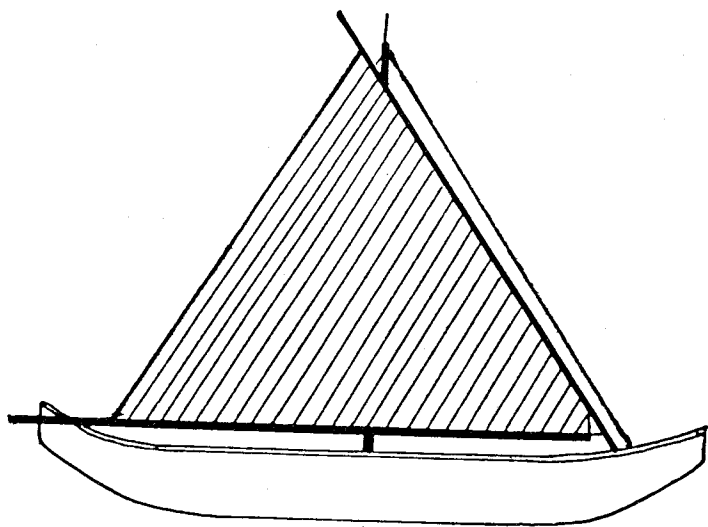


Island Voyagers In New Quests:
An Assessment Of
Degree Completion Among
Micronesian College Students



Micronesian
Area
Research
Center

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

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ASSESSMENT OF DEGREE COMPLETION AMONG
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by the research team:

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PREFACE

This study on Micronesian college dropouts is the first empirical one of its kind ever done. It began through the intellectual impetus provided by Father Francis X. Hezel, S.J. of the Micronesian Seminar at Truk. Several years ago he initiated and directed a study, which subsequently was published (PACIFIC STUDIES, Vol. 2, No. 2), about the dramatic increase in the consumption and availability of education in Truk. As the same could be said for other Micronesian states, Hezel's study received attention throughout the islands. Lynn Ilon of the Truk Education Department, contacted me regarding the possibility of developing a study of college dropouts in Micronesia as a follow-up to Hezel's work. At the time I was president of the college at Ponape and felt such an effort would be useful and worthwhile. Mrs. Ilon completed a proposal which was submitted for funding.

Several months later the study was funded by the National Institute of Education in Washington with considerable assistance from Janice Johnson at the Interior Department. However, the situation in Micronesia had shifted as Mrs. Ilon left the islands to accompany her husband on a Micronesian Liaison Office assignment in Washington, and I had left Ponape to become the director of the Micronesian Area Research Center (MARC) at the University of Guam. My successor in Ponape, Fredrick W. Young, Jr., felt as I did, that the project should be implemented. Through his good offices the Community College of Micronesia Board of Regents approved of the idea of transferring the project administration to MARC. The Graduate Dean at the University of Guam, Roy T. Tsuda, was also very supportive. Thus, after the appropriate paperwork clearances in Washington, the study's management was relocated from Ponape to Guam.

During the fall of 1979 considerable reworking and redesign of Ilon's initial proposal was undertaken. A faculty research team was engaged which included Randy L. Workman, Principal Investigator, James Craig, James Nagle, and Edward Robbins, Research Associates. Much of the project's continuing management functions were performed by Christine O'Meara, Research Assistant. Working closely with Dr. Workman, she was instrumental in the smooth implementation of the design.

The team agreed that Ponape and Kosrae would be the most convenient sampling areas and consultants were engaged in both places, in Ponape Heinrick Stevens and Sidney Skilling in Kosrae.

After the questionnaire was designed, portions of it were translated from English to both Ponapean and Kosraean and then back-translated into English by different translators. This operation helped to insure the clearest possible comprehension of aspects of the instrument by the informants in the sample. We are grateful to the translators: Canston Lonno, Atalia Nena, Kanston Palsis, Jack Sigrah, Wyler Talley, Merilyn Waguk, from Kosrae; Serebiano Barnabas, Yalmer Helgenberger, Peter Joel, Dion Neth, from Ponape.

Administering the questionnaire in the field under the direction of the researchers required a number of interviewers without whom the data could not have been gathered: Swaiper Eliam, Maskie Jim, Koisimy Rudolph, Base Jack, Jefferson Peter, Meriam Prens, Farren Henry, Trihne Anson, Aklihno Shed, Bensner Etse, Rosendo Alex, Welmina Santos, Simon Awi, and Saped Santos in Ponape; Nena Kilafwasru, Kamsky Salik, John William, Hedges Esahu, Emius Nena, Teresita Talley, Almira Livaie, Adyna Shrew, Ranson Tilfas, and Junius Palik in Kosrae.

When data had been gathered it was aptly and tediously coded by Fichieko Phillip, Ichieko Phillip and Katrina Craig. Throughout the entire project the regular MARC staff members, especially Rosita Tosco and John Sablan, were a present and solid help. Jillette Leon-Guerrero Guest typed the report for final publication.

Of course the study itself could never have been attempted had it not been for all of the Micronesians who participated as informants. The encouragement and support of the island political leadership has been always a present help. All of us hope that the results of the study will be of material assistance in the formulation of educational policy in the new governments.

DIRK ANTHONY BALLENDORF
Director, MARC
University of Guam
February 1981

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study was to examine the situation of postsecondary education in Micronesia and why some students complete their college degrees while others "drop out". This is not a simple question and its importance may not be that obvious. The question contains two specific phenomena that are quite complex. First, people who have not completed a college degree at any given time include more than those who, strictly speaking, dropped out, never to finish their education. When asked, many indicate the completion of their degree has just been postponed. Some have transferred to another college and many "stop out", a term used to describe those who take time out from college studies only to return later (Cope and Hannah, 1975).

A second complexity for this study is that Micronesian students do not attend educational institutions indigenously evolved within their own cultures. The advent of Western education is very new to Micronesia, growing since the post war years and gaining momentum during the early 1960's under the Kennedy administration. There are colleges located within Micronesia and a majority of the students interviewed for this study attended colleges within the Pacific region. Yet, we are looking at a cross-cultural event. It is cross-cultural in that it consists of students from a number of nontechnological, island societies who have entered educational settings created for the purpose of an industrialized world. Due to these complexities, perhaps our concern over Micronesian dropouts should not imply a crisis situation. In fact, the results of the present research suggest the situation is very complex and that speculations about what the problems are must be made very cautiously.

It is unfortunate that the word "dropout" brings forth negative meanings and the thought that something is wrong. To a student's family and community this negativity is usually expressed in terms of money spent and lost benefits. The colleges fear criticism of failure and complain of wasted teacher effort. For a student it is often felt as a lost opportunity or as a personal shortcoming for not having finished a chosen goal. These negative meanings may be misleading for a clear understanding of what is happening, and why we should care. The research reported here makes a less disparaging assumption in order to explore in

greater depth the complexity of relationships between Micronesia, Micronesian college students, and the colleges they attend which affect degree completion. The importance of this approach is less the direct need to decrease the college dropout rate of Micronesians and more the indirect need to enhance the course of change and development occurring in Micronesia. The basis for this statement is illustrated best through an overview of the environment within which this research problem takes place. The following chapter presents such a phenomenological overview in greater detail and gives insight to the ultimate issue toward which this study aspires. The Micronesian students and ex-students interviewed openly expressed this need themselves as a lack of understanding about what college education is supposed to do for them and what they are supposed to do, and be, in order to fit in. The limitations of the present research did not permit this need to be directly addressed, but as an exploratory study into the events surrounding completers and non-completers of college degrees, it provides an initial step toward understanding the interlocking nature of Micronesia and modern Western society.

The actual results of the present study are much less definitive in character, yet their contribution as baseline explorations of empirical relationships must not be obviated. The methodological techniques used to collect and analyze the information upon which conclusions are based, and their limitations, are discussed in Appendix A. Chapter two consists of a description of the study population and an assessment of the situation in regard to Micronesian college completers and non-completers from Ponape and Kosrae. The remaining chapters present more detailed explorations of potential factors in the analysis of why some Micronesian college students do not complete degree programs.

It is hoped this is only the beginning of an effort to understand the interlocking nature of Micronesia and the modern world. In these terms the results of the study may possess both material value to the emerging nations of Micronesia and theoretical value to educators concerned with the effects of postsecondary educational processes on minority students and communities. The limited resources of Micronesia must be used wisely, and the knowledge generated by research must be relevant to the decisions which confront us.

CHAPTER 1

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL LOOK AT EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE IN MICRONESIA

When the United States became the trustee for Micronesia after World War II, one of the articles in the agreement stipulated that the administering power would do all it could to promote the social development of the people. This mandate meant that, essentially, there would be American models of social institutions introduced and this process began immediately, albeit slowly. As the years of the trusteeship passed, the Americans learned more and more about the meaning of social development in the context of Micronesia and about some of the inherent differences between the islands and mainland interpretations. This learning process is still underway.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, a massive scholarship program was instituted by the United States for the purpose of making higher education available to a large segment of the younger Micronesian population. The beneficiaries of this program are very much in evidence today. More than any other segment of the population, they embody the confusion which attends the process of distinction between American and Micronesian notions of social development.

Of the great numbers who attended colleges and universities, Hezel's (1978) data and the present research suggest that about 40 percent failed to complete their degree programs. The reasons for this dropout rate, which is comparable to that of the U.S., can be partially determined by empirical analysis, and the report here does attempt this. But other analyses of a softer, subtler, and social nature are also needed and this is also being attempted, for without this side, we would be losing a vital distinction towards an understanding of the process under study.

Those of us who live in Micronesia tend to place emphasis on the size of the area and the distances involved in travel throughout the region. We delight in the expressions of wonderment on visitors' faces when we point out to them that when Majuro, in the Marshall Islands, calls on someone at the University of Guam for help it is roughly analogous to a call from a small school district in Long Island, New York,

asking a professor from the University of Wyoming to drop in for a few days. Yet, although the vast distances of open sea have been an important factor in the development of Micronesian cultures and societies, it is the land, or rather the lack of it, that has been the strongest shaping force. It is the concept and reality of limited land that has provided the fundamental impetus for the development and adaptation of the basic social institutions of Micronesia.

The organizational principles of a culture or society are given their form by the adaptive necessities of particular environmental settings and in Micronesia that means small discrete patches of land and meager resources. The available evidence seems to indicate that, given the limited amount of land available and a relatively high pre-contact population, before the arrival of Western technology, virtually all potentially productive land in Micronesia was either directly or indirectly involved in subsistence functions. This combination of limited land, long stretches of open seas between islands, and crowded communities has combined to form societies and cultures with strongly defined and enforced customs, mores, values, and belief systems. Members are quite clear as to their place in the scheme of things and complex lineages among persons and groups define, both implicitly and explicitly, the relationships between them. Colletta's (1980) description of the Ponapean way of life is illustrative:

...Ponapeans view their world relationally and holistically. Their approach to the world involves a more encompassing multi-directive associational mental style. First-cause explanation is a marked feature of their logical makeup. There is little extensive secondary analysis....
...there is little separation of the subjective being from the objective world....
...there is little stress on a universal moral order for judging all behavior, only specific events, encounters, and relationships (situations) isolated in time and space with meager connective or generalizable value. Reality is for the moment, the situation and not for all men at all times in all places.
...there is little individualized image of self among the Ponapeans...personal identity is rooted in the communal social order (p.11).

When the Micronesians of today leave their islands for higher education abroad they also leave behind this sense of place and belonging and enter a social context that not only fails to give definition, but also encourages the expression of one's own needs and desires, one's individuality. With the old constraints on behavior removed, with no social structure to define morality, appropriate behaviors, or social and personal relationships, the Micronesian abroad faces a crisis. In the social context of the islands control was clear, enforced, and external; in the new context control is unclear, sporadic, and expected to be much more internal than external. The result, not infrequently, is a sense of lost security and realization that a strange, if not confusing world must be confronted: a world that does not simply recognize a person for who he or she is, but rather judges a person by what he/she is and what he/she does. In as much as Ponape and Kosrae possess one of the most tight-knit socio-political organizational structures in Micronesia, the problem is particularly acute for their students abroad. It is more than culture shock, for that implies the impact of the new; the reaction is drawn from the loss of the familiar. The schools, the colleges and universities have taken them in as a family might, but because the Western traditional concept of *'in loco parentis'* is *passee*, the schools have taken responsibility only for students' education. With no source of external control, and no developed internal mechanisms of control, the Micronesian student abroad may fall into patterns of behavior that preclude academic success.

Much of Micronesia today is in reality a created society. It is an arbitrary structure serving a vision developed mainly in alien places, rather than an evolutionary structure, serving the emerging needs of an indigenous population. Part of this process of attempting to create a new society has involved switching models from one culture to another, from the traditional to the modern. This switch or change should more accurately be termed a superimposition, as the old has not been replaced; rather the attempt has been to make it irrelevant. To fully understand the sorts of pressures and stresses placed on Micronesian young men and women caught up in this process, it is necessary to look closely at some of the differences between the old and the new. The most appropriate vehicle, for this study, would be the institution of education, most

particularly the disjunctions between the old and the new. The attempt will not, however, be made to locate and classify sets of behavior in order to illustrate a cultural pattern. This leads only to an abstract definition or description of behavior. Rather the attempt will be made to make inferences from behaviors that will cast light on underlying structures and principles that define the lives of people in Micronesia.

The anthropologist Solon Kimball (1974) points out that:

...ordinarily the educational system reflects the social ordering found in social class and other institutions. It also expresses the cultural values and practices characteristic of these diverse and divergent social groupings. In this sense, education exhibits a marked congruency with other aspects of social life and culture. This affirms the interconnections between institutions and behavior (asserting neither determinancy or causality).

Formal education differs from other institutions in its crucial responsibility to transmit, consciously, designated segments of the heritage in order to reflect and perpetuate the existing system (p. 203).

But in Micronesia, the educational system represents a culture and a social structure that is radically different from that of the clients. This disjuncture between institution and person is bound to have ill effects on the participants. It is not the purpose of this study to develop a complete sociological analysis of the phenomenon. Perhaps exploration of one facet will be illustrative.

At the very heart of the educational process is the sociology of knowledge. How knowledge, per se, is viewed, valued, and regulated is central. To examine the traditional Micronesian concept of knowledge may make clear some of the difficulties experienced by Micronesian students. This model of knowledge can also be used to explicate some of the real differences between the old and new educational systems.

In Micronesia, knowledge is private, not public property. People possessing certain knowledge hold it carefully and do not share it openly or arbitrarily. Every person has a particular role to play in the society and the knowledge necessary for him or her to play that role is carefully ascribed. The possessors of knowledge are consulted, as a matter of course, by others when the need arises; thus, the lasher of house rafters or the master outrigger builder is sought when needed.

Other members of society will not attempt to copy him but will rather defer to his expertise; nor will he broadcast himself or offer free vocational advice.

When the time comes for the possessor to pass on his or her knowledge, a complicated process for the careful selection of a successor is undertaken. The heir is selected by consensus decision and according to clan and family status as well as ability. This process may take many years to complete. Even after the selection is made and the apprenticeship begins, the master will not tell all he or she knows. There is always an area for discovery, development, innovation, and creativity on the part of the new expert, and the new expert will not exercise full authority until the old master dies. In this way the knowledge is handed down, as well as developed, adapted and modified, from one generation to the next. Historical knowledge is treated similarly. Only certain people know the charts, songs and stories of the emergence of the clan structures and power blocks. Of course, there will be different versions in these matters and arguments arise, sometimes even leading to violence, but all know whose prerogative it is to debate. In many ways this construct of knowledge is antithetical to the Western view and students attempting to make the crossover find few referents. The concept of knowledge is thus one of power and status to be guarded carefully rather than distributed freely. Knowledge however, is not the only way in which the evolutionary and the created differ.

This view of knowledge, coupled with the traditional learning style of identification, prolonged observation, imitation, and cooperative participation has given rise to a particular orientation towards education. Communication, as an educative process, takes place along hierarchical lines from superordinate to subordinate. The search for knowledge is viewed as the pursuit of a definitive answer or explanation from a higher authority rather than secondary analyses or critical dialogue. In traditional Micronesia there was no such thing as a school in the Western sense. All members of the community participated in all aspects of community life: social, religious, and economic. Each person participated when they were ready, and readiness was intrinsically determined by each individual according to the overlays of societal role boundaries. In traditional Micronesia there was no separation between education and life,

and in this there was commonality with traditional cultures in general. The idea of Western schools changed all this. Education, the transfer of skills and knowledge, took place in a certain place, at specific times, and took no cognizance whatsoever of social structure. Life took place at other times elsewhere.

There are other basic differences between the old and new, the evolutionary and the created. For example, competitiveness and motivation take different forms in traditional Micronesia. The individual is taught to give way to the group. People do not compare themselves to others for this would lead to bitterness and resentment or even violence and this would be intolerable given the limited living space. Besides, there are always greater or lesser people in the community without the necessity of competitive definition. Motivation in Micronesia, unlike Western form, is born not of a desire to succeed, but rather of a desire not to fail. This implies a passive and deferring learning style where risks are not taken lest one fail. In the classroom this is reflected in the non-questioning, non-responsive behavior exhibited by Micronesian students.

Beginning in 1972, a massive Trust Territory post-secondary education program got underway, one facet of which provided funds for Micronesians to go to the mainland and elsewhere to attend colleges and universities. These funds were transferred into what became known as "T.T. Scholarships". In typical fashion, the program was developed by non-Micronesians with little understanding of the potential socio-cultural problems that might result. Although initially, and sporadically thereafter, some academic achievement standards, such as high school transcripts, were applied as selection criteria, no standardized tests were used, or have been developed for use in this program. What most often transpired was that funds were simply awarded to those who made application to the program administrators at the Trust Territory Headquarters in Saipan with "family status" often the only functional criterion. Once the students left the Trust Territory, there was little or no attempt at accountability. Scholarships would be renewed year after year in spite of failing grades, or switching both college and courses of study.

For their part, the colleges that received the students offered

little real help, despite their good intentions. Counselors did not understand the Micronesian culture well, and in only one known instance did one visit the islands. Despite the knowledge that the Micronesian students as a group required more counseling time than any other foreign student group, few colleges and universities have the necessary resources to send their counseling staff on fact-finding tours. Many of the receiving schools were small, often religion-affiliated, places which valued, and were glad to get, the scholarship money provided by the Trust Territory. An average of \$4,000 per Micronesian student per year was available and many of these schools had, and still have, large numbers of Micronesians which certainly helps an otherwise falling academic economy in many instances.

Although no complete data is available, many of the Trust Territory scholarship recipients returned to their islands without degrees. Many returned to the remote islands to tell stories of their college adventure, and herein lies an interesting and important phenomenon of traditional Micronesia. Status accrues to these returnees whether or not they earned a degree and whether or not they did well at the school. In traditional Micronesia, relatively high status has always been awarded those who leave and return with interesting experiences and stories to tell. This fact would constitute one of the prime traditional definitions of education: to go away and come back. It has its roots in the days of European exploitation when ship captains impressed islanders as seamen. This practice continued through the nineteenth century whaling days when many Micronesians were taken aboard ships for distant voyages. Today, for many Micronesians, there is no real difference between a young man who ships aboard a freighter for a two year voyage to distant lands and returns and the young man who goes off to a small college in Weeping Water, Nebraska, for two years and returns. Both have been "educated", both have interesting stories to tell, both are worthy of respect.

Clearly this lack of congruency among society, culture, and educational process troubles Micronesian students. Throughout the course of numerous personal interviews with Micronesian students and former students, the predominant expression was one of puzzlement and confusion. There is a lack of understanding about what this education

is supposed to do for them and what they are supposed to do, and be, in order to fit in. As David Nevin (1976) states in his study of Micronesia:

When you tour Micronesia to look at education, you see the dilemma laid out in full. It becomes ever more clear that while people see education as the avenue to the new success, their understanding of the interlocking nature of modern western society is so slight that they remain blind to the plain fact that their own society contains so little that is capable of supporting the new ways. Surely it is the cruelest irony that it is education itself that exacerbates their blind hopes, as year by year it trains their children away from the old culture and toward an ambiguous academic form that is supposed to be consistent -- in some unknown way -- with the modern world and with its advantages (p.148).

The ultimate community concern that led to the study reported here was this desire that educational development in Micronesia become consistent with the modern world. The first step toward some kind of consistency that is not "exacerbating" is to obtain assessments of the situation in order to accurately and specifically define problem areas. One aspect of the situation is the difference between the new and the old which frames the sort of pressures placed on Micronesian students caught up in the educational process. It is a vital distinction for placing the findings of subsequent chapters in perspective, and it is important if educational innovations are to be effective. Perhaps a final and capping irony is that the "new" education has been sold so well that when innovative attempts have been made to draw from traditional forms to restructure education, these attempts have been rejected as "not real education."

CHAPTER 2

COLLEGE ATTENDANCE AND DEGREE COMPLETION: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

Given the social environment of the research problem described in the opening section, the aim of this study was to collect information from a sample of Micronesians, investigate the situation in regard to college attendance, and to explore the reasons for students returning without completing a degree. The explosion in college attendance by Micronesians over the last decade reported by Hezel (1978) is continuing. The Micronesian News Service (1980) recently stated that more than 2,051 students were receiving aid from the Trust Territories Student Assistance Office to attend colleges, and this does not include those students attending regional colleges at their own expense. There is very little factual information available for educators and policy makers to assess what is happening with these students. How "successful" is this education effort and why do some finish while others do not? A few studies of Micronesian college students have been conducted but they barely scratch the surface of what needs to be known. Larson (1979) and Morikawa (1975) interviewed small samples of Micronesian students in the United States about their college experiences. The present research hoped to scratch a bit deeper in order to advance our knowledge of the situation one step further.

The findings of the study reported here were based on information collected through an interviewer-administered questionnaire with additional information obtained from high school and college transcripts, and a number of descriptive reference books on colleges and universities. A more detailed presentation and discussion of the research methodology is given in Appendix A. The islands of Ponape and Kosrae were selected for the research effort in order to concentrate the collection of data from a sizeable number of subjects. Furthermore, Hezel (1978) and Larson (1979) focused their studies on the situation among Trukese college students, and thus, this study partly expands available information to include two additional island districts. The target population consisted of Ponapean and Kosraean high school graduates between 1965 and 1978 who formed the base from which college attendees emerged. A list of names was randomly drawn from graduates of the Pacific Islands Central School in Ponape and

from Kosrae High School between the years 1968 and 1975. To ensure that an adequate proportion of informants had attended college, the list was supplemented with names of Ponapean and Kosraean students who received financial aid from the Trust Territories Student Assistance Office located on Saipan. Trained interviewers from each island self-selected names for contact. A total of 152 completed questionnaires, 90 from Ponape and 62 from Kosrae, were obtained.

Because of the supplementation with names from the Student Assistance Office and the self-selection of contacts by interviewers, the resultant study sample was not a true random sample. This restricts any justification to generalize the findings beyond the study sample. In addition, there are social and cultural differences among the island districts of Micronesia. However, an overview of the sample and comparison with the independent findings of Hezel (1978) suggest that the sample strongly reflects the situation of Micronesian college students.

The Study Sample and Setting

The social and educational characteristics of the study sample are presented in Table 2-1. A majority of the sample were male (79%). This proportion closely matches that of the target population of high school graduates who are the base from which attendees emerge. Hezel (1978) reported data that showed the proportion of males among Trukese high school graduates to be about 69 percent and among Trukese attending or graduated from college to be about 75 percent. The present study's sample had graduated from high school at least two years prior to the survey with about half (45%) graduating after 1972. The year of 1972 is a meaningful date since it was at that time that federal financial aid became available and the college explosion in Micronesia began. The proportion of the sample population who attended college (80%) is inflated from a reasonable estimate for the general population due to the sampling technique. However, Hezel reported that over 60 percent of Trukese high school graduates attended college in 1975 and 1976. In general, the study sample matches reported data on the situation in Truk and appears to reflect expected characteristics of our target population. The observation that Ponapeans and Kosraeans tend to start college immediately after high school graduation (84%) supports an assumption

that a large proportion of the sample who attended college had the minimum opportunity to at least complete a two-year college degree program.

TABLE 2-1. SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE.

<u>Island Sampled*</u>	(N=152)	<u>Gender</u>	(N=147)
Ponape	60	Male	79
Kosrae	40	Female	21
	<u>100%</u>		<u>100%</u>
<u>Current Age</u>	(N=138)	<u>High School Graduation</u>	(N=147)
21 to 26 years	36	1965 to 1968	14
27 to 30 years	33	1969 to 1972	41
31 to 39 years	31	1973 to 1978	45
	<u>100%</u>		<u>100%</u>
<u>Attended College</u>	(N=152)	<u>Time between High School and College</u>	(N=119)
NO	20	1 year or less	84
YES	80	Over 1 year	16
	<u>100%</u>		<u>100%</u>

*The number of cases (N) will vary from the total due to incomplete or missing data.

The subsistence and employment characteristics of the study sample are shown in Table 2-2. The vast majority of the sample was employed (85%) with only 15 percent not in the labor force. Seventy percent of the sample engaged in some type of horticultural, fishing or handicraft subsistence activity. One does not earn, or need for that matter, a substantial salaried income in order to provide for basic needs within these island economies. About half of the study sample earned between \$101 and \$200 bi-monthly, or \$2400 to \$4800 a year and few (18%) earned incomes from their subsistence labor. The economic situation in Micronesia is such that college graduates, nongraduates and those who do not go to college can achieve relatively comparable standards of living that are respectable.

TABLE 2-2. SUBSISTENCE AND EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE.

Frequency of Subsistence Activity*	(N=151)	"Is Income Earned From Subsistence Activity?"	(N=150)
Rarely	30	Yes	18
Often	70	No	82
	<u>100%</u>		<u>100%</u>
Employment for a Salaried Income	(N=148)	Bi-monthly Income**	(N=146)
Employed	85	\$100 or less	32
Looking for Work	7	\$101 to \$200	49
Not Looking	8	\$201 or more	19
	<u>100%</u>		<u>100%</u>

*Informants were asked "How often do you do subsistence work activity such as growing/gathering food, fishing, or handicrafts?" Often combines the responses "Everyday" and "1 or 2 times a month" while Rarely combines the responses "A few times a year" and "never".

**The distribution by income was not restricted to those employed for salaried income since the source was not specified.

This economic picture in Kosrae and Ponape is similar to the situation in Truk. Hezel found that most Trukese college students in the last decade have returned and found employment. His point was that demographic and economic conditions have not yet shifted to create pressures toward a speculated "brain drain" or job crunch for college students. As Hezel (1978) states:

...like the early high school graduates who were fortunate enough to be able to return to both family and a job on their home island, these college degree holders have found both a cultural home and employment upon their return from abroad (p.179).

The economies of Ponape and Kosrae have also been able to absorb their college attendees into their labor forces to date, at least among this sample population.

College Dropout Rates Among Micronesians

The employment and income differences between those who attended college and those who did not will be examined later in this section. But first, the characteristics of college attendance and the major concern, degree completion, will be examined as presented in Table 2-3. The largest number of the sample (39%) first attended the regional, two-year colleges of the Trust Territories established in the early 1970's. These are the Community College of Micronesia (CCM) located on Ponape, the Micronesian Occupational College (MOC) located in Palau, and the CCM School of Nursing originally located on Ponape and later moved to Saipan in 1975. Another 20 percent attended college on Guam. A majority of these were at the University of Guam (UOG) but several attended the two-year Guam Community College (GCC). A complete listing of colleges attended by the sample is presented in Appendix B.

The number of Micronesians attending American colleges has steadily grown since U.S. federal grant programs were available to them in 1972. Over one-third of the sample traveled to Hawaii or the United States to begin their college education. This was largely due to the fact that the aid stipulates the money must be used in U.S. schools, but a growing preference for American schools has been found among Trukese (Hezel, 1978). Also, Hezel's data show a clear shift away from other locations toward locations in the United States following the availability of financial assistance. This data revealed a similar shift. An analysis of data not presented in Table 2-3 shows that among students who attended college before 1972, 17 percent went to the United States compared to 35 percent of Ponapean and Kosraean students after 1972. This drift toward American schools may be leveling off (Larson, 1979), and it is certainly an event of its times: the beginning of modernization in Micronesia, growing numbers of high school graduates, and the availability of financial aid. Thus, the situation may change but at this time the proportions of Kosraean and Ponapean students who attended the Trust Territory schools (39%) was found to be almost equal to those who traveled to Hawaii and the United States (37%). What the data suggest is that Micronesian students have been selective of the type of college they chose to attend.

The types of college in which Kosraean and Ponapean students first enrolled tended to be small, and slightly over half of the sample attended places that only offered two-year degree programs. In short, when they chose a school for starting their college education they avoided large, impersonal universities. Many attended the small, perhaps less intimidating schools of the Trust Territories, and this influenced the data reported in Table 2-3. Nonetheless, further analysis disclosed that among those students who traveled to Hawaii and the United States, over two-thirds enrolled in colleges with less than 4,000 students.

TABLE 2-3. CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLEGES AND DEGREE COMPLETION AMONG THOSE WHO ATTENDED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

<u>Location*</u>	(N=121)	<u>College Size-Students*</u>		(N=114)
Trust Territory	39	Less than 800		47
Guam	20	800 to 4000		40
Hawaii	11	4000 to 9000		7
Continental U.S.	26	More than 9000		6
Foreign	4			6
	<u>100%</u>			<u>100%</u>
<u>Type of College*</u>	(N=120)	<u>Ever Completed Degree</u>		(N=119)
Two-year	52	No		42
Four-year	48	Yes		58
	<u>100%</u>			<u>100%</u>
<u>"Did You Ever Stop for a Semester or More and Return?"</u>	<u>Ever Completed Degree</u>			(N=119)
	<u>Never</u>	<u>After Transferred</u>	<u>At First College</u>	
No	28	6	44	
Yes	14	3	5	
	<u>42%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>49%</u>	

*Characteristics of the colleges are for the first college attended by the informants.

A graduating high school student receives advice and information from family, friends, counselors and teachers. He or she is at a major transition point in life and the decision to go to college is not made in a vacuum, although the meaning and decisiveness of choices may not be clear. At some point thoughts of "success" and "failure" often emerge. The locations and types of colleges attended by this sample indicate they did not take uncalculated risks, yet 42 percent have not completed a degree program. The difficulty in evaluating this level of non-completion is the complexity of the idea of "success". A student who returns without completing a degree may still view his or her experiences as successful and may receive different kinds of benefits from them. The social context of who graduates from high school and who even has the opportunity to go to college must be considered, also. Further complexity of the issue of college "success" and the definition of degree completion are shown in the more detailed breakdown presented at the bottom of Table 2-3.

A difficulty of all research on the completion of college is that students come and go, transfer to other places, and will usually say they have only temporarily stopped their education (Cope and Hannah, 1975; Cope, 1978). Only 28 percent of this sample simply attended college for a while and then dropped out, while 44 percent progressed through their course work and graduated from the college where they started. The other 28 percent can be called "stopouts" who left and returned or transferred, and either finished a degree (14%) or stopped out again (14%). When asked if they planned to return when they stopped out, and if they still plan to return, nearly all of the students interviewed, whether they had a degree or not, said yes. A better way to evaluate these findings is to compare the situation of Ponape and Kosrae to the situation in the United States and other nations of the world, rather than to speak in broad terms of "success".

What was found is that there is very little, if any, difference. In these terms, Micronesian college students are as "successful" as American college students. The widely accepted speculation that the general drop-out rate of Micronesians is abnormally high did not emerge within this study sample or Hezel's (1978). A number of studies on college dropouts

have been conducted to evaluate the situation in the U.S., Australia, and Great Britain (Baumgart and Johnstone, 1977; Cope and Hannah, 1975; Gracie, 1978; Hawaii University Community College System, 1979; Howell, et al., 1979; Kolstad, 1977; Lueck and Gilbert, 1978; Miller, 1973; Willner, 1979). They used a variety of definitions of "noncompleters", "nonpersisters", "withdrawn students", and so on to study the issue of dropouts, and the comparison made here is only illustrative. These American, Australian, and British studies report figures for noncompleters that range from 20 to 80 percent with the average estimate being about 40 percent never graduating (Cope, 1978). Lueck and Gilbert (1978) gave an overall estimate that of every ten (10) college students who started in 1974, five (5) would graduate sometime at that school, two (2) would transfer and graduate, while three (3) would never graduate. Comparing this to the sample survey, of every ten (10) college students or former students interviewed, five (5) graduated sometime from their first college, one (1) transferred and graduated, and four (4) have not graduated. These results lend support to the validity of Hezel's (1978) estimate of the completion rate of Trukese college students, between 1965 and 1977, to be about 62 percent. If a general conclusion is to be made at this time, Micronesian college students have completion rates comparable to other parts of the Western world.

This conclusion needs to be understood within the context of Micronesian postsecondary education to avoid misinterpretation. Very little is known about the selection process of the secondary school systems which might make high school graduates a unique group compared to the general population. If one looks at the percent of the age cohort that ultimately achieves high school graduation, then at the percent of the graduates that go away to higher education, perhaps one should really predict a much higher percentage of "success" than the "average" U.S. student population. Furthermore, it is only an overall view of completion which says little about contributions to societal development.

The merit of this finding is that it begins to document what is happening, so the continued definition of problem issues can be directed toward meaningful concerns. One implication of the similarity found between Micronesians and American college students is that researchers do not need to look for something "unique" about Micronesian cultures to understand and

and explain their levels of educational achievement which do not appear to be unique within the world. Obviously, the meaning and nature of Micronesian and American student experiences differ according to the difference in their socio-cultural home environments. To the extent that it is the student's experiences and fit with the college environment that determine whether he or she persists to graduation, these differences are important. The situation and nature of problems encountered by different kinds of students must be correctly understood if each is to be counseled and helped. What the findings of this study suggest, however, is that regardless of any such differences between cultures, there is little difference between Micronesian and other rates of degree completion.

If there is no substantial difference in the rate of degree completion, we must ask what is the role played by postsecondary education in Micronesia. Theories of human behavior assume that a person's efforts and actions are strongly influenced by the consequences they have, including the receipt of approval for having acted in accordance with understood values. As noted before, Western education is highly valued in Micronesia, but it was also noted that the socio-economic environment of Micronesia is quite different from that of the U.S. The limited picture revealed by the present study was that the role of postsecondary education in Micronesia, its benefits and consequences, may not be very different from its role in the United States. It is not surprising then, that the characteristic differences, or better - lack of differences, between college dropouts and graduates found among Micronesians are similar to the findings of American studies.

Cope and Hannah (1975) point out in their encompassing study of dropouts in the U.S. that research on withdrawal from college provides little conclusive evidence identifying factors associated with leaving college before completion. Most of this research has focused on general social characteristics, such as sex, age and so on, but results have been contradictory. The hypotheses that such differences should exist derive, in part, from the fact that such general characteristics incorporate a large number of more specific differences and factors that have often made them singularly good predictors for other kinds of behavior. As shown in Table 2-4, there was no significant difference in whether or not a college degree was ever completed by the sex, age started college, or the time of leaving high school and entering college, among the study's informants.

TABLE 2-4. EVER COMPLETED COLLEGE BY GENERAL SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS AMONG PERSONS WHO ATTENDED COLLEGE.*

<u>Ever Completed College Degree</u>	<u>General Social Characteristics</u>	
	<u>Male (N=91)</u>	<u>Female (N=24)</u>
NO	51	46
YES	49	54
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	<u>Age Started College</u>	
	<u>18 to 21 (N=62)</u>	<u>22 to 32 (N=39)</u>
NO	44	39
YES	56	61
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	<u>Year of High School Graduation</u>	
	<u>1972 or before (N=60)</u>	<u>1973 or later (N=54)</u>
NO	40	43
YES	60	57
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	<u>Year Started College</u>	
	<u>1972 or before (N=52)</u>	<u>1973 or later (N=64)</u>
NO	46	39
YES	54	61
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

*Chi square tests of association showed no significant differences in degree completion by general social characteristics examined.

Even though there are clear and definite differences in the socialization practices, roles, and expectations of males and females in Micronesia, females who attended college were found to be just

as likely to have completed a degree as the males. Year of high school completion and year started college are temporal measures that tested for trends. The data suggest that dropout rates have been fairly constant since Micronesians began trekking off to college. The education explosion following the greater availability of financial aid in 1972, apparently, did not send off higher proportions of less prepared or less dedicated students as some people have speculated. This constancy, too, is a trait of dropout rates revealed in studies of the United States (Cope, 1978; Summerskill, 1962). Perhaps this similarity of the general situation in college attrition between Micronesia and the U.S. can be put into some perspective by the examination of consequences and values related to college education in Ponape and Kosrae.

The Role of Postsecondary Education

Research from the United States and other countries has shown that the high value placed on education and college graduation as being a means to obtain other valued benefits and rewards has some truth to it (Banks, 1968; 39-65; Blau and Duncan, 1967). It is one link in a bridge to higher personal status, more opportunities, job security, improved working conditions, more income, as well as greater job and life satisfaction. College graduates more frequently assume leadership positions and are more informed about national issues. These are measurable benefits to be obtained from attending and graduating from college, and yet, about 50 percent of American freshmen who start at a particular college withdraw from it before graduation (Cope and Hannah, 1975). The stopout, transfer, and dropout rates of the U.S. demonstrate the impact of the fact that although education is a factor in obtaining rewards and moving up in society, it is not the only or necessarily the most important factor. Anderson (1958) for example states that *"while education certainly influences a man's chances to move upward or downward, only a relatively modest part of mobility is linked to education"*. There is no compelling reason to believe that education and college attendance play any greater or lesser role in Micronesia than they do in the United States, other than the great disparity in the natures of their cultures

and economies.

Education in traditional Micronesia, as presented in Chapter 1, would lead us to expect that the personal and status benefits received from college attendance would be substantial enough. But any additional status benefits from graduation, per se, may be minimal unless they are coupled with other and perhaps more influential determinants of social mobility in Micronesia. One such determinant is kinship which a person can do little to change except through marriage or adoption. Of course there are other, and more accessible traditional criteria for gaining position within the occupational and economic systems of these islands. Nonetheless, a developing structure of governmental administration and public service (e.g., especially education) has mushroomed into existence over the last twenty years. It is the most readily accessible avenue to occupational and economic resources for social mobility which are non-traditional and part of the new, emerging Micronesia. College education and graduation are valued criteria for positions within these developing institutions and thus valued for the benefits which such achieved position can provide. The mixture of tradition and non-tradition within the occupational and economic systems of these islands has affected their operation so that education has a less central role than it does within an industrialized nation like the U.S. This is revealed in Table 2-5, but more important for the present research, the college graduate was found to have an edge over the person who attended and did not graduate from college.

Examining Table 2-5, the study found that college attendance and graduation among the informants has not given an edge to these persons in the salaried job market over those who only graduated from high school. However, significant differences were found in the incomes and types of jobs among these three groups. Among those employed, high school graduates who did not attend college were concentrated in manual-skilled jobs (31%) and administrative jobs (35%). This wide gap in occupational status very likely reflects that formal education qualifications are not necessary or the only criteria for employment positions. But those who graduated from college are clearly concentrated in prestigious professional jobs (57%). It can be said that those who attended college but did not graduate fared better than those who only graduated from high school.

One-third of those not completing a college degree were employed in professional jobs, yet 23 percent were also in manual-skilled positions compared to only 9 percent of those who completed some type of college degree.

TABLE 2-5. EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME BY COLLEGE ATTENDANCE AND DEGREE COMPLETION AMONG THE TOTAL SAMPLE.

	College Attendance		
	NO	YES	
		No Degree	Completed Degree
<u>Currently Employed</u>	(N=30)	(N=49)	(N=69)
NO	23	16	13
YES	77	84	87
	100%	100%	100%
	(X ² =1.6; df=2; N.S.)		
<u>Occupation*</u>	(N=26)	(N=44)	(N=58)
Manual-skilled	31	23	9
Clerical-sales	19	16	16
Administrative	35	27	19
Professional	15	34	57
	100%	100%	100%
	(X ² =1.6; df=6; p < .05)		
<u>Bi-monthly Income</u>	(N=31)	(N=48)	(N=65)
\$100 or less	35	46	21
\$101 to \$200	42	50	51
\$201 or more	23	4	28
	100%	100%	100%
	(X ² =13.9; df=4; p < .05)		

*Crosstabulation for occupation was limited to those currently employed.

This apparent advantage from college graduation, rather than attendance only, is revealed in bi-monthly income as well. Again, the data suggest that factors other than formal education are operating, since those who

only graduated from high school tend to earn more than those who did not graduate from college. Attending and graduating from college had, however, definite monetary benefits over attending college and not graduating. This value of graduation has not escaped those who attended college. As shown in Table 2-6, informants who completed a college degree were more likely to identify 'earning more money' as a benefit of their college education than those who did not.

Among those who attended college, graduates were also more likely to think their education helped them to be better at their work than non-graduates (Table 2-6). Consequently, in addition to identifying graduation as providing a direct benefit toward social mobility within the emerging society of Micronesia, the informants indicated that graduation is also valued as a means for improved job performance. Whether or not this confidence on the job actually contributes to promotion and advancement would require further research. What the data suggest is that graduation is perhaps viewed as contributing to relevant criterion for promotion and advancement which would strengthen values held about graduation as a means for obtaining other valued rewards. The role of education in Micronesia is not that much different from its role in other parts of the Western world, including the United States. Graduation from college, whatever college or type of degree it may be, is valued for its benefits and consequences.

As with most developing regions, education and, more specifically, college graduation do not play such a central deterministic role in social mobility as they do in the United States. Graduation does not differentiate perceived benefits in getting a job, having more influence, getting more prestige, knowing more about life, and so on, although the percentage distributions were in the direction of benefits received from college graduation (Table 2-6). This will depend upon the extent to which educational qualifications become a necessary requirement for positions of high status (Banks, 1968). The fact remains that, within lower status groups, a person is more likely to gain social standing if he or she has graduated, and at the same time college graduation lessens the possibility of losing social standing among those in higher status groups. Insofar as this is an immediate and motivating concern of

Table 2-6. VIEWS OF EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS BY DEGREE COMPLETION AMONG PERSONS WHO ATTENDED COLLEGE.

Did college help you:	Degree Completion		Did College help you:	Degree Completion	
	NO	YES		NO	YES
<u>Make more money</u>	(N=48)	(N=65)	<u>Be better at work</u>	(N=47)	(N=65)
Very much	40	61	Very much	47	78
A little	54	31	A little	49	20
Not at all	6	8	Not at all	4	2
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	$(\chi^2=6.3; p < .05)^*$			$(\chi^2=12.1; p < .05)^*$	
<u>Get a better job</u>	(N=47)	(N=67)	<u>Have more influence</u>	(N=48)	(N=65)
Very much	45	54	Very much	23	38
A little	34	33	A little	42	40
Not at all	21	13	Not at all	35	22
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	$(\chi^2=1.5; N.S.)$			$(\chi^2=4.1; N.S.)$	
<u>Earn family pride</u>	(N=48)	(N=65)	<u>Get more prestige</u>	(N=48)	(N=66)
Very much	29	48	Very much	27	36
A little	52	37	A little	44	44
Not at all	19	15	Not at all	29	20
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	$(\chi^2=4.0; N.S.)$			$(\chi^2=1.8; N.S.)$	
<u>Help family more</u>	(N=48)	(n=66)	<u>Be more self-confident</u>	(N=48)	(N=67)
Very much	44	55	Very much	63	75
A little	56	42	A little	35	25
Not at all	0	3	Not at all	2	0
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	$(\chi^2=3.2; N.S.)$			$(\chi^2=2.9; N.S.)$	
<u>Know more about life</u>	(N=49)	(N=66)	<u>Be more satisfied with life</u>	(N=46)	(N=67)
Very much	55	74	Very much	28	49
A little	39	24	A little	63	43
Not at all	6	2	Not at all	9	8
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	$(\chi^2=5.2; N.S.)$			$(\chi^2=5.1; N.S.)$	

* Degrees of freedom for all crosstabulations was 2.

many college students, then it is not surprising to find a similarity in the general situation of college dropout rates between Micronesia and the United States, regardless of other differences.

This is not to say that dropout rates in Micronesia are any less problematic than elsewhere. Dropout rates of 40 percent in the United States are considered to be extremely problematic. In fact, given the economic environment, the societal need relative to community development, the governmental investment in financial aid, and in general the emergent situation of Micronesia as a developing region, perhaps it is more problematic. The major finding of the present study was to gain perspective on what is happening. What is happening is that the broad situation of postsecondary education in Micronesia is similar to the situation elsewhere. It should be viewed less as something unique to Micronesia, due to the fact that it is Micronesian, and viewed more as a universal problem, with programs and solutions that can be innovated and applied by Micronesians as well as by anyone else. Nonetheless, whatever programs are developed, they will be applied to Micronesian students, and this fact necessitates an understanding of the college experience for the Micronesian student.

THE MICRONESIAN COLLEGE EXPERIENCE:
A STUDENT PROFILE

The emphasis of this chapter is to examine the college experiences of Ponapean and Kosraean students and former students who comprised the study sample. In order to examine these college experiences, a holistic approach is necessary. The onset of the college experience occurs long before the student actually sets foot on campus to enroll in classes. It originates with one's aspirations and reasons for going to college. This pursuit of definite goals contributes to a framework of the college experience. In addition, considerations for attending particular schools because of interest in a program or field of study, receipt of financial support, and suggestions of family members or counselors make a contribution to the formative stage of the college experience.

The college experience continues with numerous transactions and interactions during the time students are in the physical environment of the college, *in situ*. These factors can be divided into the interactions between the individual and the institution, and between the individual and his or her peers. Individual and institution interaction is comprised of both academic and social characteristics. The college administration, faculty, extra-curricular activities, and services provided by the school are viewed as social characteristics, while class attendance, class participation, and academic performance constitute academic characteristics.

A student's interactions with his or her peers and the student's living arrangements are additional dimensions of the college experience. Students influence one another both academically and socially. They provide competition and support in academic pursuits, and socially they allow for an exchange of friendships.

In general, the college experience is composed of many variables which stem directly or indirectly from going to college. Indirect variables may be family aspirations, whereas direct variables arise from the student's interaction with the college environment, the institution, and peers. All of these factors may influence a student's completion of a degree or his or her withdrawal from college. Thus, this examination attempts to gain a better understanding of the Micronesian college student's experiences.

Reasons for Going to College

Previous chapters and other postsecondary studies note that college enrollment among Pacific Islanders has increased noticeably in recent years (Hezel, 1978; Larson, 1979; NASULGC*, 1977).

The ethnic minority experiencing the largest growth in full-time enrollment (among land grant colleges and state universities) during 1974 to 1976 was the Asian/Pacific Islanders (NASULGC, 1977, p. 2).

As the numbers of Micronesian students who pursue postsecondary education has increased the reasons for going to college have become greatly varied. The reasons students have commonly cited reflect both personal goals as well as compliance with the wishes of others, such as family members and friends. The pursuit of higher education based on personal goals included career preparation, knowledge, and interest in a particular field. Cope (1978) points out that attitude and commitment to goals are important individual characteristics and he refers to studies that suggest the higher the personal expectation for a degree or occupation the greater the likelihood of remaining in college.

Degree completion in itself was considered important by 96 percent of those persons attending college and a high percentage indicated that their families felt it was important also. This was the case regardless of degree completion. Among those students who did not continue their college programs 94 percent agreed that they felt it was important to finish school compared with 98 percent of the graduates who felt this way.

It can be observed that Micronesian students expect to fulfill certain goals which are reflected in reasons they stated for going to college (see Table 3-1). For example, in regard to career goals, eighty-nine percent indicated they needed a college education to obtain a job. Over half viewed a college education as a means of earning a lot of money. Forty-eight percent of the students decided to pursue college in order to further their education because they were interested in learning.

Attendance at colleges in the region as well as foreign and mainland schools provide all Kosraeans and many Ponapeans an opportunity to leave their islands and more than half indicated this was a reason for going to college. Those respondents who elaborated on other reasons they

*National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges

TABLE 3-1: REASONS FOR GOING TO COLLEGE

<u>Reasons for Going to College:</u>	<u>Percent Overall</u>		
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
"I needed a college education to get a job" (N=115)	89	11	100%
"I needed to go to college to earn a lot of money" (N=116)	59	41	100%
"I wanted to leave the island" (N=115)	58	42	100%
"I got a government grant" (N=115)	80	20	100%
"A family elder or parent said I should go" (N=115)	52	48	100%
"I had no particular reason" (N=114)	34	66	100%

"Other than these reasons, what is your biggest reason for going to college?"		(N=77)	
Duplicated statement of a fixed choice option (above)		1	
Further education		48	
For self experience - inner directed to enjoy life, to meet people		12	
To experience other places, culture, lifestyles		17	
For income or career award		5	
To help the family or at their request		5	
To help society/community - outer directed		10	
Lost a job so returned to college		<u>1</u>	
		99%*	TOTAL

*Due to rounding error totals may not equal 100%

considered important included inner-directed reasons such as the experience, and an opportunity to enjoy life and meet people, as well as to experience other places, cultures and lifestyles.

Additionally, many students went for reasons that were external to themselves. Financial incentives prompted considerations for attending college in that a large majority stated receipt of financial assistance as a reason for going. Consideration of and compliance with the suggestion of a family elder or parent as a reason for attending college was cited by half of the respondents. Other external or outer-directed reasons were geared towards helping their society and community.

A closer look at those persons attending college indicates that 81 percent or ninety-six students selected elective courses or major fields of study because of their own personal interest. While only 2 percent never chose a major, it was observed that once the students decided upon their major field of study almost three-fourths did not alter their majors. In a recent study of the impact of college on those students who persist in school and those who do not, Kowalski (1977) concludes that "*one can speculate that having a definite educational goal in mind enhances persistence in college* (p. 77)." Among the Micronesians who stated they had no particular reason for going to college, 46 percent never finished while 54 percent graduated. These percentages are not significantly different in the completion and dropout rates for the entire sample; however, the completion rate (61%) was slightly higher for the group that did have particular reasons in mind.

Reasons for Attending Particular Colleges

Just as the reasons for pursuing a college education may vary, so do the reasons for attending particular schools. These Ponapeans and Kosraeans made deliberate decisions about the specific colleges they chose to attend and were aware of other colleges and their program offerings prior to making their choices. In fact, 64 percent felt that they had other options among colleges besides the ones that offered financial assistance. Two reasons that were noticeable with regard to the choice of schools were the types of programs offered at the college

and the fact of financial assistance. An examination of the data shows that 69 percent of the students attended the college of their choice because they were interested in a particular program it offered. Financial aid awards stimulated an additional incentive as 60 percent indicated this factor influenced their selection of colleges (Table 3-2).

Other people played a role in influencing college choices among this group. Thirty-eight percent stated high school counselors and teachers suggested particular schools and that this influenced their decisions. About one-third indicated their families or peers shared in their decision or selection of which college to attend. They reported that family members or friends had attended the school or lived in the area and that this was a reason for going there also. However, in a study of Trukese college students attending school on the mainland United States Larson (1979) noted, "*while a student may go to a school because of a certain program, even more often attendance is on the advice of a friend or relative already at the school or who has attended it in the past* (p. 16)." Larson's findings and interpretation were that this is an important reason and that it may override the student's own choice and reason for attending a particular college. This role or influence of others with regard to college selection and attendance is certainly a topic for further research and exploration.

The general environment and location of the colleges also played a part in the choice of schools. Two-thirds of the respondents selected their school because they liked the location and the weather. Astin (1968) placed emphasis on the physical environment of the surrounding town and community and the climate of the particular geographic region where the student attends college. He stated, "*Any or all of these physical characteristics of the college environment can affect the progress and development of the student* (p.84)." Among these Ponapean and Kosraean students attending college in the United States, there appears to be a trend towards the west coast and south to mid-western regions. Larson (1979) noted that among the Trukese students he sampled, the west was the regional preference, and Urbanowicz (1978) concurs, "*...there appears to be an inordinately large proportion of Micronesian students in Northeastern California* (p. 7)." Overall the student's attitude toward the general environment and the school's location was

TABLE 3-2. REASONS FOR ATTENDING A PARTICULAR COLLEGE

<u>Reasons for Attending a Particular College:</u>	<u>Percent Overall</u>		
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
"It was the only school I knew about" (N=121)	17	83	100%
"It was the only school I could get into" (N=120)	36	64	100%
"I was interested in a particular program the school offered" (N=121)	69	31	100%
"I was awarded financial aid from the school" (N=121)	60	40	100%
"Teachers or counselors told me I should go there" (N=121)	38	62	100%
"Family members or friends had been to school there or lived in the area" (N=121)	33	67	100%
"I liked the location of the school, the weather, and it seemed nice" (N=121)	68	32	100%

that they were quite acceptable.

A comment repeatedly made during conversations was that going to school and living with other Ponapeans or Kosraeans often interfered with school work. The wishes of others, especially among kin, created demands on the students. They often abandoned their own preferences for the sake of others' when confronted with the dilemma of studying versus participating in other activities with cousins or relatives, and friends. They felt compelled and obligated to join them and to postpone their own studies. On other occasions, several persons indicated they chose not to attend regional schools such as Guam or Hawaii because of the large numbers of Ponapean and Kosraean students attending these schools and that social obligations to these students would hamper their own studies. On another occasion, one student stated he was transferring from the Micronesian Occupational College to a two-year vocational college on the mainland, primarily because of the program it offered and secondly because there were no Ponapean students at that school. He did mention, however, that there were other Micronesian students from Truk attending the school and this contributed to his decision to attend. Living arrangements among this sample from Ponape and Kosrae were also examined as being an integral part of the college experience.

Domicile Patterns

Domicile arrangements among this group did not correspond with residence during a particular class level or year but students were asked to comment on their living arrangements throughout their college experience. Student's place of residence has been examined by researchers to determine what affects it has had on college completion or non-completion. Residence on campus has significantly influenced persistence rates when compared to residence with family, relatives, friends or in other private residences (Astin, 1968; Cope, 1978). Since 61 percent of the Ponapean and Kosraean college students were enrolled in schools outside of the Trust Territory, including Guam, most students relied upon the college or sponsors to provide housing. As might be expected, almost three-fourths lived in the dormitories or other college housing.

These Micronesian students generally did not live alone. When they lived off campus they shared housing with either other Micronesian (38%) or non-Micronesian (33%) friends. In a few cases, students had the opportunity to live in a family setting either with non-Micronesian sponsors or with their own relatives or Micronesian friends. Among this sample there was no significant difference between finishing college and the place of residence, however dormitory residence was slightly higher among those students who completed college than those who did not. As noted in this discussion of resident patterns, interactions with friends and living arrangements overlap in many instances.

Peer Interaction

A student is influenced to a large degree by exchanges and contacts with fellow students and friends, both in the academic and social settings at school. These peer interactions and their effects among college students have been the topic of numerous studies (Astin, 1968; Spady, 1970; Bradshaw, 1975; Fetters, 1977). Bradshaw (1975) stated "... *students learn a considerable amount of both academic and extracurricular material from one another* (p. 290)." And as Astin put it:

...from the point of view of the prospective college student, the stimuli provided by his peers may represent the most significant aspect of the college environment... The effects of such stimuli are more pronounced for those students living away from home in dorm or other types of college housing shared by students (p. 7).

Ponapean and Kosraean students described their interactions with peers which contributed to their overall college experience. They turned most often to other Ponapean or Kosraean students for collaboration or assistance regarding academic matters or personal difficulties more so than to non-Micronesians. Forty-eight percent reported they studied for exams most often with Micronesian friends only. Again, Micronesians were conferred with more often when deciding what courses to take. Over one-half indicated they talked with Micronesian friends about enrollment in courses rather than with non-Micronesian friends. Twelve percent spoke with friends who were not of their ethnic background about their problems but

half of the students talked mainly with friends who were Micronesians.

In activities of a more social nature they were not as reliant solely upon other Micronesians. They engaged in interactions with non-Micronesians or the combination, non-Micronesian and Micronesian friends, more frequently. However, leisure time was spent most often with Micronesian peers. The group reported eating meals more often with Micronesians and secondly with the combination of Micronesian/non-Micronesian friends. Participation with non-Micronesians when going to parties increased slightly; however, three-fourths mingled with either Micronesians or the combination group. Dating among the combination peer group was a little more common than dating strictly Micronesians or non-Micronesians. Seventy percent of the Kosraean and Ponapean students reported they had no difficulty getting to know members of the opposite sex.

About three-fourths of the students preferred to go to social events that were associated with their schools instead of attending activities in other places. Mobility or transportation did not appear to be that much of a difficulty, which would coincide with the observation that many of the students resided on campus and preferred attending campus functions. The lack of finances was considered by about half of the informants as hampering their involvement in social activities.

Studies of peer interactions suggest that "*peer support in a collegiate social system has been shown to be associated with persistence in college* (Cope, 1978)." A comparison was made between graduates and non-graduates, and their associations with friends. The overall trend was primarily association with other Micronesians, albeit graduates interacted more often with the combination of Micronesian/non-Micronesian friends in academic and social matters than did non-graduates, yet the difference was not significant.

Environmental Aspects of Postsecondary Education

Colleges are complex institutions which incorporate the dispensing of information and the promotion of intellectual growth within a social environment. Studies of the dropout phenomena in higher education suggest the likelihood of college completion or non-completion involves

this interaction between the individual and the institution (Astin, 1968; Spady, 1970; Fetters, 1977; Kowalski, 1977; Cope, 1978) and the following chapter examines this association. One approach that was adopted in the analysis of the Micronesian students' college experience was based on Tinto's concept of integrating the student with the institution along two dimensions, the academic and the social (Cope, 1978). Adhering to this basic framework the administration, faculty, and school-associated extra-curricular activities comprised the social dimension of the student/institution interaction. Living arrangements were also included in this category. Thus an examination of the Ponapean and Kosraean students' attitudes and their interactions within the college setting can provide a general picture of the types of exchanges they experienced with the schools.

Basically a positive attitude toward the college and affiliated services prevailed. Micronesian students, both those attending mainland and regional colleges, indicated satisfaction with the college in general, with their majors and with their teachers. Ninety-two percent liked the colleges they attended and their college experience as a whole, regardless of whether or not they finished college, or if they attended a community college or a four year school. Favorable attitudes toward their college experience among non-continuing students and graduates within Hawaii's Community College system were observed in greater detail by Kosaki, et al. (1979) and appeared consistent with this group of students' attitudes.

Most agreed that student services were easily accessible. When queried about their use of the facilities that were available, such as the library, recreational facilities, financial aid, and counseling, a high percentage indicated they utilized these facilities. With particular reference to the counseling services, more than three-fourths reported they found these services to be good as well as useful. A study of international students at a U.S. university by Stafford, et al. (1978) suggests that among those international students utilizing services, there was a high rate of satisfaction and that a large percentage of the students used their academic advisors, the library, and foreign student advisors. Many of the Micronesian students from Kosrae and Ponape agreed that the colleges provided programs and activities