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Student Evaluation of Universities

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STUDENT EVALUATION OF UNIVERSITIES

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

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DEDICATION

To my parents and my partner in marriage, Marty Covey

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

The evaluation of higher education has been the subject of many recent studies.[1] With few exceptions, student input into these studies has been minimal, if at all present. What has arisen out of these evaluation studies is a need for student input, particularly in the subject area of rating universities. This study was an attempt to obtain needed information about student evaluation and ranking of universities. Students were viewed as the primary consumers of university products and thus their perceptions of ratings and quality of their university and other universities was important. Because of the increasing competitiveness for quality students by universities and the increasing concern of students for quality education, the perceived rating of universities and their components may become increasingly important for students, universities, and future employers. If current enrollments produce more graduates than the labor market can absorb, then what may matter is not the degree but where the degree was obtained. The rating of schools may thus become increasingly important to graduates seeking admission into the labor market. Higher education policies may in the future be directly

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[1] For recent examples of studies see Gourman (1967); Trow (1972); Roose and Andersen (1970); and Margulies and Blau (1973).

related or influenced by studies of rating. This study makes the assumption that student rating and professional rating are becoming increasingly important in the area of higher education. This study will investigate student perspectives on rating (evaluation) and some possible factors which might influence these perspectives.

Problems Facing Higher Education

There are several problems facing higher education at present. Many of these problems can be related directly to the subject matter of this research. The following problems that will be mentioned are by no means meant to be exhaustive of all of the problems facing higher education. The problems stated however do seem to be those which are related to this research, apply to higher education in a general sense, and are considered by many experts to be of great importance. The problems are treated only in a general sense here because each is of a complexity which would expand far beyond the scope of this research. The problems are divided into sub-areas, all of which are related to each other in various ways.

Financial Problems

The financial problems facing higher education today are immense. They all seem to have two things in common. One is that many experts agree that they exist. Secondly, unless drastic changes occur, they will worsen in the future. Earl Cheit's The New Depression in Higher Education provides a systematic study of the financial aspects and difficulties of current higher education. Cheit made an attempt to determine the extent of financial difficulty in American higher education. Cheit used the following as his definitions of degrees

of financial difficulty:

> "An institution is judged in financial difficulty if its current financial condition results in a loss of services that are regarded as a part of its program or a loss of quality. An institution is classified as headed for financial trouble if, at the time of the study, it has been able to meet current responsibilities but either can not ensure that it can much longer meet current program standards or can not plan support for evolving program growth. Those colleges and universities which can meet their current program standards, and can with some assurance plan program growth are classified not in financial trouble." (Cheit, 1971: 37)

Cheit based his findings on 41 campuses in 21 states. Using the previous classification system, Cheit determined that 71 percent (29) of the institutions were either headed for financial trouble or already had financial difficulties (Cheit, 1971: viii). Cheit concluded that all types of institutions are affected by financial problems. Cheit also found that the "Direction of the academy will in the next decade be influenced more by its financial situation than any other" (1971: 18). The importance of the Cheit study is that it was a major effort to point out current financial difficulties and those which lie ahead. It established preliminary findings as to the extent of the financial crises of higher education. Cheit's study serves to point out the existence of financial problems of higher education. The next step is to look at some of the contributing factors to these financial problems.

One contributing factor to the financial difficulties of higher education is that of government support. Higher education, since the end of World War II, had until recently experienced a gradual increase in federal and state support as a whole. Evidence suggests that governmental support will either remain constant or

will decrease. Glenny (1973: 5) suggests that the proportion of the Gross National Product going to higher education will not continue to increase, particularly at the state level. Thus, it appears that higher education may be facing a decline in much needed governmental support.

Other governmental policies, at the federal level, such as the student aid programs are having an effect on colleges and universities, but in recent years has shifted more to the trade and technical schools. These policies have a tendency to redistribute students away from college-type institutions.

Expenditures of schools appear to be on the increase,[2] factors which contribute to the increases of expenditures and costs for higher education. Economic recession and/or inflation have increased the costs for higher education which in turn raises costs to students for education. Such inflationary trends help put higher education out of reach for many students economically. Inflationary costs also raise the overhead for school functioning. Inflationary costs are going up for schools in the face of decreased governmental support for college-type schools. College and university budgets are often cut by the government as inflationary reduction measures. Another bit of evidence which demonstrates the effects of inflation on higher education is the expenditures per student. According to Cheit, from 1959-60 to 1969-70, the expenditures per student increased an average of 8.1 percent per year (1971: 104). Besides the effects of inflation, faculty salaries have increased,

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[2]See Mayhew and Brown for further development (1970: 167).

institutional growth has occured, campus disturbances have made some legislators apprehensive of support to higher education, and several other economic factors seem to be adding to the financial difficulties of schools.

Population Factors

The "Post War Baby Boom", as it is labeled, is essentially over. Evidence suggests that the pool of youth from which college students are drawn appears to be decreasing. These decreases in population will probably be reflected in decreased attendance at colleges and universities. Decreasing birth rates may have a tremendous influence on college attendance rates. Glenny (1971) contends that population trends will have a long run effect on higher education in America.

The Rise of Alternative Post Secondary Education

Community and technical schools are experiencing rapid growth. Student enrollment at these schools is increasing. Glenny notes that "In the past two years, 85 percent of all the increase in the number of first time students entered the community colleges" (1973: 7). Assuming that the community colleges and technical schools are in competition with college and universities for students, one can deduce that the increases in these schools has a negative effect on college and university enrollments, though four year colleges and universities are still the largest degree granting institutions of post secondary education. As a whole, there is an increasing shift to junior (community) colleges (Stern, 1970: 168). Additional alternatives of correspondence schools and university without walls are other programs that may be viewed as replacing

traditional college type educations.[3]

Labor and Higher Education

Traditionally in American society, education has been viewed as a means of social mobility (Havighurst and Neugarten, 1967: 54). The educational system in America is regarded by many to be one of the main avenues for upward social mobility. Though unsupported, the researcher would contend that most students further their education with some particular occupation in mind. In short, students major in mathematics so they can be a mathematician when they graduate, or psychology so they may become a psychologist. They attend school with an occupation in mind. This contention does not imply occupational motives to all students in higher education, but does suggest that many students have occupationally related motives for attending schools. Inherrent in this idea is the belief that as long as education provides a workable means to occupational ends, students will continue to attend schools. If, on the other hand, degrees become worthless in the occupational attainment process, college enrollments may drop sharply.

The level of educational attainment and its relationship to the occupational structure has been the subject of inquiry by many experts in the field.[4] As a long-term trend, the level of educational attainment has been a critical factor in determining the level of occupational attainment for many members of society. Whether this

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[3]The state university system in Nebraska has a correspondence program of higher education entitled SUN--State University of Nebraska.

[4]For a good example of the treatment of educational attainment and occupation see Anderson and Foster (1964).

continues to remain the same is subject to debate. There are several possibilities in terms of the current and future education-occupation controversy. The following are some ideas shared between experts in the area and the researcher. The scheme utilized is an abstraction from the researcher's conceptualization of the problem. The scheme should be viewed as a simplistic tool to aid in understanding the problem at hand.

The scheme used compares college enrollment levels with labor demands for college educated graduates. All of the possibilities have one thing in common and that is that problems are inherrent with every possibility. In short, each possibility will create problems for higher education and these problems will vary in severity. It is important to note that these possibilities are meant to be applied to future developments.

One possibility is that college enrollments will decrease. This contention is supported by forecasts of population growth. As the population decreases, the demand for higher education may also decrease.[5] Thus, higher educational institutions may face increased competition for necessary student enrollments.

If enrollments decrease and labor demand for college graduates also decreases, then problems, from the schools perspective, may have drastic effects. With enrollment declines would come declines in inputs such as financial and social resources. Decreases in inputs into schools would mean schools would have to experience cut-backs in services and operations. In light of decreased enrollments, if the

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[5]For further development see Glenny (1973)

labor demand increased, then student enrollments would probably increase to meet the demands of the occupational structure. At this time any drop in enrollment would probably bring levels of educational attainment more in line with occupational demand.

A second major possibility is that enrollments will remain constant. There are approximately 9.2 million college students at present (Margulies and Blau, 1973: 21). Enrollment figures are at an all time high level. The level of educational attainment for society as a whole, and for groups, has risen, though gaps between the educated and poorly educated seem to be widening (Jencks and Riesman, 1968: 79). The higher levels of attainment and the current high enrollment numbers must be viewed in light of current labor conditions.

Given the current high enrollment figures and labor demands, there appears to be an overproduction of higher educational degrees in many fields. Overproduction is defined here as more graduates than jobs available in their respective fields. A Bachelor's degree in several fields does not guarantee admission into the occupational structure as it once did. There is simply an overproduction of graduates in many areas. The nearest estimates of degrees earned for the 1972-73 school year were 980,800 Bachelor's and first professional degrees, 250,000 Master's, and 37,700 Doctor's degrees (Treem, 1972: 2). It is difficult to imagine that labor demands for college graduates will approximate the above mentioned figures. Evidence in support of students' concern for the labor market is observed in the rise of technological school enrollments which are currently offering training that is more in tune with the labor

demands of society.

If enrollments remain at the same level but labor demands for graduates decrease, then conditions may worsen and competition for jobs among college graduates may increase in severity. Then, where one attends school may become an increasingly important factor in determining access to the labor market. If enrollments remain the same but demand for graduates goes up, then more graduates may be able to find positions and possibly the students' demand for education will also increase.

Current predictions that only 2 out of 10 jobs in the future will require a college degree education are observed by Farber (1970). Farber indicates, in reference to a Bureau of Labor Statics study that, "More remarkable is BLS's prediction that eight out of ten jobs to be filled in the seventies will be open to young people without college degrees. Most favored, the report adds, will be people with some vocational training beyond high school" (Farber, 1970: 22). Thus, the demand for college graduates, given the current conditions, shows little signs of improving.

The third possibility is that enrollments may increase. If enrollments increase then the number of graduates will also increase. The projected earned degrees in higher education for the year 1980-81 is 1,679,400 as contrasted to a recent approximation of 1,268,500 for 1972-73 (Treem, 1972: 2). The net increase between the two estimates is 410,900 graduates. If enrollments increase and demand increases, then higher education will continue to expand with less difficulty than any other of the possibilities. If

enrollment increases but the labor demands decrease, then competition for jobs by college graduates will be at its most competitive state. Graduation will not guarantee admission into the labor market, but other factors may become increasingly important. Eventually, demand for education would probably decrease to a level which would approximate labor demands.

An excellent summary of college graduates and predicted labor conditions is the Carnegie Commission's College Graduates and Jobs (1973). The Commission's report contends that the labor market for college graduates is a serious concern of higher education and will continue to be so. The report refers to three studies, all of which portray an overproduction of college graduates in the future. In its entirety, the report paints a dismal picture of the college graduate - labor market situation. The report also points out some social tensions that might be generated. Given any of the possibilities of enrollment and labor conditions, one thing is clear; that is major problems are certain to evolve for higher education, college graduates and the labor market.

Summary of Problems

Major problems facing higher education were described in brief in the previous sections. The financial difficulties facing higher education are evident. Increased expenditures, inflation and many other economic factors contribute to the financial problems of higher education. Cheit's findings seem to support the existence of such problems in higher education. Problems stemming from population run along the basic line of decreased enrollments due to decreases

in college age individuals. The rise of alternative education to college may be a major factor, for community and technological schools are displaying increased enrollments, which in some instances draw students from potential college attendance. The labor market and higher education are facing some difficulties unless major changes occur. These, and other factors, are contributing to the decline of higher education. These factors are summed by O'Brian with his list:

> a) the segment of the population resulting from the baby boom of post World War II is past college age; b) economic recession or inflation have led students and their families to alter plans for college; c) drug usuage and/or protest riots on campuses have lead student and their families to avoid higher education; d) increasing earnings stemming from a college education no longer compensate for the cost of the education; e) increased importance is being attached to vocational-technical schools, often tuition free; g) more young people desire to travel and gain experience before beginning or resuming higher education, and so on. (O'Brian, 1973: 22)

It would be foolhardy to try and predict what factors will be present or what may be the status of higher education in the future. One can explore some of the possibilities, which was attempted here. Some of the possibilities described here are mutually supportive and others are in conflict. It is fairly certain that pressures will be exerted on higher education many of which may stem from the mentioned problems. The relationship of these problems to this study are presented in the following paragraphs. One must legitimately ask how these problems relate to the objectives of this study.

Importance of Study

The importance of the study is stated in this section.

Many of the problems facing higher education at present will set the boundaries of problems in the future.

Whereas it is beyond the means and scope of this study to predict concrete occurrences in the future of higher education, it may be of some value to point out some of the relationships between this study and possible future developments. By attempting such a task, the importance of this study may be made evident.

The researcher would contend, as would O'Brian (1973), that higher education is moving from a seller's market to a buyer's market. Higher education had recently been in a seller's market which means that the demand for higher education exceeded the supply of higher education. Thus, many schools were flooded with applicants and enrollments increased. Because of some of the mentioned problems facing higher education, the demand for higher education is moving toward a point in which the supply exceeds the demand. In the case of the buyer's market, the supply exceeds the demand. In operational terms there is an abundance of educational services being offered to a decreased demand for college-type education. If enrollments decline in a buyer's market, then it is logical to conclude that potential students will have more schools to choose from. This is more true in a buyer's market than in a seller's. One overall possible effect of this process may be what is termed, a "Marketing of Higher Education", in that schools will be forced to sell their product (services) to prospective students. If such marketing occurs, then

promotional tactics utilized by schools may be of great importance. The quality of education offered may be a central selling point of schools attempting to recruit students. The quality of education is closely associated with student perceptions of quality and particularly ranking and evaluation. Hence, a major aspect of this study is the importance of student ranking and evaluation. The following paragraphs relate the marketing of higher education to this study.

If competition for students increases among colleges and universities, then what students consider to be important in selecting a school will be of primary importance to such schools. Assuming that the selection process by students involves some form of evaluation, the criteria students use will be of importance to higher education. The basis of evaluation by students is viewed as constituting the criteria on which they base their selection. It is a major objective of this study, and of importance to higher education, to determine what criteria students use in evaluating a school. Certainly such criteria as cost and location are important, but evaluative processes of other characteristics of schools are also important to students. What governments, private concerns, communities, interest groups, etc. consider important criteria may be of secondary importance to what students use as criteria. This study attempts to find out what some of the student criteria might be. Such findings might be of importance to schools seeking aid in the student recruitment process. Given such data, and an increasing awareness of student needs by people in positions to execute change, a realignment of school policy may be more feasible.

Closely associated with the criteria that students use are the priorities they might attach to such criteria, refered to here as components of a university. The priority of components is the next logical question stemming out of the criteria question. Universities usually consist of basic components such as libraries, faculty, facilities, etc. The researcher is not convinced that university priorities are in line with student priorities. There is a need to determine what the priorities of students are. The importance of determining student priorities is twofold. First, there is a need to determine what are the priorities of students. Higher education as a field, knows very little about what students think is important. Second, once priorities are established, the groundwork for the reallocation of resources is present. Administrations would have a priority basis from which to redirect resources more in tune with the students' priorities. Reallocating resources to components which are at a high level of priority for students would possibly aid in the recruitment of other students. Schools could point to their development of high student priority components. For example, if good libraries are a high student priority item, then resources could be directed to improving the library and thus improving the chances of student recruitment. This would apply more to high priority components than low priority items. Since students are at present the primary consumers of educational services, the criteria and priorities they utilize may be of prime importance. Thus, the importance of obtaining some initial data on student priorities is evident.

A major item of importance is that of student rating of

universities and university components. There is a need to determine how students evaluate universities and their components. Closely tied to this rating question is the question of the ability of students to evaluate. Of importance is the establishment of preliminary findings on this subject area. The overall rank of a university and its components may provide an overall indication of the student's perception of school quality. This perception of school quality may be an important factor in determining whether a current student would recommend a school to a prospective student, would attend again, will remain in school and a host of other things. Several items might be influenced by the student's rating ability and perception of rating of schools and school components. Such rating by students and prospective students may become increasingly important in the future selection of schools.

Basic differences between professionals' perspectives and those of students are believed to exist in higher education. An objective of this study is to compare and contrast the two differing methods of evaluation. It is believed that higher education has been geared more to professional standards than student standards. By establishing that the systems of evaluation differ, insight into the nature of students, university products and higher education might be gained. In a general sense, this objective of comparing the two perspectives of evaluation is viewed as being important.

The rating of schools may become increasingly important in the labor market. Any information concerning professional and student ratings may prove to be useful. The researcher is unaware of any

synthesis of rating studies in order to determine the degree of commonality between rating systems. This study is important then, in that a section is devoted to relating professional ratings to one another to find common points. By finding common points, the student and prospective student may gain insight into how the professionals perceive schools. The assumption made by many employers within the university system and outside of it is that better schools produce better graduates. The higher the rank (quality) of a school, the higher the ability of the graduates it produces. Whether this is true or not is not the point. The point is that schools are perceived as differing in quality and in the quality of graduates they produce. For example, a B.A. from Harvard is viewed by many as worth more than a B.A. from Hooterville A. and M.[6] Acknowledging that perceived differences exist is important, but even more important may be differences perceived in the future. Given some of the possible problems facing higher education in the future, what may matter is not certification, but where the degree was obtained.

It would be difficult to point out all of the possible aspects of this study which might contribute to its importance. The researcher would contend that as the social context changes in some of the possible directions described in the problems section of this study, the importance of evaluation and ranking studies will increase for all parties concerned.

One important aspect of this study is that given the present state of affairs in evaluation and ranking, it is very seldom, if at

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[6]Hooterville A. and M. is not a real school.

all, that students are asked for input. There is little student input despite the fact that students are a necessary condition for higher education. Students are also the major consumers of higher educational services. They represent a crucial input into higher education and are necessary if higher education is to survive. Research often fails to acknowledge students and their potential contribution into the betterment of higher education. In light of this neglect of students, this study seeks to obtain some student input into the evaluation and ranking of schools and school components.

The final point to be made about the importance of the study is that it may serve as a basis for further research. It may possibly serve as a spark to further investigations into the subject matter of student evaluation and ranking. By pointing out the importance of the topic area and some preliminary findings, such a task of promoting future research may be accomplished.

Students

This section is a general treatment of students in relationship to this study. It attempts to point out some of the characteristics of students, student selection of schools, recruitment of students and student assessments of schools. All of these processes are viewed as being related to student's evaluation (rating) of schools and school components. Many of the generalizations in these sections apply to both prospective students and the students themselves. Since students and student evaluation of schools and school components are central questions in this study, it was thought to be necessary to include some background information on students. The treatment will be brief.

Several attempts have been made to define and characterize the American student. A workable definition of student is an individual who is engaged in or given to study. The students we are concerned with in this study are those enrolled in colleges and universities. Many view the students' experiences at schools as a socialization process falling between adolescence on one hand and full adulthood on the other (Parsons and Platt, 1973: 164). Others stress the effort of students to obtain certification. Some view students from a cultural perspective. Whatever definition or emphasis one selects, it is probably to some degree useful.[7] Of particular interest to this study are the following processes associated with students and prospective students.

Student Selection of Schools

With the market for higher education moving toward a buyer's market the process of selecting schools that prospective students use may be of extreme importance to colleges and universities. Student selection of schools is the outcome of several factors;[8] selection of schools is not necessarily a rational process for students. Often, lack of information, values, prestige, misinterpretation of information, false information, and other processes interfere with the student selection process. Feldman and Newcomb cite various studies which

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[7]One of the most representative works on students and student behavior containing a summary of several decades of research is Feldman and Newcomb's The Impact of College on Students (1969). The emphasis of their work is on the "Impact" of college on students.

[8]See Feldman and Newcomb (1969: 110-121) for a summary of recent findings on school selection by students.

support this contention (1969: 112).[9]

In describing student selection of schools one must ask: What do students think is important? Harris suggests that students place the greatest emphasis on the "Quality of training offered, while the cost of education seems to be the second most important consideration" (1972: 48). Quality, as mentioned, is a somewhat abstract concept and thus is probably used here as meaning several things. Others conceptualize the subject into larger categories. Douvan and Kaye (1962) contend that two factors influence individuals in selecting and appraising a school, one of which is individual standards and the other is sources of influence such as parents, counselors, and the like. It is reasonably safe to conclude that several factors probably play a role in college selection.

Selection of schools is viewed by the researcher as being increasingly important in the future. If labor demands are as low as some predict them to be in the future, then life chances will largely be dependent upon getting a good education. A good education, in turn, depends on the student's selecting a good school. Witness the degree of inbreeding in the top twenty institutions of higher education in this country. The selection process may prove to be crucial for individual careers as well as a critical variable in determining the survival of schools in the coming buyer's market. The student selection process is only half the process. The recruitment of students constitutes the other half, which is the next subject undertaken.

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[9]Jencks and Riesman typify student selection processes with their statement, "We can only conclude that students are like shoppers trying to decide between two makes of automobile about which they really know nothing." (1968: 140).

Recruitment of Students

The recruitment of students has been a problem facing many schools for several years. Every school must set admission standards, fees, and other school policies at levels which guarantee a sufficient flow of desirable applicants into their particular institution. The existence of a college or university is dependent upon the presence of a sufficient number of students enrolled. If enrollments drop below sufficient levels, then schools may face a decline in support from outside contributors such as legislatures, communities and business. Extremely low enrollments would eventually force many schools to close. It is of importance then for schools to create a situation in which their products and services are in demand by students and prospective students. The means by which this is accomplished is often refered to as the process of recruitment. The importance of recruitment should not be underestimated, particularly in the highly competitive market for students that many schools find themselves in. Concerning the competition for students, Ben-David states, "Next to solicitation of community support, the competition for students has been the most important determinant of the conduct of American institutions of higher education" (1972: 35). Most experts would probably agree that the recruitment of students has had some degree of influence on the shaping of higher education. If market conditions worsen, then what students consider important may increase in overall importance.

The selection and recruitment processes are related. Students go through the selection process to choose schools, and schools

provide literature in order to aid students in their selection process. The literature that schools provide can be viewed as a form of recruitment. There are three major sources of information which prospective students may use to select a school or that schools may use to recruit students.

One source of information is the general guide books (Fine 1973 and Lovejoy 1970). Guide books serve as descriptive surveys of higher education institutions. Several schools are usually briefly described in short sections. Guidelines are usually provided to aid the student in selecting the best possible school. Examples of this form of information available to those selecting a college are found in chapter II of this study.

A second source of literature made available to prospective students is the professional rating articles. In these articles ratings are presented based on some measurement of quality. In these studies schools and schools' characteristics are subject to some form of evaluation. Most representative of this form of literature are Gourman (1968) and Astin (1970). References to these studies and others are included in chapter II of the study. Each of this type provide a rating from which the student may base his/her selection of schools.

A third, and probably most widely used source of literature, is the college and university catalogs that schools provide. These catalogs provide a general description of the schools and its characteristics. Besides presenting facts about the school, the catalogs also provide information which might be classified as idealistic

and contain very little information from which students can make evaluations and selections. McCracken describes college catalogs as being uninformative (1972: 53). This lack of information and idealism is evident in many catalogs (McCracken, 1972). To illustrate these points, the researcher quotes a section from the Undergraduate Catalog for U.N.O. The section is entitled, "The University at a Glance".

> ...To earn a living
> and live a cultured life
> Not as two processes
> But as one ...
>
> The primary purposes of the University of Nebraska at Omaha are first, to maintain a faculty of dynamic teacher-scholars of high character and competence who will inspire able and willing students to achieve to the maximum of their abilities; and second, to provide an environment conducive to learning of the highest order. (Undergraduate Catalog, 1974: 2)

It would be difficult to deny the subjective and idealistic nature of this section. The terms "...highest order", "...higher character" and "...richer fuller life", are all basically value ladden statements. The point of including this section is to suggest that quite often little information is present which would help prospective students evaluate and select a school.

College catalogs are also similar in content to each other; they provide little basis from which comparisons can be made. They may often be deceptive, providing information that is incorrect.[10]

The reason for describing some of the literature available to prospective students is that much insight may be gained into the

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[10]Stern (1970) describes what he calls the "Freshman Myth" as the product of the poorly informed student. The "Freshman Myth" is viewed by Stern as a highly idealistic view of schools that incoming students have. Stern makes an interesting point that only one group on campus shares the "Freshman Myth", and that is the administration.

nature of school selection and evaluation by observing some of the sources of information from which students make assessments and selections. Though literature is not the only source of information, it is an important source and will continue to be so. The researcher would put forth the notion that literature may increase in importance as labor conditions worsen and students become more concerned about the quality of education offered at schools.

Student Assessment of Higher Education

Students and potential students have always assessed the quality of the higher education they have received. They have used various ways of assessing and displaying their evaluations. Violence, boycott, petitions and other means represent some of the ways students have assessed their education. Pre-Medieval assessments were based on fees paid directly to lecturers. Medieval assessments were based, in some instances, on the size of enrollments in the lectures. If enrollments were too small, faculty members were fired. Harclerod suggests that three major types of assessment have existed in the colleges and universities in the Western World for nine centuries: "First teachers have assessed students; second Western society has assessed its higher educational institutions; and, third, students have assessed their teachers and their institutions" (Harclerod and Cornell, 1971: 3). The importance of this statement is that it acknowledges a long trend of student assessment of higher education.

Harclerod concludes that, "Undoubtedly, students will continue their drive to participate, in evaluating three areas: first, the curriculum for its relevance, second, the administration for its

willingness to hear all sides of questions and give careful consideration to student ideas, and third, faculty assessment, both in the relevance of material taught and the quality and efficiency of the instructional methods used" (Harclerod and Cornell, 1971: 6). It is apparent from the literature on the subject that students have always assessed higher education and will probably continue to do so in the future.

Quality and Prestige

Quality

Quality is an ambiguous term to define when referring to the evaluation of higher education. Some experts view it as something which can be objectively measured. Others refer to quality as a subjective assessment. "Quality is", to Cartter (1966: 4), "an attribute, not easily subjected to measurement." Others view quality as a simple act of measurement, like for example counting the number of Ph.D.'s on the faculty.[11] Stern (1970: 169) associates quality with range of a school's offerings. Others might stress an institution's specialization in particular fields. The researcher would contend that quality is difficult to determine because there is no clear definition of what the term quality means. The researcher would contend that several factors might contribute to institutional quality; that such factors may be both subjective and objective in nature; and that the perception of quality is more important than the actual existence of quality.

Three final points about quality are necessary. First, knowledge

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[11] Reece McGee contends that students' success in past graduate work is an objective and quantitative measure of institutional quality (1971: 163).

of an institution's quality may be viewed as desirable. For example, Cartter states: "Just as consumer knowledge and honest advertising are requisite if a competitive economy is to work satisfactorily, so an improved knowledge of opportunities and of quality is desirable if a diverse educational system is to work effectively", (1966: 3). The point Cartter is making is that knowledge of various degrees of quality is desirable when placing students in the best educational slots available to them.

A second point is that the effects of quality or perceived quality on higher education are believed to be real. Several experts agree that degrees from "High Quality" schools are perceived as being worth more than equivalent degrees from "Lesser" institutions (Cartter, 1966: 3). The point is that the effects of perceived quality are very real in some instances and particularly in the labor market. Academic inbreeding, where schools of equal status trade their own faculty and scholars among themselves, is an excellent example of the real effects of perceived quality.

The third point to be made about quality is excellently stated by Jencks and Riesman:

> The second factor was growing public concern with the quality of higher education for the young. As the overall number of B.A.'s rose, the psychological importance of quality differentiation within this cadre rose correspondingly. More legislators were anxious that their state have a first-rank public university rather than a second-rank one, for the mere existence of the university no longer seemed much of an achievement. Similarly, more parents were concerned with where their children went to college, for a degree in itself no longer seemed unusual. (Jencks and Riesman, 1968: 14)

The point being made by Jencks and Riesman is the increased concern

by many for quality in higher education. The last line indicates that a mere degree was not enough for some, but where the degree came from was of concern. If labor markets become flooded with college graduates, as some suggest, then quality and concern for quality will be more important.[12]

Prestige

Closely associated with the concept of quality in higher education is the concept of prestige. Like quality, prestige is difficult to define, but not difficult to identify. It is not clear what prestige is but many are aware of its presence. "Although", Gross writes, "it may certainly be questioned whether reputation or prestige is equivalent to 'quality', the members of sets believe they can detect it or at least any change in it" (1968: 535). The point is that it is often easier to detect prestige than to define what constitutes prestige. Secondly, Gross is indicating that quality and prestige may or may not be equivalent.

It is apparent to many observers of higher education in America, that there exists a prestige system of colleges and universities. For example, Ivy League schools have more prestige than Rocky Mountain schools. It appears that universities and colleges are ordered in a hierarchy of prestige. Attempts have been made to determine what

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[12] Spaeth and Greeley conducted an excellent study on the relationship between institutional quality and recent alumni. Their Recent Alumni and Higher Education, (1970) demonstrates the importance alumni attach to institutional quality. Spaeth and Greeley discovered that 82 percent of the recent graduates they surveyed thought high academic standing was of great importance in choosing a college for their children as contrasted to 12 percent who indicated low costs (1970: 6).

factors contribute to the prestige system that exists in American higher education. Ben-David (1972: 47) indicates that the cultural standing of the students' and faculty served as one of the first bases for the prestige system. A second one later developed out of the importance attached to research. A third basis later developed was the professional and technological training provided, along with services to the outside. Ben-David now suggests that research is the current source of the prestige system of American higher education (1972: 47). It is easy to observe that the bases for prestige and prestige systems differ and differ over time. It is important to acknowledge the existence of the prestige system in higher education and some of the effects of the system.

The relationship of quality and prestige to the subject matter of this study is evident. Quality represents the overall evaluation of a school and its components. Rating of schools and school components are thought to be processes by which the quality of schools may be determined. Quality represents a higher order of abstraction when we are addressing the question of evaluation and ranking of higher education and its segments. Quality represents a higher order than the actual ranking and rating given items in question. Prestige is related to the subject matter of the study in that quality and prestige are often related to each other by experts and students alike. The importance of the prestige system is difficult to exaggerate (McGee, 1971: 187). Much of the student selection and recruitment processes, labor market placement, etc. is influenced by the perception of prestige and quality. The prestige and quality of schools may have

lasting effects on the institutions themselves and the graduates they produce. The quality and prestige systems present in American higher education may be viewed as functional or dysfunctional.[13] Of importance to this study is the acknowledgement of their existence and influence on the shaping of higher education in America.

Objectives of Study

There were several objectives of this study. Objectives were conceptualized as falling into four broad categories. The following sections are brief summaries of the four categories and the objectives contained within.

The first major objective category was entitled criteria. A major objective of this study was to determine whether students possessed a set of criteria that they used for evaluating (rating) a university. A subarea of investigation was to determine the ability of students to rate schools. In sum, the objectives within this category were first to establish what criteria students use, second what was the ability of students to evaluate and finally, what factors might influence this ability.

The second category of objectives fell under the label of priorities. The major objective here was to determine whether students' ranking of components of a university fell into any definite pattern. After this initial step, the study attempted to determine if differences existed between groups when ranking the components in order of priority. If differences did exist among groups, then the study attempted to investigate some of the possible factors influencing

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[13]For a discussion of functions and dysfunctions of organizational prestige see Perrow (1961).

these differences. Inherent in establishing the existence of ranking patterns (priorities) is the order of importance attached to components.

The third category of objectives fell under the label of rating. The objective was to determine what ratings students give to major components of universities, other universities and their own university. The potential influence of variables on these ratings was also subject to investigation. In summary, the major objectives of this section were to determine what ratings students assign to universities, their university and its components. The second objective was to determine the effects of selected variables on the mentioned ratings.

The fourth category of objectives fell under the title of choice and additional findings. Given the nature of the research design employed, it was anticipated that several results would be discovered which could not be classified into one of the previous three major categories. It was thus decided that a general category of important findings should be constructed.

The study's objectives centered around four central themes: criteria, priorities, rating, choice and additional findings. All were related to each other directly or indirectly. It is important to acknowledge that the descriptions provided here are very general and are not meant to cover all of the objectives in fine detail. Additional information concerning each of these objectives and other objectives are found in the respective chapters dealing with each major item.

Characteristics of the Sampled University

The University of Nebraska at Omaha was first incorporated as the University of Omaha in 1908. The name was changed in 1931 to Municipal University of Omaha. The University merged with the state system in 1968 and became the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The university is a coeducational, non-sectarian school located in the city of Omaha, Nebraska. The university is a commuter university in that there are no housing facilities for students on campus. The university is fully accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and various other agencies. The university consists of eight undergraduate colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences; College of Education; College of Business Administration; College of Engineering and Technology; College of Continuing Studies; College of Home Economics; College of Public Affairs and Community Service; and the School of Fine Arts. In addition to the undergraduate colleges, there is a Graduate college.

The enrollment figure is approximately 13,000 students composed of about 5,500 day students, 4,200 evening students and 3,000 students who attend both (Undergraduate Catalog, 1974: 2). The percentage of Freshman applicants accepted runs about 97 percent (College Charts, 1972: 60). The requirements for admission according to the College Catalog (1974: 8-9) are: graduation from any accredited high school; those not graduating from accredited high schools may be admitted provisionally; and those applicants at least 18 years old who present equivalent academic training (General Educational Development Test) or who have otherwise demonstrated adequate preparation may be admitted.

In brief, admission requirements to the university are minimal. The figures vary as to the number of out-of-state students enrolled. One figure indicates that 7 percent of the students are out-of-state students (Furniss, 1973: 933), whereas another figure estimates that 19 percent are out-of-state students (College Charts, 1972: 61). Of the 13,000 students enrolled, approximately 25 percent of the student body have some form of financial assistance (College Charts, 1972: 61). Residents of Nebraska pay a tuition for each semester credit hour of $18.00 plus additional fees. Non-residents pay $48.25 for each semester credit hour plus additional fees.

According to the Undergraduate Catalog (1974; 33-36) there are approximately 103 organizations available to undergraduate students on campus. Intercollegiate sports in football, basketball, baseball, wrestling, and track constitute in part some of the student activities available. A considerable amount of student social life centers around the Milo Bail Student Center. Programs in student orientation, career development and placement, counseling and testing, health services, minority affairs, financial aid, radio and television, intramural sports, alumni and others are available for student use.

The grounds consist of a 52 acre site which is presently expanding to the West of the existing campus. The physical facilities include the following major buildings. The Administration Building contains administrative offices and classrooms. The Fieldhouse includes a stadium with an astro-turfed playing field. The Gene Eppley Library maintains a collection of over 320,000 volumes, 125,000 documents and over 3,200 periodicals (Undergraduate Catalog, 1794: 38). The Milo

Bail Student Center consists of a university bookstore, cafeterias, meeting rooms, recreational areas and offices for various student services and organizations. The Engineering Building consists of classrooms, offices, and laboratories which is also the case with Allwine Hall and Kayser Hall. The Performing Arts Center houses an auditorium, classrooms and office space. Capital construction on other major buildings is under way such as a new 3.7 million dollar business building, new library, physical maintenance plant and others.

The school has approximately 468 full-time faculty. Approximately 250 (53 percent) of the faculty hold a doctorate or its equivalent. There are 193 (41 percent) masters degrees held by other faculty members, with the remainder holding Bachelor degrees 25 (6 percent). These figures do not take into account the number of graduate teaching assistants.

Variables Under Investigation

There were several variables under investigation in this study. The variables can be divided into two classifications, those which were considered independent (background) variables and those which were classified as dependent variables. Each variable studied will be described in the following sections with the operational definition presented as it was used in the research.

The variables were classified as being independent or dependent on the basis of the following scheme outlined by Zetterberg. Zetterberg states, "When we know or assume the direction in which the variables influence each other, we can designate one as a determinant (cause or independent variable) and the other as a result (effect or

dependent variable)." (1965: 64). All of the variables that were treated as independent were thought to have had influences on the dependent variables. This characteristic of influence was the criteria used for classifying the variables as independent or dependent. All of the background variables such as sex, age, G.P.A., year in school, enrollment status, academic major, extra-curricular involvement, having attended other schools, having applied to other schools, having read about other schools, having attended U.N.L., and having attended Creighton University were classified as being independent. All of the priorities and ratings were considered to be the dependent variables. They were dependent because the background variables were thought to influence them in some manner.

Year in School

Year in school has been a key variable for many studies. Year in school was selected for study because it represented the important dimension of time. The student's year in school may give a good indication of changes that occur over time. Year in school was defined as the student's educational status in terms of credit hours acquired. Inherrent in this definition was the idea that there was a time period involved in acquiring credit hours. The university classification scheme for year in school is Freshman (0 through 26 hours), Sophomore (27 through 57 hours), Junior (58 through 90 hours) and Senior (91 through 124 hours) (Undergraduate Catalog, 1974: 11). Graduate students are those students who have graduated and are currently enrolled in the graduate program at U.N.O. The university definition of year in school served the operational definition of

year in school for the purposes of the study. To determine the student's year in school, the researcher constructed a scale based on the five classifications of freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate. The respondent's checking the appropriate space was deemed as the workable definition of the year in school of students.

Enrollment Status

Enrollment status was defined as whether a student was a full-time or part-time student. The university definition of a full-time student is a student who is enrolled in 12 or more credit hours during the semester. Those students enrolled in less than 12 hours are classified as part-time students. The operational definition of enrollment status was the number of credit hours that a student is enrolled in which was divided into full time (12 or more hours) and part time (less than 12 hours). It was determined by requesting the student to check the appropriate space of either full- or part-time student. Enrollment status was selected as a variable for study because it was thought part-time students might differ from full-time students in their perspective. Part-time students should have had less commitment to their school.

Age

Age was defined as how old the respondent was in years. Age was selected for study because it was thought to represent a rough measure of maturity. Respondents were asked to indicate their age in a space provided. Two classifications were used for age. Those respondents 23 years old and over were classified as falling into the older category. Those who were under 23 years old were classified as

younger students. The rationale was that those students falling into the younger age category represented the approximate age group of students who had recently graduated from high school (within 5 years). The older students were considered to have not recently graduated from high school.

Academic Major

Academic major was defined as the student's degree intentions at the time of the survey. Academic major was the stated area in which the student was currently seeking a degree and/or certification. The operational definition of academic major was the stated area of specialization that the student indicated on a space provided on the questionnaire. Because of the diversity of academic majors, reclassification procedures were undertaken during the coding. These reclassification procedures and their rationale are described at length in the coding section of this study. The student's academic major was selected as a variable because the researcher thought differences might exist among academic majors. For example, Physical Education majors might place more emphasis on quality of athletic programs than other academic majors because it is more relevant to their degree.

Extra-curricular Involvement

Extra-curricular involvement was the degree of commitment of students to various activities and groups, other than academic, that were offered on the campus. The degree of extra-curricular involvement was measured by the responses to the following question:

"With regard to extra-curricular groups and activities on campus, would you consider yourself: ____Very involved ____Somewhat involved ____Not involved."

This question was believed to be a workable operational definition of the degree of involvement of students in extra-curricular activities. It is important to note that the degree of involvement was determined by the student's own perception of involvement. The variable of involvement was considered to be important because extra-curricular activities can play an important role in the student's college career. Extra-curricular involvement can draw upon the student's time and resources.

Attendance at Other Schools

Attendance at other schools was a variable that was considered to be the highest level of the comparative perspective.[14] Attendance at other schools was simply whether the respondent had ever enrolled in any college or university other than U.N.O. Students were requested to indicate a yes or no response to whether they had ever attended or not. This question constituted the operational definition of attendance. Those students who had previously attended another school were classified as being in the highest level of the comparative perspective. The comparative perspective will be described in detail following the next two variables.

Applied for Admission to Other Schools

The applied-for-admission-to-other-schools variable was whether the respondent had ever sought admission to a school other than U.N.O.

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[14] See page 37 for the definition of comparative perspective.

by going through admission procedures established by the school(s) the student sought entrance to. Application was operationally defined as the indicated responses to the question:

> "Have you ever applied for admission to a college or university other than U.N.O.? ____Yes ____No."

The question and checked space provided a workable definition of whether the student had applied or not. Respondents having applied fell into the second level of the comparative perspective. The variable was often referred to in the study as "having applied".

Read Literature on Other Schools

The next variable was that of the student's reading exposure to literature about other colleges and universities other than U.N.O. The variable was referred to in the study as "having read". Having read was defined as whether the student had been exposed to any information of a literary nature, about other schools. It was operationally defined as the student's response to the question:

> "Have you ever read any college guide books or catalogues other than U.N.O.'s? ____Yes ____No."

The question was thought to be an operational definition of having read. Responses were interpreted as workable indications of whether or not a student had been empirically exposed to the literature in question. Respondents who had indicated a positive response were classified as falling into the third level of the comparative perspective. Those who indicated a negative response were classified into the fourth level of the comparative perspective.

Comparative Perspective

The comparative perspective was a cumulation of the variables

of having attended, having applied, having read and those students who had done none of these. The comparative perspective was defined as the student's conceptualization of schools, based on the student's exposure to various schools. The comparative perspective was thought to exist in different degrees (levels). The highest degree was that of students who had attended another school. The researcher believed that direct exposure to other schools provided an empirical base from which students could make judgments. This assumed that students having direct exposure would be more likely to draw comparisons based on their previous experiences. This deduction led the researcher to believe that these students would thus be more critical of U.N.O. The second degree (level) of the comparative perspective were those students who have applied to other schools. The procedure of applying required a degree of knowledge about a school and a certain degree of involvement. Applying does not require as much involvement as actually attending, but does require more involvement and knowledge than found among those only having read the literature. Having read the literature constituted the third degree of the comparative perspective. The experience with having read the literature was believed to be an indirect experience, in that the students gain their information from second hand sources. The lowest degree of the comparative perspective was found among those students who have not attended, applied or read any literature. They were considered to have little exposure and involvement with other schools. The comparative perspective is further elaborated in the study. Since the comparative perspective was the combination of the three previously described variables of having

attended, having applied and having read, it was thought that the operational definition of the comparative perspective was the combination of all of the three variables. Each of the three variables was viewed as a different level of the comparative perspective.

Sex

Sex was the respondent's gender. The respondents sex was operationally defined as the response to a space which requested the respondent to indicate his/her sex. This question itself was the operational definition of sex. Classifications were male or female, based on the indicated response.

Approximate Grade Point Average

The variable of grade point average was defined as the respondent's mean (average) for grades received in course work. It was operationally defined as the grades received (A equals 4, B equals 3, C equals 2, D equals 1 and F equals 0) divided by the number of credit hours taken and/or attempted. Respondents were requested to indicate their approximate grade point average in a space provided on the questionnaire. Responses were classified into three categories for analysis purposes. Those students indicating a below 2.0 average (Below C) in their course work were classified into the category labeled below 2.0. Those indicating a 2.0 to 3.0 average (C to B) were classified into a second category of 2.0 to 3.0 average students. The final category was the above 3.0 (Above B) students. Any student with a 3.0 or above average was classified into this category for analysis purposes.

Attendance at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (U.N.L.)

Attendance at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln was considered to be a variable worthy of inquiry. Attendance at U.N.L. was defined as the student's enrollment at the U.N.L. campus. Attendance at U.N.L. was selected for study because students coming from U.N.L. had some exposure to U.N.L. and thus could evaluate it and second they attended a local school and thus would be aware of the local situation. The operational definition of the variable was the question:

> "Have you ever attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln? ____Yes ____No."

Those students checking "Yes" were considered to have been students at U.N.L. Those responding "No" were interpreted as not having ever attended U.N.L. as a student.

Attendance at Creighton University

Attendance at Creighton was a variable treated in a manner similar to attendance at U.N.L. Attendance at Creighton was defined as actual contact with Creighton as an enrolled student. Attendance at Creighton was selected for the same reasons as attendance at U.N.L.

The same basic definition of attendance that applied to U.N.L. students applied to Creighton students. The operational definition of attendance at Creighton was the question:

"Have you ever attended Creighton University? ____Yes ____No."

The respondents were requested to indicate their appropriate response to the question. Those indicating a positive response were considered to be previous Creighton students and those who had responded "No" were classified as having not attended Creighton University as a student.

These thirteen variables constitute the basic background (independent) variables utilized in this research. The following items were classified as the dependent variables of the study.

The next twelve items were all concerned with the question of priorities. All of the items were either professional or student generated. They were included on the basis of professional or student emphasis. Exact interpretation as to their meanings was dependent upon the student's interpretation of the item. Of importance was the rank assigned to each item. The assigned rank was thought to be the variable in the case of the items. The rank was defined as the student's ranking an item from 1 to 12 on the basis of importance in comparison to other items on the list of 12. This was operationally defined by the question:

> "The following is a list of characteristics of a university. Please rank them in order of importance, with 1 being most important, 2 being the second most important, 3 being the third most important, etc. (Please be sure to rank every item)."

Responses in the form of ranks were thought to represent the degree of importance attached to an item. The items, in order of occurance on the questionnaire were:

Quality of Library
Number of Courses Offered
Quality of Athletic Facilities
Social Atmosphere
Academic Quality of Student Body
Extra-curricular Activities
Quality of Teaching (student-teacher relationship)
Quality of Administration
Quality of Academic Departments
Quality of Physical Facilities (Buildings, etc.)
Quality of Student Services (Counseling, Health, etc.)
Quality of Faculty (Percentage of Doctoral Degrees)

The rankings of these items as a whole were referred to in the study as priorities. Comparisons may be made between items, based on their relative ranks on the scale. The ratings differed from priorities in that they were on a scale of "Poor" to "Excellent" instead of from "1" to "12". Ratings were concerned with the question of evaluation of items. The priority rankings were concerned with the order of importance of items.

Rating of Library

The rating of the library was defined as the overall evaluation, by students, of U.N.O.'s library on a provided scale. Students were permitted to use whatever criteria they desired to rate the library. The rating of U.N.O.'s library was operationally defined as the student's response to the question:

> "How would you rate U.N.O.'s library as a whole: ____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor."

The student's response was considered to be an indication of the rating given the U.N.O. library from the student's perspective. The rating of U.N.O.'s library was selected for study because libraries are thought to be of central importance to schools.

Rating of U.N.O.'s Academic Reputation

The student's rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation was again viewed as subject to the student's own interpretation. The rating of the academic reputation was determined by the student's rating on an Excellent to Poor scale. The rating of academic reputation was operationally defined as the student's response to the question:

> "How would you rate U.N.O.'s reputation as an Academic institution?"

Responses were viewed as representing the student's rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation as a whole.

Rating of Major Department

Rating of major department was defined as the student's evaluation of his/her academic department. Academic department was essentially the department from which the student sought a degree and/or certification. The rating of major department was operationally defined as the student's response to the question:

"How would you rate your major department as a whole?"

The Excellent to Poor scale was provided for students to register their responses.

Rating of Departments Other Than Major Department

Besides determining the rating of major departments, it seemed necessary to obtain ratings with non-major department ratings. It was important because the researcher wanted to compare major department of academic departments other than the students' major departments. Non-major departments were all the academic departments on campus other than the student's major department. It is important to note that since students differ in course work taken, their conceptualization of other departments was limited to the number of courses taken and the areas of such course work. Students will vary in the number of departments they are exposed to. Academic departments were principle organizational units of schools and thus were included in the variables under study. The operational definition of the rating of departments other than the student's major department was viewed as the responses to the question:

"How would you rate departments other than your major department as a whole?"

The responses were recorded on the Excellent to Poor scale with results being interpreted as the student's rating of departments other than major department as a whole.

Rating of Faculty

The student's rating of U.N.O.'s faculty was the next variable under investigation. U.N.O.'s faculty was defined as those individuals who were currently instructing at U.N.O. The students were allowed to use whatever criteria they wished to rate the U.N.O. faculty. Rating of U.N.O.'s faculty was operationally defined as the student responses to the question:

"How would you rate U.N.O.'s faculty as a whole?"

The students were requested to indicate their answer on the Excellent to Poor scale provided. The recorded responses were interpreted as representing the student rating of U.N.O.'s faculty as a whole. Faculty were thought to be a necessary and important factor in universities, thus the rating of the faculty was considered to be an important variable to study.

Rating of U.N.O.

The rating of U.N.O. was considered to be a central variable of of this study. The rating of U.N.O. as a whole was defined as the student's overall evaluation of U.N.O., using whatever criteria the student wished. In operational terms, the rating of U.N.O. was defined as the student's response to the question:

"How would you rate U.N.O. as a whole?"

The Excellent to Poor scale was provided for respondents to record

their answer. Results on the scale were considered to be the student's rating of U.N.O. as a whole.

Rating of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln

Determining the rating of U.N.L. followed virtually the same procedure as for the rating of U.N.O. U.N.L. was selected for study on the basis of its visibility to U.N.O. students. U.N.L. is a large university within the same state education system and is relatively close to the U.N.O. campus geographically. The rating of U.N.L. was operationally defined as the responses to the question:

> "How would you rate the University of Nebraska at Lincoln as a whole?"

The Excellent to Poor scale was provided for student's to register their responses. The student's selection of one of the categories was interpreted as the student's rating of U.N.L. as a whole.

Rating of Creighton University

Creighton University was, as with the case of U.N.L., selected on the basis of its visibility to U.N.O. students. It is a reasonably large university located fairly close to U.N.O. It was believed that it was visible enough to U.N.O. students for them to be able to evaluate it in a general sense. The rating of Creighton was defined operationally as the student's response to the question:

> "How would you rate Creighton University as a whole?"

The Excellent to Poor scale was used for students to record their answers. Responses to the question were interpreted as being an indication of the student's rating of Creighton as a whole.

Rating of Fellow Students Academically

The rating of fellow students academically was a variable aimed

at determining how students perceived their student cohorts in terms of academic criteria. Criteria were based on what the student, as an individual, believed was important. Fellow students were those enrolled at the same time as the respondent at U.N.O. and/or of whom the student had some recollection in an academic sense. The operational definition of rating of fellow students academically was the responses to the question:

"How would you rate your fellow students academically?"

The Excellent to Poor scale was provided. The student's response to the question defined the rating of fellow students academically as an important aspect of the student's university experiences. It was believed important to include the student's rating of fellow students. Comparisons could be made between professional ratings and student ratings of other students.

Choice

The variable labeled choice involves both the student's evaluation of a school and its components and the option of attendance. Choice was defined as whether a student would attend U.N.O. again if other options were available to him/her. In a sense this variable was the ultimate question dealing with school quality and student evaluation, for the act of attending a school was the ultimate judgment from the researcher's perspective. The variable of choice was operationally defined as the student's response to the question:

"If you had it to do all over again and had a choice, would you attend U.N.O.?"

The responses possible were Yes and No. Registered answers were interpreted as whether the student would attend U.N.O. again or not.

A key to understanding this variable is in the wording of the question and particularly the phrase, if you had it to do all over again and had a choice. This is purely a hypothetical question, in that we usually do not have it to do all over again and are limited in the choices we can make. Whereas the students probably do not have a chance of attending U.N.O. again, the key is not the actual attending U.N.O. again but the conceptualization of students regarding this question.

Rating of Student-Book Ratio

A variable which was used in determining the student's ability to evaluate schools and school components was the rating of a set ratio of books per student. The ratio was 100 library books per student. Students were asked to rate such a ratio of books per student. The question utilized as an operational definition of book-student ratio was:

> "A ratio of 100 books per student in a university library would be considered?"[15]

The Excellent to Poor scale was provided for students to register their responses. Responses to the question were considered to be a workable operational definition of student's rating of the book-student ratio. The student's rating of the student-book ratio was included because it was thought to represent an indicator of ability to evaluate.

Rating of Student-Faculty Ratio

A variable similar to the previously mentioned one was that of

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[15]The 100-1 student-book ratio and the 20-1 student-faculty ratio were based on the professional standards found in Fine(1972).

student's rating of a set student-faculty ratio. A fixed student-faculty ratio of 20 students per faculty member was provided in the question. The student's rating of the ratio was operationally defined as the response to the question:

> "A ratio of 1 faculty member per 20 students would be considered?"

The Excellent to Poor scale was provided for responses. The replies were interpreted as representing the rating of the faculty-student ratio. Results were employed in the ability-to-evaluate section of the study. The student's rating of the student-faculty was selected for study because it represented an indicator of ability to evaluate.

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample was drawn from the population of students enrolled in 100 level and 400 level courses at U.N.O. spring semester 1974. The total number of students in the sample was 471. The general characteristics of the selected sample of students will now be described in detail in the same order as they appear on the questionnaire.

The first characteristic of the sample dealt with the respondents' year in school. Of the 471 respondents, all correctly indicated their year in school. There were 126 Freshmen (26.8 percent), 69 Sophomores (14.6 percent), 88 Juniors (18.7 percent), 134 Seniors (28.5 percent) and 54 Graduate students (11.5 percent)[16] included in the obtained sample. Altogether 417 students (88.5 percent) were classified as being undergraduate students. Of importance here is the fact that the target sample of 100 Freshmen and 100 Seniors was obtained. The

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[16]All of the graduate students selected were selected on the basis of their enrollment in 400 level course numbers.

Freshmen and the Seniors are the two largest groups of students, with Seniors slightly outnumbering the Freshmen. The sampling procedure was designed to accomplish the end of increasing the number of Seniors and Freshmen obtained and to some degree was successful.

The next characteristic of the sample was the enrollment status of the respondents. A total of 470 responses were recorded which could be classified as either full-time or part-time students. A total of 332 (70.6 percent) of the respondents were full-time students. Full-time was defined as those students enrolled in less than 12 hours of course work. The number of respondents who were classified as part-time students was 138 (29.4 percent).

Respondents were requested to indicate their age which, during coding, was classified into two major categories of younger and older students. The range for the younger students in years was the "normal" college attending age of from 17 to 23 years and older being those students over 23 years old. Of the respondents, 262 (55.7 percent) were classified as being younger and 208 (44.3 percent) as older. The distribution of respondents in both groups represents a fairly balanced sample for comparisons between the groups. One respondent failed to indicate age.

Respondents were asked what their academic major was. Because of the diversity of majors, it was necessary to analyze some of the majors in terms of the colleges to which they belong. The following section describes the academic majors of the students in the sample, with their coded classifications underlined:

1. Social Sciences	
Economics	3
Geography	2
History	30
Political Science	6
Psychology	14
Sociology	20
Pre-law	3
Total	78

2. Natural Sciences	
Biology	20
Chemistry	6
Mathematics	6
Computer Science	3
Micro-biology	1
Science	2
Total	38

3. Humanities	
English	6
Journalism	4
Speech	5
Broadcasting	3
Total	18

4. Business Administration	
Accounting	10
General Business	16
Management	1
Real Estate	1
Business Administration	9
Total	37

5. Continuing Studies	
Continuing Studies	4
University Division(Added)	7
Undecided (Added)	18
Total	29

6. Education	
Counseling and Guidance	9
Elementary and Early Childhood Education	12
Secondary and Post Secondary Education	7
Secretarial Science	1
Special Education	6
Speech Pathology	4
Urban Education	1
Physical Education	6
Recreation	4

6. Education (continued)	
Education	13
Total	63

7. Engineering and Technology	
Civil Engineering	13
Industrial Engineering	4
General Engineering	10
Industrial Technology	10
Construction Engineering	6
Technology Drafting and Design	2
Electronic Engineering	22
Technology Construction Engineering	5
Fire Protection Technology	1
Total	73

8. Fine Arts	
Art	7
Music	5
Fine Arts	4
Total	16

9. Home Economics	
Food and Nutrition	1
Interior Design	17
Total	18

10. Public Affairs and Community Service	
Public Administration	2
Social Work	3
Urban Studies and Affairs	3
Total	8

11. Law Enforcement	
Law Enforcement - Criminal Justice	24
Total	24

12. Medical Related Areas	
Medical Technology	5
Nursing	39
Radiology	3
Pharmacy	2
Pre-med	3
Dentistry	4
Physical Therapy	1
Total	57

Unclassified	12

The following figures present the percentage breakdown of the sample: Social Science (17 percent); Natural Science (8.3 percent); Humanities (3.9 percent); Business Administration (8.3 percent); Continuing Studies (6.3 percent); Education (13.7 percent); Engineering (15.9 percent); Fine Arts (3.5 percent); Home Economics (3.9 percent); Public Affairs and Community Service (1.7 percent); Law Enforcement (5.2 percent); and Medical related areas (12.2 percent). There were 12 respondents which could not be classified into any college or major. Out of approximately 92 possible academic majors (Undergraduate Catalog, 1973-1974) 60 of them were represented in the sample.

As a whole the respondents were minimally involved in extra-curricular activities on campus. Of 470 responses, 354 (75.3 percent) considered themselves as not involved, 104 (22.1 percent) as somewhat involved and 12 (2.6 percent) as very involved in extra-curricular activities. A total of 97.4 percent of the sample were somewhat involved or less. In brief, the sample was characterized by a lack of involvement by respondents.

Of the 471 respondents, 219 (46.5 percent) had attended a college or university other than U.N.O. The number of students having attended only U.N.O. was 252 (53.5 percent). The number of students in both categories was reasonably balanced for data analysis and comparisons.

Those students having applied to a college or university other than U.N.O. were 284 (60.3 percent) of the sample whereas the number of students who had not applied was 187 (39.7 percent). All students responded to the question correctly. It is important to note that more of the students in the sample had applied to schools than had actually attended them.

A total of 392 (83.6 percent) of the respondents had read college guide books or catalogues and 77 (16.4 percent) indicated that they had not. Again it is important to note that more respondents had read books than had applied or had attended other schools. Two students failed to respond to this question.

The breakdown of the students by sex was 304 (64.7 percent) male and 166 (35.3 percent) females. One student failed to indicate a sex.[17]

A total of 457 respondents indicated their grade point averages. It is important to note that grade point averages would probably be approximations in that students may find it difficult to estimate their averages. Grade point averages were classified into three categories: those above 3.0; those between 3.0 and 2.0; and those below 2.0. The number of students below the 2.0 grade point average was 6 (1.3 percent). Those students between 2.0 and 3.0 was 189 (41.4 percent) and those above 3.0 numbered 262 (57.3 percent). Many possible factors might account for the seeming lack of students with under 2.0 averages. Some possibilities might be that students tend to drop out or flunk out of school and some students may have been prone to eliciting a socially desirable response. The number of students above 3.0 is seemingly large since the majority of the respondents were above 3.0.

The number of students having attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln was 41 (8.8 percent) and those having not previously attended was 425 (91.2 percent). Those having attended Creighton University were 21 (4.5 percent), whereas 445 (95.5 percent)

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[17] Hawes and Novalis estimate the percentage of men on campus to be 60 percent and women 40 percent (1972: 286).

indicated that they had not attended Creighton. The number of students not indicating a response was five.

Contentions

Early in the planning stages of the study the researcher developed some preliminary ideas on the subject matter of the study. The researcher believed that certain patterns might be present. The preliminary ideas were thought to be more than just "Gut" level thoughts, but less than hypotheses. Hypotheses are usually tied deductively or inductively to some theoretical framework. The researcher employed no theoretical framework from which hypotheses could be deduced. It is important in deductive approaches to have a theoretical basis; such was not the case with these preliminary ideas. In terms of inductive approaches, the researcher would suggest that because these preliminary ideas occured prior to the field experience, they were not totally inductive in nature. They were preconceptions occuring before the data gathering procedure. One could also argue that these thoughts were not designed to move toward any particular theory.

The researcher felt the need to develop a concept which dealt with the nature of these preliminary ideas. A concept was needed that did not treat the ideas as hypotheses but did attempt to give them some structure. In searching for an appropriate label for these ideas, the researcher developed the idea that these preconceptions could be labeled contentions. Contentions usually involve some sort of reference to putting forth an argument. A statement of position or point is often refered to as a contention. The researcher defines

contention as a preconception that the researcher has prior to the data gathering procedure, of which the researcher would argue in favor. The basic contentions of the study were the following:

1. Students know very little about how to evaluate a university in a professional sense. This contention was based on the belief that students lack the ability to evaluate.

2. As year in school increases, the ability to evaluate and rate increases. This contention was supported by the notion that Seniors will be exposed to more information about their academic environment than Freshmen and will thus be better able to evaluate their university. There was an expected difference between Freshmen and Seniors in evaluating.

3. Students possessing the comparative perspective may be better, in a professional sense, evaluators (in ability) than those students who do not have such a perspective. It was expected that there will be a difference between high comparative perspective students and low comparative perspective students. The key idea behind this line of thought was that students who have had contact with other schools will possess a better basis for comparison.

4. Students will have a tendency to overrate their membership school (higher than professionals). Students were believed to think highly of their own university.

5. Students will have a tendency to overrank their membership school, but underrank other visible area schools; students rationalize that their school is better than area schools.

6. Students will have a tendency to overrank their university's

components. They will think highly of the services offered by their university and its components. The contention being put forth here, and in number four, is that students, in spite of school characteristics (good or bad), tend to rationalize that they are receiving a good education.

7. Those students who have attended other schools, applied to other schools, read other catalogs and guide books, will be more critical of U.N.O. than those students who have not. As the level of comparative perspective increases, the rating for the membership school becomes more unfavorable. Students with wide experience were thought to be more critical of universities in general, for they would have more experience on which to base their judgments.

8. Students will overrate their membership academic department in relation to other academic departments on campus. The rationale was that students have stronger loyalties to their own academic department.

9. Older students will have a tendency to rate the membership school lower than younger students; they have more experiences on which to base their evaluations.

These then were the basic contentions of this study.

CHAPTER II

PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

This chapter consists of examples of professional ratings and guide books. The studies were thought to be representative of professional literature. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with undergraduate literature. The second section is devoted to graduate literature.

A. Undergraduate Literature

Astin

Alexander W. Astin, in his article "How Colleges Are Rated" (1971), contends that two major factors indicate the rank of a college or university. The factors are the size of enrollment and the selectivity of the school. Selectivity is defined as the academic ability of the enrolled student body. Astin states, "We believe that selectivity and size tap two important aspects of institutional status: quality (presumed academic excellence) and visibility (how well the institution is known to outsiders)," (1971: 11). Enrollment figures were made available by schools and the selectivity of a school was determined by the mean aptitude test scores of freshmen on the S.A.T.

The level of test performance was divided into 8 categories. Schools were then classified as a whole on the basis of these two factors.

Astin made the following observations based on his technique.

The least selective schools tend to be the small colleges and a very few large schools. The larger institutions tend to be more selective. Astin indicates, "It would appear that high selectivity is a sufficient condition for high status except in the very smallest institutions." (1971: 85). Astin and his associates view selectivity and size as a working operational definition of institutional status.

According to Astin, there are differences between the peer environment of the highly selective schools and non-selective schools. He suggests that highly selective schools are characterized by independence and academic competitiveness among students. Astin suggests that attendance at highly selective schools increases the likelihood that a student will stay in school and go on to further education. Astin points out other advantages and disadvantages of high ranked schools. Of importance to the present study is Astin's use of size and selectivity as a basis for ranking schools.

Barron's

Although not a ranking of schools, Barron's Profiles of American Colleges is an excellent example of a guide book to higher education. The work does not rank schools, but does provide the prospective student with some benchmarks and suggestions for evaluating and selecting a school. It provides the following characteristics of schools that should be taken into consideration by students.

General characteristics of the school such as accreditation status, climate, history and features are to be viewed by the students. Evaluation is not necessarily based on this information. The author of the guide book is Benjamin Fine. When considering enrollment

figures, Fine seems to suggest that a large university has some advantages over small schools and one gets the feeling that he is in favor of larger schools. The same can be said of his treatment of coeducational schools. Fine points out that one-sex schools may be on the way out. Fine believes that more important than the size of the school is whether it is a college or university (1972: vii). Fine points out the advantages and disadvantages of both, with no statement as to which is more preferable.

Fine's description of the library is a detailed one. He begins by cautioning that the number of holdings in a library does not mean that the holdings are of value; some may be outdated or of no use to undergraduates. With this cautionary note, Fine states a number of ratios that could be used as guidelines to evaluating a library. He indicates, "For a university a ratio of 1 undergraduate to 1000 books is extraordinary, but such ratios occur in a rare few of America's most distinguished university libraries. A ratio of 1 to 500 implies an outstanding library, 1 to 300 a superior library, 1 to 200 an adequate library, 1 to 100 or less an inferior library", (Fine, 1972: viii). Ratios are also stated for colleges. Figures for the number of periodicals are also given. A figure of 15,000 periodicals per university library is suggested by Fine to be outstanding and 6,000 more than adequate depending on the degrees offered (1972: viii). Fine's treatment of the library is one of the more explicit and involved sections to be found in higher education guide books.

Fine also addresses the topic of the faculty. He indicates that there are three factors which give an indication of the nature

of the faculty and its possible relationship to students. One measure is the percentage of Ph.D's on the faculty, which is considered by Fine to be a good indication of a school's ability to draw faculty members with scholarly credentials. Another indicator of the status of the faculty, assuming that faculty go where the money and benefits are, is the amount of faculty compensation at schools. If salaries are high, Fine contends, good faculty will stay, but if it is low they will tend to leave. The final indicator of the faculty situation at a school is the faculty-student ratio. Fine does not elaborate but indicates that, "In general, a student-faculty ratio of 10 to 1 is very good", (1972: ix). The assumption is that a low student-faculty ratio is desirable.

Additional considerations mentioned by Fine are: student life, urban vs. rural, college calendar, financial considerations and the student drop-out rate. Where the drop-out rate is more than 15 percent, Fine cautions, "the freshman academic atmosphere is bound to suffer by virtue of the number of non-students in any given freshman course", (1972: xi). The proportion of students going on to graduate education may also be viewed as an indication of the degree of study orientation of the undergraduate student body, a figure of 50 percent or more indicates a study orientated student body, while a figure of 70 percent is considered to be a high percentage.

Fine's work contains a section on the selectivity of colleges and universities. Fine warns that the classification scheme used is not a ranking of schools, but is designed rather to act as a guide for applicants, demonstrating the variations of difficulty in being admitted. Fine's Barron's Profiles of American Colleges is a fairly

comprehensive work. In it the author suggests criteria which should be taken into consideration by prospective students in evaluating a school and making a selection. Fine is explicit when he describes the criteria, to the point of actually quantifying the variables under question. The scheme is a combination of what would be considered subjective and objective information.

Cass and Birnbaum

Cass and Birnbaum have compiled data on virtually every accredited four year college in the country. In their annual Comparative Guide to American Colleges, they point out that no attempt is made to reach judgment on any school being "good" or "bad". They do however, as with the case of many guide books, provide data so that prospective students can make wise decisions in selecting a school. Criteria and guidelines are mentioned in the introduction of the work in order to help the student evaluate schools. Characteristics of schools and other related information are divided into sections in the introduction.

The first section is entitled admissions. Cass and Birnbaum present background information on the nature of admissions policies. Of particular interest is Cass and Birnbaum's selectivity index which consists of categories of: "selective", "very selective", "very (+) selective", "highly selective", or "among the most selective in the country", (1973: xix). The index is based on several factors such as average test scores of applicants, percentage of applicants accepted, ranking of students in their high school class, and other possible factors. Cass and Birnbaum indicate that, "This index is a crucial measure of the academic quality of a college because, as current

research on higher education indicates, an institution of higher learning can never be much better than its student body--and is not likely to be much worse", (1973: xix). Cass and Birnbaum, as with other researchers, make the conclusion that the selectivity of a school is a key factor in determining the overall academic quality of a school. Cass and Birnbaum also suggest that SAT and ACT scores provide a helpful, but not complete, guide to the academic quality of the student body.

In addition to the previously mentioned indicators of the academic quality of the student body, Cass and Birnbaum provide a section on the academic environment. In this section they describe the pass/fail system, degrees offered, undergraduate degrees conferred, and the number of National Merit Scholars, which they view as a rough guide to an institution's attractiveness to the nation's best scholars. The percent of entering freshmen who graduate is believed to be an indication of the nature of the student body and academic environment. The percentage of students going on to graduate study and the number of doctoral degrees conferred is also noted. All of these items are considered to be indications of the nature of the academic environment.

Next to the student body, Cass and Birnbaum believe that the faculty is the second most important factor in determining the nature and quality of a college (1973: xxv). To determine the quality of the faculty two basic criteria are used. The first is the percentage of faculty holding a doctorate and the second is the amount of faculty compensation. They make the assumptions that the more Ph.D's and the higher the compensation the better are the faculty.

In addition to sections on academic environment, admissions, and faculty, Cass and Birnbaum include sections on the student body, religious orientation and campus life. Nothing is mentioned in these sections which could be used for academic evaluation purposes.

The general thrust of the Cass and Birnbaum study is the importance they attach to the academic environment of the school, which is based on the academic quality of the student body and the quality of the faculty. Cass and Birnbaum seem to lay primary emphasis on the quality of the student body.

Gourman

Often described as the "Establishment" of the college and university rankings, The Gourman Report represents a comprehensive ranking of essentially every college and university in the country. To set the tone of his work, Gourman indicates that the public is not very well informed about the quality of education present at colleges and universities. Often, he indicates, false images exist about schools due to the lack of truthful objective evidence. Gourman views his work as providing objective data about colleges and universities.

Schools are rated on a College Board-like scale from 200 to 800. The rating assigned to a school is based on a departmental rating and a non-departmental rating averaged together. Gourman ranks each item considered to be important in the following manner with the following symbols: A for superior (800), B good (600), C fair (400), and D for poor (200). It is believed that the numerical scores for items will be comparable to the student's capability which is represented by SAT

scores. The items and methods for determining ratings are now described in detail.

Departmental evaluation is separated by Gourman from non-departmental. Each academic department is given a letter grade based on the following items:

> The initial rating of any department is based upon its accreditation. An unaccredited department would be rated as a D, and if the department (or college) is accredited by one of the six accrediting boards, it would be rated as a C. From this initial evaluation, the rating will be modified from data available on the number of courses offered, faculty evaluation as provided in the non-departmental portion of the rating, availability of adequate research and library tools, general plant efficiency, the honorary societies, and the scholarship and fellowship awards of graduates of the various departments. (Gourman, 1967: xi)

The importance of accreditation, faculty, courses offered, academic facilities and academic awards are what Gourman observes as being the most important items.[1]

Gourman describes the non-departmental items and methods in more elaborate detail than the departmental. Non-departmental items are concerned with the administration of faculty and students. Non-departmental items are divided into four areas of concern: Administration, Faculty, Student Services and General Areas.

The Administration is evaluated in terms of nine items. One item is the commitment to excellence, which is the effort of the school to develop the student to his/her fullest potential. The overall effectiveness of the staff to help accomplish this goal is taken into consideration. The extent of community support is the

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[1]Gourman also adds that a comprehensive study of students who were awarded fellowships and scholarships of national scope was undertaken when evaluating schools.

second item. The extent of community support is an indication of the degree of acceptance by the community, and thus a school's academic standing. More specifically the "ratio of financial support to students is of prime consideration in this evaluation," (Gourman, 1967: xii). The administration-faculty relationship is the next item. Here such factors as faculty morale, the hiring of competent faculty, balance of power between administration and faculty and the ratio of staff members to students is observed by Gourman. The fifth item is the amount of foundation grants. This evaluation is based on the amount of grants received by an institution on a grants-per-student ratio. The nature of the administration is the sixth item. The item of general administrative considerations is subdivided into three factors: the professional skills of the administrators, comprehensive understanding of the school's charter, and finally the leadership capacity of the administration. The amount of government contracts is also considered to be an item of concern. Only one rank is given and that is an A for those schools receiving over one million dollars per year from the government. The image of the institution is the next item mentioned. Gourman, in dealing with this item, is taking into consideration the reputation of the college or university. By reputation, Gourman means actual changes in the status of academic departments and not the public's view of a school. The eighth item is evaluation based on the school as a national institution. Gourman defines this item by indicating, "This rating is based upon the effectiveness of the school in attaining the objective of national stature and considers such factors as out-of-state

students, foreign students, visiting faculty, and the number of permanent faculty which has national or international stature", (1967: xiii). A term which might clarify the way Gourman defines a national institution is visibility. The final item under administration is the purposes and objectives of a school. Gourman compares the stated objectives and purposes with the actual, to determine the degree of fit between the two.

The second area of concern under non-departmental items is the faculty. The faculty is divided into five items, the first being faculty effectiveness. Faculty effectiveness depends on a number of factors. The factors, Gourman states, "...include earned graduate degrees, research publications, library facilities, the intellectual spread of students, which can affect the method of instructing", (1967: xiii) and other factors such as the number of teaching assistants in the classroom and the number of non-professional educators employed. The second item is faculty morale, which is based on such factors as salary, teaching loads, tenure, benefits, publishing, research facilities and fringe benefits. The method of instruction is the next item in which the effectiveness of the faculty is a key factor. The ratio of staff to students is the fourth item. Finally the amount of research activity is considered. Gourman believes that the amount of research is related to the effectiveness of teaching. The concern is for the amount of research activity undertaken by the faculty members and the facilities and publications related to research activity.

The third area is labeled student services by Gourman. The first item under student services is the academic balance between athletic programs offered at schools and the academic environment. The assumption that Gourman makes is that a healthy balance between athletics and academics should be maintained. The competition for national fellowships is an item that Gourman attempts to measure. In this case the competition for the fellowships is what is important and not the actual winning. The counseling program is the next item under consideration. The counseling program is evaluated in terms of its ability to guide students with realistic information. The fourth item is the curriculum made available to students. Effectiveness was defined by Gourman as the progressiveness of the programs. Another item was the amount of financial aid available to students by the school. The sixth item was the freshman year of studies. When studying the freshman year, Gourman observes the drop-out rate, failure rate and transfer rate. Additional items concerning honors programs and available scholarships are mentioned by Gourman.

General areas are the final area that Gourman considers when evaluating non-departmental items. Gourman begins by evaluating the alumni association. The dollar raising capability, position, influence and effectiveness of alumni is of importance in evaluating the alumni programs at schools. The second item considered is the computer center which is evaluated in terms of adequacy to meet the needs of the university and its components. Gourman believes in the importance of the third item, the library. The quality of a library, to Gourman, depends upon not only the number of volumes but also on

the number of periodicals, research documents, journals and the adequacy of the reference section. The fourth item considered is plant efficiency where such factors as adequate classroom space are studied. The importance of the physical facilities is a recurrent theme in Gourman's work. The public relations department is also considered to be an important item by Gourman. The public relations department is evaluated in terms of its ability to produce factual information. The final item is the board of trustees and their ability to contribute guidance and service to the objectives of the school.

In summary, The Gourman Report is an important work in evaluating colleges and universities. It is a comprehensive guide to the major colleges and universities. The Gourman rating of a school is the average of a total departmental rating and a non-departmental rating average. The departmental and non-departmental ratings are based on letter grades assigned to various items classified under each. Letter grades are then accumulated in order to provide a SAT score which, when scaled, might reflect the overall status of a school.[2]

A few additional comments about The Gourman Report are necessary. Gourman is very explicit in labeling the items he uses in evaluating a school. What Gourman fails to indicate are the actual measurement criteria he uses. In short, how do we know what levels of the items constitute "Excellent", or "Good", etc. Gourman

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[2]Gourman makes the important statement, "that no positive proof is yet available that this Gourman Rating coincides with the student SAT grade." (1967: x).

fails to elaborate on what criteria he used to determine these measurements. Although being comprehensive has its advantages, one becomes skeptical of how well such a task as evaluating vitually every college and university can be accomplished. A certain degree of generality must exist in order for such a task to be accomplished. Despite its apparent weaknesses, the work constitutes a serious major effort to evaluate higher education. It remains as one of the most significant studies to date on the ranking of undergraduate schools.

Lovejoy

Lovejoy's College Guide falls between a guide book and a ranking of schools. The key to the evaluation scheme utilized by Lovejoy is the accreditation of the schools. The scale ranges from having the highest accreditation attainable to institutions which are considered to be a part of higher education but are not accredited and have programs that are "unusual", (Lovejoy, 1970: 85). Lovejoy also presents descriptive information about each school in his work. Most of the information that Lovejoy presents can be obtained through college catalogues. Lovejoy does however indicate some criteria that might be used in evaluating a school in respect to the specific needs of the student.

Lovejoy suggests that the prospective student should visit the college or university under question in order to get a feel for the campus. On such a visit the student should examine the facilities (buildings) and the social opportunities on campus. He assumes the better the facilities, the better the school, and the more

opportunities for involvement. Other considerations that prospective students should make are: the size of the school, whether it is co-ed, the proximity of the school to home and the amount of regional scholarships available.

In summary, Lovejoy's College Guide ranks schools on the basis of accreditation but the thrust of the work is centered around the task of helping students select the best school for their personal needs. Lovejoy lists a number of factors that prospective students should consider in making their selection. It is important to note that the factors mentioned should be adapted to the student's needs. Lovejoy states, "It is utterly impossible to measure with a yardstick some of the intangible and inponderables about colleges", (1970: 71) in reference to quantitative measures of schools. He thus views selection and evaluation as a personal and subjective procedure.

Trow

Martin Trow's Technical Report: Carnegie Commission National Survey of Higher Education, has two general purposes. The report attempts to gather information and develop ideas useful to public policy and to investigate aspects of American higher education. Trow and his associates administered a questionnaire to faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students. An important control variable Trow uses is the quality of the school.

Trow divides his classification scheme of quality into seven groups: three groups of universities, three groups of four year colleges and a final group of all junior colleges. The major source for establishing a school's rank was The Gourman Report. Trow

(1972: 93) indicates that his use of Gourman's ranking is pragmatic in that Gourman fails to state how he combines the rankings of the various items to produce scores, but the report does however produce results similar to other efforts. Trow considers high quality universities as those scoring 580 or above on Gourman's scale, medium quality between 477 and 579 and low quality less than 477 on the Gourman scale (Trow, 1972: 94).

For four year colleges both The Gourman Report and College-Rater rankings were used by Trow. For four year colleges the scale used was: top quality colleges scored 445 or above on the Gourman and 719 or above on the College-Rater, middle quality scored from 378 to 444 on Gourman and between 550 and 718 on College-Rater and low quality scored less than 378 on the Gourman and less than 550 on the College-Rater (Trow, 1972: 96). For junior colleges, only one category was used.

The reasons for including Trow's report are twofold. First, Trow's report, though not a ranking, is a good example of a combination of two different ranking systems applied to a set of problems. The Gourman Report and College-Rater are treated as very similar in their methods and results by Trow. Second, Trow's study points to the importance of quality (rankings) of schools as a variable in studying higher education.

B. Graduate Literature

Graduate Education

The relationship between graduate and undergraduate education is an important one. The performance of a graduate program may reflect on

the overall nature of the undergraduate programs. Five points will be made here on the relationship between graduate and undergraduate education.

It is reasonably safe to conclude that graduate programs exert an influence on undergraduate education. Jencks and Riesman support this contention with their statement, "The graduate schools are therefore by far the most important shapers of undergraduate education", (1968: 247). Jencks and Riesman view undergraduate education in some schools, with little exaggeration, as simply a cut-rate, mass-produced version of graduate education (1968: 247-248). The possibility exists that departmental, as well as school reputations, stem more from their graduate training programs than from their undergraduate. Criteria for ranking such as publications, research, scholarship, and production of graduate degrees, evolve out of graduate programs more so than undergraduate education. Grigg (1965: 30) indicates, "The ultimate classification or ranking of a university is based on its graduate program, on its reputation for scholarship, and on the research that the graduate faculty produces."

The second point to be made concerns the correlation between the ranking of graduate schools and undergraduate. When comparing Gross and Grambsch, who rank graduate schools, to Gourman's ranking of undergraduate schools, Abbott and Schmid found a correlation between the two ranking systems of .83 (unknown: 19).[3] Those schools with leading graduate programs also tend to lead in undergraduate programs.

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[3]Abbott and Schmid based their correlation on the ranks of 79 schools.

There are other facets to the relationship than just a simple correlation. The relationship between undergraduate school and graduate school may also be important in terms of gaining admission to the occupational structure and/or higher echelons of education. Berelson contends, as do other experts, that there exists a system of stratification in higher education and:

> Where graduate students come from and where they go is determined in large part by the institutions through which they pass. Given the stratification of both undergraduate and graduate institutions and the differing quality of students, something like a rough matching goes on of students to graduate training institutions (out and up) and products to employing institutions (out and down)" (1960: 226).

In short, baccalaureates from better undergraduate schools generally go to the better graduate schools. This statement is more likely to be true when graduate schools have an abundance of applicants since they may tend to be more selective and use the undergraduate institution as a contributing factor in selection. Students taking their undergraduate degrees at top universities tend to attend top university graduate schools which in turn hire faculty from top universities. This process is known as the process of in-breeding.

The importance of the relationship between graduate and undergraduate education is evident. As there are perceived differences in undergraduate quality, there are also perceived differences in graduate quality. Evidence suggests that the two are correlated. If such is the case, then it is of value to study the various ways in which graduate education has been evaluated and contrast these ways with criteria used by undergraduate evaluators. The two should be

similar and of value to each other. The value of graduate evaluations (rankings) is the fourth point to be made. Upon inspection, the student of rankings will observe a considerable amount of overlap between the two systems of ranking and evaluation.

The previously mentioned points are not meant to be exhaustive of all of the relationships or characteristics of graduate and undergraduate education. They do represent some themes which are of importance to ranking and this study. The points stated justify the inclusion of graduate ranking studies in this research. Though not a comprehensive treatment of graduate education evaluations, the following studies do reflect the nature of graduate school rankings.

Berelson

Bernard Berelson's Graduate Education in the United States, presents an overall picture of graduate education in the late 1950's. A section of his work is devoted to the ranking of graduate programs, with particular emphasis on programs offering doctorates. Berelson bases his work on the previous studies of Keniston (1958). Viewing ratings as subjective, Berelson defines quality as, "largely a matter of what the field recognizes as such", (1960: 125). Berelson believes that often quality is mixed up with prestige; though not the same, they are believed to be related.

Berelson surveyed various experts in the area of graduate education such as graduate deans, graduate faculty, recent recipients of doctorates, school presidents and representatives of industrial firms, in order to gain information on the nature of graduate education. From this data, Berelson was able to construct a

classification scheme for universities and colleges. The top 12 universities constituted the first class, the next 10 schools were the second class, and the third group of schools were those belonging to the Association of American Universities and/or the Association of Graduate Schools. Colleges were also divided into three groups: those receiving accomplishment awards were the top group; the next group were those colleges receiving some recognition for accomplishment but not as high as the first group, and the final class of other colleges.

To validate the classification scheme used and the appropriate ranks of schools, Berelson looked at the percentage of doctorates produced by each school and for each group as a whole. He found that the top 12 universities produced 34 percent of all doctorates, the second group 20 percent and the third group 20 percent with the remainder falling outside of the first three classes (Berelson, 1960: 126). As a second indication of validity, Berelson studied what he termed the contributions of schools to science and scholarship. Contributions were operationally defined as authorship of articles in major learned journals in 1958. A ratio of authors per 100 faculty members was computed for every school in the study. The results, Berelson concluded, seem to support his classification scheme and the ranks assigned to the schools. It is important to note that numerical ranks are not used by Berelson, but instead schools are grouped into quality classes. The ranking scheme Berelson uses is only part of the larger treatment of graduate education that he undertakes. Three items constitute his ranking: professional opinion, production of Ph.D's and amount of publications.

Cartter

Allan Cartter's An Assessment of Quality in Graduate Education, is a serious attempt at evaluating major graduate departments in the United States. It asks what the strengths and weaknesses of graduate schools are in providing well trained scholars for research and teaching. Cartter begins by making the important point that objective measures of quality are in reality subjective. He states, "In an operational sense, quality is someone's subjective assessment, for there is no way of objectively measuring what is in essence an attribute of value", (1966: 4). Cartter viewed his study as a survey of informed opinion.

Cartter's study encompasses 106 schools which offer doctoral work. Questionnaires were sent to department chairmen, distinguished senior scholars and junior scholars. In reference to each department, each respondent was asked to give a best judgment of: the quality of the graduate faculty, the effectiveness of the doctoral program and the degree of expected change in the relative position of departments in relationship to other departments in the field.

Responses were assigned a numerical weight and mean scores for each department were compared. Departments were then classified into the following categories: Distinguished, Strong, Good, Adequate Plus and those not classified. A scale of attractiveness of programs was also constructed. Cartter attempted to evaluate the validity of his methodology by comparing the ratings of his study to ratings of panels, faculty salary levels, library resources, number of fellowships and number of publications. He viewed these items as supporting

his original findings.

In summary, Cartter viewed all rankings as subjective, including his own. He had respondents rate departments in their field in terms of the effectiveness of the doctoral program, quality of graduate faculty and amount of perceived change. Measures were taken to assure some degree of validity.[4]

Margulies and Blau

A ranking of professional schools entitled "America's Leading Professional Schools" was undertaken by Margulies and Blau. Margulies and Blau requested the deans of 1,180 professional schools to complete a questionnaire. They make the assumption that deans will be the most knowledgeable evaluators of professional education. Deans were asked to name the five most outstanding schools in their own profession. The schools that were most often mentioned by the deans were interpreted by Margulies and Blau to be the top ranked schools. Margulies and Blau indicate that there might be several factors that could influence the rating of a professional school. They suggest that, "...the salaries offered, the qualifications and commitment of the faculty, the ability of the students it attracts, the academic environment of the university, the flexibility of its structure and its responsiveness to changing conditions, and so on" (Margulies and Blau, 1973: 21) could play a role in the quality of the school and thus its selection by deans (Margulies and Blau, 1973: 21).

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[4] In 1969 Roose and Andersen replicated the Cartter study. Employing the same design as Cartter, Roose and Andersen expanded the study to allow for new departments and new majors. They also made an attempt at measuring the degree of improvement of departments. See Roose and Andersen 1969.

Of particular interest in the Margulies and Blau study is not their method of inquiry but their analysis of the data. They study the various characteristics of the schools that attained the highest ranks. Geographic location, size, student-faculty ratios, drop-out rates, quality of students, flexibility, existence of separate library and many other characteristics of schools were subject to study. The Margulies and Blau study may be characterized as a "standard" type of professional rating. They let deans use the criteria they desire to identify the most notable schools. What is important is the fact that only deans were asked to complete the questionnaire. Faculty and student input was non-existent.

Summary of Professional Literature

The professional literature suggests that professionals use a wide variety of criteria when evaluating universities and colleges. In spite of the wide variety of items used by professionals, there seem to be points of agreement among them; certain criteria are mentioned by many professionals. The major points of agreement were observed to be the following.

An item that is mentioned by several professionals is the quality of faculty (Gourman: 1967; Fine: 1972; Berelson: 1960; Cass and Birnbaum: 1973). There is a tendency for most professionals to stress the quality of the faculty as an important criteria. Professionals have a tendency, when evaluating faculty, to think in terms of the percentage of Ph.D's, publications and/or research, and compensation

levels. Seldom is teaching ability mentioned, if at all.[5]

A second major item comes under the heading of quality of the student body. The quality of the student body is often associated with the admission policies of the school and this is referred to as selectivity. Several professionals mention this criteria (Astin: 1971; Cass and Birnbaum: 1973). Statements such as, "the quality of a school is influenced by the quality of its students," are evident in the professional literature.[6]

As a whole, professionals often mention the quality of faculty as a criteria. The researcher concludes that the quality of faculty is one of the most important criteria used by professionals. In addition to these major items other criteria are: academic departments, libraries, administrations, physical facilities, student services, extra-curricular activities, environment, etc. The list can be very extensive. The point is that professionals use a wide variety of criteria when evaluating schools. It is important to acknowledge this as well as pointing out some areas of agreement.

Professional literature is important in that many individuals involved with higher education have access to it, including prospective students and present students.

What this implies is that professional literature may have an impact on higher education since there appears to be a high degree of

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[5]As will be shown later, students rate teaching highest in priority and use teaching as an evaluating criterian. See chapters 5 and 4 respectively for further descriptions.

[6]See chapters 5 and 4 for further elaboration on the students' use of the quality of the student body.

consensus on the ratings of schools; in this sense, professional ratings and guide books serve as a stable standard of comparison. These professional studies were used in the present research as standards of comparison for student evaluations and a basis for assessing their ability to evaluate.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Overview of Study

The research method employed was primarily that of survey research. The research design followed the basic format of acquiring a random sample from the population, collecting the data, and then analyzing the data.[1] Sampling was conducted during the preliminary stages of the research. The sample was derived from the population of students attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Spring semester 1974.

The development of a questionnaire for the obtained sample was also undertaken as a preliminary step. Questionnaire design was based in part on initial research involving students and preliminary library research. The goal of these preliminary tasks was to develop a workable questionnaire which would best answer the proposed areas of inquiry.

After the questionnaire had been fully developed as a workable research tool, the administration of the questionnaire to the selected sample occurred. Other minor tactics were utilized to obtain maximum

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[1] Research designs tend to map out a neat and orderly procession of research steps (sequential). Many honest researchers will indicate that such designs are desirable and look attractive on paper, but are often difficult to put into practice. I will contend that often researchers allow needs of studies to be primary influences on research design rather than strict methodologies.

response to the questionnaire. The final major task centered around the analysis of the data. To facilitate this procedure the computer program of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was utilized. The following sections of this chapter will further elaborate on the procedures used.

Sample and Sample Frame

The objective of the sampling procedure was to obtain a simple random sample of students attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha Spring semester 1974. A simple random sample is one in which each individual has an equal chance of being selected and all combinations must be equally probable (See Blalock 1960: 393). The procedure used to accomplish this goal was to randomly select a number of undergraduate courses being taught during the spring semester. The procedure of selecting courses seemed to be the most efficient when contrasted to other possible procedures.[2]

The original number of randomly selected courses was 20 Freshman level courses and 20 Senior level courses. The total number of 40 courses was thought to be sufficient enough to accomplish the target sample of 100 Freshmen and 100 Seniors. In the case of the Freshmen such was the case; however, it was necessary to conduct a second random sample of Senior level courses because the initial projections of class sizes fell short. In the second selection procedure 5 additional courses were randomly selected. Out of the 20 Freshman courses

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[2]The use of courses was thought to provide a time saving, low cost, means of gaining access to respondents. For example, the direct use of student names would have required more time and cost and would have probably yielded a lower response rate.

selected, 17 were administered the questionnaire.[3] Out of the 25 Senior courses selected, 18 were administered the questionnaire.[4] The total number of students randomly selected by this procedure was 471. The figure of 471 constituted 3.62 per cent of the approximately 13,000 students enrolled.

The procedure for obtaining a random sample was to first obtain an undergraduate Class Schedule for Spring semester 1974. The schedule consists of the following important items: (1) a unique call number which is assigned to each course; (2) a course number which gives an indication of class level of a course; (3) the name of the course; (4) the instructor of the course; (5) classroom used; (6) time and day that class is in session. All 6 items in the schedule book were utilized to either conduct the sampling procedures and/or to administer the questionnaire.

On the basis of course numbers in the schedule book, all Sophomore and Junior level courses were omitted so as to maximize the number of Freshmen and Seniors in the sample. Only the Freshmen and Senior level courses were used in the sample. The rationale behind this step was based on the original proposition that Freshmen and Seniors when compared would maximize any differences that might have occurred during collegiate exposure. It is important to note that

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[3]Of the 20 courses selected, the researcher was unable to contact one instructor, one of the selected classes was over, and the 20th class was too close to the end of the semester to administer the questionnaire.

[4]Of the 25 Senior courses selected, 3 were independent study courses which had no students enrolled, one instructor refused to cooperate, one class was cancelled, and time expired on 2 courses.

this procedure of maximizing Freshmen and Seniors did not exclude Sophomores, Juniors, or Graduates from responding to the questionnaire.

All of the Freshman and Senior level courses were listed, in order, on $\frac{1}{4}$ inch squares. All squares were measured to assure uniformity in the sampling procedure. As course and call numbers were added to the squares, each course was checked off in the schedule book. These checks served as a guide to whether or not a course was included in the sample frame or not.

All courses were included as standard procedure, however the following rules were also applied. Lecture sections were included but if labs or discussion sections were required instead of using the larger sections it was believed that the smaller lab or discussion sections would prove to be more feasible.[5] Some lectures had a lab included but no lab course number because there was only one lab; in such instances the lecture course number was used. When labs were optional, lecture numbers were entered so as to not exclude any students that did not exercise their lab option.

When courses were cross-listed, that is they were interdepartmental, only one sample entry was made. This was to insure that no one class had more than one chance of being included in the sample. Independent studies courses were included, even though no formal class period was being held, for they constituted possible student course

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[5]For example, one large lecture of 300 students might over-represent a group of students, would satisfy the target sample in only one class, and would be mechanically difficult to administer. The smaller lab and discussion sections approximated the size of other classes and instructor cooperation was easier to secure given the smaller number of students involved.

work. Classes ending March 6 were omitted because the actual administration of the questionnaire would occur at a later date.

After completing all of the entries, sample squares were divided into two separate pools, one of Freshman courses and one of Senior courses. A random sample was drawn, with replacement, from both pools. This step was taken by means of placing the squares in a box and drawing them out one at a time. Selection was made by individuals other than the researcher so as to assure objectivity in the selection process. Drawn numbers were added to a master list in order of occurrence and then returned to the box. The number of courses drawn was based on projections based on previous text book sales which gives a rough estimate of the number of students enrolled in a course.

Course numbers were then traced back to the original course title and instructor. The instructor of the selected course was mailed an introductory note which provided preliminary information about the study. Instructors were then contacted by the researcher and asked to cooperate with the administration of the questionnaire.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred during the academic Spring semester of 1974. The data collection procedure, for analytical purposes, may be divided into two distinctive, but related, stages. Given the nature of the research problem, it was necessary to conduct a preliminary data collection procedure. The following section describes the rationale and procedures utilized in this research stage.

Preliminary Data Collection Procedures

The nature of the research problem dictates that some degree of

"grounding" in the Glaser and Strauss sense (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) would be necessary in order to gain insight into the problem area and in order to construct a more valid questionnaire. The purpose of this stage was to provide some student input into the research procedure early in the design. Two tactics were used to obtain student input. The first tactic was the informal discussion of the topic between the researcher and U.N.O. students. Students were permitted to state anything they wished about U.N.O.[6] The researcher, however, did ask two questions of respondents. The first question asked the respondents to rate U.N.O. as a whole. The second question asked the respondents to indicate what criteria they used to evaluate a university. All questions were open-ended and students seemed to hold strong opinions on the subject matter. Altogether 12 undergraduates were subject to these informal discussions. All responses were recorded after the discussion had terminated.

The second tactic utilized in the preliminary stage was the administration of two open-ended questions concerning the subject area to two classes of undergraduate students. The first question asked the students to rank U.N.O. as a whole with any term which they thought would best describe U.N.O. Students were instructed that if they wished to elaborate they could. The second open-ended question asked the students what criteria would they use to evaluate a university and again they could elaborate if they so desired. Altogether 30 students

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[6]It should be noted that the researcher made every possible effort to be informal and let the respondents generate the information flow. In short a minimum of structure was present during these discussions.

responded to these questions. Data gathered from both the discussions and written questions was later used in questionnaire construction.

After preliminary procedures were implemented a pretest of the questionnaire was undertaken. Pretests act as an important aid to planning (Simon, 1969: 190). A pretest was given to determine the feasibility of the questionnaire and determine whether respondents had any difficulty in responding to the questionnaire. Another purpose of the pretest was to determine the amount of time necessary to complete the questionnaire, which was an important factor in securing instructor cooperation. The pretest was administered to 10 students over a three day period. None of the students had any difficulty in answering the questions as requested. The time necessary to complete the questionnaire ranged from 4 to 7 minutes. Although the pretest was based on a small sample, the researcher was confident that it would suffice, because none of the respondents had any difficulty completing the questionnaire. Results from the pretest were interpreted to mean that the questionnaire was basically sound for the research purposes.

The second stage of data collection involved the actual administration to students in the selected courses and the mailing of the questionnaire to students enrolled in independent studies courses. The in-class administration of the questionnaire included the following steps.

Initial permission and scheduling occurred through contact with course instructors. Administration of the questionnaire began during the first minutes of the class period. Prior to the distribution of

the questionnaire, the following instructions were stated: (1) students were asked if they had previously completed the questionnaire and if they had they were not given another questionnaire, (2) students were informed that the purpose of the questionnaire was to gather data for an M.A. thesis in sociology; (3) verbal instructions were given for completing question number 11,[7] (4) the students were informed that completing the questionnaire was optional; (5) students were asked if there were any questions; (6) students were thanked for their cooperation. Questionnaires were gathered upon completion from the respondents. Altogether 452 questionnaires were completed in this classroom manner. The in-class administration of questionnaires took place over a three week period.

Independent studies, because of their lack of a class period, presented a unique problem of obtaining student responses. Rather than contacting students on campus, the option was taken of using the mail as a means of gathering data. The procedure of contacting students and securing responses is now outlined in detail.

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[7]Some respondents failed to complete the questionnaire completely and/or properly. It was discovered that question 11 was not being correctly filled out in some instances. Usually, the respondent who failed to complete the question correctly would rank the 12 items 1 to 3 instead of 1 to 12 as directed verbally in class and on the questionnaire. Some of the failure to properly complete the questions may be due to poor questionnaire design. The researcher feels however that an undiscernable amount of improper responses were due in part to a lack of cooperation on the part of students. This conclusion is based in part on the researcher's observation of non-verbal communication of respondents. For example, facial gestures and time needed to complete the questionnaire often gave an indication of whether question 11 was filled out properly, in that those finishing first usually failed to complete question 11 correctly and those respondents "acting" as if completing the questionnaire was bothersome also failed to fill out the question correctly.

The instructor, as with the in-class procedure, was contacted and asked for cooperation. If the instructor was successfully contacted and agreed to cooperate, then a list of students currently enrolled in the selected course was obtained from the instructor. After the list of students was compiled, the next step was to contact each student by telephone and ask for their cooperation. Each student contacted by phone was: (1) informed of the researcher's name and status (sociology graduate student); (2) informed that their course (course name was stated) was selected by random procedures for sampling; (3) informed that the instructor of the course was aware of the study and had agreed to cooperate; (4) asked if they would be willing to complete the questionnaire; (5) informed that the questionnaire was for an M.A. thesis in sociology; (6) informed of the instructions (same as in class) with special emphasis on question number 11; (7) asked if they had completed the questionnaire previously; (8) thanked for their cooperation; (9) informed that they would be receiving a questionnaire and self-addressed stamped envelope. If a respondent was not contacted by telephone, the researcher's effort to contact them was indicated by a statement in the instructional letter included with the questionnaire. The statement indicated that the researcher was unable to reach the respondent by telephone and it included the information conveyed by the telephone.

In order to obtain a high response rate to the mailed questionnaires various tactics were utilized. One tactic was to hand type each letter and add a personal note such as the respondent's name. As Longworth discovered, "A personal note and typed letter of explanation on

letterhead paper increased returns." (Longworth, 1953: 313). The practice of personally contacting the respondents by telephone may have also increased the return rate. The name of the instructor and course were included to add to the legitimacy of the questionnaire. Self addressed stamped return envelopes were included for ease of return (Ferriss, 1951: 247). The letters were typed on University of Nebraska at Omaha official stationery to add to the legitimacy of the study.

A total of 22 questionnaires were mailed out using the previous procedures. Of the 22 mailed, 18 were returned, which yielded an 81.7 percent return rate, one which many social scientists would consider a high rate of return.[8]

Questionnaire Design

The general format of the questionnaire was closed response. (See Appendix A). Questions involved either filling-in-the-blank or checking the appropriate response. By using closed questions, the researcher gained uniformity of responses along the specific dimensions under investigation.[9] There were also certain advantages gained with

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[8]Non-responses may be due to several factors: change of address, transfer, non-cooperation, dropping out of school, previous completion of the questionnaire, etc. For a summary of the importance of non-response see Mayer and Pratt (Mayer and Pratt, 1966: 637-646).

[9]The criticism may be raised as to whether it would be more meaningful to use open-ended questions which permit more freedom of response and allow respondents to use their own definitions in responding. Given the nature of the problem, that of comparing student ranking with professionals, it seems more plausible to use a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is based in part on open-ended questions which might overcome some of the problems present with closed questions. The closed seemed to be more feasible for this particular study, but one must be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of it and other methods.

the use of this design in analysis, coding, and measurement. The questionnaire was designed to last five minutes, an important factor when instructors were considering cooperation. The small period of time required to complete the questionnaire was important to instructors because they did not want to take up very much class time. There were 36 questions on the questionnaire which were divided into three sections.

The first 10 questions dealt with background information about the respondents. Respondents were requested to indicate their year in school, enrollment status, age, academic major, extra-curricular involvement, having attended other schools, having applied to other schools, having read literature about other schools, sex, and approximate grade point average. The respondents were requested to either check or fill in the appropriate response. Data gathered with these questions were treated as independent variables in analysis.

A major set of questions centered around question number 11 on the questionnaire. Respondents were given a set of characteristics of a university and were requested to rank the items in order of importance from one to twelve. Respondents were requested to rank every item with a unique number. The items (characteristics) on the list were drawn from either professional literature or students. Of the twelve items listed, two were specifically student generated: those concerning the number of courses offered and the quality of teaching (student-teacher relationship). An additional item concerning the quality of the faculty was also student generated, but also is often mentioned by professionals. The three student items were developed during the

preliminary stages of the research. The professional items were gathered from professional rankings and guide books. The rationale of mixing student criteria and professional criteria was based on the problem of determining whether students would place priority on student items or professional items. Question 11 was considered to be a central question of this study. The researcher viewed the response to question 11 as a good indicator of whether the questionnaire was being completed correctly.

Questions following question 11 were of a scale type. Respondents were requested to check the appropriate response in one of five categories provided. The categories (responses) were: Excellent, Good, Average, Fair and Poor. A total of 11 questions utilized this scaled design. Three additional Yes-No questions were also included on the questionnaire. The design of the questionnaire was intended to maximize the amount of data gathered in the least amount of time.

Coding Procedures

Coding procedures are divided into two specific stages. The preliminary stage determines the categories which will be used in the analysis of the data prior to the collection of the data; this is termed the precoding procedure. The second stage occurs when the data collected is prepared for counting and tabulation by classifying responses into meaningful predetermined categories. The procedures of precoding and coding will be described in order of the occurrence of each variable in the questionnaire, keeping in mind that the two procedures actually occurred at different points in the research design.

The first response to be coded was years in school. Years in school was divided into five categories with a numerical symbol assigned to each; the five categories and symbols used were: Freshman (1), Sophomore (2), Junior (3), Senior (4), and Graduate (5).

The second variable to be coded was enrollment status. Full-time students were coded with a number 1 and part-time 2. Graduate students require only 9 hours to be full-time, however they were still subject to the same classification criteria as undergraduate students.

Age of respondents was divided into two categories of younger which was symbolized by a number 1 and older symbolized by a number 2. Responses were coded into the appropriate category after the data was collected.

The fourth variable was academic major. Majors were, as a general rule, classified into categories based on the academic major's membership college;[10] however, the following procedures and classifications were also employed. The College of Arts and Sciences was sub-divided into three categories: Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Humanities. Inclusion of majors was based on the Undergraduate Catalog classification.[11] The rationale of these divisions was also

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[10]Originally the study had proposed to use the academic major as the unit of analysis. The researcher did not foresee the vast number of majors on campus. The number of different majors was too vast to be meaningful for analysis. It was necessary to create categories that would prove to be large enough to be meaningful but not too broad to lose information.

[11]See section on characteristics of sample for actual breakdown of majors in each category.

based in part on the premise that Humanities, Social Science, and Natural Science students are usually required to take differing course work and thus might possibly incorporate student sub-cultural differences. Because of the diversity of majors in the College of Arts and Sciences and the large student enrollment in the college, it was believed to be fruitful to break the college into the categories.

The College of Continuing Studies posed a somewhat unique problem. Students falling into this category were viewed as not really falling into any specific college in that Continuing Studies represents a general approach to higher education. A student could belong to the Continuing Studies program, yet major in several possible speciality areas. Requirements within the college are fairly lax and thus students have more freedom to take electives throughout the university than other students. Many of the students enrolled in the program are taking courses as non-degree students. The College of Continuing Studies was viewed as a universal category in which students undertaking a broad approach to their education as well as those not committed to an academic major could be classified. Four of the respondents were officially registered in the continuing studies program. Also included in this category were those students in University Division and Undecided. It was believed that all students coded into this category had the common characteristic of indecision and/or wide exposure to the various colleges and courses on campus, more so than those students firmly committed to an academic major.

The law enforcement and criminal justice majors were separated from the College of Public Affairs and Community Service for two major

reasons. The first was that it represents one of the largest majors on campus and secondly it was believed that the students enrolled in the program might differ in their responses from other students within the college and university.

An additional category of Medical Related Areas was also included to incorporate students in medical fields. In some instances, students enrolled in medical areas were only exposed to U.N.O. in a limited sense in that the majority of their credits would be acquired outside of the U.N.O. campus from their respective nursing schools, medical schools, schools of dentistry, etc. Aside from the following exceptions the membership college was used.

In summary, the categories used and their code numbers were: Social Sciences (1); Natural Sciences (2); Humanities (3); Business Administration (4); Continuing Studies (5); Education (6); Engineering and Technology (7); Fine Arts (8); Home Economics (9); Public Affairs and Community Service (10); Law Enforcement (11); and Medical Related Areas (12).

The level of student involvement in extra-curricular activities and groups was classified into three categories and code numbers: very involved (3), somewhat involved (2) and not involved (1). The three variables of having attended other colleges, having applied to other colleges, and having read college catalogues were all coded in the following manner. Yes responses were symbolized with a number 1, with a number 2 representing no responses. The variable of sex was codified with a number 1 signifying a male and 2 a female. Grade point averages were divided into 3 categories with a number 1

symbolizing a below 2.0 average, 2 symbolizing a 2.0 to 3.0 average and a 3 signifying an above 3.0 average.

The list of characteristics of a university were all coded in the same manner. The coded symbol used for each variable was the actual 1 to 12 rank given to it by the respondent. Every characteristic on the list had to have a unique rank from 1 to 12 in order for the responses to be coded and recorded.

Questions 12 through 20 and 22 to 23 all dealt with the respondents' selection of their response on a provided scale. The responses and their numerical symbol were: Excellent (5); Good (4); Average (3); Fair (2); and Poor (1). All of the questions in this scale requested the respondent to evaluate or rank the item under question.

Questions 21, 24 and 25 requested information on choice in attending U.N.O. again, attendance at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, and attendance at Creighton University respectively. Yes responses were coded with a number 1 and no were coded with a number 2.

All of the coding was executed in numerical form to facilitate key punch operations and the ease of coding data on to I.B.M. code sheets. The use of numerical symbols, as opposed to alphabetic symbols, meant that the computer would perform mathematical functions on the data, but with the caution that all assumptions about the code and numbers would be made by the researcher. All coding was done with an awareness of the effects of fatigue on the researcher. To assure some degree of reliability of the coding procedure, the researcher always used the number 1 for positive responses, a number 2 for negative and always kept a coding procedure sheet at hand. The data

cards were repunched to assure the reliability of the key punch operation.

Statistics and Analysis

All of the computations made on the data were executed by the computer program entitled, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (1970). The program will be referred to here as the SPSS program. Three different procedures were utilized in the analysis of the data. The procedures of codebook, crosstabs and Guttman scale were processed by the computer. Each of the procedures will be briefly described in the following paragraphs, along with the appropriate statistics computed in each procedure.

The first procedure utilized was that of codebook. The codebook procedure computes eleven statistics of which the arithmetic mean, median and mode were used in this study. The arithmetic mean is defined as the sum of the scores of a variable divided by the total number of valid cases for that variable (SPSS, 1970: 272). The formula the SPSS program utilized was:

$$\overline{X} = \frac{\sum_{i=}^{N} Xi}{N}$$

Where $\overline{X}$ equals the mean, Xi equals the score of each case and N represents the total number of valid cases (SPSS, 1970: 272).

Another statistic utilized in the codebook procedure was the median. The median is defined as a number which has the property of having the same number of scores with smaller values as there are with larger values (Blalock, 1972: 59). The median is obtained by first arranging the cases in order according to the numerical values of the

scores. If an odd number of cases is involved, the median will be the score of the middle case; when an even number is involved, the median will be determined by computing the mean of the scores of the two middle cases. The median then, is the value of the middlepoint of an array that is such that half of the items are above it and half below it. It is often referred to as a positional measure, in that it locates a position of a case relative to other cases in the array.

The mode is the next statistic computed in the codebook procedure. The mode represents the most probable value of a distribution. It is defined as the most frequently appearing score in a distribution.

The simple percentage is the next statistic computed. It is calculated as the proportion of cases to the total number of cases multiplied by 100. The adjusted percentages were used to allow for missing cases. Percentages were computed throughout the study. In addition to percentages, frequencies were also computed. Frequency was defined as the number of cases occurring.

The next procedure executed was the crosstabs procedure. The following table is an example of the crosstabulation procedure used in this study. The Table I below provides an example of the basic table format.

EXAMPLE OF CROSSTABULATION TABLE I

Variable A	Variable B			Row Total
	a. b. c. d.	a. b.	a. b.	
	a. b.			
Column Total				(N)

The first variable mentioned is treated as the A variable. The A variable is always on the left hand side of the table. It increases as one reads down the column (when applicable). The B variable is at times treated as a dependent variable. The B variable is always mentioned second and reads from left to right, which increases in value as one reads to the right (when applicable). The a. in the first cell represents the frequency of cases in that cell. The frequencies are computed for every cell in the table. The b. represents the row percent for that particular cell, which is again computed for each cell in the table. The c. represents the column percentage for the cell and the d. represents the total percent for the cell. The frequencies for the cells and the cell row percentages were utilized in analysis. By using the row percentages, the researcher was able to make comparisons between the different values of the A variable to measure effects. By using row percentages, differences within categories were made comparable. In addition to the cell computations the margins were computed along with the total number of cases (N). The following are some of the statistical tests produced in the crosstabulation procedure.

One of the statistical tests computed in the crosstabs procedure is Chi square. Chi square was crosstabulated in every crosstabs operation. The Chi square statistic operates at least at a nominal level. Chi square is defined by Blalock as, "...a very general test that can be used whenever we wish to evaluate whether or not frequencies which have been empirically obtained differ significantly from those which would be expected under a certain set of theoretical assumptions." (1972: 275). The formula for computing Chi square is

as follows:

$$X^2 = \frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe}$$

Where X^2 equals Chi square, fo represents the observed cell frequency and fe equals the expected cell frequency. The Chi square is obtained by first taking the square of the difference between the observed and expected frequencies in each cell. We divide this figure by the expected number of cases in each cell in order to standardize it so that the biggest contributions do not always come from the largest cells. The sum of these non-negative quantities is the value of Chi square (Blalock, 1972: 277).

The degrees of freedom present in the table is computed with the Chi square statistic. The degrees of freedom is computed by the following formula:

$$df = (c - 1)\ (r - 1)$$

Where c equals the number of columns and r equals the number of rows. The number one is subtracted from the number of columns. Then one is subtracted from the number of rows. The remainders of both are then multiplied, with the end result being the degrees of freedom. The value of Chi square needed for significance increases as the degrees of freedom increases. Where the value of Chi square was found to have a probability of .05 or less, it was considered to be significant.

The next statistic is an ordinal measure of correlation. The statistic is Tau c. Tau c was crosstabulated in every crosstabs procedure. The variables must be at least at the ordinal level for

Tau c to be used. The Tau c value is computed by the following steps. The first step is to count all of the possible number of pairs $(\frac{1}{2})$ N (N - 1), then partition these into the following three groups. The P group which equals all pairs in which the order on one variable is the same as the order on the other-concordant pairs. The Q group which equals all pairs where the order on one variable is the opposite of the order on the other-discordant pairs. The third group equals all of the pairs in which at least one variable shows a tie. The Tau c formula is:

$$\text{Tau c} = \frac{2m\ (P - Q)}{N^2\ (m - 1)}$$

Where m represents either the number of rows or the number of columns in the table, whichever is smaller. The Tau c statistic measures the strength of the relationship present. The scale used by the researcher for interpreting the Tau c values was: .50 or above was considered strong; .2 to .5 was moderately strong; and .20 or less was interpreted as being weak. The Tau c values can range from -1.0 to +1.0.

In interpreting the importance of cell frequencies for tables, a standard procedure was to first find if any cells exceeded 25 percent. If any cells did, then neighboring cells were observed for similar high percentages. Further percentage comparisons were always made on the tables. The cell's row percentage was subject to analysis, to determine the extent of percentage variation between rows (variable categories). Percentages and frequencies were stated when deemed important, importance being defined as major differences in percentages

between variables (usually around 5 to 10 percent).

The final procedure was the construction of a Guttman scale. One Guttman scale was computed for the study. The definition of Guttman scale used here is, "A Guttman scale is a means of analyzing the underlying operating characteristics of three or more items in order to determine if their interrelationships meet several special properties which define a Guttman scale." (Nie, 1970: 197) These properties are that it must be unidimensional, which means that the items must measure movement toward or away from a single underlying object. It must also be cumulative which means that the items can be ranked in order of difficulty in such a way that respondents falling in the highest item category also fall into the decreasing item categories. The same applies to the additional item categories. (Nie, 1970: 197).

Two tests were used to evaluate the Guttman scale, the coefficient of reproducibility and coefficient of scalability. The coefficient of reproducibility is defined as, " ...a measure of the extent to which a respondents' scale score is a predictor of his response pattern. Mathematically it is 1 minus the result of dividing the total number of errors by the total number of responses." (Nie, 1970:201). It varies from 1 to 0. The coefficient of scalability is obtained by, " ... dividing the percent improvement by the difference between 1 and the minimum marginal reproducibility. The denominator represents the largest value that the percent improvement may obtain, and the resulting ratio is called the coefficient of scalability."[12] The coefficient

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[12]For a definition of the percent of improvement see (Nie, 1970: 201).

of scalability varies from 1 to 0 and should be well above .60.

The Nature of Survey Research

The survey attempts to arrive at generalizations by making quantitative comparisons of data gathered by uniform question-answer procedures. The broad category of survey research is divided into two major data gathering techniques which are the interview and the questionnaire. Many articles have been written on the advantages and disadvantages of survey research. There seems to be some consensus among social scientists as to what are the major advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of the survey method begin with the idea that the survey is relatively low in cost, when contrasted to other methods (Simon, 1969: 243) and in some instances existing records and data may be utilized. Some contend that with a survey the researcher can get closer to the "real" world than using other methods such as the experiment which they contend is conducted in an artificial environment. Another advantage is that often respondent cooperation is easier to obtain with survey research than with other methods.

A characteristic of survey research is its standardization. Standardization offers a major advantage in that it gives " ... social scientists a quantitative method for establishing relationships and for generalizing about known populations," (Dean, Eichhorn and Dean, 1967: 247) but it also has a major disadvantage in that it exposes each respondent to identical questions and classifies responses into a few simple types regardless of the distinctive qualities of each response. With standardization, some information is lost and some is

gained in responses to questions.

A major disadvantage indicated by many researchers is that with the survey design there is a lack of control of the independent variables. The researcher can manipulate variables during data analysis to help compensate for this weakness. Another difficulty is that respondents, at times, respond in a manner which they perceive to be socially desirable. This effect may be decreased by assuring anonymity of respondents.

In summary, the advantages of survey research are its low cost, standardization, use of existing records, high cooperation, the ability to study several variables and in some instances to bring the researcher closer to the "real" world. Disadvantages are the lack of control of independent variables, the loss of some information because of standardization, the existence of socially desirable responses, and other problems of data manipulation.

Thq Questionnaire as a Research Tool

The questionnaire is one of the most commonly employed research tools. The questionnaire, as with other tools, has certain advantages and disadvantages. Of the disadvantages, one frequently mentioned is, "There is always a degree of vagueness attached to language." (Phillips, 1966: 118). Respondents may find it difficult to understand a question or may interpret the question differently than intended by the researcher. A further disadvantage is also that respondents may not be motivated to answer the questions. Another disadvantage is that questions, especially fixed alternative, are often inflexible and are not easily adapted to the respondents' perspectives. The nature and type of data

gathered are limited to the actual wording and design of the questionnaire. Questionnaires are representations of the researcher's conceptual framework and are thus limited to a certain extent by those conceptual frameworks. Limitations in conceptualization of questionnaires pose problems to the researcher, especially in undertaking exploratory research. Another disadvantage is that the categories for classifying responses are at times too general to cope with the meanings the respondent may wish to convey (Dean, Eichhorn and Dean, 1967: 271).

Certain advantages are present with the use of the questionnaire. One advantage is that the questionnaire is relatively low in cost when contrasted with other methods. The savings of time in the data gathering procedure may also be evident in that respondents often need only a few minutes to respond to questions. A standardized questionnaire can control for differences stemming from researcher variability. The questionnaire, if properly designed, can generate a considerable amount of data with minimal effort in administration and response. Often the questionnaire affords an opportunity to take a larger sample of the population than other methods might reasonably permit. Whereas the questionnaire often lacks in flexibility, the lack of flexibility means that responses may be more consistent with the objectives of the study. Consistency of questions controls to some degree the variation in responses and thus aids the procedure of coding and data analysis.

In the present study, the questionnaire, despite its disadvantages, was viewed as the best research tool available. It is

important to describe how the researcher attempted to overcome some of the disadvantages of questionnaires. To begin with, the disadvantage of the vagueness of language is difficult to overcome; however, the questionnaire was designed to be simple in nature and was pre-tested to determine whether respondents would have any difficulty in interpreting questions.

The problem of motivation and response was slight since the questionnaire was administered in class and because of the techniques employed to elicit a high mail return rate. The inflexibility of the questionnaire posed a problem that was partially overcome by asking open-ended questions of students in the preliminary research stages. Flexibility was especially important with question number 11 since it was developed to determine what students thought was important about universities. Classification of responses into general categories may be a disadvantage in that some information may be lost. However the first 11 questions of the questionnaire were of such a factual nature, that specific responses could be indicated by the respondents. The classification of responses into the scales employed in the questionnaire leads to some information loss. One of the most important points pertaining to disadvantages of questionnaires in this study as well as others is that the data gathered is limited to the conceptualization of the questionnaire wording and design.

The advantages of using the questionnaire as a research tool seem to outweigh the disadvantages. The questionnaire used was low in cost and took very little of the respondent's time to complete - 5 minutes. The advantage of consistency in administration by researchers was not

important in that the same researcher administered all of the questionnaires. The questionnaire was advantageous in that it produced a considerable amount of data for analysis. In all, 36 responses were recorded for every completed questionnaire which provided an abundant source of data. Time was an important aspect in the design of the research in that cooperation was based on the time involved and the study's data collection had to occur during Spring semester. The questionnaire proved to be efficient and could be administered in the limitations posed by time. The use of the questionnaire provided the opportunity to sample a large number of students, a larger sample than would have been reasonable by such methods as the interview. Finally, the questionnaire provided consistency in responses which aided in the process of analysis and coding. The consistency of questions and responses allowed for a certain degree of cross comparisons among groups under study. In all research there are advantages and disadvantages to the research techniques and tools employed. What is important is for the researcher to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the research design utilized.

CHAPTER IV

STUDENT CRITERIA AND ABILITY TO RATE

One of the major objectives of this study was to gather some preliminary data on the criteria that students use to evaluate a university. The basic question was: What do students think is important in evaluating a university? The data served two purposes. First, it constituted some preliminary information about the criteria students use to evaluate universities. Second, it served the purpose of aiding in the construction of the questionnaire. In addition to the major task of gathering data on student criteria, the study also attempted to gather some data on the ability of student to evaluate. These two questions will be described in this chapter, with the criteria problem being the first to be described.

The problem of determining what criteria students use in evaluating a university was one of the first operations undertaken in the research procedure. The need to determine what criteria students use was viewed as important, for the student criteria form the basis for evaluation. Three tactics were utilized to gather information on student criteria. Two of the tactics were executed in the preliminary stage of the study. The third was executed during the in-class administration of the questionnaire.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) point to some of the advantages of

inductive strategies in social research. The researcher interpreted their work as suggesting that often the lack of pre-conceived structure is desirable in social research. The lack of structure is most applicable to situations in which the researcher is not deducing from any theoretical framework. Such was the case with this study. There were no clear cut hypotheses or theories from which to work. The study was basically inductive in nature. A tactic which was viewed as inductive in nature was the open-ended question.

The open-ended question, though limited by the question itself, does permit the respondent to generate any response that comes to mind. In the case of this study such open-ended questions were employed. One form of gathering preliminary data was to ask U.N.O. students two open-ended questions about U.N.O. A total of 12 students were asked two questions about U.N.O.

First, "How would you rate U.N.O.?"
Second, "What criteria would you use to evaluate U.N.O.?"

Both questions were open-ended and thus respondents were permitted to respond in any manner they wanted.

The same two questions were asked of 30 students at U.N.O., but instead of asking them to verbally respond, they were requested to write down their responses. The responses to both types of data gathering procedures numbered 42 in all.

The results of both procedures were compiled with the following results. The ratings of U.N.O. were usually "Good" or "Average" with no students rating U.N.O. in a manner which could be interpreted as poor. The largest number of responses were in the average (18) and

good (11) ratings. These were the exact terms that students used to rate U.N.O. except for one O.K. which was interpreted as meaning average. In addition, 3 students rated U.N.O. as excellent and 6 as fair. Others failed to have a response or didn't have an opinion.

The second question was what criteria do students use to evaluate a university. The responses were varied. Altogether 36 categories of responses were generated. A category was determined by using the exact subject that the student mentioned. For example, accreditation was mentioned by 3 students, and was a category. Social atmosphere was mentioned by a student and was thus a category. Because of the vast number (36) of categories generated, the researcher selected the three most frequently mentioned items by students as being representative of student criteria (See Appendix B). It is important to note that some students mentioned more than one item.

The three most often mentioned items were teaching (7), courses (studies) offered and the number of quality faculty (teachers). In relationship to the item of teaching two categories mentioned were viewed as similar but worded differently by students. One was teachers' attitudes toward students (1) and the other was student-teacher relationships (1). In relationship to the category of the number of quality faculty, two categories were viewed as related; faculty treatment (1) and diversity of teachers (1). Some students elaborated on the courses offered and suggested that what was important was the number of courses offered.

Of importance is the students' emphasis on academic related criteria. Teaching, quality of faculty, and courses offered can be

directly related to academic concerns. In contrast, such items as extra-curricular activities, athletics and other items would not be typified as being academic areas. One could argue that everything on campus is academic in nature, but the researcher would contend that differences in the degree of academics are evident. The thought that some items are directly related to academics and some indirectly related occurred to the researcher.

As previously mentioned, these three student criteria were incorporated into the questionnaire design. The responses to the question of ranking priorities were thought to verify whether students did use the three items as criteria. The importance attached to an item on the list of 12 on the questionnaire was interpreted as being representative of its use as a criterion by students. The three student criteria items were mixed with professional items to determine whether students would select these student items as high priority items. If the students did, it would be interpreted as supporting the importance of the criteria and the existence of the criteria as evaluative measures. It is important to note that one of the student criteria items overlapped with the professional criteria and that was the quality of the faculty. The quality of faculty was mentioned by both students and professionals. Other student criteria such as the quality of teaching and number of courses offered are not emphasized in the professional studies.

Of the 12 items on the list, students selected the quality of teaching more often as most important (ranked first), quality of academic departments as second, quality of faculty third and number

of courses offered fourth. All three of the student criteria items were ranked high by students on the questionnaire. Students had a tendency to select student generated criteria as important to a university. This evidence seems to support the idea that these criteria are used by students to evaluate universities and are considered by students to be of importance. The chapter in this study on priorities describes the priorities of students in greater detail. The results from the chapter on priorities would seem to support the conclusions about student criteria.

The importance of academics to students seems to be supported by these results. Academic related items had a tendency to be mentioned by students as being criteria and were selected by students as being of high importance to a university. Because of the mentioning of the three criteria items by students during this preliminary stage and the high ranking given the three criteria by students on the questionnaire, it may be safe to conclude that although students use many different criteria to evaluate a university, many of them use the quality of the faculty, quality of teaching and number of courses as criteria and they attach importance to such criteria. There seems to be an emphasis placed on academic criteria as opposed to non-academic criteria.

A problem that was closely associated with the question of student criteria concerned the students' ability to evaluate, ability to evaluate in reference to professional standards. The students' ability was compared to professional benchmarks. The more in line the students were with the professionals, the higher their ability to evaluate.

The more they would differ, the less their ability to evaluate. There was an assumption that professionals' ability was more valid than students'. Professional standards were utilized as a standard for comparisons. Ability then was in reference to professional standards.

To determine an approximation of ability two questions were asked of the respondents. One question was:

> "A ratio of 100 books per student in a university library would be considered?"

A scale was then provided from excellent to poor for the students to record their responses. Thus, students were asked to determine whether a set ratio of 100 books per student was a good, average, etc. ratio. The book ratio was selected for two reasons. First, a professional standard was readily available and was quantitative. Second, libraries are an important part of any university and thus they were thought to be an item in which students might have some experience and judgments about.

The results for the entire sample were that out of 454 students who responded to the question: 13 (2.9 percent) of them rated the ratio as poor; 44 (9.7 percent) as fair; 123 (27.1 percent) as average; 202 (44.5 percent) as good; and 72 (15.3 percent) as excellent. A total of 12.6 percent rated the ratio below average, as contrasted to 60.4 percent who rated it above average. As a whole, there was a tendency for students to rate the stated ratio as above average.

The professional benchmark used in the instance of the book ratio was Fine's (1972) student-book ratio. A ratio of 1 student per 100 books or less would be considered by Fine to be inferior (1972: viii).

Thus by a representative professional standard, a ratio of 1 student per 100 books is inferior or otherwise below average. One student per 200 books would be labeled by Fine as adequate (1972: viii). It appears that, if one assumes that inferior means below average (fair or poor), then most students rating the stated ratio above average know little about student-book ratios. A secondary indication of the ability to rate, related to the student-book ratio question, was the ratings given U.N.O.'s library by students. The U.N.O. library ratings are described in detail in the chapter on ranking (Chapter 6). In general the ratings given the U.N.O. library were favorable in spite of an approximate student-book ratio of 1 student per 25 books. The ratings of the student-book ratio were viewed as only one indicator of the ability to evaluate.

An important key component of any institution of higher education is the faculty. Often professionals attempt to evaluate faculties of schools. The quality of the faculty is often thought to reflect the quality of the school. There have been various attempts to measure the quality of the faculty using different criteria. One criteria used is the student-faculty ratio at an institution. The basic assumption made by most professionals is that the more faculty members per student the better. In order to gain some information about students' ability to evaluate student-facutly ratios, a question was constructed on a set student-faculty ratio. The same method used for the student-book ratio was used for the student-faculty ratio question.

The question read:

"A ratio of 1 Faculty member per 20 students would be considered."

Then a scale from excellent to poor was provided for responses. Out of 463 respondents, the responses were: 5 (1.1 percent) rated the ratio as poor; 31 (6.7 percent) as fair; 81 (17.5 percent) as average; 218 (47.1 percent) as good; and 128 (27.6 percent) as excellent. A figure of 7.8 percent of the students rated the ratio as below average, as contrasted to 74.7 percent who rated it above average. Though several professionals use the student-faculty ratio for evaluation, only one professional explicitly mentions his ratio. Fine states, "In general, a student-faculty ratio of 10 to 1 is very good" (1972: ix). The scale provided for students did not have a "very good" option and is based on a ratio of 20 to 1. Because of these two reasons straight comparisons can not be made between Fine's ratio and the results on the questionnaire. The researcher would contend that by increasing the ratio to twice its original value (From 10 to 1: 20 to 1) the rating of the ratio would decrease to no more than average on the provided scale. There is no actual way of proving this, but the researcher feels comfortable by making this assumption. For the purposes of this study then, the ratio of 20 to 1 was treated as average.

Making this assumption, it was found that 74.7 percent of the students rated the ratio as above average, which was interpreted as representing an overrating. Given a set ratio of 20 students per faculty member, it was believed safe to conclude that many students overrate. This tendency was viewed as a lack of ability on the part of the students to evaluate. It is important to acknowledge that there was a high degree of consensus among the students in evaluating

the ratio with most students selecting the good and excellent ratings. In short, most students overrated the student-faculty ratio as they did the student-book ratio. The possible reason for this tendency is that most students don't know what a good ratio might be in the professional sense.[1] They are probably never exposed to such a ratio and probably don't feel a strong enough need to find it out. The researcher is suggesting that they might be naive about such matters.

The ability to evaluate was also viewed in terms of the students' rating of the university, its components, and other universities. These ratings are described in detail in chapter 6 on student ranking. The results in general suggest that students have a tendency to overrate universities and university components compared to how professionals rate or might rate such items. These results were viewed as reflecting the students' ability to evaluate.

In addition to the sample as a whole, other computations were made on the two indicators of ability. Additional computations were made to determine some of the possible effects of variables on the ability to evaluate. The crosstabulation procedure was utilized to compare some of the variables on the questionnaire with the two indicators. The crosstabulations that were made are described in the following paragraphs.

One of the basic contentions of the study was that as years of school increase, the ability to evaluate and rank increases. The ability of students to evaluate their education was thought to improve

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[1]Results could also reflect use of weak indicators of ability to evaluate. The indicators used may not adequately measure ability to evaluate.

as they proceeded through the educational experience. The rationale behind this contention was that as year in school increases, the student develops an information base from which to make judgments. To determine whether there might be some empirical justification for the contention, the researcher crosstabulated the variable year in school with both the ratio of students to books and students to faculty. The results of the crosstabulation are the following.

The first crosstabulation was between year in school and the student-book ratio. The crosstabulation yielded a Chi square value of 15.03 with 16 degrees of freedom. The Chi square value was not significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was -.071 which was not interpreted as being important. Percentage analysis yielded little variation between the year in school categories. Cells exceeded the 25 percent level, but did so within categories and not between them. Year in school had no observed effect on rating of the student-book ratio.

It was thought that the best comparisons could be made between the Freshmen and Senior categories in terms of observed percentage differences. For the Freshmen: 4 (3.2 percent) rated the student-book ratio poor; 7 (5.6 percent) as fair; 32 (25.6 percent) as average; 62 (49.6 percent) as good; and 20 (16 percent) as excellent. In contrast, the breakdown for Seniors was: 3 (2.4 percent) rated the ratio as poor; 16 (12.7 percent) as fair; 32 (25.4 percent) as average; 57 (45.2 percent) as good; and 18 (14.3 percent) as excellent. The maximum percentage difference was for the rating of fair in which 7.1 percent more of the Seniors rated the ratio as fair more than Freshmen. For

the two above average ratings, Freshmen on a percentage basis, selected good and excellent more often than Seniors, but differences were slight (6.1 percent) for both ratings combined. Based on the evidence, there is a slight tendency for Seniors to rate the ratio lower than Freshmen. The results of statistical tests on the data do not reflect necessary values or differences to justify that Seniors are better evaluators than Freshmen, at least in terms of evaluating student-book ratios.

The next crosstabulation was the comparison of year in school with the rating of the student-faculty ratio. The crosstabulation yielded a Chi square value of 18.76 with 16 degrees of freedom and was found to be significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was .037 which was interpreted as being unimportant. The observed differences were occurring within categories and not between them. Percentage differences were found to be slight between year in school categories. It was considered to be important to compare the Freshman with Senior categories.

The breakdown for the Freshmen was: 0 rated the ratio as poor; 10 (8 percent) as fair; 25 (20 percent) as average; 67 (53.6 percent) as good; and 23 (18.4 percent) as excellent. In contrast, the breakdown for Seniors was: 3 (2.3 percent) rated the ratio as poor; 10 (7.6 percent) as fair; 27 (20.5 percent) as average; 56 (42.4 percent) as good; and 36 (27.3 percent) as excellent. The above average ratings for both groups were virtually equivalent. There appears to be, based on the statistical tests and percentage analysis, little variation between Freshmen and Seniors in terms of rating the student-faculty

ratio.

The contention that as the year in school increases, so does the ability to evaluate seems to be unsupported by the findings. The findings on student ranking seem to bear this out in chapter 6 of this study. The thought that Seniors would be better able to evaluate than Freshmen was not observed in the results or subsequent analysis. This means that in spite of the increased contact with schools that Seniors have compared to Freshmen, their ability to evaluate does not seem to increase based on the results of the two indicators used. It may be an easy argument to defend that, if a student enters the school naive, then the student has a high likelihood of leaving naive. Likewise, if a student has the ability to evaluate, he/she will graduate with this ability. The point being made here is that schools may have very little impact on the student's ability to evaluate.

A second major question arising out of the problem of ability to evaluate is the effects of the comparative perspective on the students' ability. The major contention was that students possessing the comparative perspective will be better able to evaluate than those students who do not. In short, as the degree of the comparative perspective increases, so does the ability to evaluate. To determine what possible influences the different degrees of the comparative perspective might have on the ability to evaluate, the four degrees of the perspective were crosstabulated with the student-book ratio and student faculty ratio. The first crosstabulation was with the book ratio. The summary of the findings is presented below. The row percentages and frequencies are stated in table II on the following page.

TABLE II

SUMMARY OF THE CROSSTABULATION OF COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE WITH STUDENT-BOOK RATIO

Degree of Comparative Perspective	Rating					
	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Totals
Having Attended	9	28	69	74	30	210
	4.3%	13.3%	32.9%	35.2%	14.3%	100%
Having Applied	12	30	81	169	40	272
	4.4%	11%	29.8%	40.1%	14.7%	100%
Having Read	13	35	111	167	51	377
	3.4%	9.3%	29.4%	44.3%	13.5%	100%
None	0	8	12	34	21	75
	0%	10.7%	16%	45.3%	28%	100%

N=452

It is important to note that the categories are not mutually exclusive thus there was considerable overlap among the categories. For example, those students having attended also applied and read literature. Those students having applied, also read literature. The most meaningful comparisons may be drawn between those students who had attended with those students who had not done anything. The reason for this is because these two categories are mutually exclusive and both represent the extremes.

For those students who had attended another school other than U.N.O., 49.5 percent rated the ratio above average. In contrast, those students who had not done any of the procedures, 73.3 percent rated the ratio above average. On a percentage basis, those students having the highest degree of the comparative perspective had a tendency to rate the ratio lower than those who were lower. The contention that as the comparative perspective increases, so does the ability

to evaluate seems to be supported to a slight degree. The results were not interpreted as being dramatic by the researcher. In terms of the ability to evaluate student-book ratios, the categories of the comparative perspective showed little variation from one category to the other, but some degree of percentage variation was noted for the extremes. The point that is being made is that a slight degree of the variation might be attributed to the comparative perspective when thinking in terms of ability to evaluate and more specifically the ability to evaluate a student-book ratio.

A second comparison was made between the degrees of the comparative perspective and the student-faculty ratio. The student-faculty ratio was viewed as an indicator of ability to evaluate. The frequencies and row percentages are presented in table III.

TABLE III

SUMMARY OF THE CROSSTABULATION OF COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE WITH STUDENT-FACULTY RATIO

Degree of Comparative Perspective	Rating					
	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Totals
Having Attended	2	17	38	93	67	217
	.9%	7.8%	17.5%	42.9%	30.9%	100%
Having Applied	4	20	47	124	85	280
	1.4%	7.1%	16.8%	44.3%	30.4%	100%
Having Read	4	28	66	182	105	385
	1%	7.3%	17.1%	47.3%	27.3%	100%
None	1	3	15	35	22	76
	1.3%	3.9%	19.7%	46.1%	28.9%	100%

N=461

It is important to reiterate that the categories are not mutually exclusive. Percentage comparisons between the extremes of those who

had attended and those who had not done anything demonstrated little percentage variation. The percentage difference between the two categories was 1.2 % for the above average ratings combined. These results indicate little variation among the comparative perspective categories, when evaluating the student-faculty ratio.

It was expected that a high degree of percentage variation would be present because students attending other schools might be more able to evaluate based on their contact with other schools. The observed results do not bear out this rationale. It may be suggested that, based on the two ability indicators used and the results observed in the ranking section of the study, that the comparative perspective may play a minor if any role in the students' ability to evaluate. It was acknowledged that slight differences did occur.

In addition to the major objectives of crosstabulating year in school and comparative perspective with the two ability indicators, crosstabulations with other variables were undertaken. The additional crosstabulations were computed for other variables in the study to determine what role they might play in the ability to evaluate. As with other ability comparisons, the rankings given the university, its components and other universities are considered to be evidence that is supportive of the findings presented here. The reader is asked to refer to chapter 6 on ranking for a detailed description of the findings. Additional crosstabulations centered around the problem of ability are stated in the following paragraphs.

The first crosstabulation was between enrollment status and the student-book ratio. The Chi square produced was 3.47 with 4 degrees

of freedom, which was not significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was -.04 which was interpreted as being too small to be of importance. Percentage comparisons between the cells yielded little variation between cells. The percentage variation was within enrollment status categories and not between them. Enrollment status appears to have little effect on the ability to evaluate in terms of the student-book ratio.

The second crosstabulation of enrollment status was with the student-faculty ratio. The Chi square value observed was 9.25 with 4 degrees of freedom, which was not significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was .097 which was interpreted as being too small to be of importance. The percentage differences were minimal, with the maximum difference being the rating of average in which 8.1 percent more full time than part time students rated the ratio as average. As a whole, the table showed little percentage variation between the two groups.

Evidence suggests that enrollment status may have little or no effect on the students' ability to evaluate the student-book ratio and the student-faculty ratio. Both full and part time students are probably subject to the same sources of information, so it might be unrealistic to assume that there would be differences.

The variable of the respondent's age was the next variable to be crosstabulated with the student-book ratio. The crosstabulation yielded a Chi square value of 10.81 with 4 degrees of freedom which was significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was -.1327 for the table. The observed frequencies were occuring outside of the

theoretically expected. The Tau c value was low, but did suggest that there was some degree of strength in the relationship. The percentage breakdown for younger students was: 5 (2 percent) rated the ratio poor; 16 (6.4 percent) rated it fair; 65 (26 percent) as average; 122 (48.8 percent) as good; and 42 (16.8 percent) as excellent. In contrast, the breakdown for the older students was: 8 (3.9 percent) rated the ratio as poor; 28 (13.8 percent) as fair; 58 (28.6 percent) as average; 79 (38.9 percent) as good; and 30 (14.8 percent) as excellent. The maximum percentage difference between the two age groups was for the rating of good, in which 9.9 percent more of the younger than older students rated the ratio as good. As a whole, the results suggest that, in terms of evaluating student-book ratios, age may make a slight difference. There was a slight tendency for older students to rate the ratio lower than younger students. Thus, age may influence the ability to evaluate if one uses the student-book ratio as an indicator.

The variable of age was crosstabulated with the second ability indicator of the ratio of students to faculty. The resultant Chi square value was 5.29 with 4 degrees which was not significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was .079 which was interpreted as being too small to be of concern. Percentage differences were small except for the category of excellent in which 8.7 percent more of the older students than younger rated the ratio as excellent. These results suggest that age plays a minor, if any, role in the evaluation of the student-faculty ratio.

Significant results were observed with the crosstabulation of age

with the student-book ratio but insignificant results were observed for the crosstabulation of age with student-faculty ratio. One could argue that age does affect the ability to evaluate and use the student-book indicator as evidence. On the other hand, one could argue that age makes little difference in ability and use the results of the age with student-faculty ratio as evidence. The researcher leans to the second argument simply because percentage differences seem to be occurring within age groups and not between them.

The variable of academic major was crosstabulated with both the student-book ratio and the student-faculty ratio. The results for the crosstabulation of major with student-book ratio produced a Chi square value of 62.91 with 44 degrees of freedom, which was found to be significant at the .05 level. Because of the large number of academic major categories (12) and the size of the sample, the expected cell frequencies fell below the level of 5 for some cells. The Chi square value was thus inflated. Through percentage analysis it was observed that many cells exceeded the 25 percent level, but did so within major categories and not between them. In short, there was little variation in percentage differences between academic major categories.

A crosstabulation between major and the student-faculty ratio was computed which yielded a Chi square value of 40.74 with 44 degrees of freedom. It was found not to be significant at the .05 level. Percentage analysis found cells that exceeded 25 percent, but they did so in unison with neighboring cells. Differences occurred within major categories and not among them. Academic major, the evidence suggests, plays little role in influencing the students' ability to evaluate

the student-faculty ratio.

Given the observed results of the two crosstabulations of academic major with the two indicators of ability, it may be safe to conclude that academic major has little if any influence on the students' ability to evaluate. Given the similar exposure to information for all academic majors it may be easy to understand why major would be unimportant.

The variable of respondent's sex was crosstabulated with the student-book ratio. The Chi square value produced was 10.35 with 4 degrees of freedom and was found to be significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was computed to be -.002, which was interpreted as too small to be important. The percentage breakdown for males was: 11 (3.8 percent) rated the student-book ratio poor; 34 (11.7 percent) as fair; 68 (23.4 percent) as average; 128 (44 percent) as good; and 50 (17.2 percent) as excellent. In contrast, the breakdown for females was: 2 (1.2 percent) rated the ratio as poor; 10 (6.2 percent) as fair; 54 (33.3 percent) as average; 74 (45.7 percent) as good; and 22 (13.6 percent) as excellent. It was observed that there was little percentage variation between the sexes, except for the category of average in which 9.9 percent more of the females than males rated the ratio as average. The largest percentage differences occurred within the sex categories and not between them. The low Tau c value suggests that the strength of the realtionship is almost non-existent. It may be safe to conclude that sex may have little influence on the ability to evaluate the student-book ratio indicator.

The crosstabulation of sex with the student-faculty ratio

produced a Chi square value of 1.989 with 4 degrees of freedom, which was not significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was an unimportant -.001. The maximum percentage difference between the sexes was 5.1 percent for the rating of good, in which the females rated the ratio good more often than males. The respondent's sex appears to have little influence on the ability to evaluate the student-faculty ratio.

Based on the two crosstabulations and percentage analysis, it may be safe to conclude that sex may have little or no influence on the ability to evaluate. The two indicators of the student-book and student-faculty ratios suggest that differences were occurring within sex categories and not between them. With males and females having access to basically the same sources of information about evaluation and higher education in general, it is understandable why there should be little variation between the sexes.

The final crosstabulations were made with the variable of grade point average and the two ability indicators. The first crosstabulation was between grade point average and student-book ratio. The crosstabulation yeilded a Chi square value of 7.706 with 8 degrees of freedom which was not significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was -.026, which was interpreted as being unimportant. Percentage differences were slight between the categories of grade point average. There was a slight tendency for above 3.0 students to rate the ratio lower than other grade point categories, but this tendency was very slight.

The crosstabulation of grade point average with student-faculty

ratio produced a Chi square value of 12.17 with 8 degrees of freedom, which was not significant at the .05 level. The computed Tau c value was .05 which was interpreted as being too small to be of importance. It was observed that little percentage variation existed between the grade point average categories. Most of the variation was within the categories.

Evidence suggests that grade point average plays little role in determining the ability to evaluate, based on the two indicators used. Differences were occurring by chance and percentages reflected little variation.

Two major objectives and subsequent findings were described in this chapter. The first objective of determining the criteria students use to evaluate universities was successful to a certain degree. It was found that students take into consideration a wide variety of items when evaluating a university. Some items were selected by students more often than others. Based on a small number of students (42), it was found that students mention teaching, courses offered and the number of quality faculty most often, if one selects the three most mentioned items. Findings in chapter V on priorities support the initial findings on student criteria. The three student criteria items were rated high in priority by students on the questionnaire. The results of the priorities section point to the importance that students attach to the three criteria items. An underlying theme that characterized all of the student criteria was their academic nature. All three of the items can be directly related to academic concerns. The implication is that students tend to use academic

criteria when evaluating universities.

The second major objective was to obtain some preliminary information on student ability to evaluate. Two indicators were used to determine this ability. It is important to point out that it would not be advisable to generalize too far on only two indicators as to the total ability of students to evaluate. The two indicators pointed in the direction of the students' inability to evaluate. The extent to which we can state this is limited to the two indicators used. Results on the ranking section of the study seem to support these findings. Students were found as a whole to overrate their school and its components. Overrating was interpreted as an indication of the students' inability to evaluate.

A problem derived from the question of student ability was to determine what influences some of the major variables might have on the ability to evaluate the two indicators. Crosstabulations were performed on 9 variables in order to determine their possible effects on the ability of students. Specific contentions as to the effect of year in school and comparative perspective were not strongly supported by the observed results and calculations. Tendencies were observed in the student ratings of the ratios, but they were slight. Additional crosstabulations with other variables and the two indicators yielded unimpressive results. As a whole, the differences observed between categories was overshadowed by differences within categories. Evidence suggests that the studied variables may have little if any effect on the students' ability to evaluate.

The researcher was struck by the naivety of students when

addressing the question of ability to evaluate. Evidence suggests that students lack the ability to evaluate and really don't develop this ability despite experiences at school. In short, schools may have little impact on the students' ability to evaluate. This would provide a plausible explanation for the lack of variation observed in the results. For example, little difference was observed between year in school categories as Seniors did not differ much from Freshmen.

Another possibility is the indicators are so out of line that the students may have the knowledge but simply are not able to relate that information to the specific indicators used. Students may have the ability, but the questions failed to measure it.

This concludes the chapter on criteria and ability. The study will now turn to the problem of priorities.

CHAPTER V

PRIORITIES

A major objective of the proposed research was to determine whether students rank a set of school characteristics, in terms of priority, in any consistent fashion. Do student's ranking of school characteristics fall into any definite pattern? The underlying central question was: What is the importance, in terms of priority, attached to characteristics of schools by students.

Question 11 of the questionnaire requested the student to rank a list of characteristics in order of importance. Respondents were to rank each item from 1 to 12 with 1 being the most important item on the list, 2 being the second most important item, continuing down the list of the 12 characteristics until every item had a numerical rank and each rank was unique to that item. The list of characteristics used was compiled from professional guide books and rankings in addition to the three items that were mentioned by students during the preliminary stages of the research. Analysis of the data followed two different procedures. One procedure was based on the entire sample as a whole. The other was based on the various variables under study. As a standard procedure items ranked in the top 3 ranks were labeled as having a high rank, those with ranks in the next three (4-6 were considered moderately high, those in the next three (7-9) were moderately low, and those in the bottom three ranks (10-12) were classified

as falling into the low category. The results of the research are presented in the following sections.

Sample as a Whole

The rankings of the characteristics for all of the students in the sample were analyzed. The results for the entire sample have been tabulated and are presented below in table IV. The names of the characteristics are listed down the first column, with the name of the statistic shown at the top and the value of the statistic located in the table.

TABLE IV

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR ENTIRE SAMPLE

Name of Characteristic	Mean	Median	Mode
Quality of Teaching	2.472	1.874	1.0
Quality of Academic Dept.	4.201	3.549	2.0
Quality of Faculty	4.614	3.863	2.0
Number of Courses	4.678	4.564	2.0
Quality of Library	5.412	5.238	5.0
Quality of Administration	5.857	5.690	4.0
Academic Quality of Student Body	7.214	7.224	9.0
Quality of Student Services	7.398	7.723	9.0
Quality of Physical Facilities	7.636	7.883	8.0
Social Atmosphere	8.732	9.530	10.0
Extra-curricular Activities	9.853	10.531	11.0
Quality of Athletic Facilities	9.916	10.795	12.0
			(N=407)

The characteristics of a university are listed in the table in order of importance with the highest priority being attached to the

item at the top of the list of characteristics. The quality of teaching had the highest overall ranking with the quality of athletic facilities the lowest. The overall rank (placement) of a characteristic is based on two measures, the mean, which is the arithmetic average assigned to a characteristic, and the median, which half the cases fall above and half fall below. Both measurements produce a rough scale of the order of importance of the set of characteristics. It was found that both measurements yielded the same order for the items.

The number one priority that students selected as most important was the quality of teaching. A total of 208 (51.1 percent) of the students selected the quality of teaching as the most important characteristic, whereas 78 (19.2 percent) considered it as the second most important item. Results seem to indicate that the quality of teaching is of prime importance to students. The number of students ranking the quality of teaching low was small in comparison. Eight students ranked the quality of teaching 10 or lower.

The next three characteristics, quality of academic departments, quality of faculty, and number of courses all seem to deal with academic concerns directly, more so than the remaining items on the list, such as student services and extra-curricular activities. The point to be made is that there is a tendency among students to select characteristics directly related to academic concerns over those not related or only indirectly related. The quality of teaching, number of courses and quality of faculty were items that were mentioned by students during the preliminary stages of the research.

Quality of teaching and number of courses were both student

generated items. The quality of the faculty was mentioned by students but also is a common criterion used by professionals in evaluating schools. The quality of faculty is a fairly standard item used for ranking and evaluating schools. The number of courses and quality of teaching is seldom if ever mentioned. The findings seem to suggest that there may be a gap between professional priorities and student priorities

At the bottom of the list of ranked characteristics is the quality of athletic facilities. The number of students ranking the quality of athletic facilities with the lowest rank of 12 was 151 (37.1 percent), with an additional 73 (18.9 percent) ranking it 11 and 55 (13.5 percent) ranking it 10. Results seem to indicate that the quality of athletic facilities is a low priority item for most students. Few students gave the item a high ranking. To a lesser degree, extra-curricular activities were also low ranked with an overall position of 11. As academic and/or teaching related items have a tendency to be ranked high by students, nonacademic items tended to be ranked low by students.

The overall results of the student ranking of characteristics raises some questions and generates some ideas on the subject. Concerning the number one ranked item, the quality of teaching, it may be reasonable to assume that some students attend universities for academic concerns such as learning and certification. If such is the case, then the quality of teaching and other academic items may be of primary importance to students.

Student relationships with teachers and the process of teaching involves a considerable amount of commitment on the part of the

student and faculty. For example, lectures, testing and assignments are directly related to the instructor and his/her ability to teach effectively. The teacher and the process of teaching are in a central position to be evaluated by students. The quality of teaching plays a central role in the student's university career, thus the importance that students attach to it becomes more evident.

The second ranked priority for the sample as a whole was the quality of academic departments. The high ranking of departmental quality must be viewed in light of the students' relationship to their respective academic departments. A possible explanation for the high ranking of department quality is that students are dependent upon the departments for certification, course credits, counseling and other academically related services. Most academic majors are required to take a certain number of courses in their major field from their major department. The departments constitute what might be termed a meaningful unit of analysis for students. Whatever the factors may be, students must deal directly and indirectly with the academic departments on their campus including a special involvement with their academic major department.

The quality of the faculty and number of courses were ranked third and fourth respectively. Again as with the first two items the underlying theme of the importance of academics to students comes to the surface. The quality of the library is a fairly standard characteristic used by professionals to evaluate schools. Students as a whole ranked the library the fifth item or moderately high. The final item ranked by students that falls into the moderately high category is

the quality of the administration. The academic quality of the student body received a moderately low ranking of 7.

The quality of student bodies is directly related to the selectivity of schools. Some professional evaluations consider the academic quality of the student body as one of the most important factors in determining school quality (Cass and Birnbaum 1973). Students do not seem to place as much emphasis on student body quality as do their professional counterparts. The quality of student services was ranked eighth by students. The professionals and students seem to agree that the importance of student services is of less importance than other items. Many professional rankings fail to mention student services as a criterion for evaluation.

Another item that was moderately low was the quality of physical facilities with an overall ranking of nine.[1] The facilities of schools are often suggested by professionals as criteria for evaluation, but students tend to rate the item moderately low.

The social atmosphere was ranked tenth and thus fell in the lowest category. The social atmosphere is relatively distant from the academic concerns of students as a whole. This statement is particularly true in the case of commuter schools in which many students are on campus a relatively small amount of time as contrasted to residential campuses. The researcher would contend that the social atmosphere of commuter

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[1]In light of the large amount of capital construction occurring at the sampled university, this finding is interesting. A new class-office building, library, physical plant and physical education facility are either under construction or in the planning.

campuses is of less importance to students than for students attending residential schools because the students at the commuter campus are probably on campus a shorter period of time and are less socially involved.

The eleventh item in the low priority category was extra-curricular activities. This finding is not surprising in light of the characteristics of the sample concerning the degree of involvement of students. A total of 354 (75.3 percent) of the students considered themselves not involved in extra-curricular activities and 104 (22.1 percent) indicated they were only somewhat involved. The findings appear to be mutually supportive, the lack of involvement of students and the lack of importance that students attach to extra-curricular activities.

The final overall ranked item is the quality of athletic facilities. There might be several factors which contribute to the lack of priority attached to the quality of athletic facilities. One possibility is that most university students are not active participants in varsity sports and thus tend to de-emphasize their importance. As with other low ranked items, it would be difficult to relate athletics to academic concerns in a direct sense. Other plausible factors might be the particular characteristics of the commuter student and/or the nature of sports and its acceptance at the sampled university. Any number of factors could contribute to the students' ranking athletic facilities the lowest item on the list.

As a whole, students have a tendency to select academically related concerns over non-academic. The importance of the quality of

teaching seems to be a major priority of the students in general. Students also tend to rank student generated criteria over professional. There is a tendency to select student criteria out of the mixture of professional and student items. If a pattern is present, it is that students tend to agree as to what their priorities are and these priorities are related to whether the item is related to academic concerns or not. The conclusions and inferences made are not meant to be exhaustive or definitive but rather an exploratory attempt at suggesting some possibilities on the problem.

As part of the research design, a further analysis of the ranking of characteristics was undertaken. The rank of characteristics (priorities) was related to various variables to discover what relationships might exist within the various groups of students on campus. The data were subject to a somewhat different, more elaborate analysis. The procedure used will now be described in detail.

The variables under study were cross-tabulated with the rankings made by the students. The variables under question were treated as independent variables which might influence the dependent variables (ranking of items). The statistics employed in this were the Chi square test for significance, Tau c, and percentages difference. The following steps were used to assess the recorded values for the tables.

The variable was first crosstabulated with each item included on the list of university characteristics. The variable read down the far left column and the rank for the item reads from left to right across the top, with the value of the rank decreasing from left to

right.[2] A table was generated for every variable under question and every characteristic of a university on the list provided on the questionnaire. The first statistic utilized was Chi square. The level of significance was set at .05 for these tables. It is important to note that some tables had expected frequencies of cells that fell below the minimum 5. This was due to the large number of cells and the relatively small size of the sample. Blalock (1972: 285-286) contends that the expected frequencies of cells should at minimum be 5 cases. If they are not then the researcher has two options. He/She can subtract .5 from all of the observed frequencies to reduce the value of Chi square. In the case of several cells, the researcher has the option of combining categories in order to decrease the number of cells. With this study the first option was impractical in that there were a large number of cells and the procedure of subtracting is basically designed for small tables. The second option was also considered to be impractical, for collapsing categories would have reduced them into less meaningful classifications. The loss of information may have been too much to tolerate. It was decided that a third option might be of value. The option was to present the values of Chi square in summarized form and explicitly note whether the expected frequencies fell below the acceptable level of 5 for cells. The results are thus presented with special notation of weaknesses. It is important to note that several tables had expected frequencies for cells exceeding the level of five and thus were not subject to this weakness. If both variables were ordinal, then the Tau c value

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[2]See methods chapter and particularly the data analysis section.

was observed. Further steps involving percentages in cells were also taken.

The first use of percentages was to examine the extreme columns of the tables to determine if any patterns might exist. Any peculiarities were noted; peculiarities being defined as any cell exceeding 25 percent of the cases for a row. If any cell exceeded 25 percent, then further analysis was undertaken. The same procedure applied to other cells in the tables. The rationale behind the 25 percent was that it seems to reflect a value worthy of consideration and secondly a set standard of 25 percent assured a certain level of consistency in analysis. Higher or lower percentages could have been utilized depending upon the levels set by the researcher. The emphasis on frequencies and appropriate percentages of the cells is important to this study.

The rationale of the researcher for using this third alternative is that it was simply the best option. The use of the tables and statistics, despite its apparent weaknesses, was an attempt to minimize the amount of data lost. Rather than discarding the data, the researcher felt it was of more value to present it, with special notation of the weaknesses inherent. Not all tables were subject to problems, several met all of the necessary assumptions.

Year in School

The first variable subject to study was that of year in school. Year in school was crosstabulated with each characteristic on the list. The expected frequency for cells in the computed tables, in some instances, fell below the level of 5 cases. The results are presented

in table V.

TABLE V

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR THE VARIABLE YEAR IN SCHOOL

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Library	36.56631	.7793
Number of Courses	41.27711	.5890
Quality of Athletic Facilities	44.55157	.6149
Social Atmosphere	55.59349	.1129
Academic Quality of Student Body	63.57489	.0282
Extra-curricular Activities	40.85339	.6073
Quality of Teaching	44.51567	.4499
Quality of Administration	30.99522	.9305
Quality of Academic Departments	44.87537	.4350
Quality of Physical Facilities	33.54799	.8738
Quality of Student Services	42.94559	.5168
Quality of Faculty	48.31593	.3028
		(N=407)

The Chi square values were inflated due to the expected frequencies falling below 5. The significant Chi square values are underlined on the table. There are 44 degrees of freedom for all of the tables computed for the crosstabulation of years in school and the items. Years in school, when related to the quality of library and number of courses, showed very little variation. Ranks assigned to items varied little between the year in school of the respondents. There was a certain degree of agreement concerning the quality of athletic facilities which proves to be interesting. A large portion

of the sample ranked quality of athletic facilities as 12. In terms of year in school, 25 percent of the freshmen ranked it 12, 33.3 percent of the sophomores, 42.5 percent of the juniors, 41.5 percent of the seniors and 51.1 percent of the graduate students. Over twice as many graduate students, on a percentage basis, ranked the quality of athletic facilities as 12 than freshmen. Whereas all students tend to rank the item as low, there is a slight tendency that as the years in school increase, the tendency to rank the item low also increases. When the rank of 11 is included with those ranked 12, the tendency is present but diminishes slightly. For social atmosphere, two cells fell above 25 percent, but neighboring cells also increased slightly. A table yielding a significant Chi square was the crosstabulation of years in school with academic quality of student body. No cells for the significant table exceeded 25 percent. Upon inspection it was observed that percentage differences between cells was minimal and thus the researcher is suspect. Differences were occurring within categories but not between them. Years in school, when crosstabulated with the remaining characteristics demonstrated little variation. If cells exceeded 25 percent, then neighboring cells also reflected changes, as in the case of athletic facilities in which the ranking increased beyond 25% for all year in school categories. (See above). Year in school, based on the presented analysis, does not appear to have any dramatic effects on the ranking of characteristics. In short, year in school does not greatly influence the students' priorities.

Enrollment Status

The next variable under consideration was the students' status. Status was defined as whether the student was enrolled in 12 or more hours of credit which classified him/her as a full time student and less than 12 hours as a part time student. The variable of status was crosstabulated with every item. The degrees of freedom were tabulated to be 11 for all of the tables. The expected frequencies for every table exceeded the minimum of 5, thus tables could justifiably use the Chi square statistic. The results of the crosstabulation and respective computation of Chi square are illustrated in table VI.

TABLE VI

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR THE VARIABLE ENROLLMENT STATUS

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Library	12.02088	.3621
Number of Courses	13.52461	.2604
Quality of Athletic Facilities	12.57158	.4009
Social Atmosphere	7.23085	.7801
Academic Quality of Student Body	10.53631	.4829
Extra-curricular Activities	11.77211	.3810
Quality of Teaching	13.98219	.2340
Quality of Administration	13.07475	.2885
Quality of Academic Departments	18.68961	.0669
Quality of Physical Facilities	4.19376	.9639
Quality of Student Services	12.74626	.3102
Quality of Faculty	7.55575	.7525
		(N=407)

None of the Chi square values were found to be significant at the .05 level. Some of the cells exceeded 25 percent on the computed tables, however neighboring cells also increased to similar values. Of interest is the crosstabulation of enrollment status and quality of academic departments. Though the Chi square was not significant, the results approach the realm of occurring outside of chance alone. There was as a whole little variation among respondents.

Age

The variable of the respondent's age was crosstabulated with the characteristics of the university. For the tables, there were 11 degrees of freedom. The results are illustrated in the following table VII. The expected frequency fell below the minimum of 5 for some cells.

TABLE VII

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR THE VARIABLE OF AGE

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Library	11.96581	.3662
Number of Courses	7.77670	.7332
Quality of Athletic Facilities	14.71546	.2574
Social Atmosphere	35.58850	.0002
Academic Quality of Student Body	22.22849	.0227
Extra-curricular Activities	14,63146	.2000
Quality of Teaching	10.80990	.4593
Quality of Administration	14.99487	.1827
Quality of Academic Department	19.53845	.0521
Quality of Physical Facilities	7.51119	.7563

TABLE VII (Continued)

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR THE VARIABLE OF AGE

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Student Services	18.57307	.0692
Quality of Faculty	12.05531	.3595
		(N=406)

Respondent's age was divided into two categories of older (over 23 years old) and younger (under 23 years).

For quality of library, number of courses and quality of athletic facilities all of the Chi square values indicated that the differences between the expected and the observed were occurring by chance. The crosstabulation of age with social atmosphere yielded a significant Chi square at the .05 level. The level attained was 35.58 at a level of significance of .0002. Assuming that the age of the respondents can be interpreted as an ordinal variable, along with the ordinal variable of rank of characteristic, the researcher was able to interpret Tau c. The Tau c was .25016 for the table which was considered to be a moderately strong relationship. There was a slight tendency for older students to rank social atmosphere lower than the younger students. A total of 43 percent of the younger ranked social atmosphere low (10-12) as contrasted to a slightly higher figure of 59.8 percent of the older students ranking it low.

The crosstabulation of age with academic quality of student body also yielded a significant value for Chi square of 22.22. Further inspection discovered a weak value for Tau c of -.03. The relationship was thus a weak one. Cells did not vary in any consistent fashion and

no cells exceeded the 25 percent standard level of comparison. The crosstabulation of age with extra-curricular activities, quality of teaching and quality of administration all had Chi square values that were not found to be significant. Some cells exceeded the 25 percent level but did so in harmony with neighboring cells. An almost significant Chi square value of 19.53845 was found, when comparing age with quality of academic departments. Though not statistically significant, the table was developed further but to no avail. The Tau c values were too low to indicate any relationship.

The additional items of quality of physical facilities, quality of student services, and quality of faculty were found to have statistically low values for Chi square.

Though the variable of age, when crosstabulated with the characteristics was found to be statistically significant in two instances, one must be cautious in drawing any conclusions. This is due to the expected frequencies for some of the cells falling below 5.

Academic Major

The variable of academic major presents a major problem for analysis. The crosstabulation of the 12 academic major classifications to the 12 ranks of items involves the construction of 144 cells per table. With a total N of 397 for each table, it is easy to understand why the expected frequencies of the cells would fall far below the minimum of 5 cases per cell. Given this fact and the point that academic major is nominal and not ordinal, the researcher had to rely solely on the percentages falling into the cells of each table. The Chi square values computed are presented in table VIII, keeping in

mind that they are of minimal value. The violation of the expected frequency rule is more severe with these tables than any others.

TABLE VIII

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR THE VARIABLE OF ACADEMIC MAJOR

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Library	138.56252	.1307
Number of Courses	107.06633	.1865
Quality of Athletic Facilities	118.78304	.2107
Social Atmosphere	145.81448	.0602
Academic Quality of Student Body	98.95113	.0726
Extra-curricular Activities	139.47488	.1195
Quality of Teaching	140.90347	.1033
Quality of Administration	95.61000	.0449
Quality of Academic Departments	136.61897	.1573
Quality of Physical Facilities	121.08063	.4851
Quality of Student Services	119.82980	.4828
Quality of Faculty	145.05962	.0657
		(N-397)

As mentioned, analysis of major to characteristic tables involved in-depth percentage analysis. The column extremes were noted and cells exceeding 25 percent were also examined. For the comparison of major to the quality of library the results vary little from major to major. There was a slight tendency for business administration students and home economics students to rank the number of courses offered higher than other majors. An average of 11.5 percent of academic majors outside of business administration and home economics ranked the

number of courses 1 or 2 as contrasted to 22.6 percent for business administration and 28.1 percent for home economics. A statistically significant Chi square was computed for major and quality of administration, however further analysis suggests that the Chi square value was due more to the low expected levels for the table than factors other than chance. Tables for other characteristics crosstabulated with major yielded cells that exceeded the 25 percent limit, however neighboring cells also increased relative to these cells. If variation existed among cells, it was consistent throughout academic majors.

Extra-curricular Involvement

Crosstabulation between the variable labeled involvement and the complete list of characteristics was computed. The variable was viewed as being ordinal in that differences in degree of involvement were registered by the respondents to the question. Three variations of the degree of involvement were possible: very involved, somewhat involved and not involved. Initially the researcher expected a balanced distribution of students falling into the three categories of involvement. As the results turned out, only 12 (3 percent) of the students considered themselves very involved in activities. This percentage of very involved is contrasted to 303 (74.6 percent) of the students indicating they were not involved. If one couples the lack of very involved students with 36 cells and 406 respondents, it becomes evident that the expected frequencies would fall below 5 per cell. The resulting computations are presented in table IX, keeping in mind the apparent weaknesses of the tables.

TABLE IX

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR THE VARIABLE OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Library	41.43237	.0073
Number of Courses	49.37625	.0007
Quality of Athletic Facilities	56.35321	.0002
Social Atmosphere	19.92090	.5880
Academic Quality of Student Body	17.06502	.7598
Extra-curricular Activities	25.37604	.2794
Quality of Teaching	26.26747	.2404
Quality of Administration	28.12216	.1717
Quality of Academic Departments	24.84979	.3043
Quality of Physical Facilities	28.80428	.1505
Quality of Student Services	35.41032	.0351
Quality of Faculty	18.45369	.6788
		(N=406)

The tables had 22 degrees of freedom. Analysis was made as with other tables, by comparing individual cells. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher felt that differences occurring for rankings might be attributed to the degree of involvement of students. For example, the more involved a student was, the more importance he/she might attach to non-academic concerns such as extra-curricular activities, social atmosphere and athletics. It was believed that there might exist an underlying theme of involvement.

Upon inspection of the crosstabulation of involvement with

quality of athletic facilities no dramatic results were discovered despite the Chi square value being significant. The Tau c value was -.03751 so it was deemed as unimportant. Differences occurring outside of chance were not present for the variables of social atmosphere and extra-curricular activities. Percentage differences among cells were minimal. A significant value for Chi square was found in the crosstabulation of student services with involvement, however the maximum variance of a percentage for all cells was 10.5 percent. The percentage of 10.5 was not deemed important in light of the overall distribution of the others cells. The Tau c was too small to be considered worthy of attention (Tau c -.00075). For the quality of library, percentages of cells had a maximum difference of 5 percent for one cell with other cells having less percentage differences. The Chi square, though significant at the .05 level, had a small Tau c value of .03510. The number of courses item yielded a Chi square value of 49.37 which was significant at the .05 level (.0007). The Tau c value increased slightly to .067 but was still relatively small. Only one cell showed a slight difference of percentage and that cell was the rank of 10. Only .3 percent of the not involved students ranked it 10 as contrasted to 11 percent of the somewhat involved. Other differences were minimal for the table. For the remaining tables, all of the Chi square values were insignificant at the .05 level and all had small Tau c values. Some cells exceeded 25 percent level for the very involved in several instances but such dramatic percentages were based on only 12 students. Generalizations based on only 12 students were not considered to be desirable and thus analysis

of the very involved students was not undertaken.

Sex

The crosstabulation of respondents' sex with the list of characteristics was the next procedure of analysis. The expected frequency of every cell was computed and was found to exceed the level of 5 cases per cell. Generalizations based on Chi square were not subject to any limitations due to cell frequencies being too small. The degrees of freedom for all tables was computed to be 11. The crosstabulation findings are summarized in table X. The observed frequencies for the tables did not vary significantly from the expected except in one instance and that was for the crosstabulation of sex with quality of athletic facilities. The Chi square value that was computed was 23.19 at a level of .0261.

TABLE X

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR THE VARIABLE OF SEX

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Library	4.95174	.9335
Number of Courses	6.45599	.8413
Quality of Athletic Facilities	23.19691	.0261
Social Atmosphere	9.23329	.6004
Academic Quality of Student Body	11.41180	.4094
Extra-curricular Activities	10.46836	.4888
Quality of Teaching	17.10667	.1048
Quality of Administration	7.62317	.7466
Quality of Academic Departments	9.51659	.5743
Quality of Physical Facilities	11.62143	.4415

(Continued)

TABLE X (Continued)

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKINGS FOR THE VARIABLE OF SEX

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Student Services	7.91645	.7208
Quality of Faculty	6.62271	.8288
		(N=406)

There was little percentage variation for quality of athletic facilities except for the rank of 12 in which 9.9 percent more of the females ranked it 12 than males. The variation between the sexes on this characteristic might be due to the lack of equitable use and facilities available to female students and thus the lack of importance attached to athletics by females. Sex is not considered to meet the assumptions of ordinality and thus Tau c was of no value. Cells in tables exceeded the 25 percent level in a few instances but cells increased or decreased in unison, regardless of sex. There seems to be little variation between sexes on the ranking of characteristics of a university with the exception of athletic facilities which when crosstabulated proved to be significant.

Grade Point Average

The final variable studies in relationship to priorities was that of the respondents' approximate grade point average. The grade point average of the students was determined by requesting the students to indicate their approximate average. Student grade point averages were divided into three categories for analysis: those above 3.0, from 3.0 to 2.0, and those below 2.0. The problem arose in analysis of too few students below the 2.0 grade point average. The researcher

anticipated more students below the 2.0 average would be obtained in the sample. Such was not the case; a total of only 5 students fell into that category. The lack of students below 2.0 meant that the expected frequencies for all of the tables would fall short of the 5 per cell level. In light of this, values for Chi square were exaggerated. The degrees of freedom for the tables were 22. The results of the findings are shown in table XI.

TABLE XI

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY RANKING FOR THE VARIABLE OF GRADE POINT AVERAGE

Name of Characteristic	Chi square	Significance
Quality of Library	17.23260	.7504
Number of Courses	21.43546	.4940
Quality of Athletic Facilities	42.01894	.0128
Social Atmosphere	35.11491	.0377
Academic Quality of Student Body	18.30222	.6879
Extra-curricular Activities	55.25591	.0001
Quality of Teaching	21.59804	.4841
Quality of Administration	22.73560	.4168
Quality of Academic Departments	31.10556	.0940
Quality of Physical Facilities	42.41669	.0056
Quality of Student Services	18.52292	.6746
Quality of Faculty	26.44756	.2330
		(N=396)

Four of the crosstabulations yielded Chi squares that were considered to be significant. Table by table analysis of percentages revealed that as a whole grade point averages had little effect on

respondents' ranking of items. The following results were observed. Cells did not vary percentage wise to a great extent. For the cross-tabulation of grade point average with quality of athletic facilities, a maximum difference of 10.1 percent was found between the above 3.0 and 3.0 to 2.0. This observed difference was observed for the rank of 12. No other percentage differences exceeded this figure. A total of 41.7 percent of the above 3.0 students ranked the item 12, contrasted to a figure of 31.8 percent of the 3.0 to 2.0 students. This might be an indication of a slight tendency for higher grade point average students to put less emphasis on athletic facilities. Other significant tables demonstrated little variation between the differing grade point average students. Analysis of the below 2.0 students was considered to be impractical due to the lack of respondents having the lower grade point averages. If cells exceeded 25 percent, they did in unison with neighboring cells.

Summary of Findings on Priorities

The priority rankings of university characteristics has been the major area of inquiry in this section. The priority rankings were first analyzed for the entire sample. The results for the entire sample seem to point to an underlying theme of academics. Students have a tendency to attach the highest priority (importance) to academic concerns and lowest to non-academic concerns. The three student generated items of quality of teaching, number of courses, and quality of faculty were all ranked relatively high in relationship to most of the other items on the list. The importance attached to student generated items seems to support the key role that they evidently play.

Utilizing a somewhat different procedure, the variables included in the study were systematically crosstabulated with each of the 12 items on the list and the ranks given to each item. Differences between variables were expected to exist and would thus be observed in the crosstabulations. Slight variations did occur but not to the extent that might have been expected. Interpretation and generalizations were somewhat limited due to unexpected factors such as lack of very involved and below 2.0 students in the sample. It was rationalized that the best procedure was to present a summary of the tables and explicitly note any difficulties that occurred.

What is impressive about the findings obtained through variable by variable analysis is that the differences due to independent variables were minimal. What is important to acknowledge is that students seem to be consistent in ranking items in spite of variations in independent variables. This suggests that the variables under question have little influence in the ranking of the items. The overriding academic/non-academic theme seems to be important to students regardless of major, sex, or any of the other variables under question. It is important to note that differences were observed for some variables but were slight. Implications for these findings will be discussed in the conclusion.

CHAPTER VI

STUDENT RATING

A major objective of this study was to gather information on student evaluation and rating of schools and components of schools. The particular emphasis was on the sampled university and its components. The objectives falling under the realm of student rating can be classified into four sub-areas, the first being the question of what sort of rating do students give to their membership school and other neighboring schools. The contention made was that students will overrate their own university and underrate other area schools. The key idea under question is what are the effects of school membership on student rating of schools? The researcher has put forth the contention that students will have a tendency to think highly of the school they are attending, higher than what professionals might believe.

The second sub-area of inquiry involves the students' rating of components of their school. It was a contention of the researcher that students think reasonably high of their libraries, fellow students, faculty, and various other components that go into a university.

The third sub-area of inquiry centers around the problem labeled by the researcher as the comparative perspective. The overall question was: Does a broad experience with objective and subjective information about colleges and universities affect the student's perception of a university in terms of rating? The university under question in

this problem was that of the sampled school. This broad perspective mentioned is based on the assumption that the comparative perspective increases as contact increases with other colleges and universities. Also under question was whether this comparative perspective differs in degree. It was a contention of the researcher that as the comparative perspective increases, the student becomes more critical of the sampled university because the student has had more past experiences with other schools which could be used as a yardstick (measure of comparison).

The final sub-area of inquiry was to determine whether any of the independent variables included in the study might influence the rating given the sampled university as a whole and the reputation of the school. Differences between the variables under question were expected. The techniques and findings will be presented in the following sections of this chapter.

Student Rating of U.N.O. and Other Universities

The rating of student's membership school, in this case U.N.O., was a question under study. The overall evaluation or rating of a student's school may provide an excellent indication of overall satisfaction with the school and its functioning. The first question under inquiry was to determine what rating students gave to their own university. Data for this question was gathered by requesting the respondents to rate U.N.O. as a whole. The ratings were divided into five categories: excellent, good, average, fair and poor. Responses falling into the categories were interpreted as representing rough ratings of U.N.O. as a whole. The question was designed to provide a general

overall impression of U.N.O.

Out of 464 students responding to the question: 13 students (2.8 percent) gave U.N.O. a rating of poor, 70 (15.1 percent) a rating of fair, 190 (40.9 percent) a rating of average, 176 (37.9 percent) a rating of good, and 15 (3.2 percent) a rating of excellent. A total of 83 (17.9 percent) of the students gave U.N.O. a below average rating, as contrasted to 191 (41.2 percent) giving it an above average rating. More students rated U.N.O. above average than below. Based on the results, the frequencies seem to be distributed in a good to excellent direction. As a whole 82.1 percent of the respondents viewed U.N.O. as average or above. These findings will be important in contrasting student ratings with professionals. The number of students rating U.N.O. poor approximated the number rating U.N.O. excellent. The overall bulk of the distribution falls into either average or good categories. These student ratings fall somewhat higher than professionals might rate U.N.O. The Gourman rating for U.N.O. (then the Municipal University of Omaha) was 374 (Gourman, 1967: 672), slightly below the average of 400. It is important to note that this rating is 7 years old and thus might be outdated.[1] An update by Trow (1972: 115) using The Gourman Report and College-Rater placed U.N.O. in the lowest class of the college level schools. Trow used seven classes for schools, 3 ratings for universities, 3 ratings for colleges, and 1 for all junior colleges. The variance between the student and professional ratings does not assume that one is more

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[1]The researcher realized that comparisons across time are not comparable, but the studies cited were the only professional data available.

correct than the other but does point to the tendency of most students to overrate their school in contrast to professional ratings. It may be safe to conclude, based on empirical evidence, that students tend to rate U.N.O. higher than do professionals.

U.N.O. students have a tendency to evaluate in terms of average and good categories when rating their own school. There might be several factors which could contribute to this perception of the membership school. It is beyond the scope of this work to elaborate and draw inferences on this tendency, however some possibilities should be mentioned. A student's attendance at a school for four or more years involves an important commitment on his/her part. To obtain a four year degree, the student must invest a considerable amount of time, money, effort and actions into the university and university experience. The researcher would suggest that given such a large investment on the part of students, they will view the education they are receiving as worthy of their efforts. It would seem that students may find it difficult to admit to themselves or others that they were receiving a poor education for their efforts. Upon graduation it may be difficult for students to ever admit that the degree they had received would be of little worth. The contention being put forth here is that students, in spite of school characteristics (good or bad), tend to rationalize that they are receiving a good education.[2] This contention of the researcher may in the future be worthy of further inquiry. Given the large investments that students make, it is

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[2]It may be true in an absolute sense that they are receiving a good education. The quality level may be good at all institutions.

believed that students may perceive their education as a valuable asset. Possible cognitive consonance factors might play a role in these contentions. It is important to note that these ideas concerning the rating of membership schools are to be interpreted as informed speculation as to the nature of student rating and only serve the purpose of sparking further investigation into the nature of student ranking. We can conclude that students in the sample do tend (as a whole) to overrate their university in contrast to what professionals might rate it. The theme of overrating by students is recurrent in the findings.

Closely associated with the overall rating of U.N.O. as a whole is the question of how students rate U.N.O.'s reputation as an academic institution. For this problem, the same five item scale was utilized as with other questions. A total of 466 students responded to the question asking how they rated U.N.O.'s academic reputation. The results were: 32 (6.9 percent) indicated that U.N.O.'s reputation was poor, 91 (19.5 percent) indicated fair, 191 (41 percent) as average, 139 (29.8 percent) as good, and 13 (2.8 percent) as excellent. The similarity between this distribution and the one for U.N.O. as a whole is evident--small extremes with the bulk of the respondents indicating an average or good rating for the item. There was a slight increase in the number of students indicating a below average rating for academic reputation, compared to those rating U.N.O. as a whole. The below average ratings of academic reputation had a net increase of 8.5 percent over those for U.N.O. as a whole. The slight tendency to rate the academic reputation of the membership school average or better is

observed. The number of students who rated U.N.O.'s academic reputation average or better was 73.6 percent.

The variable of membership was defined as belonging to or attending the university under question as a student either in the past or present. The variable of membership in U.N.O. was assumed, for only U.N.O. students were permitted to complete the questionnaire. Past membership at other schools of higher education was determined by questions included on the questionnaire and particularly for those having attended Creighton University and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. These two schools were selected on the basis of their visibility to U.N.O. students. Creighton University is located in the same municipal region as U.N.O. and constitutes a highly visible major area university. The University of Nebraska at Lincoln is also a large school which is highly visible to U.N.O. students in that it is a relatively short distance from U.N.O., has a large student enrollment, and is a part of the same state educational system. It was believed that both schools were dominant enough for most U.N.O. students to be able to give a general reaction to them.

The first of the universities that students were requested to rate on the excellent to poor scale was the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Out of 416 respondents a total of: 5 (1.2 percent) of the students rated U.N.L. as poor, 30 (7.2 percent) as fair, 145 (34.9 percent) as average, 209 (50.2 percent) as good and 27 (6.5 percent) as excellent. The contention of the researcher prior to data collection and analysis was that students would tend to rate area schools lower than the school they were presently attending. For example,

U.N.O. students would rate U.N.O. high but U.N.L. lower in comparison. Evidence suggests that such was not the case. As a whole, students rated U.N.L. higher than U.N.O. A total of 91.6 percent of the students rated U.N.L. average or above as contrasted to 82.1 percent for U.N.O. The largest increase was for the good rating category in which 209 (50.2 percent) of the students rated U.N.L. as a good school, which may be contrasted to a percentage of 37.9 for U.N.O. Although both ratings were high, U.N.L.'s was slightly higher. Professional ratings of U.N.L. also rate the school higher than U.N.O. The Gourman rating for U.N.L. was 463 (Gourman, 1967: 681) or slightly above the average score of 400. When addressing U.N.L., contentions about the importance of membership seem to be unsupported.

The variable of membership was also compared to Creighton University, another major area school. For this question, respondents were requested to rate Creighton University as a whole. The number of students responding to the question was 423. The findings were: 8 (1.9 percent) of the students rated Creighton as poor, 16 (3.8 percent) as fair, 79 (18.7 percent) as average, 231 (54.6 percent) good and 89 (21 percent) as excellent. The preliminary contentions of the role of membership are again unsupported based on the findings. A figure of 94.3 percent of the sample rated Creighton as average or above, with the majority of the respondents giving Creighton at least a good rating. Increases were observed for Creighton University, using U.N.O. as a standard of comparison, in the good (16.7 percent) and excellent (17.8 percent) categories while poor, fair and average categories decreased percentage wise.

Professional ratings also tend to rate Creighton higher than U.N.O. The Gourman Report (1967: 243) ranks Creighton as a 412 and Trow's update (1972: 100) rates it in the lowest class of universities, which could be interpreted as a higher rating than those for colleges. Again the tendency for students to overrate seems to be occurring in that in order for Creighton to be classified as good by Gourman, a score of 600 should have taken place.

In summary, students rated Creighton higher than U.N.O., and the contention that area schools would be underrated and that the key variable might be membership was unsupported. Whereas it is possible that membership may influence the ranking of one's own school, it appears, based on these preliminary findings, that membership may have little if any effect on the negative rating of other area schools in the case of U.N.O. students. The tendency to overrate visible area and membership schools was observed for the schools under question. If one uses professional ratings as a benchmark, there is a tendency for students to overrate. Whether this student overrating is justifiable is not the question, but rather the discrepancy between the two systems of rating. Another finding acknowledged is that the differences between the schools' ratings gives an indication that students do differentiate in terms of school quality. Though the differentiation may be interpreted as dramatic or slight, the point is reasonably clear that students do differentiate between colleges and universities. One can safely, at minimum, generalize to visible area schools.

In addition to the previously stated computations, the researcher

also crosstabulated the variables of having attended Creighton and U.N.L. with the rating of U.N.O. as a whole and its academic reputation. Attendance at either school was determined by two questions requesting the respondent to indicate whether they had ever attended Creighton and/or U.N.L. Responses were divided into those who had attended either school and those who had not. A total of 40 students had attended U.N.L. and 20 had attended Creighton University.

Of those having attended U.N.L., none of them rated U.N.O. as poor, 9 (22.5 percent) rate it fair, 19 (47.5 percent) rated it average, 11 (27.5 percent) rated it as good and 1 (2.5 percent) rated it excellent. These percentages may be contrasted to those non-attending ratings of: 3.1 percent rating U.N.O. as poor, 4.4 percent as fair, 40.4 percent as average, 38.8 percent as good, and 3.3 percent as excellent. There was a slight tendency for students having not attended U.N.L. to rate U.N.O. as a whole higher: 42.1 percent of the non U.N.L. students rated U.N.O. above average as contrasted to 30 of those having attended U.N.L., a percentage difference of 12.1 percent.

The crosstabulation of attendance at U.N.L. and the rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation was also tabulated. The results of the findings were: 5 (12.5 percent) of the students having attended U.N.L. rated U.N.O.'s reputation as poor, 11 (27.5 percent) as fair, 14 (35 percent) as average, 9 (22.5 percent) as good and 1 (2.5 percent) as excellent. In comparison, 25.4 percent of those not attending U.N.L. rated U.N.O.'s academic reputation as below average which can be contrasted with a figure of 40 percent of those having attended U.N.L. giving U.N.O.'s reputation a below average rating. There was a slight

tendency for those having attended U.N.L. to rate U.N.O's reputation lower.

The identical crosstabulation were performed on the variable of attendance at Creighton University.[3] For those respondents having attended Creighton: 2 (10 percent) rated U.N.O. as a whole poor, 4 (20 percent) as fair, 7 (35 percent) as average, 7 (35 percent) as good and none of the students rated it as excellent. The largest percentage discrepancy between those having attended Creighton and those who had not was in the below average categories. For those having attended Creighton 30 percent rated U.N.O. as below average which is contrasted with a percentage of 17.4 for those students who had not attended Creighton. The difference was noted to be 12.6 percent between the two groups.

For U.N.O.'s academic reputation, those previous Creighton students had a tendency to rate it lower than they had rated U.N.O. as a whole. The percentage breakdown for previous Creighton students was: 3 (15 percent) rated it as poor, 8 (40 percent) as fair, 4 (20 percent) as average, 5 (25 percent) as good and none of the students rated it as excellent. A total of 55 percent of the previous Creighton students rated U.N.O.'s reputation as below average as contrasted to 25.4 percent of the students never having attended Creighton. Thus, there is a slight tendency for previous Creighton students to rate U.N.O.'s academic reputation lower than those students who had never attended Creighton.

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[3]The figure of 20 respondents may be too small from which to generalize. The reader should interpret the findings with caution.

In summary, findings seem to indicate that U.N.O. students as a whole, in contrast to professionals, have a tendency to overrate all of the schools under question. Student's current membership in a school seems to have little effect on the perception (rating) of other area schools. In general, a larger percentage of past Creighton and U.N.L. students rated U.N.O. as a whole and its academic reputation lower than those students that had never attended either school. The results also indicate that students do differentiate between schools and have the ability to rate schools, at least in general terms.[4]

Student Rating of U.N.O.'s Components

The next sub-area of inquiry was the rating of components by students. Components were selected for study on the basis of their importance to the students' academic experience and in relationship to the university and its functioning. Respondents were requested to rate U.N.O.'s components from excellent to poor. The components under question were the library, academic major department, departments other than the major department, faculty, and fellow students.

The first component analyzed was the students' rating of the U.N.O. library as a whole. Students could utilize any criteria that they desired to rate the library. What was of interest to the researcher was the overall rating of the library by students. A total of 469

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[4]These findings seem to support the contention of some experts that private schools are perceived by students to be better in quality. For example, Creighton was rated the highest of the three schools by students, but professionals don't recognize the differences that students indicate. They view the three schools as fairly equal. For further elaboration of the perception of private schools see Jencks and Riesman (1968).

students recorded their responses. The findings were: 28 (6.0 percent) of them rated U.N.O.'s library as poor, 78 (16.6 percent) as fair, 154 (32.8 percent) as average, 181 (38.6 percent) as good and 28 (6 percent) as excellent. The ratings of average and good represent the bulk of the distribution. As a whole, students believe U.N.O.'s library was average or better.[5]

Professional criteria for rating libraries can give the reader a general indication of how professionals would rate U.N.O.'s library. Benjamin Fine's Barron's Profile of American Colleges provides a scale for rating libraries, which is: one undergraduate per 1000 books would be extraordinary, one to 500 outstanding, one to 300 superior, one to 200 adequate and one to 100 or less inferior (Fine, 1972: viii). By dividing the approximate U.N.O. student enrollment of 13,000 students into the number of volumes in the library, (320,000) the student-book ratio may be determined for comparison. The ratio of students to books is approximately one student to 25 books. This figure falls far below the figures suggested by Fine. The library would be classified as inferior by Fine. For periodicals, Fine suggests (1972: viii), 15,000 periodicals would be outstanding and 6,000 is more than adequate. The library at U.N.O. subscribes to 3,200 periodicals in comparison. The Gourman rating of the U.N.O. library made in 1967[6] rated it with a

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[5]Two further comments on the rating of the library are necessary. One is that students rated the library as high despite the schools' student newspaper pointing out the inadequacies of the library. See Gateway, Feb. 22, 1974 No. 40. The second point is that a new library is currently under construction which will only increase the volume space by one-third and double the seating. The one-third may still be inadequate for student needs.

[6]Data is 7 years old.

D (Gourman, 1967: 672) which represents a below average rating. In contrast to professionals, students tend to rate U.N.O.'s library higher. Few professionals would agree with students that U.N.O.'s library is a good one. Evidence suggests that many students overrate their library.

Students were requested to rate their major department as a whole. The researcher views the student's academic department as a key factor in the student's higher education experience and one worthy of investigation. As with the other components rated, the respondents were requested to rate their major department on the excellent to poor scale. The findings were based on a total of 456 students. The results were: 15 (3.3 percent) of the students rated their major department as poor, 33 (7.2 percent) rated it fair, 134 (29.4 percent) rated it average, 210 (46.1 percent) rated it good and 64 (14 percent) rated it excellent. Only 10.5 percent of the sample rated their departments as below average, as contrasted to 60.1 percent that indicated a rating of above average. There appears to be a considerable difference between the below and above average ratings. The difference in distribution is in a positive direction for departments. In short, students as a whole have a tendency to rate their departments average or above.

In comparison, the only professional rankings of departments are the graduate ratings of departments and The Gourman Report. The graduate ratings usually address only the departments offering the Ph.D., so they would not have any ratings of any U.N.O. departments since at that time no Ph.D.'s were offered at the school. The Gourman Report rates every academic department with a letter grade. The

average letter grade for all departments was C except for one which received a D evaluation (Gourman, 1967: 672). Thus, the average ratings given by Gourman would not be in agreement with many of the students. It may be safe to conclude that if we used professional evaluations as a standard, it would be observed that students tend to overrate their major department as a whole.

It was a contention of the researcher prior to data collection and analysis, that students would rate their major department higher than they would other academic departments on campus. To test this contention, students were requested to rate departments other than their own as a whole. The rationale behind this contention was that the membership and degree of investments might influence the perception of the major department and other departments. The academic major department involves what is believed to be a stronger sense of faith by students, for career development and other factors are dependent upon the major department more so than for others. For example, the sociology department has a different meaning for a sociology major than for a student taking courses as electives from the sociology department.

The number of students responding to the question was 456. The frequency and percentage breakdown for the ratings were: 2 (.4 percent) rated other departments as poor, 52 (11.4 percent) as fair, 217 (47.6 percent) as average, 177 (38.8 percent) as good and 8 (1.8 percent) as excellent. Percentage differences were noted for each of the five categories for major department and other departments. The categories of poor, good and excellent were larger for the students' major departments than for other departments: 2.9, 7.3 and 12.2 percent

larger respectively. Likewise, the fair and average categories were 4.2 and 18.2 percent larger respectively for other departments than for major departments. A total of 40.6 percent of the students rated other departments as above average in contrast to 60.1 percent who rated their own department as above average. Though differences are not what one would consider dramatic, they do indicate two points. As a whole there was a tendency for some students to rate their own major departments higher than other departments and secondly there are differences between departmental and other departmental ratings and thus students do differentiate. Differences were not as dramatic as expected, but the tendency to overrate by students is still observed.

The next component under question was that of the faculty. Faculty constitute what many would consider one of the most important components of the higher educational experience. Students, in response to this questionnaire, ranked faculty the third item on their list of priorities and faculty was mentioned as a criteria for evaluation by students. The faculty and particularly the rating of the faculty represented a question worthy of inquiry. Students were asked to rate U.N.O.'s faculty as a whole.

The number of students indicating a response was 462. The findings of the question were: 18 (1.7 percent) of the students rated the U.N.O. faculty as poor, 43 (9.3 percent) as fair, 173 (37.4 percent) as average, 220 (47.6 percent) as good and 18 (3.9 percent) as excellent. Only 11 percent of the sample rated U.N.O.'s faculty as below average, which may be contrasted with 51.5 percent who rated them above average. Again the tendency for some students to evaluate in terms of average

and good is observed.

Though professionals do not, as a rule, rate faculty they do provide some workable guidelines as to how to evaluate them. A very good student-faculty ratio is subjectively suggested in Barron's Profile of American Colleges (Fine, 1972: ix) to be 10 students per faculty member. Another measure of the quality of the faculty is the percentage of faculty holding the Ph.D. degree, which is interpreted by some to be an indication of success in having been able to employ faculty members with "scholarly" credentials. For U.N.O., the breakdown in Ph.D.'s and other credentials was as follows: 53 percent had Ph.D.'s or equivalent, 41 percent had masters and 6 percent were teaching with bachelor's degrees. The professional formula suggests that as the number of Ph.D.'s increases, the academic quality increases (as a general rule). The Gourman Report assigned a letter grade to each of the evaluated items concerning faculty at U.N.O. A "C" was given for faculty effectiveness, "C" for faculty morale, "C" for methods of instruction, "B" for ratio of staff to students, "D" for research activity and "C" for salary provisions (Gourman, 1967: 672. It is important to acknowledge the gap between Fine's idea of faculty-student ratios and Gourman's. The average ratings made by professionals and the relatively low number of Ph.D.'s on the faculty seem to suggest that the high ratings given to the faculty by students may be unwarranted, at least in the professional sense. The point with these comparisons between student ratings and professional ratings and criteria is to acknowledge the variance between the two. Students tend to overrate faculty. The researcher would suggest that professionals

use a different set of criteria than students for rating faculty. Professionals tend to think in terms of percentage of Ph.D.'s, where faculty received their degrees, compensation, research activity, etc. but fail to ever mention teaching ability. Students on the other hand stress teaching (see priority rankings) as important. The question arises as to whether Ph.D. certification is correlated with good teaching. A gap between the students and professionals is believed to exist when addressing the quality of faculty and the criteria for evaluating the faculty. Students stress teaching whereas professionals stress number of Ph.D.'s and salary levels. This does not assume that students are not concerned about certification of faculty and the other professional items, but rather it suggests that these items may play a secondary role to teaching when students evaluate faculty.

The nature of the student body is a crucial factor influencing the nature of the university and certainly the university influences the nature of the student body. Many professionals and experts in the field view the academic quality of the student body as the single most important factor determining the academic quality of a school. Closely related to the academic quality of a student body is the selectivity of the school. As a general rule, as the selectivity increases, the academic quality of the student body also increases. Cass and Birnbaum (1973: xix) suggest that the selectivity of a school is a crucial measure of academic quality because a school can never be much better than its student body and is not likely to be much worse. Astin (1971) used selectivity as one of the two determinants of academic rating of schools. Barron's Profiles of American Colleges provides the reader

with a "College Admissions Selector", which indicates the degree of competition (selectivity) for admission at schools. The rating for the competitiveness for U.N.O. was "Non-competitive", (Fine, 1972: xxix). In contrast, Creighton University was rated as "Very competitive" (Fine, 1972: xxiii) and U.N.L. was rated "Non-competitive" (Fine, 1972: xxix). The non-competitive category simply requires graduation from an accredited high school.[7] U.N.O. accepts approximately 97 percent of the freshman applicants, which makes it characterized as non-selective in nature. If selectivity is used as a basis for evaluation of schools, then U.N.O.'s policies would not fare very well. The low selectivity of U.N.O. and U.N.L. appears to be a statewide policy, since both schools have basically the same "open" policy of admissions. This liberal policy classifies U.N.O. and U.N.L. in a unique category, for as Jencks and Riesman indicate, "Only a handful of state legislatures still cling to the principle that a high school diploma should entitle a student to enter the leading public university in his state." (1968: 282). So in the professional view, because of the minimal admission requirements, U.N.O. has an excellent chance of having a poor academic quality student body, in contrast to more selective schools.

The U.N.O. students' perception of their fellow students academically was the question under investigation. Students were requested to rate their fellow students academically on the provided scale. It was a contention of the researcher that students would overrate their

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[7]See the admission requirements for U.N.O. in the section dealing with the characteristics of the sampled university.

fellow students in contrast to how professionals might rate the U.N.O. student body.

The number of students responding to the question was 465. The observed results were: 5 (1.1 percent) rated their fellow students as poor academically, 16 (3.4 percent) as fair, 178 (38.3 percent) as average, 245 (52.7 percent) as good and 21 (4.5 percent) as excellent. The largest number of responses fell into the good rating. Only 5.6 percent of the sample rated their fellow students below average which can be contrasted to 57.2 percent rating them above average. A total of 91 percent of the students rated their fellow students as average or good, which represents the bulk of the distribution. In short, there is a strong tendency for students to rate fellow students average or above. Given the contrast to professionals, these findings are thought provoking. Because of the stress on selectivity in admissions made by professionals, it would be difficult to suppose that U.N.O. students would be rated high by professionals. Evidence suggests that there may exist a gap between students and professionals on the matter of rating students academically. The contention that students overrate their fellow students academically seems to be supported if one uses the professional criteria as a benchmark. That is to say, there is a tendency for students to overrate their fellow students.

Comparative Perspective

The influence of what was labeled the comparative perspective was subject to analysis. The comparative perspective is basically a term that applies to the degree of experience that a student has had which could be utilized in evaluating a school. The rationale is that as

the student increases his/her comparative perspective, he/she becomes more knowledgeable and objective in evaluating schools. As exposure to various schools increases, knowledge from which to make workable comparisons is thought to increase. For example, a transfer student that had attended several schools would be better able to evaluate his/her current school because he/she could base the evaluations on previous experiences and contact with the other schools. Judgments are easier to make when the student has some benchmark or standard for comparison. With this problem, the researcher used the degree of contact with other schools as a critical factor influencing the student's comparative perspective. Inherrent in the comparative perspective is the idea that students, when evaluating schools, use comparisons as a basis for rating and evaluating.

By design, four basic degrees of the comparative perspective were thought to exist. The highest level of attainment of the comparative perspective were those students who had previously attended another school. Attendance at another school involves the student's active commitment and experience with the specific school attended. Assuming that exposure and social contact are necessary conditions for attendance, the researcher would propose that students having attended other schools would have more empirical experience on which to base their judgments.

The second level of the comparative perspective was whether the student had applied to a school other than U.N.O. Though applying usually does not involve direct empirical experience with other schools, it does give an indication that the student has made an important effort

to gain admission and learn about the school(s) applied to. Whereas the contact with other schools is not actually as direct or involved as attending, the students in this category have had some correspondence with other schools. Along with this correspondence is the exposure of the student to data about the school(s) applied to. In short, students learn about schools before they apply to them, either subjectively or objectively. The act of applying represents a second level of commitment and involvement with schools other than U.N.O.

The third category are those students who have read college guide books and/or catalogues other than U.N.O.'s. The reading of literature on various schools provided what was believed to be a third degree of the comparative perspective. The student's reading of literature could constitute a basis for evaluation, though limited by what was in print.

The final category are those students who have never attended, applied or read any literature about schools other than U.N.O. This classification represents the lowest degree of contact and exposure to other schools and literature about other schools. These students were believed to have the lowest amount of information to use for evaluation and comparison.

To determine what category students fell into, each student was requested to indicate whether they had ever attended another school other than U.N.O., applied to another school other than U.N.O. and ever read any college guide books and/or catalogues other than U.N.O.'s. Responses to the questions were either yes or no, with no responses to all three of the questions placing the respondent in the fourth category. The researcher had reason to believe that students who had

attended a school had also applied and read some school literature. Those students only applying had read literature, and those having only read about other schools constituted the final logical category. There was assumed to be a logical order of the items. To support this logical assumption, the researcher computed a Guttman scale of the three items which had a coefficient of reproducibility of .9744 and a coefficient of scalability of .9253. The logic behind the sequence seems to be supported by the data. Having elaborated on the nature of the comparative perspective, the following constitutes the findings.

The three variables of attendance, applied and read were cross-tabulated with the rating of U.N.O. as a whole and its academic reputation. A contention of the researcher was that students having attended other school(s) would be more critical of U.N.O. in that it might be easier for them to discover some of the weaknesses. This would be especially true if students had attended schools of higher quality than U.N.O. Those students having attended considerably lower schools might rate U.N.O. higher, but because of the low professional rating given U.N.O., this possibility was thought to occur in only a few cases. The lowest rating was expected to be from those students who had attended other schools. The second lowest rating was believed to come from those students who had applied to other schools but not attended. The third lowest rating were those students who had read some literature other than U.N.O.'s. Knowledge of other schools, even if it was second hand, would still provide a better basis for comparison. The highest rating for U.N.O. was believed to come from those students who had little knowledge about other schools. Though

differences were expected within groups, the focus was on differences between groups on the rating given U.N.O. These differences were reflected as percentages. For U.N.O. as a whole and for U.N.O.'s academic reputation, the findings are presented in the respective tables XII and XIII.

TABLE XII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR THE VARIABLE OF COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE WITH RATINGS GIVEN U.N.O. AS A WHOLE*

Comparative Perspective	Rating for U.N.O. Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Totals
Attendance	2.3	15.8	40	37.7	4.2	100%
Applied	2.5	15.4	43.6	35.4	3.2	100%
Having Read	2.8	16.1	42.5	35.5	3.1	100%
None	2.6	10.5	32.9	50	3.9	100%
						(N=454)

*In percentages

TABLE XIII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR THE VARIABLE OF COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE WITH RATINGS GIVEN TO U.N.O.'S REPUTATION AS AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION*

Comparative Perspective	Rating for U.N.O.'s Academic Reputation Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Totals
Attendance	6.9	21.6	40.8	27.1	3.7	100%
Applied	7.5	20.7	41.1	27.9	2.9	100%
Having Read	7.0	21.9	39.7	28.9	2.6	100%
None	6.6	7.9	47.4	34.2	3.9	100%
						(N=454)

*In percentages

For the rating of U.N.O. as a whole, the percentages were evenly scattered for the four groups. The observed slight differences were

interpreted to mean that there was little variation among those students having attended, applied or read literature about other schools, when rating U.N.O. For the three differing degrees of the comparative perspective the maximum percentage difference was 14.6 percent. The largest percentage difference was between those having not done anything and those having applied to other schools in the good category. Based on the differences observed in the above average categories, there appears to be a slight tendency for those students having not done anything to rate U.N.O. slightly higher than the students falling in the other categories of the comparative perspective. With the exception of the student not having done anything, what is striking is the overall lack of variation between the other three groups. This lack of variation is due in part to overlapping categories. For example, those students having attended also applied and read literature. This lack of mutual exclusiveness of categories explains a considerable amount of the lack of variation away. The differences, in any event, should have been greater between groups to support some of the contentions made by the researcher.

It was observed that for the rating of the academic reputation of U.N.O. the same lack of variation existed. Only one rating of fair varied considerably between groups. Only 7.9 percent of the not exposed students (None) rated U.N.O.'s academic reputation as fair as opposed to approximately 20 percent of the other students. The percentage of not exposed students was slightly larger than other groups for all of the above average ratings. Thus the slight tendency for these students to overrate slightly higher than other students is

observed.

As a whole, the comparative perspective, if it exists, probably has little influence on the ratings of U.N.O. as a whole and its reputation. It is important to acknowledge that the construction of the categories used might have decreased the differences to some degree. Differences were not as dramatic as what was expected by the researcher, but they did seem to exist between students possessing some degree of comparative perspective and those students who had no comparative perspective. The researcher has an inclination to conclude that the comparative perspective has minimal influence on student ranking and evaluation of U.N.O. This does not rule out the possibility, but evidence does seem to suggest that such is the case.

Background Variables Influence on Rating

The final sub-area of inquiry concerned the ratings of U.N.O. and the background variables of year in school, enrollment status, age, major, extra-curricular involvement, sex and grade point average of students. Cross-tabulations were made for the above variables with the rankings of U.N.O. as a whole and its academic reputation. Differences were expected to occur among the variables under question. The Chi square test of significance was employed along with Tau c. Frequencies and percentages were also noted. The first variable under investigation was the year in school of the respondent.

Year in school was expected to influence the overall rating of U.N.O. as a whole. The researcher believed that upper-classmen would have a tendency to be more critical of U.N.O. due to their experiences with the inadequacies (in the professional sense) of U.N.O. For

example, the increased contact with U.N.O.'s library (rated inferior by professionals) that seniors would have, might influence the seniors rating of U.N.O. as a whole in a negative direction. The underclassmen have fewer experiences on which to base their judgments and would thus be more naive about the conditions at U.N.O. To investigate these beliefs about the influence of year in school on rating, the researcher treated year in school and its five classifications as an independent variable which was crosstabulated with the five ratings of U.N.O. as a whole. The results produced a Chi square value of 27.0, with 16 degrees of freedom, which was found to be significant at the .05 level. The computed expected frequencies fell below 5 for some of the cells so inferences based on the Chi square statistic are limited. The value of Tau c was observed to be .06 which is too small to be of concern. Percentage analysis revealed little variation between groups. The maximum variation for below average ratings was between sophomores and freshmen, which was a percentage difference of 11.4 with freshmen ranking U.N.O. lower than sophomores. At the above average end of the scale, the maximum percentage difference was between seniors and juniors. A total of 26.4 percent of the juniors rated U.N.O. as above average, as contrasted to 52.6 percent of the seniors. Seniors out distanced all other year in school groups in rating U.N.O. above average. This observation is opposite to the preliminary belief that seniors would tend to rate lower. The observation does suggest the possibility that as the investment of students increases, the perception of worth of degree and school also increases. The Tau c value of .06, though very small, reflects this. This observation is

recurrent in other crosstabulations.

The crosstabulation between year in school and rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation was also computed. The statistical tests of Chi square and Tau c yielded results that fell in the realm of chance alone. Further inquiry into percentages also suggested that differences among years in school groups were also minimal. There appears to be a high degree of consensus between groups on the academic reputation of U.N.O. Beliefs that as the year in school increases for students, the tendency for them to be more critical increases seems to be unsupported.

The next crosstabulations were made for the variable of enrollment status. Status was divided into part time (under 12 hours) and full time (12 or more hours) students. The crosstabulation of status with the rating of U.N.O. as a whole yielded a Chi square value that was not significant at the .05 level. Percentage differences between full and part time students and their respective ratings of U.N.O. were slight. The maximum percentage difference between groups was 2.7 percent. At face, it appears, that status of students has little bearing on the rating given to U.N.O. as a whole.

The results of the next calculations are presented in table XIV, The table states the frequencies of part and full time students rating U.N.O.'s academic reputation in the five categories provided on the questionnaire.

TABLE XIV

ENROLLMENT STATUS AND RATINGS OF U.N.O.'S REPUTATION AS AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

Status	Rating of Academic Reputation					
	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Row Totals
Full Time	29	69	129	95	6	328
	9%	21%	39%	29%	2%	100%
Part Time	3	22	62	44	6	137
	2%	16%	45%	32%	4%	100%
						(N=465)
Column Totals	32	91	191	139	12	

The value of Chi square was 11.62 with 4 degrees of freedom at .0263 level. The findings were observed to be significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was .1137, which was considered low. Differences between the observed and expected were found to exceed the elements of chance. It is important to note that one cell had an expected frequency of 3.5 which was slightly below the level of 5 per cell. This factor may cause the Chi square value to be slightly inflated. It was observed that there was a slight tendency for full time students to rate U.N.O.'s academic reputation as poor and fair. As with other computations, differences seemed to be small between groups. In short, there appears to be a great deal of consensus between both groups of students when rating U.N.O.'s academic reputation.

The next variable under investigation was that of the respondent's age. The respondent's age was crosstabulated with both the rating of

U.N.O. as a whole and its academic reputation. It was believed that younger students would rate U.N.O. more favorably than older, due to their lack of "experience". It was also believed that older students might demonstrate a more "mature" perspective on the conditions at U.N.O. In short, they might prove to be more objective and realistic.

The first computations were made comparing age with the rating of U.N.O. as a whole. The Chi square test was applied to the data shown in table XV.

TABLE XV

AGE AND RATINGS OF U.N.O. AS A WHOLE

	Rating of U.N.O. as a Whole					
Age	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Row Totals
Younger	9	44	117	85	4	259
	3%	17%	45%	33%	2%	100%
Older	4	26	73	90	11	204
	2%	13%	36%	44%	5%	100%
						(N=463)
Column Totals	13	70	190	175	15	

A total of 463 students responded to the question. The Chi square value was 13.81 with 4 degrees of freedom at the .0079 level. The observed results were interpreted as falling outside of the realm of chance factors. The percentage breakdown for younger students was: 3.5 percent rated U.N.O. as a whole poor, 17 percent as fair, 45.2 percent as average, 32.8 percent as good and 1.5 percent as excellent. These percentages may be compared to those of the older students which

were: 2.0 percent rated U.N.O. as poor, 12.7 percent as fair, 35.8 percent as average, 44.1 percent as good and 5.4 percent as excellent. The older students demonstrated a slight tendency to rate U.N.O. higher than the younger. This observation was opposite of what was anticipated by the researcher. The Tau c value of .16784 gave an indication of the strength of the relationship, which was interpreted as being minor.

For age and academic reputation of U.N.O., the Chi square test for significance was administered but with results that were insignificant at the .05 level. Percentage differences between the younger and older students were minor. The maximum percentage difference was for the excellent rating in which 1.2 percent of the younger rated U.N.O.'s academic reputation as excellent as contrasted to 4.9 percent of the older students. As a whole, the results seem to indicate that age plays a more important role in rating U.N.O. as a whole than for its academic reputation. The findings also suggest that older students are not more critical than younger in evaluating. The contention that older students would rate U.N.O. lower in both items seems to be unsupported. The opposite, in a mild sense, may be the case.

The next variable subject to inquiry was that of the student's academic major. Academic major was crosstabulated with the ratings of U.N.O. as a whole and its academic reputation. Chi square values and percentage differences were too small to deem worthy of attention from the researcher. The bulk of the distribution fell in the average and good categories for each major. There was a slight tendency for medical area students to rate U.N.O. as a whole fair, more so than

other academic majors. As a general rule, differences were found within majors and not between them. The observations and computations of major with academic reputation demonstrated similar results. The resulting Chi square value had a high likelihood of occurring by chance and percentage differences were not particularly dramatic.[8]

The variable of sex was crosstabulated with the rating of U.N.O. as a whole and its academic reputation. Findings were discovered to be insignificant at the .05 level. In terms of percentages, 43.5 percent of the males rated U.N.O. as a whole above average, compared to 37.2 percent of the females. Differences based on sex appear to be extremely slight. The rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation also yielded a low value for Chi square. The same tendency for males to rate slightly higher was also observed. A total of 34.7 percent of the males rated the academic reputation of U.N.O. above average, as contrasted to a figure of 28.8 percent of the females. Results were not interpreted as being of extreme importance. The respondent's sex may have an influence on rating, but as the observations suggest, its influence may be weak in nature.

The investigation of the variable of grade point average was undertaken, comparing it to the two ratings of U.N.O. Because of the lack of below 2.0 students in the sample, the analysis of the data proved to be limited. Percentage comparisons based on only 6 students in the below 2.0 category were deemed to involve high risk and were thus not

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[8]Crosstabulations were made for the variable of extra-curricular involvement, but were found to be extremely small. There was virtually no variation between the differing degrees of involvement when rating U.N.O. as a whole.

undertaken. The remaining categories of 2.0 to 3.0 and above 3.0 were compared using the observed percentages. For the rating of U.N.O. as a whole, 2.0 to 3.0 students had a slight tendency to rate U.N.O. average more than the above 3.0 students. The above 3.0 students on the other hand had a slight tendency to select the good rating of U.N.O. more than the 2.0 to 3.0 students. Other categories were virtually equal between the two groups, for none of the percentages varied more than 1 percent between the two groups. A total of 45.7 percent of the 2.0 to 3.0 students rated U.N.O. average and 34.9 percent rated it good. A total of 37.6 percent of the above 3.0 students rated U.N.O. average and 41.1 percent rated it good. As a whole, the results demonstrate little variation between the two groups. The Chi square value for the comparison of grade point average with rating of U.N.O. as a whole was found to be insignificant at the .05 level.

The students' grade point averages were also compared to the ratings given for U.N.O.'s academic reputation. The Chi square test was employed but failed to yield a significant value. Percentage differences were considered to be unworthy of concern. The results lead the researcher to believe that grade point average may have little influence on ratings of U.N.O. Findings might vary considerably if more below 2.0 students were included in the sample.

Conclusion to Rating Findings

Student rating of schools and school components was the major area of investigation in this section. It is believed that student rating is of extreme importance to higher education at present and will continue to be so in the future. Four sub-areas were investigated

under the heading of student rating. One sub-area was concerned with the kinds of ratings students give their own school and other area schools. The researcher put forth the contention that students would overrate their own school in contrast to how professionals would rate it. Evidence seems to support this line of thought. It was also suggested that students might rate other area schools lower in comparison to their own school. The opposite proved to be the case. Student membership had little if any influence on the perception (rating) of other area schools. An important finding related to the mentioned research was that students do differentiate between schools; in short, they perceive differences in quality.

The second sub-area dealt with the students' rating of the components of their own university. It was a general contention that students as a whole would overrate all of their university's components in comparison to professional standards. A consistent tendency was observed for students to overrate components such as the library, faculty and fellow students.

The third sub-area of investigation was the comparative perspective. The comparative perspective was essentially based on the degree of contact and involvement of students with other schools. It was thought to exist in differing degrees from having attended, having applied, having read literature, to having little contact with other schools. Findings suggest that if the comparative perspective exists, it has a minor influence on students' perception of their membership school.

The final sub-area that was investigated was to determine the

influence of background variables on the rating of U.N.O. as a whole and as an academic institution. The variable of year in school was the first subject of study. The researcher believed that older students would be more critical of U.N.O. because of their increased experience with U.N.O. There was observed a slight tendency for this to occur in the opposite direction. Seniors had a slight tendency to rate U.N.O. higher than the other groups of students. Beliefs that as the year in school increases, the tendency for students to be more critical seems to be unsupported. Enrollment status was observed to have slight influence on ratings of U.N.O. The respondent's age was expected to have some influence on rating. It was thought that older students might be more critical of U.N.O.; older students were thought to be more objective and knowledgeable in evaluating. It was observed that there was a slight tendency for older students to rate U.N.O. higher than younger students. The students' academic majors were investigated, with evidence suggesting that there was little variation between academic majors when evaluating U.N.O. and its academic reputation. Sex was another area of inquiry. Males had a tendency to rate higher than females as a group, though differences were small. The final variable under question was that of the respondents' grade point average. It was a contention of the researcher that higher grade point students would rate U.N.O. higher. The lack of below 2.0 students limited research in this area. It was observed that little variation exists between grade point average groups. What is striking about the analysis of the background variables is the high degree of consensus

between groups. Evidence suggests that there is more variation within groups than between them.

CHAPTER VII

CHOICE AND ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

This analysis chapter consists of findings related to the variable of the student's choosing to attend U.N.O. again and important additional findings. The importance of a given item was determined by the Chi square value and Tau c value observed. If both demonstrated a significant value then further analysis was undertaken. The major thrust of this chapter deals directly with the question of student's choice of again attending U.N.O., referred to here as choice. The order of presentation will be first to describe and present the results of the choice crosstabulations and then to include any additional findings.

The variable of choice was viewed by the researcher as an important aspect of the student's evaluation of a school and its components, in this particular instance U.N.O. Choice is defined as whether a student would attend U.N.O. again, if other options were available to him/her. Students were not viewed as actually having it to do all over again, but were thought to be capable of conceptualizing such a question and response. The question on the questionnaire read:

> "If you had it to do all over again and had a choice, would you attend U.N.O.? ____Yes ____No."

The question was designed to let economic factors be minimized by the expression, "if you had a choice." The responses to the question were

a forced dichotomy of yes or no.

The question of choice was believed to be of central importance. Importance, because whether a student would attend again or not is representative of the degree of satisfaction and the evaluation of a school as a whole. It serves as an indication of the relationship between the characteristics of U.N.O. and the key question of free choice in attendance.

For the sample as a whole, out of 463 students, 288 (62.2 percent) indicated a yes response to the question of choice. A figure of 175 (37.8 percent) of the students indicated a no response, which meant they would not attend U.N.O. again if given a choice. From the researcher's perspective the figure of 37.8 percent of the students indicating no is relatively high, but in light of some of the conditions at U.N.O. by professional standards it may be possible to gain some insight into such a sizable percentage.

In light of some of the high ratings given U.N.O. and its components by students, it was deemed necessary to attempt some further investigation into some of the variables and their relationship to choice. It was believed to be necessary to compare some of the background variables and rating results with the variable of choice. The following paragraphs contain the results of such crosstabulations.

The first variable investigated in relationship to choice was year in school. The five classifications of year in school were crosstabulated with the two responses of choice. The resulting crosstabulation produced an insignificant Chi square value of 1.270. The Tau c value was -.0343 which was too low a value to be of importance.

Percentage breakdown by year in school was: Freshmen, 61.3 percent indicated yes and 38.7 indicated no; Sophomores, 62.1 percent indicated yes and 37.9 percent no; Juniors, 59.3 percent indicate yes and 40.7 percent no; Seniors, 62.4 percent indicated yes and 37.6 percent no; and graduate students, 68.5 percent indicated yes and 31.5 percent no. Of particular interest is the lack of variation among the different year in school categories. It appears that year in school has little bearing on the student's choice of attending U.N.O. again.

The second variable crosstabulated with choice was enrollment status. The crosstabulation process yielded a Chi square value of 1.113 which was not significant at the .05 level. The percentages that were observed were: Full-time students, 60.4 percent indicated yes and 39.6 percent no; Part-time students, 66.2 indicated yes and 33.8 percent no. A difference of 5.4 percent was observed between the two groups, but was considered to be slight. Based on the observed results, the researcher would suggest that enrollment status plays a very minor, if any role in determining whether students choose to attend U.N.O. again.

The variable of the respondent's age was the third variable crosstabulated with choice. The Chi square value produced by the crosstabulation had a value of 4.634 with 1 degree of freedom at a level of significance of .0313. Thus, the Chi square value was interpreted as being significant at the .05 level. Further computation of the Tau c yielded a low value of .1008. The percentage breakdown was: for the younger students, 57.6 percent indicated a yes and 42.4 percent no; the older, 67.8 percent yes and 32.2 percent no. There was a slight

tendency (10.2 percent) for younger students to indicate no responses to the question. The strength of the relationship was interpreted to be small in light of the low value for Tau c. Whereas the likelihood of the distribution occurring by chance is slim, the strength of the relationship was weak.

The variable of academic major was crosstabulated with choice. The computed Chi square value was 14.5, which was not significant at the .05 level. The percentage breakdown for the majors was: Social Science, 65.8 percent yes and 34.2 percent no; Natural Science, 51.4 percent yes and 48.6 percent no; Humanities, 55.6 percent yes and 44.4 percent no; Business Administration, 63.2 percent yes and 36.8 percent no; Continuing Studies, 67.9 percent yes and 32.1 percent no; Education, 62.3 percent yes and 37.7 percent no; Engineering, 72.2 percent yes and 27.8 percent no; School of Fine Arts, 50 percent yes and 50 percent no; Home Economics, 76.5 percent yes and 23.5 percent no; College of Public Affairs and Community Service, 50 percent yes and 50 percent no; Law Enforcement, 70.8 percent yes and 29.2 percent no; Medical areas, 48.2 percent yes and 51.8 percent no. The differences in percentages reflect differences between academic majors and colleges. The maximum percentage difference was between the 76.5 percent of the Home Economic majors indicating yes as contrasted to 48.2 percent of the Medical students indicating yes.

The variable of involvement in extra-curricular activities was crosstabulated with the variable of choice. The crosstabulation yielded a Chi square value of 2.018, which was not significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was a small -.05221. The percentages

observed were: Not involved, 60.5 percent indicated yes and 39.5 percent no; Somewhat involved, 66.3 percent yes and 33.7 percent no; Very involved, 75 percent indicated yes and 25 percent no. A difference of 14.5 percent was observed between the Very involved and Not involved students. One must note that only 12 students classified themselves as being very involved, thus making generalizations on only 12 students hazardous. Keeping this weakness in mind, there was an overall slight tendency for the likelihood of yes responses to increase as the involvement of students increases.

The first segment of the comparative perspective was that of attendance at schools other than U.N.O. This variable was crosstabulated with the variable of choice. The resultant Chi square value of 1.123 was not found to be significant at the .05 level. Percentages observed were: for those having attended other schools, 65 percent indicated yes and 35 percent no; for those not having attended other schools, 59.8 percent indicated yes and 40.2 percent no. The difference between both groups was 5.2 percent which was interpreted as being small. Results seem to indicate that attendance at other schools has little bearing on choice. Findings from this crosstabulation were compared to the other three comparative perspective variables.

The second variable of the comparative perspective was whether the student had ever applied to a school other than U.N.O. This variable was crosstabulated with the choice variable. The resultant Chi square value of .4169 was not found to be significant at the .05 level. Percentages observed: for those having applied 60.9 percent indicated yes and 39.1 percent no; for those not having applied, 64.3

percent indicated yes and 35.7 no. A percentage difference of 3.4 percent was observed, but was interpreted as being small. Those students having applied displayed a slight tendency to choose no more than those who had not applied.

The third variable of the comparative perspective was that of whether the student had read any college guide books or catalogs other than U.N.O.'s. The Chi square value observed was 2.999 at a level of .0833 significance. The resultant Chi square was not considered to be significant at the .05 level. Percentages were: out of those students who had read, 60.6 percent indicated yes and 39.4 percent no; of those who had not read, 72 percent indicated yes and 28 percent no. The percentage difference was 11.4 percent with those who had not read any literature selecting yes more often than those who had read some literature.

The figure of 72 percent of those having not read was contrasted to the figure of 65 percent who had attended, 60.9 percent who had applied and 60.6 percent who had read. Those students not having a comparative perspective had a tendency to choose to attend again. The possibility of the comparative perspective having a slight effect on choice may be observed. A possible rationale might be that students having attended other schools might have less tendency to attend U.N.O. again because they might be more critical of U.N.O. because of their past experiences.

The variable of the respondent's sex was crosstabulated with choice. The computed Chi square value of .9118 was not significant at the .05 level. Percentage breakdown for the two sex categories was:

for males, 63.9 percent indicated yes and 36.1 percent no; for females, 58.9 percent indicated yes and 41.1 percent indicated no. The percentage difference between males and females was 5 percent, with males selecting yes more often than females. The crosstabulation of sex with choice was characterized by an overall lack of variation between sexes.

The final background variable that was crosstabulated with the variable of choice was grade point average. The Chi square value was computed to be 5.839 with 2 degrees of freedom at a level of significance of .054. The Chi square value was very close to being significant at the .05 level. It is important to note that the expected cell frequencies fell below 5 for some cells and thus the Chi square value would be inflated. This low expected was due to the lack of below 2.0 students. There were only 6 students who fell below the 2.0 average grade point who answered the question. The Tau c value observed was -.1004, which was interpreted as being a low value. Percentage analysis yielded the following breakdown: Below 2.0 students, 33.3 percent indicated yes and 66.7 percent no; 2.0 to 3.0 students, 57.3 percent indicated yes and 42.7 percent no; above 3.0 students, 66.3 percent indicated yes and 33.7 percent no. Of interest is the tendency for higher grade point average students to choose to attend U.N.O. again if given a choice. The situation is reversed when the grade point average is low. The grade point average of students may be a slight factor in determining choice of attending again. Given the low number of below 2.0 students, one should exercise caution in generalizing to the larger population. The results suggest that

grade point average does not play an important role in influencing the respondent's choice of attending. The analysis of grade point average concludes the comparisons of background variable with choice. The following paragraphs contain additional comparisons of other variables to the variable of choice.

Additional variables were crosstabulated with choice. The first variable crosstabulated with choice was the rating of the U.N.O. library. The five ratings of poor, fair, average, good, and excellent were crosstabulated with the variable of choice. The Chi square value produced was 8.958 with 4 degrees of freedom at a level of significance of .0621. The level attained was close to the .05 level but was not considered to be significant. The percentage breakdown was: out of those students rating the library poor, 53.6 indicated yes and 46.4 no; those fair, 52.6 indicated yes and 47.4 no; average, 60.5 indicated yes and 39.5 percent no; good, 66.9 percent yes and 33.1 no; excellent, 78.6 percent indicated yes and 21.4 percent no. There appears to be a slight tendency for students rating the U.N.O. library high to choose to attend U.N.O. again as compared to those rating the library low. As a whole, as the rating for the library increases, so does the likelihood that the student will choose the yes response to the attend again question (Choice).

The next variable crosstabulated with choice was the rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation. The overall rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation was thought to be worthy of presenting the results in table form. The results are presented in the following table XVI. The frequencies and row percentages are presented.

TABLE XVI

CROSSTABULATION OF RATING OF U.N.O.'S ACADEMIC REPUTATION WITH CHOICE

Rating of U.N.O.'s Academic Reputation	Choice Yes	No	Totals
Poor	5 15.6%	27 84.4%	32 100%
Fair	50 54.9%	41 45.1%	91 100%
Average	112 60.2%	74 39.8%	186 100%
Good	107 78.1%	30 21.9%	137 100%
Excellent	13 100%	0 0%	13 100%
			(N=459)
	287	172	

The Chi square value for the table was 54.67 with 4 degrees of freedom and was significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was -.3248 which was interpreted as moderately strong. The results reflected in the table seem to demonstrate that as the rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation increases, so does the likelihood that the student will choose to attend U.N.O. again. The results may be a good indication of satisfaction with U.N.O.'s academic reputation by students. Lower rating students had a tendency to select no as a response more often than other students rating it average or above. The table of academic reputation was presented here because of the importance attached to the rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation as a whole.

The next variable crosstabulated with choice was the rating of the student's major department. The crosstabulation yielded a Chi

square value of 33.65 with 4 degrees of freedom, which was significant at the .05 level. The percentage breakdown was: of those students rating their major department as poor, 20 percent indicated yes and 80 percent no; fair rating, 65.6 percent yes and 34.4 no; as average, 52.6 percent yes, and 47.4 no; as good, 63.2 indicated yes and 36.8 percent no; as excellent, 87.3 percent yes and 12.7 percent no.

The extremes of poor and excellent ratings were on a percentage basis reversed. The fair and good categories were virtually equivalent in their observed results. Those rating major departments as excellent had a high tendency to choose to attend U.N.O. again as opposed to all other ratings of major departments.

Another variable, closely associated with the rating of major department, was the rating of departments other than the major department by students. This variable was crosstabulated with the variable of choice. The resulting Chi square value was 25.91 with 4 degrees of freedom and was found to be significant at the .05 level. The expected frequency for some cells was below 5, so the Chi square value was inflated. Only 2 students rated other departments as poor and 8 as excellent, thus the extremes of the tabulation were too small from which to generalize. Because of this apparent weakness and the lack of variation for the other rating categories, no further percentage analysis was undertaken.

The next variable crosstabulated with choice was the rating of the faculty. The Chi square value obtained was 38.47 with 4 degrees of freedom which was found to be significant at the .05 level. The value of Tau c was -.2926 which was interpreted a moderately strong

relationship. The expected frequencies for some of the cells fell below 5 so the Chi square value was inflated. The percentage breakdown, though small for the categories of poor and excellent as was with the rating of other departments, was: for those students rating the faculty poor, 25 percent indicated yes and 75 percent no; as fair, 40.5 percent yes and 59.5 no; as average, 51.2 indicated yes and 48.8 no; as good, 74.8 percent as yes and 25.2 percent no; as excellent, 77.8 percent indicated yes and 22.2 no. The extremes of poor and excellent reversed their percentages in terms of yes and no responses. Based on these observed percentages, one may conclude that as the rating of faculty increases, so does the tendency for students to choose to attend U.N.O. again.

The next variable to be crosstabulated with choice was the rating for U.N.O. as a whole. The results are presented in the following table. The entire table was presented due to the importance attached to the rating of U.N.O. as a whole. The frequencies and row percentages are both included in the table. The results of the crosstabulation of the rating of U.N.O. as a whole with choice are present in the below table XVII.

TABLE XVII

CROSSTABULATION OF RATING OF U.N.O. WITH CHOICE

Rating for U.N.O. as a Whole	Choice Yes	No	Totals
Poor	2 15.4%	11 84.6%	17 100%
Fair	20 28.6%	50 71.4%	70 100%

(Continued)

TABLE XVII (Continued)

CROSSTABULATION OF RATING OF U.N.O. WITH CHOICE

Rating for U.N.O. as a Whole	Choice Yes	No	Totals
Average	103 55.1%	84 44.9%	187 100%
Good	148 84.6%	27 15.4%	175 100%
Excellent	13 86.7%	2 13.3%	15 100%
			(N=460)
	286	174	

The Chi square value computed was 90.86 with 4 degrees of freedom which was significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was -.4599 which was a moderately strong relationship. By observing the results one will notice that as the rating of U.N.O. increases, the likelihood that students will choose to attend U.N.O. again increases. A steady percentage increase is observed as one reads down the yes column. An almost exact reversal is observed for the extremes, 84.6 percent of the poor rating students would not choose to attend U.N.O. again as opposed to only 13.3 percent of those students rating it excellent. The results in the table seem to reflect the importance of the students' perceived rating of U.N.O. Those students rating U.N.O. low have a higher tendency to not want to attend U.N.O. again. Those students who rated U.N.O. high who had a high tendency to choose to attend U.N.O. again. These results indirectly point to the importance of rating and attendance, at least in a conceptual sense.

The final crosstabulation was based on the variable of choice and

the rating of fellow students academically. The Chi square value was 21.57 with 4 degrees of freedom which was significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was -.1799 which was of low strength. Two of the cells fell below the expected frequency of 5 because only 5 students rated their fellow students as poor academically. The following is the percentage breakdown according to ratings given to fellow students was: as poor, 100 percent indicated no; as fair, 50 percent indicated yes and 50 percent no; as average, 55.4 percent indicated yes and 44.6 percent no; as good, 66.4 percent indicated yes and 33.6 percent no; as excellent, 90.5 percent indicated yes and 9.5 percent no. There appears to be a tendency for those students perceiving their fellow students as high academically to choose to attend U.N.O. again. As the rating of U.N.O.'s students decreases, so does the likelihood that the student will elect to attend U.N.O. again if given a choice.

In a very general sense, it was observed that most of the background variables seem to have little influence on the variable of choice. The lack of variation was noted in most of the crosstabulations. Observed frequencies were apparently occurring by chance or had a high likelihood of occurring by chance. The final background variable of grade point average did display some potential worthy of investigation.

In contrast, the rating variables (rating of faculty, students, U.N.O. etc.) seem to display some consistent patterns. As a general rule, as the rating increased for an item, so did the likelihood that the respondent would choose to attend U.N.O. again. This tendency was observed in every crosstabulation of ratings with choice. Based on the observed results, there does appear to be some relationship

between rating in general and the variable of choice. The perception of ratings may be a critical factor influencing student's choosing to attend U.N.O. again. This concludes the crosstabulations of choice. The following paragraphs deal with additional findings.

The variable of the rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation was crosstabulated with the variable of the rating of U.N.O. The frequencies and row percentages are presented in the below table XVIII.

TABLE XVIII

CROSSTABULATION OF THE RATING OF U.N.O.'S ACADEMIC REPUTATION WITH THE RATING OF U.N.O. AS A WHOLE

Rating of U.N.O.'s Academic Reputation	Rating for U.N.O. Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Row Totals
Poor	7 21.9%	18 56.3%	5 15.6%	2 6.3%	0 0%	32 7%
Fair	1 1.1%	32 36.4%	42 47.7%	13 14.8%	0 0%	88 19.2%
Average	2 1.1%	14 7.4%	109 58%	62 33%	1 .5%	138 41%
Good	1 .7%	5 3.6%	32 23.2%	93 67.4%	7 5.1%	138 30.1%
Excellent	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 46.2%	7 53.8%	13 2.8%
						(N=459)
Column Totals	11	69	188	176	15	

The computed Chi square value was 338.41 with 16 degrees of freedom and was found to be significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was .4532, which was also found to be significant at the .05 level. The Chi square value indicates that the observed distribution is not likely to occur by chance. The Tau c value observed is interpreted as being of moderate strength and close to being strong.

The expected frequency for some of the cells fell below five because of the lack of poor and excellent ratings. The percentages demonstrate that as the rating of U.N.O.'s academic reputation increases, so does the rating of U.N.O. as a whole. Students rating reputation high had a tendency to rate U.N.O. as a whole high. Those rating reputation low also had a tendency to rate U.N.O. low. There appears to be a relationship between the perception of U.N.O.'s academic reputation with the perception of U.N.O. as a whole. The stress that students place on academics appears to be the reason for the apparent relationship between the two ratings.

It was felt important to present these results because both the perception of U.N.O. as a whole and the perception of its academic reputation are major questions of great importance. They both represent a high order of perception (abstraction), in that they both encompass a number of characteristics of U.N.O. A student probably takes into consideration several factors before assigning a rank to U.N.O. as a whole and its academic reputation. A second reason for their inclusion is their high statistical values. Both Chi square and Tau c values were impressive. Some of the value may be attributed to low expected cell frequencies in some instances. It would be difficult however to imagine that the Chi square value would be inflated to so high a value because of low frequencies in some cells. Percentage analysis was undertaken as a cautionary measure. A final point to be made is that the percentages and percentage differences reflect an overall pattern which seems to support the conclusions made on the Chi square and Tau c. It is apparent that to many students,

there is little differentiation between U.N.O.'s academic reputation and the rating of U.N.O. as a whole.

Another finding of importance, which also deals with the rating of U.N.O. as a whole is the crosstabulation of the rating of the faculty with U.N.O.'s rating. The frequencies and row percentages are presented in the below table IXX.

TABLE IXX

CROSSTABULATION OF THE RATING OF U.N.O. AS A WHOLE WITH THE RATING OF THE FACULTY

Rating for U.N.O.	Rating of Faculty					Row Totals
	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	
Poor	6 46.2%	3 23.1%	3 23.1%	1 7.7%	0 0%	13 2.8%
Fair	1 1.4%	28 40%	27 38.6%	14 20%	0 0%	70 15.2%
Average	1 .5%	10 5.3%	123 65.1%	54 28.6%	1 .5%	189 40.9%
Good	0 0%	2 1.1%	18 10.3%	147 84%	8 4.6%	175 37.9%
Excellent	0 0%	0 0%	2 13.3%	4 26.7%	9 60%	15 3.2%
						(N=462)
Column Totals	8	43	173	220	18	

The Chi square value for the table was 529.95 with 16 degrees of freedom and was significant at the .05 level. The Tau c value was .49 which was interpreted as being moderately strong. The observed results indicate that as the rating for the faculty increases, so does the likelihood that the rating for U.N.O. will increase. There appears to be some degree of consensus, with students rating the faculty high also having a tendency to rate U.N.O. high. Those students rating the

faculty low also had a tendency to rate U.N.O. low. There seems to be some relationship between the two ratings. The reason for this might be the student's stress in teaching which is reflected in the faculty which represent an important facet of U.N.O. In short, the two are associated with each other. The reason for including these findings was the high Chi square value and Tau c value demonstrated that significant results were attained. Though the expected fell below 5 for some of the cells, chances are the low frequencies would not inflate the statistical values to such high levels. The percentages seem to reflect a definite pattern between the two ratings. The importance attached to teaching and faculty by students might explain some of the degree of consistency between the two ratings.

This draws to a close the analysis of the data. Other cross-tabulations and computations were undertaken and the results were studied. The four chapters on analysis represent the objectives of the proposed research. Additional findings were not presented due to either their lack of importance or the limitations of this study. The conclusion contains a brief summary of the principle findings.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings and a Proposed Model

One of the objectives of this study was to obtain some preliminary information on the criteria students use to evaluate a university. Associated with this question was the problem of determining what students' ability to evaluate might be. The following paragraphs represent a brief summary of the findings on both student criteria and ability to evaluate.

In terms of student criteria, it was determined that students use a wide variety of items when evaluating a university. Of these items, some were mentioned more often than others. Three items appear to be major student criteria. These items were teaching, number of courses, and the number of quality faculty. The three items had an academic orientation. Results from the priorities section seem to support the importance of the three items as criteria.

The second question, that of ability, was an attempt to gather some preliminary information on the ability of students to evaluate in relation to professionally selected standards. Two indicators were used to determine this ability. One centered around the ability to evaluate a student-book ratio and the other around a student-faculty ratio. Results, in a very general sense, indicated that students have a tendency to overrate the two indicators and thus may not be able to

evaluate a university according to professional standards. The findings in the rating section of the study seem to support this notion.

Attempts were made to determine the effects of various variables on the ability to evaluate. The two major variables of year in school and comparative perspective failed to have any great influence on the ability to evaluate. Evidence suggests that, on the whole, background variables had little influence on the students' ability to evaluate. The thought that universities may have little impact on the students' ability to evaluate may prove to be plausible. In a general sense, these are the findings of the first section of the study.

The objective of the second major section was to obtain some information on what student priorities might be when given a list of criteria. The criteria list provided was made up of professional and student criteria. The overall pattern of responses reflected a student tendency to attach importance to academic related items more than non-academic items. The "Quality of Teaching", "Quality of Academic Departments", and the "Quality of Faculty", were emphasized by students. At the bottom of the scale were the non-academic items such as "Social Atmosphere", "Extra-curricular Activities", and "Quality of Athletic Facilities". The student generated criteria items were all ranked within the top four ranks, which supports their use as criteria by students.

In addition to the computations for the entire sample, cross-tabulations between priorities and many of the variables were undertaken. In a very general sense, the variables studied displayed little influence on the priority rankings of the items. The priorities

attached to items remain constant without any important effect from the variables. Differences within variable categories were more dramatic than between them. It appears that many of the variables had little influence on priorities. The theme of students concern for academics is overriding the possible effects of the variables studied. An important point to be made about priorities is that students have the ability to rank items in terms of priorities if called upon to do so.

The third major section dealt with the problem of student rating. The basic contention was that students would overrate all items with the exception of visible area schools. Students were observed to have a tendency to overrate all of the items on the questionnaire. Students had a tendency to overrate the university as a whole and its components. Students had a tendency to think in terms of above average ratings. Some of the possible explanations for this overrating tendency are mentioned in the following paragraphs.

One possibility is that the components and university are actually above average and students perceive this level of quality better than professionals. Inherent in this idea is the idea that professionals might be wrong about the ratings they gave to U.N.O. and its components. The question arises as to which set of ratings, professional or student, may be more valid. Because professionals are "experts" in the field of rating, the researcher would suggest that they are better able to evaluate universities and components, based on their expertise and sources of information. Professionals are viewed by the researcher as being more systematic.

A second possibility is that students feel they must justify the

educational services that are available to them. Given the tremendous investment of time, money and other resources that students put into their schools and educational attainment process, it may be easy to understand why they would want to view their investment as worthy. Students may have a tendency to rationalize that they are receiving a good return on their investment. Thus, students have a tendency to overrate their university, its components and the services it provides. This line of thought is supported by the findings associated with the variable of choice. As the ratings for U.N.O. and its components increased, so did the likelihood that students would choose to attend U.N.O. again.

The researcher would suggest that two factors play a major role in student rating of components and the university as a whole. The researcher would put forth the notion that the student overrating is influenced by a combination of student rationalization and lack of ability to evaluate. The rationalization process is observed in the large number of students rating the university and its components above average in spite of such negative items as a poor student-faculty ratio, inferior library, and other negative judgments that professionals have placed on U.N.O. Students may have a tendency to rationalize that they are receiving a good education, which is aided by their lack of ability to evaluate this education. The end product of this combination is overrating. Most students may not want to admit that their education may be below average and thus think in terms of above average. Obtaining a degree requires a high degree of trust in an institution and its components. Students may want to justify this trust. This

tendency, when combined with the apparent lack of ability (in a professional sense) might explain the student tendency to overrate.

A tendency to overrate other area schools was observed, but was not expected. The other area schools actually received higher ratings than the membership school. One could argue three major reasons for this tendency. One might be that the two other schools are actually higher in rating than the membership school and students acknowledge this. Secondly, one might suggest, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence", argument that students perceive other schools as better than their own. The third major argument might center around the students' perception of private higher education. The highest ratings were given to the private university. Experts in higher education would probably agree that private higher education has traditionally been perceived as higher quality than public education. Whether this is justified or not remains to be proven; what is of importance is that it is perceived as being better by people, and especially by students in higher education.

The researcher would favor the last two stated possibilities for the following reasons. The first argument is ruled out because, the differences among the three schools are small enough (by professional standards) that students would not be able to perceive them. Even if the students did perceive real differences, the ratings given the private school are not justified. The student ratings given the private school were too high in comparison to professional ratings. The second and third arguments appear to be more reasonable to the researcher. Given the long traditional emphasis on private education

in this country, it is understandable why students would perceive private institutions as higher in quality. This would explain the high ratings given Creighton, but does not include the higher ratings given U.N.L. This is where the "Grass is greener", argument might be important. Given the negative (professional) characteristics of U.N.O., it is understandable why students would view the two area schools as better. In sum, what the researcher is suggesting is that the two perceptions are more important to the overrating of area schools than actual differences.

The variables included in the study were crosstabulated to determine their influence on the ranking by students. Differences were noted, but were not as dramatic as expected. Differences were greater within categories than between them. In short, most of the variables had little effect on student rating. There was an overriding tendency to overrate, in spite of the possible effects of the variables studied. What appears to matter are not the effects of the background variables or actual differences in items, but the perception of these items. The student perception of the items is characterized by the tendency to overrate.

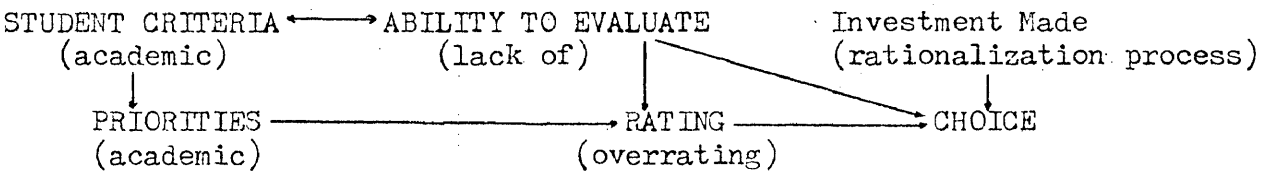
Whether the respondent would choose to attend U.N.O. again was the final major area of investigation from which conclusions may be drawn. Most students indicated they would attend U.N.O. again if given a choice. Further investigation of the possible effects of the background variables on choice yielded results that displayed little variation between variable categories. Background variables were interpreted, on the whole, as having little influence on the students' choice to attend.

Investigation into the nature of the students' perception of ratings and choice yielded impressive results. As a general pattern, those students rating the university and its components as high, had a tendency to choose to attend U.N.O. again. Those students rating the items low had a tendency to not want to attend U.N.O. again if given a choice. What appears to be important when addressing the question of choice is not the respondent's sex, major, enrollment status, and other background variables but the perception of rating of the university and its components. Those students perceiving high quality tend to choose to attend again. As the ratings increase, so does the likelihood that the student will attend again. As the ratings decrease, so does the likelihood decrease that the student will choose to attend again. The clear implication is that student perception of ratings is important.

The following model represents the major framework of the findings of this study and some additional thought on the subject. It serves to unify the basic findings and suggests a basic model for understanding the possible nature of student evaluation of universities as represented in this study. The model is represented in figure 1.

PROPOSED MODEL

FIGURE 1



The concepts stated represent major areas of investigation in this study. The lines and arrows represent lines of influence. Items

within the parentheses summate the major conclusions of the study. The explanation of how the model was conceptualized and how it operates is described in the following paragraphs.

The starting point for the model are the student criteria. Student criteria form the basis of the student evaluation procedure. Criteria constitute the concepts/ideas from which students make their evaluations. Criteria were found to be academic in nature. Students selected academic criteria more often than non-academic criteria.

The criteria that students use has the capability of being ranked in order of importance. This ranking was referred to as priorities. Given a set of criteria and asked to rate them in order of importance, it was observed that students have the ability to rank items in order of importance. The student criteria were in general rated higher than other criteria. One could contend that the criteria that students use influences the priorities attached to the items. The use of criteria influences the priority ranking of criteria.

The relationship between student criteria and priorities is viewed as a one way relationship. Criteria are viewed as a necessary condition for priorities, but priorities are not necessary conditions for criteria. The point being made is that student criteria influence the student priorities attached to such criteria. The students' stress on academic criteria may have a direct bearing on the priority rankings, for academic concerns were emphasized both as criteria and high priority items.

Closely associated with criteria is the ability to evaluate. The ability to evaluate is in reference to professional standards. It is

suggested in the model that there is a reciprocal relationship between criteria and ability. Both are viewed as influencing each other. For example, students with high ability would probably mention several criteria that they would use. Part of the definition of high ability would involve the consideration of several criteria. Thus, ability might influence the number of criteria that students use. Likewise, if a student possessed a large number of criteria, his/her ability to evaluate would be affected (increased). Thus, as the example demonstrates, ability and criteria may be closely linked.

The general results demonstrate that most students may lack the ability to evaluate (assuming that the indicators used are at least partially valid representations of ability.) The researcher had the impression that students probably lack any high degree of ability to evaluate. Results from the rating section of the study seem to support this notion.

The ability to evaluate is reflected in the ratings given the university, its components and visible area universities. The ability to evaluate is viewed as having a direct influence on the process of student rating. One could successfully argue that the ratings given the items are the end product of the ability to evaluate. In a very real sense then, student ability to evaluate is believed to influence the rating of items. The rating results indicate that students have a tendency to overrate all of the items under investigation.

In addition to the influence of ability on the student rating of items, another major process is thought to exist. This process though not verified in this study, might be important. It may be assumed

that, given the large investments students make in their degree attainment process in their respective schools, students justify this investment to themselves and others. They like to think their investment is worthwhile. This process of justification is referred to as the rationalization process on the model. The overrating tendencies that students have may be a product of this rationalization process along with their inability to evaluate.

In addition to the major influences of ability and rationalization on rating, the researcher would suggest that the criteria that students use and the priorities they attach to the criteria might play an indirect role in rating. The relationship of criteria to ability and priorities was previously mentioned. Criteria form the basic building blocks for evaluation and deductively the process of student rating. It also forms the basis for priorities, which play a role in evaluation. For example, if a school stresses extra-curricular activities, which is a low priority item for students, the students may rate the school slightly lower. The difference between school and student priorities might have a bearing on the rating of a school. The student criteria and priorities then, may be viewed as influencing student rating of schools and school components.[1]

The final item located in the model deals with the question of students' choice in attending again. In a very general sense, background

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[1]The unexpected findings of higher ratings given to area schools requires a slight modification of the model. The rationalization process is replaced with "The Grass is Greener" argument or the private education argument or both. The researcher is suggesting that when students evaluate other schools, the rationalization process is replaced by these two processes.

variables such as the respondent's sex, major, and others failed to demonstrate any major influence on the variable of choice. The variable of choice was viewed as being an important conceptual question dealing with the student's overall satisfaction with the education received at U.N.O. The variable of choice could be viewed as the end judgment of U.N.O. and its components. If the student was satisfied with the services received, he/she would have a high likelihood of attending again. If there was a high degree of dissatisfaction, the student might be expected to not attend again.

Investigation into the possible effects of background variables on students' choice yielded results which reflected a lack of variation between variables. In reference to the crosstabulation of ratings with the variable of choice the opposite was the case. Significant results were observed for most of the crosstabulations. The observed pattern was that as the rating increased for an item, so did the likelihood of choosing to attend again. As the ratings decreased, so did the likelihood that the student would choose to attend U.N.O. again. The results demonstrate the importance of student's perception of rating on the variable of choice. Rating variables appear to have more influence on student's choice in attendance than background variables.

The proposed model, in brief, suggests that there are relationships among the major subjects of this study. Some of the relationships are viewed as reciprocal and others are one way. The major items are all interrelated. The basic process (format) is that students possess a set of criteria from which they evaluate. This set of criteris is

characterized by an academic emphasis. This set of criteria influences the students' ability to evaluate, which reciprocally influences their sets of criteria. The sets of criteria that students use also influence the priorities that students attach to criteria. Student criteria form the basic building blocks of a priority rankings. Students have to have a notion of criteria before they can rate those criteria in order of importance. The ability to evaluate, criteria, and priorities all seem to contribute to the rating of items by students. An additional item of rationalization might be another possible influence. The rationalization process is the notion that students will justify their investment in education. Thus student ratings may be influenced by several factors. The ratings given items may prove to be a critical factor influencing whether the student would choose to attend again or not. Throughout this model, background variables display a slight influence on the process. Student perceptions of schools and their components seem to be an overriding factor on student evaluation. This then is the proposed model of the items and their interrelationships. Evidence seems to support the model, but further testing and investigation are necessary, particularly of the student rationalization process.

A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

1. Year in school: ____Freshman ____Sophomore ____Junior ____Senior ____Graduate

2. Status: ____Full time student (12 or more credit hours) ____Part time student

3. Age: _____

4. Academic major: _____

5. With regard to extra-curricular groups and activities on campus, would you consider yourself:
____Very involved ____Somewhat involved ____Not involved

6. Have you ever attended a college or university other than U.N.O.?
____Yes- If so how many: ____
____No

7. Have you ever applied for admission to a college or university other than U.N.O.?
____Yes- If so how many: _____
____No

8. Have you ever read any college guide books or catalogues other than U.N.O.'s?
____Yes- If so how many: ____
____No

9. Sex: ____Male ____Female

10. Approximate Grade Point Average: _____

11. The following is a list of characteristics of a university. Please rank them in order of importance, with 1 being most important, 2 being the second most important, 3 being the third most important, etc; (Please be sure to rank every item)

____Quality of Library
____Number of courses offered
____Quality of Athletic Facilities
____Social Atmosphere
____Academic Quality of Student Body
____Extra-curricular Activities
____Quality of Teaching (student-teacher relationship)
____Quality of Administration
____Quality of Academic Departments
____Quality of Physical Facilities (Buildings, etc.)
____Quality of Student Services (Counseling, Health, etc.)
____Quality of Faculty (Percentage of Doctoral Degrees)

Questionnaire (Continued)

12. How would you rate U.N.O.'s library as a whole:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

13. How would you rate U.N.O.'s reputation as an Academic institution:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

14. How would you rate your major department as a whole:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

15. How would you rate departments other than your major department as a whole:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

16. How would you rate U.N.O.'s Faculty as a whole:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

17. How would you rate U.N.O. as a whole:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

18. How would you rate the University of Nebraska at Lincoln as a whole:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

19. How would you rate Creighton University as a whole:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

20. How would you rate your fellow students academically:
____Excellent students ____Good students ____Average students
____Fair students ____Poor students

21. If you had it to do all over again and had a choice, would you attend U.N.O.?
____Yes ____No

22. A ratio of 100 books per student in a university library would be considered:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

23. A ratio of 1 Faculty member per 20 students would be considered:
____Excellent ____Good ____Average ____Fair ____Poor

24. Have you ever attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln?
____Yes
____No

25. Have you ever attended Creighton University?
____Yes
____No

APPENDIX B

STUDENT GENERATED CRITERIA

Student Generated Criteria

1. Teacher attitudes towards students - 1
2. Teaching - 7
3. Facilities - 5
4. Well maintained library - 1
5. Cost - 3
6. Studies offered - 14
7. Atmosphere of learning - 1
8. Number of quality faculty - 13
9. Pleasant surroundings - 1
10. Atmosphere - 3
11. Accreditation - 3
12. How students are treated - 1
13. How facilities are run - 1
14. Faculty treatment - 1
15. Grading - 1
16. Administration - 1
17. Student programs - 3
18. Athletics - 4
19. Good texts - 2
20. Student - teacher relationship - 1
21. Expansion - 1
22. Enrollment - 2
23. Co-ed - 1
24. Drop out rates for students - 1
25. School help - 1
26. Diversity of teachers - 1
27. Value system of school - 1
28. Provisions for students - 1
29. Services provided for students - 1
30. School views toward race - 1
31. Environment - 3
32. Relevant classes - 1
33. Appearance of school - 1
34. Lack of rules and regulations - 1
35. Location - 1
36. Library - 1

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