

The Perceptions of Sixteen Professors
on Preferential Admission in Four Professional Schools at
the University of Manitoba:
An Exploratory Study

A Thesis
presented to the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Education
in
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Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1987

Michal Gill, 1987

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THE PERCEPTIONS OF SIXTEEN PROFESSORS
ON PREFERENTIAL ADMISSION IN FOUR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

BY

MICHAL GILL

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This was an exploratory study arising out of an interest in understanding the perception and attitude of the academic community toward preferential admission to professional schools.

Sixteen professors from four professional schools were interviewed to ascertain the views that they held about special admission to their faculty. The study also reported on the program completion rate of students admitted under the special admission category.

The conclusion of this study indicates that the interviewees were familiar with the special admission procedures and practices in their respective faculties. The respondents, in general, expressed positive attitudes toward the existence of a special admission category. However, these positive attitudes have not led to a proportionate increase in the number of students admitted to the professional schools under the special admission category.

An analysis of the academic achievement of beneficiaries under the special admission category revealed that the completion rate among the special students was only slightly lower than that of the regular students.

There was a general agreement among all interviewees that entrance tests serve as a major barrier for minorities and socially disadvantaged groups in gaining admission to professional schools. It was learned that a growing realization exists in the academic community that changes in the admission process are necessary in order to assess properly and fairly minority and socially disadvantaged applicants.

The results of this research indicate that the special admitted student require more intensive counselling and better tutorial assistance. Summer programs could be provided to give remedial and enrichment courses before the academic year begins.

Some of the more significant conclusions drawn from the research findings are that the professional schools should aim toward increasing accessibility for minorities and socially disadvantaged student so that all segments of the population will be represented among the professional class.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introductory Statement

In the years since World War II, a major transformation of Canada's higher education system has taken place. The most visible components of this transformation were the establishment of a large number of new institutions and the rapid growth and expansion of older ones. Enrollments in almost all sectors of post-secondary education rose dramatically, and programs intended to equalize access to higher education were initiated and expanded (Von Stein, 1984).

A number of regional and global developments precipitated this transformation of higher education in Canada. The industrial and research boom and the resulting influx of population in the 1950s generated more and more demand for higher education. By the mid 1960s, enrollment pressure increased even more, as the "baby boom" generation matured. In addition, the proportion of young people participating in higher education had increased dramatically as a result of concern with technological development and greater recognition of the relationship between higher education and rising standards of living and production. In consequence of this new attitude, governments and the public in general became much more heavily involved in financing higher education. "Not surprisingly, they showed increasing interest in the coordination and control of institutions of higher education" (Sheffield, 1986).

Government involvement in higher education increased during the 1960s, not only as a consequence of the rapid expansion of the previous

period, but also in response to the growing concern for social equality throughout North America (Von Stein, 1984). There was concern at the time that all individuals should have equal access to higher education in order to enable them to develop to their fullest potential.

Governments committed themselves to support the expansion, decentralization, and diversification of all types of higher education, and to develop the necessary mechanisms of coordinating services in order to achieve democratic social goals with maximum effectiveness (Berghofer and Vladicka, 1980).

As Sheffield (1982) points out, the 1960s were still years of expansion, the 1970s were a period of consolidation, and steadily increasing government involvement with and coordination of what has, in practically all provinces, clearly become systems of higher education. The 1980s have seen an emphasis upon financial retrenchment and constraint which threaten some of the gains in increased opportunities for higher learning that have been made in the past two decades. Robert Pike in Accessibility to Postsecondary Education in Canada (1986) voiced the fear that "the access doors to the university are closing for many individuals who would previously have been admitted". Among those excluded are likely to be found "disproportionately large numbers of individuals from lower class and disadvantaged ethnic minority backgrounds: precisely those groups still underrepresented in the Canadian university system" (p. viii).

As Anisef et al. point out (1986, p. 196), efforts to study accessibility to postsecondary education in Manitoba have been modest. However, Manitoba universities have shown a commitment to allow adults relatively ready access to higher education opportunities.

Professional faculties at the University of Manitoba have created special admission categories to their respective faculties. It can also be seen that the funding mechanism that has developed in Manitoba reflects the complex and diverse nature of the higher education system which it supports. Funding procedures aim to control overall government spending on post-secondary education while encouraging development of services for which particular demand exists, or which can achieve government social goals (Von Stein, 1984). Providing access to educational opportunity is a critical component of these social goals and will likely remain a highly politicized aspect of higher education in Manitoba.

Purpose of the Study

This study had several purposes. It intended to explore and describe the perceptions of sixteen professors from four professional faculties at the University of Manitoba on three issues: general attitude towards special admission to their respective faculties, the right of a federal or provincial government to impose special admission procedures on a professional faculty, and the effect of special admission categories on their respective faculty. The study also intended to report on the program completion rate of students admitted under the special admission category. The four professional faculties from which professors were interviewed were the School of Social Work, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Medicine.

The purposes determined the following research questions:

1. What are the special admission procedures and practices in the School of Social Work, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Manitoba and are the interviewees familiar with them?

2. What is the attitude of the professors interviewed towards special admission to their respective faculties?

3. What is the general opinion of the interviewees on the right of a federal or provincial government to impose special admission procedures on a professional faculty?

4. What are the perceived effects of special admission categories on the academic standards of the respective faculty?

5. What is the program completion rate of students admitted under the special admission category?

Significance of the Study

The present study has significance from both theoretical and practical perspectives. It has theoretical significance for two reasons. First, it has endeavored to explore the general attitudes of some members of four professional faculties at the University of Manitoba toward special admissions to their respective faculties. This is significant because it explores the issues in a Canadian setting, whereas most of the previous studies and the literature deal primarily with the American experience. Second, the present study, by using the technique of semi-structured interviews to gain information, has departed from the more commonly used survey procedures. Educators, administrators and other persons or groups who are interested in access

to higher education and employment opportunity for all citizens should find value in this research. The findings of this research could play a role in reinforcing or modifying current programs.

Limitations

This study has several apparent limitations. The first limitation is in relation to the relatively small sample size involved. The expressed attitudes of sixteen professors may not necessarily reflect the attitudes of other professors at the University of Manitoba. Hence, the small number of faculty members involved in this study imposes restrictions on drawing conclusions relating to the opinions of academic staff towards special admissions to their respective faculties.

The second major limitation concerns the semi-structured interview itself as a means of gaining information. Since the interviewer was the only individual involved in collecting data, there is the possibility of her subjective involvement in the interaction. In other words, either consciously or unconsciously, the interviewer may have verbally prompted the subjects into providing certain "desired" information. Furthermore, in the analysis of interview transcripts, the researcher may have imposed her interpretations on statements made, thereby biasing their accounts (Katzner, Cook, & Cruch, 1982, p. 102). Therefore, there are several aspects of the interview which may reduce the credibility of information gained from it. Clearly, then, obvious research limitations are involved. Very careful analysis of interview transcripts and frequent perception checks, however, were measures taken to maintain credibility.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions have been accepted.

Special Admission refers to the allocation of places for those applicants who would not be competitive in the academic category.

Regular Student refers to those students who gain admission to the professional faculties based upon their academic record and/or entrance examination.

Special Student refers to students who are not competitive in the academic category. The professional schools feel that the academic record of these students is not a true reflection of the applicant's intellectual merit. Factors that are taken into consideration in the selection of those applicants include: societal, educational and economic obstacles encountered by the person during the course of his/her pre-university studies.

Academic Achievement refers to the students' completion rate once admitted into the professional school.

Opinion refers to any evaluative or judgmental statement which is based on the person's belief system, and is not supported by numerical values.

The University of Manitoba Access Program. The University of Manitoba Access Program is geared to provide university training to residents of Northern Manitoba. Preference is given to those

persons of low income who lack opportunity for further study, and those who are of Native ancestry.

The Saskatoon Program. The University of Saskatchewan provides a special pre-law program for native people, who wish to begin the study of law. The program objective is to familiarize students with the teaching methods, the kinds of assignments and the pressures of law school.

Methodology

This section describes the methods and procedure that have been used for gaining an understanding of the investigated problem.

Since the major purpose of the study was an exploration of the attitudes of sixteen professors, the most appropriate research strategy was deemed to be the qualitative approach. The author is aware that the expression "qualitative approach" is fraught with multiple meanings and ambiguity. For the purposes of this study, the researcher in her search for understanding did not reduce the pages upon pages of narration and other data to numerical symbols. She tried to analyze it "with all its richness as closely as possible to the form in which it was recorded and transcribed" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 28).

The approach used attempted to capture what people had to say about their own experiences, in their own setting, using their own words. The initial focus of the research was an understanding of the phenomenon without imposing predetermined expectations on the research setting.

The researcher attempted to establish "truth value" (internal validity in "scientific" terms) by testing the credibility of her

findings and interpretations with the information from which data were drawn. As Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 110) emphasize, this process of going to sources is the backbone of satisfying the truth-value criterion.

It must also be stated that the researcher was not concerned with developing context-free generalizations of enduring truth value. Rather, it was attempted to generate working hypotheses rooted in the natural context that spawned them. It was assumed that generalizations about human behaviors are not possible because generalizations are of necessity context-free propositions. Phenomena, on the other hand, are intuitively and intrinsically connected with the natural context in which they occur. Consequently, Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest replacing "generalizability" with the idea of "fittingness" (p. 118) as the key concept.

Furthermore, the qualitative approach is often criticized on the grounds that it is virtually impossible to replicate a descriptive study of a phenomenon. Barritt et al. (1983) note, however, that "it is hard to redo any kind of study when humans are involved because conditions are never entirely replicable, and it is easier to recreate the appearance of similarity in a controlled experiment" (p. 124). Guba and Lincoln (1981) propose the concept of "auditability" instead of "reliability". They explain that auditability simply means that the role of one investigator could be tested for consistency or "audited" by a second investigator, who, after examining the data of the first, could conclude, "Yes, given that perspective and those data, I would probably have reached the same conclusion" (p. 124).

The author also acknowledges her own prejudiced viewpoint in an attempt to minimize the effect of such biases on the data. It should be stressed, however, that biases are universal and cannot be totally eliminated from any inquiry. The author guarded against her own biases by doing "member checks" and recording detailed fieldnotes which include reflections on her own opinions, preconceived ideas, prejudice, and their potential effect on the data.

Data Collection Techniques

Using appropriate questions as guides, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with sixteen professors. Since it was not feasible to interview a large sample of the population of interest, the concept of "key informants", explained by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) was adopted. Particular informants were chosen "because they were believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 66). Of the sixteen professors, four were from the School of Social Work, four from the Faculty of Law, four from the Faculty of Education (two from the Winnipeg Education Centre and two faculty-based professors), and four professors from the Faculty of Medicine.

The deans of these four faculties were informed of the nature of the research, their permission to contact faculty members was received, and they were requested to suggest names of faculty members who were perceived to be "key informants" with a minimum of five years teaching experience in the faculty.

Of those suggested, the first four professors in each faculty who agreed to be interviewed were chosen. These professors were contacted

by telephone before the interviews and appointments were set up at their convenience. The interviews were conducted in the professors' offices. All participants agreed to have the interviews tape recorded and transcripts were made of the recorded sessions. The duration of the interviews ranged from sixty minutes to ninety minutes. During follow-up telephone conversation, sketchy notes were taken by the interviewer during the conversation and more detailed notes were completed immediately after the telephone conversation.

No deceptions were employed and all the informants participating in the study were advised of the exact nature and purpose of the research project. Participants were also informed that names would not be used in the report and that what was said in the interview would be treated confidentially.

The following questions were used as guides for the interviews:

1. Could you please tell me what the special admission procedures to your faculty are?
2. In your opinion, are they appropriate in the university setting and in particular in a professional school?
3. Do you think the federal and/or provincial government has a right (legal or social) to impose special admission procedures on professional schools? Would you please elaborate on this point?
4. What is your perception of the effect of special admission procedures on the academic standards in your faculty?

Semi-structured interviews were employed because they enabled the researcher to focus the interview, yet permitted the interviewee to define the situation. Although the interviewer approached the

interviewee with a certain set of questions to be answered, the nature of the interviews was flexible, allowing for some probing in questions and variation in responses. This provided a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and enabled the interviewer to uncover a range of feelings and perceptions on the issue (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

The data which emerged from these semi-structured interviews were in the form of descriptions and dialogue. No attempt was made to determine the validity of the expressed attitudes, or the reasons why these attitudes were held.

Analysis of Data

The analysis of data was undertaken on two levels. The first level involved the analysis of the individual interviews. The purpose here was to uncover the general attitude and opinion of the interviewee toward the special admission procedures used in her/his faculty, toward a government's right to impose special admission categories on professional schools, and the perceived effect of special admission on the academic standards of the faculty. The data for each faculty were then clustered and summarized into descriptive categories derived from the four research questions. The data analysis involved the use of qualitative methods as described by Glazer and Strauss (1967) and Miles and Huberman (1984).

The second level of analysis was an explanatory one. It was intended to provide meaning and draw relationships. The researcher looked for relationships between the academic community's attitude toward special admission and the achievement of the special students.

The study also involved an examination of relevant documents. Documents related to admission requirements and procedures used by the School of Social Work, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Medicine were examined. Where available, documents related to the "completion rate" of specially admitted students in these four faculties were also examined.

Organization of the Study

This thesis was organized according to the following format.

Chapter 1 outlines the purpose of the study, describes its significance, states the limitations, defines the terms used, and describes the research methodology.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature, with respect to the investigated problem. Particular attention has been given to the expressed attitudes by academics toward the special admission procedures.

Chapter 3 presents and analyzes the data. This chapter also includes numerical data on the completion rate of the special students.

Chapter 4 consists of a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations that resulted from this work.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND RELEVANT RESEARCH

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the literature and research related to preferential admission in general, and in professional schools in particular. The chapter will consist of a brief description of affirmative action, a critical assessment by the academic community on the factors influencing accessibility to higher education in general and in the Canadian society in particular. The effectiveness and credibility of entrance tests will be discussed. A review of the academic community's position and opinions toward the admission criteria used by professional schools and toward affirmative action in higher education will conclude the chapter.

Initiated in the United States and transported into Canada, affirmative action comprises a collection of programs intended to reduce the discrimination suffered by various ethnic groups, races, sexes, and other minorities. These programs attempt to counterbalance the effect of previous discrimination by providing compensation for inequalities that have resulted from such practices. The concept of affirmative action is relatively new, originating in the 1960s with the American government's initiative to end discrimination in employment. In March of 1961, President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925, which established the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. This Committee was directed to survey the Federal Government's employment practices and recommend "additional affirmative steps" to

implement the policy of non-discrimination in employment. The Order also directed employers in the private sector, and universities having contracts with the Federal Government, to extend this policy by taking "affirmative action--to ensure that applicants are employed and that employees are treated during employment without regard to their race, creed, colour, or national origin".

Responsibility for the implementation of non-discriminatory policy in the United States has shifted in the decades since 1961, and the scope of the policy has expanded. Affirmative action as a concept became entrenched in law with the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. It has been advanced with the issuing of Executive Order 11375, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, and Executive Order 11478, which directed the establishment of an affirmative action program within the Federal Civil Service. Shortly afterward, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission were created. The latter agency was responsible for the enforcement of the Civil Rights Act and for ensuring that all employers complied with the law through conciliation. The former office was established to monitor and ensure compliance on the part of the government itself, that is, for all federal agencies, departments, contractors, and sub-contractors. After its establishment in 1965, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance functioned to formulate guidelines and to set quotas and timetables for the achievement of a racially and sexually balanced civil service. In the American experience, affirmative action is a policy that has greatly and deeply affected the character of employment and hiring practices in both

the private and public sectors of the economy.

In contrast, adoption of affirmative action policies by both public and private sector employers in Canada has been largely a voluntary matter. The Federal Government established an equal employment opportunity program for female and minority employees within its jurisdiction in 1971. Although the programs vary, there are common characteristics. Rather than an imposed quota, flexible goals and timetables were established by the organization itself as the means to evaluate program success. Affirmative action in Canada is viewed as a human rights issue. Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states

- (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups, including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical ability.

The margin notes to Section 15(2) use the term "affirmative action". The Canadian Human Rights Act also provides for the establishment of special action programs. A second major difference between the policies in Canada and the United States has roots that are both historical and ideological. The U.S. constitution places a primary emphasis on the rights of the individual and the protection of those rights in the face of collective and state infringement. By comparison, Canada is a nation founded upon the recognition of the special or unique

rights of certain groups. Hence, within the British North America Act, provision was made for the religious right of the French in Canada to separate schools. The same Act carefully defined certain collective language rights in the government of Canada and Quebec. Indeed, Canadian constitutional history is largely the story of the evolutionary entrenchment of collective rights. The initiation of policies on affirmative action in Canada is to be traced to the early 1960s. In 1962 the Royal Commission on Government Organization noted that French Canadians did not hold jobs in the federal civil service in proportion to their numbers and that they were concentrated in the lower levels of the pay scale. By the end of the 1960s, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism issued a report that articulated the basic principles of affirmative action in Canada.

An official, formal, and general policy on affirmative action was initiated by the Government of Canada in 1975. In November of that year, an Affirmative Action Secretariat was established and in 1976 a Federal Contracts Programme was initiated. The latter called for employers with federal contracts of over \$200,000 voluntarily to establish affirmative action programmes. In July 1977, section 15 of the Canadian Human Rights Act was passed, thereby ensuring the legality of such programmes and providing the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal with the power to order remedial action where discriminatory practices were found.

In 1978 the federal government announced a series of affirmative action plans intended to increase the participation of aboriginal people, women, and the physically disabled in the civil service.

Between 1978 and 1982, both the Treasury Board and the Secretariat of State established pilot projects aimed at eliminating discriminatory barriers in their search and selection procedures. It was not, however, until 1983 that a policy of affirmative action was developed and set in place for the civil service as a whole. The group specified by this new general policy are women, native peoples, the physically disabled, and visible minorities. The policy is administered by the Directorate on Affirmative Action under the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission. The Directorate functions as a resource centre for the public service which must now implement affirmative action programs and for private sector companies interested in establishing such programs.

Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect on April 19, 1985 and, like the Canadian Human Rights Act before it, established the legality of affirmative action policies by removing the danger of a charge of reverse discrimination. Provincial human rights legislation also contains provisions for affirmative action, so the relevance of affirmative action to Canadian society is no longer a matter for debate. Although solidly entrenched in law, acceptance of it as a wide corporate human resource policy is still in the developmental stage.

All task forces on affirmative action in Canada were oriented around the labour force. The terms "affirmative action" and/or "special admission category" in Canadian universities have only become incorporated in the admission process relatively recently. Therefore, there are not many Canadian studies that are dealing with the topic of "special admission categories" and the special student population. As a

result, it was necessary to refer to and include American sources in the literature review that dealt with the investigated topic. Special admission programs deal with the concept of equal opportunity and the concept of accessibility. Hence, the American studies cited are relevant to the Canadian experience because these studies deal with similar universal concepts.

Factors Influencing Accessibility to Higher Education

In interpreting the contemporary debate concerning admissions criteria, it is well to keep in mind the observation made by Leslie and Morrison (1974) who state that "social systems survive or perish to the extent that they remain relevant to the collective they serve. Collective and social needs change and social institutions must change as well if they are to survive". Universities, they argue, must also become more flexible and progressive in order to serve a changing student population and changing society needs.

The use of traditional admission criteria to professional schools has met with success and failures. The primary educational failure was its inability to provide adequate professional training to significant number of citizens identified as ethnic or racial minorities. Many studies demonstrated that there are a number of factors influencing and determining accessibility to higher education.

Hutchins (1948), Roberts (1970) have researched and documented evidence that persons with sufficient affluence do not suffer from the lack of opportunity to attend professional schools. Lesser (1964) and others have documented the variables influencing earning a college

education. Those students whose parents attended college have largely been successful in earning advanced education themselves. A disproportionate number of ethnic minorities and socially disadvantaged groups have consistently been denied equal access to higher education.

In Is the Die Cast? Anisef et al. (1980) examined the link between education and work in Ontario as well as the accessibility to post-secondary education of various social groups. One of the findings was that proportionately more respondents who select academic programs come from higher social economic backgrounds and the more urban areas.

In a policy statement on student and student access, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) documented significant differences in university participation rates by socio-economic status, urban origins, ethnicity, language group and minority groups. They stated:

Many societal and economic factors contribute to the underrepresentation of certain groups in Ontario's universities. In most cases, the decision to attend or not attend university is made long before application forms are distributed to Grade 13 students. High school "streaming" decisions are made in Grade 9. Parental expectations and other environmental factors operate from birth. Thus, if it is desirable to promote fairer, or more representative, access to universities, plans must be designed to be effective in the long as well as the short run (1982, p. 4).

In a national study, conducted in 1965, of 145,817 Canadian secondary school students and 7884 teachers in 373 schools, Breton (1972) analysed the impact of psychological and sociological factors on career expectations and plans. The major finding of this study was that adolescents' career intentions and decisions depend upon a set of interrelated factors: social origin, social economic status of the

family, and geographical location.

A study conducted by Brown and Poiker (1982) focussed on the personal, social, economic, and geographical characteristics of 15,500 British Columbia Grade 12 students. The study showed that among those who preferred university studies, most came from high income, highly educated and professional families, while those who regarded colleges as a more realistic choice tended to come from middle income families whose parents were more diverse in their educational and occupational background. Those students from families whose parents ranked low in income, education, and occupational position tended not to continue with their education.

In 1978, a joint research project of the Department of Education and the Department of Labour and Manpower in Manitoba was implemented. The study revealed that demographic and social economic patterns influenced the choice of education. Students from high socio-economic status (SES) were more likely to participate in postsecondary education than students from the medium or low SES levels. High SES students tended to enroll in universities while greater proportions of low and medium SES students enrolled in community colleges and other post secondary non-university institutions (cited in Anisef et al., 1985, p. 198).

A study conducted by Stephen and Lyons (1984) sought to identify factors which influenced the performance of students enrolled in post secondary programs, particularly the urban and rural background of students. Urban students reported somewhat higher levels of parental education than their counterparts from rural areas. The researchers

discovered that rural students have to make greater adjustments to different living conditions and lifestyles than do urban students.

In 1961, the Canadian Union of Students, in a report of a national survey of students at universities, found that in Ontario half of the students were from the 15 percent of families who reported the highest income levels (Hatton, 1983). More recent studies carried out by Carleton University Students' Association (1976 & 1979), University of Western Ontario Student Council (1976 & 1979), University of Waterloo Student Federation (1980) and McMaster University Student Union (1982) showed that little has changed. These studies indicated that students tend to come more from upper class families. The relatively elite composition of universities, especially at the graduate level, was revealed in a recent analysis of the 1982 Ontario Graduate Survey, sponsored by the Ministry of Education/Ministry of Colleges and Universities. The result of the survey shows a significantly greater proportion of graduate/ professional than undergraduate degree holders come from families whose parents have higher levels of education (cited in Anisef et al., 1985, p. 99).

The Bovey Commission on Post-Secondary Education in Ontario (1984), and the Macdonald Commission (1985) also argued in their reports that high school performance and admission to a university is not solely a function of a person's academic record or score on a set of external exams or standardized tests. Many studies, both commissions argued, have documented that grades in high school and university are affected by a number of factors such as parents' incomes, education and occupation, home environment, ethnicity, language used in the home, age,

and sex. Jencks (1968) listed four main factors that are barriers to higher education: money, geography, race and environment." These factors, according to Jencks, almost exclusively tend to deny ethnic minorities and socially disadvantaged persons an equal opportunity for higher education. The important point Jencks argues is to realize that these factors are all tied closely to the social-economic cultural factor which provides upper and middle class students the facility with which to follow through on plans to prepare for and enter the professional schools. Many other researchers demonstrated in their studies that students' educational aspirations are largely a product of their socio-economic background (Buttrich, 1977; Crysdale, 1975; Clark et al., 1969; Gilbert & McRobert, 1977; Porter et al. 1979; Aniset et al., 1972).

In The Vertical Mosaic (1965), Porter analysed the power and stratification system of Canadian society. He argued that in industrial societies, school attainment becomes an increasingly important resource for both the individual and society. The forces of industrialization result in demand for technically qualified manpower and pressure is developed to transform the educational system. Democratic ideals, Porter argued, require that an individual's occupational choice be based on abilities and interest. Porter pointed out that, in fact, the Canadian class structure militates against equality of educational opportunities for individuals possessing certain social qualities.

In his book Colleges Today and Tomorrow, Lewis Mayhew (1969) cites court decisions, civil rights, legislation, protests and other factors which provided greater opportunities for minorities to gain higher

education. He states that only few universities have exerted honest efforts to increase the proportion of minority students. As gross inequalities continue to persist, William (1976) argues various categories of ethnic minority groups and lower social-economic groups bear the brunt of an uneven distribution of educational resources. In many instances, minority group members encounter interpersonal and organizational obstacles to change. The Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society in its Equality Now! (1984) report identified some of these areas:

It is important for postsecondary institutions to examine the ways in which they respond to visible minority students whose culture may be different and who may be more mature. Research suggests they are faced with a number of obstacles to participation, including discrimination, non-acceptance, low expectation by teachers, and lack of respect for and recognition of the learners' past experience. Postsecondary institutions need to identify recruitment procedures which encourage more visible minorities to take advantage of their programs (p. 133).

Burke (1984) has pointed out that "there are usually no special barriers to initial entry to elementary school, but subsequent entry to secondary and post secondary institutions poses problems for cultural minorities" (p. 8). A study of the student population at McMaster University revealed that although there were more than 15,000 Native Indians living in the area, none was identified in the university enrollment (Hatton, 1983). The Report of the Task Force on Native Students (1978) examined the representation of Native students at the University of Alberta and found that in the fall of 1977 only 47 Native students were enrolled at the University of Alberta. Over half were enrolled in Education with the next highest percentage in Arts. Few gains have been made in other

areas (cited in Anisef et al., 1985, p. 174). A study conducted by the Saskatchewan Department of Education (1981) on rural education concluded that "the continued underachievement of Native/Indian students represents the clearest example of inequality of education opportunity" (p. 44).

The Commission on Post-Secondary Education in Toronto (COPSEO) final report The Learning Society (1972) argued that for an individual to succeed, he/she must have access to appropriate educational services throughout his/her life and not just after high school. The Commission suggested that there should be a more open and flexible relationship between post-secondary education and employment possibilities. This is necessary since accessibility to post-secondary education and its linkage to careers, particularly professional careers, is an important aspect in the decision making process of students who plan to pursue post-secondary education. Cloutier et al. (1983) analyzed the admission policies and access rate to Quebec universities. The study strongly attacks the belief that the educational system contributes to equalizing the conditions of different individuals and social groups. The authors argue that the acquisition of technical and scientific expertise alone is not sufficient to achieve high social status. The authors maintain that the universities, and above all the professional faculties and professional associations, sensitive to the interests of the existing "status groups", have been raising their admission standards since the turn of the century. The authors' main hypotheses are as follows: admission standards in Quebec universities will be particularly restrictive in that they give access to the most desirable cultural

market. The normative model which prevails in the admission process is based on the prototype of a young man who has not experienced any interruption in his studies, who possesses the cultural skills of the upper class, and who has proven himself academically in the field applied for. The new groups--women, adults, young people from lower class backgrounds--will have access to the culturally least desirable markets unless their performance is truly exceptional (cited in Anisef et al., 1985, p. 146). A part of the present controversy regarding admissions criteria is based upon meritocratic concepts. Proponents of meritocracy, such as Schaefer (1979), Roberts (1982), Glazer (1975), presume that advancement in our social system is based purely on merit. Consequently only those objectives or cognitive measures, such as entrance exams and grade point average, which differentiate individual qualities should be utilized to determine merit.

People like Manning (1977) and Evans (1977) agree that some cognitive measures should be employed in the decision making process, but they steadfastly maintain that such measures are not the sole determinants of and should not be exclusive criteria employed in the decisions affecting admissions. The rationale for their claim lies in data which seem to show that strict or rigid adherence to cognitive or traditional criteria results in discrimination against minority and socially disadvantaged students and reduces their proportion of acceptance in graduate and professional schools to insignificant levels.

Bias in Entrance Tests

The underrepresentation of certain groups in the professional schools has led many educators to reevaluate the traditional admissions process in order to identify the major barriers and to determine how these barriers might be removed. The growing recognition that entrance tests serve as the major barriers for minorities and socially disadvantaged groups added further support for change. Evan (1977) argues that because minorities and socially disadvantaged students generally tend to score lower than white middle class students on the Law School Admission and the Medical College Admission Test, they have been blocked at disproportionate rates from attending the professional schools. Critics such as Faia (1969) and Manning (1976) maintain that those tests have a built in cultural bias that accounts for the lower scores of some groups. American Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas also questioned the admission tests ability to measure minority qualification for professional study.

These minorities have cultural backgrounds that are vastly different from the dominant Caucasian. Many Eskimos, American Indians, Pilipinos, Chicanos, Asian Indians and Africans come from such disparate backgrounds that a test sensitively tuned for most applicants would be wide of the mark for many minorities . . . In so far as LSAT reflect the dimensions and orientation of the Organization they do a disservice to minorities (cited in Riedman, 1978, p. 61).

A task force report on the MCAT by the Association of American Medical Colleges observed that "the verbal and general information sections of the current MCAT have potential for unfair bias against many applicants particularly socially deprived students and students from many racial

and ethnic minority groups" (1973, p. 14). Another significant study concerning the use of non traditional criteria for selection and admission in professional schools was conducted by Doris Evans (1977). She observed that students from minority groups perform less well than other students with respect to certain objective criteria such as the medical school admissions test and the college grade point average. Evans attributed the weak performance to a host of factors, particularly deprivation in academic preparation--a factor in the backgrounds of many minority student candidates which extends from elementary school through college--and extreme financial hardship--a factor which requires from these students to work many hours per week while in college.

Still another criticism of testing asserts that there are aptitudes in minority groups that are not tapped by the traditional test content. It is not that minorities are deficient Flaughner (1969) argues, rather, they are different and their different aptitudes need to be recognized in the educational system, even if the system has to be changed to permit this. In other words, what Flaughner says is that tests are predictive of success as the educational process now exists; however, it is imperative that the educational process be changed to take account of those abilities which now exist in minority groups members but are not being utilized in educational processes. In a major review of the literature dealing with biases in testing practices, Flaughner (1970) identified three possible sources of unfairness in tests and in testing. According to Flaughner:

the first and by far the most commonly referred to is that of the test content. There is a widely held belief that the kinds of tests, or the kinds of questions asked within the test, are biased against minority groups, causing them to perform poorly in ways that are not valid. Second, the test program itself may be conducted in such a way that the result is discriminatory. For example, information essential to registering for and taking the test may not be disseminated in a form that makes it available to minority groups, or conditions may be allowed to exist in the test administration itself which are intimidating. Third, discriminatory practices may exist in the use to which test results are put, such as requiring high verbal test scores to qualify for a job which in fact does not depend upon verbal skills, or requiring certain aptitude levels for graduation from a program rather than using the aptitude measure to select or predict success upon entering (p. 6).

Concerning the atmosphere in which objective examinations are conducted, Katz (1970) studying Negro college students, has found interaction of environmental influences on a series of cognitive tasks. By using both black and white test administrators, and in addition manipulating the information given to the examinees concerning the comparison groups against which they were competing, Katz has been able to show that performance changes systematically as a function of these variables. Katz's results show that the presence of white test administrators reduces the performance of the black examinees while the use of a black administrator yields better test performance among the black examinees. Katz has also been able to show that apparently other variables, such as past history of successful competition on the part of the examinee, also will influence the success in a given test situation and will alter the test performance.

Many other writers argue that apart from the test content itself, the actual examination procedure may have an unfair influence on

minority group performance. Sattler (1970) notes the paucity of research on the influence of racial factors, but states that

Numerous writers have either concluded or suggested that this variable may play an important role in the intelligence test situation (Anastasi, 1959; Journal of Social Issues, 1964; Pettigrew, 1964). These writers have suggested that racial examiner-examinee differences, primarily between white examiners and minority examinees, may lead to such examinee behaviors as fear and suspicion, verbal constriction, strained and unnatural reactions, the assuming of a facade of stupidity in order to avoid appearing 'uppity', and scoring low in order to avoid personal threat (p. 144).

The growing recognition that entrance tests have a built-in cultural bias had led many educators and policy makers to conclude that greater flexibility is needed in order to assess properly minority and low SES applicants. Question of test bias against minorities is argued at length in numerous studies (see Manning, 1976; Evans and Hart, 1976; Breland, 1974; Cooper, Lee and Williams, 1978; AAMC, 1976; Linn, 1974; Goldman, 1973). Those studies argue that the professional schools should consider fully the application of students and should take note of a wider range of background information, including social economic, racial and ethnic origins.

Cognitive Factors

The most frequently employed objective or cognitive criteria used by the professional schools are scores on such examinations as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Law School Aptitude Test (LSAT), and the Medical Aptitude Test (MCAT), and grade point average (GPA).

Entrance test scores are used by many professional schools in an effort to predict student performance. The Law School Admission Test

(LSAT) and the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) were first used as standardized examinations in the late 1940's.

The MCAT is administered by the American College Testing Program of Iowa City, under the supervision of the Association of American Medical Colleges. Scores are reported in six areas of knowledge and ability: biology, chemistry, physics, science problems, and two skill sections--reading and quantitative analysis (Littlemer, 1983). Bartlett (1976) argues that most medical schools agree that in reviewing applicants' test results, the science and quantitative scores are the two figures that should be concentrated on. Other areas of academic knowledge examined by the MCAT generally are given less weight in the evaluation test scores. According to Bartlett, the MCAT examination was originally developed as a means of reducing medical school attrition, which it has successfully done over the years. But he emphasizes that the medical colleges must make use of a variety of other evaluative criteria in addition to the MCAT. The Association of American Medical Colleges (1973) stresses that researchers are exploring the development of additional instruments to measure personal qualities deemed necessary for the practice of medicine.

The Law School Admission Test is administered by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, under the direction of the Law School Admission Council. The LSAT is divided into six sections: reading comprehension, reading recall, error recognition, sentence correction, data interpretation, and principles and cases (Evans and Hart, 1981). Scores are reported as a single combined figure with a possible top score of 800. According to Warkov (1982) LSAT scores rose so

substantially between 1961 to 1979 that a score which in the 1960's would have secured access to the most selective law schools, was by the end of the 1970's the bare minimum required at two-thirds of all law schools.

Undergraduate grade point averages are the second set of cognitive criteria evaluated in the admissions process. Goldman (1973) writes that some schools place heavier weight on grades than on test scores while other schools reverse this emphasis, and some professional schools consider that grades earned at some undergraduate schools are "worth more" than those earned at other universities.

Subjective and Qualitative Factors

Various forms of pressure to expand opportunities for the admission of minority and socially disadvantaged students to professional schools resulted in a proliferation of different types of special admissions programs. Many professional schools in the United States and Canada have adopted admission programs which permit greater flexibility in the admission process when considering the applications of minorities and disadvantaged students.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges (1976), such programs can be justified on the basis of meeting societal needs and by providing students who are willing to work in underserved areas. The use of qualitative factors, of course, implies subjective judgment. Non traditional criteria often utilized in the decision process include a broad understanding of the applicant's home environment and socioeconomic background. Winograd (1973) stresses that the

professional schools "must look at the total person. Admissions committees must look beyond the LSAT and UGPA. It takes some special effort to get all the information, but it is there". The view is echoed by the American Association of Law Schools:

Each school, in its own way, attempts to make the best possible prediction as to the relative quality of the applicants. Everything that is known about them is taken into consideration: the applicants personal statements, their work histories, the nature and subjects taken in undergraduate college ... the possible disadvantaged background upon the validity of predicted performance, and every other factor that the particular school thinks can possibly be utilized in making a judgment as to the relative quality of the applicants (1975, pp. 453-454).

In the same vein, the Association of American Medical Colleges stresses:

Undergraduate grade point average and Medical College Admission Test score alone are insufficient to predict more than the ability to study medicine, admissions committees rely on the personal interview commitment to service, and a variety of other biographical characteristics to determine which academically qualified applicants will make the best doctors (p. 5)

Areas of consideration used by the professional schools are the applicant's age, work experiences, undergraduate activities, and community service. These are often viewed as possible assets which may demonstrate that a superior academic record was not created only at the expense of everything else (Winograd, 1973, p. 864). Another consideration is the region from which an applicant comes. Many schools, Manning (1978) argues, seek geographic balance or a national cross section of students. Some preference may also be accorded applicants who come from urban or rural settings or from an area which is underrepresented in the student body.

Letters of recommendation are another qualitative factor which is considered by the admissions committee as a means of gaining insights into the character and ability of the applicant to complete and function in the profession. Willingham and Breland (1977) argue that in many cases the name or title of the person signing a reference may be more important than the content of the letter. An essay may be required of applicants concerning their professional interests and goals.

Willingham and Breland stress that evaluation of these individual essays is highly subjective and depends largely on the values of the admission officers reviewing them.

Personal interviews with applicants also are one of the most subjective aspects of the admissions procedures. Manning (1977) points out that the admissions personnel conducting the interviews generally have wide latitude in their questioning and discussions. The open ended nature of the interview, according to Manning, is an ideal opportunity to test the aspiration and personal qualities of the applicant.

The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (1977) recommended in their study that the admission interviewers should question students to see exactly what they plan to contribute to the profession, and should not admit a student on the basis of test scores of grade point average, without looking at their character or the contribution the individual will make to the profession.

The Academic Community Response to Special Admission Programs

The controversy over preferential or special admissions programs in higher education has produced considerable debate within the academic community. Behind the verbal barrage of "debasement of academic standards", "racist heritage" and "meritocratic myth" fundamental issues are being raised concerning the purposes of the professional schools, the relationship between meritocratic and egalitarian values, and government intervention in higher education. Considerable controversy revolves in Canada and in the U.S. around the question of whether special admission categories in professional schools are necessary, legitimate, and meet the high standards of academic excellence expected in the professional schools.

Arguments Against Special Admission

The most frequent criticism of special admission in higher education is that it requires the imposition of racial or social quotas upon faculty student admissions. The preferential system erodes, according to Sowell (1982), standards of academic excellence by substituting the ascriptive characteristics of race and sex over intellectual ability and performance as the criterion for faculty admissions. Preferential admissions, Ornstein (1976) argues, is symptomatic of the drive toward the "new equality" which is aimed at producing equality of result in income, status, and power. Thus, proportional group representation is replacing the traditional value of equality of opportunity and advancement based upon individual merit.

Moreover, preferential treatment undermines the democratic concept of equality of opportunity, which stresses that individuals "ought to be allowed the opportunity to compete fairly for society's benefits, based upon their abilities, rather than benefits allocated on the basis of such characteristics as race ethnicity and social class.

Hook (1971) further charges that preferential systems stigmatize minorities by making it appear that group membership rather than individual ability of persons within those groups accounts for their being admitted as students. Preferential treatment Bunzel (1972) adds, also contributes to racial and ethnic polarization and reinforces racial stereotypes.

To critics of preferential treatment such as Hook, Bunzel and Bell, what is at stake is the redefinition of equality:

As a principle, equality of opportunity denies the precedence of birth, of nepotism, of patronage or any other criterion which allocates place, other than fair competition open equally to talent and ambition. It asserts . . . universalism over particularism, achievement over ascription (Bell, 1972, p. 41).

The new equality, Bell argues, means equality not at the start of a race, but at the finish, equality not of opportunity but of result. Under this new equality, ascription replaces achievement. Block (1978) points out that the allocation of the benefits of society based upon race and social class, not only undermine principles of equality but also principles of distributive and compensatory justice. Justice, Block argues, requires that the benefits of society in the form of wealth, status, power, honors, and the like ought to be distributed according to the individual's talents and abilities. Justice further requires that compensation be made to individuals wrongfully injured; it does not

require that compensation be made to entire groups or classes of persons by another group or class or by society at large. Preferential treatment, Ornstein (1976) argues, also penalizes qualified people who through no fault of their own are expected to sacrifice their opportunities in education on behalf of a greater social good.

Far from reducing stereotyping of minorities and socially disadvantaged students, critics as William's (1982) and Barksdale (1977) claim that preferential treatment reinforces the image that these preferred groups cannot "make it" on their own. Preferential treatment thus, they argue, contributes to the very stigma and loss of respect that it was supposed to eliminate.

Reverse discrimination has been the most widespread criticism of affirmative action resulting in at least two landmark cases, The DeFunis and Bakke cases. Both cases dealt with admission policies and equal protection of the law. Allen Ornstein (1974) argues that reverse discrimination penalizes a group of people who had no part in past discrimination, while it discourages excellence and fosters mediocrity.

Daniel Bell in his essay "On meritocracy and equality" argues that the new form of equality which stresses equality of outcome is a threat to one other principle to which we have traditionally been dedicated: that of liberty. The attempt to overcome differences in the rewards obtained by different racial or ethnic groups entails the labeling of individuals, as belonging to particular groups, and the elevation of group rights over individual rights. Bell concludes his article with a plea on behalf of "a just meritocracy" as opposed to the imposition of "a rigid, dogmatic egalitarianism in matters where it conflicts with

other social objectives and even becomes self defeating" (p. 43).. Bell attributes the contemporary controversy surrounding the need for affirmative action to the ambiguity of the term "equality" itself. He views the principal nature of equality primarily as a means rather than an end in itself. Seabury (1972) claims that equal opportunity is an equality of political and educational rights before the law, not a guarantee of equal economic and social status, which are to be obtained by the individual's own efforts. To turn the universities into an engine for imposing an equality of condition on people would undermine the individual freedom. In addition, Sassen argues, an affirmative action system reintroduces racial distinction into a system which ought to be colorblind, and thus implicitly sanctions other forms of discrimination.

Arguments for Preferential Admission

A representative sample of the kinds of concerns raised by supporters of preferential admissions in higher education is found in the American Association of University Professors' Council Commission on Discrimination report, "Affirmative Action in Higher Education" (1973). The idea of Affirmative or Preferential Admission, the report explains

is essentially the revision of standards and practices to assure that institutions are in fact drawing from the largest marketplace of human resources (p. 17-8).

Proponents of preferential treatment argue that plans are necessary in academic institutions to provide equal opportunities for minorities and socially disadvantaged students, to compete fairly for admissions to the professional schools (Sandler, 1975; Van Alslyne, 1977; Lewis, 1975).

Preferential treatment defenders such as Bailey (1978), Sell (1973) and Barksdale (1977) consistently deny that such programs lower academic standards and compel universities to admit less qualified minority students when better qualified students are available.

Another controversy which overlaps the issue of preferential treatment, centers around the question of whether these programs will abolish the merit system. According to Ringer (1976) advocates of meritocracy and opponents of preferential treatment have been consistently under attack, with the most bitter assault coming from racial minorities who call the meritocratic system racist and discriminatory. Advocates of meritocracy have attacked affirmative action for its presumed advocacy of quotas, which is defined by them as retrogressive. Ringer made a strong case for preferential admissions policies and stated that the policies were a move in the right direction for social justice and a valid attempt to counter balance the present system of admission which is inadequate. He claims the meritocratic system contains many non traditional and subjective components that bias the system toward certain groups. Further he suggests that true meritocracy would be based on a system that would allocate and distribute rewards according to an impersonal, objective, rational assessment of individual merit. According to Ringer, the goal of preferential treatment, is a merit system without biases and subjectivities.

According to Havinghurst (1976), if there were a utopian society in which no ethnic or racial group has a decided advantage, there would be equal representation of each group at each occupational level. He said

that proportionality is the natural and logical outcome of a merit society, one in which race and ethnicity are irrelevant.

Gross (1978) in his arguments favoring reverse discrimination, said reverse discrimination is necessary to promote a better future for society as a whole. He conceded that reverse discrimination in itself may be unjust, but compensation must be made if a future goal is to be obtained. Reverse discrimination, Gross argues, will promote a more egalitarian future in our society.

Bayles (1973) claims that groups which have been traditionally discriminated against deserve compensation for wrongful injuries that they have suffered. Increased benefits to these groups are justified in order to bring them up to the level of wealth, status, honors, and power which they would now have, were it not for the discrimination they have endured. Those favoring special programs reject the argument that selected groups are admitted over more qualified people. What is different under preferential programs is that the pool of qualified applicants in education is now enlarged to include groups previously excluded (see Fried, 1974; Fleming, 1978). Preferential admission, Hewitt and Cortes (1977) argue, is an attempt to overcome past "reverse discrimination" when white males were the preferred groups in higher education. Another major argument that the proponents of preferential treatment are using are appeals to social utility. Koleda and Craig (1976) argue that without preferential admissions programs to professional schools, lawyers and doctors needed to serve minority groups would be practically non existent. Social utility justifications for preferential treatment also are based upon the need to promote the

public welfare (Koleda and Craig, 1976). Jones (1977) argues that by increasing educational and employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups, poverty and inequality can be reduced. In terms of distributive justice, Axelsen (1978) claims that discrimination aimed at minorities generates a pervasive and deep-seated maldistribution of wealth, status, and power. Under preferential policies, minorities previously underrepresented in education are now given increased opportunities, based on their abilities, needs, and contributions they can make to society.

U.S. Justices Brennan, White, Marshall and Blackman emphasized in the Bakke case (1977) the need and desire to remedy the damaging effects of past societal discrimination, and to provide equal opportunities for minorities and socially disadvantaged to participate in all aspects of society (cited in Blackwell, 1978)

The effects of past societal discrimination is sufficiently important to justify the use of race-conscious admissions programs where there is a sound basis for concluding that minority underrepresentation is substantial and chronic, and that the handicap of past discrimination is impeding access of minorities to medical school or any other opportunities to participate in American society (p. 130).

In summary, to proponents of preferential treatment, equality is a myth because of pervasive patterns of discrimination against certain groups which perpetuate a massive maldistribution of power, status, wealth and authority. To eliminate such maldistribution it is necessary to consider one's race, sex, and ethnicity because these characteristics are the reasons for the discrimination which brought about such maldistribution in the first place.

Rappaport (1974) in his research study involving minority students in UCLA's Legal Education Opportunity Program (LEOP) shows that minority students with good, but not necessarily top law school credentials, that is, LSAT above 520 and GPA above 3.20, perform almost as well as their regular admitted counterparts with LSAT's one hundred and fifty points higher. Another research project conducted by Simon and Covell (1975) at the University of California, San Diego, compared the performances of 23 black and Mexican American students enrolled under affirmative admission procedures with 21 students admitted under regular procedures. The two groups were compared at three stages: MCAT entrance scores and undergraduate grade point averages, the National Board of Medical Examiners Test, and performances on the medicine, surgery and pediatrics internships. The wide gap between the two groups on quantitative entrance criteria diminished slightly by the time national board examination was taken. Following completion of two of three major clinical internships, the difference between the two groups was no more than "the distinction between a slightly above average level of performance for the regular admitted students and average level of performance for students admitted on variances" (p.739). Simon and Covell point out that only one of the 23 minority students in this study would have been admitted to this medical school had it not been for affirmative admissions considerations.

William (1976) investigated the accessibility of the legal profession to minorities and women in Colorado, and the difficulties encountered by minorities and women at the professional education level and in the bar examination. The finding of William's study include:

minority and female students voiced strong complaints that negative attitudes based on race and sex manifested by some professors at the law schools were damaging to student performance; the financial aid available to minority students in law schools was inadequate and a severe handicap in some cases; and the bar examination had a disparate and discriminatory effect on minority applicants.

The Council Commission on Discrimination (1973) emphasizes in its report the need for a thorough review and revision of academic recruitment policies. It points out the disadvantages to minorities of certain conventional ways of locating possible candidates for certain positions. It calls for special admission action plans to reexamine recruiting practices and patterns, and to revise them with the specific ambition of including more minorities.

In the recently released Royal Commission report on Equality in Employment, Judge Abella (1984) argues that for native people and minority groups, "equality in employment means effective and relevant education and training, accommodation to cultural and geographic realities" (p. 4). Judge Abella also argues in her report that in order to create equality of opportunity, we must do different things for different people. "Sometimes equality means treating people the same, despite their differences, and sometimes it means treating them as equals by accommodating their differences" (p. 3).

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson in a speech at Howard University proclaimed the need for Special Admission programs (cited in Fuerst, 1976)

Freedom is not enough, you do not wipe out scars of centuries by saying now you are free to go where you want and do what you desire. You do not take person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bringing him up to the starting line of a race and say you are free to compete, and justly believe that you have been completely fair. All of our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates, and this is the next and most profound stage of the battle of civil rights (p. 11).

Summary

This review of the literature served to clarify the focus of the problem investigated in this research. A critical barrier in the admission of minority and socially disadvantaged groups centres on achievement in entrance tests. Many argue that intentionally or not, the entrance exams act as an exclusionary device which has a disproportionate impact on the socially disadvantaged and ethnic minorities. They argue that exams are taking no account of minority backgrounds and are culturally biased. Test makers themselves refute the notion of an achievement-free ability test, and warn universities and colleges that they should not use the entrance exams as the chief evaluative instrument in admission.

The literature reveals deep-seated differences within the academic community toward preferential admission programs. Opponents of preferential admission programs have labelled them as being directly responsible for reverse discrimination. They argue that reverse discrimination penalizes a group of people who had no part in past discrimination, while it discourages academic excellence and fosters mediocrity. They further criticize preferential admission because it

stigmatizes those beneficiaries by making it appear that the group membership, rather than individual ability, accounts for their admission as students.

Members of the academic community favoring preferential admission argue that minority and socially disadvantaged groups have been so adversely affected by exclusionary policies and practices in education that action is a necessary precondition for remedying and for bringing relief from those conditions. They argue that the social system must become less rigid and more open, so that all segments of the population will be represented among the professional class. The advocates of preferential admission programs also point out that the professionals tend to earn considerably higher incomes in our society. Therefore, including a greater diversity of minority group members into professional occupations is one way of facilitating upward mobility and aiding in the disintegration of the poverty cycle. Equally important, they emphasize, is the fact that educated professionals tend to become the role models for other members of their group, and also increase the probability of providing service in minority communities. Thus, the justification for preferential admission programs lies in the need to provide opportunities that were denied to many applicants due to adverse socioeconomic circumstances or past racial exclusion.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

This study represents an attempt to explore the opinion of some members of the academic community from four professional schools--social work, law, education, and medicine--toward special admission in their respective faculties. Efforts were made to determine the familiarity of the interviewees with respect to special admission procedures in their faculty, the attitude of the interviewees toward the special admission category, the perceived relationship of the university with the government in respect to this issue, and the perceived effect of the special student on academic standards in their faculty. The chapter also presents the number of students admitted under the special admissions category, and the completion rate of the special students in each of the investigated faculties.

The data are reported for each faculty separately. The chapter concludes with a comparison between the faculties.

School of Social Work

Familiarity With Special Admission Procedures

The special admission category was instituted at the School of Social Work in the mid-1970's. During this time the School of Social Work changed its admission procedure and no longer required an interview for admission. Students started to be admitted solely on the base of G.P.A. Therefore, the faculty council was looking for an alternative admission procedure for those students whose grades might

not be competitive in the academic category but who had demonstrated important qualities for the profession.

The faculty members interviewed identified two groups of special consideration students. The first group are those who perceive themselves to be from the Native population of Canada. The second group are people who have shown a commitment and involvement in the profession or in the human services and are over 21 years of age. All applicants under the special category must demonstrate a commitment to and involvement in human services through volunteer or paid employment. They need to have an adjusted G.P.A. of 2.0 or better, and a minimum 30 credit hours of university work. The special consideration committee gives roughly 40 per cent weighting to G.P.A., and 60 per cent weighting for life experience, which can be demonstrated to the committee through autobiography, letters of reference, and any other supporting documents. The committee reserves the right to interview the applicants, but rarely exercises this right.

If we have a question regarding the person's background, his/her commitment to the profession, we bring him/her in for an interview.

The number of first year students admitted under the special category is roughly 14 per cent, which, according to two interviewees, is based on the historical average of students applying under the special category between the years 1976-1982. During this time all eligible students were admitted "the school at that time was working on the assumption that it has unlimited resources". Another respondent, however, stated that the number of students to be selected is based on a formula which ties the number of students admitted in the special consideration

category to the proportion in which they are represented in the total pool of applicants. According to this respondent, the number of students and their percentage is determined annually.

Expressed Attitudes Toward the Special Admission Category

The four interviewees expressed some dissatisfaction regarding the direction the special admission program has taken the last few years. The special admission category was originally intended to be for Native people and mature students from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds. The interviewees stated that in fact, the majority of people who have used the category "are those people who simply don't have 3.5 G.P.A., and in order to ensure that they have a place, they apply under the special category . . . therefore the special admission program is somewhat misused in the faculty".

Another interviewee added to this argument "the number of students applying under the special category goes up almost every year, mainly because it became more and more difficult to get in through the regular academic route". As a result, this person continued, the faculty found out that during the year in which the G.P.A. level was going up in the academic category, it also was going up in the special consideration category. The faculty members, the respondent said, started to become concerned that people with high G.P.A. and very little experience were gaining admission through the special category.

We had to start to watch our weighting very carefully because we were giving 40 per cent to academic achievement, and if you get some people who have 3.2 or 3.4 G.P.A. and very little experience in the social services applying under the special category, that would weight them much more heavily than the one

who had 2.1 G.P.A. and five years of experience in the social services.

The interviewees pointed out that the whole program is under review, and the faculty is about to redesign the entire admission procedures. Two professors expressed the opinion that extra weighting should be given to socially disadvantaged students applying under the special category, and less weighting to academic achievement. Another respondent emphasized that when the special consideration category was designed, the social work program at Winnipeg Education Centre (W.E.C.) was not yet introduced. The W.E.C., she said, focuses on students who are from socially, economically, geographically, and educationally disadvantaged background. Therefore, the interviewee argued, "I personally would like to see the special category diminished in the faculty, and see it operating only under the W.E.C and the northern programs." These two programs, she emphasized, are specifically targeted for people of Native ancestry and also focus on disadvantaged individuals. "The program delivers general courses and also courses which are of specific relevance to the culture and values of the people of Native ancestry and people from disadvantaged background. The curriculum reflects the needs of this target group."

The problem of delivering social services to minorities was also raised by two interviewees. They claimed that minority and core area people do not receive services from people with whom they share a common background. The problem of social workers to population ratio among Native and other minorities is very low, and as a result the delivery of services to this group is insufficient. Hence the interviewee argued there should be substantial increase in the number of minority social

workers "to be available for the delivery of services to members of their own group or to other minority groups".

The respondents expressed the opinion that the special admission category should serve a specific social purpose. The perception of the four professors interviewed was, however, that although the goals of the special category were to offer educational opportunities for the less privileged applicants, the end results of the admission process indicate otherwise. The view that future direction in social services education should aim toward increasing the accessibility of certain groups either through W.E.C., northern programs or the School of Social Work on campus was repeatedly expressed.

Expressed Opinion on the Right of a Federal or
Provincial Government to Impose Special Admission Procedures
on Professional Faculties

A shared view was expressed by all respondents with respect to a government role in post secondary education in general, and social work in particular. The real problem, the interviewees said, lies not in whether government should be involved in implementation of programs, but rather in whether it should dictate the direction to the school. "The government's major role is to ensure an even distribution of goods and services to all segments of society", responded one individual. The government should act as a safeguard, and remind the academic institutions that their obligation is toward the total community.

I say yes, it is the role of the government to be responsive to the need of range of citizens, not just to the privileged middle class ... in fact I believe that government is doing less than it should do at

the university's level. They should force and fund more programs designed for and aimed at under privileged students.

One respondent answered that "universities should not be the ivory tower. The university should still be a centre of excellence in terms of research, but it should not be elitist". The university, the interviewee argued, cannot take only those students who will make the university look good "We have to be able to take people who are going to challenge us, and those are going to be people from all walks of life. We should take people who will make us work harder." If the university does not take volunteer action toward more equal access, then government should monitor and interfere to correct the system.

Equality demands sometimes enforcement, and the government, as a representative of the people should have the rights to impose certain measures to ensure accessibility to the professional schools to the underprivileged members of society.

The interviewee also added that often when there is no government attention to equality issues, and the matter is left only to university decision "the result has been a perpetuation of the status quo, with no real improvement in access to professional schools and job opportunities".

In addition to providing job opportunities, the post secondary education institutions must recognize that the expanding Native population, immigrants and members of the low socio-economic class require the training of professional people who share the same background and are sensitive to the needs of these people. The respondent mentioned that the educational policies of the university must reflect the needs of society. Since the needs of society

constantly change, the universities are facing the challenge of meeting the new demands. If the universities cannot bring about this change and fail to respond to the need of certain segments of society, "the government may step in to introduce alternative programs to accomplish its goals". Another interviewee claimed that he would like to see the government more in a position of suggesting and giving direction, than dictating to the university who should be accepted and what programs should be provided.

Government has the right to suggest how their money ought to be spent . . . but if government will start saying this is exactly how you should be doing it, or here is a list of people that you must accept, then it is not a university any more as a centre of learning with standards and guidelines, it is instead a training program.

Differences of opinion were expressed, however. All respondents at the School of Social Work agreed that government has a major role to play in the direction post secondary education institutions are taking. The respondents all agreed that government should exercise its power to ensure greater accessibility for all to societies' goods and services.

Perceived Effect of Special Admission Categories on Academic Standards

The interviewees perceived that there is no difference overall in performance of special students as compared to regular students. Though they admitted that they cannot base their opinions on empirical data

The number of people who fail out of Social Work faculty is very small. I don't know if any of them, in the past two years were special consideration students. My guess is that they are not disproportionally represented.

One interviewee when asked if special consideration students lower academic standard replied sharply "quite the contra" in fact, she said, the faculty raised in the past a concern that too many of the "regular" students are lacking life experience, which may have a negative effect on the profession. The same view was expressed by two other interviewees. One of them argued that

The special students have a positive effect on the class. They counterbalance those young students who are relatively naive, and unaware of the real world.

The other interviewee added to this argument saying that the special students which have more experience in life

often do not agree with what I have to say, and they will express their view. This way the students in the class are getting not only the teacher's perspective, but also someone else's perspective.

Another respondent expressed a very similar view. He also pointed out that the special students tend to ask many more questions and challenge the professors more often than regular students. He said:

they are less socialized into sit down, take notes, and don't open your mouth . . . they are more likely to ask questions, and that is in my view what promotes learning.

One respondent explained that the students that the faculty deals with under the special consideration category do not need academic upgrading. She explained that admission to the School of Social Work is now so competitive that most students who use the special consideration category "are people who a few years ago would have gotten into the program anyway. So there is no real academic problem."

Program Completion Rate

The School of Social Work does not have a record on the academic performance of the special admittance students. Therefore no data are available regarding the completion rate for those students. The interviewees explained that initially when the special admission category was introduced, the school deliberately did not track the special admittance students for civil liberty reasons

Since the time that special admission category was instituted up to two years ago, we by design, not just through neglect did not track this group of people. We deliberately did not try to figure out their academic outcome, whether they were successful or not, or just the same as any other student.

The school changed its policy two years ago after a few firey council meetings, arguing that civil liberty reasons are not relevant when dealing with a special group of students. Explained one interviewee:

We wanted to look carefully at what we call our special consideration students. We wanted to know whether or not we were setting up these people for failure because the admission requirements are different . . . We have set several safeguards which would prevent anyone, other than the admission and advising officers, to know who is a special student.

Faculty of Law

Familiarity With Special Admission Procedures

Interviewees in this faculty expressed a diversity of attitudes regarding special admission. A general description of their views is reported in this section. Each of the interviewees showed extensive knowledge regarding admission criteria, and was familiar with all possible routes and discretionary admission policies which are open to the special students. The faculty members pointed out that the special consideration students are required to meet different standards than the regular students in order to gain admission.

The interviewees identified three different special admission categories. Applicants in Group A are mature students 26 years or over. The applicant must have competitive LSAT score and comparative G.P.A. calculated on at least one year of university level study. The only difference between applicants under this category, and regular applicants is that while regular applicants need two years of academic experience before admittance to law school, applicants from Group A need only one year of university.

Applicants in group B are required to have two years of undergraduate work if they are under 26 years of age. Applicants who are 26 years or over are not required to have attended university at all in order to apply to law school. The applicants may have a minimum LSAT score, but they have to demonstrate to the special admission committee that (a) they had overcome some sorts of societal, educational or physical obstacles, which may explain "The person's absence of performance", or (b) they have achieved certain things which indicate a potential for law.

Group C is designed for students who are of Canadian Native ancestry. Applicants in this category may be admitted if they meet one or a combination of the following criteria. One is at least two years of undergraduate work, competitive G.P.A., and competitive LSAT scores. Another is two years of undergraduate work in the ACCESS program, competitive LSAT scores, and successful completion of the Legal Studies for Native Students program in Saskatoon. Mature applicants who can demonstrate a strong motivation to study and a life history which indicates likely success in the program, may have minimum LSAT scores, but must successfully complete the Saskatoon program.

All students applying to law school under the special admission category must go through an interview procedure. The interviews are conducted by the interviewing sub-committee composed of members drawn from the Faculty of Law, the law student body, the practising bar, and the university counseling services. The applicant is required to submit a personal statement, an autobiographical essay of 800 words that deals with the applicant's past history and his/her ambition for the future. The applicant is also required to submit three letters of reference, including a character reference, an optional resume, and a transcript of any post secondary education or a statement of achievement in any area that may show academic merit.

Expressed Attitude Toward Special Admission Category

The attitude of all four professors interviewed toward the existence of special admission categories and the special student was very positive. It should be mentioned, however, that not all persons that were contacted agreed to be interviewed for the purpose of this study.

All interviewees agreed that eligibility index of G.P.A. and LSAT score were not heavily weighted and are not the primary determinants for students in the special category. When the interviewees were asked for the rationale of why special admission categories were established, some suggested the need for greater diversity.

Just as diversity makes the university a better learning environment for the student, so it makes the university a better learning environment for the faculty members . . . the insight provided by the participation of the special students enrich and broaden the teacher scholarly interests, and protect them from insensitivity to minority perspectives.

Another interviewee argued that

In an industrialized and technologically oriented social system, there is always the risk that a comparatively small number of people will achieve professional status and recognition . . . The risk is even greater that those professionals will become the dominant group power.

Therefore, the interviewee emphasized, to combat that danger, the social system, of which the university is a part, must become less rigid and more open so that all segments of the population will be reasonably represented among the professional class. All interviewees agreed that the movement of minority group members into professional occupations, and law as part of them, is one way in which the university can and

should facilitate upward mobility.

Equally important was the argument for the need of role models, particularly for the Native students. As one interviewee pointed out

The role of the lawyer within the community often goes well beyond their profession . . . the fact that "they" made it as educated professionals will provide a source of inspiration for the other members of their group.

The faculty members interviewed expressed willingness and desire to increase the number of allocated places in the special category from 10 percent that is offered now to 15 or even 20 per cent. One interviewee even suggested to set "a quota system or at least a target" for certain disadvantaged groups

I would ensure, for example, that the special preference given to Native students will be extended . . . To ensure that there is a special hat out of which the lottery tickets were drawn dealing with visible and other minority groups.

In the report prepared on behalf of the Special Students' Committee, University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law, the committee raised the concern that Native people "desperately need Native lawyers to provide the kind of expertise necessary to deal with their legal problems" (1984, p. 30). When asked about it, the interviewees downplayed the importance of the need to train Native lawyers to serve their community. "The question of whether or not minority law graduates would in fact practise in the minority is irrelevant", but as one interviewee suggested, there are substantial indicators that they do. He emphasized, though, that by no means are they expected or advised to do so by the faculty or the profession.

The reasons for having a special admissions category were primarily

the desire for diversity in the student body, the need for role models among certain minority groups, and as a means of social advancement for disadvantaged groups in our society. "The university set out to be part of the solution for Canadian social problems, and the Faculty of Law ought to be one of the institutions which contributes to the solution."

Expressed Opinion on the Right of a Federal or
Provincial Government to Impose Special Admission Procedures
on Professional Faculties

A strong sensitivity, and some disagreement on the degree to which the government has or should have the right to intervene in the affairs of the faculty was expressed. Most of the interviewees at the faculty argued that the government has the right to provide incentives, but it does not have the right to dictate "whether the university or the faculty accept those incentives or not". The interviewees, at large, would like the faculty to have the last word on what admission programs should be included in the faculty.

One interviewee argued that universities should not be an ivory tower. The universities, the interviewee emphasized, get all their financial support directly or indirectly from the public, and hence they should be a reflection of society and should reflect the society's needs. "I have no patience or understanding for the notion of a university which is already elitest to what I would like to see it . . . I have no problems with the notion of affirmative action in the admission process." It must be pointed out that the view expressed by

this particular individual is not a common one, and does not reflect the attitude of the other interviewees. Another interviewee saw academic freedom only as far as academic lecturing and academic scholarship is concerned. Academic freedom, according to this person, does not apply to the admission process.

There is no consensus among the individuals interviewed on the right of the government legally and morally, to interfere in how the university is conducting its admission procedure. The question that puzzles the academic community, according to one interviewee, "Is the government a partner with the university, or is it only a provider for the university?"

Perceived Effect of Special Admission Categories
on Academic Standards

The four interviewees answered with a definite "no" to the question of whether the special students lowered academic standards.

The assignments, the marking and the assessment are all done color blind, age blind, and sex blind. It is the student . . . no special treatment, no lowering the standard.

One interviewee said that he thinks that the special students elevate the standard of the law school in terms of its being a more interesting and more stimulating environment, which for him "is equally important to the ability to write tests".

Yet another interviewee argued that special consideration students and Native students are generally less quick at test taking than are regular students "who generally come out of an environment in which they have been programmed to write tests, and are very good at test

taking". The interviewee added "I don't think that test taking tells you much about intellectual or analytical ability".

One interviewee admitted that 15 years ago, when the first Native students were admitted to law, the academic requirements were bent "if not completely collapsed" in order to ensure that the Native student survived. "Because there were no role models, no support system . . . they were isolated not only from the community, they were isolated at the law school." The interviewee confessed that the academics as a group had decided to establish the program (for Natives) to have a few people that although not academically compatible, could serve as role models for those who will come behind and then

"will be able to elevate the standard for Native people to be the equivalent to the standard of white students . . . and as it happened the first few Native students come out of law school with a lower academic standard, and then the standard become equivalent. Initially in order to get it to happen we had to bend the rules."

In summary, the interviewees argued that the special students did not in any way erode the standard of the faculty. In fact, they argued, this student population makes the faculty a more stimulating and interesting place to be, and offers to the faculty wisdom and life experience that is not generated through courses and lecturing.

Program Completion Rate

Table 1

Special Admitted Students, Group A and B, at the
University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law
(1976-1982)

Number of students admitted	83
Number of students completed law school	56
Number of students withdrawals/academic failures	27
Completion rate	67%

Table 2

Special Admitted Native Students, Group C, at the
University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law
(1970-1983)

Number of students admitted	19
Number of students completed law school	12
Number of students withdrawals/academic failures	7
Completion rate	63%

Tables 1 and 2 represent findings on the question of the academic achievement of the special admitted student population. The academic achievement of the student is measured by the completion rate of the students from law school. The data show that the completion rate among the special admitted students is somewhat lower than that of the regular students. The completion rate of the special admitted students is 67 percent; the completion rate among native students is 62 percent (see

Tables 1 and 2), the completion rate of the regular admitted students is estimated by the Faculty of Law to be 90 percent.

The data support the argument that students with a lower level of LSAT performance, and low G.P.A. can, and do, succeed in law school once admitted. As indicated in Tables 1 and 2, the success rate among the special students is between 62 and 67 percent, as compared with the estimated 90 percent success among regular students. The difference in the success rate among the two categories is significant; but as an interviewee expressed, "it is most definitely worth the effort".

Faculty of Education

Familiarity With Special Admission Procedures

The Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, has two separate special admission committees. The two committees are separated not only in their goal and vision, but also physically. One committee is on campus and deals with mature students. The other committee is part of the Winnipeg Education Centre (W.E.C.) situated downtown. The centre is unique in that it is carrying out most of the academic activities away from the university setting, and functions as a mini-campus. The W.E.C. is recognized as an affirmative action inner city adult elementary teaching program.

The special mature student on campus may meet minimum academic requirements, but is required to submit an autobiographical essay and three letters of reference that may provide some insight into the applicant's life history and some explanation for the lack of academic performance.

The W.E.C. has a mandate to serve economically disadvantaged students. Therefore the entire student population is "special". The program was designed for those people who demonstrate the following three needs: academic upgrading, social emotional support, and financial support. The program focuses on the training of teachers for the inner city, and even more broadly it focuses on the training of teachers for poverty areas. So while the university caters to the mature students in its special admission category, the W.E.C. is catering to the mature students who are economically disadvantaged. The W.E.C. draws most of

its students from the inner city area. However, the centre will also accept qualified students from other geographic areas. The primary goal of the centre, the respondents emphasized, is to improve education for learners in the inner city.

Recruitment of students to the W.E.C. is the first function of the centre admission committee. Representatives of the centre circulate application forms to interested people in the community. The centre committee then establishes interview schedules for prospective students, all of whom are interviewed. The ability to communicate is taken into consideration. The major question that the committee asks is "Is this the kind of person we want to teach the children of our community?". A commitment toward the teaching profession by an applicant often receives more consideration in the recruitment proceedings than the academic background. As one individual put it, "the past experience shows that academic skill to do university work can be acquired by committed adults no matter what their educational background at the time of recruitment is."

Expressed Attitude Toward Special Admission Category

The need for broader and more inclusive participation of minority, new immigrants and socially disadvantaged groups was continually identified by each interviewee. The interviewees, however, varied in their opinions on how the university should attain this goal.

One interviewee expressed the willingness to see open admission at the university together with a support system and upgrading for those who need it. "Just open admission on its own is not good enough. It is

open admission with special services, remediation and preparatory courses." The respondent stated that "High school marks are not a good indicator of who will be a good teacher. I would put a lot more emphasis on the interview data than on the high school record." The interviewee pointed out that those students who do not fit, simply will drop out the first year and he does not see a risk of lowering academic standards.

Another interviewee also welcomed the special admittance students and argued that even greater efforts should be made to increase the number of minority teachers. "We require teachers who have an understanding of the culture and lifestyle of the children from various communities." The interviewee emphasized again that people who completed only Grade 8 or 9 must go through upgrading before they earn admission to the faculty.

The attitude of the interviewees from the W.E.C. was even more supportive. They see the special admission program as a one step toward greater social equality. They argued that teacher education programs, along with other programs at the university, have a built-in class bias.

Not only economic factors exclude the economically disadvantaged. Methods used also discriminate against teachers from rural and inner city areas.

The person argued that the content of history and English programs has highlighted European and Canadian interpretations which support the status quo of the economic power group and exclude the Native and the immigrants contributions. Likewise he continued:

The university pedagogy emphasizes the written and oral form of displaying reality and sometimes omits the pictorial and concrete modes of representing the world. Yet research in science education clearly

shows that learners from economically deprived backgrounds do significantly better when concrete modes are used along with symbolized models of knowledge.

The interviewees from the W.E.C. see the academic upgrading as an integral part of the university courses.

The major difference between the views held by the interviewees on campus and those from W.E.C. is in the way in which the special student should receive his/her upgrading. The respondents from the W.E.C. see the academic upgrading as an integral part of the university courses. The professors on campus emphasized that the special student should take make up courses and skill courses before entering the faculty.

In addition, the perceptions of individuals interviewed with respect to the performance of the "special" students relative to the performance of the "regular" students differed. They agreed, however, that a strong social need for special admission programs exists.

Expressed Opinion on the Right of a Federal or
Provincial Government to Impose Special Admission Procedures
on Professional Faculties

Members of the Faculty of Education who were interviewed generally agreed that the government plays a major role in formal education. The reactions ranged from justifying government involvement in post secondary education to encouraging the government's role in universities.

One professor stated rather empathically that the government should have the right to tell the university the direction it should take:

We as taxpayers pour hundreds of million of dollars

into the universities . . . so, of course, the university must listen to the government and government must listen to its people . . . and the government must not waste the people's money by giving it to institutions who are not doing what the government, and what the people who elected the government want it to do.

This interviewee would like to see an even greater influence of government on the universities than presently. When asked about the need for academic freedom, the individual replied that academic freedom was set up to make university run efficiently; but he emphasized that if academic freedom gets in the way of the university responding to the needs of society, "then of course the needs of society should supercede the need of any selected subgroup in society". Another interviewee shared the same view and argued that if it were not for the direct involvement of the provincial government "we would not have this kind of education, training people from selected communities to act as a role model for people within the community". The interviewee also pointed out that just because universities had the freedom to run their own programs in such an elitist manner that "so many people were left out of the mainstream of society . . . in order to see this kind of program begin, there had to be government involvement".

Another respondent was very cynical when asked about academic freedom. He stated that there has never been a problem or a conflict between government and university, because "academics are so easily seduced by government . . . they [universities] will do anything to get money". Universities, the interviewee argued, should reserve the right to protect their own freedom "but I have never known any university to do so".

Another interviewee expressed the opinion that government and university should have a joint partnership in running the universities' affairs. "I would not like to see government just dictating unless it absolutely has to." The interviewee said that most of the time controversial issues can be solved by a negotiation process "but it may be necessary for government sometimes to take the initiative; government should have a leading role in what happens at the university level". Yet another interviewee added that if academic freedom means that the university should be independent of the society in which it exists "then the answer is no, universities should not have total freedom, certainly not if it is a government funded university". The university has certain obligations to society, the interviewee continued, and it must address social concerns and social issues.

Perceived Effect of Special Admission Category
on Academic Standards

One interviewee from the W.E.C. explained that the meaning of what is an academic standard depends on how we define knowledge, and how we measure standards. If knowing means only being able to read and write then "we are perhaps lowering standards, but if knowing means also having some experience in the world then we are raising the academic standard, because we are bringing into the program people who have much life experience". The person emphasized that unfortunately universities define very narrowly what it means to know things; and by doing so the university closes doors and puts artificial barriers in front of many qualified and capable people.

"I argue that having these mature students in the university, in fact broadens the university standard. These people bring with them experiences, information, and knowledge that the university does not have, because it is not available in books."

Yet, the same interviewee admitted that W.E.C. graduated some people, not many, who were not ready to graduate.

Another interviewee from the W.E.C. replied to the question of whether the specially admitted students lower academic standards, that it depends on the attitude of the person being asked. Again the individual emphasized that the answer depends on how we view learning:

My message is that the university will be a better place if it will also add to its pedagogy the experiential part. Now the university is suffering from narrow symboliness . . . We see the professionals that come out of the university are unable to communicate with the clients - the students.

The reactions among the interviewees on the campus were somewhat different. One interviewee replied that in one way the special students are competent and in other ways they are not. "In terms of dealing with kids, in terms of operating a classroom and knowing how to put material across, I think that they are competent teachers." But the interviewee stated that where these people are lacking is in the general knowledge and cultural background. "The teacher's job is to provide a general intellectual knowledge of society, but if you don't have it in your background you cannot transmit it to your students". Yet the interviewee was not critical of the special admission program; he simply argued that the special students need more upgrading and remedial courses. "Some students are very competent, but there is a more significant number who are not, in my opinion. The reason is that I see

pitfalls in the program itself." To demonstrate his point the interviewee told the following story:

I remember the Dean standing up in front of all the fourth year students and giving them the following advice: if you are a rural person from a small town never go back teaching in your own town. You will lack credibility. People will always remember the silly things you did as a kid . . .

The next night I saw the same Dean speaking to the fourth year class at the W.E.C. There he said to those students: go back to your community and help the people there.

The interviewee pointed out that what in essence the Dean was saying is that Indians and Native people graduating from the W.E.C. are not good enough to teach white kids, and that the university has two different sets of expectations.

Another respondent was less sympathetic toward the special admission category, and even less so toward W.E.C. He claimed that to take inner city people and physically isolate them from the main campus is criminal.

"I don't think that it is a good experience for people who were raised in the inner city area and want to teach in an inner city school to have their academic life experience and practice teaching in the inner city, as well . . . What we end up doing is ghettoizing them even more so."

The interviewee argued that all special students who do not meet the minimum standard should be asked to take a year of upgrading "and then come to take regular classes on campus".

Another interviewee stated that the students who graduated from the W.E.C. are going to be even better teachers than the "regular" students. The reason for that, the interviewee said, is that these students are coming from the community of students that they are going to teach. "If

you lived in a cycle of poverty yourself, you are going to understand those children better . . . You have been there yourself. "In my opinion, they are well trained to go and serve their own community."

Program Completion Rate

Table 3

Special Admitted Students at the University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg Education Centre, Faculty of Education Branch
(1973-1981)

Number of students admitted	169
Number of students completed B.Ed program	105
Number of students withdrawals/academic failures	64
Completion Rate	62%

Table 3 indicates that the completion rate in W.E.C., which is a program entirely designed for special needs students, is slightly above 60%. Although there are no readily available data on the completion rate of the "regular" students in the Education Faculty, all interviewees estimated that it is higher, probably in the range of 80%. The interviewees, though, point out that 60% is a very successful completion rate, particularly given the fact that many of the students enrolling in W.E.C. would have never made it on campus. Many students, the interviewees emphasized, failed in the formal school system, and have only Grade 8 education. Many of the students are also single parents, and many did not have a stable emotional environment in their own home. All of that, the interviewees at the centre argued, points to the enormous success of the program.

Faculty of Medicine

Familiarity With Special Admission Procedures

Candidates for admission to the medical school at the University of Manitoba are divided into two categories: "academic category" and the "special consideration category". The selection of candidates in the special consideration category is primarily on the basis of personal attributes and special premedical experience. Scholastic achievement is important and considered, but is not weighted heavily.

The four faculty members interviewed are either presently involved in the admission committee or had been involved in the past. Therefore the interviewees are aware of special admission and its practice in the faculty.

As listed in the medical school information brochure and as identified by the interviewees, there are four groups of special consideration applicants. The common denominator for all special consideration candidates is that they are not competitive in the academic category. Group A consists of applicants who are from the Native population of Canada. The students are required to complete two years of premedical courses or two years of premedical preparatory studies in the Special Premedical Studies Program. Applicants who have an occupational background of some relationship to the health delivery system fall into Group B. Characteristically, the applicant has had to be engaged in full time employment for at least two years, in positions of responsibility in the area of health, social welfare or health education. Group C consists of applicants who at the time of

application have completed a graduate program in bio-medical sciences, and whose graduate work is associated with occupational experiences in their discipline. Applicants who are sponsored by approved international organizations such as CIDA and CUPA form Group D.

Students may apply under the special consideration category if they fall into one of these four groups. These students still have to fulfill the eligibility requirements of the faculty which include prerequisite courses. They have to attain G.P.A. of not less than 3.0 and MCAT score of 7.0. The students are also asked to submit an autobiographical essay, and three letters of reference. Each applicant is interviewed by four persons, one a medical student, two faculty members representing clinical and basic science areas, and one practising physician.

Expressed Attitude Toward Special Admission Category

The interviewees in the medical school do not see their faculty as a vehicle of social advancement in society or as a means of correcting past or present discrimination. According to them, the emphasis in medical school is primarily on academic achievement, and academic achievement is measured by numerical factors, even though as one interviewee argued "the performance on MCAT may not be significantly related to performance as a practising physician, it is still highly correlated with success in medical school". One interviewee stated that one of the reasons the faculty decided to include the special admission category was the realization that the "regular" admission practice excluded certain groups of people. "Because fair individual treatment

was not met under the existing admission arrangements, special admission became necessary and justifiable as a means of providing equality of access".

One respondent pointed out that these students are special and are categorized as a special group does not imply "that somehow we do not apply the same regulation of eligibility. We expect the special students to write the Medical College test as everyone else, and they are required to complete all premedical courses just as the regular medical student". Also, the fact that a person has a master's degree or Ph.D does not mean that he/she is eligible for special consideration. The possession of the degree itself, the interviewee argued, is not special. However, the degree plus some work experience in the field in which the person received the degree is considered. The main beneficiaries in the special category, therefore, are not Native and other visible minorities or socially disadvantaged students; rather, the special category aims at those people who already have an occupational background in the health services or people that have completed a graduate program in the bio-medical sciences.

Another interviewee emphasized that

"when the special consideration for graduate students was introduced, it was not meant as a backdoor to medical school, it was designed for, and still is, for people who made a deliberate choice in university to go into research in the bio-medical sciences. If these people found out later in their career that they could not continue in that particular field because they need to test whatever they are doing on human beings and they could not do that unless they would become doctors."

The same individual pointed out that before 1980 the Faculty of Medicine did not have a special category to enable these people to be admitted to

medical school.

Prior to 1980 we admitted solely on the basis of how well people have done in university and many of these people, in fact, may not have done well in the undergraduate university years. There are students who come into university who do not do well in the first couple of years, and I don't think we should tell them that because you did not do well in the undergraduate years you cannot be eligible to medical school.

If those people, the interviewee stressed, go on into the bio-medical sciences, and they do well in their specialized field, then they become eligible through the special consideration category.

When the author requested comments on the growing need for improved health care services for minority groups and the need of Native physicians to serve their community, the reaction was mixed. One respondent stated that she recognizes the problem and argued that native people get less, and possibly less effective health care than the rest of the population. The infant mortality is higher and life expectancy is shorter among the Native population. Another interviewee added that:

the fact that Natives face barriers to adequate health care, that may include shortages of health manpower where they live, makes it clear how past and continuing maldistribution of health care has affected their physical well being.

Therefore, he continued, "the expressed commitment by a Native candidate to assist an underserved community should coincide with the medical school's determination to play a larger role in addressing society's unmet needs". Another professor saw the commitment of the medical school toward the unserved northern communities, not through educating Native doctors.

We have a department of Northern Affairs, which we set up even before we introduced the special consideration category. We started in Churchill and we worked all the way up to the northern communities. That is the way we show our commitment toward underserved communities.

The Faculty of Medicine allocates about ten per cent of available places to the special consideration category but it is not committed to this percentage. The number of students that the committee will interview, the interviewees argued, depends on the number of applicants the committee judges as qualified students in a particular year. "We have no quota ... If you set a quota then you can be charged with some form of discrimination." None of the interviewees expressed a willingness or suggested that the faculty should increase the number of available places from the present 10 percent.

Expressed Opinion on the Right of a Federal or
Provincial Government to Impose Special Admission Procedures
on Professional Faculties

The opinions about the role of the government in support of special admission programs vary among the interviewees. One rejected any government intervention and argued that it would be a mistake if the government tried to subvert the system and attempted to impose its own political desire upon the professional schools. Another person argued that if the faculty would have shown resistance toward some degree of openness and flexibility in their admission practice, such as the introduction of a special consideration category, then "maybe the government would have the right to take some measures". However the faculty has taken voluntary action, and self initiation to introduce the

special category without any pressure from the government, and therefore the interviewee does not see any reason why the government would have the right to interfere in the faculty's governance. Another respondent expressed the opinion that if the elected government, which represents the people, believes that the faculty wishes to have some kind of affirmative action program, the government has the right, with the cooperation of the faculty, to introduce and finance those programs.

It means that society and its government recognize that injustice has been done to a group of people ... and to rectify the situation, the government justifiably should try to encourage these people to enter the main stream of society through special programs.

The same person added:

I think that with our special admission category there is room for affirmative action in the sense that age, sex and color could be factors in admission, but not the sole factor to decide upon admission.

Yet another professor stated that most affirmative action programs are directed toward groups, not individuals, and by treating individuals on the basis of ascribed characteristics, the government programs may be open to the charges of racism and sexism. Without government interference, the interviewee continued, the faculty with its special admission category can judge each person on an individual basis, and can select only qualified persons.

The Perceived Effect of Special Admission Categories
on Academic Standards

The fact that a student applies under the special consideration category, the interviewees stated, does not imply that the student does not have to meet the same regulations as any other student. What it does mean is that other factors may be taken into consideration as well. As previously stated, one interviewee pointed out that when the special consideration for the graduate students was introduced "it was not meant as a backdoor to medical school for those who could not make it through the front door. Those people are not less qualified or less competent." It was further suggested that the Native students that enrolled in the premedical program do not automatically become candidates in the special category. One interviewee stressed that

"we admit only these that we judge to be academically suitable for medical school. The special consideration intervieweeing committee has to make a decision whether or not this particular student will be able to survive the program on an equal base, otherwise the person will not be admitted. Those people who have been admitted into the faculty from the ACCESS program are academically as competent as anyone can expect."

Another individual remarked that the faculty sometimes may need to work harder with some of the special students, and sometimes a student will have to repeat a year. However, he emphasized the faculty "does not bend the standard at all".

Another interviewee said that some students who are admitted under the "normal" category actually have a lower G.P.A. than their counterparts who were admitted under the "special" category, but he adds "no matter under what category one is applying, he or she must meet the

high standard of the faculty". He also emphasized that all students in the special category must achieve an MCAT score of at least 7; "but there are people from the academic category who scored less than 7 on the MCAT ... so as everyone can see we do not lower in any way the academic standard of the faculty". One person stated that his gut feeling is that if medical school would compare the performance of the students enrolled under special consideration procedures, and students admitted under regular procedures at three stages (MCAT entrance scores and G.P.A., the National Board of Medical Examination Test and performance on internships), the wide gap between the two groups on quantitative entrance criteria diminishes by the time of the clinical internships. The interviewee argued that all students, those from the academic category and those from the special category, are qualified to study medicine.

Program Completion Rate

Table 4

Special Admitted Students at the University of
Manitoba, Faculty of Medicine
(1981-1986)

Number of students admitted	32
Number of students completed	N/A
Percentage of special consideration admitted as a proportion of the total number admitted	6.7%

Table 4 represents the admission statistics provided by the Faculty of Medicine. The table provides information about the number of students admitted under the special consideration category. No

information was available as to the completion rate of those students.

As indicated in Table 4, the number of students admitted under the special category is only 6.7 percent of the total number of students admitted to the first year. This is lower than the ten percent allocated (but not committed) by the Faculty for students applying under the special consideration category.

Chapter Summary

The establishment of a special admission category in the professional schools at the University of Manitoba is a relatively recent occurrence. Its beginnings were in the early 1970's. The special categories generally were developed in response to social pressures for greater flexibility toward groups of people which historically were largely excluded from the professional schools. As a result, the special categories started to reach a new population of students and provided opportunities for the non-traditional professional applicants. What is common to virtually all programs is the decision to use individual background as one of the relevant factors in determining admission. The special admission committees tend to focus on the student's economic status and other inhibitors that he/she may have encountered during life.

The special category provides for the admission of approximately 10 per cent of "academically less qualified students" to the professional schools. It is this provision which constitutes the framework within which special admission students do not have to meet the regular entrance criteria, but are expected to have a good character as exemplified by letters of recommendation and some work experience. In effect, as noted earlier, the admission standards tend to be a "trade-off" in which special admitted students trade lack of superior academic record for a good autobiography, letters of references, impressive interviews and other qualities which the admission committee could use to predict successful professional experience. The faculties' members insisted that all applicants selected are qualified, and the

special category has not resulted in selection of applicants deemed unlikely to succeed in school or in the practice of the profession.

The special categories, as identified by the interviewees, are primarily for mature, Native, socially disadvantaged people, and people who have a background experience that is valuable to the profession. The applicants may have combined scores (G.P.A. and/or entrance examination) which are lower than those of some other applicants who are not accepted. Because of other factors weighted in the admission process for the special applicants, they gain admission over other students. All faculties' members placed high importance on the written autobiography of special admission students, written references and subjective opinion of the interviewing committee toward the prospective special students. All the professors interviewed in this study placed relatively lower value on the grades and test scores.

Most respondents rated special students as earning somewhat lower grades than regular students. The exception was the School of Social Work where respondents stated that academic achievement of specially admitted students was "on par with other students". The general attitude of the interviewees supports the contention that the specially admitted students, once admitted, have increasingly attained success at the professional schools. Perceptions and records tended to unfold a steady pattern in the number of special students recruited and admitted to study. No records were kept in the Faculty of Social Work which could identify the success rate of specially admitted students relative to others. In such absence of recorded data, it was difficult to point out the differences between the two groups.

The special admission efforts appear to be responsible for the increase in non-traditional student enrollment at the professional schools under investigation. The importance of diversity was emphasized by many of the faculties' members. The concern whether the special student would in fact practise in his/her community was hardly mentioned. The issue was raised only in two faculties, Education and Social Work, and even there it was not a prime concern. The pressing issue according to all interviewees is to bring the disadvantaged members of our society into the main stream of society and to elevate their self esteem and self respect.

With respect to government involvement in support of special admission programs, it can be said that different educators had different views, but since the special admission categories have been introduced by the faculties voluntarily, most respondents have not deemed it wise or prudent for the government to dictate its own policies. The interviewees perceived the relationship between government and university as one of provider and receiver, and hence the latter has to address and serve the society's needs.

In concluding, it can be said that considerable effort has been exerted by the four faculties to expand educational opportunity to culturally and economically disadvantaged students. The study reveals that each of the investigated faculties showed some commitment to serve this student population. Clearly special admissions have helped some non-traditional students to gain entrance to professional schools. The task of evaluating educational opportunities and educating Native and other ethnic minorities in higher education has just begun. Still

needed is greater expansion of educational opportunities and greater efforts in recruitment.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of selected academics from four professional schools toward the special admission category in their respective faculties. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain a degree of subjective understanding of these perceptions. Other findings were based on an examination of relevant documents.

Chapter 4 presents a summary of the findings, implications and observations, as well as recommendations.

Summary

Special Admission Procedures

Analysis of the data indicates that special admission procedures exist in the four professional schools and that the Interviewees were familiar with these procedures and practices in their own faculties.

The decision of some faculties to rely partially on subjective judgement in reviewing applicants grows out of the realization that professional schools were an almost exclusively white upper-middle class male domain. As many researchers pointed out (Ringer, 1976; William, 1976; Porter, 1965), scores and grades are not sufficient basis for defining relative merit. Major areas of human characteristics which are relevant to the likelihood of academic and career success are omitted from these two cognitive sources of data about a student.

Based on the survey of the literature and the analysis of the research findings, it was learned that a growing realization exists in the academic community that changes in the admission process are necessary in order to assess properly and fairly minority and socially disadvantaged applicants. As noted, this approach is steadily gaining support in the four investigated faculties with respect to the evaluation of non-traditional candidates. The essential difference between "traditional" and "special" admission programs is that the latter have added minority or socioeconomic status to the academic criteria. Although the mechanics of affirmative/special action programs may vary from school to school, the principle basic to each program is that differences in academic credentials among qualified applicants are not the sole nor the best criteria for judging how qualified an applicant is in terms of his/her potential to make a contribution to the profession and to society. Also, as pointed out in the literature review (Bailey, 1978; Barksdale, 1977), the universities should measure academic achievement not only by how high the applicant stands, but also by how far he/she had to climb from where he/she began. An acceptable academic record supplemented by extracurricular activities, service, or self-support during university may reveal a unique breadth of experience and the ability to handle heavy workloads. Also an expressed commitment by an applicant to assist underserved communities may coincide with a professional school's determination to play a larger role in addressing society's unmet needs. The backgrounds of minority candidates may reveal strengths in languages and an understanding of minority cultures and socioeconomic setting largely absent from the current practice of some professions. Thus, race or

ethnic background can serve to identify candidates who bring specially needed attributes and knowledge to their professional studies.

Attitude

The respondents also expressed positive attitudes toward the existence of a special admission category. However, these positive attitudes have not led to a proportionate increase in the number of students admitted to the professional schools under the special admission category. The one exception is the Winnipeg Education Centre which is an affirmative action inner-city teaching program, and has a specific mandate to serve economically disadvantaged students.

Government Involvement

With respect to government involvement in support of special admission programs, most interviewees expressed the opinion that they do not wish to see government dictate its own policies upon universities. The respondents argued that government should not be involved in implementation of programs, but rather act as a safeguard to remind the academic institutions that their obligation is toward the total community. Government should be in a position of suggesting and giving some direction, they emphasized, but not dictating what programs should be provided and who would be accepted to these programs.

The literature suggests that in this decade it has become a central issue to succeed in the elimination of racial discrimination from all Canadian life and to establish equal access to job and career opportunities. While some progress has been made during the past

decade, the current employment situation provides still disturbing evidence that members of groups historically victimized by discriminatory practices still carry the burden of that wrongdoing. As an example, unemployment statistics, a critical indicator of economic status, reveal sad situations for Natives and other minority groups. Income is another important indicator. In 1980, the average of employment income for Native people, broken down by gender and status reported earnings substantially below national norms. Only 17 per cent of Native males earned \$20,000 and over, while an income of \$30,000 or more was attained by only four per cent. In contrast, 35.4 per cent of the total male labour force earned \$20,000 or more, while 11.7 per cent of the total male labour force earned \$30,000 or more (Abella Report, 1984, p.98). Income for women show similar trends. As the status and rewards of particular types of employment increase, minority participation tends to decline. This is particularly true in the professions, as noted by the Abella Report.

In 1973 the task force on the problems in post secondary education for Manitoba Indian and Metis recommended the following:

Indian students should be admitted to professional programs, and where necessary the programs and curriculum should be altered to facilitate these "new students" in terms of orientation and admissions. Rigid regulations relating to professional education pose additional difficulties for native people because of their segregated social and educational backgrounds, and place artificial barriers in the way of their full participation in professional studies. Society expects Indian people to demonstrate proficiency in adapting themselves to modern society, educationally, socially, and economically, yet draws a line at the point of professional studies, the single most important element along the hard road toward a breakthrough into full participation in modern society (p. 11).

As the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in higher education (1977) pointed out, the public has a clear interest in the problem of access to higher education and especially to graduate and professional education. This interest is rooted in the need to have individuals trained in areas vital to the well-being of the entire society; the role professional schools can play in determining composition of professions; the need to meet the diversified needs of a heterogeneous, pluralistic nation; and the need for individuals of potential talent from all segments of society to have a fair chance to rise to positions as leaders and role models for those in each segment of the society.

The public interest cannot be served by merely selecting for admission those applicants with the highest combinations of test scores and grades, important as they are. Moreover, as respondents pointed out, tests and grades are not sufficient as a sole basis for the decision. They are best, it is said, at identifying at one end of the spectrum those applicants who are likely to distinguish themselves academically and at the other end those likely to fail. But they are insufficient for determining the admission of a great many persons found between these extremes. The point is that there is a need for admissions policies which can serve both the public and the academic interests.

It should be made clear, however, that the admission to higher education in general and to professional schools specifically, is from among qualified applicants, all of whom are able to pursue the work required. Qualified applicants, however, can bring different attributes and different degrees of qualification to the study for a profession.

The review of the literature and the perception of the interviewees appear to offer an adequate rationale for the use of preferential admissions procedures in the selection of minority group students, mature students and socially disadvantaged students. The most frequently mentioned reasons were 1) rectifying past acts of discrimination and exclusion, 2) fulfilling a societal need, 3) producing people willing to serve in underserved areas, 4) increasing the diversity of both the student body and the profession, 5) meeting the moral urgency created by the problems of inequality of access, 6) making professional schools more available to a wider array of students, and 7) modifying the tradition of institutional autonomy.

Given the effects of historic discrimination, the tendency of minority group students to be eliminated through the exclusive use of cognitive measures as the basis of admissions, and the inappropriateness of some highly subjective determinants when used in isolation, preferential admission programs appear to be the most appropriate tool available for increasing access of minority group students to professional schools. A preferential admission category based upon a racial or ethnic classification need not be perceived as a commitment to use this basis forever. Neither should it be viewed as an effort to undermine academic standards. It can be temporarily utilized until the specific underrepresented minority has achieved parity. Then, preferential admission will cease for that particular minority group. Establishing a pool of qualified minority group students, who, can be evaluated in terms of their overall potential for success as students and for meeting societal needs, will provide universities with the flexibility needed in making discretionary

admission decisions. Thus, in determining admission, appropriate weight can be assigned to all measures, including racial classification, test scores, subjective attributes, and societal needs.

Given the underrepresentation of minorities, as a whole, in all academic disciplines, their access to professional schools is perceived as highly desirable, not only to provide diversity among students, but also to provide diversity within the professions. Minority students need to have role models and middle class students should have exposure to minorities in non-stereotypical roles.

Perceived Effects on Academic Standards and Program Completion

The findings of this study do not support the argument raised by some researchers (Sowell, 1982, Ornstein, 1976) who said that preferential admission erodes standards of academic excellency, and compels universities to admit unqualified students. Most interviewees perceived that there are no significant differences overall in performance of special students as compared to regular students. All interviewees argued that the special students do not lower academic standards in their faculty and that those people are not less qualified.

An analysis of the academic achievement of beneficiaries under the special admission category reveals that the completion rate among the special students is somewhat lower than that of the regular students. The data support the researchers (Fried, 1974; Fleming, 1978; Rappaport, 1974) that argue that under the special admission programs the pool of qualified applicants is enlarged to include groups previously excluded from the professional schools.

In June of 1983, the Manitoba Government Employees Association and the government of Manitoba, recognizing the inequality, prejudices and discriminatory barriers against certain groups, signed a joint policy statement that established criteria for an affirmative action program for departments and agencies that fall within the Civil Service Act.

The committee (Affirmative Action Policies Statement, 1983) stated the following:

While we cannot change historical patterns, prejudices or past failings of our institutions, we can undertake some positive actions how to overcome the effects of the past practices; that is, we can implement affirmative action measures.

Though the committee did not deal directly with higher education, it provided the following guideline regarding education:

Special measures may include outreach recruitment, maintaining an inventory of target group applicants, providing career opportunity information to target group members and educational institutions, establishing alternative selection methods in order to evaluate skills and abilities not necessarily recognized in regular selection method.

Taking race or ethnicity into account in the admission process has not meant that unqualified minority applicants are being admitted to professional studies. As noted earlier, available research questions the contention that applicants with higher entrance examination scores are better qualified to enter professional schools. Despite this evidence, these test scores combined with undergraduate grades are used to provide "benchmark scores" which then may be applied with little flexibility to rank qualified applicants. Any

individual ranked in this way may appear to be less qualified than he or she actually is. As one faculty member put it "the serious thought that goes into the admission process is to achieve 'fairness', and that requires that every applicant admitted be fully assessed". The recognition that entrance tests serve as major barriers for minorities has been recognized in the literature and by the professors interviewed.

Two other points should be noted in this discussion of special admission programs at the professional schools. One concerns the question of whether minority graduates would in fact practise in the minority community. Substantial evidence from studies conducted in the United States indicates that they do. A study by the National Planning Association (1976), for example, showed a correlation indicating that black physicians have a greater tendency than their white counterparts to practise in the primary health care fields which administer direct client service to the minority communities. Another study by the Association of American Medical Colleges (1982) found that minorities showed the highest interest in practising in areas having a shortage of physicians. Similar studies were not conducted in Canada, but it is assumed that the trend in Canada would not be different.

Social utility justification for preferential treatment was only partially supported by the interviewees from the four faculties. Some interviewees agree with researchers such as Jones (1977) and Koleda and Craig (1976) that minority groups need to be served by people with whom they share a common background. They expressed the

opinion that the special admission category should serve a specific social purpose. Other interviewees, however, see their faculty's commitment toward minority groups as providing services to the minority communities and not as training people from these communities.

There was a general agreement among all interviewees that entrance tests serve as a major barrier for minorities and socially disadvantaged groups in gaining admission to professional schools. The interviewees argued that one of the reasons the professional schools decided to include the special admission category was the realization that the regular admission category excludes certain groups of people from professional schools. This view supports researchers such as Evan (1977), Faia (1969), and Manning (1976) who also argued that entrance tests have a built in cultural bias that accounts for the lower scores among minority groups.

The interviewees agreed that the movement of minority group members into professional occupations is one way in which the university can facilitate upward mobility. This view coincides with the argument of some researchers (Gross, 1978; Koleda and Craig, 1976; Jones, 1977) who argued that special admission programs provide opportunities for minorities and socially disadvantaged to participate in all aspects of society and promote a more egalitarian future in our society.

A second issue influencing minority enrollment trends in higher education deals with childhood education. This view was expressed by many educators (Anisef et al., 1980; Lesser, 1964; Stephen & Lyons, 1984; Porter et al., 1979; Burke, 1984; Judge Abella, 1984) who argued that factors such as family income, parental education,

ethnicity, and language used in the home influence the career choice. Clearly, then, the special admission programs in the last decade were introduced to provide educational opportunities and encouragement to those minority groups about whom Judge Abella and other writers are talking. According to them, these segments of our society have too long suffered from an unfair share of the educational system. It is not unrealistic to assume that without special admission programs, minority enrollments in professional schools will drop to distressingly low levels.

Implications and Observations of the Study

The data generated in this study have considerable implications for further research. These implications are summarized in this section.

A further examination of the population under study may reveal potential differences between the perceptions of professors closely associated with special students and those who are not. Although not part of this study, it may very well be that professors who deal with affirmative action programs, or those who have helped to implement the special admission category in their faculties are more strongly supportive of government intervention, may have favorable attitudes toward the concept of affirmative action in higher education, and hold higher education institutions partly responsible for implementing social equality.

A further study comparing faculties' views toward affirmative action and/or special admission programs could be made between

provinces. Such an assessment could survey all institutions within each province for a thorough examination of the issue.

There is a need to examine exemplary special admission programs to identify the elements of successful implementation resulting in the admission of "non-traditional" students. Many respondents expressed a sentiment that the government should not impose its requirements on the faculty admission process. A closer comparison could be made among faculties with no required special admission programs or a volunteer plan and those with mandated programs.

It would be valuable to examine and describe the perceptions of "special students" on the effect of faculty attitude on performance in professional schools.

Additional studies should be made to determine the impact of special admissions on the faculties and the professional practices.

Judging from their comments, faculty members supported the concept of equal opportunity, but generally resented quota system as a strategy to meet this goal. Among faculty members there is a strong resentment against external intervention in the faculty admission practices. They appear to prefer the idea of faculties developing their own approaches and strategies for increasing the number of nontraditional students, and see government in a monitoring role, ensuring steps toward greater equality are being taken at the university level. An in-depth perceptual study may help to clarify these observations.

Recommendations

With the order to expand educational opportunities came greater demand for financial support and counselling services.

The "nontraditional" university student requires a somewhat different form of service than the "regular" student. While all share basic needs, special students require more intensive counselling, both personal and academic, and better tutorial assistance. This extra effort is needed in order to overcome educational, academic, psychological and cultural differences. Students in need of financial assistance tended to seek this help without particular reservations, but as interviewees have suggested, some "special" students in need of counselling and tutorial services are reluctant to seek them. These services may be available, but do not appear to be adequate in either of the four faculties.

It has become evident that if one of the functions of the special admission category is to assist these students in gaining equal footing with their regular admission peers, additional and more effective support should be built into the program.

Data suggest that adequate counselling and tutoring were not readily available in the four professional faculties. It seems that two faculties, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Medicine, had tried tutorial services. However, interviewees in both faculties expressed some dissatisfaction with the overall results. The students who were in need of tutorial aid, it seems, refused to seek it out for fear of being labeled "stupid" or "special", judged the respondents.

It was also learned that the counselling and tutorial problems were not all academic, but emotional, psychological, social and cultural, as well. Better and more effective methods of special services delivery might be developed and provided to this group of students.

Summer programs could be provided to give remedial and enrichment courses before the academic year begins. The goals of these programs should be academic reinforcement, developing study habits, critical thinking, reading comprehension, and other related skills.

The professional schools might consider developing "half-track" programs which will allow students an opportunity to take the first year program over a longer time frame. The literature indicates that, rather than having to lower standards or drop a large proportion of minority and socially disadvantaged students, this provides an opportunity to maintain standards and give students a chance to complete their program.

It is recommended that a concentrated effort be made to provide rural and inner city locations with information relating to the special admission programs available at the professional schools.

It is recommended that all new personnel in their initial job orientation sessions be provided with background information and knowledge about the special admission program and policy.

The underrepresentation of minorities in the study and practice of professional schools should lead the universities to re-evaluate the traditional admissions process in order to identify the major barriers that still prevent many minorities from entering professional

schools. It is recommended that universities determine how these barriers can be removed.

Conclusions

The starting principle of effective problem solving is the requirement to determine if there is indeed a problem and, if so, what must be changed. The author of this study has noticed fundamental differences in the attitude of various faculty members, and between different faculties, toward the purpose of special admission categories.

Respondents from the School of Social Work argued that minority groups rarely receive services from people with whom they share common backgrounds. Their main argument was, therefore, that the faculty should aim toward increasing accessibility for native and other visible minorities who could then provide the necessary services to their "own" people.

Members from the Faculty of Law expressed dissatisfaction with the proportional number of certain social groups and racial groups at their faculty. The interviewees rationalized their argument for higher proportional representation of special category students on a number of grounds. These include the urgent need for greater diversity in the profession, the need for role models and social mobility for the disadvantaged groups in our society. All the faculty members expressed desire to increase the number of allocated places in the special category.

Respondents from the Faculty of Education also expressed willingness to see more open admission practices towards students applying for special admission. The respondents see open admission as a step toward greater social equality.

The academic community in the Faculty of Medicine expressed a diversity of attitudes and opinions regarding the special admission category. They generally argued, however, that the emphasis in medical school is primarily on academic achievement, measured by empirical data. Therefore, the interviewees noted, the main beneficiaries in the special category are not native or socially disadvantaged students, but rather persons who already have occupational backgrounds in the health services, or who have completed graduate programs in the bio-medical services. None of the interviewees suggested that the faculty should increase the number of available places or commit itself to fill the 10 percent of first year seats allocated for the special consideration category.

Three out of the four investigated faculties, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Social Work, and the Faculty of Education, agreed that there is a problem with the proportional numbers of certain groups in professional schools. The current admission practices are reflected in disparate outcomes for various groups in terms of occupational status and consequent income levels. As Judge Abella (1984) argued,

At present, society's disadvantaged are disproportionately assumed by four designated groups. Clearly, some distinctions have been made or overlooked in the past that have resulted in the disproportionate representation

of native people, visible minorities, disabled persons, and women on the lower rungs of the ladder to society's benefits." By reversing our approach and by using these same distinctions to identify, confront, and eliminate barriers these distinctions have caused in the past, we can reverse the trends, provide access, and open the door to equality (p. 3).

Whether or not university officials choose to articulate it, the fundamental justification for special admission programs in professional schools is identical to that which has led the government to uphold affirmative action programs in employment. Special admission programs are designed to provide redress for past practices of racial and gender exclusion from the professional schools. Equally important, the programs are intended to provide opportunities that were denied to many applicants earlier in their lives, and that may be foreclosed forever if special admission programs are not permitted to intervene. The justification for special admission to secure equal access to the job market lies in the need to overcome the effects of past and present discrimination. It rests in the practical need to assure that young people whose lives have been marred by discrimination in public education are not forever barred from the opportunities to realize their potential and to become productive citizens. The short history of special admission programs has shown such programs to be promising instruments for obtaining some measure of equality of opportunity.

In summary, then, although sufficient data to form definite conclusions regarding the achievement of beneficiaries under the special admission category were not available, those that were

available are consistent with other studies (Rappaport, 1974; Simon and Covell, 1975) which argued that once opportunities are provided, the specially admitted students will perform as well as their counterparts.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

AN INTERVIEW WITH ONE ACADEMIC MEMBER FROM
THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

February 4, 1986

Could you please tell me what the special admission procedures to your faculty are?

Historically, the special consideration was set up as a category in the mid 1970s, where the school was changing its admission procedures and no longer required an interview for admission. So the school said, look, we are only going to admit people based on GPA, maybe we ought to have some method of admitting people who have shown a commitment to and involvement in the profession or in human services. To do that, we'll set a separate category of admission, called special consideration, and we'll look at people based on two separate sets of criteria. The first one is, are they Native people? The other category is for people who through paid employment or volunteer work experience could demonstrate a commitment to and involvement in human services, and/or people who had some kind of degree or certificate or diploma in the human services field. Those students who would be considered had to be over 21, they needed an adjusted GPA of 2.0 after a minimum of 30 credit hours, instead of 2.5 GPA and higher, which is required in the regular category. Except for the Native applicants, all other special applicants had to be residents of Manitoba. Natives could be from anywhere in Canada. It was not clear initially whether or not the GPA and work experience

counted for the Native people. This was not an issue and even weighting was not an issue from about 1976 until 1982, because the school at the time was working on the assumption that it had unlimited resources and that it could take any student who could meet the minimum eligibility requirements. So, if you were a Native with 2.0, you got in. If you were a person who was over 21 and a resident of Manitoba with 2.0 GPA or better and had been a volunteer for a year with Childrens' Aid, you would likely gain admission. Only since 1982, we started to provide only up to ten percent of first year seats for special consideration students. In 1982, at that point, the fiscal crisis of the Canadian society struck the School of Social Work and we started limiting admission. We started to draw a line on the list; prior to 1982 if you showed minimum admission requirements you were offered a place. What I did find was that there was a rough historical average between the years 1976 and 1982 of 14 percent. So, what I did was I went to the admissions committee. I went to the school council and said: we cannot take everybody, we limited our admission, we want permission to use 14 percent as the number of places for first year special students. The school by then had limited the admission to 85 FTE (full time equivalent). We set 14 percent of the seats for the special consideration category, and we based it on the historical average.

The next thing we had to do is to set up a procedure for giving some rational weighting to the GPA, and the experience for the people in that category. So we gave roughly 40 percent weighting to GPA and 60 percent to personal experience which could be demonstrated through

autobiographies and reference letters. We reserved the right to interview but I don't think we exercised it until 1985. If we had a question about the person's background or his/her commitment to the profession, we reserved the right to bring him/her in for an interview. Gradually, we did some other things. We decided that the Native category should not exist independently as a special consideration category. First of all, the Natives should be part of the 14 percent, and second of all, Native applicants should have to demonstrate a commitment to and involvement in the social service profession, through volunteer work or paid employment. Consequently, after 1982/1983 school year, we folded the two categories into one special consideration category, but there are other ways, and just being a Native does not make you eligible for the special category. You have got to be Native and show commitment to and involvement in the profession.

How many people from the total pool of applicants apply under the special category?

The number started with about 20-25 and went up to 75, so it became more and more difficult to get in through the special consideration category. What was also happening was that as it got more and more difficult to get in through the regular way, which was GPA, people started applying through the special consideration. We did find that during the years in which the GPA level for admission was going up in the regular category, it was also going up in the special consideration category. We had to watch our weighting very carefully, because we were

giving 40 percent to grades, and if you get some people who have 3.2 or 3.4 GPA who cannot gain admission under the academic category, applying under the special category should weight them much more heavily than a person who has 2.1 GPA but five years of experience in the social service. So the weighting we had to adjust from year to year. The school is reviewing the admission procedures, and there will be subsequently changes and also an interview will be added.

In your opinion, are the special admission procedures appropriate in the university setting and in particular in the professional school?

The special consideration group compete in similar ways to the regular group except that we use more criteria with different weight. Firstly, the applicants themselves are required to provide us with considerably more documentations than the regular students. The most important document is the autobiographic statement of the student. We pass these documentations to a set of reviewer people here on faculty and the people on the review committee score the special consideration person on a variety of criterias. One of these criteria must still be GPA. We would not take anyone with less than 2.0 GPA. Secondly, the review committee scores them on the basis of relevant work experience, they score them on the basis of educational experience and its relevance to the profession, and they score them on the basis of references. So you see, all these steps ensure high standards in the faculty, and also ensure that we select the right people to the profession. Therefore, the special admission procedure, if administered correctly, are appropriate and should be integrated in the admission procedure of each faculty.

Do you think the federal and/or provincial governments have a right (legal or social) to impose special consideration procedures to professional schools? Would you please elaborate on this point?

- I don't think that university should be either an ivory tower or a direct reflection of society. I think that there are some middle grounds between the two. I think university has to be a centre of excellence in terms of learning, in terms of research. Universities have a unique role in society. So they don't necessarily reflect society, but at the same time I think universities cannot be elitist. They cannot say: we'll take only those students who will make us look better. We have to be able to take people who are going to challenge us, and those are going to be people from all walks of life. It is easy to educate middle class persons, from middle class high schools, from middle class neighbourhoods, who will come, sit down, take notes, and give back tests, simple, but if that is all what we are having, we are not doing a very good job. I think, therefore, that government has some role to play in terms of saying: if we are funding you, you have to be prepared to take the kind of students who are not easy. Government has the right to suggest how their money is out to be spent. But if government will start getting in and saying: this is exactly what you should be doing, or here is a list of people that you must accept, then it is not a university any more as a centre of learning with standards and guidelines, instead it is a program.

What do you think is the effect of special admission procedures on the academic standards in your faculty?

I cannot base my answer on any empirical data, because I have never seen any. My guess is that the answer is that the special students do not lower academic standards. The number of people who fail out of the social work is very small. I don't know if any of them in the past year or two were special consideration students. My guess is that they are not disproportionately represented. I believe that the average social work student is a little bit older than the average student pursuing the first degree. I know of many mature people who have gone through the program, and in terms of how they affect my class, they affect it always positively. They are not as naive about the world, therefore they counterbalance those students who are relatively naive. If I say something a student who is a little bit older and has been in the world a bit says: I have a similar experience, or I don't agree with you but I understand the perspective. The younger students tend to say: I am getting the teacher's perspective, but I am also getting someone else's perspective. The special students tend to be more confident of themselves, particularly as they move through the program. They are less socialized into the sit-down-and-take-notes and don't open your mouth. They are more likely to ask questions and that is, in my view, what promotes learning. So I don't see any negative effect. The special student will ask many more questions and challenge you more than the regular campus students. But other than that, the tests are the same, the grading systems are the same.