

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 127 869

HE 008 176

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 TITLE Societal Factors; An Analysis of Selected Factors of Dormitory Students and Commuting Students at Johnson and Wales College.
 PUB DATE 17 Jun 75
 NOTE 22p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University; Best copy available

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
 DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Age; *Business Education; College Environment; *Commuting Students; Comparative Analysis; Grade Point Average; *Higher Education; *Resident Students; *Student Characteristics; *Student College Relationship
 IDENTIFIERS *Johnson and Wales College

ABSTRACT

Focusing on freshmen commuter students and freshmen dormitory students at Johnson and Wales College, general characteristics and academic achievement were measured. General entrance characteristics included student age, College Entrance Examination Board scores and high school rank. Academic achievement was measured in terms of student grades in Introduction to Accounting and Business Mathematics courses. In addition, final grade-point averages were compared as an indicator of academic achievement. In general, entrance characteristics for commuter and dormitory students were similar. Some differences in academic achievement were noted in Introduction to Accounting and Business Mathematics courses and in terms of the students' final grade-point averages. (Author/KE)

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AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED FACTORS OF DORMITORY STUDENTS
AND COMMUTING STUDENTS AT JOHNSON & WALES COLLEGE

SOCIETAL FACTORS

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A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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June 17, 1975

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INTRODUCTION

The drastic increases in the cost of a college education which have been witnessed in recent years has seriously affected many students range of options with respect to attending college. Many students are being forced to reassess their positions and choose colleges within commuting distance as opposed to those colleges which would necessitate on campus living. Obviously, lack of funds is the main obstacle to students in this position. The cost of living on campus could add as much as three thousand dollars to a student's already high tuition invoice.

If students are altering their mode of attending college are they foresaking an intrinsic benefit of a college education by living at home, or are they enhancing their chances of achieving their educational goals by not living on campus?

The literature on the characteristics of dormitory students and commuter students is scarce. What appears to be the first real detailed study of commuter students and resident students is Arthur Chickering's recent work, *Commuter Versus Resident Students*(1974). The study was national in scope and covered approximately twenty-seven thousand students and one hundred and seventy-nine institutions. Chickering focused his attention on many of the characteristics of resident students versus commuter students. In addition, he measured the outcomes of the educational experience in terms of achievement(grade point average), attitudes, behaviors, and future plans as they applied to resident and commuter students.



Many interesting conclusions were reached (Chickering, 1974):

- (1) There are constant relationships between attitudes after the freshman year and living arrangements during that year;
- (2) Students who live at home during that year are more frequently conservative while students who live on campus are inclined to be more liberal;
- (3) Commuter students feel that restrictions on free speech in the press is needed more so than dormitory students.

Several academic factors were discovered in the study(Chickering, 1974):

- (1) Commuters less frequently type their homework than resident students;
- (2) Commuters less frequently oversleep compared to resident students;
- (3) Commuters less frequently ask teachers for advice;
- (4) Commuters more frequently fail to complete their assignments.

In terms of personal characteristics, Chickering found that students who live at home rate themselves lower on many important characteristics after the freshman year than students who live under other conditions. Thus, during the freshman year, the self-esteem of commuting students suffers in comparison with their residential peers(Chickering, 1974).

In general, therefore, Chickering discovered that students who commute from home during their freshman year in college(Chickering, 1974):

- (1) are less frequently involved in academic activities and in extracurricular activities;
- (2) rate themselves lower in a variety of abilities and desirable personal characteristics;
- (3) are less committed to a diverse array of long-range goals, and are more conservative in their sociopolitical attitudes.

It would appear that the vast majority of educators today are aware of individual differences in their students. It is also apparent, though, that many administrators and teachers act as though these differences did not exist. Students are all treated alike, take many of the same courses, are assigned to classes together and in some cases assigned a roommate instead of being able to choose a roommate of their choice.

Chickering(1974) states:

" The impact on the student of a given curriculum, course, teacher, fellow student or residence hall experience will vary depending upon the background of the student. Despite the fact that the principle smacks us in the eye daily, higher education has given little attention to it. Instead, students have been treated as though they were billiard balls, all alike in shape, size and destiny, all stationary till struck."

" The pool table is tipped and each ball is rolling. College experiences can accelerate, retard, or deflect the directions in which they move, depending on the force and direction of the college experiences as they intersect with those of the student."

"Until colleges and universities recognize the significance of individual differences much more explicitly and develop policies, practices and educational resources accordingly, the promise of significant learning for the increasingly diverse kinds of students pursuing higher education will go unfilled. The place to begin is by conceptualizing more clearly some of the major dimensions of individual differences which need to be taken into account. They reside in three general areas: (1) purposes and interests; (2) skills and abilities; (3) cognitive styles."

At Johnson & Wales College, a private four-year business school, full-time enrollment is approximately nine hundred and twenty seven students, with four hundred and thirty eight (47.2%) living in the college dormitory and four hundred and eighty nine (52.8%) commuting from home. It would be interesting to know the characteristics of each of these groups to determine how well each group is being served and how their respective environments affect their academic achievements.



PROCEDURE

In order to obtain information on resident and commuter students the master list of all students scheduled to enter the college in the academic year 1974-75 was consulted. The master list totaled three hundred and ninety four students. The list was broken down into dormitory students and commuter students:

Dormitory students - 177 (44.9%)

Commuter students - 217 (55.1%)

Student files were consulted in order to compile data on resident and commuter students. Of the total of three hundred and ninety four students two hundred and ninety two students qualified for the study. The remaining students consisted of transfer students, freshmen who had attended a previous summer session and those who applied but did not enter in the month of September. Therefore, the analysis of commuter and dormitory students was concentrated on students with no previous college experience.

The initial procedure was to identify entering characteristics of dormitory and commuter students:

- (1) High school rank;
- (2) Ability level as determined by the Schrammel General Abilities Test;
- (3) College Entrance Examination Board scores;
- (4) Age.

Secondly, information was gathered with respect to academic achievement during the 1974-75 academic year in the following categories:

- (1) Grade distributions in Introduction to Accounting and Business Mathematics courses in which all entering students are required to enroll;
- (2) Number of students voluntarily withdrawing from Introduction to Accounting and Business Mathematics courses;
- (3) Number of students leaving school.

Finally, information relative to the end of the freshman year was gathered for resident and commuter students with respect to:

- (1) Overall grade point averages;
- (2) Numbers of students, resident and commuters, with grade point averages in the following categories:
 - (a) 3.50 to 4.00
 - (b) 3.00 to 3.49
 - (c) 2.50 to 2.99
 - (d) 2.00 to 2.49
 - (e) 1.50 to 1.99
 - (f) 1.00 to 1.49
 - (g) below 1.00

DATA RESULTING FROM STUDY

The initial procedure involved the gathering data on the entering characteristics of commuter and dormitory students. Table I on the following page summarizes these entering characteristics.

The average age of a commuting student was nineteen and nine-tenth years(19.9) while the average age of a dormitory student was eighteen and three-tenth years(18.3). Since Johnson & Wales College does not require College Entrance Examination Board scores as a prerequisite for admission to the college, a relatively low percentage of entering students had submitted these scores to the college along with their high school transcripts. The average verbal score for both commuters and dormitory students was three hundred and seventy-nine(379) while the average mathematics scores were four hundred and six(406) for commuters and four hundred and ten(410) for dormitory students.

During the freshman orientation period in September of the year freshmen are asked to take the Schrammel General Abilities Test, which is similar to the United States Army Alpha Intelligence Test. Again, a very low percentage of students took this examination. The average score earned by commuter students was one hundred and three(103) while the dormitory students earned an average score of one hundred and four (104).

TABLE I.
SUMMARY OF ENTERING CHARACTERISTICS FOR
COMMUTER AND DORMITORY STUDENTS

	COMMUTER STUDENTS	DORMITORY STUDENTS
AGE.....	<u>19.9</u>	<u>18.3</u>
COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION BOARD SCORES:		
VERBAL.....	379	379
MATHEMATICS.....	406	410
TOTAL.....	785	790
SCHRAMMEL SCORE.....	<u>103.5</u>	<u>104.8</u>

High school ranks were available for ninety-five(95) commuter students and ninety-four(94) dormitory students. The average high school rank for commuter students was .511 while the average high school rank for dormitory students was .509. Table II. on the following page presents a percentile distribution of high school rank for commuter students and dormitory students.

TABLE II.
DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENTILE HIGH SCHOOL RANK
FOR COMMUTER STUDENTS AND DORMITORY STUDENTS

PERCENTILE	COMMUTER STUDENTS		DORMITORY STUDENTS	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
.000-.099	5	5.3%	8	8.5%
.100-.199	6	6.3%	6	6.4%
.200-.299	11	11.6%	13	13.8%
.300-.399	13	13.6%	9	9.6%
.400-.499	15	15.8%	10	10.6%
.500-.599	9	9.5%	10	10.6%
.600-.699	7	7.4%	10	10.6%
.700-.799	11	11.6%	8	8.5%
.800-.899	13	13.6%	9	9.6%
.900-.999	5	5.3%	11	11.8%
AVERAGE		<u>.511</u>		<u>.509</u>

The second phase of the study involved the gathering of grades for commuter students and dormitory students in Introduction to Accounting and Business Mathematics courses. Figure I. and Figure II. on the following pages present the distribution of grades in each of these courses. A larger proportion of A grades and B grades was earned in Business Mathematics by commuter students as opposed to dormitory students. At the same time dormitory students earned the greater proportion of C, D, and F grades.

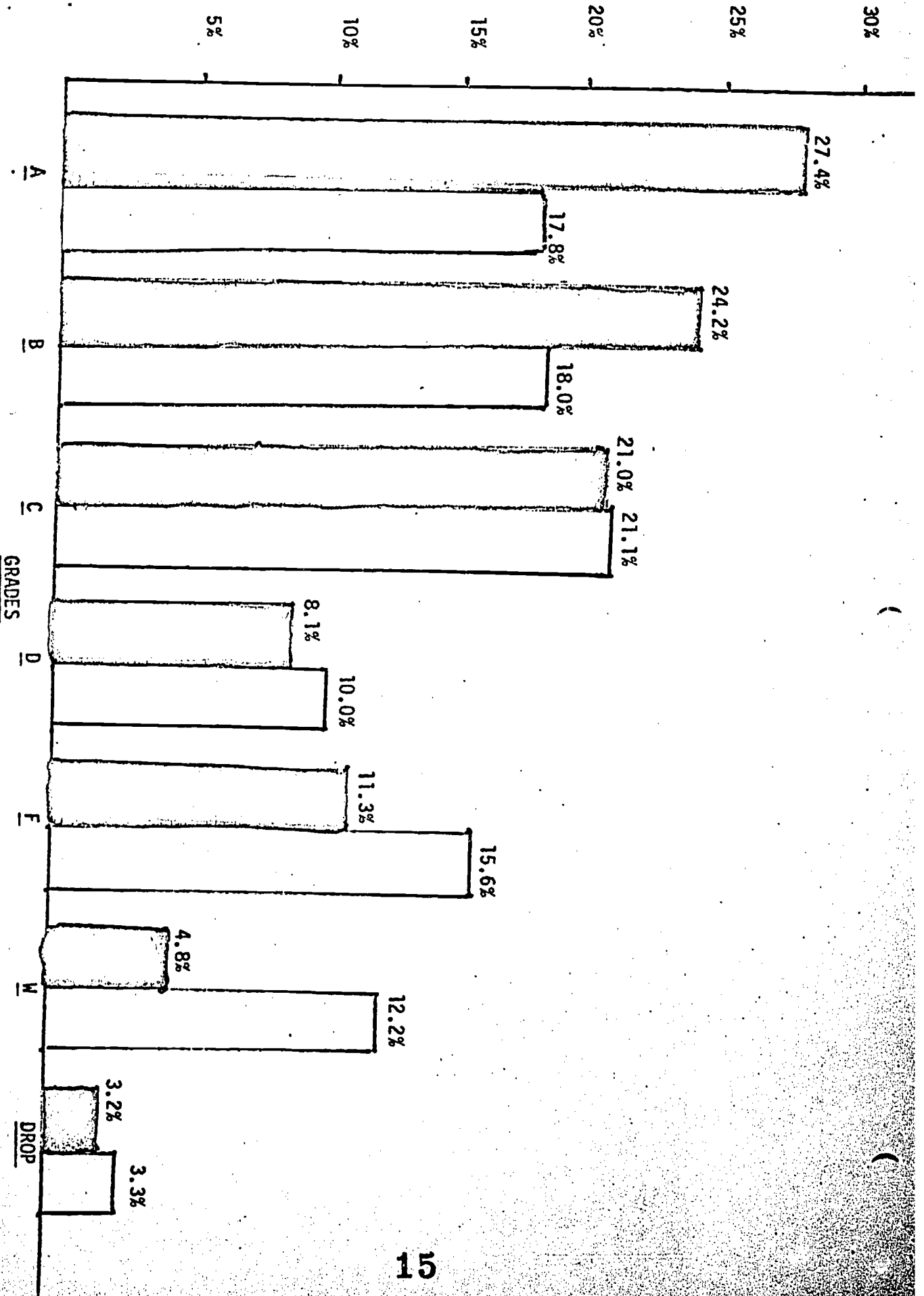


FIGURE 1. COMPARISON OF GRADES IN INTRODUCTION TO ACCOUNTING FOR DORMITORY STUDENTS AND COMPUTER STUDENTS

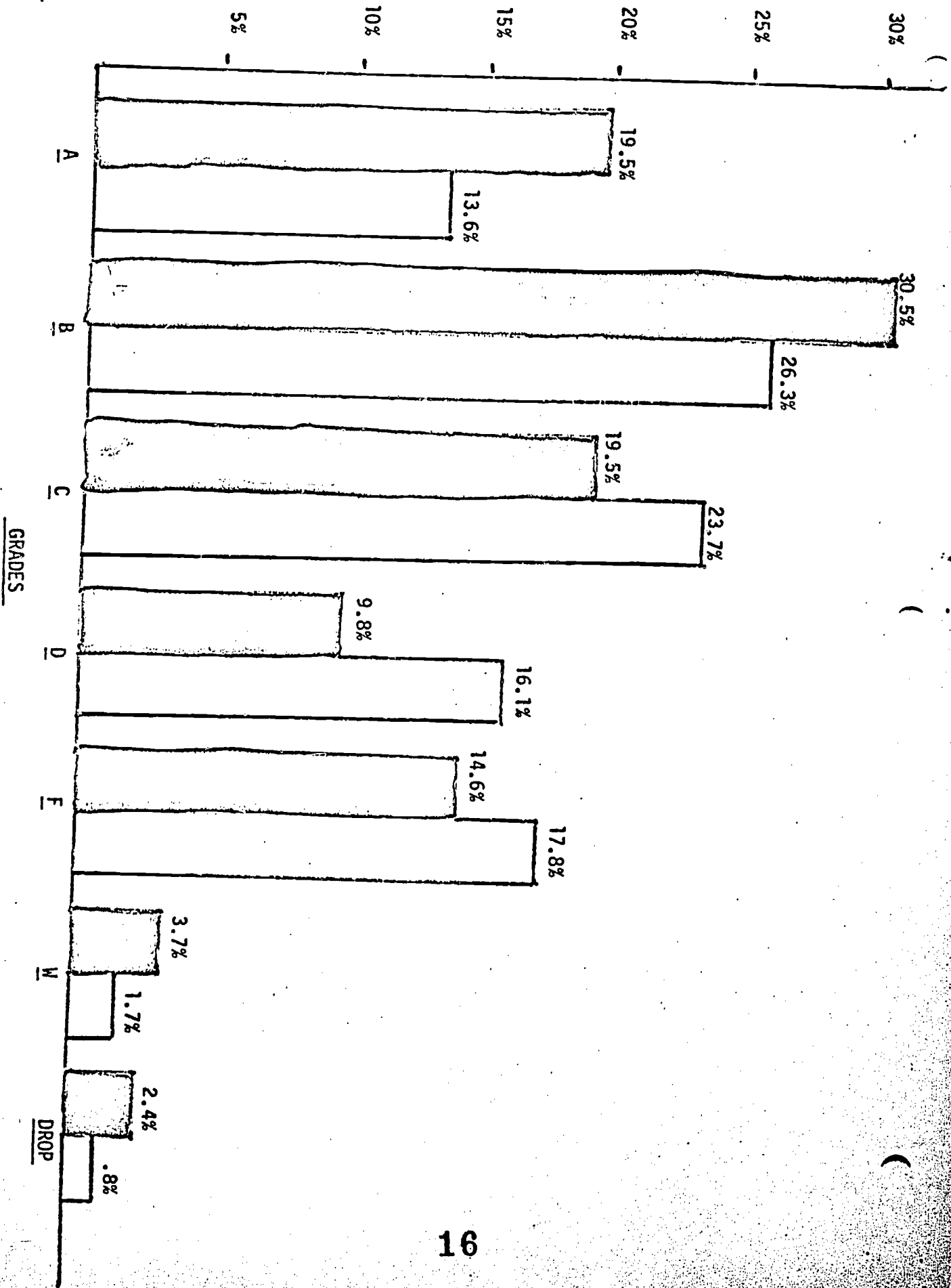


FIGURE II. COMPARISON OF GRADES IN BUSINESS MATHEMATICS FOR DORMITORY STUDENTS AND COMPUTER STUDENTS

When comparing grades earned in Introduction to Accounting, again the greater portion of A grades and B grades was earned by commuter students. The proportion of C grades earned was practically equal, while dormitory students earned a greater proportion of D grades and F grades.

The following facts were revealed concerning voluntary withdrawals from Business Mathematics and Introduction to Accounting:

- (1) a larger proportion of dormitory students have withdrawn from Introduction to Accounting as opposed to commuter students;
- (2) a larger proportion of commuter students have withdrawn from Business Mathematics as opposed to dormitory students.

The final portion of the analysis involved the gathering of final grade point averages for all freshmen commuter students and freshmen dormitory students. One hundred and nineteen (119) commuter students completed the three trimester academic year while one hundred and twenty eight dormitory students completed the academic year. Commuter students earned an average grade point average for three trimesters of 2.54 while dormitory students earned an average grade point average of 2.33. Figure III. on the following page presents the distribution of grade point averages for commuter students and dormitory students.

The following observations may be made:

- (1) A larger portion of commuter students earned grade point averages above 3.00 (35.3%) as opposed to dormitory students (25%);

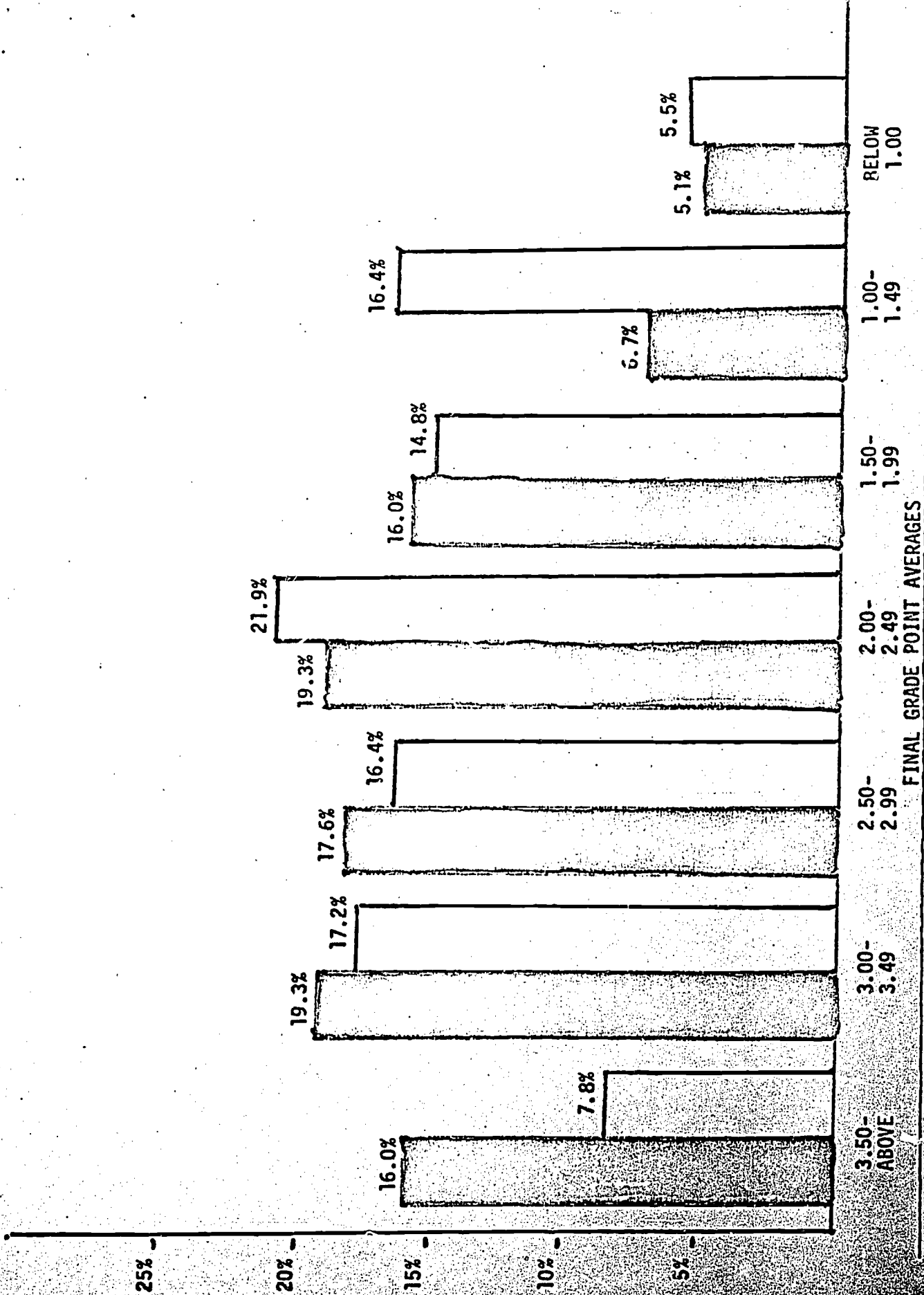


FIGURE III. DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL GRADE POINT AVERAGES FOR FRESHMEN COMMUTER AND DORMITORY STUDENTS.

- (2) A larger proportion of dormitory students earned grade point averages below 1.50(21.9%) as opposed to commuter students (11.8%).

CONCLUSIONS

By comparing the data presented for freshmen commuter students and freshmen dormitory students the following observations may be made:

- (1) Commuter students are slightly older than dormitory students having a mean age of nineteen and nine-tenths years(19.9) as opposed to dormitory students who have a mean age of eighteen and three-tenths years(18.3);
- (2) Commuter and dormitory students rank rather closely on College Entrance Examination Board scores with commuters showing an average score of 785 and dormitory students showing an average score of 790;
- (3) Commuter and dormitory students compare favorably in their respective high school ranks with commuters showing a mean percentile ranking of .511 while dormitory students have a mean percentile ranking of .509

- (4) a larger portion of dormitory students have withdrawn from Introduction to Accounting courses as opposed to commuter students;
- (5) a larger portion of commuter students have withdrawn from Business Mathematics courses as opposed to dormitory students;
- (6) commuter students have earned higher grades in Introduction to Accounting as opposed to dormitory students;
- (7) commuter students have earned higher grades in Business Mathematics as opposed to dormitory students;
- (8) as a group, commuter students have earned higher grade point averages than dormitory students;
- (9) a greater number of commuter students have voluntarily withdrawn from the college as opposed to dormitory students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data collected and the conclusions reached in this study it is evident that further study is needed to reach concrete conclusions with respect to the affect which living arrangements have on a students academic achievement . Further, no attempt has been made to consider other variables such as:

- (1) participation in extracurricular activities;
- (2) pursuance of full-time or part-time work;
- (3) family bakkground;
- (4) cultural background.

All of the above variables should be considered when attempting to reach conclusions on the affect which living arrangements have on academic achievement.

Therefore, the basic recommendation of this study is that the scope be enlarged to include all students in the college and also to include other variables such as working students, married students, single students and family background.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Bird, Caroline. The Case Against College New York: David McKay Co, 1975.

Chickering, Arthur. Commuting Versus Resident Students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1974.