HOW UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS THINK ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION AND PREPARE FOR EMPLOYMENT

by

Pannel Chindalo

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Graduate Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This study explores of how university students understand the relationship between a liberal arts undergraduate degree and becoming employment-ready. The study employs a phenomenological approach. Surveys and interviews of students were conducted on the Faculty of Arts and Science students at the St. George Campus of the University of Toronto. Supplementary data were obtained from National Survey of Student Engagement. By employing Bourdieu’s theory of practice (especially with regard to capital, habitus and field), the study reveals how students went about preparing for the labour market differed by their social class, immigration status and race.

Students’ abilities to secure skill-enhancing extracurricular activities and maintaining high GPA scores appeared related to their cultural capital. Most racialized first generation students experienced levels of difficulties in securing skill-enhancing extracurricular skill activities and maintaining high GPAs, which affected their employment readiness, clarity about occupational direction and their entry to graduate
studies. New immigrant students were least aware of the extracurricular activities needed to prepare for employment.

The study concludes that most liberal arts undergraduate students are not ready for employment at the completion of their studies and that social class and race may be related to their ability to make themselves employment-ready.
Acknowledgements

In ancient Christian literature, there is a concept of a friend who walks along and provides comfort during the journey of life. This friend can be consulted at anytime and be counted to provide peace and understanding. This friend is known as the wind (Spirit). In my journey of writing, my mentors, friends and family walked along with me.

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Chapter One: Does the baccalaureate properly prepare students for entrance into the North American labour market?

Introduction

The research question of this study, how do undergraduate students understand the relationship between higher education and becoming employment ready? has the potential to invite questions about the fundamental purpose of higher education, which many university leaders, politicians, educators, and theorists have argued passionately. Their positions are often presented in the form of arguments, mission statements, and apologetics. The debate about the relationship between education and employment has been ongoing for about a century. This study does not support or refute such arguments but rather asks undergraduate students how they understand the relationship between higher education and becoming employment ready. How they answer the question depends on their understandings, which are informed by their experiences. This study only captures a moment in students’ lives and may not remain consistent the rest of their lives. With this mindset, I question the utility of seemingly unalterable assumptions about the relationship between education and work that do not consider the contextual circumstances of each generation.

The study inquires about how students think about higher education and prepare for the labour market, employing an evidence based approach. This type of inquiry joins the genre of Canadian studies that ask students about their university education, employment preparedness and the specific skills gained from the programs of study in relation to their jobs. Such studies include the Canadian University Report (2010), the Ontario Graduate Survey (2005), Adamuti-Tracke, Hawkcy, Schuetze, & Glickman (2006) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (2008). Universities explicitly market their programs to prospective students as leading to employment (see for example University of Toronto,
University of Regina provides a more direct and aggressive advert: “We are the only University in Canada to guarantee you will find a great job within six months of graduation” (Canadian University Report, 2010, p.4).

University Career Centers primarily help students connect their educations to the labour market. Brooks (2009), the director of Liberal Arts Career Services at the University of Texas at Austin, writes: “Traditional reasoning about the enrichment of the student as future citizen can only go so far when parents who pay the tuition or students taking courses can’t see a bottom line in the form of a lucrative job after graduation” (The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 6, 2009, p.A112). The Canadian University Report (2010) demonstrates that students across Canada think about the worth of an undergraduate education in terms of how it connects to employment.

This study investigates third and fourth year students’ experiences in the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto.

This chapter provides the conceptual background to the study and the research questions. A review of issues on the relationship between undergraduate degrees and the labour market is followed by the study’s conceptual framework, personal reflections and summaries of the thesis chapters.

**Background of study**

The story of the baccalaureate degree in relation to the labour market has continued to unfold like a Shakespearean drama. The story of King Lear is about a King who entrusted his kingdom and wealth to two of his three daughters because he chose to believe their promise that they would maintain his security and that they loved him. He soon discovered that he made a mistake: Reagan and Gonoril did not honour their promises. The daughters’ deception drove Lear to self-introspection and the realization that he knew that Gonoril and Reagan had always been deceptive. Why did he succumb to their flattery when he knew their characters?
In comparison, governments, universities, labour markets, scholars and many families endorse the baccalaureate degree as the best investment in higher education. For decades, employment trends and lifetime earnings have demonstrated the value and demand for an undergraduate degree (Emery 2005; Geske, 1999). But is the undergraduate degree a good preparation for employment for all students, even when race and social class differences continue to influence students’ success in elementary and secondary education? Or do we just hope that postsecondary education will erase prejudice and differential outcomes that occur as a result of race and social class?

The sterling reputation of the baccalaureate degree was first challenged in the 1990s when it was described as inapplicable and its investment value was questioned (Bond, 1999; Evers, Rush & Berdrow, 1998; Rubenstein, 1998). Stakeholders such as higher education leaders rebutted with substantive facts about the baccalaureate’s relevance and its applicability in the labour market (Axelrod, 2002; Levin, 1993). The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education organized a conference and published series of papers in 1993 on “work and education” that addressed questions about the baccalaureate degree, general education and the labour market. A conclusion could be deduced from this literature: the educational system in both Canada and the United States did not need change because the economic driving factors had not changed and that the labour market’s challenge on the educational system to produce high skilled labour was unwarranted (Levin, 1993, Turk, 1993).

However the critical views on the undergraduate education’s applicability to the labour market have continued to gain support (e.g., Adamuti-Trache, 2006; Grayson, 1997; Tachibozo & Pasteur, 2007). Race and social class reportedly contribute to difficulties experienced by baccalaureate graduates in the labour market. Recent increases in undergraduate enrollments include high proportions of racial minority and women students (Davenport, 2002, Emery, 2005; Facts 2008). Increases in the numbers of racial minority and women students imply that the labour
market will be seeing more of the less traditional job seekers with baccalaureate degrees. Increases in undergraduate enrollments also imply that there are more people with undergraduate degrees competing for jobs but also that there are more traditionally marginalized groups competing for similar jobs. Already studies (Emery, 2005) have linked the increase in unemployment rates to the increase of women entering the labour market with baccalaureate degrees.

Both Canada and the United States have histories of classism and racism rooted in immigration, slavery, and multiculturalism; also injustice and inequality treatment of racial minorities. Many studies describe the impact of social class and racism on student achievement and progress in schools (Curtis, Livingstone & Smaller, 1994; Dei, 2002; Fordham, 1996; Giroux & Purple, 1983; McDonough, 1991; Oakes, 1975; Veltmeyer, 1986). Race and social class are also reported to have negative impacts on racial minorities in the labour market (Carnoy, 1995; Carnoy & Levin 1985; Galabuzi, 2007). Studies which discuss segmentation of the labour market argue that it is organizationally hierarchical and segregated by race (Alhausel, Spivack & Amsel, 1975; Carnoy, 1995; Galabuzi, 2007). While the existence and effects of racism and social class are widely reported in public schools and the labour market, there is a dearth of knowledge on how race and social class affect students’ educational success in higher education and labour market entry. This study takes the baccalaureate education, social class and race as critical factors for understanding the undergraduate degree’s appeal in the labour market.

**Research Questions**

The two research questions for this study are:

(1) **How do undergraduates understand the relationship between higher education and becoming employment ready?**

(2) **How do social class and race affect undergraduates’ understandings of their academic progress and employment readiness?**
In order to make the study manageable, students from the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto were the sole focus of this exploration. While they represent a particular segment of the undergraduate population, Arts and Science programs across Ontario universities are the largest group at the undergraduate level. The Council of Ontario Universities (Application Statistics, 2007, p.34) reports 58.3 % of all registered applicants in Ontario are in arts and science programs. The arts and science enrollment percentage is overwhelming when compared to the other twelve programs that share the remaining 41.7% student population.

The complex nature of this study required a critical orientation in order to link student’s views with various literatures that address the relationship between higher education and work. The study draws upon different theoretical perspectives in order to map out processes and issues facing undergraduates as they prepare to transition from university into the labour market. The study primarily draws on literature on student development, economics of education and sociology of education. Other relevant bodies of literature include culture and race studies, psychology, and educational policy.

**Bourdieu’s theory of practice**

This study is rooted in Pierre Bourdieu’s (1930-2002) case study of the French society. His passion to understand social disparities led him to develop the conceptual tools of *capital*, *habitus*, and *field* (Grenfell, 2008; Robbins, 2008; Swartz, 1997). These concepts were essential to his understanding of the relation between society and individuals. First, this section describes how Bourdieu defined *capital, habitus and field* and how he used these to address social issues. Second, I describe how McDonough (1997) adapted a partial application of Bourdieu’s “theory of practice.” Third, I discuss how Bourdieu’s theory of practice is applied in this study.
Although Bourdieu developed the conceptual tools of capital, habitus and field at different times, they are intricately connected in terms of daily individual and group practices (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Reay, 2004; Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu used capital to define forms of power whether they be material, cultural, social or symbolic which are at the disposal of individuals or groups in society. These resources are considered capital when used in social relations of power, where those who have access to these resources have advantages over those who do not have it (Moore, 2008; Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu named three types of capital. Cultural capital constitutes verbal facility, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, information about the school system and educational credentials; economic capital comprises resources that can be converted into money or are money; and social capital pertains to networking, politics, religion, or all types of affiliations.

Bourdieu understood cultural capital as existing in three forms: the embodiment state, the objectified form and the institutionalized form (Swartz, 1997). The embodiment and objectified forms focus on early influences of how a child is nurtured during the early growth period, what a family teaches and exposes a child to in terms of values, language, consumption patterns, attributes and use of learning tools such as books, and scientific tools (Swartz, 1997). Finally, the institutionalized form of cultural capital is the educational credentials system, which Bourdieu described as enabling particular groups of people to monopolize society by preserving and reproducing social status by means of credentials (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). He saw credentials as one of the most influential forms of power in society as Swartz (1997) writes:

Bourdieu places great importance upon the growth of the higher education system and the role it has come to play in the allocation of status in the advanced societies. Credentials become the means for gaining access to positions in the job market. It becomes essential for parents to invest in good education for their children so they can reap the “profit” on the job market (p.7).
Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) describe how cultural capital divides students in schools by performance records, based on affluent standards constructed to fit middle class cultural capital.

**Habitus** is a complex concept that takes different shapes and forms in Bourdieu’s writing. It represents how individuals make use of history and the present to address a current situation. Bourdieu used *habitus* to explain how structures are limited in their power to control individuals; rather, individuals bring dispositions to what structures offer to produce practice (Maton, 2008). Bourdieu employed various descriptions, including “cultural unconscious,” “habit forming,” “mental habit,” “mental and corporeal schemata of perceptions, appreciations, and action,” and “generative principal of regulated improvisations” to explicate *habitus* (Swartz, 1997, p.101). Regardless of the shapes and forms it takes, *habitus* conveys a notion of “deeply internalized master dispositions that generate action” (Swartz, 1997, p.101). *Habitus* should not be interpreted as a form of determinism but rather as an attempt to reconcile, transcend and demystify dualisms of objective-subjective, agency-structure and the micro-macro (Bourdieu, 1985a; Maton, 2008; Reay, 2004). It helps to explain the persistence of patterns such as how working class children embrace working class vocations and middle class children choose middle class careers. Thus the definition of *habitus*:

A system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generates and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operation necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu 1990h, p. 53).

*Habitus* informs us that individual histories (“structured structures”) are essential in producing actions (“structuring structures”). As such, individuals’ experiences inform their practices. The issue is, which sorts of histories are better suited for producing best (mastery) practices in *fields* such as education? Most definitely for Bourdieu, the middle class history is better suited for formal education.
*Fields* are arenas where individuals compete and struggle to accumulate and monopolize different kinds of capital. *Fields* are organizations, or systems (e.g. governments, businesses, universities, symbolic space) arranged around types of *capital* or more than one *capital* (Thomson, 2008; Swartz, 1999). Individuals could posses more *economic* and *cultural capital*, just *cultural capital*, moderate *cultural capital*, moderate *economic capital*, minimal *cultural capital*, minimal *economic capital* and so forth. Activities within *fields* provide privileges to some individuals or groups to dominate but also disadvantage other individuals or groups’ abilities to take part or even aspire to participate (Schubert, 2008). This process is unconscious such that dominating groups may not even be aware of it and the dominated may believe it is due to their own failings, but the end result is their suffering. The suffering of individuals in a *field* caused by a system assumed to be fair is what Bourdieu calls *symbolic violence* (Schubert, 2008) because the game in the *fields* leads some individuals or groups to feel inept.

These concepts of *capital*, *habitus* and *field* represent Bourdieu’s theory of practice in a relational equation: *Capital* + *habitus* + *field* = *practice*. *Practices* are actions undertaken by individuals or groups that represent what they do. That is, the values of *cultural capital*, *social capital*, *economic capital* and *habitus* in a society can be best understood in relation to where individuals work (*fields*).

McDonough (1997) applied the conceptual tools *cultural capital* and *habitus* to explore high school students’ selection process for post secondary institutions. McDonough employed a partial application of Bourdieu’s theory, as most North American studies have tended to do in the past (Hovart, 2001). However, McDonough’s (1997) study is a stepping stone for this study for being one of the first to apply Bourdieu’s theory at the higher education level in North America. By employing the conceptual tools of *cultural capital* and *habitus*, McDonough unveiled social reproduction processes similar to those discussed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 1990). In her study, students from working class families lacked resources to invest in the process of searching
for suitable post-secondary institutions. Furthermore, working class families did not see a need to apply to more than one postsecondary institution because it would cost more. One way of linking McDonough’s research to this study is by asking a simple question: Who between a four year university or college graduate or a high school graduate stands a better chance of finding a better job and living a better life in North America? A four year college or university graduate is better equipped because for most people, postsecondary education is the means to moving up from a working social class. McDonough’s study described social reproduction processes in education and society in the K-12 California educational system in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This study begins where McDonough would have liked working class students to reach: university. It also goes further than McDonough’s study by employing Bourdieu’s complete theory of practice of capital (cultural, social and economic), habitus and field whereas she applied only cultural capital and habitus.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study adapts the theory of practice: $Capital + habitus + field = practice$. The university is treated as a field where students’ capital and habitus are employed to produce practices that help them earn credentials. Therefore treating a university as a field supposes an investigation of how students’ capital and habitus contribute to their practices (Thomason, 2008). To define a university as a field also implies that it has standards and requirements that students have to fulfill in order to succeed. At the same time, academic success in a university is not confined to satisfying the basic requirements but also includes demonstrating mastery of knowledge (Maton, 2008; Swartz, 1997). To say it another way, students’ academic performances are measured in relation to other students’ academic performances. To illustrate how students are measured in the university we can compare them to tennis players. If players who started playing tennis between ages 5 and 10; 11 and 13; or 14 and 17 qualified for an under-18 national selection camp, what kind of skill differences would be observed amongst the players? At
first all players would have the basic skills of serving, receiving, forehand, backhand, volleys and over-head strokes. However, players who started playing tennis between the age of 5 and 10 are likely to be more skillful than other players because of the additional years spent in training. During matches these players are likely to demonstrate top spin, side spin, half volley, punch volley, lobs, kick-serves, slide serves and so forth. Furthermore, these players are likely to have developed maximum ball control and footwork that would make their plays appear easy. Players who began between ages 11 and 13 are likely to show same skill but would lack variety and ball control. In comparison, players who started between ages 14 and 17 are likely to be the least skilled and would look much busier on the court by running back and forth because of unrefined techniques. If the camp selection committee were to make a choice based on players’ skill levels without knowledge of when each player started playing tennis, who coaches them or how much each player spends on training, players who started playing tennis between ages 5 and 10 are likely to be selected. However, if all the players were to continue practicing into their early twenties, the advantages of when they started playing tennis would disappear. Similarly, university education depends on the early resources students bring with them. University program duration is short for many students to catch up, and they are forced to consider other occupational directions.

Undergraduate education demands particular skillfulness that students need to have in order to navigate smoothly through university requirements and expectations. In this study, students are observed in how they use their capital and habitus to earn academic credentials and prepare for the labour market (Reay, 2004). An examination of a university as a field entails discovering the environmental context within which they earn their academic credentials for the labour market (Reay, 2004; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). To conceptualize the university as a field also means that it is a place where students struggle for success and some become more successful than others (Swartz, 1997).
This study is also concerned with individuals and groups who are unsuccessful in a field. Bourdieu used a concept of *symbolic violence* to describe the suffering individuals endure for failing and blaming themselves as not having the ability to succeed (Schubert, 2008). *Symbolic violence in fields* pertains to the understanding that universities are created to be meritocratic at the same time that expectations are based on standards that favour participants who possess a particular *cultural capital*.

I use *symbolic violence* to characterize how students in a university disqualify themselves from pursuing occupational goals because of low grades, without knowing that rules of the system itself disadvantage them. Although Bourdieu never used the term racism, this study explores the relationship between race and students’ follow-through of occupational choices, grades and participation in extracurricular activities for employment preparation. Therefore racism could be categorized as *symbolic violence* if more racial minority students than white students are not succeeding and as classicism when a group of students with similar capital suffer the same consequences (Horvat, 2001). Victims of *symbolic violence* do not blame the system because they learn to understand that they participated equally but were unable to succeed. Horvat (2001) extrapolates from *symbolic violence* to systemic racism. As much as it is assumed within universities that students have equal chances, Bourdieu’s concept leads to an understanding that participants in the university engage with unequal resources and that the rules of the game give advantage to students with more *cultural capital*.

**Personal experiences and reflections on Higher Education and Employment**

My personal experiences and search for answers during my doctoral studies on the link between higher education and the labour market have been elusive and filled with tensions.

On September 17, 2008, to mark what I thought were the last days of my PhD preparation I visited my most familiar *crying wall* which is Cherry Beach. Cherry Beach is located across from
the Toronto Islands. It has tall trees that provide shelter from the sun and a patch of sand that extends for about 250 meters. I have come here over the past 18 years to ponder my employment needs and rest my emotions from mental anguish of why I have always been a step behind in finding good jobs.

I am a first generation Canadian. English is my highly functional language. I speak English fluently. I am also a Black immigrant from the Southern Africa region. I began my post secondary education in Ontario. When I completed my undergraduate degree I emotionally felt that I had accomplished something that would give me a head start in the labour market. Unfortunately, I graduated in the early 1990s and there was a recession in Canada. So I explained and accepted my dilemma of working as a cleaner, telemarketer, courier and loader as only temporary. But by the mid 1990s, my situation had not changed, despite the changes in job statistics issued by Stats Canada.

During this period I started my master’s studies at McMaster University while I continued working on low-end jobs. When I graduated with a Master’s degree, I thought that I had at least earned a place that would help me secure a better job than telemarketing. I was wrong. I embarked on a second master’s degree in education at York University in 1996, while I continued with my telemarketing job. I was given student assistant research funding by the department during my two-year program. Faculty members assigned me jobs to summarize articles, conduct searches for resources, and photo copy resources. These experiences did not provide me with work knowledge different than that possessed by a high school graduate.

When I completed the Masters program at York University, I found a job as a sales person in a computer store. With two children to raise under the age of six and a wage of about $800 per month, I was stretched. During this period I reunited with my undergraduate colleagues whose experiences helped me articulate my own. In addition, some of my friends whose children where in high school in the early 1990s had also graduated from university, which enabled me to make
further comparisons. A reunion with my friends who were White Canadians helped to take away some of the skepticism that race might be one of the sources of my predicament. However, since most of my White friends had come from working class families, it helped to identify social class as perhaps a contributing factor.

Families who assisted me when I immigrated and whose children were in high school had graduated from university by 1999. I witnessed these middle-class children struggle with the same issues I was facing. One child took an additional college diploma to supplement her baccalaureate but still could not find a good job. The other child opted for graduate school and has recently completed doctoral studies. I quickly understood that my problem was larger and transcended classism and racism.

The company I was working for after my graduation from York University declared bankruptcy six months later. Employment Insurance (EI) carried us for the next 6 months with an additional $300 from Child Tax Benefit. Where was my education when I needed it most to help me secure a better job? Just before my EI ended, I found a job as a manager of E-commerce. This was both a new position and a new type of business for the company but was not related to any of my educational disciplines. It was a small company that had been in business for 25 years. However, the agreement was that the government of Ontario would pay half of my salary during the first six months. My job involved negotiating prices with print cartridge manufacturers in both Canada and the US. I was also the coordinator for internet shops in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, an accountant, a loader, inventory manager, shipping person, and the advertising agent.

The nature of the industry did not last long because the technology of recycling cartridges and filling them with ink had not been perfected. It did not bring a sustained effort the industry had hoped. After eight months I advised the president of the company to end the project since reliable clients in the print industry did not trust recycled cartridges because of what they described as ‘below standard performance.’ As such original manufacturers earned further
credibility and consumers preferred original products. I was jobless again with one college
diploma, one undergraduate degree and two masters’ degrees.

Did something go wrong in my educational journey: Had I picked less valuable programs?
How come people with less education than I secured more rewarding jobs? Still convinced that
education is a better choice for improving my contribution to society and my life but not in private
returns of securing better jobs, I began my PhD studies in Educational Administration in
September, 2002. In my third year I conducted a pilot study of PhD students in educational
administration, higher education and philosophy and history programs. The participants were 3
White female students and 1 Black female student, all had opted for graduate studies after their
bachelor’s degree because they felt they were not prepared for the labour market. Two went to
teacher’s college, one went for graduate studies in psychology and the fourth one went for
graduate studies in philosophy. Upon completing their studies, the psychology graduate went to a
teacher’s college and the philosophy graduate worked in a coffee shop before deciding to pursue
doctoral studies. This pilot study helped me realize that perhaps there was more I needed to do for
myself in as much as I expected my education to serve me. It also showed me that more
credentials were needed to secure employment for both racial minorities and White students or
that at least for some students these degrees were not sufficient.

A little wiser and a little more acculturated into Toronto, I looked for opportunities to
improve my development that could perhaps help me. One of those opportunities came through
my supervisor in my fifth year to coordinate a major research project. I was given advice,
mentorship, and an opportunity to learn. In December 2008, I received the last cheque of my 24-
month contract.

Things change, Cherry Beach has changed over the past 18 years. In fact, it did not have a
name when I first started going there. It was muddy in the fall and spring but bumpy and uneven
in summer. However, the sand has remained the same and so has the controlled shore line. It now
has a neatly constructed tarred parking lot, a round-about for cars coming in and going out. It also
has a take-away stand. More people came to surf and canoe from Cherry Beach. Cherry Beach has
changed but I have? Am I like its sand that still looks the same?

We are officially in a recession in both Canada and the US. A cloud of uncertainty hangs in
the air this winter of 2009, just like it did when I first graduated with my baccalaureate in 1993.

**Organization of Thesis**

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. **Chapter One** has provided the background to
the study and the research questions. It introduced the difficulties of the undergraduate degree in
the labour market and attributed some of the difficulties to increases in university enrolments, race
and social class. The chapter also provided the conceptual framework for exploring the effects of
social class and race through Bourdieu’s theory of practice: *capital, habitus capital* and *field.*

In **Chapter Two**, I arrange the literature review in three sections: (a) college choice and
student decision making for occupational directions; (b) economics of education perspectives on
the undergraduate education and (c) sociology of education perspectives on university education.
This literature review helps to capture the many facets that speak to higher education and
employment.

**Chapter Three** outlines the thesis’ methodology. It is a phenomenological study by
design. The chapter describes the research methods, access to research participants, and data
sources. It also includes methods of data dissemination, data analysis, and study limitations. The
chapter introduces National Survey of Student Engagement survey instruments and compares
them with the study’s original data collection instruments. This chapter demonstrates how the
results of this study could be inferred to Arts and Science programs in other Ontario universities.
Chapter Four describes the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Arts and Science at the undergraduate level. It describes how the university markets its programs to students in terms of the connections between academic programs and the labour market. University reports, program descriptions, and interviews with career counselors are used to construct this chapter.

Chapter Five provides the analysis and discussion of student data. The data are sorted according to if and when students chose occupational directions, organized into four clusters. The data presentation for each cluster is organized according to students’ social demographics, university experience and initiative in seeking extra-curricular activities. The cluster analyses reveal significant differences along social class and racial categories. The results are summarized according to two findings: the undergraduate degree is necessary but not sufficient for labour market preparation; and social demographics played an influential role in how students viewed the baccalaureate education and labour market readiness.

Chapter Six answers the research questions. It shows that although students’ understandings and expectations from the undergraduate education are similar, students differ in how they prepare for the labour market. It discusses how cultural capital, social capital and economic capital were understood to have separated students’ university experiences. Chapter Six summarizes all the chapters to provide continuity. It also describes the study significance, limitations and implications for research and practice.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The chapter reviews three bodies of research: (a) college choice and occupational direction decisions; (b) economics of education perspective on undergraduates; and (c) sociology of education perspective on higher education.

Student decision making for colleges, academic majors and occupational directions

This section covers two lines of research: pre-university decision making, and occupational decision making when students are in university. It could be inferred from the literature on “student development” and “choosing college” that students engage at least two types of decision making for their university education: decisions about selecting a university and selecting an academic major (presumably toward an occupational direction). Lang (2008) makes a distinction between how students make decisions when choosing universities after high school and how they make decisions during their studies in college or university. He reports that students are influenced by more predictable factors when selecting college and are less predictable when selecting academic or occupational directions during college.

Post secondary selection influences

The post-secondary school decision-making process is well explored from both sociological and economic perspectives. Theories of “status-attainment” and “econometrics” used in theorizing about how students decide which universities to select demonstrate predictable patterns (Hossler, 1999). Status-attainment models focus on how the socialization process of family conditions, interactions with peers and school environment shape students’ decisions (Beswick, 1991; Hossler, 1999; McDonough, 1994). The assumption that theorists of the status-attainment model make is that “behavioral variables” of students’ academic performance or family social life
interact with “background variables” like the occupational status of parents to determine students’ educational aspirations (Hossler et al., 1999). Equally predictive are econometric models which assume that students use cost-benefit analyses to weigh costs against perceived benefits. Costs include both direct (tuition, books) and indirect expenses (opportunity costs, the money that could have been earned instead of going to university). Benefits may include financial gains from the degree, location in relation to home, student quality of life and extracurricular programs. Other econometric models rest on the idea of production and cost functions. The cost function ties the outputs to inputs in a linear design such that outputs are sums of inputs with appropriate weights (e.g., will a student gain more from their investment). The inputs frequently considered are student characteristics such as family, school related factors and even community-related factors (e.g. community mentors’ influence). These factors are associated with parental income, academic ability and parents’ level of education. In summary, econometric and status-attainment models have set patterns by which predictions could be made about students’ selection where to go to college (Hossler, 1999).

Jackson (1995), wanting to include more flexibility in college decision making theories, devised a model that combined econometric and status-attainment models. Jackson used a three-stage process with factors he calls “preference” (family background, social context, academic achievement and aspiration), “exclusion” (resources and choice set) and “evaluation” (rating scheme and choice). He uses these factors to explain the interdependence of the prominent aspects of the status-attainment and econometric models in students’ decision-making for postsecondary education. Jackson’s model expands and reworks the interdependence and flexibility of the factors to increase fluidity.

McDonough (1997) took the status-attainment model and explored it with a multi-layered sociological perspective. McDonough describes how social class influences students’ values beginning with schools they attend, career counseling advice they receive, their association with
friends and family members and the occupations of close family members. McDonough concludes that these context factors limit working class students’ perceptions for careers requiring university education. Like other researchers (Hossler, 1999; Lareau, 1987), McDonough relies on social demographic patterns to explore how students choose postsecondary institutions.

Lang (2008) reiterates the role status-attainment and econometric models play in students’ selection of postsecondary institutions. Lang further differentiates the criteria students engage to select institutions for their baccalaureate education and the rationale for deciding to transfer from college to university or from university to college during their studies. The essence of Lang’s argument on transfer is that choosing a university requires a planned process of some sort, whereas planning for an occupational or academic direction in university or college does not depend on well arranged and articulated plans. The idea of unpredictability in university students’ planning is discussed in the next subsection.

**Undergraduate decision-making process**

Studies in career counseling report that about 75% of students change their majors during their undergraduate studies (Gordon, 2007). This suggests that many students make decisions about their academic and occupational directions based on their experiences during undergraduate studies (Rybak, 2007). Decision making for academic or occupational direction for many university students occurs when they gain more occupation knowledge and understand their abilities after taking courses to make informed decisions. Seemingly students’ decisions are influenced by the knowledge and experience they acquire, resulting in unpredictable decision making which depend on what makes sense thus unpredictable. At the same time, students’ particular social backgrounds may influence what they do to follow through on their decisions, and explain why some are more successful than others. In other words, students still retain their prior networks and values while in postsecondary education.
I organize the vast literature on students’ occupational direction processes by asking the following questions:

(a) *What* influences occupational decision-making?

(b) What is the *nature* of students’ decision making?

(c) What influences *how* students make decisions?

**What influences occupational decision-making?**

According to Gordon (2007), undergraduate studies expose students to information about academic and occupational directions that necessitate decision making and changes to their original academic plans. Students’ understandings change about the value of different academic concentrations and occupational directions as they progress in their studies. Theories on student development consider students’ maturation and identity struggles at this stage of their lives, which makes choosing an academic major from too many options particularly challenging (Gordon, 2007; Savickas, 2002). Labour market information also plays a role in students’ change of occupational directions as do other variables such as grades, interest and personal traits (Gordon, 2007).

In Ontario, the government publishes information about occupations and employment trends in the labour market, but it is unknown if students apply this information in their career development deliberations (Lang, 2008). Studies support the frequency of students’ change of majors during their studies by reporting the positive impact it has on students (Steele 1994; Titley & Titley, 1980).

Students’ change of academic majors can have positive outcomes as they are correlated with increases in students’ graduation rates. Gordon (2007) reports that students who change a major at least once have graduation rates ranging between 70% and 85%, while students who retain their original majors have graduation rates between 45% and 50%. These trends suggest that
students may be more motivated when they change to suitable academic majors hence occupational choices. However, for some students, deciding on occupational directions is a challenging process, requiring introspection and a realignment of interests, grades, and personality (James & Alsalam, 1993).

**What is the nature of students’ decision making?**

Much has been written on the nature of student career decision-making. Three possibilities have been identified: students may be tentatively undecided; developmentally undecided; and undecided (Gordon, 2007; Cohen, Chartrand & Joowdy, 1995; Rojewski, 1990; Vondracek, Hostetler, Schulenburg & Shimizu, 1990). Students who are *tentatively undecided* are close to making decisions and comfortable with the situation in which they find themselves. They are characterized as “ready-to-decide students…well-adjusted, close to deciding, intuitive decision makers and confident that a decision will be made when it feels right” (Gordon, 2007 p. 82). *Developmentally undecided* students are students who resolve their situation through maturation. They are also described as being in the process of obtaining information about the labour market, self knowledge and learning to make decisions.

The third category, *undecided*, consists of students who have very unclear intentions, low self-esteem and are unable to use decision making procedures (Gordon, 2007).

**What influences how students make decisions?**

The impacts of family relationships on students are considered fundamental to occupational choice (Gordon, 2007; Holland, 1997). But there is no consensus on what aspects of family relationships influence career choice. Lopez and Andrews (1987) argue that interactions between the person and the family affect confidence when making decisions. Other studies do not

Pearson and Dellman-Jenkins (1997) investigated decision making on academic majors between students whose parents were postsecondary graduates and parents who were not and discovered no differences between these students. This finding suggests that parents’ level of education may not have the same influence on students’ decision making in university as it does in the postsecondary choice stage of selecting a postsecondary institution. However Pearson and Dellman-Jenkins discovered that students were much influenced by their own individual work experience, and personal experiences.

**Summary of student decision making process**

This section differentiates between the two types of decisions that students make during initial postsecondary selection and during their studies. “College choice” decisions entail the selection process for a postsecondary institution. Status-attainment and econometric models are profoundly helpful in explaining this process. However, in-university decision making for academic concentration and occupational direction is different. Students make decisions based on the knowledge they acquire from courses, their grades, interests, work experiences, and other personal experiences. Background factors such as family and parents’ levels of education do not appear to have significant impact, although the role of values that students acquire from their families cannot be ruled out from how students make use of these opportunities. Decisions for postsecondary institutions are more readily predictable than decisions for academic concentrations and occupational directions (Lang, 2008).
Economics of education perspectives on undergraduate education

This section presents discussions on higher education and employment.

**Baccalaureate as the means to labour market entry: Dissolving the myth**

In the research emphasis on comparing and compartmentalizing public benefits and private returns, the value of higher education for graduates with baccalaureate degrees is sometimes lost. In this study, the two kinds of benefits are seen as sides of the same coin. This means that undergraduate education is both expected to develop the participant to contribute to the public good and to make a private gain (Adamuti-Tracke et al., 2006; Hoffman, 1993; Geske, 1996; Leslie & Brinkman, 1988). Many individuals in both Canada and the US expect their participation in higher education to bring public good and private gain together, as do postsecondary leaders, parents and government (Arrow, 2000; Axelrod, 2002; Erickson, 1987). This is the reason, perhaps, that recent studies in economics of education integrate social and economic aspects of education because they sum up a balanced portrait of student development (Blaug, 1992). In view of this fusion, the following discussion on economics of education will expand on the conventional boundaries of what is expected of the baccalaureate degree in the labour market.

**What is higher education meant to accomplish for individuals?**

This section explores what economics of education theorists believe to be higher education’s contribution to students’ lives and how an absence of employment disturbs the anticipation of self-reliance.

Researchers (Geske, 1996; Leslie & Brinkman 1998) report that higher education provides steady employment and instills a sense of social responsibility for baccalaureate graduates (Geske, 1996, Mincer, 1992, Tchibozo & Pasteur, 2007). This conclusion is based on regressions analyses
of employment patterns and the social good this brings about that are well respected in economics of education. Knox, Lindsay & Kolb (1993) provide further clarification when they divide higher education’s value to students in three categories: utilitarian, expressive individualism and civic responsibility (also Leslie & Brinkman, 1988). They define *utilitarian* as the private benefits such as consumption, financial, happiness and well being of the student. These private returns of higher education are well documented (e.g., Beach, 2005; Berg, 1970; Blaug, 1992; Cohn & Geske, 1993; Douglas, 1977; Geske, 1996; Leslie & Brinkman, 1988). Knox et al. define *expressive individualism* as a condition which helps baccalaureate graduates to develop individual voice and validity as a result of personal happiness, freedom, friendship, marriage, family and leisure (Knox et al., 1993; Leslie & Brinkman, 1988). *Civic responsibility* pertains to esteemed values of “equality, justice, democracy and even community” (Collier, 2002; Knox et al, 1993, p.5). Boyer (cited in Knox et al, 1993) summarizes the above values in relation to undergraduate education:

> The aim of the undergraduate experience is not only to prepare the young for productive careers, but also to enable them to live lives of dignity and purpose; not only to generate new knowledge, but to channel that knowledge to human ends; not merely to study government, but to help shape a citizenry that can promote the public good (p.4).

The conception of “productive careers” conceptualizes the baccalaureate degree as a prerequisite to employment and earnings, an enabler for better earnings and better jobs through the human capital lens (Bailey, 2000; Wise, 1979). Human capital promotes the idea that any student can reap these rewards through secured employment and that individual success is a matter of free choice (Carnoy, 1995; Mincer, 1992). Human capital theory sees an investment in higher education as improving the potential for productivity and the earning capacity of whoever invests in it (Davenport, 2002; Berg, 1970; Blaug, 1992; Douglas, 1977; Leslie and Brinkman, 1988).

However, some studies challenge the view that higher education provides access to the labour market for all regardless of their social demographics. In his discussion on the “segmented labour market,” Carnoy (1995) distinguishes between the economics perspective and the
sociological perspective as he disputes the idea of meritocracy. For Carnoy, human capital theory overlooks the structural barriers that prevent many people like minoritized populations, women and the working class from access by meritocracy (see also American Association of University Women, 1999; Galabuzi, 2006; Douglas 1977; Freeman, 1998). Carnoy argues that meritocracy does not apply to most cases and that social structures play a critical role in deciding which social class groups will benefit most from higher education.

Social structure pertains to social organizations, work organizations, and educational organizations that prevent full access to knowledge and participation for minoritized and working class groups. Carnoy advocates for a structural intervention in order that members of disadvantaged groups can benefit from their participation in higher education in the labour market. Intervening for marginalized groups in the labour market entails the increase of access to higher education and an increase of representation in leadership and other influential positions. Labour market segmentation results in only a few people privileged by social class to have access to leadership jobs and disadvantaged groups that do not have a history in these jobs are denied access (Carnoy & Levin, 1985).

Carnoy’s concerns about structural intervention are well supported both implicitly and explicitly in sociological studies (see for example Carnoy, 1995; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; McDonough, 1991). Changing structures in the labour market implies mixing social class representation in leadership jobs. In anti-racist studies, structural changes imply representation, access and equal returns for minoritized groups and full participation in the labour market (Galabuzi, 2006).

Advocating for socially marginalized groups to have fair access to the labour market jobs is not just a matter of justice and equity but also an acknowledgement that higher education returns cannot be limited to socially privileged people. In the United States in the post Brown v. Board of Education (Cottrol, Diamond & Ware, 2003) era, when legislation is intended to correct
social practices, higher education has been assumed to represent better employment prospects and reasonable returns for all; therefore to separate this expectation of higher education but retain the expressive individualism and civic responsibility represents an imbalanced equation. It is a question of how higher education can meet the employment needs, civic responsibilities and expressive individualism for all who earn it (Kearney, 1988; Skilbert, 1994).

**Employment expectations for baccalaureate graduates**

Studies (Bowman, 1993; Emery 2005; Rathje & Emery, 2002; Smith, 2003) in higher education and economics of education (Leslie & Brinkman, 1998) argue that investing in undergraduate education provides employment security, better life-time earnings and better quality of life. Studies on rate of returns (Cohn & Geske, 1993; Leslie & Brinkman, 1988) and other economics of education studies describe the advantages of higher education over high school education (Arrow, 2000; Geske, 1996; Mincer, 1992). Acquiring a baccalaureate is expected to help individuals develop knowledge and skills to find better jobs (Freeman, 1998; Knox et al., 1980). Therefore an undergraduate education is expected to provide insulation against unemployment (Knox et al., 1993; Whitehead, 1992). Expecting better employment after a baccalaureate degree thus is both rooted in the social expectations based on what used to happen and in the economic theory of what higher education does to a student’s value in the labour market. It also implies that higher education without hope of better employment in economic driven societies like Canada and the United States has no practical value.
Does the baccalaureate provide work knowledge and skills for employment?

There are diverse perspectives on whether the undergraduate degree provides students with employable skills in the labour market, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

We know from early studies by Berg (1970) and Douglas (1977) that higher education was thought to increase productivity and skills; thus its appeal with respect to the labour market. A distinction, however, needs to be made about how higher education is understood to contribute to economic growth. In the context of an industry-driven economy, higher education’s contribution was understood as indirectly linked to productivity since university graduates tended to be managers whose organizational responsibilities were to increase performance. However, the economies of Canada and the US are more dependent on both industrial technology and information skills. This skills dependence is at the core of economic growth, thus moving higher education into a direct link to economic growth through skills and productivity (Emery, 2005; Trow, 2006). The link of higher education to economic growth is assumed to lie in organizational efficiency, the production of ideas, and the invention of technologies and skills that increase productivity and create demand (Hoenack, 1993; McMahon, 1993; Slaughter, 1990). For this reason, higher education is believed to be linked to increases in productivity and as such, employers are generally keen at hiring people with more education (Wise, 1976; Knox, Lindsay & Kolb, 1993). However the link between higher education and productivity has become a significant problem for baccalaureate graduates (Adamuti-Trache et al., 2006, Dauglas, 1977).

Employers realize that hiring someone without work skills or experience, even if they do have a baccalaureate degree, does not increase productivity (Bennett, Dunne & Carre, 2000; Carter, 2007; Evers et al., 1998) As a result, employers are less willing to hire graduates solely on
the basis of higher education as implementing on-job training reduces time spent on work itself and ultimately revenues suffer. As such, recent graduates with baccalaureate degrees are expected to acquire additional relevant experiences that can appeal to employers (Adamuti-Trache et al., 2006; Tchibozo & Pasteur, 2007). Some studies (Adamuti-Trache et al., 2006; Tchibozo & Pasteur 2007) report long delays in finding full-time employment lasting up to five years for baccalaureate graduates without applied education. At the same time, baccalaureate graduates from applied programs are reported to transition faster into the labour market (Adamuti-Trache et al., 2006; Tchibozo & Pasteur, 2007).

But not everyone agrees that undergraduates should be loaded with additional requirements to secure their place in the labour market. Axelrod (2002) and Levin (1993) argue that undergraduate education is adequate for jobs in the labour market. They purport that the undergraduate degree is applicable and sufficient but that the labour market creates a mechanism of screening job applicants not based on the quality of work it offers (also Turk 1993).

Arguably, higher education and productivity are not symmetrical, as productivity may have to do with personal traits, prior experiences and skills rather than education or cognitive development (Cohn & Geske, 1993; Levin, 1993; Whitehead, 1992). This perspective challenges the claim that higher education can provide entry into the labour market on its own merit. However the consensus on the baccalaureate degree is that it is a basic requirement in addition to experiences and work related skills (Adamuti-Trache, 2006; Tchibozo & Pasteur, 2007).

**Social Demographic Challenges in Higher Education**

The sociological perspectives reviewed in this section address challenges that affect racial minorities, working class people, minorities and women in terms of the interrelation between higher education and the labour market.
Disadvantaged groups in schools & higher education

Access to higher education remains difficult for most working class families and minoritized populations (Bramble, 2000; Curtis et al. 1996; McDonough, 1991). The difficulty is rooted in a combination of factors that include lower achievement levels, socioeconomics, and streaming of these groups in the public school systems (e.g. Anyon, 1981; Cummings, 1996; Curtis et al, 1996; Fordham, 1996; Henry, 1994; McDonough, 1991; Solomon, 1992; Oakes, 1985). Streaming is a practice of sorting and grouping students according to their perceived ability in public schools. This directs schools to teach students at different levels that determine their prospects for post secondary education. Low performing students, mostly from the working class and minoritized groups, are put in non-academic streams which exclude them from access to an undergraduate education. Theorists label these difficulties differently according to their disciplines.

The sociology of education literature (McDonough 1991; Cummings 1996; Curtis et al., 1996) discusses access difficulties for disadvantaged groups from a social structural perspective that brings classism into focus. Studies have consistently demonstrated how minoritized populations as a group fall behind in higher education achievement levels and performance (grades) in comparison to non-minority students (Morgan, 2005; Morales and Trotman, 2006; Stiff-Williams, 2007). Furthermore, studies in the US demonstrate lower performance levels among Hispanics and Black students (Morales and Trotman, 2006). At the same time, there has been increased university enrollment among women and minorities in universities in the past two decades (Beach, 2005, Emery, 2005; Easton, 2002).

In this study, low performance limits students’ occupational choices because they cannot access professional schools or secure entry into quality occupations. A succinct explanation about how this works is provided in Knox, Lindsay and Kolb’s concept of “socialization and allocation” (1993, p.7). Although my intent is to illuminate the effects of “allocation,” a brief explanation of
“socialization” is warranted as well. For Knox et al., the “socialization” factor describes how the university environment leads to changes in students’ values that help them develop into competent, critical, and socially concerned human beings. “Allocation” is the means by which people are given a functional status by what they have accomplished in society. Thus the allocation factor sheds light both on the socializing role of higher education and the social status resulting from higher education. But the certification function of higher education also gives social status to students. Thus, universities socialize students but also certify students and apportion them to positions in society (Knox et al. 1993):

Schools exist primarily for the survival and functioning of society rather than personal development of students…Schools evaluate the performance and capacities of their students, sorting and certifying them for positions in the social order (p. 10). This implies that when minoritized groups are streamed or underachieve in university and are unable to seek occupations of their interest, they find themselves in positions where society victimizes them.

As such, streaming in elementary and secondary school and underachievement in university easily translate into how racial minorities continue to be under represented in higher status positions. It also results into a lack of a voice and an imbalance in the representation of racial minorities. Sociologists and economists have come to be critical of the lack of meritocracy in the process of allocation (Carnoy, 1980; Knox et al. 1993; Oakes, 1986).

**Disadvantaged groups and the labour market**

Racial minorities, working class people and women are reported to have disadvantages in the labour market in comparison to white middle class men (Bourdieu, 1977; Carnoy, 1980 Carnoy, 1995; Freeman, 1998; Galabuzi, 2006; Henry, 1994). Studies indicate that private returns increase for these groups when they obtain higher education degrees, but even then their earnings are below white middle class men with similar education educational backgrounds (Galabuzi,
At the same time women’s earning are reported to be lower than men with similar education, on average (Emery 2005).

Carnoy’s (1993) historical analysis of employment describes the segmentation of the labour market that segregates marginalized groups. Carnoy identifies two conflicting ideas about the labour market. The first sees the labour market as meritorious and rewards a few with top jobs. The second is that the labour market is entrenched in a social structure that is not favourable to some groups (e.g., women and working class). This means that despite their educational attainment, these groups of people have limited access to better jobs (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Carnoy, 1980). Labour market practices continue this pattern through clientele preferences and social networks that provide access to privileged middle class people but narrows access for disadvantaged groups.

According to Galabuzi (2006), racial minorities in Canada are disadvantaged in the labour market regardless of their educational levels. He describes visible minorities as having the highest unemployment rate, the highest percentage in low-end jobs, the highest percentage in underpaid jobs and highly underrepresented in better paying jobs. He summarizes his finding as follows:

The impact of neo-liberal global restructuring leading to the growth of precarious forms of work and declining power of labour, the retreat of the state from economic and social regulation, and the acceleration of South-North migration have combined with historical processes of racialization in Canadian labour markets to render racialized groups more vulnerable to labour-market segmentation and declining social economic status. The consequence is the emergence of the racialization of poverty and other forms of social exclusion (p. xi).

Higher education and the schooling systems in general have demonstrated persistent activism in eliminating some of the barriers for disadvantaged groups (Knox et al, 1993; James, 1990). Arguably, for Knox, et al, the labour market has not been putting an equal effort to break barriers for disadvantaged groups. Studies that explore minoritized groups’ and working-class people’s lack of representation in higher jobs also suggest that socialization affects how students
understand the value of education as a possible explanation for their low occupational aspirations (e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Cummings, 1997; Gaskell, 1985; Freeman, 1998; Hossler, 1999; McDonough, 1997). These studies suggest that students’ perceptions and experiences are correlated with their demographic characteristics about how they understand in postsecondary education.

Ogbu (1987) identified populations in North America he categorized as involuntary immigrants and other populations such as First Nations people that resist middleclass educational values. Morales and Trotman (2006) also identify the need to help students from minoritized groups who have less esteemed perceptions of middle class education values. However some students’ indifference to educational values is rooted in a lack of resources. In other words the matter in question is simply that some students’ backgrounds do not encourage the educational values that are taken for granted in the mainstream culture. Cultural indifference and lack of resources are some of the issues that lead to student low esteem aspirations and underachievement.

Recent studies (Morgan, 2005; Morales and Trotman, 2006) discuss how minority students in the US decide against college education because of low esteem rooted in cultural beliefs that influence them to exclude themselves from higher education. Minoritized students who rise against these odds are described as “resilient” (Morgan, 2005; Morales and Trotman, 2006).

Summary

This chapter has highlighted student decision making for selecting a university and identifying academic and occupational directions. The purposes of a baccalaureate degree, labour market challenges for visible minorities and the working class in the labour market were described. The chapter also discussed the influence of higher education on intellectual development and enabling students to access quality employment. The relationship between an undergraduate degree and employment was described. Historically, higher education has been
often associated with better employment for its graduates, but minoritized populations and women have had lesser rewarding returns from employment than middle class white men in general. In addition, employment opportunities that result from higher education are less available for racial minorities and working class people.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction to the methodology

In this chapter I discuss the research methods used in this study, including research instrumentation and procedures for data collection and analysis.

I chose a mixed methods approach for its practical application (Creswell, 2003) and for the opportunity it offers for capturing both the breadth and depth of issues concerning undergraduates and the labour market. A mixed method strategy comprises both qualitative and quantitative data for a single study (Bryman, 2007). It is also a phenomenological study in the sense that all experiences gathered from data sources represent a part of students’ social realities of their university experiences (Gubrium & Holstein 2000). As such, phenomenological method provides a way of interpreting students’ social experiences as part of their reality. To illustrate the meaning of a phenomenological research: it is like a free lance photographer who watches an emergency crew pull a boy out of a car involved in an accident and rush him to a hospital. At the hospital another crew of nurses rushes to take the boy to the operating room where a group of surgeons operate on the boy and spare his life. The following morning the free lance photographer sees a picture in the local paper of a boy lying on stretcher and paramedics hurrying into the hospital. Being curious, she decides to verify the picture in the paper with the pictures she took. She decides to align all the twenty pictures in sequence taken from the scene of the accident to the hospital. She notices that the published picture in the paper was taken at the hospital. She lifts the picture from the rest of the pictures and notices a gap of an incomplete story it leaves. She also puts the picture by itself and notices the lack of flow in the story but then realizes that even by itself the picture was still a piece of representation of what happened. Newspaper readers would still see a part of the story through the picture although they did not have access to the pictures from the
scene of the accident to the operating room. This study is phenomenological because it represents a part of undergraduate students’ experiences in the faculty of arts and science. Like the reporter who chose a picture of paramedics and a boy on the stretcher at the hospital to represent safe arrival, phenomenological analysis requires an interpreter to construct a representative reality (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Quantitative data collected through surveys (see Appendix A) and qualitative data (see Appendix B) collected through interviews captured students’ basic understandings of higher education and their labour market readiness. The survey is one of the popular forms of gathering data, with excellent reliability on larger samples (Cochran, Mosteller & Tukey, 1957). Two surveys were used in this study. The first survey was designed by the researcher. The second survey was designed by the National Survey of Student Engagement. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an international organization that collected data from first and fourth year students at the University of Toronto and other Ontario universities to measure student engagement and also to help universities plan for better student experiences and institutional improvement. Each participating university is given a report that compares its results with other grouped universities without naming them. NSSE had had a sample of 1056 fourth year students; this presented an opportunity to compare its large sample with the data I collected on essential items (see Appendix C). After examining the items used in this instrument, the thesis committee and I decided that NSSE data collected at the University of Toronto data would allow for an assessment of the representativeness of my survey and interview samples and to understand the representativeness in relation to liberal arts students at other Ontario universities. The Ethics Committee at the University of Toronto approved the use of the National Survey of Student Engagement 2006 for comparison purposes. Both surveys elicited information about participants’ social backgrounds, demographics, extra-curricular activities, work skills, academic concentrations and possible occupational directions. The design of the research instruments were
informed by several sources that included, Ontario Graduate Survey, thesis committee, literature and class discussions. The survey items were tested on student participants recruited at the career center in the summer of 2006.

Two kinds of interviews were conducted for this study: Student interviews and career counselor interviews. Student interviews focused on their personal narratives about higher education, activity involvement, skills and the labour market. I tested the interview questions in a pilot study I did for a research methodology class. Interviews with career counselors at the University of Toronto focused on student inquiries on occupational directions and labour market trends as well as career centre services. In addition, I observed and attended workshops at the career center to help me understand how students are helped to make connections between schooling and the labour market.

The study also employs textual analysis of a report generated by the University of Toronto, *Measuring Up* (2007), which describes undergraduate programs at University of Toronto and compares University of Toronto students with those at other Ontario universities. I use this analysis to understand students’ academic directions and how they link their education to the labour market.

**Reasons for choosing University of Toronto Faculty of Arts and Science students**

I chose to focus on students in the faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto initially because it represented a large population from across different university colleges, all within walking distance from my student graduate office. It also turned out to be a useful sample for an exploratory study because of the variety of programs it offers. The Faculty of Arts and Science is the largest faculty at the University of Toronto and has the largest enrollment and resources in Canada ([www.utoronto.ca](http://www.utoronto.ca)). It thus provides a case from which most Ontario
universities can extrapolate from, given that Arts and Science programs have the largest enrollments at most Ontario universities (COU, 2008). As such, conclusions of this study could be inferred to the liberal arts and science (humanities) student populations in Ontario (see pp. 46-47).

**Sampling**

All student participants and career counselors in this study were recruited at the University of Toronto. Third and fourth year students were selected because they were most likely to have chosen academic focus areas, occupational directions and were more likely to be knowledgeable about the labour market than students in first and second years. In their mega literature review, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) report that senior students are most likely to initiate participation in career related activities. Third and fourth year students also had the highest representation (24% each) of utilizing career centre services at the University of Toronto.

**Data analysis**

A mixed-research rationale of “confirm and discover” (Bryman, 2008) guided my process of data analyses in order provide clearer connections between the qualitative and quantitative data. “Confirming” is the process of analyzing qualitative data in order to derive possible conclusions, and “discovering” is the process of analyzing quantitative data in order to arrive at the similar conclusions drawn from the qualitative analysis. As such, the process of confirm and discover makes it possible to analyze qualitative and quantitative data separately as well as connecting findings from the two types of data. Student interviews and survey data were grouped according to when students chose an occupational direction and how they engaged in the process of choosing an occupational direction. This approach resulted in creating four student clusters: Students who
decided before they started university; those who decided after starting their undergraduate studies; those who remained undecided; and those who had dropped their original occupational directions but were unable to replace them. Experiences of students in each cluster were analyzed and related to their background information (family income, parent education, parent occupation, and student identity), university experiences (GPA, participation in skill-building extracurricular activities) and personal agency (demonstrated initiative in seeking skill-building extracurricular activities). This analysis resulted in clear patterns of social class effects. Clear patterns also emerged from the data analysis about race effects that convinced me to include race in this study despite my original intent of not wanting to do so.

The rationale for using background information, university experience and individual agency is grounded in the conceptual framework. Theoretical models on Student College Choice such as status-attainment and econometrics also employ student social demographics (Hossler et al, 1999; McDonough, 1991; see also Chapter 2). Income responses categorized as above or below average are based on Statistics Canada (2009) and Ontario Graduate Survey (2005).

Table 1-3 provides Statistics Canada data on family income. Ontario family annual income averaged between $59,000 and $67,000 in the five-year period between 2002 -2006. Based on these figures, family annual incomes below $50,000 are considered below average and above $50,000 are above average in this study.
### Table 1-3: Family Income, by province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column1</th>
<th>Column2</th>
<th>Column3</th>
<th>Column4</th>
<th>Column5</th>
<th>Column6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median total income, by province and territory</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(All census families)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All census families¹</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$56,000</td>
<td>$58,100</td>
<td>$60,600</td>
<td>$63,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Median total income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>$59,600</td>
<td>$60,500</td>
<td>$62,500</td>
<td>$64,500</td>
<td>$66,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>43,200</td>
<td>44,800</td>
<td>46,100</td>
<td>47,600</td>
<td>50,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>48,600</td>
<td>49,600</td>
<td>51,300</td>
<td>53,400</td>
<td>56,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>48,600</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>51,500</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>56,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>46,800</td>
<td>48,000</td>
<td>49,700</td>
<td>51,500</td>
<td>54,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>51,600</td>
<td>52,600</td>
<td>54,400</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>59,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>48,100</td>
<td>47,900</td>
<td>49,900</td>
<td>52,300</td>
<td>54,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>51,200</td>
<td>52,100</td>
<td>54,100</td>
<td>56,100</td>
<td>58,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>50,500</td>
<td>51,500</td>
<td>53,500</td>
<td>56,300</td>
<td>60,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>61,700</td>
<td>63,000</td>
<td>66,400</td>
<td>71,000</td>
<td>78,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>52,800</td>
<td>53,600</td>
<td>55,900</td>
<td>58,500</td>
<td>62,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>63,900</td>
<td>64,300</td>
<td>67,800</td>
<td>71,700</td>
<td>76,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>76,400</td>
<td>79,800</td>
<td>83,900</td>
<td>88,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>48,100</td>
<td>47,900</td>
<td>49,900</td>
<td>52,300</td>
<td>54,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹. Census families include couple families, with or without children, and lone-parent families.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, CANSIM.

University experiences consist of factors that have been used in other studies to understand student development and progress (Kuhn, 2005; Pearson & Dellman-Jenkins, 1997). Personal agency is a factor used to understand students own initiative in driving their academic and occupational goals (Gordon, 2007; Morales & Trotman, 2005). Personal agency helps to understand why social backgrounds do not have deterministic effects on students who otherwise fit the demographic profile of unlikely to progress further in higher education. In essence, the application of Bourdieu’s theory of practice (*capital, habitus* and *field*) takes into account the resources available to each student (see p.5).
**Survey participants**

I distributed about 400 surveys to third and fourth year students in the Faculty of Arts and Science in the fall of 2006. About 180 were returned but only 136 responded to most or all of the questions, a 34% complete return rate. The 136 participants who completed the survey came from all seven colleges at the St. George campus. They carried a wide range of course concentrations, specialties, majors and minors (see Appendix C). The participants were recruited from classes, the career center and student lounges. Students were very helpful in identifying and locating third and fourth year classes for me to visit. Professors were very generous at permitting me to talk to their classes and distribute the surveys. Without this permission it would have been difficult to obtain data, as I had already spent six months without much success. I distributed copies of the survey in a history class at the Ignatieff Theater, Trinity College, with over 80 students; a human biology class held in Convocation Hall with at least 300 students; and a zoology class held in an auditorium and had about 50 students. About 260 of the 400 surveys distributed in classes were voided. About 220 of these wasted surveys came from a biology class in Convocation Hall where students were not given enough time fill out the survey because they were other promotions and announcements. A lot of surveys were left untouched on the desks or floor. In other classes where students were given ten or more minutes, the surveys were completed. In a few cases students were not part of the target group and in some few cases students did not want to participate.

Participants were not randomly chosen by a formula but were located opportunistically and were all volunteers. Therefore the sample does not represent the entire population of the Faculty of Arts and Science and generalization to the entire population from this sample cannot be made. However, a claim can be made that the sample reveals patterns of students’ characteristics, experiences and perceptions that require further investigation.
Most of the students had come directly from high school to begin their undergraduate studies. 63% of the participants were female and 37% male. 36% identified themselves as visible minority students. 41% of the students came from families with annual incomes that were above $50,000, while 35% came from families with annual incomes below $49,000. About 32% of the students’ parents had university educations; 25% had college educations; the rest of the parents had high school education and a few could claim grade school only. There tended to be more male parents with university education than female parents with university education. The average age of the participants was 22 years.

Table 2-3: Survey respondent characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents with University education</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents with college education</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents with high/grade school education</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible minority students</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-minority students</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with over 50K family income</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students representation</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male student representation</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview participants**

Out of 136 participants who completed the survey, 30 indicated that they were willing to be interviewed; 12 students were unreachable for interviews for reasons that ranged from providing inaccurate email addresses or not returning calls and only 18 participants were interviewed. The 18 interview participants are a subset of the survey participants recruited from the St. George campus classes, student lounges and the career centre during the Spring, Summer and Fall of 2006. There were 6 male participants and 12 female participants. 45% of the participants identified themselves or were categorized by the researcher as racial minorities. Eight participants were racial minorities (5 female and 3 male). 55% of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian or Anglo-Saxon. I could not achieve a balance in the representation of
female, male and minority participants because of the study’s dependence on voluntary participants. Student interviews were conducted in libraries, student lounges, classrooms and a cafeteria at the St. George campus. I arranged these locations to accommodate students’ schedules. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed by me. Transcripts were sent to participants to check for accurate representation, though only 8 of the 18 responded. It may be that the other 10 participants had graduated by June 2007 when the transcripts were sent out. Two of the 8 who responded made some corrections on their transcripts.
students choose the University of Toronto for other reasons such as sports, program reputation and family tradition or influence.

Interviewed students discussed what they thought about their education and experiences. Their answers were generally more elaborate than I had anticipated when I formulated the interview questions. The issues that students raised in these discussions were similar to the additional responses expressed in NSSE data (see Chapter 5). The general topics included: a lack of emphasis on work skills in their respective programs; a lack of internship and work opportunities; a lack of faculty interaction; and big classes.

Table 4-3: Interview participant background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Parents with University</th>
<th>Parents with College</th>
<th>GTA Resident</th>
<th>Ontario Resident</th>
<th>Out of province Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income over $50,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income under $50,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences and similarities between the survey and interview items

The questions that were asked in the interviews were similar to questions asked in the survey. The survey instrument had 49 items; the interview protocol had 5 items with 26 probes. The survey helped to capture participants’ social demographics, academic relationships, courses and work skills. Interview questions probed on students’ thoughts, intentions, the quality of work experiences, explanations of their experiences and decisions information which could not be adequately captured in survey items. At the same time, creating interview participants’ profiles partially depended on their completed detailed background information in their completed surveys.
Career Counselors interviews

Career counselors are important to this study because (within the University of Toronto) they are the most visible agent that bridges academic programs with the labour market. Career counselors’ descriptions of how they assist students in making connections between their education and the labour market is critical to understanding the resources available to students during their undergraduate years. Five career centre staff were consulted in all. Three were career counselors, one at each of the three University of Toronto campuses (St. George, Scarborough, and Mississauga). All these interviews took place in the career counselors’ offices and took between 45 minutes and 60 minutes. I recorded and transcribed the interviews. Copies of transcripts were sent to them to check for accurate representation. The counselors were very interested in and supportive of the study. The other two interviews were with career centre directors who assisted with additional information. I had telephone conversations and email discussions with the director of the career centre at the St. George campus. She sent me statistics on how students made use of the St. George career centre and shared her ideas on how to make students aware of the career centre’s services. When I met with the director of career services at the Scarborough campus, she took me on an orientation of the campus, which helped to clarify some of the student life issues that had been shared in the interview with the career counselor there.

The career centre provides a lot of services for the alumni, mid career changes, academic counseling, and specialized employment services for undergraduate and graduate students. The career centre is only one part of student services that also include housing, inclusive education services and other student life matters at the University of Toronto.
The National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement was conducted at the University of Toronto in the same year I collected the primary data and included a few items similar to my survey. The comparison between NSSE and primary data are identified in the text to support specific results; full comparisons of the instrument items are in Chapter 5.

Information collected through NSSE has been found to be reliable and credible by prospective students, creditors and others (http://nsse.iub.edu/index.cfm). Since 2000, over 1,200 undergraduate institutions have participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement in the United States and Canada (http://nsse.iub.edu/index.cfm). The information collected focuses on student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for students’ learning and personal development. The collected information allows for estimating how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college (http://nsse.iub.edu/index.cfm). By continually refining the collection and analysis strategies since 1999, when the first pilot survey was conducted, NSSE has become increasingly essential to universities in Canada and the United States.

The National Survey of Student Engagement conducted data collection at the University of Toronto’s three campuses in Spring 2006. The survey was posted on the Web; only first year and fourth year students were invited to participate. I used SPSS software to select fourth year respondents from the 2006 survey data and to analyze the results.

Table 5-3: NSSE 2006 Respondent description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>NSSE 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4th year participants</td>
<td>1056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible minority</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None minority</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not International students</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were 1,056 fourth year respondents. 52.4% of the respondents were racial minorities and 47.6% were non minority students. 10% of the respondents had parents who did not complete high school. 20% of the respondents had female parents who graduated from high school (14% for male parents). 25% of the female parents completed college while only 13% male parents completed college. 47% of female parents had completed university while 60% male parents had completed university.

**Sample comparisons between NSSE and the primary data**

The NSSE data represents a large student sample and more than one faculty, thus supporting and validating the inference of the results of the primary data I collected to the larger undergraduate population at the University of Toronto. A comparison between NSSE and the primary data also infers a comparison to other Ontario universities as in *Measuring Up* (2007).

There are differences in design between the two surveys. NSSE was designed to achieve multiple purposes, especially to allow universities in Canada and the US to evaluate undergraduate experiences and compare them with the other participating universities. In contrast, this study was designed to capture students’ understanding of the relationship between higher education and preparing for employment.

The faculties and programs identified by NSSE did not neatly match with the University of Toronto’s faculties. NSSE faculty categories were based on those used in most of the universities in the United States and Canada: Arts and Humanities, Biological Science, Business, Education, Engineering, Physical Science, Professional Social Science, and Other. At the University of Toronto, the Faculty of Arts and Science is the largest faculty, consisting of about 79% of all undergraduates ([www.utoronto.ca](http://www.utoronto.ca); see Appendix D for Arts and Science details) but this is not easily captured in the NSSE data. To reach a compromise on faculties, NSSE asked respondents to identify their programs and majors. This made it possible to trace each participant’s faculty at University of Toronto. Of University of Toronto responses, 28% were in the Arts and Humanities,
41% in Social Science and 15% were in Biological Science. Given that these three programs are in the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto, it is safe to infer that 84% of all NSSE participants came from the Faculty of Arts and Science. A comparison with NSSE thus provides a fairly similar population and larger population to the sample gathered for this study. NSSE was also designed to allow the University of Toronto to be compared with other Ontario universities, a comparison that resulted into similar or close results (Measuring Up, 2007), which infers that this study’s results are also comparable to other Ontario universities that NSSE data compares with the University of Toronto. Despite my having designed the survey before knowing about NSSE, I found similarities between NSSE and primary study items. NSSE had the following categories for its items: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment. Within these categories, specific items that the thesis committee deemed would be useful to this study included skills and work knowledge, internship and practicum involvement, academic experiences, background information and additional comments (see Chapter 5).

In addition, NSSE and primary data results are comparable to other studies such as the Ontario University Graduate Survey (2005). The similarity of results between this study and the Ontario Graduate Survey also supports the findings of this study. As such, the Ontario Graduate Survey validates the claims made in this study on arts and science undergraduates’ employment preparations. Table 7-3 displays some of the Ontario Graduate Survey responses of baccalaureate graduates and graduates in the Arts and Sciences two years after graduation. Unemployment is over 18% (Social science and Humanities columns). Over 50% of the graduates do not have permanent employment. Over 21% find the skills they acquired from their programs of study are not related to work. Over 52% pursue further studies and are not looking for employment.
Table 6-3: Ontario Graduate Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description two years after graduation</th>
<th>Social Science</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>Other Arts &amp; Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanently employed</td>
<td>53.31%</td>
<td>49.55%</td>
<td>58.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>19.59%</td>
<td>18.47%</td>
<td>29.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for working under 30 hours per week is unable to find full time work</td>
<td>32.18%</td>
<td>39.68%</td>
<td>34.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill acquired from program studied are not related to work at all</td>
<td>21.29%</td>
<td>24.08%</td>
<td>20.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main reason for not looking for work is going to school</td>
<td>52.42%</td>
<td>53.58%</td>
<td>45.39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Table created from Ontario University Graduate Survey 2005

In addition, the above challenges are likely to continue for a long time given that Arts and Science programs have the largest enrollment records in Ontario of over 75% (COU, 2008). Table 6 also strongly aligns with the challenges that participants at the St. George Campus illuminated in the primary data.

**Summary**

This chapter discussed the methodology and described the types of data employed in this study. It is a phenomenological study that uses survey data, interview data, observational data and textual data. The use and contribution of each data source was explained. Student data dissemination produced patterns of race and social class that are employed throughout the thesis discussions. The comparison between the primary data and NSSE enabled an inference of the results to other Ontario universities.
Chapter Four: The University Context

Introduction

Chapter Four paints a picture of the Faculty of Arts and Science, and it describes how the university understands its educational effects on students and how it helps students prepare for the labour market. To provide the university perspective, the chapter draws from website descriptions, university publications (Measuring Up, 2007; Facts & Figures 2008) and interviews with career counselors. The chapter concludes by identifying salient issues in the program descriptions and reports that are not clearly communicated to students and may inhibit them from making informed choices about program of study in relation to the labour market.

The Faculty of Arts and Science

Arts & Science is committed to offering our students the highest quality liberal education, and to promoting the intellectual risk-taking that produces cutting-edge scholarship. Ensuring that our students receive the best education possible means that we must vigilantly maintain innovative learning experiences and excellent teaching…As a Faculty, we are constantly endeavouring to remain responsive to the moments of invention, discovery and growth that profoundly influence how we understand the world (http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/main)

The Faculty of Arts and Science advertises itself as the largest in Canada, providing more course options, programs and resources to undergraduate students than any other (http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/main). The university claims that “the Faculty's breadth and diversity means students can get exactly what they want and need to achieve their goals,” that it can provide and deliver the education that each student desires. The university suggests this claim is substantiated by its magnitude: 22,000 undergraduate students, 800 scholars who teach over 2,000 courses in 300 programs hosted by 29 departments, 15 centres and institutes, and 7 colleges
Each program offers students three kinds of concentrations: “specialties,” “majors” and “minors.” These three options differ in the number of courses required: a specialty requires a concentration of 9 or more courses; a major requires 6 or more courses, and a minor requires 4 courses. Students are given the liberty to choose whatever they want to study without college affiliation limitations. As Beatrice, a racial minority student in this study notes: “I realized that I could graduate with anything I wanted, economics, accounting, statistics, English, science... my college didn’t matter and my initial program didn’t matter.”

Yet this element of choice requires students to take responsibility for charting the course between university preparation and the labour market. This is evident in the program descriptions, where explicit connections to the labour market are incomplete. For example, students are given the following information about what they could do with an English specialty in the labour market:

The possibilities for the studies of English are many. Former students have made careers in a wide variety of fields, including, among others, teaching at the primary, secondary or post secondary levels, publishing with both large and small publishers, advertising, public relations, journalism of various kinds in different media, translating, working in libraries and writing. Some have branched out into areas not so directly related to English, finding attractive employment in different facets of business or in the many branches of government and social service. English is widely valued as pre-professional training. (http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/prospective/programsofstudy/progs/english).

The generality of this description demonstrates many possible occupational directions, but employment in each occupational direction identified in the quotation above actually requires additional studies. Current labour market practices are skill specific, therefore making the suggested occupational options difficult to enter with a basic English baccalaureate (Eggin, 1992; Tchibozo & Pasteur, 2007). Students may therefore graduate with academic experiences that help them comprehend the possibilities of what they could do with an English specialty but without employable skills. Most of the liberal education program descriptions similarly do not identify
specific skills that students could apply in the labour market. By the same token, fewer programs offer internships (exceptions include urban planning and some environmental programs). Many graduates with bachelor degrees come to discover they are not ready for employment after university (Ontario Graduate Survey, 2005).

What the University of Toronto knows about students

Measuring Up (2007) drawing from 2006 NSSE data and using internally collected data provides information on student demographics as an overview of students’ difficulties, their academic performances and employment.

The University reported that fourth year students were 58% female (42% male). 52% of these students were visible minorities. 76% were reported as under 24 years of age. The published report did not disaggregate results according to student demographics although these data were available.

Table 7-4: Demographics of Fourth Year Student Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UT/NSSE 2006</th>
<th>UT internal Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Students</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Students</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time students</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time student</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 24 year</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 or older</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible Minority</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Measuring Up (2007)

University’s perception of students

Measuring Up reported that students experienced some level of constraint because of large classes and minimal interaction between students and faculty. Student-faculty interaction is considered to have a positive impact on students since students value faculty advice (Terenzini & Pascarella, 2005). Consequently, a lack of interaction between faculty and students may have
negative effects in areas of academic advising where the University of Toronto was below all Ontario universities (Measuring Up, 2007).

Measuring Up reported that 22% of all senior students surveyed found academic performance their biggest obstacle; another 23% reported financial difficulties as the highest threat to academic progress. This was lower than the 31% financial obstacle reported by other Ontario universities. Measuring Up also reported that 15% experienced personal and family obligations difficulties. (See table 9-4 for summaries).

Table 8-4: Students perceived barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior students</th>
<th>U of T 2006</th>
<th>Ontario 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your academic performance at University</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial pressures or work obligations</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/personal problems or obligations</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table adapted from Measuring Up, 2007.

Since Measuring Up does not disaggregate results by demographic characteristics, it is not clear whether certain demographic groups are more susceptible to academic performance than others. Many studies demonstrate that when student demographics are included in the analysis, racial minority and working class groups tend to have low performances comparatively (Morgan 2005; Trotman & Morales, 2006; Stiff-Williams, 2007).

Measuring Up also reported that University of Toronto students have high academic achievement and low employment skills when the two factors are compared (see table 9-4). Table 9-4 provides highlights from Measuring Up on students’ intellectual development and employable skill gains.
Table 9-4: U of T academic gains and labour market preparations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual and academic Items</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have gained thinking critically and analytically</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are able to learn effectively on your own</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are acquiring a broad general education</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour Market items</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to solve complex real-world problems</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to work effectively with others</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have acquired job or work-related knowledge and skills</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table created from Measuring-Up 2007

Table 9-4 reflects 2006 student responses and also displays critical data about what students believe they have acquired from their university education in relation to preparation for the labour market. This table reveals that about half of the surveyed students believed they had developed strong academic skills but only a quarter of the students believed they were ready for employment. Measuring Up does not tell us who the unprepared students are or how those who were prepared for employment were able to do so.

Table 9-4 also shows the following results on intellectual and academic items: 39% students reported that an education they received enabled them to learn effectively on their own; 49% reported to have gained analytical and critical thinking skills; 40% reported to have acquired a broad general education. However, table 9-4 shows low results on closely related labour market preparation items: 15% reported to have gained skills to solve complex real world problems; 17% reported to have gained skills to work effectively with others; and 15% reported to have acquired job or work related skills. The following section describes what the university does to compensate for the lack of directly work related knowledge and skills among students in its Arts and Science academic programs.
Career Counselors’ Perspective.

This section describes how the career centre at the University of Toronto helps students to prepare for the labour market. It draws on career counselors’ experiences and uses pseudonyms to give them active voices. Students’ voices are also assigned pseudonyms.

Rachael, a career counselor reflected on her experiences with students:

A really common question is: “What can I do with my degree?” As a result, I often need to explain to them that university [doesn’t provide work preparation]. I inform them that there are a lot of things they can do in terms of volunteering, working, etcetera to build-up their skills and get a better sense of the world of work. Another common comment from students is, “I have no idea what I want to do,” which is fair – In this situation, we often start with the on-line self assessment to get them thinking about how their values, interests, personal qualities, and skills relate to various occupations.

The career centre at the University of Toronto provides practical guidance to students about how to develop career goals and apply their educations to the labour market. It also provides career development resources and services for alumni.

This section reviews of how the career centre functions and how staff understand the value of an undergraduate education in relation to the labour market.

The Career Center compensatory services

The staff views the career centre as the unit in the University of Toronto where students are supported to discover their occupational interests, learn about the labour market, and learn how to prepare for employment. Without these services, students in workshops I attended were often unable to identify any skills from their coursework that could be transferred to the labour market. Career centre staff pride themselves in helping students identify the skills they acquired through their coursework that could be applied to the labour market. Some of the students I interviewed appreciated the seminars and were relieved when they realized that they had skills they could include on their resumes. Mike, a racial minority student, described what he gained from the career centre:
I have been to two seminars already. “Discovering Skills and Options” was interesting, fun and interactive but I really thought the “Interview and a few Techniques” workshops, uh I mean I have had interview help before from outside agencies and I was amazed at like how much the career center did expand on that and I plan to attend a few more of seminars to get the certificate that I could put on the resume. The career center is definitely useful. It should be useful when I start looking for job postings.

While about one third of surveyed students find the Career Center “somewhat” helpful, it cannot meet all students’ career developmental needs. Gordon, a racial minority student, remarked how he found the career centre unhelpful:

I know people go to the career centre and things like that. I tried to go there several times. It is really extremely difficult I think to...uh most of it, like how to write a resume. It’s never actually, what do you want- like areas that broaden your perspective. I guess that’s what I always want, broadening a perspective as well as depth.

Most of the students I interviewed were unaware of the career centre and its services.

The Career Center takes pride in explaining trends in the labour market to students that could be useful in their occupational and employment searches. Workshops and seminars focus on employer needs and how students can meet these requirements.

**Career centre services that prepare students for the labour market**

The services that assist students in finding work can be characterized in terms of immediate work (usually summer work) and future work based on students’ occupational interests.

Students are taught how to respond to typical questions asked in interview situations. Students can request a mock interview to help them prepare for upcoming interviews. Students are taught how to search for jobs by using career web sites, newspapers, search engines and networking. Career counselors highly recommend strategies such as cold calling possible employers and talking to people within one’s network of friends.

Some workshops show students how to identify their personality traits and identify which kind of jobs would suit them. Other services include linking students with professionals in the
fields of their interests to learn about occupational specifics. Most of the professionals are University of Toronto alumni.

Also available are discussion groups where a panel of people working in an area of interest is brought together to discuss what they do, the requirements to work in a field, job details and how to access these jobs. If students have interest in a particular occupational area or if the career center staff discovers a field that they believe students need to become aware of, seminars are arranged. For example, I attended a seminar on “policy work” in which a panel of four people from both public and private organizations came to talk about their work and how to find jobs in the field of policy.

The career centre also brings potential employers on campus through work fairs in order to help students build networks with potential employers. Workshops focus on how students can make use of job-fairs including how to make positive impressions to expedite the follow-up process of networking.

**Linking students to the labour market**

Career counselors maintain that developing the skills and knowledge for a smooth transition into the labour market requires deliberate planning by students. They believe that the process of discovering interests, developing experiences through volunteering, paid work, networking with potential employers and garnering information require more time than most students give it. In most cases, students who visit the career center to seek career development advice did not plan ahead, and most were late in doing so. Counselors believe that students should start as early as in their second year to plan for the labour market. Wendy, a career counselor, said:

I think the most important one… would be to plan ahead and starting early is a good habit. …I think if we can capture people in the first year, we really want to get a message across of being planful and starting early. Give yourself time, uh, which I think at university is supposed to be a wide message. Start early, be organized.
Rather than planning ahead, career center staff reported, students tended to visit the career center only when there was an insurmountable hurdle in their career development. Three of the interview participants who were recruited at the career center for this study had gone there only when they discovered that their friends had already chosen occupational directions and they had not.

Interviewed students said it was encouraging to know that there were transferable skills from the courses they took that could be useful on the labour market. Many of the skills identified by counselors in interviews and workshops were very general skills such as teamwork, ability to work independently, critical thinking skills and research skills, but as the quotation at the beginning of the notes, career counselors maintained the baccalaureate needed to be paired with demonstrable experiences from other sources in order for students to be ready for employment.

**What circumstances lead students to lack occupational direction?**

According to career counselors, there are several circumstances that present difficulties to students in planning occupational directions. Sharon, a career counselor described it this way:

I think the biggest thing is helping them to understand how a general program in biology will lead to a career. I see a lot of life science students because many of them have come in thinking; “I want to be a doctor”. If this plan doesn’t work out, they often don’t know what to do with their degree. Job searching is also a large focus area. I often find that students don’t know where to start or they feel overwhelmed by the process. In either case, I think it is important to take it step-by-step in order to relieve some of the stress of the process.

The following are circumstances identified by counselors that presented difficulties to students’ occupational directions:

(a) *Students take a long time to decide on a new occupation after rejecting their occupational direction because of lack of interest.*

Students seemed at a loss when they had no goal or idea of how to achieve a new goal. Students who seemed affected most were those who lost interest in an occupational direction that could
have been suggested by someone else (e.g., an influential family member) rather than discovering it themselves.

\[(b)\] Students felt stuck when they lost their occupational direction because of low grade point averages.

Students who focused on a single occupational direction found themselves without options when faced with the reality that their GPA scores were insufficient to carry them into their desired occupations.

\[(c)\] Students felt stuck because they found themselves without an occupational interest.

Some students were unable to figure out what they wanted, despite having been at university for over three years.

Career counselors believed that many students graduated without seeking help and were likely stranded for a long time, when this inconvenience could have been avoided if they had obtained support from the career center.

**The disconnect between academia and labour market**

Career counselors identified disengagement between undergraduate programs of study and the labour market. Sharon said:

I am often told, “I can’t believe how fast it has gone by,” and “Certain friends know that they want to do this, but I don’t know what I want to do.” There also appears to be a [lack of link] between how their program and their university degree translates into an occupation and how they fit into the work place. It seems that a lot of students [in third and fourth year] start to think about whether or not they will be marketable to employers and what they can do to build their resume.

Most Arts and Science programs do not explicate what students can do with their education in terms of the labour market.
Concluding Remarks

The counselors assessed their success through the testimonials they received from students they helped. Wendy said:

To see a student in the office and have them say as they walk out, “I have never been to a career counselor before and I didn’t know how helpful it gonna be!” “I didn’t know that my resume could look so good! I didn’t know I would actually get into medical school!”

Some of the interviewed students were satisfied with how career centre services demonstrated the relevance of their academic work in the labour market. The niche of the career centre’s skills is critical for students who find little relation between their education and the labour market.

Many students remain ignorant about the services the career centre offers. Perhaps if more students who were interested in making their education relevant to the labour market had sought the services at the Career Center earlier, they could have been better prepared.

Chapter Four Summary

This chapter provided a description of what the University of Toronto says about its undergraduate education and how students should prepare for the labour market. The connection between the undergraduate education and the labour market lacked work skills but academic resources for students’ academic skills development were detailed. However, the career centre attempts to compensate for the lack of connection between an undergraduate education and the labour market.

The next chapter discusses how student demographics relate to labour market readiness among the participants of this study, therefore putting into question how students with diverse backgrounds could equally benefit from the Faculty of Arts and Science education and labour market preparations described by career counselors in this chapter.
Chapter Five: What Students say about their undergraduate education

Introduction

This chapter discusses patterns of student experiences during their undergraduate education, focusing on how they went about meeting their academic obligations and preparing for the labour market. I will briefly recapitulate the conceptual and methodological issues described earlier in order to clarify this chapter’s design and direction. The conceptual framework in Chapter One introduced Bourdieu’s concept of field as a place where actors bring with them capital (cultural, economic and social) and habitus (predispositions) in order to function (Moore, 2008; Maton, 2008; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). As such, capital and habitus are to be understood in relation to a field. A field is a place of production and there are many fields (Thomson, 2008; Swartz 1997). To Bourdieu a university is a field (Bourdieu Passeron, 1990; Swartz 1997) in that it is place where students engage their capital and predispositions to earn credentials and become employment ready. In Chapter Three, a mixed-research rationale of “confirming and discovering” (Bryman, 2008) was described. “Confirming” is the process of analyzing qualitative data in order to derive possible conclusions, and “discovering” is the process of analyzing quantitative data in order to revive the conclusions drawn from the qualitative analysis. As such the process of confirm and discover makes it possible to analyze qualitative and quantitative data separately as well as to connect the two types of data.

Chapter Five is divided into two sections. The first section, based on eighteen student interviews, reveals the sense making of students who shared particular experiences at university through an interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Two major findings result from the interpretative phenomenological inquiry. The second section investigates
the quantitative data (primary survey and NSSE) to demonstrate how the findings established in
the qualitative section are repeated in the surveys.

Analyses of students’ university experiences reveal patterns of students’ practices which
result in differences in their performances. These patterns are organized into four groups or
clusters. Further analyses of these clusters, when disaggregated by race, reveal acute differences in
students’ academic performance and preparation for the labour market. The disaggregation of
students’ university experiences in relation to their demographic characteristics also reveals
differences in students’ understanding of how the baccalaureate education is related to readiness
for the labour market.

Of the 18 interviews participants, Cluster One (Focused from start to finish) consists of
the 3 (17%) who had identified their occupational directions before starting their baccalaureate
degrees. Cluster Two (Late start but focused at the finish) consists of the 8 (44%) who formed
their occupational goals after starting their undergraduate studies. Cluster Three (Confused from
start to finish) comprises the 2 (11%) who had yet to form their occupational directions. Cluster
Four (Lost but hopeful), comprises 5 (28%) who had abandoned their original occupational goals
and still remain undecided.
Table 10-5: Summary of clusters compositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Number</th>
<th>Cluster Name</th>
<th>Occupational Decision</th>
<th>Group %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 1</td>
<td>Focused from start to the finish</td>
<td>Decided on occupation goals before or at start of undergraduate studies</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>Late start but focused to the finish</td>
<td>Decided on occupational after starting undergraduate studies</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3</td>
<td>Confused from start to finish</td>
<td>Undecided on occupational goal through throughout. Not optimistic.</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>Lost but hopeful</td>
<td>Dropped original occupational goal at start or during undergraduate studies. Optimistic to find occupational interest.</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key definitions**

*University experiences* describe both curricular and extra-curricular activities.

*Course impacts* describe academic development and relevant skills for the labour market.

*Grades* are self-reported grade point averages which are critical to students’ access to further studies.

*Activity involvement* represents students’ participation in extra-curricular activities that enhance work knowledge and skills.

*Relevant activities* include internships, research with faculty and relevant part-time work outside the university and in some cases, volunteer opportunities.

*Social Demographics* describe participants’ backgrounds in order to understand their cultural capital. Relevant demographics include racial identity, parents’ occupation (for social location and influence) and family income (economic capital) they started university.

*Students’ understanding of higher education and concentrations* capture interview participants’ views about higher education and their choices of study concentrations.
Student experiences and effects of university describe students’ practical experiences in order to capture how they were preparing for the labour market in the university.

**Cluster One (Focused from start to finish)**

Cluster One interview participants had identified occupational goals, which would lead to graduate or professional studies, prior to their university enrolment. They actively sought and maintained high GPAs. They were consistent in their occupational directions throughout their undergraduate educations. They had a range of impressions about the value of the baccalaureate degree in the labour market.

Participants in Cluster One are given pseudonyms: Sonja, Ruth and Maxine. Table 11-5 below shows the participants’ characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number Participants</th>
<th>Family annual Income</th>
<th>Parents educational level</th>
<th>Student GPA</th>
<th>Extra-curricular activity</th>
<th>Occupational Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial minority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>1 University; 1 College</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>High level activity</td>
<td>Decided before University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 @ over $50,000</td>
<td>All parents university</td>
<td>All @ 3.5</td>
<td>High level activity</td>
<td>Decided before University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 @ $20,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 (17%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student demographics and background information

Interview participants in this cluster had varied racial characteristics: Sonja and Ruth identified themselves as Caucasians and Maxine identified herself as a racial minority. Their family income levels also varied: Sonja reported a family annual income of over $50,000 while Ruth and Maxine reported under $20,000. They demonstrated different paths into university: this was Ruth’s second baccalaureate; after her first baccalaureate she worked and acquired over two years of labour market experience before returning to university. Maxine took a break of two years after higher school but when she started university she was caring for two younger siblings in the absence of their mother. These extra responsibilities forced Maxine to reduce the number of courses she took per year. In contrast, Sonja started her undergraduate studies after completing high school. Annual family incomes did not seem to make a difference to participants’ experiences in Cluster One.

All the interview participants in Cluster One reported that their parents were university graduates. Only Maxine’s mother had a college education. Maxine’s father was a researcher and senior administrator in a medical field but had been laid off for a few years. Ruth’s father was a doctor and her mother was a researcher. Sonja’s parents were both in foreign relations occupations. Studies (e.g., Warren & King, 2006) report that children of university-educated parents are more likely to attend university than other children.

Participants’ Understanding of Higher Education

Interview participants in Cluster One understood that the Faculty of Arts and Science was a step toward their occupational choices. All said they were planning to pursue graduate studies. At the same time more than students in the other clusters, they all took courses in other subject areas and were interested in getting more credentials which could help them enter their
occupational choices. When asked about why they wanted university education, their answers emphasized employment advantages. Sonja reflected on why she chose to go to university:

Honesty I went to university because everyone tells you can’t get a good job without a university degree. So mainly that I guess and then also on the practical level I wanted to live by myself, wanted to meet other people different people. So just going to a university would probably have opened my perspective and stuff like that but on a practical level definitely if you don’t have a university degree you can’t get a good job.

Maxine answered the question:

I think one of the really important things about education is removing yourself from this bracket of people that’s about 80% that do not have a degree out of the entire world, right! And for me it was really important to try and get to the top. And I felt that the way in our society that we have to do that is through a university education. So uh one of my main purpose is to have self respect, uh the intellectual level and it was always important I had to do it. There was no question about it. You know it’s the next step towards your future. To me you go to high school and then pursue university studies and you know, keep climbing up the ladder. But I think you can get to the top of the ladder without having university.

Maxine was planning to do graduate studies in psychology. Ruth was planning to go to medical school and Sonja had already applied for a master’s program in international relations.

Concentrations – specialty, major and minor

Cluster One interview participants did not change from their original specialties or majors over the course of their undergraduate years, although some of them took additional majors or minors. They chose concentrations and courses for purposes of preparing for occupational directions. For example, Ruth who wanted to be became a doctor and practice medicine among First Nations people said:

I was tired of spending all of the time working on bad American television and decided if I was going to work that hard I needed to do something better with my life so I am in health studies, in environmental biology and aboriginal studies here and I am trying to get home… I want to practice medicine there also. That’s where my path is taking me now.
Sonja described her deliberate process of selecting concentrations in this manner:

I am studying international relations and in a way I have always wanted to do that just because we traveled a lot and we lived in different places around the world. So plus my family is very politicized so it was something I have always wanted to do. What I am saying is that it was something I wanted to do. I came to University of Toronto to study International relations... International Relations is the major and then minors in history and science.

Similarly Maxine, who was majoring in music and a double minor in psychology and political science, said:

The reason I am taking all my music and psychology courses is to get into music therapy which is my future career so uh it’s required that I have at least a major in music and a minor in psychology to get into that.

**Student University experiences**

Cluster One interview participants were knowledgeable about the experiences and activities they needed to successfully pursue their occupational choices. These students had better time management skills than most participants in the other clusters. They did not experience as difficult a first year as many participants in the other clusters. They were involved in extra-curricular activities either on or outside the campus (e.g., for the music program, performing frequently; for an international relationship specialty, an internship in the foreign department, and so on). Sonja described how internships contributed to her understanding of the labour market and what she had to do:

All these things working for the government I realized sort of things that people – preferably I would like to work in Foreign Affairs Canada and just being in that sort of environment working for the government. Seeing what people are like in that environment that definitely helped me, okay probably this is what I should do. And also talking to people who work for the government, seeing what they have done to get there. See what sort of education they have, the experiences they have. Well that helps well may be this is what you should do. It also helps, build contacts and real networking with people so those are the kind of things that prompt my career options or my career ambitions.
Some participants were also involved in non-essential campus activities that did not directly relate to their occupational choices (such as volunteering on an Access Committee for a medical school bound student). For example, Ruth volunteered on campus committees but nonetheless found the experiences helpful.

The participants achieved better GPA scores than most students in the other clusters. Sonja had a 3.4 GPA; Ruth had a 3.5 GPA and Maxine had a 3.0 GPA.

Knowledge of the labour market

Cluster One interview participants had acquired their knowledge about their occupational choices through internships, work and other sources such as family members. They all made a clear effort to find out what kind of education and experiences they needed in order to pursue their occupational choices. Maxine described her experiences:

I play music on the streets regularly all around the city for all kinds of festivals and different events and I am always meeting people. I give out my business cards, I am getting contacts. I am out there, you know, and that definitely helps my future.

When asked if the baccalaureate could enable them find employment in their occupational choices, participants said that it would be their employment experiences that would get them employed and not the baccalaureate. For example Sonja responded:

Whereas my academic experience lack work skills, my work experiences have provided me with a lot of work related skills that will make employers likely consider me…In order to enter the labour market university education is needed, [but] at the same time a BA is not sufficient because many people have it…I think my work experiences and knowledge of languages will help me.
Career Centre Assistance

The career centre can play a role in helping students connect their academic experiences to the labour market, but Cluster One interview participants did not seem to need the career center services. Sonja, the only one who visited the Career Center, explained:

I think I do things well by myself. I am… it takes getting used to the people but I know how to look for a job. I know how to apply for a job. I tried to get jobs in the past. Uh one of the reasons I went to the career centre. I got back from France, it was in the middle of the summer and I wanted to get a job for the last two months which is very improbable. And I didn’t get the job. I went to the Career Centre anyway to see it. I guess I could go for their resume clinics and cover letter clinics but haven’t gone.

Cluster One discussion

There were few patterns in terms of racial identity and family income for students in Cluster One with the exception of GPA scores, where the racial minority student was 0.5 below the other two participants. Cluster One students were disciplined in pursuing their academic goals by maintaining grades, participating in both essential activities (internships, research and directly linked activities to occupational goals) and non essential activities (e.g. volunteering on campus committees). They displayed more initiative in seeking activities and knowledge about their occupational choices than students in the other clusters. Some of the preparations undertaken by these participants may have been guided by family members who were working in the same occupations. There were considerable differences in the quality of these students activities, for example contrast playing music on the streets for a racial minority to an internship in a foreign department office for a white student or volunteering on different committees on campus by the other white student.

All three interview participants in Cluster One were planning for graduate studies, and two (Ruth and Sonja) were aiming to start graduate studies immediately after their baccalaureates.
Cluster One students did not think that their baccalaureate degrees alone would help them secure jobs.

**Cluster Two (Late start but focused to finish)**

Cluster Two consists of eight (44%) of the eighteen interview participants who formed their occupational goals after starting their undergraduate studies. Their pseudonyms are Kush, Sarah, Mika, Amitage, Sam, Mike, Natasha and Steffi. The interview participants in this cluster developed their occupational interests as a result of taking university courses. Most of them changed their specialties or majors in the process of looking for a suitable occupational direction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number Participants</th>
<th>Family annual Income</th>
<th>Parents educational level</th>
<th>Student GPA</th>
<th>Extra Curricular activity</th>
<th>Occupational decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial minority</td>
<td>2 @ $40,000</td>
<td>4 University; 3 college; 1 H. School</td>
<td>1 @ 3.0; 2 @ 2.0; 1 @ 3.5</td>
<td>3 High level activity; 1 Low level activity</td>
<td>Decided in University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>2 @ $40,000</td>
<td>4 University; 2 College; 2 H. School</td>
<td>1 @ 1.5; 1 @ 3.0; 1 @ 3.5</td>
<td>2 High level activity; 2 Low level</td>
<td>Decided in University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8 (44%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Courses were critical to shaping career directions for participants in this cluster; even those who came into university with ideas about their occupational directions changed these directions after taking courses toward what they believed were more suitable choices.

**Student demographics**

Interview participants in Cluster Two came from socially diverse groups and had varying university experiences that did not seem to follow any patterns in relation to their identities. The self disclosed identities in this group included Caucasians, Black, East Asians, and South Asians.
In summary, Cluster Two comprised 50% racial minority and 50% Caucasian (Table 12-5). Further categorization of the interview participants split them into three groups: new immigrant, visible minority and white students.

There were large differences in family annual incomes between those who were new immigrants (Kush, Sarah, Mika, Amitage) and those who were not (Mike, Sam, Natasha and Steffi). New immigrant participants in Cluster Two reported family annual incomes of under $30,000 regardless of race. Racial minority students reported family annual incomes of between $40,000 to over $50,000. All other participants reported their family annual incomes at over $50,000.

There were notable differences in reported parents’ levels of education. All new immigrants had parents with educational levels ranging between high school and college except for one participant whose parents were university graduates. (However, university education did not seem to make a difference in the family income and the type of jobs the parents had.) Participants who identified themselves as racial minorities had parents whose educational levels ranged between college and university. All Cluster Two Caucasian students had parents who were university graduates. All the parents of participants in Cluster Two who were identified as new immigrants worked as taxi drivers, labourers in industrial jobs, clerks or were self-employed (e.g., owning a convenience store). In contrast, parents of participants who were not new immigrants were employed as medical doctors, surgeons, senior policy analysts, accountants, civil servants, farmers, teachers and engineers.

**Students’ Understanding of Higher Education and Concentrations**

This section captures interview participants’ views about higher education and their choices for study concentrations. 83% of Cluster Two participants viewed university as a place to get an education that would prepare them for the labour market in their respective occupational
choices. Their decisions to apply to university, however, were less focused than those of Cluster One participants. Sam, a White male student said:

I went into university after trying a year out of school and realizing that labour market without university education was not the most promising. Uh but it was more than just that I mean I could have – there is a lot of programs may be just for going in for career purposes with [a community college] was an option. Ever since I was young I have always had kind of thirst for knowledge, mostly social sciences, that’s like geography, history, and my family talks about it a lot. Uh so I was kind of brought up in an environment that really encouraged intellectual process.

Steffi, a white female student, thought university education would help her secure better employment:

Initially my experience with the university was that it would help me succeed in the future. It would provide me job opportunities. It would provide me with I don’t know uh a new form, a new out-let. I mean having a high school, in my opinion – I guess you could find a job with it in my opinion it wasn’t enough to find a better job to do well in society so that was my basic understanding of why I wanted to go to university because I mean learning experience is also important. I like learning different aspects but finding a job was basic.

Mike, a racial minority student, said:

I did think University would put me in a better position. Uh I did think it would put me in a better position to enter the job market. To make more money. To get more lucrative job positions eh to get better chance for promotions, eh, advancing… And to put me in a better position than my peers in high schools and colleges or who didn’t go to college at all.

Cluster Two participants viewed higher education as useful for gaining social status and employment, but to some it was liberating and enlightening as well. Amitage, a white new immigrant student, stated:

But I definitely think post-secondary education- it’s not for everybody but it should be available to everyone who wants it because it is very enlightening. I think the world would be a better place if a lot more people were well educated.
Concentrations – major and minors

Interview participants in Cluster Two had at least one major and a minor concentration of courses. Most had double major concentrations and a minor, or single major and double minor concentrations. Most additions happened without prior planning but as their undergraduate experiences unfolded. However, it was how each participant viewed the process as either an opportunity to invest knowledge or as a trial and error journey that seemed to make a difference.

Steffi, a white female student, recalled how she used the process as an opportunity:

My first year I took all science courses and took one critical science class because I knew I was interested in it uh from one in high school. And when I started taking it more and I wasn’t doing so well in science I realized that I wanted to be more general. Then I added my international relations major in third year. I had to take a pre-requisite in second year to be able to get into third year. Then I added a minor this year in economics because I realized I needed two credits. I [said] why not just add it and I just like take two more courses – I am interested in it why not. I have never changed from one to another but I know like most friends have. I think it’s a common thing. So I just added them but never changed. Changing wasn’t really an option for me. I just figured it out and added them.

In contrast Sarah, an immigrant racial minority student, described her process of changing concentrations as a trial and error process:

Well I have changed majors a few times. Well I started with architecture first. I changed my mind in the middle of the year and I went on to life sciences and after that I got to do a biology and chemistry major because I wanted to do med school. I am kind of on the way of doing that but it didn’t turnout as I thought. It wouldn’t turn out like because at the beginning but it has been different. (By different the participant meant low grades that forced her to change her major). I got into life sciences because of my sociology professor, sounds weird but it’s true. He was teaching about fertilization, some ethical topic about it. I started listening and okay, I like this stuff. So I just got into it. I have just changed from chemistry now. I am doing biology so the change from chemistry was also due to professors and great enthusiasm towards the course. I did feel it was enough for teaching a student but not for a career so I shifted. That’s what it is basically. It’s a bit mixed up but what can you do there’s too many options to look-out for. That one big issue I face out there. I don’t know…

All participants in Cluster Two said they liked taking a lot of courses because this helped them discover areas of interest that could possibly lead to occupational directions. However, as
illustrated by the quotes above, taking many courses could either become a process of creativity or a distraction. GPA scores differed according to identity in the following way: new immigrants’ GPA scores ranged from 2.0 to 3.0; visible minorities ranged from 2.0 to 3.5 and non-minorities ranged from 1.5 to 3.7 (See Table 12-5 above for details).

**Student experiences and effects of university**

Interview participants in Cluster Two varied in terms of extracurricular experiences that could support their education. Most of the participants who were new immigrants (Kush, Amitage, Sarah, and Mika) did not participate in extracurricular activities that supported their occupational choices. They instead worked in jobs to earn a living and did not seem to recognize the need to connect work experiences with their studies. Amitage, a White new immigrant student, explained his situation in the following manner:

No I haven’t done that yet (found extra-curricular activities). I have had more of a “practical” approach to things. Right now I am working in an auto-factory. The bottom line, it pays good and definitely I would like to get to volunteering every summer, including this past summer but summer school sort of hinders things a little bit. I have always had a job ever since I was 17, so as much as I would like to, sometimes the time is not there but the further I get into my career and the closer I get to graduating the more I understand that I have to do volunteer jobs, learning skills in appropriate work forces.

Most new immigrant participants in Cluster Two were involved in labour jobs; they hoped that acquiring a baccalaureate education would help them find better employment. As the above quotation suggests, new immigrants did not seem to find time for skill-enhancing extracurricular activities and in most cases did not look for them. In particular it was a combination of the need to work and the hope that graduation from university would lead to a better job. Mika, a new immigrant racial minority, further commented:

No, like I work part-time at Canadian Tire so it’s just because it helps with tuition, so I guess that does help in a way of showing me what I don’t wanna do. You know what I mean? I don’t want to be in retail because it’s crazy hours and not like good pay and so yeah. So it shows me what I don’t want to do. I guess that’s a good thing.
The Cluster Two new immigrant participants worked hard to earn money, trying to keep up with academic demands but at the same time underutilizing the opportunity of being at university because of their circumstances.

Kush, a White new immigrant, told a similar story about how he did not have time for skill-enhancing extracurricular activities because he needed to work to support his family. Kush looked forward to when he would complete his baccalaureate degree so he could find a better job. Kush narrated a story that perhaps explained his ambivalence and hope:

You know I don’t like these jobs. You start early in the morning and work long hours and they don’t give you respect because of the way you dress, you’re like a nobody. So one day my sister was given trouble by her supervisor at her job. I dressed in a suit like a lawyer and went to talk to him. He listened to everything I told him and stopped troubling my sister…Education is power. I want to dress nice and have a good job. So I say this [industrial job] is temporary.

In summary, new immigrants had low GPA scores, lacked skill enhancing extracurricular experiences to support their education, but were hopeful of finding satisfying jobs after completing the studies.

Participants in Cluster Two who were not new immigrants participated in extracurricular activities including teaching assistantships, internships, and working on research projects with faculty members. Natasha, a racial minority participant from an affluent family of medical doctors and surgeons, reflected on extracurricular experiences aligned with her interests:

It’s epidemiological research so it’s looking at psycho-social, clinical and behavioral differences in smokers and non-smokers with diabetes – a long name, yeah, so it was just basically we went to the diabetes education centre like the Trillium Health Centre and Toronto Western [Hospital] and we gave out surveys uh for people to find us. They sent those back to us and then we had interviews with them. We monitored them over a year so there was initially six months and then a year and I did the statistical analysis and I just finished my manuscript so …it’s going for editing, uh, fingers crossed, hope it gets published. I really like my supervisor, she’s great… I mean I don’t think I would want to do research for my life but it’s good to have the experience because I think I would always wonder what if I got a research – you know what I mean.
The narratives of Canadian-born Cluster Two participants did not emphasize financial constraints, but rather a sense of optimism in exploring academic skills. A sense of daring to venture and explore areas of knowledge and skills, even those from which they had disqualified themselves previously, seemed to make more sense to try again. Sam, a White male student, described his adventure:

I (should) have definitely taken math in high school. I would tell you that much that’s one thing I regret doing. I dropped it just because I wasn’t doing well. I wasn’t the greatest student in high school but ability not the effort. So tough courses I think I tended to shy away from. I took a lot of law, politics, and business in the last couple of years at school because that’s what I was interested in but didn’t really challenge myself with any sciences or math. I wish I had maintained the math because I am now thinking – Now I realize I am interested in economics and I found that I do quite well at it. I am kind of disappointed that I had to take mediocre courses and stuff … I am actually at this point moving more towards the direction of economics and think may be try to do a masters… I am actually doing a teacher assistantship ship for an economics professor of mine. Talking to him has helped me a lot in a way – this is what has put me in the direction of economics is talking to him and find a process in which I need to step up so I have been asking him a lot of questions. And actually we meet sometime this week and hopefully talk more in depth about pursuing like a master’s in economics, considering that I am in my third year actually with no math in university. Uh so it would be a bit of a challenge but he’s kind of helping me to find out when I need to do [it].

There was also a tale of opportunity for Mike, a racial minority participant who was given an internship through his program. Mike had gone through a trial and error process in selecting a major and an occupational choice when he was given an internship in urban planning. The internship helped Mike make his occupational choice. Since he was planning to enter the labour market after his undergraduate studies, the internship experience motivated him. Mike reflected on this experience and what it meant to him:

Ah well, as part of the urban program there was an internship. So that gave direct experience, it kind of prepared me to know what might lay ahead. Even though it might not be the exact same kind of job, but the atmosphere, the hours. It was a big shift from being a student to going 9 am to 5 pm. Like I got used to it but it was dramatic in the beginning. And I guess just doing like city stuff in the summer a job can help, ah people were telling me, you know that’s a good thing that you apply to the city and you are doing urban
studies. You kind of have your foot into the door if you want a position in the city. So these are examples of experiences outside of the school.

Mike sent me an email soon after he graduated when I asked him to check if his transcript represented what he talked about in the interview. He told me he was excited that the department had acknowledged his effort and awarded him a prize of $500. Mike’s journey shows how his beginning seemed gloomy after he dropped two majors but also how an internship provided an occupational direction. He described the experience as intellectually satisfying and financially rewarding.

**Knowledge of the labour market and their experiences**

Some participants in Cluster Two participated in paid work activities they thought would help secure jobs in the labour market after graduation. Paid work for Cluster Two participants were of three types. First, there were unrewarding jobs not requiring university education (commonly described as “dead-end jobs”). These types of jobs did not support participants’ occupational directions; students took these jobs purely to earn an income. Second was Mike’s internship associated with urban planning and environmental studies. Third, two students (Natasha and Sam) were able to secure research work and teaching assistantships with faculty. Both Natasha and Sam thought that working for members of faculty helped them gain practical skills and sometimes helped them to make sense of theories they learned in their course work. All participants in this study noted that internships and research opportunities with faculty were rare.

Six of the eight participants in Cluster Two had part-time jobs which did not utilize their university education. They thought that these experiences, without additional extracurricular experiences, would only help them find similar jobs.
Planning for after baccalaureate completion

All but two of the Cluster Two participants thought that finding better employment would require further training or graduate studies: Kush, a new immigrant and Mike, a racial minority student born in Canada.

Among new immigrant participants, Mika wanted to work for Immigration and Citizenship and was planning for graduate studies. Amitage was planning to be a history teacher and was planning to go to teacher’s college. Kush was aiming to use his economics degree to find a job. Sarah wanted to be a medical doctor but her low GPA caused her to adjust her plans:

Well I do want to do Med school at the end no matter what happens but I think I will be probably heading towards nursing and then go to Med school. Let’s see what happens. Yeah that’s where I am heading towards to now nursing.

A consensus among new immigrant participants was that ending their studies at the baccalaureate level would not help them find ideal jobs. Mika said:

Uh I am ready personally but I don’t think I will be getting the job I’ve studied for. I am studying anthropology and human biology and unless until you do a masters or Ph.D., you can’t put that to a use anyway. They are expecting more so I guess no, that way I can’t use it. But I will have to be getting jobs related to these fields but not exactly that field so I need to invest a little bit more.

In contrast, Canadian-born participants (Sam, Mike, Natasha and Steffi), did not have hope in using the baccalaureate degree in the labour market, with exception of Mike. Natasha was planning to do a Ph.D. in child development, Sam was planning to do a master’s in economics, and Steffi was planning to do administration studies in communicable diseases. Steffi’s comment on connecting the undergraduate degree to the labour market summed these participants’ understanding:

I think if you’re just getting your basic undergrad I really don’t think it means that much anymore because so many people are having university education… uh I mean that now that I am in my fourth year and I am ready to graduate, I think one thing it has taught me in being here for 4 years spending my money and the time of studying is that piece of paper I
getting. It may not necessarily help me get a job. It may not necessarily secure me a job when I graduate but it shows potential… I don’t think it prepares one for anything directly.

Even Mike, who was planning to start working after his baccalaureate, had reservations:

I will make myself ready. I mean there’s still a bit of reluctance that’s why I am still returning my summer job cause I know I have so many years ahead of me that I will be working. So I figure like, why rush the inevitable I am enjoying my time off now and a little bit of summer and then I will go ahead and look for work. And when I find that job I’ll prepare myself whether I am ready or not. I know I will have to do it eventually but I wouldn’t say I am not ready but I am just a little bit reluctant.

Whereas most of the Cluster Two participants were planning for graduate studies, participants who identified as new immigrant minorities did not have GPAs high enough to meet the requirement for graduate studies. In contrast, the other Cluster Two students had better GPAs to meet the requirements for graduate studies.

**Career Centre Assistance**

Two of the eight participants in Cluster Two sought help from the career center. Mika went to the career centre to seek help on finding an occupational direction in her third year. She came across a pamphlet that helped her decide to seek an occupation in immigration and settlement. In contrast, Steffi reflected on how the career centre’s job database had been helpful:

I’ve gotten all my university jobs through the Career Centre. I find their on-line career search extremely beneficial and everyone I talk to I tell them to go on it. Uh I got my personal assistant job there, my work study job on career web site. And I also worked part-time for an accountant that lasted for two years which has helped me with like maths, general financing knowledge. I got and I tutored in my second year and third and. I got that through the career center. So like all my work positions I have gotten through the Career Centre.

**Cluster Two Discussion**

Most new immigrant participants in Cluster Two did not participate in extracurricular activities that could prepare them for their occupational choices. They seemed to believe that
being in university and taking courses was sufficient. These participants’ educational experiences were limited to attending classes, and their jobs were menial, in industrial plants and working as cash registers. As such, new immigrant students lacked experiences and skills that could match their educations and prepare them for the labour market. Their need to work for survival rather than earn extra income could be attributed to lack of economic capital. They also lacked some degree of appropriate social capital that could help with networking into extra-curriculum activities. Cultural capital in terms of maximizing their academic performance and demonstrating cultural awareness that could inform their understanding of occupational trends seemed to lack. Therefore new immigrants’ ways of functioning did not take full advantage of what was expected of them in the university (field).

In contrast, Cluster Two Canadian-born students had better economical capital; they came from families with annual incomes above $50,000. They also seemed to have better cultural capital and social capital: as most of their parents had university educations; participants seemed to add more course concentrations (specialty, major or minor) as their interests increased; had higher GPA scores, between 3.5 and 3.7, and had greater activity involvement.

However, the influence of social demographics resulted in differences in how students acted in preparing for the labour market. Second, all students in Cluster Two initially had hoped that the baccalaureate would prepare them for employment, but while at university students who were not new immigrants realized that the baccalaureate was insufficient.

**Cluster Three (Confused from start to finish)**

Cluster Three consisted of two (11%) of the eighteen interview participants, who lacked occupational focus at the beginning of their undergraduate studies and still had not arrived at occupational directions in their later undergraduate years. The two interviewed participants’
pseudonyms were Humphrey and Geena. These two participants’ narratives are compared and contrasted.

Table 13-5: Cluster Three Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial minority</th>
<th>Number Participants</th>
<th>Family annual Income</th>
<th>Parents educational level</th>
<th>Student GPA</th>
<th>Extracurricular activity</th>
<th>Occupational decision</th>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Over $50,000</td>
<td>1 University; 1 College</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Low level activity</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two interview participants in Cluster Three shared an understanding that their studies in the university did not provide them with skills that could help them secure gainful employment on the labour market.

**Student demographics and background information**

The two participants had different social backgrounds. Humphrey is a male racial minority and Geena is a female Caucasian. Both Humphrey and Eugene are second generation Canadians or more. Humphrey’s father is a university graduate and his mother is a college graduate who works as an assistant administrator. At the time of the interview, Humphrey’s father had just been laid off from his job as an administrator. Humphrey reported a family annual income of over $50,000. In comparison, Geena’s parents were both university graduates. Her father is a retired teacher and her mother is a member of the clergy. Eugene reported a family annual income of over $50,000 as well.

**Understanding of higher education**

This section captures the two interviewees’ views about higher education and their choices for study concentrations.
Both Humphrey and Geena had hoped that enrolling in the Faculty of Arts and Science would help them discover their occupational interests. With the last semester of the fourth year approaching, neither participant had decided on their occupational direction although they had chosen a major. Geena reflected on what role she had expected the university to play:

I came into U of T thinking more along the lines it would give me a direction. So my first year I took pretty basic courses that I was interested in and from there I kind of adopted what I like best. It was kind of- I kind of came into it hoping that I would have direction by being here rather than having a goal and coming specifically for that.

Humphrey, too, did not know what to do, but his father had suggested an occupational direction that he thought about but had never committed to it.

When I first began I didn’t know what I really want to get into. And my dad had always been telling me to become a doctor. So even through high school the only courses I was taking were science courses eh…Like I kind of stayed away from the business side because my school which was a semi-private school, there weren’t a lot of other options for the courses that we could take in grade 12 and OAC and stuff eh. So it was either business or science. There was like economics and math. I just planned doing science in university and then I said to myself, yeah maybe, maybe I will become a doctor you know. I really don’t know what I want than what my father keeps saying I should do that.

Whereas neither participant had identified what they wanted to study, they still looked for a connection between the education they were receiving and the labour market. These expectations will be explored later.
Concentrations - majors and minors

Geena settled for a major in international relations and minors in political science and English.

Humphrey settled for double majors in biology and sociology. There were differences in how Geena and Humphrey arrived at their majors and minors. Despite having started without a focus, Geena’s choices seemed to have been informed by some experiences. After spending the first year taking courses that were mostly electives, Geena discovered that they could form an English major. She described the process of choosing her major and minor as “wishy-washy.”

It’s kind of wish-washy I guess. You can’t expect a future while you are here you only take so many courses. I do have a path that I chose after – in my second year I chose to do political science and English because those were the two areas that interested me most and then I got more into it I realized that as a job wise as a career I would probably want to get my major in third year into international relations then made English and political science my minors. So that’s the kind of direction I have gone.

Geena changed her English major because she resisted taking so many requirements.

I chose to switch out of English as a major, definitely as a major you have so many requirements that I didn’t feel were relevant for me at least. And I understand why they are necessary for people who would want a major in it. I did want to take shortcuts and I didn’t want to take English before the sixteenth century which are mandatory [courses].

Through a political science elective course, she discovered an interest in international relations.

This interest led her to volunteer in a third-world country development program. She also discovered that studying international relations was more practical than English and political science, which she thought were “theoretical.” As such, Geena’s decisions seemed to be informed by her activity involvement and how relevant courses were to what she was looking for rather than a trial and error process.

In contrast, Humphrey chose majors through trial and error and with the realization that he needed the courses he had taken to form majors in order to graduate with a Bachelor in Science.

Hearsay information about occupational possibilities, poor of time management skills and a lack
of commitment seemed to have contributed to Humphrey’s lack of clarity about what he wanted to do. Humphrey described his process:

My first week at university I decided to change my major, I wasn’t really for it. I didn’t prepare at all…I wasn’t going for classes or putting in any effort, so I found it too hard the first week and chemistry, especially cause I didn’t do any work in high school. So yeah I wasn’t prepared and I had to switch programs. I went to speak to one of the guidance counselors at U of T. And they suggested that I take courses in what I was interested in. And that’s how I chose computer science, psychology and what else …I knew I was interested in psychology because it involves analyzing people’s behaviour and I like to do that. Well psychology, I guess its kind of weird, eh…you know how you are in high school. When I was in high school, you know how you just hear about like different studies…things like that from friends or relatives or whatever. I remember hearing about an exercise that my aunt learned from a psychiatrist which involved people’s unconscious thoughts coming to consciousness and I thought it was really cool. I just thought that (psychology) was interesting and so I am like, ah, that sounds pretty cool. And I am like, maybe I will do something like that. I will see how it is. And with computer science I liked computers. Like eh, honestly I wanted to do something in I.T. because … back when I when I started in 2002, the I.T. sector was just getting big, right. So everyone wanted to get into I.T. but U of T and York didn’t have an I.T. program. It was only like colleges and Ryerson. So I just decided to do computer sciences. Thinking that could do, you know, as good as I.T. But then even that eh after two courses in computer sciences, I did well in one of them and the second one was computer programming and I hated it. I ended up dropping that course and getting out of that whole thing.

Both Geena and Humphrey ended up with courses they could not use for their majors. Their GPA scores reflected their difference in commitment to their studies and also divided them by identity. Geena managed a GPA score of 3.1 while Humphrey’s was 2.0. Humphrey described how his low GPA altered his plans for a specialty in psychology:

I was planning on just doing a specialist in psychology but since my first two years in university were really bad, I didn’t do any work and my grades really showed it. So I couldn’t finish with my specialist because you need like, whatever a 2.5 GPA. I was like at 1 point something so I had to switch my program again.

**Student experiences and the effects of university**

Geena and Humphrey shared similar part-time employment experiences but differed in how they sought extra-curricular activities. Both worked in jobs that were not career building. During summer, Humphrey continued to work in dead-end jobs but Geena looked for extra-
curricular opportunities and seemed to want to get involved even after being turned down. She started applying for an overseas internship in her second year and found satisfaction in the process of compiling the application package. Her application was not successful, but the following summer she secured a voluntary position through an international organization. Geena explained:

This time I went away with a different organization. I went to a [third-world country] and I volunteered for two months. I found that organization, it’s a an international organization based in UK it connects with smaller grass roots agencies. I went to [third-world country] through them but worked with a small indigenous community there. That shaped what I want to do in future.

In her fourth year, Geena volunteered to recruit students from the University of Toronto for another organization. She was encouraged by her experiences and become motivated to find other opportunities and thought that she would be a resource for other students who were looking for extra-curricular activities.

I spoke with a large organization today. I was telling them that because I am in international relations, I would like to promote their agency next week hopefully before school goes out. They’re gonna send me some information – so I can help them with advertising. I am gonna try to get some emails from this class we have next to get people on board because it’s a really good organization. I think a lot of people would be interested in it. It’s just hard to find through the university an organization that’s really good. Luckily I just stumbled on this one but a lot of people I know are looking but they can’t find it, yeah sorry.

Knowledge of the labour market and their experiences

Geena and Humphrey did not have work experiences that would give them a better understanding of positive occupational options. Their work experiences did not require university education and did not compliment their studies in university. Humphrey described his work experiences:

I have gotten two jobs on my own. One of them was a retail job in a shop called Club Monaco. I just applied for the job, got it and the other one was tele-surveying. So any
one can do that stuff, it is not something that would further my career or something as a career, retail or telemarketing.

Geena did not see how her baccalaureate education would help her in the labour market.

Geena explained her dissatisfaction:

I feel as though the BA is worth nothing. I know a lot of people feel that way. It’s good to get you into higher education if you wanna go to teacher’s college; otherwise a BA doesn’t do a thing. There are no technical skills, uh, I don’t have any connections to anything really through the school. My girl friend at [a college], right, she is, last week she had, it’s called the “meeting bridge” she is in a good program. I am always hearing things that she has connections about what she is going to do after school. I know that’s what college is geared towards hands-on. If the amount of money we are putting on to U T to work our butt for four years to have no tangible direction or things to hold onto when we get older is kind of depressing.

Two issues influenced their lack of preparedness for the labour market. First, they did not feel that they had work skills required by employers. Second, they could not identify areas of interest.

**Planning for after baccalaureate completion**

Interview participants in Cluster Three did not believe they were ready to start working right after their undergraduate studies. Neither Humphrey nor Geena had narrowed their searches to specific occupations and this presented difficulties for what to do after graduation. Geena described her dilemma:

I’m not really sure how the courses I’ve taken have helped me develop my career options. I don’t know what I can do with my degree yet but it seems like almost any program would yield the same results in terms of career options. Nothing spectacular – nothing – maybe I am wrong but I don’t think so. Uh, maybe I can write a better essay than I did in high school but in general I don’t feel like I have advanced myself that much in one particular area that I could be competitive in a field. I guess that goes with what courses I am taking as well.

The students were left with few options. Humphrey knew that graduate studies were not option because his GPA at 2.0 would not be enough to meet the requirements. He sought help from the career Centre for job searches, resume writing and self-discovery seminars. He was looking for companies or organizations that could provide him an internship or job although he did
not know what he was looking for. Geena talked about travelling after graduation; she thought she was too young to work full time. Geena was encouraged by a family member who is a professor to pursue graduate studies. For Geena, seeking further studies was more feasible than fulltime employment because she felt too young to work fulltime and her family was encouraging her to pursue graduate studies.

**Career Center Assistance**

Humphrey, who sought help at the career centre, felt much more positive about how his education may have contributed to prepare for employment. Humphrey said:

The workshops and the seminars they did give me some insight and stuff. I felt a lot more confident after going to them. Because eh, before going to those it just seemed like education was just a waste of time and money...If I went to college and did something specific, they kind of give you the training. It seems more applicable to a job whereas university, they don’t really tell you the skills that they are teaching you. When I went to the workshops, I said yeah, I didn’t realize that I learnt all these skills even like working on group project something like that you don’t realize that. Those are transferable skills like time management skills.

**Cluster Three Discussion and Conclusion**

Cluster Three participants’ experiences varied in relation to their internalized habits. Humphrey reported that he found it difficult to make a transition from how he used to prepare for classes in high school to how to prepare efficiently for classes in university. He cited a lack of management skills in terms of his inability to cope with large course loads, especially in terms of his studying habits. He attributed his low GPA to his first and second academic years when he was still learning how to cope with heavier course loads. He was also less likely to seek skill enhancing extra-curricular activities on campus. In contrast, Geena, the White student, was affected by indecisiveness in terms of programs of study and course selection. She questioned her decision to take more basic courses that did not count towards her programs. She did voluntary work and also initiated involvement in campus activities such as recruiting fellow students for
humanitarian agencies, therefore making a link between education and the labour market. Her family members also encouraged her to pursue graduate studies.

**Cluster Four (Lost but hopeful)**

Cluster Two consists of five (28%) of the eighteen interview participants who started with occupational goals but dropped them for lack of interest or low GPAs. These participants were still searching for appropriate occupational directions to replace the original ones. The participants differed in what caused them to lose interest in their original occupational choices. Two of the participants had narrowed their educational options to fit their occupational goals but when their GPAs were too low to continue, they dropped these occupational goals. The three other participants dropped their original plans because they wanted to diversify their education. Cluster Four participants differed on what made it difficult for them to select new occupational goals.

**Table 14-5: Cluster Four Descriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number Participants</th>
<th>Family annual Income</th>
<th>Parents educational level</th>
<th>Student GPA</th>
<th>Extracurricular activity</th>
<th>Occupational decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial minority</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 @ $40,000</td>
<td>1 University; 3 college;</td>
<td>2 @ 2.0</td>
<td>1 High level activity; 1 Low level activity</td>
<td>Dropped original and undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caucasian</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 @ $20,000 1 @ $40,000 1 @ $50,000</td>
<td>3 University; 3 College; 1@ 3.0 1@ 3.5 1@ 3.5</td>
<td>1 High level activity; 3 Low level activity</td>
<td>Dropped original and undecided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5 (28%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student demographics and background information**

The five participants in Cluster Four came from diverse racial groups and social backgrounds. Their pseudonyms are Joyce, Dori, Yvonne, Beatrice and Gordon. Joyce is a White female participant who reported a family annual income of over $50,000. Joyce’s father completed high school and works as an operator, while her mother, who completed university, is a teacher.
Dori is a White female participant who reported a family annual income of under $40,000. Dori’s father graduated from college and works on a farm, while her mother who graduated from college, works as an administrative assistant. Yvonne is a White female participant who reported a family annual income of $20,000. Yvonne’s father is a university graduate who works as an economist, while her mother completed university and is a teacher. Beatrice is a racial minority participant who reported a family annual income of under $40,000. Beatrice’s parents are self-employed and are both college graduates. Gordon is a racial minority participant who reported a family annual income of under $40,000 and but opted not to report his GPA. Gordon’s father is an engineering university graduate, while his mother is a high school graduate and stays home.

There were notable similarities in family annual incomes among the participants in Cluster Four, except Joyce, who reported a higher annual family income. Parents’ educational levels were also similar except in the case of Yvonne, whose parents were both university graduates. However, despite the similarities in parents’ levels of education there were acute differences between racial minority students (Gordon, Beatrice) and White students (Joyce, Yvonne and Dori) in Cluster Four.

**Students’ Understanding of Higher Education**

Cluster Four participants expected their undergraduate baccalaureate educations to help them qualify for their pre-selected occupational goals or provide them with more occupational options. White interview participants in this cluster abandoned their original occupational directions to seek the diversity that the Arts and Science would offer. In contrast, racial minority students wanted to develop single focused occupational directions but dropped these choices because of their experiences in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

For Yvonne and Dori, the desire to expand their options began after they had enrolled in other universities before coming to the University of Toronto. Dori began her undergraduate
studies at another Ontario university in a fashion design program, but after two years realized that she wanted to expand her options. Dori reflected on her decision and the challenges it presented:

I wanted to have more options, that is why I transferred to UT. There is only so much you can do with a fashion design program. However a lot options at UT without guidance have also brought other difficulties like I need structure. I have been studying in universities for five years if you add the two years at [other Ontario University].

Similarly, Yvonne’s undergraduate education involved three universities and three provinces.

I didn’t finish high school so [another Canadian university] was the only one that could take me. So I went there and I got a 3.9 average there and then I transferred to [a second Canadian university] because I wanted a better education. And it was okay. I did well at it. I thought it was academically solid but it wasn’t quite what I was looking for, not quite my program…it really didn’t really encourage a disciplinary approach … so I transferred here.

Joyce decided against the engineering program she had been accepted into because she thought it didn’t offer enough options.

Well, actually I was going to go into engineering when I first came to U of T, but mostly because my parents wanted me to do. So I didn’t do that – I didn’t do engineering so I was hoping that uh I guess that it would keep my options open more. I think biology was more the thing I was interested in. I didn’t want to – I mean engineering is really a hard program. You’ve got good marks to get in and stuff but I didn’t want to do that just because I got in. I didn’t want the admissions committee to decide what I wanted to do. Uh so I guess I was just trying to keep my options open.

When it came to choosing majors and minors, White students in this cluster were more guided by a process of building knowledge than a trial and error process. Joyce described her situation:

I am a double major in human biology and health studies. I just started health studies this year. So uh I don’t know if the course I am taking will actually help me. I think they are [more] confusing, a bit more, because it makes me interested, like I am interested in a whole bunch of different things and I can’t decide which one, the one I will pursue, that kind of thing. Uh like right now I am doing my research thesis in zoology even that’s not even my major.

Yvonne described her process of choosing concentrations in this way:
I officially changed my major once, I guess, but I have changed my mind a number of times. I thought I would start in sociology and then I thought I would do English. And then I thought I would do philosophy and now I am doing political science [with a minor in history]…. I sort of prefer and hope more of a interdisciplinary program, that’s what I am doing, and it has been hard and I’ve also gone to a number of universities and it’s hard to find an interdisciplinary program which is why I sort of took so many courses as such to change my degree all over the place.

In comparison, the two racial minority participants in Cluster Four who started with clear occupational goals seemed to narrow their options and were unable to develop their occupational choices as they had hoped. Gordon and Beatrice started university with great expectations and anticipation for what they wanted to do for their careers. Gordon had been preparing for university by taking pre-university courses in science and was the only participant in the study who had private tutors in high school. Both Gordon and Beatrice seemed destined for careers of their choices but also seemed to lack understanding of university structures. Beatrice recalled her expectations:

I had a very romantic notion of what university would be like. I thought academically it would expand my mind and I would get to know everything I would need to know for my life, not only for work but for me as well as a human being. So I thought like you could sit in a place like this. And then like you could talk about different issues that are happening like political issues or scientific issues. And we will be just really interested in the material, where, as in high school it was kind of like you were doing the things just because you were told to do it and was not out of interest but it was out of pure need to get your diploma and because your teacher told you to… When I came to university I knew that I would become a doctor… I knew that I wanted to be a doctor since I was like four but then coming into university I didn’t have a very good idea of what being a doctor meant.

Gordon’s reflection is similar to Beatrice:

I had lots of expectations. I had extremely high expectations. Uh not only from the media what we understand as university so kind of. Like this place where people are of like-minded ideas even if it’s different but at least the same goals, right, the same objectives would come together and contribute for this. So I had this idealistic view always what university would be. And I think it also comes from my like culture in which and how I grew up kind of. Because when I was so typically- I am kind of Asian. But [stereotypically] my family always spoke in favour of higher education. University was
this goal since I was like, I don’t know, five years or six years old… Uh so when I began my studies it was kind of what I expected this idealistic thought of amazing professors and uh ability to go into areas that I really are interested in and just be able to just pour myself into it. You know there is this chance that I can – just finally I won’t be limited by this high school, middle school or whatever system that constricts what to study, when to study, what to do, instead I will be able to just you know get a topic something that I really like and be able to just go straight toward it instead of having to do with unnecessary… Vet school was kind of my goal.

When it came to choosing majors and minors, these two racial minority students in this cluster were more guided by an interest of finding ways to complete university education than following the occupational dreams which had gone beyond their reach after their first years.

Beatrice narrated her story:

But in first year it was a shock for me just because of my – I did not at all have a smooth transition from high school into university, like my marks suffered a lot. And it was kind of a wakeup call … because in high school things were like handed to me and like if I didn’t have like a 90% or something I would be very upset. Here obviously that wasn’t the situation so I felt like, I don’t know, like teachers were always telling me oh if you can’t become a doctor who can and that sort of thing. But university made me realize that it’s extremely difficult and that I needed to work and If I don’t then I won’t become whatever I want to… Well, right now I just – I am realizing that it’s not just the be-all and end-all to a doctor. Like I realize that they are different things I could do to get to what I want to do. Human biology major…I am as well in philosophy and political science double minor.

Gordon’s experiences also led him to drop his life sciences major and ambition to be a psychologist. He took a year off and returned to major in history.

But yeah, I changed into, uh I had a choice of criminology, international relations, ethics, law and society and history. And I took history essentially. I realized the schedule was really difficult for me to do history as well as bio-chemistry or history and psychology. So I just decided you know what, I realized I do love history uh for many reasons and I decided I will go into history.

Grade point averages

There was a difference in GPA scores between racial minority participants and Caucasian participants. Racial minority participants reported low GPA scores that reflected their difficult
transitions into university. Gordon and Beatrice had GPAs between 2.0 and 2.5. White participants, Dori, Yvonne and Joyce reported 3.0, 3.5 and 3.5 respectively.

**Student experiences in the university**

Participants in Cluster Four had very different university experiences. Few participants were enrolled in programs that offered internships which could help them gain work experience and skills. Dori was the only one in this cluster who got an internship through her program. The others had to create their practical experiences through work or skill-enhancing extracurricular activities. Yvonne volunteered in a kitchen soup and Beatrice volunteered in hospitals. Joyce was on a sports team. Gordon did not participate in any extracurricular activities.

White participants in Cluster Four identified more areas of interest that could lead to occupational directions but found it difficult to decide on specific occupational directions. Joyce explained the difficulty of choosing a direction:

> Definitely this got a lot of friends and family and they are always asking me, so what do you want do with your degree, and they are like you are in third year so you should decide. I don’t know yet, so it becomes like nagging after a while when the same family members are always asking you. What are you going to do with your life? What’s going on? I don’t know.

In contrast, the two racial minority participants were forced to drop their occupational directions because of low GPAs. This difficulty was exacerbated for Beatrice who retained a major that was no longer useful to the original occupational goal and for Gordon a narrowed scope of course concentrations, resulting into fewer options. Gordon reflected on his experience:

> Uh, where am I going? What does this all mean? What am I going to use this for? I don’t know, at first I was so sure about what it is I wanted to become in high school and that sort of thing, but university I was kind of left questioning and confused.
Knowledge of the labour market and experiences

Most Cluster Four participants did not have a developed understanding about the types of occupations that could build upon their educations. Their job experiences only exposed them to types of work that did not require university education. None of the participants were planning to enter the labour market right after their baccalaureates. Beatrice reflected on what she thought about the labour market:

And we (with friends) talk about what is it are we supposed to do when we leave like …uh because I realize how competitive it is just with a B.Sc. I don’t know, I just feel like a university degree alone is insufficient for me anyway to secure the kind of job I would like. That is to say just feel like what I said before uh it is like a stepping stone, that’s how I look at university because I feel like a bachelor’s degree alone, maybe before it was a good big deal but like for now it is just okay.

Gordon reflected on his baccalaureate in history and said:

Undergrad I think not as much. It’s really hard to find a job if you are a history student. And for me U of T is such a huge machine and I know that’s stereotypical but eh there’s always horrible stories of guys graduating working in a convenient store or guys graduating and they don’t get much opportunities. I think it’s always further studies, always further studies and it’s never [less]. You have to have more than a university degree to actually get a job that [you] might actually truly want unless you start off from the beginning in going to entrepreneurship.

Similarly Yvonne expressed deep concerns about the baccalaureate and employment:

I don’t [think] anyone who has a BA is working in their field. My sister just got her master’s degree and she is still unemployable for the most part. Most of the organizations she wants to work for require either another year of Masters or a Ph.D. I would like to – I guess a few jobs and even internships – a lot of internships for the stuff I wanna do they are not even paid, they want you to have a Masters degree.

Career Center Assistance

Only two of the five students in Cluster Four had positive things to say about the career Centre.

The other participants were not interested in the Career Center services. Yvonne at laughed when asked about seeking help from the Career Center:
Oh no I haven’t (laughs). I am not saying I am looking for [help]. I know how to search for information.

Joyce answered the question a little more diplomatically:
I have seen some of the services they offer but I have not been there. I think that as I draw closer to completing the program I will probably go there to seek services that will help me find a job.

Gordon described the services as narrow and not helpful to him and Dori also described her experiences with the career center as unhelpful and discouraging.

**Cluster Four Discussion**

Cluster Four participants differed by their racial identities about how they wanted to apply the baccalaureate education. Cultural capital seemed to have played a role in terms of how students navigated courses which affected GPA scores. The students were also aware of the kind of experiences they needed to be ready for employment and how not having these experiences made them unprepared. Students in Cluster Four were not ready for employment, yet all agreed that they were receiving a good academic education.

Participants in Cluster Four dropped their original occupational interests and remained undecided about their occupational directions. Participants in Cluster Four were planning further studies. The female participants in this cluster were involved in voluntary work but the males were not.

When the group was split by race, differences emerged between racial minorities and Whites. White participants wanted more occupational options from their education as they broadened their concentrations to double majors and minors, but this resulted in less clarity about what to do. Racial minority participants had clearer occupational choices at the beginning of their studies but could not maintain GPA scores at required levels. They also had narrowed their options to single majors and were more interested in completing their studies than deciding on occupational directions.
Table 15-5: CLUSTERS SUMMARY

*Cluster One (Focused from start to the finish)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number Participants</th>
<th>Family annual Income</th>
<th>Parents educational level</th>
<th>Student GPA</th>
<th>Extracurricular activity</th>
<th>Occupational decision</th>
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<td>1 University; 1 College</td>
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<td>High level activity</td>
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<td>All parents university</td>
<td>All @ 3.5 average</td>
<td>High level activity</td>
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*Cluster Two (Late start but focused to the finish)*

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<th>Student GPA</th>
<th>Extracurricular activity</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial minority</td>
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<td>2 @ $40,000, 2 @ over $50,000</td>
<td>4 University; 3 college; 1 H. School</td>
<td>1 @ 3.0; 2 @ 2.0; 1 @ 3.5</td>
<td>3 High level activity; 1 Low level activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 @ $40,000, 2 @ over $50,000</td>
<td>4 University; 2 College; 2 H. School</td>
<td>1 @ 1.5; 1 @ 3.0; 1 @ 3.5</td>
<td>2 High level activity; 2 Low level</td>
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*Cluster Three (Confused from start to finish)*

<table>
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<th>Number Participants</th>
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<td>2 University</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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*Cluster Four (Lost but hopeful)*

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial minority</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 @ $40,000</td>
<td>1 University; 3 college;</td>
<td>2 @ 2.0</td>
<td>1 High level activity; 1 Low level activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 @ $20,000, 1 @ $40,000, 1 @ $50,000</td>
<td>3 University; 3 College;</td>
<td>1 @ 3.0 1 @ 3.5</td>
<td>1 High level activity; 3 Low level activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals 18
Findings from the Qualitative Data

The major findings that arise from comparing four clusters are:

1. *The undergraduate degree is necessary but not sufficient for labour market preparation.* Most students did not understand when they entered university that an undergraduate education is necessary but not sufficient.

2. *Social demographics appear to play an influential role in how students viewed the baccalaureate education and their labour market readiness.* There are clear patterns along demographic differences in how students viewed the baccalaureate education in terms of their labour market readiness.

The next section compares interview findings with survey data.

Quantitative analysis: Discovering patterns from the Primary Survey data

This section substantiates the findings from the interview data by noting similar patterns in the primary study survey. To investigate the survey findings multivariate analyses were employed using SPSS software. Partial correlations and multiple regressions were employed at this preliminary process.

There were one hundred and thirty-six survey participants, of which eighteen provided interviews. Table 16-5, compares sample sizes and overlaps between survey and interview participants.
Table 16-5: Survey and Interview cross comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Racial Minority</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Cluster One</th>
<th>Cluster Two</th>
<th>Cluster Three</th>
<th>Cluster Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finding 1: The undergraduate degree is necessary but not sufficient for labour market preparation

Most students did not understand when they entered university but have discovered since that a baccalaureate is necessary but not sufficient.

To investigate Finding 1, multiple dependant variables were examined (see Table 17-5).

Table 17-5: Dependent variable responses by identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Identity</th>
<th>Total number of participants</th>
<th>Participants planning for graduate studies</th>
<th>Participants not sure to find jobs in occupational choices</th>
<th>Higher Education should provide competitive skills for labour Market</th>
<th>Study program preparing for employment in desired field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial minority</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, Table 17-5 also shows that racial minority and Caucasian students believed that they needed more schooling beyond their undergraduate education in order to prepare themselves for the labour market.

In all, 76% survey respondents were likely to pursue graduate studies. 69% of the survey participants were unsure the baccalaureate would help them find jobs in their occupational choices and 85% of the survey participants who responded had expected the baccalaureate to provide them work skills. It stands to reason that, if most participants discovered that their undergraduate educations did not provide them with work skills, they would plan to pursue graduate studies.
Finding 2: Social demographics played influential role in how students viewed the baccalaureate education and labour market readiness.

There are clear patterns along demographics differences in how students viewed the baccalaureate education in terms of their labour market readiness. To investigate finding 2, correlations between dependant variables of identity, family income, parents’ occupations and GPA scores were used in relation to the independent variable of undergraduate student.

Table 18-5 shows GPA scores, family income and identity. Two conclusions can be drawn. High income aligned more with Caucasian students than with racial minority students. Second Caucasian students had high GPAs than racial minority students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Identity (voluntary exposure)</th>
<th>Total number of participants from each identity</th>
<th>Participants under $50000 with GPA under 3.0</th>
<th>Participants over $50000 with GPA under 3.0</th>
<th>Total number of participants with GPA under 3.0</th>
<th>Total representation of participants above 3.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According the University of Toronto admissions requirements, students below the GPA score of 3.0 (B) would not qualify for graduate studies. Table 18-5 indicates that 64% of racial minorities had GPA scores of under 3.0. In comparison, only 25% of Caucasian students had GPA scores of under 3.0.

When cross-tab analysis was performed on students’ identity item, the results show that as a group racial minorities (Arabic students, Black students, East Asian students and South Asian students) were more unlikely to make the cut for graduate studies. In addition, Caucasian students...
with family incomes below $50000 were more unlikely to qualify for graduate studies in comparison to Caucasian students from families with over $50000 annual income.

When Finding 1 is compared with Finding 2, we discover that although 76% of survey participants were planning for graduate studies in order to become employment ready, only a few participants would qualify based on GPA scores and many participants would be forced to seek other alternatives to prepare for the labour market. Clearly the two findings reveal that most racial minorities were unlikely to qualify for graduate studies. The two findings reveal clear patterns among both interview and survey participants. These patterns expose participants’ cultural capital, economic capital and habitus. To discuss these patterns, the next section will draw on student experiences in the clusters and aggregations from the survey.

**Student Patterns in the Field: Qualitative and Quantitative conclusions**

This section identifies possible influences on the patterns of students experiences revealed in both primary data sets. The discussion draws on students’ experiences by clusters and similar aggregations from the survey according to demographic identities, grades, and extracurricular activities. The patterns are also informed by how students went about doing what they thought would prepare them for employment after they graduated or further studies.

More Caucasian students than racial minorities and new immigrants combined were successful in substantiating their understanding of higher education and preparing for the labour market, regardless of where they were placed in the clusters. Caucasian students seemed to have the necessary cultural capital for academic performance which gave them high grades; cultural knowledge which helped them understand how to prepare for employment; sufficient economic capital which helped not to be overly extended by financial constraints; and social capital which helped to secure skill-enhancing extracurricular activities.
Caucasian students’ high GPA scores could be connected to their experiences of smooth first year transitions and an effective strategy of choosing concentrations rather than the trial and error process engaged by most racial minority students. They also were more likely to have university educated parents than racial minority participants. These factors seem to have contributed to their academic success, hence were better positioned to maintain high GPA scores. At the same time, although Caucasian students’ participation in skill-enhancing extracurricular activities were not as high as their grades, they were still more likely to participate in extracurricular activities than racial minority students. Two conclusions can be reached about Caucasian students’ experiences. First, they were better prepared than racial minority students in being eligible for graduate studies. Second, by having a better participation record in extracurricular activities than racial minority participants, they were better prepared, knowledgeable and ready for the labour market.

The patterns in the clusters reveal that although most racial minority students were determined to perform better, they did not live up to their understandings of higher education and preparing for the labour market. *Cultural capital* in the form of an academic foundation and *social capital* in the form of suitable networks were not adequate to ensure effective practices. *Economic capital* did not appear significantly lower for racial minority participants except in a few cases where family annual income was below $20,000. The phenomenon of low grades among racial minority students seemed to have been influenced by a lack of information about course taking and a trial and error process of choosing majors. Most of the racial minority students in the clusters reported having started with science majors but were not knowledgeable about what they wanted or how to navigate their courses. Their parents’ educational levels were divided between university and college graduates, more in the latter category. These factors may have contributed not only to getting low GPA scores but also to frequent charges of majors. A reasonable conclusion is that racial minority students had less *cultural capital* needed to efficiently operate
according to their understanding of higher education. Most racial minority participants did not participate in skill-enhancing extracurricular activities, which suggest a lack of necessary networks as compared with Caucasian students. To use Bourdieu’ conceptual tools, the patterns of low grades influenced by less cultural capital and lack of skill-enhancing extracurricular activities influenced by ineffective social capital brought about symbolic violence for racial minority students. Symbolic violence is a condition by which participants attribute their ‘lack of success’ as caused by their inability rather than perceiving the university system as equally contributing to the cause of their difficulties.

New immigrant patterns, although confined to cluster 2, reveal cultural capital, economic capital and social capital lacking in students’ understanding of higher education and preparation for the labour market. (New immigrants could not be itemized from the survey data). Although most new immigrants had low grades, as did racial minorities, they seemed to have an understanding that coursework was a sufficient preparation for the labour market. Most new immigrants’ low grades were impacted by a lack of cultural capital in terms of suitable academic preparation; their parents were mostly college and high school graduates. Less economic capital in the form of low family annual income forced new immigrants to work in “dead-end” jobs to assist their families. Most new immigrants lacked cultural knowledge that would have encouraged their participation in skill-enhancing extracurricular activities. In addition most new immigrant students did not have the social capital necessary for networking and creating labour market preparedness. These factors lead to conclude that new immigrants’ practices would not realistically accommodate the shift to graduate studies as a preparation for the labour market because of their low grades. New immigrants’ lack of skill-enhancing extracurricular activities only furthered their unpreparedness for employment. Therefore despite new immigrant students’ hope of finding better jobs after their undergraduate studies or plans to pursue graduate studies; it was unlikely that they were prepared for both.
Comparing primary data patterns with NSSE Data

This section compares the primary survey data patterns with NSSE 2006 data in relation to essential items, revealing similar patterns between the two surveys’ results.

A list of NSSE items that are comparable to the primary survey are in Appendix B. For the purposes of this section, only demographics, grades, academic performance and labour market related items are compared.

Student demographics comparison

The primary survey data comprised 62% Caucasian participants while NSSE had 47% Caucasian participants. The primary data consisted of 38% racial minorities and NSSE consisted of 53%. This difference in racial representation could have been due to two factors: the primary survey data was a smaller sample, collected only at the St. George Campus while NSSE was a larger and more representative sample collected from all three University of Toronto campuses. Another difference in findings between the two surveys was in fathers’ college education where the primary survey showed 3% more than NSSE. The other differences in the two samples as shown in Table 19-5 are small to make a difference; this decision rule is based on 5% error of margin.

Table 19-5: Demographic Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item description</th>
<th>NSSE</th>
<th>Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial Minority respondents</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian respondents</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers with university education</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers with university education</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers with college education</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers with college education</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade comparison by identity

Grade point averages are very critical to students’ realization of their occupational directions. Often the inability to maintain sufficiently high grade levels forces students to abandon their initial occupational directions. The two sets of data both favoured Caucasian students over racial minority students (See Table 19-5). A minimum of “B” grade is required to apply for graduate studies at the University of Toronto (www.utoronto.ca/admissions).

Table 20-5: Student Grades/GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Study (minority)</th>
<th>NSSE (minority)</th>
<th>Study (Caucasian)</th>
<th>NSSE (Caucasian)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C- to C+ or 2.0 - 2.9</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- to B+ or 3.0 – 3.5</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- to A or 3.6 – 4.0</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20-5 shows a slight difference between the two survey populations but similar patterns in terms of students’ grades.

A comparison between the NSSE and the primary data shows the following differences:

For “C” grade averages NSSE shows visible minorities with a 7% average difference from Caucasian students whereas the primary data shows visible minorities with a 0.9% difference. For “B” averages NSSE shows non-minority respondents with a 5% lead while the primary data has non-minority students with a 13% lead on racial minority students. NSSE shows a 3% advantage on “A” average grades for non-minority students. The primary data shows a bigger margin advantage of 11% for non-minority respondents on the “A” average grades.

This comparison for grades in both surveys shows a pattern that favours Caucasian participants over racial minorities in advancing to graduate studies based. At the same time, it
implies that racial minorities are less likely to pursue occupational directions that require graduate studies due to low grades.

**How students compared on academic challenge and Enriching Educational Experiences**

Table 21-5 shows that students in both surveys were less prepared for the labour market, than would be accurate if their academic achievements were taken into account. In addition Table 21-5 shows very low scores on items that relate to work skills (ability to solve complex problems, ability to work with others and work knowledge or skills gained) by students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Primary data</th>
<th>NSSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic development</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work knowledge/ skills gained</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to solve complex problems</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work with others</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the primary survey data and NSSE reveal students reporting high satisfaction with their academic development of 79% and 69% respectively, even while they show lower satisfaction work skills gained. Both data sets reported the lowest scores on work knowledge and skills gained. NSSE reported that 15% of the students claimed to have gained work skills. This implies that 85% of the respondents in NSSE did not believe their education had equipped them with work skills. The primary data showed a slight 18% gain in work skills leaving 82% without work skills. This implies that most students believe they are not well prepared to start working after their undergraduate educations. About 15% of respondents from NSSE reported that they could solve complex problems. This implies that 85% of participants in NSSE found their education unhelpful at solving complex problems. Only 17% of the respondents in NSSE reported that they gained skills in working with others.
Responses to these survey items describe a pattern of perceptions why students seek graduates studies in order to prepare for the labour market.

**Extra-curricular comparisons**

Twenty-five per cent of NSSE respondents reported to have participated in practicums, internships, co-ops or clinical activities. Only 6% of interviewed students in the primary data reported having participated in essential activities of internship, research or a good job befitting university education. Most students in NSSE reported disappointment at the lack of internships, or research work with faculty, suggesting that practicum, co-ops and clinical activities were not a useful indicator for labour market preparation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Description</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Practicum, internship, coop, clinical Ass.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visible Minority</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non minority</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other respondents</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>Not done</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, NSSE data shows similar critical patterns in terms of students’ lack of work skills, racial minorities’ low grades, and students’ lack of skill enhancing extra-curriculum as in the primary data.

**Summary of Chapter Five**

Chapter Five was divided between two sections. In the first section, 18 interviews were analyzed through an interpretative phenomenological process. Four clusters of interviewed students were created according to when each group of students decided on their occupational directions. Cluster One (Focused to the finish line), Cluster Two (Late start but focused to finish), Cluster Three (Confused from the start to finish) and Cluster Four (Lost but hopeful). The analysis of the interviews produced two findings: *The undergraduate degree is necessary but not sufficient for*
labour market preparation and Social demographics appear to play an influential role in how students viewed the baccalaureate education and their labour market readiness. The second section was limited to quantitative data analyses that employed the patterns from the qualitative data and investigated it in the primary survey. It then compared the primary survey data with NSSE 2006 data and found that similar patterns existed between the two surveys. This substantiates the validity of the findings from the primary data.

Participants had different backgrounds and university experiences but came to similar conclusions, that the baccalaureate alone could not prepare them to enter the labour market because it lacked the skills development required by the labour market. Students employed their understandings of higher education and the labour market to prepare for employment. There was a strong correspondence between social demographics and how study participants understood the relationship between the baccalaureate and preparing for the labour market. In general, most students initially expected the undergraduate education to provide employable skills but did not find this to be the case.
Chapter Six: Answering the Research Questions

Introduction

This chapter answers the research questions, discusses the significance and implications of this study.

(1) How do undergraduates understand the relationship between higher education and becoming employment ready?

(2) How does social class and race affect undergraduates’ understandings of their academic progress and employment readiness?

Undergraduate Arts and Science students at the University of Toronto were likely to claim that their educations provided enriching academic experiences but were unlikely to prepare them for employment. While some students found other options to prepare for employment, others were least successful. Therefore, although students’ understandings of the undergraduate education at the time of the study were initially similar, they differed significantly in how they prepared for the labour market along social class and racial categories. The sum of capital each student possessed and employed in the field aided in how well they performed academically and prepared for employment.

The following are findings drawn from the analysis and discussions in the preceding chapters:

(a) The undergraduate curriculum writ large does little to directly prepare students for the labour market in terms of specific direction.

(b) Only students with capital (cultural, social, and economic) can successfully navigate the field (university) toward labour market preparation.

(c) The career centre helps to compensate for the dissonance between the lack of capital many students bring to university and what is required to make the most out of university experience but is unable to compensate fully.
Arts and Science students in this study anticipated that it was necessary to ready themselves for employment. To create a practical connection between the undergraduate education and the labour market, some students learned to look for a symbiotic relationship between the two by seeking opportunities that would provide necessary experiences and skills. This shift in Arts and Science students focus should be conceptualized as both a curriculum issue and a cultural phenomenon that reflects changes in the labour market and also as a structural stratification issue. The issue then becomes that university and labour market are different fields requiring different types of capital to successfully navigate them.

To reiterate the progress made so far about the connection between the labour market and undergraduate education, a summary of the preceding chapters is necessitated.

Chapter One

Potential difficulties of social class, race, increases in the number of baccalaureate graduates, and the segmentation of the labour market are introduced as possible challenges to the undergraduate degrees’ transition into the labour market. Chapter One also provides the conceptual framework which employs Bourdieu’s theory of practice: \( \text{capital} + \text{habitus} + \text{field} = \text{practice} \). \textit{Symbolic violence} is emphasized to describe the suffering of those who are not successful in the field. These concepts help to reveal influences of social class and race in students’ university experiences. The researcher’s personal experiences are described in order to locate self in the study.

Chapter Two

The literature review in Chapter Two is arranged into four segments. Segment one, \textit{College choice and student decision making for occupational directions}, discusses how student decision making for selecting a postsecondary institution differs from how students make occupational decisions. The differences between the two types of decisions are that choosing a postsecondary institution depends on more obvious factors such as social class while occupational directions
depend on students’ postsecondary experiences and are unpredictable. Segment two, *Economics of education perspectives on the undergraduate education*, develops the rationale for the undergraduate degree’s link to the labour market and why it is seen as a good investment in education. Both the public and private returns are discussed as inextricably bound. Economics of Education literature is used to build a theory for the necessity of undergraduate education and social expectations. Segment three, *Sociology of education perspectives on university*, discusses hurdles which marginalized groups (working class, racial minorities, and women) encounter when they enter the labour market with a baccalaureate education. Given that the undergraduate degree is seen as a preparation for employment, the experiences of marginalized groups are examined. Segment four, *Employment trends among Arts and Science baccalaureate graduates*, describes the developments and changes in the labour market that distinguishes between applied and non-applied education. This distinction between applied and non-applied education, disadvantages Arts and Science baccalaureate graduates in the labour market.

**Chapter Three**

Chapter Three outlines the research study’s methodology. It is a phenomenological study by design because it interprets the contributions of different data sets as representing parts of the social reality of students. The chapter describes the research methods, access to research participants, and data sources. The primary data collected consisted of surveys and interviews. The survey was administered to third and fourth year students at the St. George Campus of University of Toronto. The survey response was 34% of the 400 surveys that were distributed. Eighteen students were interviewed, as well as three career counselors at the University of Toronto campuses. I also attended and observed seminar groups and workshops at the Career Center. Two additional types of data (NSSE 2006 and *Measuring Up*, 2007) collected by the University of Toronto were used for comparison and validating purposes. The comparison focused on essential and similar items between the primary data and the University of Toronto data. Data
disaggregation was organized according to when participants chose occupational directions and resulted in the creation of four clusters. Each cluster was analyzed according to student background information, university experiences and individual agency. The results produced social class and racial divisions. The choice to study students enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Science was based on access and was due also to Arts and Science programs having the largest enrollments in Ontario (COU, 2007; Ontario Graduate Survey, 2005; Facts 2008).

Chapter Four

Chapter Four describes the Faculty of Arts and Science context at the University of Toronto. Promotional materials from the home page website, *Measuring Up* (2007); Facts (2008) and career counselor interviews are used to construct the context of the university. These sources of information construct the university’s perception of students and programs within the Faculty of Arts and Science. The University of Toronto’s Career Center compensates for academic programs lack in preparing students for the labour market. This chapter also describes how the Faculty of Arts and Science understand and meets students’ needs and how its multidisciplinary education is designed to meet students’ multiple occupational interests. The chapter paints a picture which shows that the university meets students’ academic needs through its programs and also provides resources to prepare them for the labour market. There are concerns, however, in how students are aggregated in the university reports which do not disclose the social identities of students who benefit most from the university.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five provides an analysis and discussion of how students performed in a university *field* and readied for the labour market *field*. The chapter is divided into two sections that discuss qualitative data and quantitative data separately. The first section discusses the 18 interviews through an interpretative phenomenological analysis method. The analysis of 18 interviews produced two findings. The second section presents analysis of the surveys. The two findings from
the interviews are investigated and validated by the surveys. The first section consists of four clusters, *Focused from Start to Finish, Late start and focused to finish, Lost from start to finish* and *Lost but hopeful*, describe students’ situations and predicaments. Each cluster was analyzed according to each student’s background information, university experiences and labour market preparations. The analysis revealed differences in students’ university experiences along social class and racial identity differences. The analysis produced two major findings:

1. The undergraduate degree is necessary but not sufficient for labour market preparation.
2. Social demographics played influential role in how students viewed the baccalaureate education and labour market readiness.

The chapter demonstrated that the field rewarded students with more capital (*cultural, social and economic*) and students with less capital experienced difficulties in meeting the field’s expectations of academic performance and preparing for the labour market. Whereas having less capital revealed social class effects, most students who had difficulties to meet the field expectations were racial minorities and new immigrants. The consequence of not meeting field expectations for racial minorities and new immigrants resulted into a condition of *symbolic violence*.

Chapter Six, begins the discussion with one of the three major points that the study has concluded with in answering the thesis questions: The undergraduate curriculum writ large does little to directly prepare students for the labour market in terms of specific direction. It is this lack of *direct* connection to the labour market of an Arts and Science undergraduate education that has led to a dual preparation for academic skills and skill-enhancing extra-curricular activities by students during their baccalaureate studies (Adamuti-Tracke et al., 2006; Tchibozo & Pasteur, 2007). Whereas success in the university and entry into the labour market used to depend on acquiring university credentials (Bond, 1998; Carnoy, 1993) which required middleclass *cultural capital*, success now depends on engaging all capital (*cultural, social and economic*) by
bringing into fruition the most needed capital at each required moment during programs of study. Like a literal soccer field which Bourdieu used to develop the concept of field, a soccer field is never the same at all times (Thomson, 2008). The soccer field is not constant; it is muddy, wet, cold, humid, windy, artificial turf, natural turf, under floodlights, under natural light, home advantage and away disadvantage that players have to adjust. In comparison the fields of university and labour market have changing conditions that require students to adjust. At the same time conditions in the university are not necessarily compatible with conditions in the labour market, thus the different discussions about the undergraduate education connection to the labour market (Avery, 2005; Axelrod, 2002, Bond, 1998, Carnoy, 1993; Adamuti-Trache et al., 2006; Tchibozo & Pasteur, 2007). Students are left with an only option of bridging the two fields which curriculum cannot do for them.

**Only students with appropriate cultural capital and social capital can successfully navigate the undergraduate program toward labour market preparation**

This section addresses differences in students’ experiences in the university field which results into categorizing students by social class and racial identities.

Differences were noted in terms of students’ demographic descriptors, labour market preparation, academic achievement and understandings of individual agency in the baccalaureate process. In the field, race, social class and immigration status correlated with how students generally navigated the undergraduate programs toward labour market preparation. Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of capital, habitus and field, helped to explain some differences that occurred between racial minority students and Caucasian students, and also between new immigrant students and the rest of the students (see conceptual framework in Chapter One). Whereas it could have been difficult to differentiate which students were likely to be successful, using the university as a field made it possible to differentiate students by their experiences. Field is a better diagnosing tool for habitus because it removes deterministic assumptions of background
information and categorizes students by what they do, thus respecting their ability to adjust what they learn at different times in their lives (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). At the same time, it is students’ actions in the field that revealed whether cultural capital, social capital and economic capital accounted for significant differences in their academic performance and labour market preparations. As such, treating the university as a field focuses attention on the resources they bring to the field. In economics of education, this is explained by the concept of inputs and outputs. Inputs are resources invested in order to increase benefits. The idea is that students are likely to function only as far as they have been prepared, implying that the field expects a level of readiness in students. The question is, how are students supposed to be ready?

To illustrate the idea, I will use the example of copper process from mined copper ore rocks to metal. At the world’s largest copper mines, in Zambia, I learned that when copper ore was mined, it was transported to the crushers. The crushers pounded the rocks and emptied on the conveyor belts which sorted the rocks from the coarser ore and put back the uncrushed ore rocks for more crushing. After the crushing, washing and screening was completed, the coarser ore went to the heap leach, where sulfuric acid was used to dissolve the copper from the slag. The leach solution, which contained dissolved copper, was put through a process called solvent extraction. The solvent extraction process separated the purified copper from the slag. The concentrated copper solution was again dissolved in sulfuric acid and sent to the electrolytic cells where it was formed into copper plates or rods. The copper plates would be packed for export. Abroad, these copper plates and copper rods would be processed into bullets, electric cables, appliances and so on. The idea here is that the field is like the importer’s market where copper is ready to be turned into particular objects and is assumed ready. In the field, prior preparations on students are assumed to have been made diligently. As such, the field is most favourable to students who are prepared to take on both academic challenges and labour market preparation than those requiring a “reprocessing” that should have been thoroughly done at the mine. At the same time, it is not
sufficient to remain a “copper plate” since its worth is in the object it’s turned into, as such to prepare for academic work and the labour market, the field requires that students have finances, networks and cultural awareness to access as “lifelines” as in a television show.

Thus, social capital and economic capital in the form of inherited social networks and financial resources respectively provided some advantages to middle class students in terms of locating extra-curricular activities and removing financial constraints so students could concentrate on developing their occupational goals. Habitus, which refers to functional dispositions, revealed differences in students’ university experiences (Maton, 2008; Swartz, 1999). Through habitus, differences in students’ experiences were aligned along racial identity, immigration and social class categories. These differences resulted from students’ application of knowledge they believed would prepare them for the labour market. Many racial minority students did not seem to apply what they seemed to know about preparing for the labour market.

Social class influence in students’ university experiences

The university as a field also permitted a definition of social class in a different way. Bourdieu used another term, symbolic space, which generally distinguishes individuals’ operations in the field in terms of those who have access to power and those who do not (Schubert, 2008; Swartz, 1999). Symbolic space does not have written rules which are could learned and followed by others who do not belong in its segment. It is a code of respect which exists in a field based on social affiliations, credentials, and other forms which command respect. As such, symbolic space is a kind of operating culture in a field. Symbolic space has standards that are created from practices of individuals in the field that become a system, which in turn protects and blocks individuals based on their practices in a field. It exists because a group of individuals have skills and codes of behaviour which are translated into power (symbolic power) over others who do not have the same operating codes and skills. Therefore symbolic space gives way to symbolic power for groups or individuals which translate into their ability to dominate a field (Swartz, 1999). In
the university setting, belonging to a *symbolic space* is noticeable in what students do and in what those who evaluate their work base their evaluations (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The university’s approval of students’ academic performances and labour market preparations provide these students with *symbolic power*, which becomes an earned license to dominate the *fields*.

Students in this study who demonstrated better academic performance and extra-activity involvement were protected by the system and could be grouped as those students who were more likely to pursue their occupational directions. On the contrary, students who did not have better academic performance or extra-curricular involvement were not protected by the system and these students’ progress towards their occupational directions were haphazard. In this sense *symbolic space* separated students by social class.

This is the reason we discover that racial identity did not make a difference in how students prepared for the labour market. This group of students came from all clusters, the only difference between the clusters was how they selected occupational goals or how they continued in the process of selecting occupational goals. These students’ parents were mostly graduates of Canadian universities and were working in high skilled professions such as medicine, medical research, policy work, teaching and other high profile research jobs. These profiles provided this group of students’ *capital* (*cultural, social and economic*) that differentiated them from other students.

Students in the aforementioned category were active in seeking activities, maintaining grades and were knowledgeable about their occupational directions. They demonstrated a common understanding of higher education and the labour market that depended on their effort to bridge the two. Students’ understandings demonstrated a comprehension in terms of educational requirements and experiences needed. These students participated in internships, research with faculty occupation-related work, and related volunteer activities. Their efforts to plan for their
education demonstrated their understanding of a need to be actively responsible in academic achievement and labour market preparation.

In other words, these students were positively impacted by middle class values. A form of habitus differentiated this combination of students from other students as they demonstrated the ability to network and possessed an awareness of trends in the labour market. While networking did advantage this group of respondents in securing rare internship positions in some cases, a significant difference was found in regards to participants’ understanding of labour market shifts and planning for employment challenges. These students also possessed self-discipline in terms of time management, involvement in multiple activities, and academic responsibility and even when in difficult circumstances. In comparison, students whose parents did not have Canadian university educations, and were not second generation Canadians or even more did not seem to maintain both grades and activity levels, despite having similar or better annual family incomes. A perception that academic programs were a sufficient preparation for employment may have been an influential factor.

Ideally this group of respondents engaged in the kinds of labour market preparations that career counselors advise baccalaureate students to undertake in preparing for the labour market. Although it may be assumed that parents may have played a role in some of these respondents’ preparations for the labour market, some participants were not living with parents and were financially supporting themselves.

While cultural capital and social capital through creative networking, knowledge of labour market trends, better academic performance and other forms of associations created common identity that guided these students in preparing for the labour market, other students were hampered by another form of social class.
Racial minority disadvantages: a cultural capital factor

Similarly, students whose academic performances and labour market preparations did not meet the field’s standards that are entrenched by symbolic power did not have much success despite their efforts. A lack of belonging in the symbolic space because of how they functioned and performed put many racial minority students on a less successful path in terms of preparing for the labour market. Since the university as a field is guarded by standards of fair assessments, prejudice and discrimination may not be considered as possible causes of these students’ lack of success, unless warranted. Given that it were mostly racial minority students who were less successful, it suffices to mention that none of the racial minority participants attributed their lack of success to racism or any form of discrimination. Therefore to conclude that most racial minority students’ efforts and desires to succeed were not rewarded as equally as most Caucasian students because they lacked particular resources of capital (cultural and social) that could have helped enhance their practices, is a fair assessment. Thus the consequence of racial minority students’ lack of success in the field becomes symbolic violence. As defined in Chapter One, symbolic violence is a kind of suffering that occurs in a field when a participant blames their lack of success on their inability. For racial minority students in this study, it was about having their occupational goals diminish because of low grades and being unprepared for employment because they could not secure extracurricular activities. Since symbolic violence is rooted in unequal student practices in the university, meaning that high performances are informed by a different form of cultural capital that is set as a standard, symbolic violence extrapolates into systemic racism (Horvat, 2001). This outcome was evident in this study where most racial minority students were less able than White students to prepare for the labour market.

However, other ways of examining racial minority student performance are warranted in this investigation. The study established that racial minority students in comparison to Caucasian
students attained low grades, a factor that hampers occupational preparations through graduate studies or further studies. A separate analysis of the supplementary NSSE data also showed that racial minority students had low grades as a group in comparison to non minority students (see Chapter Five). Low grades among visible minorities in comparison to white students are a common trend in other studies (Morgan, 2005; Stiff-Williams, 2006.). More than one analytic lens is helpful to probe and understand the low grade phenomenon. The structural lens of social class can be used to string together issues which influence the outcome of low grades among racial minorities. Lack of access to opportunities, parents’ lack of knowledge and resources to invest in a child and students’ preference for non-academic occupational directions are all issues associated with classism in sociology of education studies (McDonough 1991; Morales 2006). The problem is that they label the situations but do not describe how it happens, the argument being that to label an individual as a working class reveals nothing about their abilities.

Anti-racism studies (Dei, 2001) also provide lenses to probe visible minority classroom performance issues. Although there may be an overlap between anti-racism studies and social class, anti-racism highlight government policies in the form of colonialism and curriculum design as being complicit in the low grade phenomenon. As such, these policies are understood to exert pressure and constrictions that oppress racial minorities in a myriad of ways (Dei, 2001). In so doing, anti-racism studies eliminate the tendency to interpret social issues as being the product of cultural deficits inherent to racial minorities. However, anti-racism views the structure as the object of blame.

A closer examination revealed that low grades were associated more with the type of courses in which minoritized students enrolled and the point in the program at which they undertook these courses. For example, high aspirations for science occupations such as medicine often directed racial minority students to begin their program of studies with more demanding prerequisite science courses than White students. Forty percent of racial minority students were in
science double majors which students of all races concur to be the most difficult courses at the undergraduate level. As indicated earlier, these respondents could not maintain high GPA scores, perhaps, for lack of time management which affected their study habits in high level science courses. This is not a reflection of lack of intellectual abilities but of understanding university educational process of navigating course taking. Most racial minority students were high achievers in high school, as evidenced in getting accepted at the University of Toronto which has high entrance levels; in addition, these students took pride in the hope their high school teachers had in them to do well in university as well.

Racial minority students, especially from the two clusters (*Lost from start to finish* and *Lost but hopeful*) also experienced difficulties in finding activities and maintaining grades which required time management skills and knowledge of how to manage course taking. These types of student experiences are associated with students in social class predicaments. As defined previously, visible minority students in Cluster Three and Cluster Four were mostly second generation Canadians, therefore implying that a *habitus* suited for middle class education and labour market values had not been crystallized. Even when they participated in extra-curricular activities to prepare for the labour market, more racial minority students could not maintain GPA scores and were forced to abandon their occupational choices. Career counselors reported that more students dropped occupational choices due to low GPA scores. However, racial minority students were the largest group that dropped occupational choices due to low GPA scores. In addition, they lacked *social capital* that could have helped access extra-curriculum activities such as internships, research work and other meaningful work experiences. Racial minorities were able to find “meaningless” jobs which did not contribute to their occupational directions and educational development. They secured jobs in the service industries such as sales, clerical work, cashiers, or loaders in departmental stores and factories. There is little evidence to suggest that this income was needed to supplement family income although *Measuring Up* (2007) reported that
family obligations and finances were some of the fears that senior students articulated. Furthermore, racial minority participants in Clusters Three and Four, reported instructional and learning variations between what they were accustomed to in high school and the academic challenges of university education (Chapter 5).

The commonness of the difficulties described in this section among second generation visible minorities suggests a case of limited cultural capital. A deductive assumption can be made in comparison to third generation Canadians, as non-third generation racial minorities had not mastered synchronizing academic issues and labour market preparation in their university experiences.

According to race theories, this conclusion could be interpreted in several ways. It could be interpreted as biased for correlating racial minority status with a different type of operating culture. As such, it could be assumed that I am imposing a cultural deficit which is a form of blaming the students. It is an assumption that depicts a lack of sensitivity to other cultures. However, my intention is to identify the tension which happens when different cultures with different valid perspectives come in contact. These results may also be interpreted to reveal that university context privileges middle-class experiences and thus affords preferential treatment to students from this particular orientation.

As such, it is possible to comprehend the differences that caused difficulties for visible minority students with a “double-conscious” perspective. Dubois (Rabaka, 2008) coined the phrase “double-conscious” to explain how Black Americans lived with two cultures: the Black culture within the black community and the legal culture in the larger United States. I am suggesting that it is possible to comprehend this phenomenon with a kind of double-consciousness which addresses it as a need in the diagnosis process and as racism when it extends to the exclusion or preferential treatment of racial minority students.
However, as discussed earlier, Bourdieu’s concept of field helps to demystify the dualistic notions of victim and oppressor, racial minority and Caucasian students in the university. Treating the university as a field leads to an understanding that universities and students are active in making experiences in a context that may be more favourable to what some students bring than others. All students respond to the field’s demands to the best of their preparation. Each student is qualified to participate in the university in order to attain credentials. During their studies, students accept the results of their performances because they participate in a field with fair rules. However, students who trail behind accept their results too and concede defeat by changing to less desired occupational directions because they accept the levels of their engagement as valid. This deduction leads to an understanding that students are not passive victims in education. However, although the field (university) is fair, its rules assume particular types of cultural capital and social capital prerequisites that are not written but are respected and are necessary to help students produce masterful practices in the university. It is symbolic power in the culture of higher education to possess an academic habitus and to demonstrate it in order to be accepted. Groups of racial minority are unsuccessful in achieving mastery only because certain aspects of their academic preparation lack particular cultural capital skills in their preparation for university. Therefore for racial minorities to increase success in academic performance and labour market readiness, a particular academic cultural capital and social capital must be inherent in their preparation for university education.

The idea is that the academic credentialing system has developed to entrench individuals who prepare in certain ways and exhibit certain qualities it deems exceptional. Therefore it is individuals’ practices and institutionalized regulations that create a system that becomes difficult for other groups or individuals to become accepted in the symbolic space.
New Immigrant Students – A case of lacking privileged cultural Capital

This section discusses new immigrants’ labour market preparations as an even more adverse social class case than first generation visible minority students. While first and second generation visible minority students were aware of how they needed to prepare for the labour market, new immigrants lacked an awareness of what they needed to do.

New immigrant students lacked knowledge about the labour market but were optimistic about what their baccalaureate programs offered even though they were least prepared. At the same time, it is not conceptually difficulty to understand that new immigrants were likely to be adversely affected by this mantra of classism. According to Khyatt (as cited in Chindalo, 1999), new immigrants develop low expectations of securing better jobs and were more likely to associate each other with low end jobs. Students who were new immigrants had limited understanding of what a baccalaureate was worth in the labour market and needed their comprehension to be expanded. In Chapter Three, I discussed how within the North American context, baccalaureate graduates were expected to be gainfully employed in leadership jobs (Carnoy 1985). Throughout this study students and career counselors challenged the idea of depending on the undergraduate education for labour market preparation. New immigrants were the only group that believed that a baccalaureate equaled employment readiness. Students in this category seemed to have retained the outdated understanding of the baccalaureate in relation to labour market preparedness.

In addition, new immigrants lacked resources to educate themselves about what universities offered and how these programs would meet their occupational needs. They were not aware of other universities that could have met their needs when they applied.

New immigrant students had the lowest GPA scores in comparison with the other two identity categories of participants. Low grades were seemingly influenced by home-life obligations and financial responsibilities which kept them captive in low end jobs. They had low
family annual incomes (under $40,000) and had to supplement family income by working in low wage factory jobs.

New immigrant students can be seen to lack cultural capital, social capital and economic capital. The difference between first generation visible minority category and new immigrant category is that respondents in the visible minority category are aware of what they needed to prepare for the labour market but most new immigrants were not aware of their lack. More often they looked to the undergraduate education as a means of rescue from undesired low employment cycle.

The following section shows how the career center compensates for students who lack cultural knowledge (a form of cultural capital) and social capital to prepare themselves for the labour market.

**Helping those who can’t help themselves: The career centre compensates for students’ lack in preparing for the labour market.**

The career centre attempts to compensate for a curriculum that lacks clarity in terms of labour market application and the dissonance of capital many students bring to university and what is required to make the most out of university experiences.

Student experiences demonstrate that broader curriculum and labour market needs have multiplied occupational choices beyond the traditional occupations known to students and their families. Students find themselves not knowing what occupation their education would best be suited for. The career centre attempts to point students in occupational directions suited for their disciplines and provides basic skills needed to prepare for the labour market. In this way the career centre puts a name to the problems students encounter.

The career centre can be viewed as an attempt by the university to compensate for the dissonance between the lack of cultural capital many students bring to university and what is
required to make the most out of university experience. It is somewhat successful in this regard, but it cannot make up for the mismatch entirely. For example, new immigrants’ difficulties are very complex; they include changing their paradigms of the labour market, cultural expectations, linguistic and other social challenges. Whereas resume writing provides partial remedy services, most new immigrant students find it difficult to initiate activities, and most critical steps of networking by cold calling potential employers present difficulties most new immigrant students cannot overcome due to language and cultural barriers.

Personal experience location in the study

In Chapter One I described my experiences as a new immigrant in the labour market. As a new immigrant student I focused on completing my studies and working in low-end jobs to finance my education. I worked hard to sustain good grades because I wanted to pursue graduate studies. I volunteered in churches and worked in low-end jobs. Student loans were not an option during my undergraduate studies. When I completed my early graduate studies, I could not find a job as a minister in a church. I realized that culture played a significant role in churches. Evangelical churches were divided along racial and ethnicity lines: White English speaking churches, White ethnic language churches, Black Caribbean, Black Canadian and so on. I was a sub-Saharan Black immigrant. Churches wanted ministers who could culturally relate to their congregations. Pressed with survival needs, I returned to low-end jobs as I searched for jobs in other sectors. My Canadian low-end job experiences could not help me find a better job. I changed careers by earning a graduate degree in education. I repeated the pattern of study and working on low-end jobs to survive. I fell into a circle of getting more credentials and not having better work experiences. I have been a case of limited social capital. I lacked networks and knowledge of the labour market to move beyond my circumstances. Whereas race plays a significant role in hindering racial minorities’ career development, my experiences are more aligned with how I am
as a first generation Black immigrant (Galabuzi, 2007; Gordon, 2007). I am also a victim of symbolic violence that is although I have attained educational credentials that lead to better influential vocational locations as is the case with most Canadians with similar qualifications but I am still rejected in the labour market. I am a reject because I am not accepted on the basis of academic credentials. Perhaps I am also rejected because I do not fit the Canadian cultural profile but that is a guess. Whatever the basis of my rejection is, my suffering is real and comes despite abiding by the given channel of higher education credentials. In this sense it is symbolic violence. Being a Black new immigrant, working class, and baccalaureate graduate in Arts and Science is likely to compound more difficulties of language and cultural issues to the already existing dilemma of the undergraduate degree in the labour market.

The study’s finding that students have to rely on their capital (cultural, social, economic) to prepare for the labour market puts most racial minority students and new immigrants at a disadvantage. McDonough’s (1991) research that reveals differences in how cultural capital played a critical role in students’ college selections sets a foundation for understanding the role of social demographics in students’ university experiences. McDonough’s study moved the social class discussion close to university students. Morales (2006) describes approaches to postsecondary education aimed at dissolving negative effects of cultural capital among racial minority students. Most studies on minority populations in Canada have focused on students in K-12. While reaching university for racial minority students has been conceived as a critical achievement, this study highlights how social class and race affect their progress and eventual labour market entries are less researched.

Studies on immigration and employment trends paint a difficult picture of racial minorities trends in the labour market, although Galabuzi’s study (2006) takes a broad overview of racial minorities in the labour market. His samples on racial minorities with university level education report double digit unemployment rates. Galabuzi provides a starting place to examine racial
minorities’ employment trends that have Canadian baccalaureates. As such, issues of student struggles in performing have not received much attention. There are established factors that should lead us to suspect cultural capital effects in higher education. Studies show that racial minority students’ grades as a group were likely to be lower than White students also require thorough investigation in higher education before applying K-12 anti-racism diagnostic tools (Morgan 2006).

Students of university educated parents were more likely to choose university than students without university educated parents and that cultural capital affects how students think about themselves and what they choose to do (McDonough, 1991). These factors also formed part of racial minority and new immigrant students’ experiences in this study. As such, the role of cultural capital in how students navigate their university experiences is rooted in the effects of social demographics.

**Study significance and implications**

This study discovers new ground by showing that students have to rely on their resources and abilities to prepare for the labour market. If this is so, then higher education does not appear to be a means by which the effects of classism or racism are diminished. The effects of cultural capital, social capital and economic capital in higher education present a challenge regarding the baccalaureate education as the best investment for lifetime earnings. Therefore, the question in need of further consideration is whether the baccalaureate is a good investment for the labour market and for whom. Results of this study suggest that its marketability depends on how each student makes the necessary preparations beyond their academic program requirements. For most students, especially racial minorities, scarce university resources to remedy the situation means the baccalaureate education in and of itself cannot prepare students for the labour market. However,
students can depend on the baccalaureate education as a foundation for further studies and also for access to voluntary experiences that can lead to employment.

The second aspect of this study reveals that most working class and racial minority students are unable to attain their articulated occupational intentions for lack of additional qualifications required by the labour market in terms of experiences that could be attained through informal work experiences. On the other hand, new immigrants are affected by a rudimentary concept of the labour market that hinders them from seeing the criticalness of key extra-curricular experiences when preparing for the labour market.

This study makes a contribution on two issues: First, many Arts and Science students discover that they cannot rely on their undergraduate education to prepare for employment later then they can successfully compensate for this gap. This finding may explain why recent studies report that baccalaureate graduates in Arts and Science have difficulties at integrating into the labour market and are staying unemployed for longer periods than baccalaureate graduates with applied education. Second, this study reveals that the process of navigating undergraduate courses depended on each student’s abilities. At the same time, success in preparing for employment relies on social capital. This presents a different discussion in higher education literature where the undergraduate baccalaureate has been considered the best educational investment and preparation for the labour market regardless of race, gender and social class.
Study Limitations

Although it is difficult for a study to claim wide generalization, this study’s use of several data sets infers the potential generalization of results across Ontario universities. However it does retain some limitations given that it is focused on one university and that neither the primary survey nor the primary interview data comprised a large sample.

This is a case study of a large university, with a large faculty and enormous resources, therefore making it atypical. Given that most students are required to meet entrance requirements that are above other Ontario universities’ requirements; that learning takes place in often large classrooms where interactions between students and professors are rare but students are expected to perform; and that faculty qualifications usually involve proven research programs suggests different expectations of students at the University of Toronto as compared with other Ontario universities. In other words, the inputs (quality of faculty, classes, learning resources and partnerships, student services, student scholarships and so on) are likely to impact student outputs (scholarly and technology exposure, academic refine and so on) although it may not be reflected in terms of labour market readiness. However, the findings present a compelling case that deserves consideration and further investigation. Prior studies have reported detailed negative effects of the Arts and Science baccalaureate education in the labour market (Adamuti-Trache, et al., 2006).

Implications for Research

There are at least four implications for research that emerge from this study:

First, racism and classism in the public educational system is well documented (Curtis et al., 1994; Fordham, 1996), but the emergence of cultural capital and social capital as a hindrance
to students’ labour market preparations and eventual employment in postsecondary education is a phenomenon that requires further investigation.

Second, there is a need to find a consensus across other universities to firmly establish whether Arts and Science programs are not preparing students for the labour market and if so whether students are aware of this phenomenon.

Third, the study revealed an unusually high proportion of racial minority students who experienced difficulties in navigating the university system that resulted in low GPA scores and were forced to abandon their occupational choices. Additional studies could investigate how widespread this problem is.

**Implications for practice**

The discussion on the implications for practice is limited to universities, career centers and students.

**Implications for practice: What can universities do?**

The growing increase of racial minorities in universities requires universities to assist these populations in developing to their full potentials and entering the labour market ready for employment. Developing student potential and preparing for the labour market is complicated by many factors which racial minorities cannot control. Often racial minorities in this study began university with high aspirations and were dismayed along the way. Lacking navigating skills often inhibited racial minority students from developing their potential. How can universities help racial minorities and other students who fit into this category?

The hurdle standing between racial minorities and developing potential are the appropriate *social capital* and *cultural capital*. Many racial minority students begin university with hopes of reaching their aspirations but within the first two years their GPAs may drop and prevent them
from continuing in their desired occupational directions. In addition to losing occupational direction, racial minority students realize that they do not have employable skills. Why should this matter to the University of Toronto and other universities? It should matter because it is a marketing and cultural factor, not an intellectual ability matter.

The new recruitment markets for universities are racial minorities and women. Both racial minorities and women have the largest representation at the undergraduate level. It also means that large universities like the University of Toronto will depend on these new populations to fill the dorms and classes. As reported in Chapter 5, many racial minorities come from family and cultural backgrounds without university education. While high school is a place where racial minorities thrive and strive to earn a place in university, university requirements for success are different. University requires discipline, structured habits and strategic thinking in addition to intelligence. Many racial minorities begin university with high intelligence but realize two years later that they needed to have created time and strategies instead of bulldozing through courses. In addition, success in university requires high literacy functions in reading and writing which are least practiced in many racial minority cultures (reference), and success in university is highly dependent on these skills. As evidenced in this study, students who did not come from backgrounds of high literacy values and strategic organizational skills, experienced difficulties in navigating university life and were unable to reach their occupational goals.

**Arts and Science Education**

Most students value the Arts and Science education because of the academic discipline it requires for their development. However, universities need to be clear about how an Arts and Science baccalaureate prepares students for the labour market. At present, students are discovering late in their studies that they are not prepared for the labour market. Except for those who have completed university or have taken courses such as “the University and Society or Economics of
Education,” the intent of the Arts and Science baccalaureate is not communicated adequately. Many students in this study entered university expecting to acquire skills for employment but universities expect students to develop knowledge that would enable them to live responsibly as well (Knox et al., 1993, p. 4). Clearly the double emphasis goal is difficult to fulfill for universities at the baccalaureate level where the labour market’s emphasis rests on work skills. Students who understand this distinction are well prepared to succeed in the Arts and Science system, but for students who are recruited from “non-elite” social backgrounds, labour market success takes precedence over other gains. For many racial minorities and working class students, an undergraduate degree is a huge investment that takes substantial resources which becomes reduced to a general education if void of work skills.

The labour market has changed and universities should take into consideration that the majority of students expect to be employment ready (Adamuti-Tracke, et al., 2006; Tchibozo & Pasteur, 2007). Universities such as the University of Toronto can design a curriculum that does not compromise the academic intent of its programs but also prepares baccalaureate students for employment. Designing such a curriculum is within the Arts and Science strengths given the multiple disciplines and resources that are already there.

**Career Support**

The career centre compensates the Arts and Science curriculum by assisting students on how to prepare for the labour market. Many racial minorities and working class students who do not have *social capital* and *cultural capital* have benefitted from these services. The career centre finds is unable to solve some of the students’ labour market difficulties because of structural barriers that are beyond its comprehension and resources. For example, solutions for job searches which recommend cold calling and arranging audience with people working in similar occupations, do not take into account cultural difficulties which include language and
assertiveness. New immigrant students do not have network systems that are dependable for job searches since most of the parents are employed in low wage jobs. Furthermore, racial minorities and new immigrants tend to have accents that are perceived as inadequate (or unnatural) way of speaking English. Critical race studies perceive these problems as rooted in racism and labour market segmentation (Galabuzi, 2006). As such, preparing students for employment includes social preparation as well. The career centre’s solutions do not address cultural capital pitfalls and cultural differences that result in discriminating against a large number of racial minorities and new immigrants by the labour market.

Career centre advocacy services focus on making some aspects of education meet the standards of the labour market but not on helping academic programs incorporate practices that connect to the labour market. At the same time, it would better serve students if the labour market would tailor its standards to academic programs. As such, to increase its effectiveness, university units (college academic counseling services; programs of study, career center) need to advocate between academic programs and the labour market in order to build transparent connections. This suggestion is different from designing programs that feed into labour market needs as is the case between some schools of management and business corporations. The desired connections being sought here are of finding ways in which Arts and Science graduates can have clearer transitional connections into the labour market without suffering unemployment setbacks because their non-applied education.

**Implications for students**

Racial minority and new immigrant students need to select of universities that can best serve their needs. Small universities are likely to create situations where professors are more accessible and most likely to give advice to students. Large universities demand high level
organizational skills and self sufficiency which these groups of students may not be accustomed to in the first few years. Yet those early years are critical for establishing better GPA scores and for staying on the path of developing potential.

In conclusion, implications for research and practice suggest that all parties involved in the process of education and work should contribute by making necessary adjustments to make the Arts and Science baccalaureate desirable in the labour market.
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Appendix A: Survey Questions, Primary Data

Section A
Background Questions

1. Name of College in the University of Toronto
2. Sex  a. Male  b. Female
3. What is your age?
4. What is your program of study?
5. Have you ever changed your major?
6. Current year 3rd year...; 4th year...
7. What is your GPA?
8. What is your major?
9. What is your minor if you have any?
10. Which occupation do you hope to enter after you graduate?
11. Name the country, province and city of where you received your high school education?
12. Did you attend a private high school? Yes / No
13. Did you receive any private tutoring during high school? Yes/ No
14. What is your family annual income?
   (a) Under $20000 (b) $20000 to $29000 (c) $30000 to $39000 (d) $40000 to $49000 (e) above $50000
15. What is the highest level of schooling that your mother reached?
   (a) University (b) College (c) High School (d) Grade School (e) None.
16. What is the highest level of schooling that your father reached?
   (a) University (b) College (c) High School (d) Grade School (e) None
17. What is your father’s occupation?
18. What is your mother’s occupation?
19. Do you consider yourself a racial minority? Yes / No.
20. What is your racial group or ethnic group? (optional)

Section B
The following are considerations that may have influenced your decision to attend this particular university. Circle or mark the answer that reflects your view.

1. The institution’s reputation for academic excellence
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know
2. I was advised by family
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know
3. I considered the advice of my guidance counselor
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know
4. I liked the location or the convenience of this location
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know
5. I liked the institution’s reputation for selectivity
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know
6. I liked the fact that the institutions’ name is widely recognized
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know
7. I liked the institution’s reputation for job-orientation and placement
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know
8. I liked the institution’s ranking in Maclean’s or other media surveys
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know
9. I liked the reputation in my chosen field
(a) Not at all (b) Very little (c) Somewhat (d) Very much (e) Don’t know

The following are statements about your undergraduate experiences. You are asked to rate your answers on a scale of one-to-ten (1 to 10). 10 will demonstrate the highest score and 1 the least score. Circle the number that best represents your rating of the following statements. Circle or mark the number that represents your rating

1. The courses I have taken have helped me to develop academically.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. The courses I have taken have given me specific skills training I will need in my future work.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. I have deliberately taken courses or sort courses outside my program requirements that would give me specific employable skills.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. I feel that my education so far does not have applicable specific skills I can identify in my job seeking resume.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Part-time job or voluntary experiences have helped me to decide on my occupational choice (major or career option)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Lower grades in some courses influenced me to change my field of study.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Lack of finances influenced my decision to take a less costly program of study.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. University education will lead to higher salary than if I just had a high school diploma.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. I have changed my program of study in order to get into a program that will lead to readily available jobs after graduation

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. My current program of study is adequately preparing me for employment in my desired field.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. I am not sure if my undergraduate education is enough to secure a job in my occupational choice.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. I don’t know the field I will be seeking jobs in after my graduation

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. I am likely going to pursue graduate studies in order to increase my chances of finding a better job.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Section C

Please select an answer that closely reflects your thinking in this section.

1. Do you think that your identity (race, religion, gender or new immigrant) played a part in your selection of occupational choice?
   (a) Very much so  (b) Somewhat  (c) Very little  (d) Absolutely not  (e) Don’t know

2. Have any of your professors influenced your occupational choice direction?
   (a) Very much so  (b) Somewhat  (c) Very little  (d) Absolutely not  (e) Don’t know

3. Have fellow students influenced your occupational choice direction?
   (a) Very much so  (b) Somewhat  (c) Very little  (d) Absolutely not  (e) Don’t know
5. University education should provide students with competitive skills in the labour market.
   (a) Very much so  (b) Somewhat  (c) Very little  (d) Absolutely not  (e) Don’t know

6. Minority students (e.g. Black) don’t seem to have encouraging experiences in classes.
   (a) Very much so  (b) Somewhat  (c) Very little  (d) Absolutely not  (e) Don’t know

7. Attending the University of Toronto gives individuals seeking jobs a competitive edge because of its reputation.
   a. (a) Very much so (b) Somewhat  (c) Very little  (d) Absolutely not  (e) Don’t know

8. The career center at the University of Toronto has been helpful in helping me acquire skills for the labour market.
   (a) Very much so  (b) Somewhat  (c) Very little  (d) Absolutely not  (e) Don’t know
Appendix B: Interview Questions, Primary Data

Q1. What did you think university education would do for you when you began your studies?

Probing questions
- When did you start thinking about attending university?
- What were your thoughts on developing employable skills?
- What were your thoughts on developing academic abilities?
- How did your career plans resonate with your identity?

Q2. How have the courses you have taken at the University of Toronto helped you to develop your career option?

Probing questions
- How have courses helped you to build the skills you need for work?
- Have you chosen elective courses to specifically help you build work skills?
- Do you have a preference between practice and theory-oriented courses?
- How have the courses helped you to develop academically?
- Did you fit in well in classroom discussions?

Q3. Could you describe some of your experiences outside of class that have helped you to decide (or affirm) on your career choice during your studies?

Probing questions
- Did any of your work experiences influence your career option?
- Did you have any outside of class consultation with any of your professors?
- Did your fellow students have any influence on your career option?
- In what capacity has the career center been helpful to you?
- What would you say had the most influence in career direction outside your courses?
- What would you say has been a worrisome issue for you beside class assignments?

Q4. Tell me about what you expected from the University of Toronto in order to develop your career choice?

Probing questions
- How have your expectations been met?
How have your expectations been not met?
What would you do differently in order to achieve your expectations if you were to start all-over again?
Would you enroll in the same college and program?

Q5. Do you think the employment sector will fairly reward your university education?

**Probing questions**
- Do you think that the labour market is fair to everyone who participates in it?
- Does racial origin make a difference in labour market?
- Do you think social class gives other students an edge in the labour market?
- Do you think it is difficult for the labour market to reward every graduate according to their qualifications?
- Do you feel ready to enter the labour market?
- Are you planning to pursue graduate studies after your graduation?
**Appendix C Essential NSSE Comparable Items & Student Majors**

**Table AC – 1: NSSE comparable items to primary survey**

*Background Characteristics*

1. Sex
2. Are you part of a visible minority group in Canada?
3. What is your current classification in the university?
   - Senior/Fourth year
4. What have most of your grades been up to now at this institution
   - C- or lower, C+, B-, B, B+, A-, A
5. What is the highest level of education that your father completed
6. What is the highest level of education that your mother completed
7. Please enter your major(s) or your expected major(s)

*Additional Questions: Ontario Universities only*

8. In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?
   - Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
9. Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?
   - Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment
10. To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?
    - Intellectual development
    - Acquiring job or work related knowledge skills
11. If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending
12. If you have any additional comments or feedback that you would like to share on the quality of your educational experience please type below.

---

The essential items in table AC-1, are compared with the primary survey in Chapter Five.
Table AC-2: Shows only shows majors and specialty of participants in the primary data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<td>Sociology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>18.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<td>Zoology</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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<td>Human Behavioral Biology</td>
<td>.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
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Appendix D: Faculty of Arts & Science

Programs offered by the 7 colleges

The following are the specific programs offered by each of the seven colleges:


New College offers specific programs in African Studies, Caribbean Studies, Equity Studies, Human Biology, Paradigms and Archetypes, South Asian Studies and Women's Studies.

St. Michael's College offers specific programs in Book and Media Studies, Celtic Studies, Christianity and Culture and Mediaeval Studies.

Trinity College offers specific programs in Ethics, Society and Law, Immunology, International Relations and Trinity One.

University College offers specific programs in Aboriginal Studies, Canadian Studies, Cognitive Science, Drama, Health Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, and Sexual Diversity Studies.

Victoria College offers specific programs in Literary Studies, Semiotics and Communication Theory, Renaissance Studies, and Vic One.

Woodsworth College offers specific programs in Criminology, Employment Relations.

Faculty of Arts Institutes

- Asian Institute
- Centre for Comparative Literature
- Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies
- Centre for Environment
- Centre for Ethics
- Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies
- Centre for Global Change Science
- Centre for Medieval Studies
- Centre for Quantum Information and Quantum Control
- Centre for the Study of Korea
- Centre for the Study of the United States
- Humanities Institute (see Jackman Humanities Institute)
- Institute for Optical Sciences
- Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology
- Jackman Humanities Institute
- Munk Centre for International Studies
- School of Public Policy and Governance
- The Women and Gender Studies Institute

Faculty of Arts list of Courses

S= Specialty
M= Major
m = Minor

- Aboriginal Studies (S,M,m)
- Actuarial Science and Statistics (S,M)
- African Studies (S,M,m) See New College Programs
- American Studies (M,m)
- Anthropology (S,M, m)
- Anthropology - Biological (S,M)
- Anthropology - Linguistic and Semiotic (M)
- Anthropology - Social and Cultural (S)
- Applied Mathematics (S)
- Applied Physics (S)
- Archaeological Science (S,M)
- Archaeology (S)
- Architectural Studies - Design (M)
- Architectural Studies - History, Theory, Criticism (M)
- Art See Fine Art and Visual Studies (S, M,m)
- Asia-Pacific Studies (M)
- Astronomy and Astrophysics (M,m)
- Astronomy and Physics (S)
- Behaviour (S)
- Biochemistry (S,M)
- Bioethics (S,M,m)
- Biogeography (S)
- Bioinformatics and Computational Biology (S)
- Biological Chemistry (S)
- Biology (S,M,m)
- Biophysics (S)
- Book and Media Studies (M, m) See St.Michael's College Programs
- Botany (S,M,m)
- Buddhism, Psychology and Mental Health (m) See New College Programs
- Buddhist Studies (S,M)
- Business See Commerce and Finance - Bachelor of Commerce (S) or Commerce - Bachelor of Arts (M)
- Business German (m)
- Canadian Studies (S,M,m) See University College Programs
- Caribbean Studies (S,M,m) See New College Programs
- Cell Biology (S)
- Celtic Studies (S,M,m) See St.Michael's College Programs
- Chemical Physics (S)
- Chemistry (S,M,m)
- Chemistry and Geology (S)
- Christianity and Culture (S,M,m) See St.Michael's College Programs
- Christianity and Culture: Christianity and Education (m)
- Christianity and Culture: Religious Education (M)
- Cinema Studies (S,M,m) See Innis College Programs
- Classical Civilization (M,m)
- Classics (S,M)
- Cognitive Science and Artificial Intelligence (S) See University College Programs
- Cognitive Science (S,M) See University College Programs
- Commerce and Finance - Bachelor of Commerce (S)
- Commerce - Bachelor of Arts (M)
- Comparative Animal Physiology (S)
- Computer Science (S,M)
- Computer Science - Artificial Intelligence Option (S)
- Computer Science - Foundations Option (S)
- Computer Science - Information Systems Option (S)
- Computer Science - Software Engineering Option (S)
- Computer Science and Economics (S)
- Computer Science and Mathematics (S)
- Computer Science and Physics (S)
- Computer Science and Statistics (S)
- Criminology (S,M) See Woodsworth College Programs
- Croatian and Serbian Studies (M,m)
- Czech and Slovak Studies (M,m)
- Developmental Biology (S)
- Diaspora and Transnational Studies (M,m)
- Drama (S,M,m) See University College Programs
- Earth Systems - Physics and Environment (S)
- East Asian Studies (S,M,m)
- Ecology (S)
- Economic and Evolutionary Biology (M)
- Economic History (M, m)
  Economics (S,M,m)
- Economics and Geography (S)
- Economics and Mathematics (S)
- Economics and Philosophy (S)
- Economics and Political Science (S)
- Economics and Sociology (S)
- Economics and Statistics (S)
- Economics - Quantitative Methods (S)
- Education and Society (m)
- Employment Relations (S,M) See Woodsworth College Programs
- English (S,M,m)
- English and Drama S) See University College Programs
- English and Linguistics (S)
- English and Philosophy (S)
- Environment and Health (S)
- Environment and Resource Management (S,M)
- Environment and Science (S,M,m)
- Environment and Toxicology (S)
- Environment and Society (S,M,m)
- Environmental Anthropology (m)
- Environmental Biology (m)
- Environmental Chemistry (S,m)
- Environmental Economics (m)
- Environmental Ethics (M, m)
- Environmental Policy and Practice (S,M,m)
- Environmental Geosciences (S,M,m)
- Equity Studies (M) See New College Programs
- Estonian Studies (m)
- Ethics, Society and Law (M) See Trinity College Programs
- European Studies (M)
- European Union Studies (m)
- Evolutionary Biology (S)
- Fine Art (History of Art) S,M,m)
- Financial Economics (S)
- Finnish Studies (M, m)
- Forest Conservation (S,M,m)
- Forest Conservation Science (S,M,m)
- French as a Second Language (m)
- French Cultural Studies (m)
- French Language and French Linguistics (S,M)
- French Language and Literature (S,M)
- French Second Language Learning (M)
- French Studies (m)
- French Translation (m)
- Geographic Information Systems (m)
- Geography (S,M,m)
- Geology (S,M,m)
- Geology and Physics (S)
- German Studies (S,M)
- Greek (M,m)
- Health Studies (S,M) See University College Programs
- Historical and Cultural Geography (S,M)
- History (S,M,m)
- History and Political Science (S)
- History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (M)
- Human Biology (M)
- Human Biology - Genes, Genetics and Biotechnology
- Human Biology - Global Health (S)
- Human Biology - Health and Disease (S)
- Human-Computer Interaction (S)
- Hungarian Studies (M,m)
- Immunology (S) See Trinity College Programs
- Innis College Programs
- Interfaculty Combination: Environmental Policy and Practice and International Development Studies (S,M)
- International Relations (S,M) See Trinity College Programs
- International Relations/Peace and Conflict Studies (S) See Trinity College Programs
- Italian Studies (S,M,m)
- Italian Culture and Communication Studies (m)
- Italian Second Language Learning (M)
- Jewish Studies (S,M,m)
- Latin (M,m)
- Latin American Studies (M)
- Life, Environmental and General Physics (m)
- Linguistics (S,M,m)
- Linguistics and Computing (S)
- Linguistics and Languages other than English (S)
- Linguistics and Philosophy (S)
- Literary Studies (S,M) See Victoria College Programs
- Literary Studies and Philosophy (S)
- Literary Studies (Comparative Literature Stream(S,M)
- Materials Science (S)
• Mathematics (S,M,m)
• Mathematics and Its Applications (S)
• Mathematics and Philosophy (S)
• Mathematics and Physics (S)
• Mediaeval Studies (S,M,m) See St. Michael's College Programs
• Molecular Genetics and Microbiology (S)
• Modern Languages and Literatures (S)
• Molecular Plant Biology (S)
• Music Studies (S,M)
• Music with Ensemble Option (S,M)
• Music History and Culture (m)
• Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations (S,M,m)
• Neuroscience (S)
• New College Programs
• Nutritional Sciences (M)
• Paradigms and Archetypes (m) See New College Programs
• Past Environments (S)
• Pathobiology (S)
• Peace and Conflict Studies (S,M) See University College Programs
• Pharmacology (S,M)
• Pharmacology and Toxicology (S)
• Pharmaceutical Chemistry (S) See Chemistry
• Philosophy (S,M,m)
• Philosophy of Science (S)
• Philosophy and Political Science (S)
• Philosophy and Religion (S)
• Philosophy and Sociology (S)
• Physical and Environmental Geography (S,M,m)
• Physics (S,M,m)
• Physics and Philosophy (S)
• Physiology (S,M,m)
• Planetary Science (S)
• Polish Language and Literature (M,m)
• Polish Studies (M,m)
• Political Science (S,M,m)
• Political Science and Sociology (S)
• Portuguese (S,M,m)
• Prehistoric Archaeology (M)
• Psychology (S,M,m)
• Psychology Research (S)
• Religion (S,M,m)
• Religion - Christian Origins (S)
• Renaissance Studies (S,M,m) See Victoria College Programs
• Russian Literature in Translation (m)
• Russian Language (m)
• Russian Language and Literature (S,M,m)
• Semiotics and Communication Theory (M,m) See Victoria College Programs
• Sexual Diversity Studies (M,m) See University College Programs
• Slavic Languages (S)
• Slavic Languages and Literatures (S)
- Sociology (S,M,m)
- Sociology and Urban Studies (S)
- South Asian Studies (S,M,m) See New College Programs
- Spanish (S,M,m)
- St. Michael's College Programs
- Statistics (S,M,m)
- Statistics and Mathematics (S)
- Toxicology (S,M)
- Trinity College Programs
- Ukrainian Language and Literature (S,M,m)
- University College Programs
- Urban, Economic and Social Geography (S,M)
- Urban Studies (S,M,m) See Innis College Programs
- Victoria College Programs
- Visual Studies (S,M,m)
- Women and Gender Studies (S,M,m) See New College Programs
- Woodsworth College Programs
- Writing and Rhetoric (m) See Innis College Programs
- Yiddish, Al and Malke Green Program (m)
- Zoology (S,M,m)

Faculty of ARTS & Science Academic Units

- Aboriginal Studies Program
- Anthropology
- Art
- Asian Institute
- Astronomy and Astrophysics
- Cell and Systems Biology
- Centre for Comparative Literature
- Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies
- Centre for Environment
- Centre for Ethics
- Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies
- Centre for Global Change Science
- Centre for Medieval Studies
- Centre for Quantum Information and Quantum Control
- Centre for the Study of Korea
- Centre for the Study of the United States
- Chemistry
- Classics
- Commerce
- Computer Science
- Dr. David Chu Program in Asia Pacific Studies
- East Asian Studies
- Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
- Economics
- English
- French
- Geography
- Geology
- German
- History
- Humanities Institute (see Jackman Humanities Institute)
- Human Biology Programs
- Innis College
- Institute for Optical Sciences
- Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology
- Italian
- Jackman Humanities Institute
- Jewish Studies Program
- Latin American Studies Program
- Linguistics
- Mathematics
- Munk Centre for International Studies
- Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
- New College
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- School of Public Policy and Governance
- Slavic Languages and Literatures
- Sociology
- Spanish and Portuguese
- St. Michael's College
- Statistics and Actuarial Science
- The Study of Religion
- The Women and Gender Studies Institute
- Trinity College
- University College
- Victoria College
- Woodsworth College

Faculty of Arts Science Interdisciplinary Programs

- Aboriginal Studies (University College)
- African Studies (New College)
- American Studies
- Book and Media Studies (St. Michael's College)
- Canadian Studies (University College)
- Caribbean Studies (New College)
- Celtic Studies (St. Michael's College)
- Christianity and Culture (St. Michael's College)
- Cinema Studies (Innis College)
- Cognitive Science (University College)
- Criminology (Woodsworth College)
- Dr. David Chu Program in Asia Pacific Studies
- Drama (University College)
- Employment Relations (Woodsworth College)
- Equity Studies (New College)
- Ethics, Society and Law (Trinity College)
- Health Studies (University College)
- Human Biology (New College)
- Immunology (Trinity College)
- International Relations (Trinity College)
- Jewish Studies Program
- Latin American Studies Program
- Literary Studies (Victoria College)
- Medieval Studies (St. Michael's College)
- Paradigms and Archetypes (New College)
- Peace and Conflict Studies (University College)
- Renaissance Studies (Victoria College)
- Semiotics and Communication Theory (Victoria College)
- Sexual Diversity Studies (University College)
- South Asian Studies (New College)
- Trinity One (Trinity College)
- Urban Studies (Innis College)
- Vic One (Victoria College) Writing, Rhetoric and Critical Analysis (Innis College)
Appendix E: Informed Consent Letter for Interviews

Dear participant

My name is Pannel Chindalo; I am a doctoral student in the department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education at OISE/UT. My supervisor for this study is Dr. Nina Bascia. I am contacting you because you are a 3rd or 4th year in the Arts and Science program at the University of Toronto. This means that if you are a 3rd or 4th year undergraduate student at Victoria, St. Michael, Emmanuel or Trinity colleges, you can help me.

I am conducting a study about students’ understandings of the relationship between undergraduate education and the labour market. I am seeking to hear your views about your undergraduate education and the labour market. Your views will be used to broaden our understanding of university education, students and the labour market in a social, economic and knowledge changing society. The aim of this of this study is to capture students’ preparations, understandings and influences as they prepare to move from university to the labour market.

In order to complete this study I will need 20 volunteers for the interviews. I am asking you to participate in this project. The interview will take about 20 minutes. We could arrange for a face-to- interview or we could conduct the interview over the phone. Your participation will be voluntary. You may skip a question or abandon the study at anytime.

Please indicate below your participation preference.
(a) Please print your initials if you would like to participate in the study: ______
(b) Telephone option: Please print your initials if you would prefer phone interview: ______

Please provide your email address: ________________

Study details
Thank you for indicating an interest in participating in a research project that will examine undergraduate students’ standing of higher education and acquiring employable skills. I, Pannel Chindalo, will carry out all research as part of completing my doctoral studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. The following outlines the study
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itself and information about your participation. If you require any further information or explanation, please contact me at (416) 503-4714. Dr. Nina Bascia who supervises the study may be contacted at (416) 923-6641 Ex.2511.

This study will investigate 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students’ understanding of the relationship between higher education and their acquisition of employable skills. The study will employ students’ experiences and their individual agency in the process of their learning and acquiring skills. This study will examine student experiences in relation to higher education and how these experiences come to have bearings on their understandings and skills they acquire in preparing for the labour market. The aim of this study is to capture students’ preparations and influences through their experiences as they formulate their meaning of higher education and learn useful skills for employment. This study does not view the first-degree as the solution to finding meaningful employment as most economic and sociological studies do but rather question this belief in view of the contextual social, economic and knowledge changes.

For this reason I am inviting you to assist me by agreeing to participate in the study. Your role as one of the 20 participants will involve a face-to-face interview or the option of a phone interview about your higher education experiences and aspirations. The interview will take about 20 minutes to complete. As the interview proceeds, I may ask questions for clarification or further understanding. You will be free to either skip a question or abandon the study at any time.

It is the intention that each interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed to paper; you have the choice of declining to have the interview taped. You will be assigned a number that will correspond to your interviews and transcriptions. Your transcript will be e-mailed to you a week after the interview to read in order for you to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that could result. You’ll have to notify the researcher within two weeks after receiving your transcript if you intend to make changes to your transcript. The information obtained in the interview will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. The raw data will be shredded and burnt.

There are no external risks for participating in this study. There is no payment or compensation for your participation. Your participation is completely voluntary. In the analysis of the study number codes and pseudo names will be used to ensure confidentiality. As a participant you will be
contributing to a process of improving undergraduates’ preparations and strategizing for the labour market in a much more complex society. Finally, you are free to ask any questions about the research and your involvement with it. You may request a summary of the findings that will sent to you as an electronic file.

Pannel Chindalo                        Dr. Nina Bascia
PhD Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education

Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education

OISE/University of Toronto

Telephone: (416) 5034714

Email: pchindalo@osie.utoronto.ca

Research Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: ____________________________________ College: _____________________________

Signed: ____________________________ Date: ______________________________

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audiotaped: _____
Please initial if you would prefer a telephone interview: ________
Please initial if you would like to have a copy of the summary results sent to you: ______
Appendix F: E-mail Informed Survey Consent & Recruitment

Dear student

My name is Pannel Chindalo; I am a doctoral student in the department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education at OISE/UT. My supervisor for this study is Dr. Nina Bascia. I am contacting you because you are a 3rd or 4th year in the Arts and Science program at the University of Toronto. This means that if you are a 3rd or 4th year undergraduate student at Victoria, St. Michael, Emmanuel or Trinity colleges, you can help me.

I am conducting a study about students’ understandings of the relationship between undergraduate education and the labour market. I am seeking to hear your views about your undergraduate education and the labour market. Your views will be used to broaden our understanding of university education, students and the labour market in a social, economic and knowledge changing society. The aim of this of this study is to capture students’ preparations, understandings and influences as they prepare to move from university to the labour market.

In order to complete this study I will need about 400 participants to respond the survey questionnaire. I am asking you to participate in this study project. Your participation will be in the form of answering a survey questionnaire that will take about 20 minutes. The survey will be sent by email to you. You may also choose to take the survey over the phone. Your participation will be voluntary. You can skip a question or abandon the study at anytime.

Please indicate below if you would like a phone option:
(a) Please print your initials if you would like to take the survey over the phone: ______

Study Details…

Thank you for indicating an interest in participating in a research project that will examine undergraduate students’ standing of higher education and acquiring employable skills. I, Pannel Chindalo, will carry out all research as part of completing my doctoral studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. The following outlines the study itself and information about your participation. If you require any further information or explanation, please contact me at (416) 503-4714. Dr. Nina Bascia who supervises the study may be contacted at (416) 923-6641 Ex.2511.
This study will investigate 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} year undergraduate students’ understanding of the relationship between higher education and their acquisition of employable skills. The study will employ students’ experiences and their individual agency in the process of their learning and acquiring skills. This study will examine student experiences in relation to higher education and how these experiences come to have bearings on their understandings and skills they acquire in preparing for the labour market. The aim of this study is to capture students’ preparations and influences through their experiences as they formulate their meaning of higher education and learn useful skills for employment. This study does not view the first-degree as the solution to finding meaningful employment as most economic and sociological studies do but rather question this belief in view of the contextual social, economic and knowledge changes.

For this reason I am inviting you to assist me by agreeing to participate in the study. Your role will involve answering a questionnaire about your higher education experiences and aspirations. The questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to complete. Should you opt to take the survey by telephone, it will also take about 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your participation is completely voluntary. You will be free to either skip a question or abandon the study at any time.

The information obtained through survey will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. You will be assigned a number that will correspond to your survey questionnaire and response answer sheet. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, questionnaire responses) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. The raw data will be shredded and burnt.

There are no external risks for participating in this study. Number codes will be used instead of names to ensure confidentiality. Results of the study will be reported in percentages. There is no payment or compensation for participating in this study. You may request a copy of the findings that will be sent as an electronic file. As a participant you will be contributing to a process of improving undergraduates’ preparations and strategizing for the labour market in a much more complex society. Finally, you are free to ask any questions about the research and your involvement with it.

Pannel Chindalo

Dr. Nina Bascia
PhD Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education

Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education

OISE/University of Toronto

OISE/University of Toronto

Telephone: (416) 5034714

Telephone: (416) 923-6641 Ex.2511

Email: pchindalo@osie.utoronto.ca

Email: nbascia@oise.utoronto.ca

Research Consent

I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this study and give my consent to be a participant by completing and returning the questionnaire. Please find the attached questionnaire with this email.

Please initial if you would prefer a telephone response to the survey: ____________

Please initial if you would like to have a copy of the summary results sent to you: ______
Appendix G: Recruitment/Informed Consent for Career Counselors

Dear Student Counselor

My name is Pannel Chindalo; I am a doctoral student in the department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education at OISE/UT. My supervisor for this study is Dr. Nina Bascia. I am contacting you because you are a career counselor at the University of Toronto. My study will be investigating how 3rd or 4th year undergraduate students in the Arts and Science programs at the University of Toronto understand the relationship between undergraduate education and the labour market. The aim of this of this study is to capture students’ preparations, understandings and influences as they prepare to move from university to the labour market.

I am seeking to hear career counselors’ observations and views about how undergraduate students prepare themselves for the labour market. Your views as a counselor will be used to broaden our understanding of how students engage university education to prepare for the labour market in a social, economic and knowledge changing society. I am asking you to participate in this study project. Your participation will be in the form of a face-to-face interview for 30 minutes. Your participation will be voluntary.

You will be provided with more detailed information about the study before the interview. The study meets all the ethical requirements of the University of Toronto.

Please initial here if you would like to participate:________________

Please provide your email address if you initialed above:_____________________________________

Study Details
Thank you for indicating an interest in participating in a research project that will examine undergraduate students’ understanding of higher education and acquiring employable skills. The following outlines the study itself and information about your participation.

This study will investigate 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students’ understanding of the relationship between higher education and their acquisition of employable skills. The study will employ students’ experiences and their individual agency in the process of their learning and acquiring skills. This study will examine student experiences in relation to higher education and how these experiences come to have bearings on their understandings and skills they acquire in preparing for the labour market. The aim of this study is to capture students’ preparations and influences through their experiences as they formulate their meaning of higher education and learn useful skills for employment. As a career counselor your involvement with undergraduate students will help us understand some trends which undergraduate students experience in relation to education and preparing for the labour market.

For this reason I am inviting career counselors to assist me by agreeing to participate in the study. Your role will involve a face-to-face interview or the option of a phone interview about your experiences with undergraduate students. During the interview you will be asked questions about undergraduate students on career options, skills, change of discipline, habits on career planning and other influences that impact their education and career options. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. As the interview proceeds, I may ask questions for clarification or further understanding. There is no payment or compensation for your participation.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You will be free to either skip a question or abandon the study at any time. It is the intention that each interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed to paper; you have the choice of declining to have the interview taped. You will be assigned a number that will correspond to your interviews and transcriptions. Your transcript will be e-mailed to you to read in order for you to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that could result. You will have two weeks to notify the researcher of any corrections you desire to make on your transcript. The information obtained in the interview will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. The raw data will be shredded and burnt.
You may request a copy of the findings that will be sent to you in an electronic file.

There are no external risks for participating in this study. As a participant you will be contributing to a process of improving undergraduates’ preparations and strategizing for the labour market in a much more complex society. Finally, you are free to ask any questions about the research and your involvement with it and may request a summary of the findings of the study.

Pannel Chindalo
PhD Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone: (416) 5034714
Email: pchindalo@osie.utoronto.ca

Dr. Nina Bascia
Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone: (416) 923-6641 Ex.2511
Email: nbascia@oise.utoronto.ca

Research Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: ________________________________________Career Center_________________________

Signed: ___________________________ Date: __________________________

Please initial if you would prefer a telephone interview: ______

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audiotaped: _____

Please initial if you would like to have a copy of the summary results sent to you: ______
Appendix H: Interview Questions for Career Counselors

1. Could you talk about your experiences with undergraduate students and the kind of help they seek from your office?

2. In your experiences as a counselor what do you see to be the foremost need of undergraduates who come to your office?

3. What kinds of specific skills do most undergraduate students seek from your office?

4. How would you describe the success of the services you offer to undergraduate students?
Appendix I Letter Requesting Career Center Director Consent

March 17, 2006

University of Toronto
Career Center Director
_______College
Toronto, Ontario

Dear …

I am a graduate student in the Theory & Policy Studies in Education Department at OISE/UT and am currently planning a research project that will involve 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students in the Arts and Science programs at the University of Toronto. In order to begin the project, I require to interview career counselors about the work they do to help undergraduate students prepare for the labour market.

This study will investigate 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students’ understanding of the relationship between higher education and their acquisition of employable skills. The study will employ students’ experiences and their individual agency in the process of their learning and acquiring skills. This study will examine student experiences in relation to higher education and how these experiences come to have bearings on their understandings and skills they acquire in preparing for the labour market. The aim of this study is to capture students’ preparations and influences through their experiences as they formulate their meaning of higher education and learn useful skills for employment. A minimum of between 200- 400 students will participate in this study. In addition, a balance between male and female students will be sought.

The study involves the use of a survey questionnaire and interviews in which participants will be asked about their university experiences, perceptions, skills and preparations associated with what they intend to on the labour market. Subjects will be well informed about the nature of the study and their participation, including the assurance that they may withdraw at any time. In addition, they may request that any information, whether in written form or audiotape, be eliminated from the project.
Participants will at no time be judged or evaluated, and will at no time be at risk of harm. Participants may request a summary of the findings that will be sent to them as an electronic file.

The information gathered from both questionnaires and interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. All information will be reported in such a way that individual students and colleges cannot be identified. All data collected will be used for the purposes of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

If you agree, please sign the letter below and return it to me in the envelope provided. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (416) 503-4714 or at pchindalo@oise.utoronto.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Nina Bascia at (416) 923-6641 ext.2511. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

*Pannel Chindalo*
Appendix J: Letter Requesting Professor’s Consent

March 17, 2006

University of Toronto
_______College
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Professor:

I am a graduate student in the Theory & Policy Studies in Education Department at OISE/UT and am currently planning a research project that will involve 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students in the Arts and Science programs at the University of Toronto. In order to begin the project, I require your consent to permit me to come to your class and ask 3rd and 4th year students to help me by volunteering their participation in study. I will take five minutes to introduce my study and then pass-out a blank sheet of paper where students who wish to volunteer will print their contact information, preferably their email addresses and mailing addresses. I will then collect this contact information and leave.

This study will investigate 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students’ understanding of the relationship between higher education and their acquisition of employable skills. The study will employ students’ experiences and their individual agency in the process of their learning and acquiring skills. This study will examine student experiences in relation to higher education and how these experiences come to have bearings on their understandings and skills they acquire in preparing for the labour market. The aim of this study is to capture students’ preparations and influences through their experiences as they formulate their meaning of higher education and learn useful skills for employment. A minimum of between 200- 400 students will participate by answering the survey questionnaire and 15 -20 students will participant in the individual interviews. In addition, a balance between male and female students will be sought.

The study involves the use of a survey questionnaire and interviews in which participants will be asked about their university experiences, perceptions, skills and preparations associated with what
they intend to on the labour market. Subjects will be well informed about the nature of the study and their participation, including the assurance that they may withdraw at any time. In addition, they may request that any information, whether in written form or audiotape, be eliminated from the project. Participants will at no time be judged or evaluated, and will at no time be at risk of harm. Participants may request a summary of the findings that will be sent to them as an electronic file.

The information gathered from both questionnaires and interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. All information will be reported in such a way that individual students and colleges cannot be identified. All data collected will be used for the purposes of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

If you agree, please sign the letter below and return it to me in the envelope provided. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (416) 5034714 or at pchindalo@oise.utoronto.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Nina Bascia at (416) 923-6641 ext.2511. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Pannel Chindalo