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THE RELATIONSHIP OF OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE
OF ACADEMIC FIELDS TO SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR

by

JEAN LEWIS JACOBY

B. S., St. Lawrence University, 1953

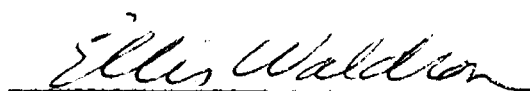
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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The problem of this research is to determine the relationship of occupational prestige of academic fields to the selection of a college major. More specifically, the research is concerned with the occupational prestige ranking of twenty-four academic fields in which it is possible to major at Montana State University by a sample of freshman students, and a comparison of these occupational prestige rankings with actual selection by the same students. In addition, the research seeks to discover which of a given number of factors most influence the assignment of high and low occupational prestige to academic fields. Finally, the study attempts to establish the effects of certain variables, such as sex, religion, father's education, father's occupation, and prestige ranking, upon selection of a field of major.

The problem under consideration in this study is related to the larger field of occupational selection. This relationship is suggested by the assumption that most students choose a major field in preparation, directly or indirectly, for a vocation.

Many theories have been advanced to explain why

individuals choose one vocation in preference to others. Experimental studies have produced somewhat conflicting answers to the question of vocational selection.

Family influence and pressure may account in part for specific choice of occupation. One's values and attitudes are certainly influenced by one's immediate family. Desires and ambitions may be transferred from parent to child. Parents also are in a position to bring certain pressures to bear, emotional or financial, which may not easily be withstood.

Personal interest is often expressed as the motive for vocational selection. Personal skills, abilities and casual job experiences may be instrumental in determining vocation.

Choice of occupation is perceptibly influenced or limited by intelligence. Some fields, for instance medicine, are not open to those with average or low intelligence.

The social pressure in our highly competitive society is yet another factor in the process of vocational selection. It appears to be the goal of many Americans to achieve a higher occupational status than that of their parents. Thus one's occupation in the United States appears less likely to be ascribed by the society or culture than might be the case in some other countries.

Final mention might be made of the influence of the supply and demand of the labor market upon the choice

of an occupation. Choice of a job is in many cases at least partially dependant upon expediency and the availability of a job is an important consideration. Location affects the type of jobs available. It is unlikely, for example, that someone who wished to stay in a small town would choose physics or sociology as an occupational field. On the other hand, a city dweller who wished to remain one would probably not choose forestry as an occupation.

Considerable research has also been done in the specialized field of prestige ranking of occupations and occupational groups. Again on the assumption that academic fields at the university have counterparts in the occupational world, a possible relationship might be established between this study and studies of occupational prestige.

CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

The investigator was able to find no previous research studies specifically on the problem of prestige rankings of academic fields and the selection of college major. However, related research has been done in the areas of vocational selection and occupational prestige.

Weeks perhaps most nearly approximated the present study in her research entitled Factors Influencing the Choice of Courses by Students in Certain Liberal Arts Colleges.¹ Weeks' study included 507 students from ten liberal arts colleges. She found that 73% of the courses reported by the students in her sample were selected for one of the following three reasons: a) to meet requirements (group and major), b) occupational interest, or c) subject matter. Two fifths of the courses were taken primarily to fulfill requirements, one fifth because of occupational interest and one seventh of the courses were taken because of interest in subject matter.²

¹Helen Foss Weeks, Factors Influencing the Choice of Courses by Students in Certain Liberal Arts Colleges, (New York, Bureau of Publications, Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1931).

²Ibid., p. 12.

In personal interviews with senior students at the University of Michigan, Weeks found that 80% of the students reported that home interests or environment influenced them in the selection of certain courses.¹

Studies in Occupational Selection

James Auten used high school seniors as subjects in his study of "How Students Select Vocations."² The five reasons given most often for selection of a vocation in order of their rank were 1) entirely student's own decision, 2) long personal interest in the work, 3) belief in personal qualifications, 4) most suited to my abilities, 5) practical experience in that line. Other reasons less frequently given for selection of a vocation were family suggestion or tradition, guidance, success of others, most profitable financially, friend's advice, teacher's advice, and suggested by classroom study.

Moser's findings in a similar study³ were quite different. He found a high positive correlation between

¹Ibid., p. 46.

²James A. Auten, "How Students Select Vocations," Clearing House, 26 (November, 1951), 175-78.

³Wilbur S. Moser, "The Influence of Certain Cultural Factors upon the Selection of Vocational Preferences by High School Students," Journal of Educational Research, 45 (March, 1952), 523-6.

vocational choices of students and extent of parent's college education. Moser concluded that home environment is a determining factor in vocational preferences as expressed by high school students.

Gist, Pihlblad and Gregory dealt with yet another factor in occupational selection. Their research¹ indicated that scholarship is more closely related to an individual's future occupation than is his father's occupation. The students who do well academically are more apt to enter high status occupations than are those who do poorly academically.

Carl Dickenson asked a pertinent question in his study, "How College Seniors' Preferences Compare with Employment and Enrollment Data."² Through this research he tried to find out if college students are studying what they need for occupations of their choice. The expressions of senior students' preferences regarding jobs were classified in accordance with major curriculum offerings at the University of Washington.

The findings revealed a marked contrast in the job preferences of men and women. Men placed almost twice as much emphasis on business administration, but

¹Noel P. Gist, C. T. Pihlblad, and C. L. Gregory, "Scholastic Achievement and Occupation," American Sociological Review, 7 (1942), 752-63.

²Carl Dickenson, "How College Seniors' Preferences Compare with Employment and Enrollment Data," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 32 (April, 1954), 485-8.

showed only one third as much interest in the arts and social science fields as did women. Men almost completely dominated the areas of engineering, natural sciences and outdoor occupations. Women, on the other hand, showed greater preference for teaching, the arts, nursing and social sciences.

The data relating to enrollment and job preference indicated that 31.4% of the senior men desired to enter the business field although only 24.5% were enrolled in the College of Business Administration. Of all senior men 18.5% were enrolled in the College of Engineering, but 10.5% planned to work directly as professional engineers. The senior male enrollment in the social sciences was 10.4% while only 3.2% expressed a preference for jobs in this area.

For senior women there was a large discrepancy between the percentage enrolled in business administration and those who expressed a preference for this occupational field, which could probably be explained by the fact that although a large number of women prefer office work, few are enrolled in the business field. Other differences for women were noted in home economics where 6.5% were enrolled as students, but only 3.7% expressed a preference for professional work in that area.

Studies in Occupational Prestige

Considerable research has been done in the area

of prestige ranking of occupations. Only the more pertinent ones will be cited here.

Smith¹ did a piece of research in which he had his subjects rank 100 occupations on the basis of seating at a banquet. He found that high government positions have the greatest prestige and unskilled migratory workers, professional prostitutes, garbage collectors and hucksters have the lowest prestige.

Canter made a study of "Intelligence and the Social Status of Occupations."² He interpreted his findings as indicating that judges' perceptions of the intelligence of personnel within an occupation may be the dominant factor influencing judgments of social status of occupations.

Rickey, Fox and Fauset did a study in 1948 entitled "Prestige Ranks in Teaching,"³ in which eighteen occupations were ranked as to prestige by primarily first semester freshmen at Indiana University. The authors concluded as a result of this study that there is agreement on prestige rankings of occupations by the time students

¹Mapheus Smith, "An Empirical Scale of Prestige Status of Occupations," American Sociological Review, 8 (1943), 185-92.

²Ralph R. Canter, "Intelligence and the Social Status of Occupations," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 34 (January, 1956), 258-60.

³Robert W. Rickey, William H. Fox, Charles E. Fauset, "Prestige Ranks in Teaching," Occupations, 30 (October, 1951), 33-6.

reach college. They also found that teaching as an occupation has relatively low prestige. The authors did find that those who had chosen teaching as an occupation ranked it higher in prestige than did those who chose other fields.

In 1946 the National Opinion Research Center conducted a public opinion poll of occupational ratings.¹ A representative sample of the American public was asked to rate ninety occupations on a five point scale. It is estimated that from two thirds to three fourths of all people gainfully employed in the United States at the time of the poll were represented in the list of occupations. North and Hatt analyzed and presented the data collected in this poll. When grouped by type of occupation into eleven general groups, government officials ranked highest in prestige, professional and semiprofessional ranked second and proprietors, managers and officials (except farm) ranked third. Laborers as an occupational type ranked lowest in prestige. Consensus in rankings was high among all those polled, including both those in high and low prestige occupations.

Summary

In summary, Weeks found that most students

¹National Opinion Research Center, "Jobs and Occupations: A Popular Evaluation," Public Opinion News, 9 (1947), 3-13.

in her study chose college courses for one of three reasons; a) to meet requirements, (b) occupational interest, or (c) interest in subject matter. Auten found that the reasons most often given for choosing a vocation were such as (a) entirely individual's own decision, (b) long personal interest, and (c) belief in personal qualifications. Moser, on the other hand, concluded that home environment is a determining factor in occupational preference.

In a study of college seniors, their academic fields and job preferences, Dickenson discovered that the students do not always choose the curriculum offering corresponding to their job preferences.

In the area of prestige ranking of occupations studies have shown that there is much agreement among respondents on how occupations should be ranked. People in high government positions and in the professions generally have the greatest prestige occupationally, while laborers occupy the lowest rank.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Sample

An effort was made to obtain as representative a sample as possible from the freshman class. No claim is made, however, that this actually is a representative sample of any specified population.

The sample was taken from the freshman class rather than from any other class or combination of classes for two principal reasons. First, the author believes that freshmen are less likely to be biased by the influences of the university and its curriculum than the students with longer, more intimate association. Thus, it is expected that the freshmen express in their prestige rankings a more general outlook than upper-class students. Secondly, since commitments of freshmen to major fields are not final, there is not the vested interest in certain fields which might influence the ranking by students of longer standing. The third factor which influenced the choice of a freshman sample was feasibility. Required freshman courses in English provided an easily accessible group.

The actual sample is composed of freshmen

registered in the twelve sections of a course entitled English 11a - Freshman Composition. This course is required of all students at Montana State University. Therefore, the chance that the group would be biased by any factors of pre-selection seem slight. The representativeness of this group is further enhanced by the fact that these second quarter registrants include both students from the so-called "bonehead" first quarter classes and the average and superior freshman English students.

Out of a total registration of approximately 240 in the twelve sections of English 11a, a final sample of 180 was selected. Students absent from class on the day the questionnaires were administered, non-freshman, and students handing in incomplete or otherwise unusable questionnaires account for the difference between the number of registrants and the actual sample obtained.

The selection of major fields included in the study by the members of the sample was compared with selection of these majors both by all freshmen and by the total university population.¹ The comparison was made to obtain some indication of the actual representativeness of the sample in the area of selection. On the basis of the comparison the author feels justified in assuming that no significant bias exists in this area.

¹Appendix A.

Questionnaire¹

The questionnaires were anonymous and were administered by class instructors with no additional verbal instructions. The questionnaire was designed to form a logical sequence and also to facilitate coding for computational purposes. It included the following variables.

- 1) Sex
- 2) Age
- 3) Religious preference
- 4) Father's education
- 5) Father's occupation
- 6) Selection or non-selection of major
- 7) Indication of planning to enter an occupation for which college major is highly desirable preparation
- 8) The occupational prestige of the following academic fields
 - Art (Fine Arts)
 - Business Administration
 - Chemistry
 - Economics
 - Education
 - English
 - Foreign Languages
 - Forestry
 - Geology
 - Health and Physical Education
 - History and Political Science
 - Home Economics
 - Journalism
 - Liberal Arts
 - Mathematics
 - Music
 - Pharmacy
 - Physics
 - Pre-Engineering
 - Pre-Law
 - Pre-Medical Science
 - Psychology
 - Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work
 - Wildlife Technology

¹Appendix B.

- 9) Factors influencing prestige ranking
- Personal interest in subject
 - Lack of personal interest in subject
 - Social utility (Contribution to the betterment of society)
 - Lack of social utility
 - Favorable opinion of family
 - Unfavorable opinion of family
 - Favorable opinion of friends
 - Unfavorable opinion of friends
 - Difficulty of subject content
 - Simplicity of subject content
 - Difficulty of achieving success in the field
 - Ease of achieving success in the field
 - Good potential earnings in the field
 - Poor potential earnings in the field
 - Many employment opportunities
 - Few employment opportunities
 - Publicity and recognition given people in the field
 - Lack of publicity and recognition given people in the field
 - Favorable influence of those you know in the field
 - Unfavorable influence of those you know in the field.

These nine variables were included to support or refute the hypotheses of the research as well as to provide descriptive and control data.

Selection of Fields to be Ranked

Not all academic fields in which it is possible to major at Montana State University were included in the list to be ranked according to occupational prestige. Including all thirty-eight fields would have made the list longer than the time limit of the questionnaire could comfortably allow. This longer list, in the author's opinion, also would tax the patience of the subjects to

such an extent that thoughtful rankings would not be made. In addition, some of the major fields were chosen by so few freshmen that they probably would not be represented in the sample. For these reasons the academic fields included in the study were reduced from thirty-eight to twenty-four.

The twenty-four academic fields included in the study were chosen on the basis of frequency of selection by the total university population as recorded in the Summary of Registration¹ compiled by the Registrar of Montana State University during the Winter quarter, 1957. All fields with a total registration of twenty-four or more were included. The total freshman registration in each of these twenty-four fields was at least five with the exception of economics which had an enrollment of two freshmen.

The author considers that the final list of academic fields provides an adequate range for meaningful prestige ranking, as well as sufficient variety to give a representative picture of actual selection.

Definition of Terms

The terms of this research are operationally defined as follows:

¹Appendix C.

(1) Occupational prestige of an academic field is defined as the rank, from one to twenty-four, which is assigned by the respondents to each of twenty-four fields in which it is possible to major at Montana State University. The term "occupational prestige" was not defined on the questionnaire. The author assumes that the meaning of prestige is understood by the subjects.¹

(2) Selection of college major is defined as the specific indication by subjects, on the questionnaire, of the fields they have chosen.

Working Hypotheses

The working hypotheses of the research are

- I. There will be agreement generally on prestige ranking of academic fields.
- II. A significant relationship exists between occupational prestige rankings and selection of college major.
- III. There will be a higher correlation between prestige ranking and selection for males than for females.
- IV. Prestige does not play a significant role in the selection of education as a major.
- V. The pattern of selection for males will differ from the one for females.
- VI. Of the specified factors influencing prestige rankings these will be the ones most frequently checked.
 - 1) Good potential earnings in the field
 - 2) Many employment opportunities
 - 3) Publicity and recognition

¹The subjects of the pre-test sample expressed no question or doubt as to the meaning of prestige.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

The sample used in this study was composed entirely of freshmen at Montana State University who were enrolled in the twelve sections of English 11a during the Winter Quarter of 1957. No claim is made that this is a representative sample of any specified population.

The questionnaire was given during one class period only. Therefore, the sample does not include those students who were absent from class on that particular day. The total number included in the final study was 180.

The sex distribution of the sample is given in Table I. The sex ratio of the entire student body at the time of the study was approximately 2 to 1: males composed 68% of the total registrants and females 32%.

TABLE I
SEX DISTRIBUTION

SEX	NUMBER	PER CENT
Male	116	64
Female	64	36
TOTAL	180	100

Table II shows the age groups into which the sample was divided.

TABLE II

AGE DISTRIBUTION

AGE	NUMBER	PER CENT
16-18 years	91	51
19-21 years	54	30
22 years and over	35	19
TOTAL	180	100

A division of the sample according to religious preference is given in Table III.

TABLE III.

RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE	NUMBER	PER CENT
Catholic	43	24
Protestant	127	70
Jewish	0	0
Other	10	6
TOTAL	180	100

Table IV indicates the composition of the sample according to fathers' education. Each category represents the highest level completed. Father's education was given regardless of whether or not he was still living.

Over half of the subjects (59%) had fathers with a high school education or less. Forty-one per cent of

the subjects had fathers with at least some college education.

TABLE IV

DISTRIBUTION BY FATHER'S EDUCATION

FATHER'S EDUCATION	NUMBER	PER CENT
Elementary	50	28
High School	56	31
Some College	35	20
College	38	21
TOTAL	179	100

A distribution by father's occupation is given in Table V. Respondents were asked on the questionnaire to write in father's occupation whether or not he was still living. Each occupation was then assigned to one of the six categories listed below.

TABLE V

DISTRIBUTION BY FATHER'S OCCUPATION

FATHER'S OCCUPATION	NUMBER	PER CENT
Professional	17	10
Business	49	28
Clerical	15	8
Agriculture	41	23
Skilled and semi-skilled labor	53	30
Unskilled labor	1	1
TOTAL	176	100

The majority of the total sample, 150 or 83%, indicated that they had selected a major field. Thir-

ty students or 17% of the sample had not yet chosen a major.

Of that part of the sample which had already chosen majors, 139 or 93% of the students indicated that they planned to enter occupations after college for which their college majors are considered highly desirable preparation. Eleven students, representing 7% of the number with chosen majors, indicated that their majors were not in preparation for an occupation.

CHAPTER V

SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR

One of the hypotheses of this study is that the pattern of selection for males differs from the pattern of selection for females. To throw light on this hypothesis, as well as to provide the necessary data to compare selection of major with prestige rankings of academic fields, is the primary purpose of the following analysis of selection of college major.

At the time of registration at Montana State University every student is asked to indicate his probable major, that is, the field or department in which he will specialize. Freshmen are not committed finally to the choice they make at registration. They may, if they wish, merely specify 'general' if they have no major field in mind.

The students in the sample were asked if they had selected a major field. Those who answered yes¹ indicated their choice. The vast majority of respondents

¹Of the total sample of 180, 150 or 83% answered that they had selected a major.

who specified a major field had chosen one of the twenty-four which were included in the list to be ranked by occupational prestige.¹ The present analysis of selection of college major will be limited to these twenty-four fields.

About equal proportions of males and females had not selected a major field at the time of this study (16% v. 17%).

Selection by Total Sample

The field most frequently selected was business administration. Twenty-five per cent of the total number of respondents chose this field. The field ranking second in total frequency of selection was education. Ten per cent of the total number of respondents chose this field. The selection for the remaining twenty-two fields of major was fairly evenly distributed. No other fields stand out as sharply as do business administration and education.

The frequent choice of these two fields is possibly accountable to the fact that graduates in both are currently much in demand. Also one could speculate that these majors are chosen often because they offer fairly clearcut preparation for relatively specific types of

¹Of the total of 150 students who had selected majors 144, or 96%, selected one from the list of twenty-four included in the study.

jobs. Positions for people trained in business or education are generally available throughout the United States.

Table VI, page 24, ranks the twenty-four academic fields with which this study deals in order of frequency of selection by both sexes.

Selection by Males

The male respondents exhibited a pattern of selection notably distinct from that of the females. For a comparison see Tables VII and VIII on pages 26 and 30.

The field most frequently selected by males was business administration which claimed 32% of the total. Since this area offers preparation for a wide variety of occupations open largely to men, for instance, sales, office management, marketing and accounting, it is not surprising to find a large number of male registrants.

Geology ranks second in frequency of selection by males. In this sample the males completely dominated the field with a total of eight majors as compared with no female majors. This distribution coincides with the findings of other studies. Men tend to dominate the sciences and particularly those connected with outdoor occupations.

The field ranking third in frequency of selection by males was pre-law. This major field, also, was chosen

TABLE VI

SELECTION OF MAJOR BY TOTAL SAMPLE

FIELD	NUMBER	PER CENT
Business Administration	36	25
Education	14	10
Geology	8	5
Health and Physical Education	8	5
Liberal Arts	8	5
Home Economics	7	5
Music	7	5
Pharmacy	7	5
Pre-Law	7	5
Pre-Medical Science	7	5
Forestry	6	4
Pre-Engineering	5	4
Psychology	5	4
Chemistry	4	3
Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work	4	3
Art	2	1
English	2	1
Journalism	2	1
Wildlife Technology	2	1
Foreign Languages	1	1
History and Political Science	1	1
Physics	1	1
Economics	0	0
Mathematics	0	0
TOTAL	144	100

exclusively by males.

Fields sharing fourth place in frequency of selection were forestry and pre-medical science. There was no overlapping between the sexes in the selection of forestry for what seems like the obvious reason that most women are ill suited for the type of occupation for which the major of forestry prepares. Pre-medical science was chosen by 6% of the men compared with 2% of the women. Long and expensive preparation for a career in medicine might be a major consideration in discouraging women in this field, particularly those women who intend to marry.

One other field, pre-engineering, was noteworthy in that it was selected only by males. This might be expected, too, since engineering is the traditional province of men to the exclusion of women.

The remaining selections were scattered among the other fields. Table VII, page 26, lists in order of frequency of selection the choices of major by males.

When the individual fields were grouped according to general area,¹ it became evident that males tended

¹The fields were grouped as follows.
Social Science - Economics, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work; Natural Science - Chemistry, Geology, Mathematics, Physics, Wildlife Technology; Pre-Professional - Pre-Law, Pre-Medical Science; Semi-professional - Education, Forestry, Health & Physical Education, Home Economics, Journalism, Pharmacy, Pre-Engineering; Humanities - Art, English, Foreign Languages, History and Political Science, Liberal Arts, Music; Business - Business Administration

TABLE VII

SELECTION OF MAJOR BY MALES

FIELD	NUMBER	PER CENT
Business Administration	30	32
Geology	8	9
Pre-Law	7	8
Forestry	6	6
Pre-Medical Science	6	6
Health and Physical Education	5	5
Pharmacy	5	5
Pre-Engineering	5	5
Music	4	4
Psychology	4	4
Chemistry	3	3
Education	3	3
Liberal Arts	3	3
Journalism	2	2
History and Political Science	1	1
Physics	1	1
Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work	1	1
Wildlife Technology	1	1
Art	0	0
Economics	0	0
English	0	0
Foreign Languages	0	0
Home Economics	0	0
Mathematics	0	0
TOTAL	95	99

to select majors in business notably more frequently than one would expect by chance alone. Also, their selection of pre-professional fields and the natural sciences was somewhat greater than one might expect to find by chance alone. Males tended to under select majors in the semi-professional fields and the humanities, while selection of social sciences about equals the expected frequency.¹

Selection by Females

The field most frequently selected by females was education. Of the total respondents 23% chose this major. The large number of female majors in education is not surprising since teaching is one field almost unqualifiedly open to women. Teaching is traditionally a proper and desirable vocation for women. Furthermore, the current demand almost assures jobs for graduates any place in the United States. Relatively few men (3%) chose education as a major.

Home economics ranked second in popularity as a major for women. It was selected by 15% of the female respondents. This field, too, is approved for women and almost exclusively so. No men in the sample selected home economics. One might expect selection in this field to be based primarily upon a desire to prepare for marriage.

¹Appendix D.

There are, of course, occupational possibilities in the field open to women. Majors might be planning to teach home economics, go into dietetics or select a position of home economics in the business world.

Third in importance in selection by females was business administration (12%). The large number of women in this field might be at least partially explained by the fact that business administration includes those specializing in secretarial science and those preparing to teach business subjects on the secondary school level.

Liberal arts was selected as a major by 10% of the total female respondents. The author speculates that this field might be a natural choice for women who do not plan occupations, but are rather more interested in acquiring a well rounded education. It is also possible that majors in liberal arts plan teaching careers.

Health and physical education, music, and sociology, anthropology and social work were each selected by 6% of the respondents. In the first two cases the author supposes that the occupational goal of majors is teaching. Possible reasons for females choosing a major in sociology, anthropology and social work are purely conjectural. This field does provide a fairly general background for those not particularly interested in a vocation. A further reason for selecting this field might be a vocational interest in social work or a related field.

A full listing of the twenty-four fields in order of frequency of selection by female respondents is given in Table VIII, page 30.

When the individual academic fields were grouped by general area¹ it became evident that the great majority (74%) of the women in this sample were concentrated in two areas, semiprofessional and the humanities. The large proportion (47%) in the semiprofessional area can be accounted for by the fact that both education and home economics, the two fields most often selected by women, are included in that classification.

Females appeared least likely to chose majors in either the natural sciences or the pre-professional area. Business and the social sciences were selected by 12% and 8% respectively of the total number of female respondents.²

It seems reasonable to conclude from the foregoing data that there is a distinctive pattern of selection of major for males and females. A statistical analysis of the association between sex and selection yielded a Chi Square of 23.54, indicating that sex is significantly associated with selection at the .001 level.³

¹See note 1, page 25.

²Appendix D.

³A Chi Square of 20.52 is significant at the .001 level with five degrees of freedom.
see Appendix D.

TABLE VIII

SELECTION OF MAJOR BY FEMALES

FIELD	NUMBER	PER CENT
Education	11	23
Home Economics	7	15
Business Administration	6	12
Liberal Arts	5	10
Health and Physical Education	3	6
Music	3	6
Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work	3	6
Art	2	4
English	2	4
Pharmacy	2	4
Chemistry	1	2
Foreign Languages	1	2
Pre-Medical Science	1	2
Psychology	1	2
Wildlife Technology	1	2
Economics	0	0
Forestry	0	0
Geology	0	0
History and Political Science	0	0
Journalism	0	0
Mathematics	0	0
Physics	0	0
Pre-engineering	0	0
Pre-Law	0	0
TOTAL	49	100

Selection of Major and Father's Education

Since this research is concerned with factors influencing choice of college major it seemed worthwhile to ascertain the relationship, if any existed, between father's education and selection of major. In order to facilitate a comparison, the four educational levels¹ were reduced to two; college and less than college. The twenty-four academic fields were reduced to the six general areas mentioned previously. A Chi Square of 3.23 was found for selection of major and father's education indicating no significant association between the two.²

Previous investigators have found a positive relationship between the extent of parents' education and selection of an occupation. (It must be kept in mind that one of the assumptions of this research is that students choose their college major in preparation for an occupation.) However, the author recognizes that there is a strong element of pre-selection in the research sample. All the respondents are, after all, college students and they have, in choosing to attend college, considerably narrowed the range of occupations from which they wish to choose. One does not usually register in

¹See Table IV, page 19.

²A Chi Square of 11.07 is necessary for significance on the .05 level with five degrees of freedom. See Appendix E.

a university if he desires to be a carpenter, a truck driver, a mail carrier, or any of the hundreds of occupations for which college training is not necessary. Thus, having once entered college perhaps one would not expect that father's education would substantially influence the student's choice of major. At any rate no association was uncovered by this research.

Selection of Major and Father's Occupation

Some research studies in the area of vocational selection have indicated that father's occupation influences the selection of the child's occupation. Thus according to some findings, the occupation of the child is likely to be in the same general area or on the approximate level of that of the father.

In this study it was expected that the range of fathers' occupations would far exceed the range of occupations for which an academic career would prepare one. A college education is generally considered as preparation for a career in scientific, professional or semi-professional areas, or in business. Thus the author did not anticipate any close association between father's occupation and specific choice of major. There did seem to be a possibility, however, that those students whose fathers were in professions might tend to select pre-professional majors and that those students whose fathers

were in business would tend to choose a business major.

Because of the small number of cases in each cell the individual major fields were combined and assigned to one of six general areas.¹ For the same reason fathers' occupational classifications were lumped into two groups rather than the original six.² The first group represents principally white collar workers and the second represents principally manual workers.

An analysis using Chi Square was made of the association between father's occupation and selection of major. Chi Square was 2.86 indicating no significant association between selection of major and father's occupation for the respondents in this study.³

Selection of Major and Religion

With no real empirical basis for the supposition the author hypothesized that perhaps this study could reveal some relationship between religious preference and selection of major. Specifically, the author felt

¹See note 1, page 25.

²Professional, business and clerical occupations were included in one category and agricultural, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labor occupations made up the second category.

³A Chi Square of 11.07 is necessary for significance on the .05 level with five degrees of freedom. See Appendix F.

that a greater proportion of Catholics would select pre-professional, semiprofessional, or humanities majors. Conversely, the author conjectured that Protestants would tend to select social science, natural science or business majors more often than one would expect by chance alone.

The data in this study did not support the hypotheses that selection of college major is associated with religion. The Chi Square equaled 2.20, which is not significant.¹

Summary

An analysis of selection of college major by a sample of 180 freshmen revealed a strong association between sex and choice of major. Males tended to select some fields and females tended to select other, different fields. The research failed to establish any association between selection of college major and variables of father's education, father's occupation, or religious preference.

¹A Chi Square of 11.07 is necessary for significance on the .05 level with five degrees of freedom. See Appendix G.

CHAPTER VI

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE OF ACADEMIC FIELDS AND SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR

Prestige ranking

The principal aim of this research is to obtain an occupational prestige ranking of academic fields and to make a comparison of the prestige rankings and the selection of college major to establish whether or not there is an association. In order to secure a prestige ranking of the fields, the respondents were asked to rank in order of importance the twenty-four academic fields included in the study. Thus, the field ranking highest in prestige was given the number "1" and so on down a numerical scale with the field ranking lowest in prestige being assigned the number "24." The final prestige rank for each field was determined by obtaining the median rank for each field and then ranking the medians from high to low. In the case of a tie each field within the tie was assigned the same numerical rank.

Table IX, page 36, lists the academic fields as they were ranked by the total sample. The prestige ranking by males is shown in Table X, page 37, and the

TABLE IX
OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING
OF ACADEMIC FIELDS BY TOTAL SAMPLE

PRESTIGE RANK	FIELD
1	Pre-Medical Science
2.5	Pre-Engineering
2.5	Pre-Law
4	Chemistry
6	Mathematics
6	Pharmacy
6	Physics
8	Business Administration
9	Education
10	Psychology
11.5	Geology
11.5	Journalism
13.5	Economics
13.5	English
15.5	Foreign Language
15.5	History and Political Science
17	Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work
19.5	Art
19.5	Forestry
19.5	Liberal Arts
19.5	Music
22	Wildlife Technology
23.5	Health and Physical Education
23.5	Home Economics

TABLE X
OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING
OF ACADEMIC FIELDS BY MALES

PRESTIGE RANK	FIELD
1	Pre-Medical Science
2	Pre-Engineering
3.5	Pre-Law
3.5	Chemistry
6	Mathematics
6	Pharmacy
6	Physics
8	Business Administration
9.5	Education
9.5	Geology
11	Psychology
13	English
13	History and Political Science
13	Journalism
15.5	Economics
15.5	Foreign Languages
17.5	Forestry
17.5	Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work
20	Art
20	Liberal Arts
20	Music
22.5	Health and Physical Education
22.5	Wildlife Technology
24	Home Economics

TABLE XI

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING
OF ACADEMIC FIELDS BY FEMALES

PRESTIGE RANK	FIELD
1	Pre-Medical Science
2	Pre-Law
3	Pre-engineering
5	Chemistry
5	Pharmacy
5	Education
7	Business Administration
8.5	Mathematics
8.5	Physics
10	English
11	Psychology
13.5	Economics
13.5	Foreign Languages
13.5	Home Economics
13.5	Journalism
17.5	Geology
17.5	History and Political Science
17.5	Music
17.5	Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work
20.5	Art
20.5	Liberal Arts
22	Forestry
23	Wildlife Technology
24	Health and Physical Education

ranking by females in Table XI, page 38.

To facilitate a measurement of the agreement between the two sexes on occupational prestige ranking, the fields were divided into three groups; the eight which were high in prestige, the middle eight with prestige ranks from nine through sixteen, and the eight which held the lowest rank positions. The fields included in each level by males and by females were then compared.

There was complete agreement between the sexes on the four fields ranked highest. Although the order varied slightly, both males and females included pre-medical science, pre-engineering, pre-law, and chemistry in the first four prestige ranks.

There was general agreement on the prestige ranking of the remaining fields with the following exceptions. Males ranked physics in the top eight, females ranked it in the middle eight. Males ranked education in the middle level and females placed it in the high level. Home economics was ranked low by males, but females included it in the middle group. Finally, males put history and political science in the middle prestige level while females included it in the low prestige level. For further comparison see Tables X and XI.

A Comparison of Prestige Ranking and Selection
by Total Sample, Males, and Females

The author hypothesized that a comparison of

prestige ranking by the total sample with a ranking by frequency of selection would show that a relationship existed between prestige and selection. Spearman's Rho was used as a measure of rank order correlation.¹ A Rho of .003 was obtained from a comparison of the two sets of data² indicating the existence of no relationship.

However, when the same measure of rank order correlation was applied to prestige ranking and selection by males alone a Rho of .41 was obtained indicating a relationship significant at the 5% level.³ It would appear, then, that although for the total sample prestige is not related to selection there is such a relationship for males. The analysis of occupational prestige rankings and selection of major by females yielded no significant relationship.⁴ (Rho equaled -.07.)

The data is in accordance with the hypothesis that there will be a greater relationship between prestige and selection for men than for women. This phenomenon can perhaps be understood if one recognizes that

¹The formula for Spearman's Rho is as follows:

$$\text{Rho} = \frac{1-6\sum d^2}{N(N^2-1)}$$

A Rho of .409 is significant on the .05 level.

²Appendix H.

³Appendix I.

⁴Appendix J.

men are more vitally concerned with an occupation and all its ramifications than are women. The average man can anticipate spending a great deal more time working at his vocation than can the average woman. A man looks to his work to provide many satisfactions, economic, social and psychological. It is for these reasons the author believes occupational prestige is of greater importance to males.

The average woman, on the other hand, finds her satisfactions in areas other than vocational. Many of her social and psychological needs are met in her role as wife, mother and homemaker. Her social position is usually determined by the social status of her husband and, therefore, it might be expected that the woman herself would be more concerned with the prestige of her husband's vocation than with that of her own.

The Relationship of Prestige and Selection In Individual Fields

The author hoped that further analysis of the prestige ranking and selection of individual fields of major would be fruitful in measuring to what extent prestige was operative in the selection of specific majors. Toward this end a fourfold table for each of the twenty-four academic fields was constructed in which the sample was broken down into two segments, the majors and the non-majors. The author then ascertained from the data

how many of the majors had ranked that field first in prestige and the number of majors who had ranked it other than first. The same information for non-majors was included in the table. It was then possible, by using Tschuprow's T,¹ to measure the strength of the relationship between prestige ranking and selection of each field.

The author was able to apply Tschuprow's T Measure of correlation to only ten of the twenty-four fields. In the remaining fourteen the number of cases in one or more of the cells was not sufficient to warrant a meaningful analysis using the previously mentioned statistic.² Nevertheless, some consideration will be given these fields in terms of simple percentages or numbers.

A greater reliance can be placed on the data for the following ten fields which had the greatest number of cases.

Business Administration. Majors in business ad-

¹Tschuprow's T is a non-parametric statistic giving a rough approximation of Pearsonian Product Moment r. The formula is

$$T^2 = \frac{\phi^2}{\sqrt{(s-1)(t-1)}}$$

In computing the Chi Square necessary for the T formula Yates correction for continuity for fourfold contingency tables was used.

$$df = 1 \quad \chi^2 = \frac{N(\sqrt{AD-BC} - \frac{N}{2})^2}{(A+B)(C+D)(A+C)(B+D)}$$

²In these cases the expected frequency in one or more cells is considerably less than the usually stated minimum of 5.

ministration tended to rank that field first in prestige significantly more frequently than did non-majors. As indicated in the table 50% of the business administration majors ranked the field highest in prestige while only about 3% of the non-majors did so. The coefficient of correlation between prestige and selection was .56.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	18	18
Non-Majors	4	140
		N=180
	T=.56	

The total sample assigned business administration the first rank in selection and the eighth rank in prestige.

Education. A fairly strong positive relationship existed between selection of education as a major and ranking it first in prestige. Slightly over half of the majors ranked it first in prestige while none of the non-majors did so. The evidence, then, is contrary to the hypothesis that prestige does not play a significant part in the selection of education as a major.

Education ranked ninth in occupational prestige and second in frequency of selection.

The following table presents a distribution of the ranking.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR EDUCATION MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	5	9
Non-Majors	0	165
		N=179
	T=.52	

Health and Physical Education. The strongest relationship between prestige and selection was found in the field of health and physical education. The distribution is shown below. It is interesting to note that while three quarters of the majors ranked the field first in prestige, no non-majors did so. The prestige rank position assigned to health and physical education by the total sample was 23.5. It shared last place with home economics.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	6	2
Non-Majors	0	172
		N=180
	T=.79	

This extreme dichotomy between the prestige ranking by majors and non-majors naturally raises the question of whether the students' preception of the prestige of a field influences the choice or whether the choice influences the prestige ranking. The data in this study can-

not answer this question, however, and only seeks to determine the strength of the relationship.

Home Economics. A positive correlation between selection and prestige ranking in home economics was derived from the data. As indicated in the table below over half of the majors assigned the field rank number one in prestige while only one of 170 non-majors did so.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR HOME ECONOMICS MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank		
	First	Other than First	
Majors	4	3	
Non-Majors	1	169	
			N=177
			T=.57

In prestige ranking by the total sample home economics shared the lowest position with health and physical education. Females ranked the field at 13.5, a rank held in common with three others.¹

Music. Occupational prestige was significantly interrelated with selection of music as a major. The correlation of .76 is second in strength to the correlation of .79 found for health and physical education. The distribution of those ranking music first and other than first in prestige is shown below.

¹See Table XI, page 38.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR MUSIC MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	5	2
Non-Majors	0	172
		N=179
	T=.76	

The total sample assigned music a rank of 19.5, a position shared with art, forestry and liberal arts. In frequency of selection by the total sample music held eighth place.

Pharmacy. The correlation between selection and prestige for pharmacy was measured at .48. Although the relationship is not too strong it is apparent from the table below that a significantly larger proportion of those who ranked pharmacy first in prestige also chose it as a major.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR PHARMACY MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	4	3
Non-Majors	3	169
		N=179
	T=.48	

In prestige ranking by the total sample pharmacy ranked sixth sharing that position with mathematics and physics. Pharmacy was the eighth most frequently chosen major.

Pre-Engineering. There seemed to be virtually no connection between prestige and selection for pre-engineering when the correlation was computed on the basis of ranking it first or other than first in prestige. The distribution in the fourfold table was as follows.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR PRE-ENGINEERING MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	1	4
Non-Majors	8	167
		N=180
	T=.04	

Ranking by the total number of respondents yielded a position of 2.5, the same prestige rank as held by pre-law. If the hypothesis of this study were to be born out, one would expect both that there would be a greater number of majors and that a larger proportion of them would rank the field first in prestige. Actually, pre-engineering ranked 12.5 in frequency of selection.

Pre-Law. A T of .22 indicated a rather low correlation between selection and prestige in the field of pre-law. See the table below for the distribution.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR PRE-LAW MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	3	4
Non-Majors	9	164
		N=180
	T=.22	

The rank order position of pre-law given by the total sample was 2.5 contrasted with a rank of eight for frequency of selection.

Pre-Medical Science. The correlation between prestige and selection of pre-medical science seemed so low as to be of little or no significance. The distribution is shown below.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR PRE-MEDICAL SCIENCE MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than first
Majors	5	2
Non-Majors	55	118
		N=180
	T=.14	

Over twice as many majors ranked the field first in prestige as ranked it less than first, but it must be noted that fifty-five respondents who ranked it first did not select it as a major. By the whole sample pre-medical science was ranked first in prestige and eighth in frequency of choice. The latter position in frequency of choice was shared with pre-law, pharmacy, music and home economics.

Psychology. The field of psychology produced a fairly strong correlation between prestige and selection. Four of the five students who selected psychology as a major ranked it first in prestige. The distribution in the fourfold table is shown below.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR PSYCHOLOGY MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	4	1
Non-Majors	2	173
		N=180

T=.62

The prestige rank for psychology designated by the total respondents was 10. In frequency of selection it's rank order was 12.5.

A briefer consideration is given the following fields. As previously stated, the data on these fields did not lend itself to the type of statistical analysis used in the above material.

Art. Of the two students majoring in art, neither ranked it first in prestige.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR ART MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	0	2
Non-Majors	1	177
		N=180

Art was given the prestige rank of 19.5 and a selection rank of 17.5 by the total sample.

Chemistry. Seventy-five per cent of the chemistry majors ranked the field first in prestige, whereas approxi-

mately 5% of the non-majors did so. The distribution seems to indicate a relationship in chemistry between prestige and selection.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR CHEMISTRY MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	3	1
Non-Majors	8	168
		N=180

For all respondents the ranking in prestige was 4 and in frequency of selection the rank was 14.5.

Economics. No attention can be directed to this field regarding the relation of prestige and selection because economics was selected by no member of the sample nor was it ranked first in prestige by anyone. Its prestige rank was 13.5

English. Neither of the two English majors ranked the field first in prestige. Approximately 1% of the non-majors did so. There seems little reason to suspect any relationship here.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR ENGLISH MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	0	2
Non-Majors	2	176
		N=180

Foreign Languages. Foreign languages was ranked

first in prestige only once and then by a non-major. For the general sample the field had a prestige rank of 15.5 and a selection rank of 21.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	0	1
Non-Majors	1	178
		N=180

Forestry. Fifty per cent of forestry majors ranked the field first in prestige. No non-majors did so. Thus, a relationship between choice and prestige seems possible. Generally, forestry had a rank of 19.5 in prestige and 11 in frequency of selection.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR FORESTRY MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	3	3
Non-Majors	0	174
		N=180

Geology. In geology 12% of the majors ranked it highest in prestige compared with 88% who ranked it other than first. These percentages seem to point to little connection between selection and prestige ranking for this field. For the total sample geology was given a prestige rank position of 11.5 and a rank of 4 in frequency of selection.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR GEOLOGY MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	1	7
Non-Majors	2	169
		N=179

History and Political Science. With only one major in this field no conclusion could reasonably be drawn regarding a correlation between selection and prestige rank. For the sample as a whole history and political science held a prestige rank of 15.5 and a frequency of selection rank of 21.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	0	1
Non-Majors	0	179
		N=180

Journalism. Neither the two majors in journalism nor anyone else ranked it first in prestige. For the whole group the prestige rank of journalism was 11.5 and the rank by frequency of selection was 17.5.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR JOURNALISM MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	0	2
Non-Majors	0	178
		N=180

Liberal Arts. Twenty-five per cent of those who selected liberal arts as a major ranked it first in prestige. There appears then no positive correlation between selection and prestige in this field. By the total sample liberal arts was assigned a prestige rank position of 19.5 and a rank of 4 in frequency of selection.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR LIBERAL ARTS MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	2	6
Non-Majors	2	169
		N=179

Mathematics. Since there were no majors in mathematics included in the sample no conclusions can be reached.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR MATHEMATICS MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	0	0
Non-Majors	7	173
		N=180

Mathematics was generally rated rather high in prestige with a rank of 6. With no majors, it shared last place in frequency of selection.

Physics. The one major in physics ranked the field first in prestige. As a whole the sample gave the field a rank of 6 in prestige and 16.5 in frequency of selection.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR PHYSICS MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	1	0
Non-Majors	8	171
		N=180

Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, Half of the four majors in sociology, anthropology and social work ranked the field first in prestige. A positive correlation possibly exists between selection and prestige. Based on the ranking by the total sample the field held a prestige rank of 17 and a selection rank of 14.5

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	2	2
Non-Majors	0	175
		N=179

Wildlife Technology. One of the two majors in wildlife technology ranked it first in prestige. The number of cases is really too small to warrant any guess as to possible correlation between prestige and selection.

The total sample ranked the field in position 22 for prestige and in rank number 17.5 for frequency of selection.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTION AND PRESTIGE
FOR WILDLIFE TECHNOLOGY MAJORS AND NON-MAJORS

	Prestige Rank	
	First	Other than First
Majors	1	1
Non-Majors	0	178

N=180

Factors Affecting Prestige Ranking

The author attempted through this research to find out what factors influenced the occupational prestige ranking of an academic field. To this end respondents were asked to check those factors from a list of twenty which most influenced their assigning either rank number 1 or rank number 24 to a field. The results were not altogether satisfactory¹ and the author feels that an intensive analysis of the data is not warranted. However, perhaps the findings are of limited value as clues to what some of the factors are that lay behind the students' perception of prestige.

The two factors which were checked most often as influencing the ranking of a field first in prestige were good potential earnings and many employment opportunities, in that order. (See table below.) These findings would

¹This is discussed in Chapter VII, page 64, under limitations.

seem to indicate that for the majority of respondents money is an important index of prestige.

TABLE XII

FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED THE RANKING
OF A FIELD FIRST IN PRESTIGE¹

FACTOR	NUMBER OF TIMES CHECKED
Good potential earnings	123
Many employment opportunities	113
Social utility	102
Favorable influence of those known in the field	92
Publicity and recognition given people in the field	79
Personal interest in subject	70
Favorable opinion of family	67
Difficulty of subject content	64

It is important to note that many of the individual factors which influenced high prestige ranking are much the same as those claimed by other studies² to affect vocational or academic course selection, for instance, opinion of family and personal interest in the subject.

The fact that difficulty of subject content was checked frequently would tend to support Canter's research³ in which he found that judges' estimates of the intelligence required for an occupation influences the social

¹See Appendix K for a complete list of factors.

²Weeks, supra, p. 4, and Auten, supra, p. 5.

³Canter, supra, p. 8.

status of that occupation. To relate the two findings one must, of course, assume that difficulty of subject content is highly correlated with intelligence of those taking that subject. The correctness of this assumption has not been ascertained.

The factors influencing low prestige were apparently not as clear cut. The only two factors about which there was any sort of agreement among respondents were lack of personal interest in the subject, checked 120 times, and poor potential earnings in the field, checked 70 times.¹ This last factor seems to bolster the hypothesis that money, or the lack of it, is an important influence in prestige ranking.

Summary

The data on prestige rankings by males and females pointed to general agreement between the sexes.

A rank order correlation of occupational prestige ranking and selection of college major for the total sample yielded a Rho of .003, indicating virtually no relation between prestige and selection.

The relationship between prestige ranking and selection for females alone also was not significant (Rho = -.07). However, for males there was a significant positive correlation between prestige and selection

¹See appendix L for a complete list of factors.

(Rho=.41).

In the analysis of individual fields, business administration, education, health and physical education, home economics and psychology all had correlations of .52 or higher when prestige ranking by majors and non-majors were compared. Thus, in the above fields those respondents who were majors ranked the field highest in prestige significantly more frequently than those who were not majors.

The factor influencing the prestige ranking of academic fields which was most often checked by respondents was money (potential earnings).

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND LIMITATIONS

The Sample

The judgement of the findings of any piece of research must depend to a considerable extent upon the adequacy of the sample from which the data is drawn. In recognition of the importance of the sample, a brief review of its salient features is in order.

The 180 respondents were drawn from the twelve sections of an English course required of all freshmen at Montana State University during the Winter quarter of 1957. Of the 180 students all were freshmen, 64% were males and 36% females. Fifty-one per cent were between the ages of 16 and 18 years, 30% were 19 to 21 years old and 19% were 22 or over. It was primarily a Protestant sample with 70% expressing that religious preference. Twenty-four per cent indicated a Catholic preference and 6% checked the category 'other.'

The fathers of 59% of the sample had a high school education or less and 41% of the respondents had fathers who had attended college.

Forty-six per cent of the respondents' fathers were in professional, business or clerical occupations

compared with 54% of the fathers who were in occupations classified as agriculture, skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled labor.¹

The material having to do with selection of major is based on the selections of the 144 students in the sample who had chosen a major at the time of the study.

The Findings

The findings are summarized primarily in terms of the working hypotheses.

The data seemed to support the hypothesis that there would be agreement generally on prestige ranking of academic fields. The agreement was most pronounced in those fields which had either very high or very low ranking. With minor variations, then, males ranked the fields approximately the same as did the females.

The rank order correlation for prestige and selection for the entire sample yielded a R_{ho} of .003, that is, no correlation. Thus the second hypothesis stating that there would be a significant relationship between prestige and selection was refuted.

¹It is perhaps notable that the background factors of fathers' education and occupation for this sample are in variance with what one generally expects to find. The average American college student comes from a family above average in educational attainment and occupational status. The author would guess that the fact that Montana is largely rural and the University state supported accounts at least partially for the variance.

The third hypothesis stated that there would be a higher correlation between prestige and selection for males than for females. The data did corroborate the hypothesis. The rank order correlation for females on prestige and selection was $-.07$, not significant, while for males a significant $.41$ relation existed.

A fourth hypothesis was that prestige does not play a significant role in the selection of education as a major. Five of the total fourteen majors ranked education number 1 in prestige and no non-majors did so. The correlation between prestige and selection was $.52$ showing a rather definite connection, contrary to the hypothesis.

The findings in regard to differential selection of major served to support the fifth hypothesis that the pattern of selection for males would differ from that for females. The first four rank positions in frequency of choice by women were filled by education, home economics, business administration and liberal arts, in that order. For men the first three ranks were filled by business administration, geology and pre-law. Pre-medical science, and forestry tied for fourth place in frequency of selection. Thus the only common thread in the selection pattern in the top four fields for males and females was business administration.

The sixth and final hypothesis to be tested was that concerning the factors influencing prestige ranking. The author believed the following would be most frequently

checked: 1) good potential earnings, 2) many employment opportunities, and 3) publicity and recognition given people in the field.

The data did for the most part reinforce the above hypothesis. The three factors actually checked most often were: 1) good potential earnings, 2) many employment opportunities, and 3) lack of personal interest in the subject. The first two were checked in respect to factors influencing high prestige and the third in respect to factors influencing low prestige. Publicity and recognition given people in the field placed sixth in number of times checked.

In addition to the findings described above the research indicated that for the sample involved there was no relationship between selection of major and the variables of religion, father's education or father's occupation. As mentioned previously, there was a relationship between selection of major and sex.

Limitations

Behind every research study is the author's desire to make some contribution to the body of knowledge in his field. It is hoped that this study might have made some small addition to an understanding of the process of choice of major and, indirectly, choice of vocation as well as shed light on the occupational prestige ranking of academic fields. However, the author recognizes that

any evaluation of the finds of research must take into account the limitations imposed upon it by time, money, location, sampling, instruments of measurement and human error. The present study has many such limitations.

One of the most damaging limitation^s in this research is the smallness of the sample. Thus the number of students choosing any one field was apt to be very small. For over half of the academic fields, the number of cases per cell in the fourfold tables was so small as to preclude any meaningful statistical analysis. The size of the sample was also reflected in the absence of well defined rankings in both prestige and selection. Several fields in both cases often shared the same rank position.

A second aspect of the research open to question is the length of the list of fields to be ranked. One can legitimately doubt that the students ranked all twenty-four fields with equal care and thoughtfulness. Probably the high and low rankings are more reliable than the middle ones.

A third limitation is in the representativeness of the sample. Possible biases of the sampling technique have not been exhaustively explored. The most that can be said is that the 180 students included seem to be representative of the total freshman class.

Another difficulty of the research was involved in the listing of the academic fields. The fields included in the study all represent major departments at

Montana State University. In at least two instances a department included more than one subject. The ranking of the combination of history and political science or sociology, anthropology and social work may not reflect what the ranking of the fields would be if they were listed separately.

The value of the data relating to factors which influence high and low prestige ranking is limited in that it was apparent many of the respondents did not understand the directions for checking the list of factors.¹

The author recognizes a sixth limitation in the list of factors influencing prestige ranking which is far from exhaustive. There are perhaps other factors not included which would come closer to the essence of prestige.

These, then, are the principal limitations of the research as the author sees them. Undoubtedly there are others.

¹In some cases respondents checked both the positive and negative statements as influencing high prestige. These cases were thrown out. In other instances it seemed evident that respondents were checking the factors which influenced their own selection or the ranking of their own selection.

CHAPTER VIII
INTERPRETATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

At the end of a research project the author is faced with the task of interpreting the meaning and import of his findings. He should go beyond the point of reporting his observations to search out the significance of these observations and to fit them into the larger area to which they are akin.

The author believes the study has importance in that it calls attention to the association between occupational prestige of academic fields and the selection of college major. Perhaps too little consideration has been given prestige as a factor in vocational selection.

It is true that some of the factors which influence prestige, such as family and interest in the subject (or work), have long been objects of research in the field of occupational selection. The author is convinced, however, that there is an element in prestige which is absent in these other factors, individually or collectively.

This research, with all its limitations, does seem to indicate that in some areas and for some people

prestige is significantly related to selection of college major, which is in most cases viewed as preparation for an occupation.

It must be emphasized that whatever else this research accomplishes it does not establish any cause and effect relationship between prestige and selection. Certain of the findings do, nevertheless, lead to speculation on whether selection influences prestige or prestige selection. One is struck by the situation in which majors in fields such as health and physical education or music rank their fields first in prestige fairly consistently whereas the non-majors consistently assign the fields very low prestige. On the other hand, people in the high prestige fields such as pre-engineering and pre-law are not very much more apt to rank their field number one in prestige than are the non-majors.

In the author's opinion, the most plausible explanation of the seemingly paradoxical ranking by majors in the very low prestige fields and those in the very high prestige fields is that the former are being somewhat defensive in their ranking. It seems very unlikely that those majoring in health and physical education chose that field because of its high prestige value. However, and this is conjecture on the author's part, once having selected the field the majors endow it with virtues it does not possess--at least in the eyes of most students.

In contrast, the majors in fields such as pre-

engineering and pre-law, recognizing the relatively high prestige of their field are not as anxious to give it the number one position. This is not to say that pre-law and pre-engineering majors ranked their fields low. On the contrary, seven out of seven pre-law majors ranked the field in the top three prestige ranks and three out of five pre-engineering majors did so. It seems more probable that the prestige of the occupations of law, engineering and medicine exert influence on the choice of those fields as a major even though the apparent relationship between selection and prestige is not as strong as for some other major fields.

However one interprets the findings, the author thinks that some contribution has been made by the study to understanding in the broader field of vocational selection, and that the results might be useful to both curriculum advisors and vocational counselors. The present study also points up the fact that university departments are seen by the students in terms of prestige and that there is substantial agreement concerning the prestige ranking.

Suggestions for Further Research

In the course of a specific bit of research related questions arise which are not within the scope of the study, but which would provide the basis of inter-

esting corollary studies. The author lists below some suggestions for possible further research in this area.

A more elaborate investigation of prestige ranking of academic fields might be worthwhile in which separate and composite rankings by students, faculty, and outsiders would be obtained. A comparison of the prestige rankings with differential salary schedules and the like might provide insight into the structure and organization of a university.

Undoubtedly a more intense consideration of the factors influencing the perception of prestige is in order. It would be interesting as well, to try to find out if the same basic factors influence the prestige of academic fields, occupations and other areas open to such ranking.

If feasible, a two part study would perhaps produce some worthwhile results. A prestige ranking by high school seniors of academic fields could be followed by a study of the prestige ranking by the same students who two years later were enrolled in a college or university. A comparison then could be made between prestige rankings at the two time periods and the influence on selection could be more accurately ascertained.

Finally, the author feels strongly that more research is needed to determine how realistic college preparation is for a specific occupation. Is the student's expectation of his preparation greater than is the case?

APPENDIX A

A COMPARISON OF SELECTION OF TWENTY-FOUR MAJOR FIELDS
BY THE SAMPLE, ALL FRESHMEN AND ALL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

CHOICE OF MAJOR	SAMPLE		ALL FRESHMEN		ALL UNIVERSITY	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Art	2	1	15	3	30	1
Business Administration	36	24	147	26	614	25
Chemistry	4	3	11	2	32	1
Economics	0	0	2	0	24	1
Education	14	10	48	8	250	10
English	2	1	11	2	92	4
Foreign Languages	1	1	5	1	35	2
Forestry	6	4	58	10	279	11
Geology	8	6	18	3	107	4
Health and Physical Education	8	6	20	3	95	4
History and Political Science	1	1	14	2	121	5
Home Economics	7	5	23	4	70	3
Journalism	2	1	24	4	76	3
Liberal Arts	8	6	41	7	106	4
Mathematics	0	0	7	1	34	1
Music	7	5	33	6	119	5
Pharmacy	7	5	15	3	89	4
Physics	1	1	5	1	24	1
Pre-Engineering	5	3	19	3	28	1
Pre-Law	7	5	14	2	31	1
Pre Medical Science	7	5	15	3	52	2
Psychology	5	3	10	2	55	2
Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work	4	3	15	3	63	3
Wildlife Technology	2	1	7	1	38	2
TOTAL	144	100	577	100	2,464	100

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of a study of the occupational prestige rankings of various academic fields in which one can major here at Montana State University. The information that you give will be anonymous.

Your cooperation in this research project is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time and interest.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING
OF ACADEMIC FIELDS

ARE YOU A FRESHMAN: Check one

1. Yes
 2. No

1. SEX: Check one

1. Male
 2. Female

2. AGE: Check one

1. 16-18 years
 2. 19-21 years
 3. 22 and over

3. RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

1. Catholic
 2. Protestant
 3. Jewish
 4. Other

4. FATHER' EDUCATION: Check the highest level completed.

1. Elementary (Check one regardless of whether
 2. High School or not parent is now living. If
 3. Some College a step-parent has had most influ-
 4. College ence upon you, indicate his educa-
tion instead.)

5. FATHER'S OCCUPATION: _____

(If father is deceased, indicate what his occupation was. If a step-father had most influence upon you, indicate his occupation.)

APPENDIX B (cont.)

6. OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING OF ACADEMIC FIELDS

Please rank the 24 academic fields at the right in order of importance from 1 to 24. Write the number "1" next to the field you consider has the greatest occupational prestige. Write the number "2" next to the field you consider has the second greatest occupational prestige and so on down the scale with the number "24" being written next to the field you consider has the least occupational prestige.

Although ranking of some fields will be difficult, please assign a rank number to all 24 fields without using any number more than once.

- Art (Fine Arts)
- Business Administration
- Chemistry
- Economics
- Education
- English
- Foreign Languages
- Forestry
- Geology
- Health and Physical Education
- History and Political Science
- Home Economics
- Journalism
- Liberal Arts
- Mathematics
- Music
- Pharmacy
- Physics
- Pre-Engineering
- Pre-Law
- Pre-Medical Science
- Psychology
- Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work
- Wildlife Technology

7. Have you selected a major field?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

8. If you answered yes to the above question, refer to the following list for the number of your major field and write it in the blank. If your major field does not appear on the list, write it in. _____

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Art | 14. Liberal Arts |
| 2. Business Administration | 15. Mathematics |
| 3. Chemistry | 16. Music |
| 4. Economics | 17. Pharmacy |
| 5. Education | 18. Physics |
| 6. English | 19. Pre-Engineering |
| 7. Foreign Language | 20. Pre-Law |
| 8. Forestry | 21. Pre-Medical Science |
| 9. Geology | 22. Psychology |
| 10. Health and Physical Education | 23. Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work |
| 11. History and Political Science | 24. Wildlife Technology |
| 12. Home Economics | |
| 13. Journalism | |

APPENDIX B (cont.)

9. If you answered yes to question 7, do you plan to enter an occupation after college for which your college major is considered highly desirable preparation?
 ___ 1. Yes
 ___ 2. No

10. In the first column under prestige check only those factors which strongly influenced your ranking a field number 1 or highest in occupational prestige. In the second column under prestige, check only those factors which strongly influenced your ranking a field number 24 or lowest in occupational prestige.

	PRESTIGE	
	Highest	Lowest
Personal interest in subject _____		
Lack of personal interest in subject _____		
Social Utility (Contribution to the betterment of society) _____		
Lack of social utility _____		
Favorable opinion of family _____		
Unfavorable opinion of family _____		
Favorable opinion of friends _____		
Unfavorable opinion of friends _____		
Difficulty of subject content _____		
Simplicity of subject content _____		
Difficulty of achieving success in the field _____		
Ease of achieving success in the field _____		
Good potential earnings in the field _____		
Poor potential earnings in the field _____		
Many employment opportunities _____		
Few employment opportunities _____		
Publicity and recognition given people in the field _____		
Lack of publicity and recognition given people in the field _____		
Favorable influence of those you know in the field _____		
Unfavorable influence of those you know in the field _____		
Other (Write in any other influencing factors) _____		

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SEX AND SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR

AREA	MALES	FEMALES
Social Sciences	5	4
Natural Sciences	13	2
Pre-Professional	13	1
Semiprofessional	26	23
Humanities	8	13
Business	30	6
TOTAL	95	49

$$\chi^2=23.54$$

Significant at .001 level.

5 d.f.

APPENDIX E

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN FATHER'S EDUCATION
AND SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR

AREA	LESS THAN COLLEGE	SOME COLLEGE
Social Sciences	4	5
Natural Sciences	9	6
Pre-Professional	7	7
Semiprofessional	33	16
Humanities	11	10
Business	20	16
TOTAL	84	60

$$\chi^2 = 3.23$$

5 d.f.

APPENDIX F

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN FATHER'S OCCUPATION
AND SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR

AREA	PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS CLERICAL	AGRICULTURE SKILLED SEMI-SKILLED UNSKILLED LABOR
Social Sciences	5	4
Natural Sciences	10	5
Pre-Professional	8	6
Semiprofessional	22	27
Humanities	10	11
Business	18	14
TOTAL	73	67

$$\chi^2=2.86$$

5 d.f.

APPENDIX G

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE
AND SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR

AREA	CATHOLIC	PROTESTANT
Social Sciences	1	8
Natural Sciences	3	12
Pre-Professional	2	11
Semiprofessional	11	35
Humanities	6	13
Business	9	25
TOTAL	32	104

$$\chi^2 = 2.20$$

5 d.f.

APPENDIX H

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING
OF ACADEMIC FIELDS AND SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR
BY TOTAL SAMPLE

FIELD	PRESTIGE RANK	RANK BY SELECTION
Pre-Medical Science.	1	8
Pre-Engineering.	2.5	12.5
Pre-Law.	2.5	8
Chemistry.	4	14.5
Mathematics.	6	23.5
Pharmacy	6	8
Physics.	6	21
Business Administration.	8	1
Education.	9	2
Psychology	10	12.5
Geology.	11.5	4
Journalism	11.5	17.5
Economics.	13.5	23.5
English.	13.5	17.5
Foreign Languages.	15.5	21
History and Political Science	15.5	21
Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work	17	14.5
Art.	19.5	17.5
Forestry	19.5	11
Liberal Arts	19.5	4
Music.	19.5	8
Wildlife Technology.	22	17.5
Health and Physical Education	23.5	4
Home Economics	23.5	8

Rho=.003

APPENDIX I

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING
 OF ACADEMIC FIELDS AND SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR
 BY MALES

FIELD	PRESTIGE RANK	RANK BY SELECTION
Pre-Medical Science . . .	1	4.5
Pre-Engineering	2	7
Pre-Law	3.5	3
Chemistry	3.5	12
Mathematics	6	21.5
Physics	6	16.5
Pharmacy	6	7
Business Administration	8	1
Education	9.5	12
Geology	9.5	2
Psychology	11	9.5
English	13	21.5
History and Political Science	13	16.5
Journalism	13	14
Economics	15.5	21.5
Foreign Language	15.5	21.5
Forestry	17.5	4.5
Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work	17.5	16.5
Art	20	21.5
Liberal Arts	20	12
Music	20	9.5
Health and Physical Education	22.5	7
Wildlife Technology	22.5	16.5
Home Economics	24	21.5

Rho=.41

Significant at the .05 level.

APPENDIX J

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING
OF ACADEMIC FIELDS AND SELECTION OF COLLEGE MAJOR
BY FEMALES

FIELD	PRESTIGE RANK	RANK BY SELECTION
Pre-Medical Science.	1	13
Pre-Law.	2	20
Pre-engineering.	3	20
Chemistry.	5	13
Pharmacy	5	9
Education.	5	1
Business Administration.	7	3
Mathematics.	8.5	20
Physics.	8.5	20
English.	10	9
Psychology	11	13
Economics.	13.5	20
Foreign Languages.	13.5	13
Home Economics	13.5	2
Journalism	13.5	20
Geology.	17.5	20
History and Political Science	17.5	20
Music.	17.5	6
Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work	17.5	6
Art.	20.5	9
Liberal Arts	20.5	4
Forestry	22	20
Wildlife Technology.	23	13
Health and Physical Education	24	6

Rho=-.07

APPENDIX K

FACTORS INFLUENCING HIGH PRESTIGE RANKINGS

FACTOR	NUMBER OF TIMES CHECKED
Good potential earnings in the field.	123
Many employment opportunities	113
Social utility.	102
Favorable influence of those you know in the field	92
Publicity and recognition given people in the field	79
Personal interest in subject.	70
Favorable opinion of family.	67
Difficulty of subject content	64
Difficulty of achieving success in the field.	57
Favorable opinion of friends.	48
Ease of achieving success in the field.	22
Simplicity of subject content	14
Lack of publicity and recognition given people in the field.	5
Unfavorable opinion of family	3
Unfavorable opinion of friends.	3
Lack of personal interest in subject.	2
Few employment opportunities.	2
Poor potential earnings	1
Unfavorable influence of those you know in the field	1

APPENDIX L

FACTORS INFLUENCING LOW PRESTIGE RANKINGS

FACTOR	NUMBER OF TIMES CHECKED
Lack of personal interest in subject. . .	120
Poor potential earnings	70
Lack of social utility.	50
Few employment opportunities.	50
Lack of publicity and recognition given people in the field.	50
Simplicity of subject content	48
Difficulty of achieving success in the field.	45
Unfavorable influence of those you know in the field	41
Unfavorable opinion of family	35
Ease of achieving success in the field. .	35
Unfavorable opinion of friends.	29
Difficulty of subject content	26
Favorable opinion of friends.	6
Many employment opportunities	6
Publicity and recognition given people in the field	6
Favorable opinion of family	5
Favorable influence of those you know in the field	3
Personal interest in subject.	2
Social utility.	2
Good potential earnings	1

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