northwestern Ontario. The variables to be examined include background such as age, sex, family size, community of origin, self-concept of academic ability and academic ability. Other attributes to be compared are parental encouragement, peer group influence, reasons for attending their respective educational institutions and perception of the labour market opportunity structure.

Two and three dimensional contingency tables will be used to systematically display the findings. The chi-square test of statistical significance will be applied to each table to provide a probability value to show how likely it is that the two samples came from the same or identical population. Eta, a measure of association, will also be applied to give an indication of how dissimilar the means of the dependent variable are within the categories of the independent variable. "When the means are identical, eta is zero. If the means are very different and the variances within the categories of the independent variable are small, eta increases toward the maximum value of one" (Nie, et al., 1975: 230).

Collectively, there are eleven contingency tables which present the relationship between eleven independent variables

and the dependent variable of educational selection. The responses of each sample are categorized for each independent variable according to the post-secondary institution attended. Each table is accompanied by a description of the findings presented in those tables.

The first table displays the relationship between institutional selection and occupational status of the respondent's father. The categories as defined by Blishen and McRoberts, (1976: 71-79) were employed for this purpose. The Blishen SES (socioeconomic status) categories of I and II were collapsed to represent the high end of the SES spectrum, III and IV to represent the middle SES category, and V and VI to represent the low end of the SES spectrum.

All of the remaining contingency tables examine the relationship between a specific independent variable and the dependent variable (educational selection) while controlling for SES.

The findings presented in Table 1 clearly indicate that the SES variable does not measurably influence the decision to attend a specific type of post-secondary education in Northwestern Ontario. In each socioeconomic category the percentage distribution is extremely similar. The chi-square value is 0.31 which is not significant at the 10% level of significance. The eta is 0.03 which indicates that there is virtually no association between SES and educational selection.

The results of Table 2 pertaining to educational selection

Table 1 The Percentage Distribution of Students from Confederation College and Lakehead University by Socioeconomic Status

	SES				
	High	Middle	Low		N
University	32%	34%	34%	100%	(159)
College	30%	35%	35%	100%	(181)
					340

$\chi^2 = 0.31$ $p = 0.86$ Eta = 0.03

by sex controlling for SES indicate that the percentage distribution of males and females at each institution in the high SES category is identical. For the middle SES category the results indicate that a larger percentage of females are attending the university while a larger percentage of males are attending the community college. In the lowest SES category, the percentage distribution of students by sex and institution is similar with slightly more males and less females attending the community college than the university.

The chi-square values for the high and low SES categories are not significant at the 10% level of significance. The chi-square value for the middle SES category is statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The eta for the high and low SES categories indicates that there is no association and for the middle SES category it indicates a weak association.

The results of Table 3 indicate that in all three SES categories the percentage distribution of students by age for each institution is quite similar. This similarity is most noticeable in the middle SES category where a somewhat smaller percentage are under 20 years of age. The chi-square values for all SES categories are not statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. In each category, the eta indicates that there is no association between age and educational selection.

For each SES category in Table 4, there is a slightly

Table 2 The Sex Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

	Male	Female	N
High SES			
University	43%	57%	100% (51)
College	43%	57%	100% (53)
			104
$\chi^2 = 0.02$	p = 0.86	Eta = 0.00	
Middle SES			
University	36%	64%	100% (55)
College	55%	45%	100% (65)
			120
$\chi^2 = 3.60$	p = 0.06	Eta = 0.19	
Low SES			
University	57%	43%	100% (53)
College	62%	38%	100% (63)
			116
$\chi^2 = 0.15$	p = 0.69	Eta = 0.05	

Table 3 The Age Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

	Under 20 Years	Over 20 Years	N
High SES			
University	61%	39%	100% (51)
College	68%	32%	100% (53)
			104
$\chi^2 = 0.31$	p = 0.57	Eta = 0.07	
Middle SES			
University	66%	34%	100% (55)
College	69%	31%	100% (65)
			120
$\chi^2 = 0.06$	p = 0.80	Eta = 0.04	
Low SES			
University	74%	26%	100% (53)
College	68%	32%	100% (63)
			116
$\chi^2 = 0.18$	p = 0.67	Eta = 0.06	

larger percentage of students in university with only one sibling. In the highest SES category with four or more siblings, the percentage figure favours university attendance. In that same category, a larger percentage of students with two or three siblings attend the community college. In the middle and low SES categories this is reversed with a larger percentage of students with two or three siblings attending the university and four or more siblings attending the community college.

The chi-square values for the high and low SES categories are statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The chi-square value for the middle SES category is not significant at the 10% level of significance. The eta for the high and low SES categories indicates weak association and for the middle SES category no association.

Table 5 examines the relationship of the student's educational selection with his/her community of origin controlling for SES. In all the SES categories, there are more students from communities of 100,000 or more attending the community college than the university and a larger percentage of students from communities of less than 10,000 attending the university. In sum, students from smaller communities tend to go to university while students from metropolitan areas tend to go to college. This tendency applies for all occupational status categories although it is much more pronounced within the high occupational category.

The chi-square values for the middle and low SES categories

Table 4 The Percentage Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions by Family Size Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

High SES

	Number of Siblings				
	1	2	3	4 or More	N
University	29%	22%	18%	31%	100% (51)
College	17%	41%	25%	17%	100% (53)
					104

$\chi^2 = 7.80$ p = 0.04 Eta = 0.27

Middle SES

	Number of Siblings				
	1	2	3	4 or More	N
University	29%	27%	26%	18%	100% (55)
College	25%	21%	23%	31%	100% (65)
					120

$\chi^2 = 2.60$ p = 0.46 Eta = 0.15

Low SES

	Number of Siblings				
	1	2	3	4 or More	N
University	30%	30%	29%	11%	100% (53)
College	21%	21%	22%	36%	100% (63)
					116

$\chi^2 = 9.80$ p = 0.02 Eta = 0.29

Table 5 The Community Size Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

High SES

	Community Size			
	Under 10,000	10,000 to 100,000	Over 100,000	N
University	22%	26%	52%	100% (51)
College	4%	36%	60%	100% (53)
				104
$\chi^2 = 7.70$	p = 0.02	Eta = 0.27		

Middle SES

University	9%	47%	44%	100% (55)
College	3%	41%	56%	100% (65)
				120
$\chi^2 = 3.00$	p = 0.22	Eta = 0.16		

Low SES

University	7%	40%	53%	100% (53)
College	2%	30%	68%	100% (63)
				116
$\chi^2 = 4.20$	p = 0.12	Eta = 0.19		

are not significant at the 10% level of significance. The chi-square value for the high SES category is statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The eta for the middle and low SES categories indicates that there is no association and for the high SES category a weak association.

In the high and low SES categories as indicated by Table 6 a larger percentage of university students received a high and medium degree of parental encouragement to attend university than did the community college students to attend college.

The distribution in the middle SES category indicates that more university students received a medium degree of parental encouragement than community college students. In this same category, the same percentage of students in each institution received a high degree of parental encouragement.

The percentage distribution of parental encouragement scores in the low SES category indicates that of all the SES categories, the largest percentage of university students receiving a high degree of parental encouragement occurred in the low SES category. The reverse holds for the community college sample with the smallest percentage of college students receiving a high degree and the largest percentage of college students receiving a low degree of parental encouragement in the low SES category.

The chi-square values for the high and low SES categories are statistically significant at the 10% level of significance

Table 6 The Percentage Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions by Degree of Parental Encouragement Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

High SES

Parental Encouragement

	Low	Medium	High	N
University	26%	27%	37%	100% (51)
College	43%	26%	21%	100% (53)
				104
$\chi^2 = 4.90$	p = 0.09	Eta = 0.22		

Middle SES

University	35%	35%	30%	100% (55)
College	39%	31%	30%	100% (65)
				120
$\chi^2 = 0.25$	p = 0.88	Eta = 0.04		

Low SES

University	34%	25%	41%	100% (53)
College	60%	21%	19%	100% (63)
				116
$\chi^2 = 9.30$	p = 0.01	Eta = 0.28		

but not for the middle SES category. The eta values for the high and low SES categories indicate a weak association and none for the middle SES eta value.

The results concerning peer group influence and educational selection displayed in Table 7 indicate that a larger percentage of community college students experienced a very low degree of peer group influence than did university students. This holds for all SES categories. A larger percentage of university students experienced a very high degree of peer group influence. This holds for all SES categories. A larger percentage of university students experienced a medium or higher degree of peer group influence than did community college students. This holds for all SES categories.

The chi-square values for the high and medium SES categories are statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The chi-square value for the low SES category is not statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The eta for each SES category indicates that there is little association.

Table 8 displays the distribution of values pertaining to the student's self-concept of academic ability by institution while controlling for SES.

The results of this comparison indicate that a larger percentage of community college students have a low self-concept of academic ability. In the high and low SES categories, a larger percentage of community college students than university

Table 7 The Percentage Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions by the Degree of Peer Group Influence Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

High SES

Peer Group Influence

	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High		N
University	14%	14%	12%	33%	27%	100%	(51)
College	13%	40%	19%	21%	7%	100%	(53)
							104

χ^2 = 12.60 p = 0.01 Eta = 0.35

Middle SES

University	20%	13%	18%	18%	31%	100%	(55)
College	37%	18%	17%	25%	3%	100%	(65)
							120

χ^2 = 18.70 p = 0.00 Eta = 0.39

Low SES

University	13%	15%	21%	30%	21%	100%	(53)
College	19%	31%	14%	23%	13%	100%	(63)
							116

χ^2 = 5.90 p = 0.20 Eta = 0.23

Table 8 The Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions by Self-Concept of Academic Ability Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

High SES

Self-Concept

	Low	Medium	High	N
University	12%	39%	49%	100% (51)
College	15%	28%	57%	100% (53)
				104

$\chi^2 = 1.40$ p = 0.49 Eta = 0.12

Middle SES

University	7%	51%	42%	100% (55)
College	28%	35%	37%	100% (65)
				120

$\chi^2 = 8.60$ p = 0.01 Eta = 0.27

Low SES

University	5%	60%	35%	100% (53)
College	22%	35%	43%	100% (63)
				116

$\chi^2 = 11.50$ p = 0.01 Eta = 0.30

students have a high self-concept of academic ability. The reverse is true for university students in the middle SES category. In the medium value of self-concept the statistics favour the university sample in each SES category.

When the percentage statistics of the medium and high self-concept values are added for each institution by SES category the results indicate that as SES decreases the percentage of university students in the medium to high value range increases. This is not the case for the community college sample.

In sum, students with low self-concepts are more likely to attend community college regardless of the father's occupational status. This tendency is most pronounced in the middle and low SES categories and less so in the high SES category. Further, students with a high self-concept of ability from a high or a low socioeconomic background tend to go to Confederation College while those with a medium self-concept regardless of SES tend to go to Lakehead University.

The chi-square value for the high SES category is not statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The chi-square values for the middle and low SES categories are statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The eta for each SES category indicates that there is a weak association.

The data in Table 9 indicates that a relatively similar

Table 9 The Academic Ability Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions Controlling the Socio-economic Status

High SES

	Academic Average			
	50-69%	70-79%	Over 80%	N
University	47%	33%	20%	100% (51)
College	51%	40%	9%	100% (53)
				104

$\chi^2 = 2.20$ p = 0.33 Eta = 0.15

Middle SES

University	50%	30%	20%	100% (55)
College	55%	37%	8%	100% (65)
				120

$\chi^2 = 3.90$ p = 0.33 Eta = 0.18

Low SES

University	43%	42%	15%	100% (53)
College	42%	43%	15%	100% (63)
				116

$\chi^2 = 0.48$ p = 0.98 Eta = 0.02

percentage of students from each institution obtained a high school average in the senior year of less than 69%. This holds for all SES categories. In the high and middle SES categories a larger percentage of community college students obtained an average within the range of 70-79% than university students while the reverse is the case for the 80% and over categorical value. In sum, students with averages between 70 and 79% from high and middle SES backgrounds tend to go to Confederation College while students from similar backgrounds with senior high school averages of 80% or more tend to go to university.

The chi-square values of Table 9 for all the SES categories are not significant at the 10% level of significance. The eta for the high and middle SES categories indicate that there is weak association and for the low SES category none.

The results of Table 10 indicate that a larger percentage of university students than community college students feel that the chances of obtaining a job following completion of studies are very low. This holds for all SES categories.

For the low and high possibility values the percentage distribution at each institution is quite similar in each SES category. In all the SES categories a larger percentage of community college than university students reported that their chances of landing a related job was very high.

In sum, students who feel that their chances of landing a related job are very high tend to go to Confederation College

Table 10 The Perception of Job Opportunities Distribution of Students of the Two Institutions Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

High SES

Students Perception of the Likelihood of Obtaining a Job

	Very Low	Low	High	Very High		N
University	33%	33%	18%	16%	100%	(51)
College	11%	34%	25%	30%	100%	(53)
						104

$\chi^2 = 8.60$ p = 0.03 Eta = 0.30

Middle SES

University	24%	33%	36%	7%	100%	(55)
College	15%	28%	34%	23%	100%	(65)
						120

$\chi^2 = 6.00$ p = 0.11 Eta = 0.22

Low SES

University	36%	30%	19%	15%	100%	(53)
College	21%	27%	24%	27%	100%	(63)
						116

$\chi^2 = 4.70$ p = 0.20 Eta = 0.20

regardless of their socioeconomic origin. Students who feel that their chances of obtaining a related job are very low tend to go to Lakehead University regardless of their socio-economic origin.

The chi-square values for the middle and low SES categories are not statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The chi-square value for the high SES category is statistically significant at the 10% level of significance. The eta for each SES category indicates that there is weak association.

The data tabulated in Table 11 clearly indicates that the principle reason for attending community college is occupational. In all three SES categories larger percentages of community college students go to college for occupational reasons than do university students attending university. The principle reason for attending university in the high SES category is academic, utilitarian in the middle and somewhat less utilitarian in the low SES category. In sum, students who perceive education as a means to an occupation tend to go to community college regardless of their socioeconomic origin.

Summary of the Findings

Socioeconomic Status

The findings presented in this chapter clearly indicate that the SES variable does not measurably influence the decision

Table 11 The Distribution of Reasons for Attendance of Students of the Two Institutions Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

High SES

	Reasons			
	Utilitarian	Academic	Other	N
University	39%	51%	10%	100% (51)
College	87%	0%	13%	100% (53)
				104

$\chi^2 = 36.55$ p = 0.00 Eta = 0.59

Middle SES

University	40%	29%	31%	100% (55)
College	79%	5%	16%	100% (65)
				120

$\chi^2 = 21.01$ p = 0.00 Eta = 0.42

Low SES

University	35%	39%	26%	100% (53)
College	82%	2%	17%	100% (63)
				116

$\chi^2 = 31.98$ p = 0.00 Eta = 0.53

to attend a specific type of post-secondary institution in the Thunder Bay District. The distribution of students by SES provided in Table 1 supports this statement.

Sex

The percentage distribution of males and females in the high SES category in each educational category is identical. A larger percentage of males in the middle and low SES categories are attending the community college. A larger percentage of females in the middle and low SES categories are attending the university. This distribution indicates that as socioeconomic status decreases the effect of sex on educational selection increases.

Age

The age distribution of students of the two institutions by SES is very similar indicating that age is not directly related to educational selection.

Family Size

A larger percentage of students in the high SES category with 1, or 4 or more, siblings are attending university. A larger percentage of students in the middle and low SES categories with 1, 2, or 3, siblings are attending university. A larger percentage of students in the middle and low SES

categories with 4 or more siblings are attending the community college. As socioeconomic status decreases the effect of a large family size on educational selection increases.

Community of Residence

In each SES category a larger percentage of students from communities of 10,000 or less are attending university. In each SES category a larger percentage of students from communities of 100,000 or more are attending community college. As community of residence approaches the extremes of the value range, the effect on educational selection increases regardless of socioeconomic status.

Parental Encouragement

In all SES categories, a larger percentage of community college students receive a low degree of parental encouragement. In all SES categories, a larger percentage of university students receive a medium or high degree of parental encouragement. Generally, as socioeconomic status decreases parental encouragement decreases and the effect on educational selection increases.

Peer Group Influence

In all SES categories a larger percentage of university students experience a high or very high degree of peer group

influence to attend university. In all SES categories, a larger percentage of community college students experience a low to very low degree of peer group influence. Regardless of social class as peer group influence increases the effect on educational selection increases.

Self-Concept of Academic Ability

A larger percentage of university students in all SES categories held medium self-concepts. As the medium value of self-concept increases the effect on educational selection increases regardless of social class.

Academic Ability

A larger percentage of university students obtained high school senior averages of 80% or more. A larger percentage of community college students in all SES categories obtained averages of 70-79%. In general, the academic ability distribution for each sample as represented in Table 9 is quite similar.

Perception of the Labour Market Opportunity Structure

A large percentage of community college students express a very high degree of optimism in each SES category and a high degree in the high and low SES categories. A larger percentage of university students express a very low degree of optimism

in all SES categories.

Reasons for Attending a Post-Secondary Institution

A larger percentage of community college students in all SES categories go to college for occupational purposes than do students who select the university. A larger percentage of university students in all SES categories go to university for academic purposes than students who select the community college. Only in the middle SES category do university students select the utilitarian choice more than any other reason for attending.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

I. SUMMARY

This study examined the relationship of socioeconomic status background to educational selection. Questionnaires were administered to 220 first year Confederation College students and 215 freshmen attending Lakehead University. The quota sampling method was employed to select and sample the two student populations. A lack of sufficient date pertaining to the SES variable disqualified several respondents which further reduced the samples to 181 college and 159 university students. The responses were coded, transferred to punch cards and processed by the Lakehead University computer.

The initial relationship of socioeconomic status to educational selection was examined. Contingency tables were then constructed to systematically display the relationship of educational selection to a number of independent variables while controlling for socioeconomic status. These independent variables were: age; sex; family size; community of residence; peer group influence; parental encouragement; self-concept of ability; senior high-school year grade point average; perception of the labour market opportunity structure; and, reasons for attending a post-secondary school.

Chi-square values were obtained for each table to determine whether significant differences existed between the two student

populations. Eta values were obtained to evaluate the degree of association of the attributes of students attending each institution.

II. COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS STUDIES

The most significant difference between this study and previous Canadian studies is that no other study has examined the differences or similarities between a community college and university population. The principal target population for educational research in Canada has consistently been high school students. Two studies, American in origin, conducted by J. Karabel and F. Pincus have provided material for direct comparison (Karabel, 1974: 14; Pincus, 1974: 18). Their findings indicated that American community colleges were composed primarily of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings in this study indicated that this was not the case in Thunder Bay.

Other related studies have employed the same independent variables found in this study to determine the extent to which variations in these independent variables affect the post-secondary plans of high school students. This section of this chapter will compare the results of these studies pertaining to socioeconomic status, community of residence, family size, parental encouragement, peer group influence and self-concept of academic ability to the results found in this study. The decision to compare the studies on the basis of these variables was determined by virtue of the fact that the two student populations

examined in this study (with the exception of socioeconomic status) exhibited significant differences when these variables were introduced into the original relationship of educational selection and socioeconomic status.

Socioeconomic status The Porter, Blishen, Porter study examined the relationship of socioeconomic status of high school students to post-secondary educational aspirations in Ontario. Their findings indicated that as socioeconomic status decreased, the numbers of students aspiring to go to a community college increased. Conversely, as socioeconomic status increased, the numbers of students aspiring to attend a university increased (1973: 48). The distribution of students, the chi-square test and the eta value found in Table 1 indicate that there is no association between educational selection and socioeconomic status in Thunder Bay. In sum, the findings in this study do not support the Porter et al., findings.

The Pavalko and Bishop studies conducted in Thunder Bay produced findings which clearly indicated that socioeconomic status was directly related to levels of educational aspiration (Bishop, 1965: 24; Pavalko, 1971: 312). However, neither Pavalko nor Bishop employed the community college as an alternative category.

On a theoretical level, the findings in this study seem to challenge Sewell, Hall, Straus, and Hyman. According to Hyman,

values specific to different social status positions significantly influence and determine variations in educational and occupational aspirations (Hyman, 1953: 427). The results of the Sewell, Haller and Straus study of 4,617 Wisconsin high school seniors functioned to furnish evidence to support Hyman's claim. The variance of findings may be attributed to differing time frame and structural factors such as educational systems and community types in which each study was conducted.

Community of residence The findings of Lipset, Sewell and Haller, Middleton and Grigg, and Porter, Blishen and Porter indicate that for each level of urbanization, the lower the social class, the lower the educational aspiration. Their findings further indicate that the smaller the community of residence, the lower the educational aspiration with the exception of students from high SES backgrounds (Lipset, 1955: 227; Sewell and Haller, 1957: 411; Middleton and Grigg, 1959: 347; Porter et al., 1973: 70).

The findings in this study indicate that a larger percentage of students from communities of less than 10,000 attend the university regardless of socioeconomic status and that a larger percentage of students from communities of more than 100,000 attend the community college regardless of socioeconomic status. Again the results appear to differ from previous studies.

Family size Family size has been found to have a negative effect

on educational aspiration levels but variations of this effect do exist and are dependent upon variations in mental ability and socioeconomic status (Porter et al., 1973: 61).

The findings in this study tend to support the general theory that as family size increases and socioeconomic status decreases, the effect on educational selection increases. However, this theory does not account for the diversity of educational selection observed for significant proportions of students with an equal number of siblings from the same socioeconomic background.

Parental encouragement Studies by Rehberg and Westby, Kahl, Bordua, Simpson, Sewell and Shah, and Breton indicated that parental encouragement was a crucial factor in determining whether an individual would pursue an educational career beyond high school (Rehbert and Westby, 1967: 371; Kahl, 1953: 190; Bordua, 1960; Simpson, 1962; Sewell and Shah, 1968a: 561; Breton, 1972: 184).

Gilbert acknowledged the importance of parental encouragement but understood it to be largely a reflection of socioeconomic status in Canada. He stated that the socioeconomic status and parental educational aspirations for the child are related so that the higher the socioeconomic status, the higher the parental educational aspiration for the child (1977: 292). The findings of this study tended to support this general sociological theory. However, the findings also clearly indicate that there were substantial proportions of students attending the university

regardless of SES who had received a low degree of parental encouragement. Conversely, the findings also clearly indicate that there were substantial proportions of students regardless of SES attending the community college who had received a high degree of parental encouragement.

Peer group influence The findings of the Pavalko and Bishop study conducted in Thunder Bay indicated that peer influences on educational selection did not operate uniformly across all socioeconomic statuses and sex groups (1966b: 199). The findings in this study indicated that a larger percentage of students attending the community college consistently experienced very low and low degrees of peer group influence than the university students. Conversely, a larger percentage of university students consistently experienced very high degrees of peer group influence than did community college students. Still, the findings in Table 7 indicated that substantial proportions of community college students did experience a high degree of peer group influence in all SES categories.

Self-concept of academic ability The studies conducted by Porter, Blishen and Porter (1973) and Singh (1977) indicated that there was a strong relationship between self-concept of academic ability and levels of student educational aspiration. Their studies further indicated that self-concept of academic ability

was so strongly associated with socioeconomic status that when socioeconomic status decreased so would the student's self-concept of academic ability.

The findings in this study generally indicated that larger percentages of community college students than university students held low and high degrees of self-concept in the high and low SES categories. On the other hand, larger percentages of university students than community college students held medium self-concepts in all SES categories.

Although the findings partially support the general theory that self-concept decreases when socioeconomic status decreases, they do not fully explain the diversity of educational selection observed within each SES category of Table 8.

Two intervening variables Substantial differences have been found to exist between the two student populations through the examination of the community of residence, family size, parental encouragement, peer group influence, and self-concept of ability variables. These differences, in part, account for the diversity of educational selection observed within each socioeconomic category. Differences were also found to exist between the two student populations with respect to perception of the labour market opportunity structure and reasons for attending a post-secondary institution. While these two variables may not account fully for the diversity of observed educational selection, it is

proposed that they have significantly minimized the effect of traditional and conventional background variables on the formulation of post-secondary educational aspirations. Further research will have to be conducted to determine the actual contribution made by these two intervening variables.

Perception of the labour market opportunity structure In all SES categories a larger percentage of community college students than university students had a very high degree of confidence of obtaining an occupation related to their course of study. In addition, a larger percentage of community college students than university students had a very high degree of confidence of obtaining a related occupation in the high and low SES categories.

Reasons for attending a post-secondary institution The results found in Table 11 indicated that the two student populations were attending a post-secondary institution for two quite different reasons. In no other table was the contrast between these two populations more clearly established. In all SES categories a larger percentage of community college students selected the college for utilitarian reasons than for any other. In all SES categories, a larger percentage of community college students than university students stated that they selected the post-secondary institution for utilitarian reasons. In all SES categories except the middle category, a larger percentage

of university students than community college students stated that they selected the post-secondary institution for academic reasons.

II. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicated that the difference in the SES backgrounds between the freshmen populations of students attending the university and the community college in Thunder Bay was not significant. Previous studies have indicated that the Ontario educational system has traditionally directed students from middle and high SES backgrounds into the university and students from low SES backgrounds into the community college or the labour market.

The reason for the difference in the findings may be attributed to the hinterland character of Northwestern Ontario and/or the much publicized belief that the university graduates have great difficulty finding gainful employment.

Seventy-six percent of the sample came from Northwestern Ontario; a region consisting of one metropolitan centre and many small isolated communities. The principal economic activity, resource extraction, transportation and development, is highly labour intensive and as such provides numerous occupational opportunities for blue collar workers. Within each community one would expect to find a relatively large segment of the population employed as blue collar workers and a smaller segment

employed as white collar workers. The social composition of this environment may prompt the middle and high SES inhabitants to interact on a frequent basis with the blue collar inhabitants.

The extent to which the offspring of the white collar workers have adopted blue collar values and aspirations through association is as yet unknown. However, given this setting, the offspring of white collar workers may be more apt to become part of a blue collar peer group and identify more closely with blue collar values and aspirations than their more urbanized counterparts.

This is to say, while individuals from Northwestern Ontario and more urbanized regions of the Province share a similar SES background with respect to father's education and income, they may not hold the same degree of prestige for white collar occupations or share similar occupational or educational aspirations. The Blishen SES scale of occupations in its application cannot be adjusted to account for either of these two factors. This may, in part, explain the results of this study which indicate that a convergence of SES backgrounds has occurred in the community college. The degree to which the application of this SES scale has distorted the results would be dependent upon the degree to which the hinterland character of Northwestern Ontario functioned to formulate blue collar aspirations among the white collar inhabitants.

Prior to 1965, students from middle and high SES backgrounds

wishing to attend a post-secondary institution had to leave Northwestern Ontario. While attending post-secondary institutions in the more urbanized centres of Ontario the students may have become aware of the existing regional disparities and perhaps began to perceive the institutions of Northwestern Ontario, including the educational institutions, as inferior. This pattern of out migration may still be occurring despite the existence of post-secondary institutions in Thunder Bay.

Potential post-secondary students may still perceive the post-secondary institutions located in Thunder Bay to be less prestigious than the post-secondary institutions in the more urbanized centres. If the out-migration is extremely extensive, it may have the effect of seriously depleting Northwestern Ontario of students from middle and high SES backgrounds. Unlike the sample of students from the high and middle SES backgrounds the out-migration students may share values and aspirations more closely aligned to those of students with similar SES backgrounds inhabiting the more urbanized centres. The students from the middle and high SES backgrounds who stay behind may be less status conscious and, as such, may not perceive any social advantage of selecting one of the institutions over the other. This, in part, may explain the similarity of SES backgrounds of students in the two institutions.

Traditionally, the university has provided its graduates with the means of obtaining a relatively high status occupation.

The media has suggested that the labour market is no longer able to afford university graduates this kind of opportunity. On the other hand, the media has suggested that the community college graduates do not and will not have great difficulty finding employment commensurate with their training. Students from high and middle SES backgrounds may have been influenced by these highly publicized beliefs and selected the community college instead of the university. This possibility is supported by the data presented in Table 11 which indicates that a larger percentage of students from the high and middle SES categories who selected the community college did so for utilitarian purposes than did their counterparts attending the university. Traditionally, the community college has been viewed as a cooling out institution or a reservoir for the overflow of students from low SES backgrounds aspiring to obtain a post-secondary education. Conversely, the university has been viewed as an educational institution occupied predominantly by students from high and middle SES backgrounds. If a convergence of SES backgrounds has occurred as indicated by the data presented in Table 1, it would seem more plausible to suggest that this shift involved the movement of students from the high and middle SES backgrounds not those from lower SES backgrounds. This convergence may, in part, be a result of the inability of the labour market to absorb university graduates causing potential university bound students to re-evaluate means to ends and select the post-

secondary institution accordingly.

Two separate theories have been put forth to explain the similarity of SES backgrounds of students in the two institutions. The first infers that the hinterland character of Northwestern Ontario fosters blue collar aspirations among the offspring of white collar workers and an inferior image of the university. Individuals from middle and high SES backgrounds who have not adopted blue collar aspirations and are more prestige conscious, may have migrated to post-secondary institutions in the more urbanized centres. The remainder of the student population is theorized to have adapted blue collar values and aspirations and to be less prestige conscious. Given this setting, the community college and university may be accorded similar degrees of prestige and selected indiscriminantly by the regional inhabitants. Compared to other universities, Lakehead University may be viewed as a blue collar institution. The effects of the hinterland character on the sample as discussed above may, in part, explain the similarity of SES backgrounds of students in the two post-secondary institutions.

The second theory implies that potential university bound students from high and middle SES backgrounds have been redirected to the community college as a result of the much publicized belief that university graduates have great difficulty finding employment commensurate with their training. The data represented in this study partially explains the convergence of SES

backgrounds of students from the two institutions and by doing so provides support for this theory.

To determine the extent to which each of these factors influenced the results of this study will require further research.

Some possible studies are listed below.

(1) The extent to which the present day labour market condition affects post-secondary selection in Ontario is still largely unknown. Studies could be conducted in several Ontario cities such as Kingston, Ottawa, Peterborough and Hamilton for purposes of comparison. This kind of comparison will allow succeeding researchers to determine whether the implied change in the community college population is particular to Northwestern Ontario or is occurring throughout Ontario.

(2) Similar populations could be sampled periodically over a period of years while noting the media and government reports pertaining to university graduate employment. Such a study could determine with greater accuracy the extent to which the labour market condition affects educational selection.

(3) A similar study could be conducted in two different cities, one having a relatively low rate of unemployment and the other having a relatively high rate of unemployment. Again the effect of the labour market condition on educational selection may be more fully understood through this kind of controlled comparison.

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APPENDIX

A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL SELECTION

OF

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

Dear Student:

There are a number of questions about your decision to attend this particular post-secondary educational institution that we think are worth trying to answer. You can help us by answering the questions as carefully and accurately as possible.

This is not a test and we assure you that all your answers will be a private matter concerning only yourself and the researcher.

Peter B. Worrell
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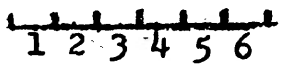
Thunder Bay, Ontario.



NOTE

* INSTRUCTIONS: PLEASE READ THE EXAMPLES VERY CAREFULLY*

Most questions are followed by a list of answers. From this list choose the one answer that is right for you and indicate your choice by circling a number.

The following examples show you how to answer.

1. Do you live in Ontario?.. (1) Yes .2). No 3) I don't know
2. Is your Father working? (1) Yes 2) No 3) I don't know
3. Do most of your friends like hockey? 1) Yes (2) No 3) I don't know

Some of the other questions may require a PRINTED answer to be placed in a blank. *PLEASE PRINT*

The following answer will show you how to answer.

4. How many of your brothers and sisters are currently employed? Please list by relation and occupation.

	Relation	Occupation
1.	BROTHER	MECHANIC
2.	SISTER	TEACHER
3.	BROTHER	DENTIST

PART I

Aspects of your Personal History

REMEMBER! WHEN YOU ARE GIVEN A CHOICE SIMPLY CIRCLE THE CORRECT NUMBER.

1. In which of the following age categories do you belong? ⌊7⌋

   1) 19 or less
   2) 20 to 22
   3) 23 to 25
   4) 26 to 30
   5) 31 years or more

⌊8⌋

2. You are a (1) female (2) male

3. Where did you live before you attended this post-secondary institution?_____ ⌊9⌋

4. Was this community located in Ontario? 1) yes 2) No ⌊10⌋

5. How long did you live there? 1) 3 years or less 4) 11 to 15 years
   2) 4 to 6 years 5) 16 to 20 years
   11 3) 7 to 10 years 6) 21 years or more

6. What was the approximate size of the community where you lived just before you attended this post-secondary institution?

   1) fewer than 5000 people
   2) 5001 to 10,000 people
   3) 10,000 to 20,000 people
   4) 20,001 to 50,000 people
   5) 50,001 to 100,00 people
   6) over 100,001 people

   ⌊12⌋

7. If you lived there less than 3 years could you please state the preceding place of residence._____ ⌊13⌋

8. Was this community located in Ontario? 1) Yes 2) No ⌊14⌋

9. How many years did you live there?_____ ⌊15⌋

10. What was the approximate size of that community?_____ people [16]

11. To what ethnic or cultural group do you belong?_____
(e.g., English, French, Italian, North American Indian, etc) [17]

Part II

Now we would like to ask you some questions about your family history.

12. How many brothers do you have?_____ [18]

13. How many sisters do you have?_____ [19]

14. Are your parents still living together? 1) yes 2) No [20]

15. Was your Father alive when you entered this post-secondary institution? 1) Yes 2) No [21]

16. Was your Mother alive when you entered this post-secondary institution? 1) Yes 2) No [22]

Part III

You and your Family's Education History

17. Please indicate the highest level of education achieved by your Father. (1) Elementary (2) High school (3) Vocational (4) Community College (5) University [23]

18. Did your Father receive a 1) certificate [24]
2) diploma
3) degree
4) none of the above
5) other(Please specify)_____

19. What was the highest level of education achieved by your Mother? (1) Elementary (2) High school (3) Vocational (4) Community College (5) University [25]

20. Did your Mother receive a 1) certificate [26]
2) diploma
3) degree
4) none of the above
5) other(Please specify)_____

PLEASE REMEMBER TO CIRCLE ONLY ONE NUMBER TO INDICATE THE ANSWER THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU.

21. What is the highest level of education achieved by your brother(s) and/or sister(s)?

Sibling List	Highest Level of Education
1. oldest brother.....	_____ [27]
2. second oldest brother.....	_____
3. third oldest brother.....	_____ [2]
4. fourth oldest brother.....	_____ [3]
1. oldest sister.....	_____
2. second oldest sister.....	_____
3. third oldest sister.....	_____
4. fourth oldest sister.....	_____

22. Are you 1) the oldest child [35]
2) the middle child
3) the youngest child
4) Other,(Please specify)_____

Part IV

Family Employment History

23. What is your Father's occupation?_____
(Please be specific, e.g. Mechanic at Harold's Garage) [36]
_____

24. Do you think he earns 1) less than $5001 per annum
2) between $5001 and $10,000 per annum
3) between $10,001 and $15,000 per annum
4) between $15,001 and $20,000 [37]
5) over $20,001 per year

25. What is your Mother's occupation?_____
(Please be specific e.g. House Wife) [38]

26. What do you estimate your Mother's income to be? $_____ [39]

27. How many of your brothers and sisters are currently employed?

Please list by relation, occupation, and if possible please attempt to estimate their income level.

	Relation		Occupation		Income	
1.	_____	40	_____	41	$_____	42
2.	_____	43	_____	44	$_____	45
3.	_____	46	_____	47	$_____	48
4.	_____	49	_____	50	$_____	51
5.	_____	52	_____	53	$_____	54

Part V

Your Previous Educational History

28. What average did you achieve in your last year of high school?

1) between 50 and 59%
2) between 60 and 69%
3) between 70 and 79%
4) between 80 and 89%
5) over 89%

55

29. Did you get accepted into your present course of studies on the basis of 1) your high school average
2) as a mature student
3) other(Please specify)_____

56

30. What kind of a high school did you attend? 1) a private school
2) a public high school
3) a free school

57

31. What program were you enrolled in at high school?

1) 5 year Arts and Science
2) 4 year Arts and Science
3) 5 year Science Technology and Trades
4) 4 year Science Technology and Trades
5) 5 year Business and Commerce
6) 4 year Business and Commerce
7) 2 year Vocational Training
8) Other,(Please specify the name and the length of the program)

_____

58

PLEASE REMEMBER TO CIRCLE ONLY ONE NUMBER TO INDICATE THE ANSWER THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU

32. Did you complete that high school program? 1) yes 2) No

59

33. If you answered "NO" to question 32 please state the number of years you did complete_____years.

60

34. If you did not complete the high school course could you please indicate the single most important reason, Why?

1) I transfered to another course
2) to seek employment
3) Family committments
4) Travel
5) Marriage
6) Lack of interest
7) Other, (Please specify)_____

61

35. Prior to leaving, what did you see as the single most important advantage of attending high school?

1) prepared me for employment
2) led me to higher education
3) to be with friends
4) to make new friends
5) academic studies
6) character development
7) sports
8) no advantage
9) Don't Know, Can't say
10) Other(Specify)_____

62

36. What do you think was the single most important advantage of attending this post-secondary institution?

1) it will prepare me for employment
2) to learn and acquire knowledge
3) to be with friends
4) to meet new people
5) to develop my character
6) to meet my future husband or wife
7) sports
8) it was the only place that offered the course I wanted to take
9) No advantage
10) Don't know,Can't say
11) Other, (Please specify)_____

63

PLEASE REMEMBER TO CIRCLE ONLY ONE NUMBER TO INDICATE THE ANSWER THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU

37. To the best of your knowledge who do you think influenced you the most to attend this post-secondary institution? 64

1) your spouse
2) your girl friend(s)
3) your boy friend(s)
4) your friends in general
5) your Father
6) your Mother
7) both parents
8) other family members
9) your high school teachers
10) No one did
11) Other, (Please specify)_____

38. Please indicate any post-secondary institutions you attended prior to the one your are presently enrolled in. 65

1) Community College
2) University
3) private institution, (please specify)_____
4) Other, (please specify)_____

39. If you had attended a post-secondary institution prior to this one, could you please indicate if you completed the program or not. 1) I completed the program 66
2) I did not complete the program

NOTE: READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS VERY CAREFULLY!

If you are presently attending a Community College please answer the following questions. Those not attending a Community College please proceed to Question 44.

40. What do you see as the single most important advantage of attending a Community College instead of a University.

1) better chance of getting a job
2) make more money
3) meet nicer people 67

NOTE:------Continued on next page!

Question 40 continued)

4) more practical education
5) get a better job
6) receive a more academic education
7) no advantage
8) Don't know, Can't say
9) Other, (please specify)_____

41. Do you think you have the ability to complete a University degree? 1) yes 2) No 68

42. Do you think a Community College education is more likely to guarantee the graduate a job than a University education?
1) Yes 2) No 3) about the same 69

43. What program are you presently enrolled in at Confederation College? 70 71
_____

NOTE: COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS PROCEED TO QUESTION 49.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE TO BE ANSWERED BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ONLY!

44. What do you see as the single most important advantage of attending a University instead of a Community College? 72

1) better chance of getting a job
2) make more money
3) meet nicer people
4) more practical education
5) get a better job
6) receive a more academic education
7) no advantage
8) Don't know, Can't say
9) Other, (please specify)_____
_____

45. Do you think a University is more likely to guarantee the graduate a job than a Community College education?
1) Yes 2) No 3) about the same 73

46. What program are you presently enrolled in at Lakehead University?

_____ 74 75

47. Are you a 1) first year student
2) second year student
3) third year student
4) fourth year student
5) other, (please specify)_____ 76

48. How many years of University are you planning to attend?

1) one year
2) two years
3) three years
4) four years
5) five years
6) more than five years 77

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE TO BE ANSWERED BY ALL STUDENTS

---

49. What occupational activity are you most likely to be involved in after you graduate? (Please be specific)_____ 78

_____

50. How relevant are your present studies to this occupational activity? 1) extremely relevant
2) relevant
3) not very relevant
4) not relevant at all 79

51. How difficult do you think it is to get a job today?

1) extremely difficult
2) very difficult
3) difficult
4) not very difficult
5) not difficult at all 80

1 2 3 4 5 6

52. After you have completed your studies what kind of a chance do you think you will have of getting a job?

1) excellent chance
2) very good chance
3) a chance
4) not a very good chance
5) no chance at all 7

53. Do you have a job already waiting for you after you graduate?

1) Yes 2) No 8

54. When you graduate will you be working for

1) your Father or other relative(s) 9
2) Friend(s) of your Father or of other relatives
3) I don't know yet who I will be working for
4) Other, (Please be specifc)_____

55. Who helped you the most in thinking about your future education?

1) Father
2) Mother
3) Father and Mother equally
4) School principal or vice-principal
5) Teacher(s)
6) School guidance counsellor
7) Close friends
8) Brother(s) or Sister(s)
9) Others (Who?)_____
10) No one helped me at all 10

56. Please circle one of the following?

1) My parents wanted me to go to a Community College 11
2) My parents wanted me to go to a University
3) My parents did not want me to go to a Community College or a University.
4) My parents did not care one way or the other.

57. Approximately how much do you think the average tuition fees are for one academic year at an Ontario University or Community College? PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER IN EACH COLUMN:

	University	Community College
Up to $99	1	1
$100-$199	2	2
$200-$349	3	3
$350-$549	4	4
$550-$799	5	5

12 13

(Continued on next page)

	University	Community College
$800-$999	6	6
$1000-$1500	7	7
I don't know	8	8

Part VI

Questions about you and your friends

58. Before attending this institution how much did you discuss your hopes for future education with your close friend(s)?

1) Not at all
2) Some
3) Very Much

14

59. How much did they help you in thinking about these hopes for your future education?

1) Not at all
2) Some
3) Very Much

15

60. To the best of your knowledge would you say that the majority of your friends are

1) attending a university
2) attending a community college
3) attending a nursing school
4) now working
5) now travelling
6) unemployed
7) other please specify_____

16

61. How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?

1) I am the best
2) I am above average
3) I am average
4) I am below average
5) I am the poorest

17

62. How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at this post-secondary institution?

1) I am among the best
2) I am above average
3) I am average
4) I am below average
5) I am the poorest

18

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

FOR PARTICIPATING

Yours truly,

Peter Worrell

Peter Worrell