STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE NATURE OF

PRE-UNIVERSITY CAREER SUPPORT:

AN URBAN/RURAL COMPARISON

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Student Perspectives on the Nature of Pre-University Career
Support: An Urban/Rural Comparison

By

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Abstract

This study was designed to explore and compare the career related needs of rural and urban youth upon entering a post-secondary institution. Subjects were 101 university students who had completed at least their first year of university study. Subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire developed from a list of perceived career related needs identified in a study by Jeffery and Lehr (1993). While few significant urban/rural differences were found, a number of unexpected outcomes related to the career preparedness of all youth were noted. In addition, several areas needing further study are discussed.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been with me for the past three years. In that time I have worked in a number of positions and travelled in an effort to remain employed. This was a hindrance to completing this thesis and completion may have been halted had it not been for my friends and family who provided numerous amounts of encouragement and support. For that I give thanks for what they have done.

Thank you,

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The advances in technology, combined with the dissolution of much traditional employment, are forcing students, both young and old alike, to seek higher learning, or retraining, in order to be more employable (Graham, 1987). As a result of the increasing demand for training, it is necessary to understand the needs of students entering University so that these students can be better prepared for the challenges they will face in a post-secondary environment (Burry, 1975; Graham, 1987; Mabry, 1989; Tompkins, 1981).

Rural Students, like their urban counterparts, have ready access to a high school education and hence, can acquire the prerequisites needed to gain entrance into a University. In spite of this, there may be common challenges and problems faced by the rural students that are unique. Rural students are usually from areas that do not provide ready access to post-secondary schooling. These students have to leave their home and familiar surroundings to gain access to the educational training an urban student can acquire while living at home. The rural student usually travels to an urban environment, at what is now regarded as a young age, leaving their friends and family behind. These students will have to adjust

to an unfamiliar community in order to attend a university while urban students may live at home for their post-secondary training. The costs of attending a university away from their home community also typically places considerable burden on both the rural student and their parents. Living at home enables urban students to retain the support networks they had while attending secondary school. The urban students' situation can be an advantage as they may experience less stress than rural students. Urban students do not have to deal with the stress of leaving home and living in a place where the loss of supports is compounded by their having to learn how to survive on their own while attending a university. It can be thus asked if rural students are as well prepared for their transition into the post-secondary environment? If not, what might they learn to help them be better prepared?

In many respects, the situations of rural and urban students entering university appear to be different and rural students appear to be at a disadvantage. This question of what rural students need to prepare them for their transition from high school to university and the world of careers is very important and the focus of this thesis. If educators, parents, and counsellors better understood and knew the needs of rural

students, they may be more effective in preparing them for their future.

This knowledge of student needs could also be useful for urban students. Some studies (Burry, 1975; Justiz, et. al., 1986; Bloodsworth and Fitzgerald, 1991), have supported the idea that if youth had the proper academic and social preparation, and received guidance from parents, then they would have an easier transition into a university/career environment. This thesis determined some of the transition-related needs, both personal and academic, that youth perceived to exist when they entered the post-secondary environment.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to determine the perceived career related needs of rural and urban youth entering the post-secondary environment. The needs to be assessed related to the academic and life skills and social and emotional support a young person might need to successfully move into a post-secondary learning and training environment.

When students enter new environments, as do persons entering new jobs, learning has to have taken place beforehand so these individuals can effectively integrate. Students entering a post-secondary

institution from high school, or students entering as "mature students",

need to be prepared for the required adjustment to their new environment.

The first objective of this study was to further assess the perceived

career related needs of youth identified in Lehr and Jeffery (1993). This

study sought to determine the degree to which youth experience those

needs being met and to determine who was involved in meeting those

needs prior to entering a post-secondary institution. The study by Lehr

and Jeffery identified what parents, community members and others

perceived to be the career-related needs of youth upon leaving high

school. This study assessed whether or not the needs identified by

Jeffery and Lehr are actually experienced by the students.

The second objective of this study was to determine if there were

differences in the needs of urban and rural students prior to entering a

post-secondary institution. This information would help determine what

sort of differences there were with respect to career preparedness.

Significance of the Study

This study was intended to gain a better understanding of what

students need in order to achieve a successful transition into a

post-secondary learning environment. If parents, teachers, counsellors, and others understand the needs of students about to experience transition, then they can better help them prepare. As Bazalgette (1975) pointed out, adults have the knowledge of what young people should expect in the world once they leave home to pursue a career or higher education. These adults have the responsibility of passing this information onto the younger generation in order to prepare them for the world experience.

In an article in the journal *Health Promotion (1993),* the unidentified author spoke of protecting our best resource: our youth. The article discussed how one group of young people are learning about taking care of themselves through training in financial planning and courses on how to find employment. The article suggests that large portions of young people are not prepared to care for themselves when they leave high school. This study seeks to determine the needs of youth so that future programs can be developed which can better prepare them for pursuing a post-secondary education. This thesis also seeks to find if there are differences between the perceived career related needs of rural and urban youth, and if so, the nature of those differences. This

knowledge could be useful to educators, parents and program developers seeking to help youth become better prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In reviewing the available literature, it became apparent that there are many articles dealing with the career related "needs" of rural and urban youth prior to entering university. Those articles addressed topics including the current needs of youth, new directions in policy and programs and ways to create and improve access to resources that would help youth in their transition. The majority relate to youth growing up in the United States. While these articles provided information relating to the needs of youth in general, this thesis focused on the needs of youth living and growing up in rural and urban Newfoundland about whom less is specifically known. Below is a brief overview of the literature on the transitional problems of youth followed by a more specific discussion of the literature addressing the Newfoundland situation.

Youth In Transition

Upon completing High School, young people are in the position of having to decide whether to attend a post-secondary institution, or seek employment. In order to be competitive in today's job market, an

increasing number of young people feel a post-secondary education is necessary and hence, continue their schooling. Many of these youth are unprepared to take this step (Payne, 1989; Mabry, 1989).

Payne (1989), conducted a review of the literature relating to the academic preparedness of high school students entering a post-secondary environment. His review indicated that a large portion of students were lacking in one or more of the basic skill areas (math, writing, and reading) and thus required extra help or course work in order to pursue a post-secondary degree or diploma. Payne noted that many community colleges are inundated by unprepared freshman. He felt high schools were not properly preparing students for future academic pursuits. He noted that even those students who completed high school with good marks were "hit hard" by the higher standards expected at the post-secondary level. Payne's review suggests that community colleges need to have better communication with high schools. Improved communication could help to clarify the expectations and skills needed by those seeking a post secondary education.

Mabry (1989) found similar problems. He found that there was a lack of prepared students entering the post-secondary environment and

that these students appeared to lack the academic skills needed for success at the post-secondary level. They were unprepared to meet the challenges of higher education and either struggled or dropped out. Mabry also suggested that in order to alter this trend, high schools and community colleges should engage in a collaborative effort. He suggested that students could take advanced academic courses in high school that would prepare them for the transition into the post-secondary environment. He suggested the idea of "advanced placement", which would allow high school students to participate in college courses and receive credits. Mabry's article indicates that there needs to be better communication between the two school levels.

Students not only need to be academically prepared, they also need to understand what potential employers may require. Charner (1988) conducted a study to help determine what future employers require, and how youth can become prepared to meet these requirements. In his study, it was found that employers did not hire youth for entry level jobs because some students did not have the basic academic skills or were poorly prepared for the demands of the position. Charner suggests that students need to improve resume writing,

academics, personal attitude, self-confidence and interview skills. Thus, Charner is suggesting that schools take an active role in basic academics and the preparation of students for future careers.

Drier (1996) conducted a study to determine what students require to "plan for life". His study suggested that the purpose of education was to prepare students for their future careers. He suggested that all students should be prepared through skill development, career guidance and advice from mentors in order to prepare for the challenge of pursuing a career. The overall outcome of his study suggested that career planning and "clarity of purpose" are required to help youth successfully make the transition from high school to a career.

Another study looking at the transition related needs of youth was conducted by Looker (1996). This longitudinal study examined the transition-related issues facing youth deciding between careers and post - secondary education. The study indicated that there were many areas where youth felt let down or unprepared to meet the challenges presented to them in their pursuits after high school. Youth felt they lacked knowledge about: the available funding for post - secondary education, access to information/resources about possible careers, and access to

guidance services. Other findings from her study indicated that marriage and family can affect decisions to pursue post - secondary education or careers. Those who were informed about post - secondary programs found it to be an asset while those uninformed found it to be a barrier. Youth felt that the amount of available funding for post – secondary education is decreasing.

Titley, Titley, and Wolf (1976) looked at students' performance while attending a post-secondary institution. They discussed how post-secondary education is more self-directed than secondary school. In secondary school, youth may have the opportunity to ask others for advice as to what they should do, but upon reaching the post-secondary environment, these students have more autonomy and must make independent decisions. Their survey indicated that being older did not necessarily mean better career decisions were made. Older students did not appear to be more able to make independent decisions. Many wandered from one major to the next. This study did not make any recommendations as to how students could better prepare for decision making.

McGrath (1996) carried out research in an attempt to determine

variables that influenced participation in post - secondary education. His results indicated that the variables most frequently related to participation were level of academic achievement, the number of barriers in the way of students, the value placed on education by the students and those around them, participation in advanced mathematics while attending high school, and personal well being. Hence, there appear to be many variables, both internal and external, which affect students' abilities to meet the challenges they will face after high school.

The above mentioned studies indicate that a large portion of the students entering community colleges and universities are not prepared to meet the challenges they will face. This situation poses a significant problem for educators. Bazalgette (1975) sought to determine how students feel with respect to their school-based preparation for the work environment. His study indicated that young people did not know how to interact with authority and "acted out" by not turning up for work and exhibiting anti-social behavior. When asked what their problem was, these youth responded that they were not prepared by the schools or their parents. They felt let down because they felt the adults in their lives had experiences similar to what they were now encountering and had not

passed on their knowledge.

The finding of inadequate preparation has been supported in more recent studies by Mero (1990) and by Shapiro (1986) who describe general education as "unfocused". They feel that the public education system does not appear to be preparing youth for their futures and that it reflects policy handed down by administrative authorities who are not adequately informed about the needs of youth. Shapiro's study reflects ideas similar to those of Purves (1988) and Faust (1950). They believed that while secondary education was designed to develop a common core of knowledge, skills, and values, shared among all students and considered necessary to deal with personal and social problems, administrative authorities have not adequately defined the actual needs of youth. These authorities are not studying the needs of youth and then designing policy.

Bazalgette (1975) found that students felt let down by the adults in their lives. This finding corresponds with a number of studies (Davey, 1993; Looker, 1996; Middleton & Lougheed, 1993;Trusty, Watts, & Crawford, 1996) which suggest that parents, teachers and counsellors are the best sources of information and guidance that a student can have

while in the secondary school environment. These studies indicate that youth can access great amounts of knowledge from mentors and those adults who are in direct contact with them. These adults have the potential to relate information about what it is like to try and survive in educational and career settings after secondary school. As was found in the study by Middleton and Lougheed (1993), parents of adolescents are in a position to influence a young person's career aspirations and personal development and to assist their children in becoming prepared to succeed.

Davey (1993), found that parents had the power to enhance the progress of their children. In her study, senior high school students were surveyed to determine the occupational aspirations and the experiences that relate to their personal development and career pursuit. Results indicated that support by parents was considered to be very important, and that the higher the support offered by parents, the more likely there was to be an increase in the confidence of the student trying to realize a particular goal. She also found that others were also considered to be just as important in a supportive capacity. These others were friends, teachers, other family members, and guidance counsellors. Thus, it can

be seen that while there are many people in the lives of students who can impact on their development, and help them to achieve their goals, these individuals have to make the effort to be involved.

Axelrod and Anisef (1996) conducted a study to determine some of the factors involved in the decision to pursue a post - secondary education or to seek employment. Results indicated that individuals from middle class families and from schools that promoted university education were more likely to pursue a higher education. Their study suggests that guidance services should be improved and that they should demonstrate options, and encourage the "most competent" to pursue their schooling, while providing a place where youth could discuss the barriers affecting their pursuit of goals and interests. Their results also suggest that socioeconomic status, gender and place of residence are important factors that impact on the career related decisions of youth.

There have been numerous studies suggesting the need for changes in the school curriculum in order to develop programs which help students prepare for future career pursuits. These studies have suggested different programs that incorporate strategies to teach youth how to survive in both the post-secondary environment and the job

market. Drier and Ciccone (1988) discussed how unprepared youth are for the transition from school to work. They determined that there was a need for more career guidance programs in the school. These programs could focus on themes such as the development of coping-skills, business/community support, and preparation for success. These would be beneficial in helping the student transfer from a secondary school environment to the worlds of career or university.

Helwig, Hiatt, & Vidales, (1989), believed that youth need to learn job hunting skills. These skills would include teaching students about the range of possible careers available to them; career options; building life-long skills; and teaching the academics necessary for success. This study further emphasizes the need for high school programs which help students adapt to life after secondary school.

Other types of programs that can be used to effectively help students with their transition from secondary school to the employment market are being developed everyday. Cairns, Woodward and Hashizumi (1993) developed one such program. They describe the development of, and implementation of, a work-skills program that would be tried in schools. They hoped that the simulation program would allow youth to

better learn work skills necessary for entering the job market. Their study suggested that if a realistic learning environment is provided that teaches work skills, this might enable those involved to identify their abilities, to help encourage cooperating action, promote the development of group problem-solving skills and allow them the opportunity to view different work roles. This study emphasized the ability of programs to teach youth what they need to survive in the future job market. It informs youth about the skills they will need to acquire in order to be successful.

Some programs have been cited (such as a work skills simulation program (Cairns, et al., 1993), parental involvement (Davey, 1993; Middleton & Lougheed, 1993; and, Trusty, Watts, & Crawford, 1996), and career guidance programs (Drier and Ciccone, 1988). Other programs are in place to help students make the transition from high school to the post-secondary environment and to the world of careers.

Wonacott (1992) discussed the use of career education programs to help students learn what is required in the world of employment. Through such approaches as youth apprenticeship programs, youth community service, and career oriented secondary school programs, youth can begin to gain the skills necessary for future success. In these

programs, youth can have exposure to various careers, and they can learn of the demands that will be placed upon them in a given career. These programs would allow youth to gain an understanding of what the world of employment involves, and what they need to learn in order to be successful. These approaches provide students with information pertaining to careers and the post-secondary education required to pursue such careers.

Another source of information has been designed to help students with the transition from the school environment to the world of employment. The Work Based Learning Resource Guide (Finley and Scott, 1995) provides students with access to actual work places, or experiences where the student can gain a first hand view of what actually transpires in the workplace. The approaches in this resource guide include youth apprenticeship, mentoring, internship, job shadowing, and cooperative education. These approaches can help the student make decisions as to what they would like to pursue with respect to a career and what they will require in order to be competent.

According to some writers, more school programs are needed that provide students with access to the skills and information they will need to

pursue a (Donaldson, 1996; Drier, 1996; Drier & Ciccone, 1988; Looker, 1996; Looker & Lowe, 1996; and, Mabry, 1989). With exposure to career development programs students can learn what employers want and can better decide what type of career they wish to pursue. These programs may help students gain a first hand look at what they will have to develop within themselves, both personally and academically, in order to pursue a particular career.

<div align="center">The Newfoundland Situation</div>

The Newfoundland school system has been evolving to meet the needs of youth throughout the province with respect to course offerings and business/career education. Watts (1983) realized that students need assistance acquiring information about potential careers and the education required to gain employment in a particular career. He began work on a project called <u>FACET III (Finding A Career Effectively Today)</u> which is the updated version of <u>The Career Development and Vocational Information School Project</u> created in 1975 at Beaconsfield High School. This project was intended to provide information to students who are planning on pursuing a post-secondary education. Watts decided that

there was a need to update the information on the entrance requirements for various post-secondary institutions throughout the province. Hence, this project was developed to help students understand what they needed to enhance their future opportunities.

Cahill and Martland (1993) conducted a study on career counselling in rural areas. They reviewed some of the differences existing between rural and urban access to career information and resources. Their findings indicated that rural counsellors face issues not usually seen by their urban counterparts. The rural counsellor appears to be on the periphery of the "urban industrial culture", and they develop perspectives that are separate from those of people living in urban areas. It appears that urban dwellers have better access to a range of paying jobs as compared to rural dwellers. This differential access limits the exposure of rural people to a variety of employment experiences.

Cahill's and Martland's (1993) research suggests that career development theory is one-sided when it comes to developing programs to meet the needs of youth. They determined that the theory of career development tends to take an urban approach, and assumes that this is the direction required to help all youth. Their research suggests that those

involved in the creation of career development theory do not appear to realize that the rural experience is quite different, in many ways, from the urban experience and, thus requires more consideration of their differences.

The experiences of rural people appear to be different with respect to geographical location, family, and socioeconomic status (Rojewski, 1994). Rural youth, due to their location, may experience many blocks that may not be experienced by urban youth. Rural youth may be disadvantaged by geography and socioeconomic status and may not be reached through the current career development approaches. Thus, the rural student may not be as sophisticated in terms of careers as their urban counterparts who have more access to career resources and job exposure. Urban youth may be more ready to pursue higher education or seek employment upon completing high school.

Rural communities have some unique qualities that are not commonly found in urban areas. They tend to have more community support due to there being fewer people in a smaller geographical area compared to urban environments. Kenkel (1985) discussed the idea that close-knit families and homogeneous populations characterize rural

communities where there is continued familiarity between all people in the community. These communities have more easily identified social networks that allow people to rely on each other for personal support. He found that when rural people leave their home environment and move to urban areas, they tend to lose that close, easily identifiable social network. In an urban setting, they have to rely on themselves more often and this could cause some adjustment problems.

McCracken and Barcinas (1991) conducted a study looking at the differences between rural and urban high school students' aspirations based on the location of the school. Their results indicated that there are positive and negative aspects relating to the location of the school. They found that the likelihood of attending a technical school compared to a university was more common to the rural person, possibly due to the proximity of the school to their home community. This was different for the urban student who usually had the opportunity to attend either type of school. They found that there were small differences in the occupational aspirations of rural and urban students and that rural students usually had to leave their home communities in order to pursue their chosen occupation.

Hektner (1995), found that there were many rural youth who decided that in order to move ahead in society, they would have to leave their home community. They found that rural teens were more likely to experience a personal conflict with leaving. This finding could indicate that there might be adjustment problems for these rural youth when they move to a new community, and away from their support structures, in order to realize their goals.

Singh and Baksh (1991) conducted field research into Newfoundland teachers' perceptions of parents' interest in the education of their children. Their findings suggest that teachers believe there are not enough parents interested in their children's academics, that parents are not highly interested in the teachers' ideas, and that teachers are not able to put into practice those ideas learned in their teacher training. Their conclusions indicate that parents and teachers need to be more interactive in the education of the students. This interaction may be beneficial to the parent/teacher relationship. It was noted that students look toward their parents and teachers for the majority of their academic support.

The literature points to the idea that the rural student is at a

disadvantage with respect to school and community programs relating to career education. Apostal and Bilden (1991) suggested that rural students, as compared to urban students, have had unique circumstances to deal with when attempting to make decisions about their careers and future education. They suggest that rural youth have limited accessibility to higher education, a more narrow school curriculum, a limited exposure to the world of occupations, and access to fewer role models. These deficiencies cause rural students to be at a disadvantage and this decreases their ability to make educated career choices.

Warren (1983) sought to determine whether or not rural students in Newfoundland are at a disadvantage with respect to accessibility to higher education, school curriculum, role models and occupations. He studied the attitudes of the public toward elementary and high school education. His results indicated that teaching students to think was considered very important. Over half (70%) of the respondents believed that there was not enough attention given to preparing high school students for a career after high school. While this study does not account for changes that have taken place in the past 14 years, it does indicate that for some time many people have not believed that the education

system was meeting the needs of rural youth.

Warren also asked people to comment on areas of improvement that could be implemented in the schools. Responses indicated that there was a need for more vocational courses (86%) in secondary schools. Thus, the results suggest that people were concerned about the level of education their children were receiving, and that there was a need for more curriculum relating to career development.

Sharpe (1996), in an ongoing study of youth in transition, has sought to determine the problems faced by youth after they leave high school. These problems were: finding suitable employment, obtaining financial funding for post - secondary education, finding personal support for pursuing a post-secondary education, and knowing what programs to pursue. This study suggested that if certain resources were in place, such as career education programs and better guidance services, then many of these problems may have been avoided. The Summary Report on youth in transition by Sharpe and White (1993), found that students did not feel that they had adequate access to guidance services. Those students who indicated having adequate access were those students with grades of 75 or greater.

Career education has been defined as helping "students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to attain meaningful careers" (Balcombe, 1995). Teachers in career education courses are supposed to help students realize what they will 'need' in order to be successful in future career pursuits. Thus, what are the needs of youth, and what programs are in place to help these students make a successful transition from high school to post-secondary education or employment?

According to literature recently published by the Department of Education (1996), there have been advances made in the effort to bring career information to students. This information is being delivered through courses such as cooperative education and career development, and programs involving apprenticeship training that will be tried in the 1997/1998 school year. These courses and programs have been implemented in the schools throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and are becoming more available each year (Division of Evaluation, Research, and Planning, 1996; Division of Program Development, 1990; and Division of Program Development, 1992).

The Cooperative Education courses (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Division of Program Development, 1992) were developed

for implementation in the schools throughout the province. The purpose of the courses was to officially integrate school learning with practical experience through work placement in the community. This would involve the participation of the school, community, students, teachers, employees and employers. These courses could provide students with exposure to various careers while in school, and the opportunity to actively participate in a particular career through employment within the community. Through this process, students could learn about different occupations, gain some of the skills required to pursue a particular career, and learn about the world of work.

The development of the cooperative education courses were based on Department of Education guidelines, and related to the availability of work opportunities in each community. The courses were designed to meet the needs of students in both urban and rural areas. Because there are many rural communities within Newfoundland and Labrador that do not have ready access to the variety of occupations usually existing in urban areas, rural students may have limited exposure to a variety of possible careers through cooperative education.

Another course offered in the public school system of

Newfoundland and Labrador is Career Education (Department of Education, 1990). This course is offered as a part of the guidance and career development programs for students. The purpose of the course is to provide training in "life planning" skills. Training is related to: career planning, decision making, occupational information and job analysis, leaving home, life management and other necessary life skills. It is a program designed to help prepare students for their life after high school. These courses have been implemented throughout the Province in order to fulfil a recognized need to help youth prepare for their futures.

The Apprenticeship Training program (Industrial Training Division, Department of Education, 1996) was designed to help adults and youth experience different occupations related to industries such as carpentry, engineering, refrigeration repair, and other vocational careers. This program has been in place for a number of years at the college level, and was accessed by individuals attending post-secondary technical institutions. Programs are now being designed to include youth at the secondary level of education to provide exposure to different occupations.

The Cooperative Education courses offer experiences at different levels. Students can take the courses during the time period required to

complete high school. According to the statistics released by the
Department of Education for 1995 - 1996, the first course was offered in
61 schools with a total of 1,293 students participating, but fewer students
participated at the more advanced levels. It also appeared from the
statistics that as the course level increased, fewer schools participated.
Other statistical information released by the Department of Education
(Profile '96, Educational Indicators, 1997) indicates that most schools
within the province have access to this course, but that the level of
participation is varied. The data indicates that, on average, less than 40%
of students participate in the course. The course is available in all school
districts.

Career Education courses are offered in 118 schools (Department
of Education, 1996). In these schools, a total of 2,983 students
participated in the course, a slight decrease from previous years. The
statistical data unfortunately does not provide a breakdown of the
numbers of rural and urban students that have access to these courses.

No data was available on the Youth Apprenticeship Training
Program released by the Department of Education. It appears that this is
a new program that is currently being planned. It has been implemented

on a pilot basis in a small number of schools around the Province. No data on the program is currently available.

As noted earlier, the Lehr and Jeffery (1993) study suggested that rural youth in Newfoundland do not appear to be well informed or prepared to make career decisions. These young people do not have ready access to the information that would allow them to make educated career choices. The study indicated that while youth have concerned and caring parents who want the best for their children, the parents are not well informed themselves.

Summary

In summary, the literature indicates the need for more research into the needs of students as they prepare to move into the post-secondary and career environment after high school. The literature suggests that youth are unprepared to meet the challenges of careers and post - secondary education upon leaving high school (Looker, 1996; Mabry, 1989; and, Payne, 1989). It appears that youth have not been adequately prepared by their high schools, parents, mentors, and others (Bazalgette, 1975; Davey, 1993; Drier, 1996; and, Looker, 1996). While

there have been many programs developed for implementation at the high school level, and many programs are now in place in Newfoundland schools, not all students are availing of these resources as can be noted in Profile '96, Educational Indicators, 1997 (Department of Education, 1996). It appears that youth, in general, have many disadvantages and that rural youths are more disadvantaged than urban youth when it comes to being prepared to make career related decisions and when making decisions about attending a post - secondary institution (Apostal & Bilden, 1991; Cahill & Martland, 1993; Kenkel, 1985; Rojewski, 1994)

Chapter 3

Methodology

Instrument

A questionnaire was developed based on previous research by
Jeffery and Lehr (1993). These researchers developed a list of the
career-related needs of youth at or near graduation from high school.
The list was based on a qualitative study of the views of rural parents,
knowledgeable members of the community, and youth. Their goal was to
gain insight into the needs of rural youth with respect to career
preparedness.

The developed questionnaire was administered to students who
had completed their first year of university. It sought to determine and
compare the needs and support available to both rural and urban
students entering university.

The questionnaire sought to further explore the needs identified in
the Jeffery and Lehr (1993) study. The questionnaire sought information
in four areas: (a) demographic; (b) general reasons for entering
university; (c) parental and peer support; and (d) academic readiness.
The demographic section asked if the respondent was rural or urban and
sought background information in areas related to year leaving high

school, high school average, name of home community, parents' level of education and how they were paying for their education.

The second section was of a general nature and presented statements related to student's reasons for entering university, how informed they were about the range of possible careers available to them, why they chose to enter a particular institution, and their awareness of available funding.

The third section of the questionnaire was titled "parent and peer support". This section sought to determine from whom students acquired their support for attending university and how or if that support influenced their decisions. Questions asked related to parents' knowledge of university courses, the long and short-term costs of education, and the awareness of difficulties that might arise from living away from home.

The fourth and final section of the questionnaire explored "academic readiness". This section sought to determine how academically prepared students felt they were, prior to entering a post-secondary environment, for further studies. It explored the support that was available from their high school, home community and others outside the school.

Thus, the questionnaire covered several different aspects of a student's life. The demographic section consisted of statements requiring yes/no and multiple choice answers while the other sections employed a five point Likert type scale to allow for more precise analysis of the data (Cheung and Mooi, 1994).

The instrument went through several revisions aimed at increasing its clarity and the ease with which it could be used. In this process, it was also piloted with graduate students. Once all revisions had been made and the questionnaire was ready for implementation, the chosen student sample was approached, with permission of the instructor, during class time and asked to complete the questionnaire. The students were informed as to the reason for the study and told that the questionnaire was anonymous and their participation voluntary. Questionnaires were handed out to students at the beginning of class to be completed during their class break (see appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire).

Subjects

The subject pool consisted of 190 students, at Memorial University of Newfoundland enrolled in a Drugs and Behavior psychology course

offered during the summer semester. This course was chosen because registrants typically come from many different university departments and thus deemed to be more representative of the university population.

The students in the course had typically completed first year university and were deemed able to reasonably comment on their preparedness for the university challenge. Of the 190 students in the course, only 116 were in attendance and of those students, 101 completed and returned the questionnaire (see Appendix B, Table B.1).

Demographic data (see Appendix B) indicated that, of the sample studied, 26.7% of respondents had completed first year university, 39.6% had a high school average of 75% or greater, 60% were from urban communities and 40% were from rural communities. As well, 19.8% stated that they had entered university within two years of graduation from high school and 82.2% of respondents entered university because they felt there was a greater chance of future employment with a university education.

Results indicate that some students (19.2%) had attended another university or post secondary institution of some sort. It appears many students (34.0%) received career information from their school counsellor

and 56.4% had the opportunity to meet with representatives from other colleges and/or universities before graduation from high school.

The majority of students (72%) indicated that they were paying for their education through student or personal loans and 57.1% were not employed while attending university.

Subjects indicated that their parents (29.7% of mothers and 27.6% of fathers) had completed at least a high school diploma and had a household yearly income of 25,000 to 40,000 dollars.

When designing the study, the demographics of the sample were not known. For this reason, a number of questions were asked including what year the student left school, how many people lived within a ten mile radius, the highest level of education attained by parents and how the student was paying for his or her education. The resultant data can be found in Tables B.1 - B.17 in Appendix B. This information was not directly used in the analysis of data related to students' needs and career readiness.

Treatment of Data

The questionnaire gathered information on students' perceptions of how prepared they felt upon entering University, who helped them

prepare, and about what other resources they were exposed to which helped to prepare them. Because both rural and urban students completed the questionnaire, it was possible to explore areas of possible differences between the groups. The distinction between rural and urban was based on the number of individuals living in or near a community. It was decided that any community of 5000 or less would be deemed as being rural (Press, 1986).

After the data was collected, it was analyzed using the Statistical Package For Social Sciences (Norusis, 1993) computer software program. Analysis included the calculation of cross - tabulations (for frequency distributions) and chi-squares. Comparisons between the questionnaire items were performed to determine who helped prepare or support students for future education and careers and if there were significant differences between the urban and rural populations with respect to their general preparedness for university and academic readiness.

In experimental analysis, the convention of a .05 level of significance is typically used. As this was deemed to be, at least in part, an exploratory study, it was decided, post hoc, that to identify potentially

worthwhile areas for further exploration a less rigorous significance level would be used. It was thus decided to review the data using a .10 level of significance.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Data

This chapter presents the results of the current study. The data describes the level of career preparedness experienced by rural and urban youth and it explores their needs upon entering a post-secondary environment.

The results are presented by questionnaire section (see Appendix A). The results for each questionnaire section are broken into three parts. The first part deals with the significant results at the $p < .05$ level of significance. The second part reviews the data using the $p < .10$ level of significance. The P<.10 level was used to determine if other possible needs, not indicated using the $p < .05$ level, may be identified. The third part reviews the results of both groups together.

The collected data was analyzed with the Statistical Package For Social Sciences (Norusis, 1993) computer software program providing means and standard deviations that were then used to calculate frequency distributions and –chi-squares..

Results

Few statistically significant differences were found between rural

and urban students in any of the following sections.

<u>Section I: General Preparedness For University</u>

Table 1 reviews the questions in the section titled "General Preparedness For University". Data analysis revealed statistically significant urban and rural differences relating to how students obtain funding for post secondary education. Here, more rural students (71%) than urban students (50%) indicated that they had adequate knowledge about acquiring funding (Chi-square = 3.89, $p<0.05$).

When reviewing the data using the $p < .10$ level, results indicated that more urban students (56.7%) than rural students (37.5%), disagreed with the statement that they were well informed about the range of possible careers open to them before entering university (chi-square = 3.53, $p<0.06$).

Another questionnaire statement that was significant at the $p<.10$ level related to the awareness of funding available to pursue a post - secondary education. The results indicated that 82.5% of rural students compared to 66.7% of urbans knew about the sources of available funding (Chi-square Square = 3.05, $p<0.08$).

Results also suggested that rural students (82.1%) may be more

Table 1 : General Preparedness

Statement	Rural		Urban		Row Total		Chi-square	P-value
	Freq.	/ %	Freq.	/ %	Freq.	/ %		
Well informed about range of possible careers								
Agree	25	62.5	26	43.3	51	51.0	3.53	0.06
Disagree	15	37.5	34	56.7	49	49.0		
Cost was an important factor in my decision								
Agree	17	44.7	36	61.0	53	54.6	2.47	0.12
Disagree	21	55.3	23	39.0	44	45.4		
Family tradition was a factor in my decision								
Agree	7	22.6	9	16.1	16	18.4	0.56	0.45
Disagree	24	77.4	47	83.9	71	81.6		
Proximity to home was an important factor								
Agree	15	41.7	32	54.2	47	49.5	1.41	0.24
Disagree	21	58.3	27	45.8	48	50.5		
Program availability was an important factor								
Agree	15	38.5	25	43.9	40	41.7	0.27	0.59
Disagree	24	61.5	32	56.1	56	58.3		
Where my friends went was an important factor								
Agree	14	36.8	21	35.0	35	35.7	0.03	0.85
Disagree	24	63.2	39	65.0	63	64.3		
Possibility of future employment								
Agree	36	90.0	54	88.5	90	89.1	0.05	0.82
Disagree	4	10.0	7	11.5	11	10.9		
Career choice influenced by observing others								
Agree	16	43.2	25	43.1	41	43.2	0	0.99
Disagree	21	56.8	33	56.9	54	56.8		
I was aware of sources of funding								
Agree	33	82.5	40	66.7	73	73.0	3.05	0.08
Disagree	7	17.5	20	33.3	27	27.0		

Table 1 : General Preparedness

Statement	Rural		Urban		Row Total		Chi-square	P-value
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Knew how to get funding								
Agree	27	71.1	30	50.8	57	58.8	3.89	0.05**
Disagree	11	28.9	29	49.2	40	41.2		
Was aware of the challenges I would face								
Agree	25	65.8	47	78.3	72	73.5	1.88	0.17
Disagree	13	34.2	13	21.7	26	26.5		
Was prepared for move to new community								
Agree	32	82.1	30	65.2	62	72.9	3.03	0.08
Disagree	7	17.9	16	34.8	23	27.1		
Knew how to find accomodations								
Agree	28	70.0	32	80	60	75	1.07	0.3
Disagree	12	30.0	8	20	20	25		

Note: ** indicates significance using chi-square analysis at the p<.05 level.

For full questionnaire statements, refer to Appendix A

prepared to move to a new community in order to further their education than urban students (65.2%), (chi = 3.03, p<0.08).

When the data of the two groups was considered together, further insights into the needs of both rural and urban youth became evident. It was found that 54.6% of students agreed that cost was not a factor in deciding to choose a particular post-secondary institution. Students (89.1%) also stated that the potential for future employment was very important and that observing others did not influence their career choices. A majority of youth (73.5%) was aware of challenges they would face at university; and, 75% of students were aware of how to get accommodations while attending university.

Section II: Parental and Peer Support

Table 2 presents information about parental and peer support. In this section, there was only one statistically significant result at the p<.05 level of significance. The data revealed that some students experienced problems when trying to make new friends at university. Results indicated that 15.4% of rural students compared to 35.8% of urban students experienced difficulties when trying to make new friends at university

Table 2 : Parental and Peer Support

Statement	Rural		Urban		Row Total		Chi-square	P-value
	Freq.	/ %	Freq.	/ %	Freq.	/ %		
Parents awareness of where I was moving								
Agree	15	38.5	17	47.2	32	42.7	0.59	0.44
Disagree	24	61.5	19	52.8	43	57.3		
Parents assisted in course selection								
Agree	5	13.9	9	18.4	14	16.5	0.3	0.58
Disagree	31	86.1	40	81.6	71	83.5		
Parents heled me anticipate problems								
Agree	18	48.6	29	56.9	47	53.3	0.58	0.45
Disagree	19	51.4	22	43.1	41	46.6		
Parents had difficulty finding information								
Agree	7	23.3	4	9.1	11	14.9	2.86	0.09
Disagree	23	76.7	40	90.9	63	85.1		
Parents helped me understand difference								
Agree	15	40.5	29	56.9	44	50.0	2.29	0.13
Disagree	22	59.5	22	43.1	44	50.0		
Parents had confidence in my ability to care for myself								
Agree	36	92.3	42	85.7	78	88.6	0.94	0.33
Disagree	3	7.7	7	14.3	10	11.4		
Parents were supportive of pursuing education								
Agree	34	87.2	50	87.7	84	87.5	0.01	0.94
Disagree	5	12.8	7	12.3	12	12.5		
Knowledgeable about the long and short term costs								
Agree	26	65.0	45	77.6	71	72.4	1.88	0.17
Disagree	14	35.0	13	22.4	27	27.6		

contd...

Table 2 : Parental/Peer Support

Statement	Rural		Urban		Row Total		Chi-square	P-value
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Program chosen based on length of time to finish								
Agree	3	8.3	10	17.5	13	14.0	1.56	0.21
Disagree	33	91.7	47	82.5	80	86.0		
Knowledge of how moving would lessen home contact								
Agree	34	89.5	38	88.4	72	88.9	0.03	0.88
Disagree	4	10.5	5	11.6	9	11.1		
Experienced difficulties making new friends								
Agree	6	15.4	19	35.8	25	27.2	4.76	0.03**
Disagree	33	84.6	34	64.2	67	72.8		
Anticipated problems related to living away from home								
Agree	36	90.0	33	82.5	69	86.3	0.95	0.33
Disagree	4	10.0	7	17.5	11	13.8		
My friends provided encouragement and support								
Agree	32	86.5	48	87.3	80	87.0	0.01	0.91
Disagree	5	13.5	7	12.7	12	13.0		

Note: ** indicates significance using chi-square analysis at the $p<.05$ level.

For full questionnaire statements, refer to Appendix A

(chi-square = 4.76, p<0.03).

When using the p<.10 level of significance, information was revealed relating to parents' ability to acquire information about post secondary education in their community. Results suggested that rural parents (23.3%) had more difficulty finding information compared to their urban counterparts (9.1%), (chi-square = 2.86, p<0.09).

When the groups were considered together, other information gained from the data analysis indicated that: parents were not involved in the selection of courses (83.5%); and 88.6% of youth stated that parents had confidence in their ability to take care of themselves. Students (87.5%) felt that parents were supportive of them pursuing a post-secondary education and 72.4% of youth were aware of the long and short term costs of pursuing a post-secondary education and 86% stated that length of program was not a factor in choosing to pursue a post-secondary education. Students (88.9%) also stated that the loss of communication with home was not a factor when choosing to pursue their education and 86.3% stated that they were aware of the potential problems they would face when living away from home. Also, 87% stated that their friends provided support and encouragement with respect to

plans to attend university.

Section III: Academic Readiness

Table 3 refers to the students academic readiness for pursuing a post - secondary program. There were two statistically significant findings at the $p<.05$ level of significance in this section.

The results indicated that 40.5% of rural students felt prepared to use the library independently while 61% of urban students felt prepared. The significant difference between the two groups suggests that urban students were more prepared to independently use the library (chi = 3.83, $p<0.05$).

The other statistically significant finding in this section deals with students' choice of program. The results indicated that urban students (75.9%) made their course choices based on the range of possible careers available to them while only 55.3% of rural students did the same (chi-square = 4.46, $p<0.04$).

When the groups were combined, it was found that 71.9% of students did not feel prepared to independently use computer resources, 62.2% felt prepared to write term papers and, 61.5% felt unprepared by their high school. It was also found that 60.9% felt encouraged by

Table 3 : Academic Readiness

Statement	Rural		Urban		Row Total		chi-square	P - value
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Prepared to use library independently								
Agree	15	40.5	36	61.0	51	53.1	3.83	0.05**
Disagree	22	59.5	23	39.0	45	46.9		
Prepared to independently use advisors								
Agree	20	51.3	33	56.9	53	54.6	0.29	0.59
Disagree	19	48.7	25	43.1	44	45.4		
Prepared to independently use computer resources								
Agree	8	20.5	19	33.3	27	28.1	1.88	0.17
Disagree	31	79.5	38	66.7	69	71.9		
Prepared to write term/research papers								
Agree	21	55.3	40	66.7	61	62.2	1.29	0.26
Disagree	17	44.7	20	33.3	37	37.8		
Found that High School had prepared me								
Agree	15	38.5	22	38.6	37	38.5	0	0.99
Disagree	24	61.5	35	61.4	59	61.5		
Previous teachers encouraged me								
Agree	24	61.5	32	60.4	56	60.9	0.01	0.91
Disagree	15	38.5	21	39.6	36	39.1		
Received first career info. while in high school								
Agree	27	67.5	32	54.2	59	59.6	1.74	0.19
Disagree	13	32.5	27	45.8	40	40.4		
School counsellor was accessible and helpful								
Agree	22	57.9	23	41.8	45	48.4	2.33	0.12
Disagree	16	42.1	32	58.2	48	51.6		
Others in my high school helped prepare me								
Agree	21	55.3	22	39.3	43	45.7	2.33	0.13
Disagree	17	44.7	34	60.7	51	54.3		

Table 3 : Academic Readiness

Statement	Rural		Urban		Row Total		Chi-square	P - value
	Freq.	/ %	Freq.	/ %	Freq.	/ %		
Considered a range of careers when making choices								
Agree	21	55.3	44	75.9	65	67.7	4.46	0.04**
Disagree	17	44.7	14	24.1	31	32.3		
Found career information through own efforts								
Agree	31	77.5	51	87.9	82	83.7	1.89	0.17
Disagree	9	22.5	7	12.1	16	16.3		
Others in my community helped me make choices								
Agree	14	35.0	18	31.6	32	33.0	0.12	0.72
Disagree	26	65.0	39	68.4	65	67.0		
Disabilities were a factor University choice								
Agree	2	18.2	3	25.0	5	21.7	0.15	0.69
Disagree	9	81.8	9	75.0	18	78.3		

Note: ** indicates significance using chi-square analysis at the p<.05 level.

For full questionnaire statements, refer to Appendix A

teachers to continue their education, 59.6% stated that they received

their first information about careers while in high school, and that 51.6%

disagreed that the high school counsellor was available to them. As well,

54.3% felt that others in their school did not help prepare them for making

choices at university, 83.7% of students stated that they found career

information through their own efforts, 67% disagreed that others in their

community helped prepare them for making choices at university, and

78.3% did not consider the provision of assistance for disabilities as a

factor when choosing to attend a particular university.

Other Findings

The other piece of important information to be reported was

gathered through the demographic section of the questionnaire. Data

analysis revealed that, of the students receiving career guidance (see

Appendix B, Table B.14), 34% were in the 75+ average range (see

Appendix B, Table B.5). This was the majority of students responding to

this question.

Another important finding which became apparent through the

collection and review of demographic data related to where students

found the majority of their career information. Students suggested the Internet was not a source of career information. None of the respondents selected the Internet as a source of career information. The majority of respondents picked either school counsellors (34%) or found information on their own (23%) about potential careers (see Appendix B, Table B.14).

Summary

Thus, while there were only a few significant results observed through the data analysis, several potentially important pieces of information were identified. These additional results will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

This was an exploratory study designed to determine the career related needs of rural and urban youth upon entering university and to determine if there are differences between the two groups. The study was based on the list of perceived career related needs identified in a study by Lehr and Jeffery (1993). Through the questionnaire process, data was gathered from Memorial University students who had completed at least their first year. The data analysis revealed few significant differences between the groups, but analysis did provide important information related to the actual needs of students. There are many shared needs that do not appear to be adequately addressed.

Questionnaire Based Conclusions

Section I of the questionnaire explored how prepared students felt they were to pursue a post-secondary education. The only significant result related to students knowledge about obtaining funding. Results indicated that rural students felt more informed. The assumption was that rural students would more likely need to avail of funding than urban

students in order to pursue their education. This does not mean, however, that urban students should be less informed about funding, for they may also require funding information. . The reason for urban students not being as informed may be related to their geographical location. Urban students tend to live within areas containing post-secondary institutions and may have ready access to funding information. This may be a reason for their response on the questionnaire for they may not be as in need of funding information. This is an area needing additional investigation as a lack of knowledge about funding can have a detrimental effect when attempting to pursue a post-secondary education.

Another difference was found relating to how well students were informed about the range of possible careers available to them. Results indicated that urban students felt they were less informed. This was an interesting result because rural students were expected to be less informed as a result of less exposure, in their home community, to a variety of careers. As well, it was presumed that career information would be less accessible in a rural setting. There are two possibilities as to why this occurred. The first possibility is that rural students are more informed because they live away from an urban setting and require the information

to make informed career decisions and hence, make a greater effort to learn about careers. The urban student, on the other hand, should have more ready access to career information and resources and thus be potentially more informed. Why they are less informed is an important question that has not been answered in this thesis.

A possible reason for the above finding could be that while urban students may have been aware of the wide range of possible careers by way of living in an urban setting, they may not have been directly exposed through the school and home environment. This may have been the reason for urban students indicating that their knowledge about actual careers was limited. Rural students, on the other hand, see a limited range of careers in their home communities, but believe that they are better informed than is actually the case. If this explanation is correct, then the rural student needs to be more informed about the very wide range of careers that exist before leaving high school. These possibilities need to be addressed in future research.

Another difference between the two groups relates to being prepared to move to a new community in order to pursue future education. Results demonstrated that rural students felt more prepared to

move to a new community. In this study, information revealed that rural students felt they did not have ready access to a post-secondary institution in their home community and, hence, would have to move in order to satisfy their need for further education. This may not be the case for urban dwellers because they are more likely to live close to a post-secondary institution and could, possibly, live at home.

Other information from Section I, revealed important information about the needs of students in general. Results indicated that cost was not a major factor in deciding to choose a particular post-secondary institution. Students appear to realize the need for higher education because they believe it will not only increase their knowledge about careers and the skills required to pursue certain careers, but it may increase their chances of obtaining future employment. Thus, the majority of students, in this thesis, who perceive the possibility of obtaining employment appear to be willing to put cost aside and invest in their futures.

The results also indicated that the majority of students felt prepared by people in their home community such as: parents, teachers, counsellors, and others to meet the challenges of university The study,

however, did not (specifically) identify which groups in the community contributed most to their preparation.

Findings also suggested that students know how to obtain accommodations while attending university. This could be related to information acquired through parents, teachers, counsellors, or others in their community. The questionnaire did not ask specific questions relating to who helped them find accommodations. Future research could look more specifically at this issue.

Section II of the questionnaire looked at the support provided by parents and friends. The data analysis revealed one statistically significant difference between the groups related to making new friends at university. It appears that more urban students experienced difficulties meeting new friends than rural students. Urban students are more likely to be attending university with many of their friends while the rural student might be expected to have fewer friends on campus who are from their home communities. Rural students, because they are assumed to have fewer friends due to leaving their home community, might be expected to seek out more friendships and hence, may encounter more difficulty. Results indicated that this was not the case. Results indicated

that urban students experienced more problems when attempting to create friendships. A reason for this could be that because urban students tend to remain with their previous friends, they make fewer "new" friends and hence, regard making friends more difficult. This topic could be investigated further in future research.

Other potentially relevant differences between the groups were revealed by applying the p <.10 level of significance. Results showed that students perceived rural parents to have more difficulty finding information on post-secondary institutions. While this was an expected finding, there were only 23.3% of students who indicated this situation (see Table 2). This suggests that the majority of parents, in both rural and urban communities, reportedly felt they had little difficulty finding information on post-secondary education. Thus, information on post-secondary education appears to be readily available for those who seek it.

When the group data was combined, more insights into the needs of rural and urban youth were revealed. The first few findings related to parents' perspectives on the pursuit of higher education by their children. It was found that the majority of parents, according to youth, had

confidence in youth's abilities to care for themselves while attending university and that parents were supportive of them pursuing a post-secondary education. This finding suggests that parents, in this study, are interested in the career pursuits of their children even though other researchers suggest that parents need to be more involved (Davey, 1993; Middleton and Lougheed, 1993). These other writers suggest that parents have not been involved in their children's education and should be more willing and interested if they expect their children to succeed. Such findings do not seem to be supported by this research. This study suggests that parents are involved and are supportive. The respondents in this study are already in university and it is possible that if a broader sample of persons completing high school was studied, findings similar to those cited might be supported.

Like parents, it seems that peers also provided support and encouragement to those who were planning to attend university. Questionnaire results indicate that students felt their friends provided encouragement and support for their pursuing a post-secondary education. These friends may understand the need for higher education and are willing to encourage their friends to pursue their education in

order to fulfil future goals.

Other interesting findings related to the awareness, by youth, of the overall cost of pursuing a post-secondary education and to how long the program would take to complete. The questionnaire collected information that suggested that youth did not worry about the cost of higher education or about how long it would take to complete. This finding suggests that these individuals knew about the costs and time involved but, as was mentioned earlier, they believed that having a post-secondary education would increase the likelihood of obtaining future employment. When they completed the program and gained employment, they would be able to repay the money borrowed for their education.

Another finding relates to the loss of direct contact with home if, and when, they have to leave their home community. Other researchers (Kenkel, 1985; and, Hektner, 1995) have stated that youth experience grief related to leaving their home community. This grief may indeed exist, but the young people of this study appeared to realize the importance of higher education and were willing to experience the loss of communication associated with leaving their home community in order to

pursue such an endeavor.

The last finding in this section relates to youths' awareness of potential problems they would face while living away from home. Results indicated that students were aware of potential problems and had considered them when they decided to pursue a post-secondary education. This suggests that students are willing to accept these problems while trying to prepare themselves for the future and while getting their education.

Section III of the questionnaire dealt with the academic readiness of students. This section was designed to gather information relating to how academically prepared students felt they were for pursuing a post-secondary education, and to discover who were the people directly involved in the preparation process. In this section, there were two statistically significant differences found between the groups. These findings related to how students' felt about their ability to use library resources and about making career choices.

Urban students felt more prepared to independently use library resources than rural students. This result may suggest that the urban student possibly had more access to library resources and hence, had

learned to use them more effectively. This finding was expected and may suggest that rural students have either less access to resources, or perhaps that few individuals, within the rural community, help students learn how to avail of possible resources within the library. Urban students, on the other hand, may have been exposed to a number of different libraries or could have experienced the university library on their own and through field trips. Such access may help familiarize them with the university resources.

Another significant finding related to students' choice of program. The results indicated that urban students felt they were aware of a number of potential careers and that this awareness helped them to make more informed course choices. This finding indicates that rural students felt they were less aware of potential careers and that they would thus experience difficulties when choosing courses. If students choose poorly, they may later find that they would have to complete extra courses in order to satisfy the requirements for a given program and career choice. This could increase the length of time required for completing their programs. This does not mean that they choose courses in an effort to make them more employable, but to better help them prepare for

pursuing a career that is of interest to them.

While there were no other statistically significant differences between the two groups, the data yielded interesting information about the needs of the combined groups. The data suggested that students did not feel adequately prepared by their high schools to pursue a post-secondary education. Respondents did not feel prepared to independently use computer resources nor did they feel that school personnel helped prepare them for making career and course choices at university. This result corresponds with literature cited earlier (Drier and Ciccone, 1988; Bazalgette, 1975; Payne, 1989) which suggested that, because students are unprepared, they have an increased likelihood of failure when pursuing higher education and careers. The findings in this present study may indicate similar outcomes in that the lack of preparedness perceived to exist by the students might contribute to potential difficulty when pursuing education or employment after high school.

These findings contradict others cited in this study (Charner, 1988; Mabry, 1989; and, Payne, 1989). The findings in this study suggest that students received support and preparation from their schools. They felt

prepared to write term papers, felt encouraged by their teachers to pursue a higher education and, received career information while in high school. The information revealed in this study indicates that students felt prepared to pursue a post-secondary education by their high schools and thus contradicts the findings of other authors. These contradictory findings may suggest that some schools are preparing students more adequately than others. It is also possible that there is a select population of students who receive more preparation.

Further review of the data suggests that the majority of students responding to this questionnaire did not feel that guidance counsellors were readily available to all students. The majority of students sought and found career information on their own. This finding raises questions about who is helping to prepare students and about why some students are receiving guidance while others feel unable to access information on careers and higher education.

The data revealed information related to home life, community and school achievement. This information was used to conduct further analysis that revealed one interesting finding relating to grades and the receiving of career information in high school.

Further data analysis revealed that the majority of subjects who stated that they received career guidance had average grades of 75 or greater. This suggests that those students with grades lower than 75 are either not receiving or not availing of career information. Sharpe and White (1993) found similar results relating to average grades and access to guidance services. Their results also indicated that students felt that parents and friends had more input into their future education than guidance counsellors. It would thus appear that students who may require the most assistance are those who are receiving the least. These are the students who may need extra support to help them succeed. The students with grades in the 75 and greater range may be more likely to succeed without help. Thus, it would be very useful to conduct further research into the activities of schools and students to determine which groups are accessing information; who is providing information; what is the quality of the information; and if there are differences between the groups with respect to accessing information.

Another finding related to other potential sources of career information in the community. While there were no significant urban/rural differences, students (67%) did state that no others in their community

were involved in their decision making with respect to course choices at university. This finding indicates that students had little input from mentors or others in the community and hence, there is a need for such individuals . Many researchers (Apostal & Bilden, 1991; Bazalgette, 1975; Trusty, Watts & Crawford, 1993) have stated the advantages of mentors in helping students make career decisions. Mentors can help inform students about possible problems and inform them about how to ease their transition into the post-secondary environment and the world of careers.

The last piece of information gathered from Section III of the questionnaire relates to disabilities. The data indicates that of the students surveyed, 78.3% did not consider the availability of resources for those with disabilities to be a factor in deciding to attend a particular university. This could indicate that there were few individuals who have disabilities or that for those with disabilities, the availability of resources did not matter.

Another finding relates to where students found career related information. The data (see appendix B, Table B.14) indicated that the majority of students (34%) received career related information from the

school counsellor. While this was an expected finding, it was expected that counsellors would play a larger role.

One finding that was surprising related to students using the Internet as a tool for learning about careers and finding career related information. The data indicated that no students in this study received career related information via the Internet. Considering the size and magnitude of information that is accessible through the Internet, and that all schools have the ability to access the internet, one wonders why students did not use the internet as a source of career information. This was an interesting finding that needs to be further researched. Not availing of current and potentially powerful sources of career information can limit a students' access to careers that are not visible within their home community.

Summary

Thus, there were many interesting findings that did not reflect the assumptions made about rural youth compared to urban youth. The results of this study did not confirm the idea that rural youth are less prepared than urban youth with respect to pursuing a post-secondary

education or pursuing a career. The results indicated, for the most part, that both groups felt they were similarly prepared and that they both have similar needs that are not being sufficiently satisfied by parents, teachers, and others. More research is needed to further investigate what schools provide to youth and to what extent students are being exposed to career information resources.

Such future research should be a priority because the youth of today are at risk of being underemployed and undereducated. The current rate of unemployment in Newfoundland is high and students need considerable support if they are to succeed. Mandatory school programs are needed for these will require all students to at least learn about the sources of information available to them when seeking careers after high school. These programs should alert students to a wide array of possible resources that would help them prepare for their futures. As well, those schools with less access to a diverse range of local careers should be encouraged to use resources such as the Internet or other available resources like those offered by their local Canada Employment Agency. By so doing, they can learn about many careers that are not practiced in their home communities.

This thesis demonstrates that students have career development needs which are not being met. These needs may be met more effectively if efforts were made to both better clarify the nature of the problem being faced by youths' and better clarify the reasons for the problem existing. If efforts were made to modify or develop better career counselling and student support services, then some of the problems encountered may be eliminated or overcome more easily. Again, more research aimed at problem clarification and service development is required.

Parents and teachers appear to be very important sources of information. Other research (Davey, 1993; Middleton & Lougheed, 1993) has suggested the same finding and stated that parents, teachers and others need to be more involved in the career decisions of youth. This current study reflects the findings of other researchers in that parents, teachers, and others involved in the lives of youth are very important sources of information and need to become more involved.

The overall findings of this study suggest that there is a great need for further research into the career-related needs of youth. This research should be directed at determining what students require to help them

successfully move into higher education and careers. The focus should be on the people in the lives of students who can best assist them in their learning and what sorts of programs need to be implemented in the schools and communities.

Implications of the Study

The results of this exploratory study have brought to light many of the academic and career related needs of youth as they leave high school and enter University. These needs are important and have to be understood by those in positions of influence such as parents, teachers, guidance counsellors, and policy makers.

The needs identified in this study reflect the necessity for more information on possible careers and accessing funding for post-secondary education. The importance of providing academic courses to make the transition easier and for exposure to mentors along with better access to technology and library resources are also identified. Many of these needs require improved and more specialized guidance services.

Students should be made aware of the challenges they will face when pursuing a post-secondary education and how they can face the

challenges with confidence. This can only be accomplished through awareness provided by those surrounding youth as they prepare for their future.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Future Research</div>

This study suggests that there are many areas that need to be pursued in future research. Specific questions arising from the current study relate to why rural students feel more aware of possible careers than do urban students. Questions also exist about:

a) who are the specific people involved in preparing youth for meeting the challenges of post-secondary education;

b) why did urban students find it more difficult to make friends at university;

c) how involved are parents in the career decisions of youth;

d) what is the true impact of having to leave home to pursue post-secondary education;

e) why did urban students feel more knowledgeable about using library resources;

f) whether students with higher averages receive more support and preparation from guidance counsellors;

g) how students are availing of current technologies like the internet to learn about possible careers; and

h) whether students with disabilities have a different perspective on their decision to attend a post-secondary institution.

It would also be beneficial to complete studies, similar to this current study, with the students from other post-secondary institutions. Such studies would both test the validity of the current results and highlight other needs not identified in this study.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire

University Readiness Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was developed for the purposes of gathering data to help determine how prepared students are upon entering first year university and to help determine what their needs were one they arrived. This information could be helpful in preparation of future students.

The information gathered from this questionnaire will be used for research purposes only. Strict confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. The data will be summarized in the author's thesis.

Please answer all questions on the answer sheet which is provided with this questionnaire. Filling out this questionnaire is voluntary and thus, students have the option to omit any questions they choose.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for filling out this questionnaire. Have a great summer.

Gregory D. Pearce
Master's Candidate
Department of Education

University Readiness Questionnaire

Please answer all questions on the provided answer sheet

1. Please indicate the number of completed University courses:

    a) 1 - 8 b) 9 - 17   c) 18 - 26
    d) 27 - 35   e) 36 - 44   f) 45 or more

2. Please indicate the name of your home community on the answer sheet.

3. Estimate the number of people living within a ten mile radius of your home community?

4. Please write in the year you completed or left high school?

5. What was your approximate average when you left High School (check one)

6. Please indicatewhich of the following were the reason(s) for your entry into University.(Please indicate as many as possible)

    a) Mature student   b) Scholarship   c) Family Tradition
    d) Grades   e) Future Employment f) Other (please specify)

7. Have you attended any other University?

8. Have you attended any other post-secondary training?

9. If you answered "yes" to question 9, was your training in a community with a population of over 25,000?

10. If known, please indicate the highest level of education attained by your mother.

    a) less than grade 8   b) some school   c) high school diploma
    d) college diploma   e) some university   f) university degree
    g) other (specify)

11. If known, please indicate the highest level of education   attained by your father.

    a) less than grade 8   b) some school   c) high school diploma
    d) college diplomae) some university   f) university degree g) other (specify)

12. Please estimate the category which best describes the total yearly income in your household.

   a) 0 - 15,000   b) 15,000 - 25,000   c) 25,000 - 40,000   d) 40,000 - 55,000
   e) 55,000 - 70,000   f) 70,000 +

13. Is there a college or other form of post secondary training available in or close to your community (i.e. within 30-40 km)?

14. Which of the following was the principal place you received information on this university

   a) Internet,   b) Counsellor   c) Peers   d) Self Search
   e) Media   f) Family   g) Other (please specify)

15. Before entering University, I met with representatives from one or more colleges/universities.

16. Which of the following best describes the way you are paying for your education?

   a) Student/Personal Loans   b) Parental Support   c) Part or Full Time job
   d) Previous Saving/personal funds   e) Scholarships or bursaries

17. How many hours do you work per week?

   a) <5   b) 6 - 10   c) 11 - 15   d) 16 - 25   e) 26 or more
   f) not employed

On a scale of 1 to 5 rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable

18. Before entering University, I felt well informed about the range of possible careers available to me?

19. Affordability/cost was an important factor in making my choice to attend a particular post secondary institution.

20. Family tradition was an important factor in making my choice to attend a particular post secondary institution.

21. Proximity to home was an important factor in making my choice to attend a particular post secondary institution.

22. Availability of a particular program(s) was an important factor in making my choice to attend a particular post secondary institution.

23. The fact that my friends were attending a particular institution was an important factor in making my choice to attend a particular post secondary institution.

24. The possibility of future employment was an important factor in making my choice to attend a particular post secondary institution.

25. My career choice was influenced by directly observing people pursuing/working in that career.

26. I was aware of the sources of funding (i.e. grants, loans, scholarships) available to help me further my education.

27. I knew how to go about getting funding for a post secondary education.

28. I was aware of the challenges (i.e. time management, increased study requirements) I would face upon entering university.

29. I was prepared for the move to a new community to further my education.

30. I knew how to find suitable accommodations while attending university.

Parental and Peer Support

31. My parents knowledge of where I would have to move in order to finish my education helped prepare me for living there.

32. My parents assisted in my selection of university courses.

33. My parents helped me anticipate possible problems and experiences that I might have like the size of the campus and the possible loneliness.

34. My parents found it difficult or impossible to get information about University from our community

35. My parents helped me to understand how post-secondary and high school education is different.

36. My parents had confidence in my ability to care for myself.

37. I feel that my parents were supportive of my obtaining more education

38. I had realistic knowledge about the long and short term costs (tuition, books, and supplies) of my education

39. I chose my program based on the length of time it would take to complete.

40. I understood that if I had to move away to study, it could lessen the amount of communication with parents and friends back home.

41. I experienced difficulties making new friends/forming new relationships when I began attending university.

42. I anticipated some problems in adjusting to living on my own.

43. My friends provided me with encouragement and support with respect to my plans to attend university.

Academic Readiness

44. When starting university, I felt prepared to independently use the library.

45. When starting university, I felt prepared to independently use information from advisors/consultants.

46. When starting university, I felt prepared to independently use the computerized resources.

47. On entering university, I found that I was able to write term/research papers well enough to successfully complete required course work.

48. On entering university, I found that my high school program had adequately prepared me to pursue a post secondary education.

49. My previous teachers (in high school) encouraged my choice of a university education.

50. I first received considerable information on career options (i.e. brochures, calendars) while in high school.

51. My school counsellor was accessible and gave me considerable advice and help with respect to career options.

52. I considered a wide range of careers in making my course choices.

53. I was able to find career information through my own efforts.

54. Others in my school, besides my school counsellor, helped prepare me for making choices about university.

55. Others in my community, outside my school, helped prepare me for making choices about university.

56. I decided to attend this University because it provided services related to my disability

**Appendix B
Demographic Data**

Table B.1
University Courses Completed

Ranges	Frequency	%
1 - 8	6	5.9
9 - 17	27	26.7
18 - 26	25	24.8
27 - 35	24	23.8
36 - 44	11	10.9
45 or more	8	7.9
	N = 101	Total = 100%

Table B.2
Home Community

Place of Residence	Frequency	Percent
Urban	61	60.4
Rural	40	39.6
	N = 101	Total = 100%

Table B.3
People in 10 Mile Radius

Population Size	Frequency	Percent
0 - 5000	38	45.5
> than 5000	46	54.5
	N = 84	Total = 100%

Table B.4
Year Completed or Left High School

Year	Frequency	Percent
1974 - 1985	9	9.2
1986 - 1990	12	12.3
1991 - 1995	78	78.5
	N = 99	Total = 100%

Table 8.5
Approximate average when left high school

Average	Frequency	Percent
<60	2	2
60 - 65	4	4
65 - 75	21	21
75 - 85	40	40
85+	33	33
	N = 100	Total = 100%

Table 8.6
Indicate the reason(s) for entering University

Reason	Frequency	Percent
Mature Student	14	13.9
Scholarship	6	5.9
Family Tradition	8	7.9
Grades	32	31.7
Future Employment	83	83
Other	9	8.9
	N = 101	Total = 100%

Table 8.7
Attended Any Other University

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	14.9
No	86	85.1
	N = 101	Total = 100%

Table 8.8
Attended Any Other Post Secondary Institution

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	19	19.2
No	80	80.8
	N = 99	Total = 100%

Table B.9

If yes to Q8, was post secondary in area of >25000 people?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	71.4
No	6	28.6
	N = 21	Total = 100%

Table B.10

Highest level of education attained by mother

Level	Frequency	Percent
< Grade 8	6	6.2
Some School	21	21.6
High School Diploma	30	30.9
College diploma	10	10.3
Some University	8	8.2
University Degree	13	13.4
Other	9	9.3
	N = 97	Total = 100%

Table B.11

Highest level of education attained by father

Level	Frequency	Percent
< Grade 8	12	12.2
Some School	20	20.4
High School Diploma	27	27.6
College diploma	9	9.2
Some University	4	4.1
University Degree	21	21.4
Other	5	5.1
	N = 98	Total = 100%

Table B.12
Household yearly income

Level of income	Frequency	Percent
0 - 15000	8	8.3
15000 - 25000	17	17.7
25000 - 40000	34	35.4
40000 - 55000	13	13.5
55000 - 70000	13	13.5
70000+	11	11.5
	N = 96	Total = 100%

Table B.13
Is there a college or post secondary in or near community?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	80	81.6
No	18	18.4
	N = 98	Total = 100%

Table B.14
Principal place where recieved University info.

Place	Frequency	Percent
Internet	0	0
Counsellor	34	34
Peers	18	18
Self Search	23	23
Media	1	1
Family	15	15
Other	9	9
	N = 100	Total = 100%

Table B.15
Did you meet college/Univ. reps before entering University?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	57	56.4
No	44	43.6
	N = 101	Total = 100%

Table B.16
How are you paying for your education?

Method	Frequency	Percent
Student/Personal Loans	72	72
Parental Support	15	15
Part/Full Time job	5	5
Savings/Personal Funds	4	4
Scholarships/Bursaries	3	4
	N = 99	Total = 100%

Table B.17
How many hours do you work per week?

Hours Worked	Frequency	Percent
<5	9	9.2
6 - 10	8	8.2
11 - 15	7	7.1
16 - 25	13	13.3
26 or more	5	5.1
Not Employed	56	57.1
	N = 98	Total = 100%