

MESA L-SLIS RESEARCH BRIEF #8a

Immigrants and Visible Minorities

Post-Secondary Education Experiences

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The authors would like to thank Alex Usher for his input regarding the content of these briefs, Senning Luk for his help with formatting, Ryan Dunn for his assistance in creating the final L-SLIS data set and Miriam Kramer for her management of the project. Thanks also go to Acumen/Academica group for their work on the survey. Arthur Sweetman, Keith Banting and Garnett Picot provided insightful suggestions regarding the structure of the documents and David Binder of Statistics Canada helped in creating the sample weights. Gratitude is extended to Anne Motte and Andrew Parkin of the CMSF for their input and support on this and other aspects of the MESA Project. Finally, the authors also wish to gratefully acknowledge the provision of office space and other support from the University of Ottawa, without which the analysis of the L-SLIS would not have been possible.

Immigrants and Visible Minorities: Post-Secondary Education Experiences

(Version 11-04-10)

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Please cite as:

Finnie, Ross, Stephen Childs and Andrew Wismer. (2010). *Immigrants and Visible Minorities: Post-Secondary Education Experiences* (Version 11-04-10) A MESA Project L-SLIS Research Brief. Toronto, ON: Canadian Education Project.

Part I: Introduction

Major Findings

The Longitudinal Survey of Low Income Students (L-SLIS), created in order to measure the effects of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation's Access Bursary, offers a unique combination of information pertaining to students' preparations for, attitudes towards, and experiences in post-secondary education (PSE). This report uses the L-SLIS to compare two groups of students of interest: those who came to Canada as immigrants and those who are members of visible minority groups ("Vismins" for short). To do this we classify students into four comparison groups:

- Non-Vismins born in Canada,
- Vismins born in Canada,
- Non-Vismin immigrants,
- Vismin immigrants.

For the low income students represented in the L-SLIS data, the major findings are:

1. Compared to non-Vismins, Vismins are much less likely to leave PSE in first or second year without graduating, as are immigrants compared to non-immigrants.
2. Vismins are much more likely than non-Vismins to say that their parents would be very disappointed in them if they did not get a PSE.
3. Vismins are much less likely than non-Vismins to say that their school's faculty is helpful and sympathetic. However, this does not take into account differences in program choices or other factors that may be related to this outcome.
4. Vismins spend more hours per week studying compared to non-Vismins, as do immigrants compared to non-immigrants.
5. Vismins born in Canada and non-Vismin immigrants are more likely than others to have paid jobs while in PSE.

Overall, we find Vismins compare favorably to non-Vismins in many respects while immigrants compare favorably to non-immigrants. The biggest differences are, therefore, between Vismin immigrants and non-Vismins born in Canada. Immigrants' and Vismins' extra study hours, stronger feelings of parental expectation and lower leaving rates could very well be interrelated.

Despite their successes in PSE, there is evidence that Vismins have less positive feelings towards their school's faculty, compared to non-Vismins. This may indicate that more work is needed to better the inclusiveness of PSE environments and could be of concern to university administrators.

Immigrants and visible minorities have many different individual and family characteristics that could be driving the results of this report. We begin to get at controlling for these factors through our regression analysis but further research would be worthwhile. For this reason one must be careful when imputing causality between any factors. Also note, the findings of this brief apply to the low income students represented by the L-SLIS and we cannot say if our findings hold for the student population in general.

Survey Data and Sample Selection

The L-SLIS is constructed from administrative data and from surveys that were carried out during the early months of 2007, 2008 and 2009 and which covered students who entered PSE in fall 2006. The sample used for this report includes only students who enter PSE for their first time (the target group of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation's Access Bursary), and is further reduced to single dependant students, as defined by provincial student aid systems. Only students with parental incomes below the National Child Benefit (NCB) line have been included in this analysis in order to allow for consistent samples across provinces. Due to provincial differences in bursary programs, only students from Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba or British Columbia are included. Note that all respondents are recipients of government aid in their first year. For further sample details, see Appendix I.

In our sample, the percentage of university students who are immigrants is much higher than the percentage of college students who are immigrants. This reflects PSE access patterns found in other work.

Part II: The Analysis

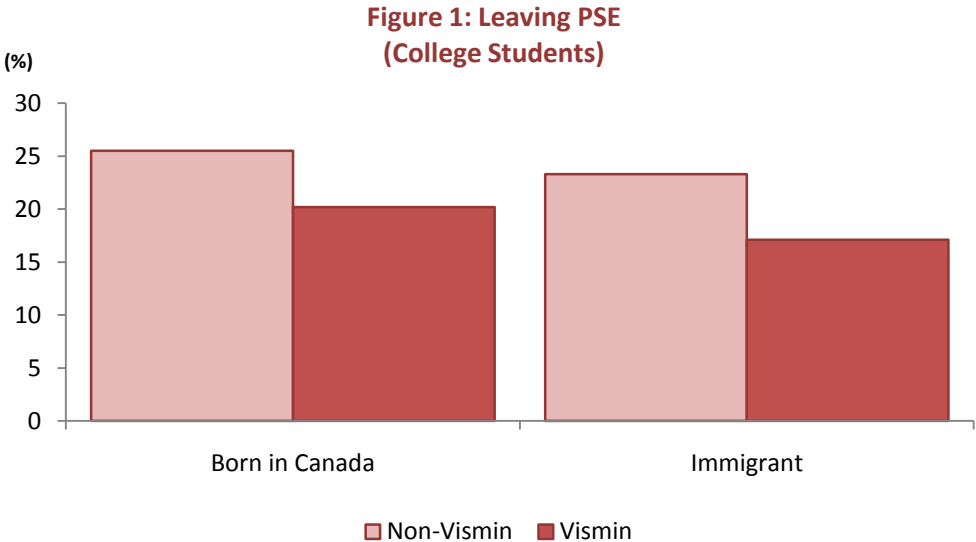
Individual, Family and Other Background Characteristics

Immigrants and Vismins of the sample are more likely to be male compared to non-Vismins born in Canada (Table A1). Also, immigrants and Vismins are much more likely to be from urban areas compared to non-Vismins born in Canada. Vismin immigrants are the most likely to be from an urban area (77.7 percent).

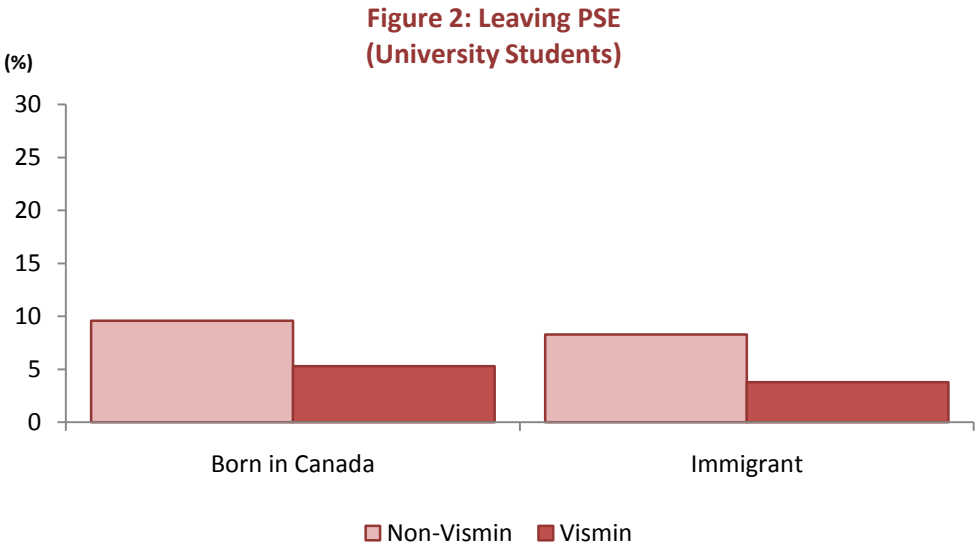
Immigrants are more likely to be from two parent households than non-immigrants (Table A1). Students born in Canada are less likely to have parents who attended PSE. In this sample of low income students, non-Vismins born in Canada have somewhat higher parental incomes than other students while Vismins immigrants have lower incomes.

Leaving PSE

Vismins are much less likely to leave PSE in first or second year compared to non-Vismins, as are immigrants compared to non-immigrants. Vismin immigrants are the least likely to leave college (17.1 percent leave) while non-Vismins born in Canada are the most likely to leave college (25.5 percent leave) (Figure 1). The same pattern is observed for university students but they leave at lower rates (Figure 2).



Source: Table A2. Figure represents the percentage of students who leave PSE during first or second year, without graduating.



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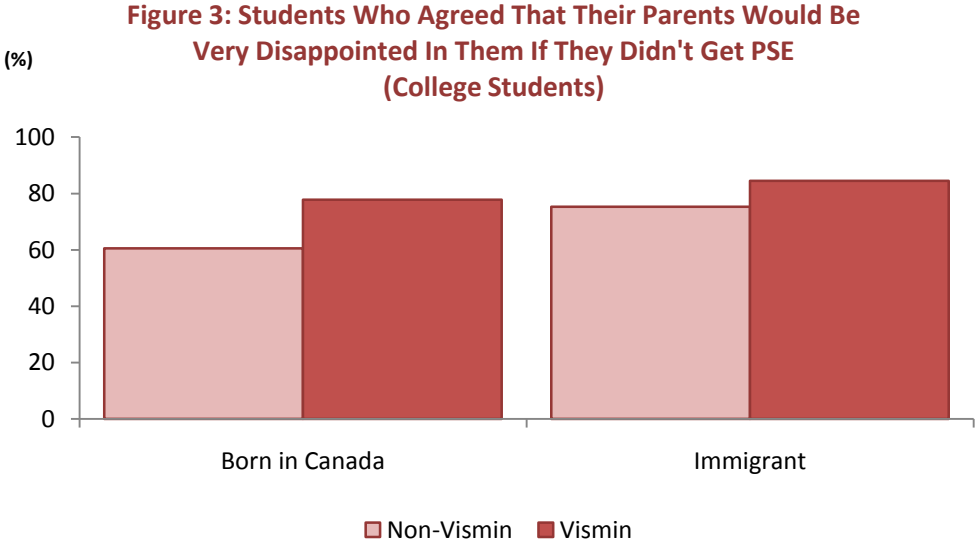
We have also estimated the relationship between students' immigrant and Vismin statuses and leaving PSE in a regression framework. Table A5 shows the differences in the leaving rates experienced by students with different immigrant and Vismin statuses, with and without controlling for other factors (gender, province, community size, family structure, parental education, parental income and high school grades) that affect leaving rates, and which may also be correlated with students' immigrant and Vismin statuses.

Our regression results show, Vismin immigrants, in particular, are significantly less likely to leave PSE compared to non-Vismins born in Canada, even after taking into account observable background characteristics which are related to leaving PSE (gender, province, community size, family structure, parental education, parental income and high school grades) (Table A5). It thus appears there is something special about the behavior of Vismin immigrants. Previous work concerning Vismin immigrants' access to PSE has concluded, 'they just go'; our results here lead us to claim, 'they just stay.'

Attitudes Towards PSE

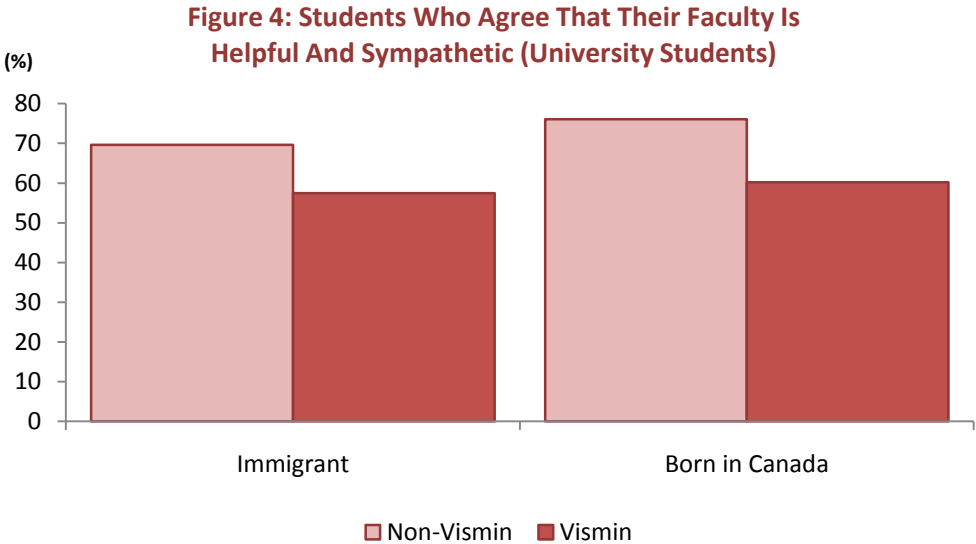
Students are asked whether they agree with a number of statements regarding the value of PSE. From their responses it is difficult to rank the four groups. Students of all groups agree in large proportions that PSE is worth going into debt for, that PSE is a good investment and that PSE leads to jobs that are more satisfying and prestigious (Table A3).

Vismins are, however, much more likely than non-Vismins to feel that their parents would be very disappointed in them if they didn't get PSE (Figure 3 and Table A3). Also, immigrants are slightly more likely than non-immigrants to feel that their parents would be very disappointed.



Source: Table A3.

Interestingly, when students are asked whether they agree that their school is a place where they belong, Vismins are less likely to agree than non-Vismins, especially among immigrants (Table A2). Vismins are also much less likely to agree that faculty at their school are helpful and sympathetic (Figure 4 and Table A3). We cannot say whether these findings are related to students' program choices or other factors.

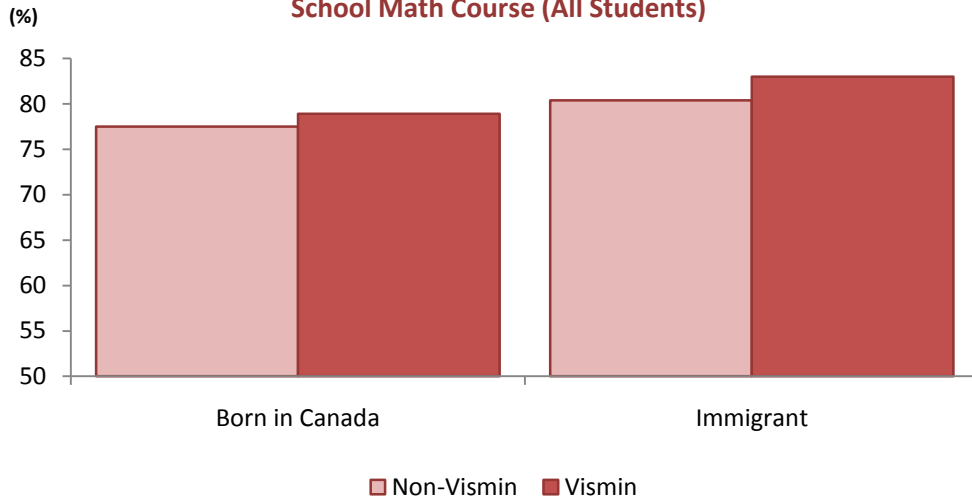


Source: Table A3.

High School and PSE Grades

Overall high school grades do not vary greatly across the four groups (Table A4). Note that our analysis of grades only applies to the select group of students that our sample covers – i.e. students who access PSE and are on government aid. Pooling university and college students, we find Vismins have higher overall averages than non-Vismins; immigrants have higher overall averages than non-immigrants. Non-Vismins born in Canada have the lowest overall average (81.5 percent). Vismin immigrants have the highest overall average (83.6 percent). Differences emerge more clearly when focusing on high school math grades (Figure 5). Non-Vismins born in Canada report the lowest math average (77.5 percent) while Vismin immigrants report the highest (83 percent). Looking at high school language grades, the four groups' averages do not vary much, (they range between 80.4 and 82.1 percent) (Table A4).

Figure 5: Average Grade In Highest Level High School Math Course (All Students)



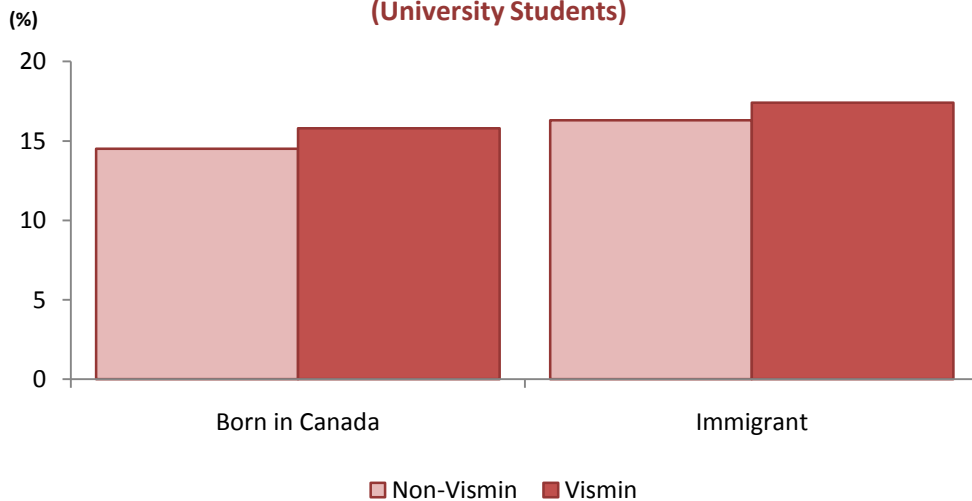
Source: Table A4.

There is only slight variation among the four groups when it comes to first year PSE grade averages (Table A2).

Time Use in PSE

For university students, non-Vismins born in Canada spend the lowest number of hours per week studying (14.5 hours, on average) followed by Vismins born in Canada (15.8 hours, on average) (Figure 6). Non-Vismin immigrants spend slightly more hours studying (16.3 hours, on average) and Vismin immigrants spend the most hours studying (17.4 hours).

Figure 6: Average Hours Per Week Spent Studying (University Students)



Source: Table A2.

For college students, there is little difference between Vismins and non-Vismins when it comes to study hours, but immigrants spend more hours per week studying than non-immigrants, on average (Table A2).

Among college students, Vismins born in Canada and non-Vismin immigrants are more likely than others to work in a paid job while in school. These two groups have an employment rate of around 50 percent while the other two groups have employment rates of about 44 percent (Table A2). Of those that are employed, non-Vismin immigrants work the most hours per week (19.7 hours, on average) and Vismin immigrants work the least number of hours per week (15.3 hours, on average) (Table A2). Both Vismins and non-Vismins born in Canada work about 16.5 hours per week on average.

University students' employment rates are lower than, but follow the same pattern as college students' (Table A2). Of those university students who are employed, Vismin immigrants work the least, 11.6 hours per week, while students of the other groups work between 13.8 and 14.3 hours on average.

Part III: Conclusion

The four groups of interest are made up of students from different backgrounds but their grades in high school and PSE vary only slightly. Interestingly though, Vismins are much less likely than non-Vismins to leave PSE before graduating, while immigrants also are less likely to leave compared to non-immigrants. Vismins may feel comparatively greater pressure from their parents to complete PSE, as may immigrants. We do not wish to necessarily imply causation between these factors but the correlations are interesting nonetheless.

Also of potential importance is that Vismins are less likely to say that their school is a place they belong and less likely to agree that faculty is helpful and sympathetic; this may indicate that perhaps more work is needed to better the inclusiveness of PSE environments, but further research is required. In particular, it would be important to take into account other factors that may be related to these outcomes, such as field of study.

Appendix I: Survey Data and Sample Selection

Conducted as part of the Measuring the Effectiveness of Student Aid (MESA) project, the L-SLIS is a longitudinal survey of recipients of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (CMSF) Access Bursaries¹. For some provinces, certain non-recipient low-income students are also included in the survey data. The surveys were carried out in the early months of 2007, 2008 and 2009 and cover students who first entered PSE in the fall of 2006. Survey respondents were contacted once a year, by telephone, in their first, second and third years after starting PSE. Survey data have been linked to government aid administrative data. It is important to note that the eligibility requirements for the CMSF Access Bursaries were determined provincially and vary from province to province. The L-SLIS therefore represents somewhat different populations in different provinces.

Restrictions have been made to the L-SLIS in order to create a consistent national sample. Due to the unique nature of the programs in Quebec, Saskatchewan and Alberta, students from these provinces are not included in this analysis. Prince Edward Island is omitted due to the absence of any administrative data. The following restrictions have been made in order to provide a consistent sample across the remaining provinces, which include Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia:

1. The sample is restricted to only students who enter PSE for their first time and are single dependant students, as defined by student aid systems.
2. Only students with parental incomes below the National Child Benefit (NCB) line are included.

Aboriginals are omitted because they are unique from other Vismins born in Canada. Aboriginals are treated in other L-SLIS research briefs.

It should be noted that only low income students who apply for and receive government aid are included. Therefore, this is not a sample of all low income students in Canada. The sample has 3921 observations (after deleting those few students who did not provide information regarding immigrant or minority status). There are 1795 non-Vismins born in Canada, 633 Vismins born in Canada, 173 non-Vismin immigrants and 1336 Vismin immigrants. Roughly 64 percent of the students in the sample are from Ontario and roughly 15 percent are from British Columbia. The remaining four provinces together make up 20 percent of the sample and each have shares of around 2.5 to 10 percent. There are no college students from Nova Scotia included in the sample. Samples are weighted to take account of non-response and to scale up to the underlying populations of lower income students they represent.

¹ For some provinces, certain non-recipient low-income students are also included in the L-SLIS but they are not included in this analysis due to the income restriction placed on the sample (see below).

Appendix II: Detailed Tables

Table A1: Individual, Family and Other Background Characteristics (All Students)

	Born in Canada		Immigrant	
	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin
Gender (% male)	35.6	43.6	45.3	45.3
Province of Origin				
Newfoundland and Labrador	6.5	0.5	0.5	
Nova Scotia	4.4	0.2		0.1
New Brunswick	18.1	1.6	3.4	0.3
Ontario	55.2	75.1	73.7	73.8
Manitoba	4.2	4.3	8.3	2.6
British Columbia	11.5	18.3	14.1	23.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Size of Community Where High School Was Attended				
Rural (pop. < 10 000)	46.1	12.1	15.4	8.1
Suburban (pop. = 10 000 to 100 000)	31.5	20.5	20.4	14.2
Urban (pop. > 100000)	22.4	67.4	64.2	77.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Family Structure				
Two Parents	52.5	57.9	64.6	72.3
Mother Only	40.0	36.0	32.5	22.9
Other	7.5	6.2	2.9	4.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Highest Level Of Parental Education				
Less Than High School	9.4	9.5	4.9	5.9
High School Completed	34.0	31.2	10.6	24.7
Some PSE	45.9	44.1	42.8	28.1
University-BA	8.3	10.8	21.5	22.5
University-Grad	2.3	4.3	20.2	18.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Parental Income				
\$0 To \$5 000	3.1	3.5	4.5	7.5
\$5 000 To \$10 000	6.6	9.9	13.4	11.2
\$10 000 To \$20 000	27.9	28.9	27.6	35.5
\$20 000 To \$30 000	33.0	36.5	33.6	29.5
\$30 000 And Up	29.5	21.1	20.8	16.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Longitudinal Survey of Low Income Students.

Table A2: Leaving PSE, Time Use and Grades In PSE (College and University Students)

	College				University			
	Born in Canada		Immigrant		Born in Canada		Immigrant	
	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin
Percentage Who Leave PSE in First or Second Year Without Graduating*	25.5	20.2	23.3	17.1	9.6	5.3	8.3	3.8
Percentage With Paid Jobs In First Year	42.5	50.5	50.0	45.7	28.9	38.4	36.2	29.5
Mean Hours Per Week In First Year								
Paid Work**	16.6	16.5	19.7	15.3	14.0	13.8	14.3	11.6
In Classes, Labs And Tutorials Studying	23.5	21.8	25.5	22	18.3	18.8	19	20.5
Extracurricular Activities	11.8	12.1	14.0	14.1	14.5	15.8	16.3	17.4
Commuting To And From Class	4.3	4.3	3.9	3.9	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.7
	4.8	6.4	6.8	7.0	4.4	7.2	7.2	7.5
Overall Grade Average in First Year of PSE								
Below 70%	15.3	22.4	10.3	21.7	26.2	23.5	20.8	17.9
70% ^s	46.0	49.9	50.3	55.1	51.5	53.1	48.0	52.3
80% ^s	32.8	23.1	32.6	19.7	19.8	19.5	28.1	25.5
90% ^s	5.9	4.5	6.8	3.6	2.4	3.9	3.2	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Overall Grade Average in First Year of PSE (Means)	77.8	75.8	78.6	75.4	74.6	75.1	76.0	76.5

Source: Longitudinal Survey of Low Income Students. *Students are counted as leavers if they left PSE prior to their second interview, which took place in the winter of 2008, during their second year. **Only students who worked every week, on average, and reported employment income are included.

Table A3: Attitudes Towards PSE (College and University Students)

	College				University			
	Born in Canada		Immigrant		Born in Canada		Immigrant	
	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin
Percentage Who Agree								
Their Parents Would Be Very Disappointed in Them if They Didn't Get PSE	60.5	77.8	75.3	84.5	64.8	86.6	75.2	89.2
Their School is a Place Where They Feel Like They Belong	90.1	88.3	94.7	88.0	90.5	87.0	94.0	85.5
Faculty is Helpful and Sympathetic	81.4	78.2	89.5	72.1	69.6	57.5	76.1	60.2
Going Deep Into Debt To Get PSE is Still Worth it	88.3	88.7	90.0	85.5	91.0	86.9	88	87.3
The Time And Money Put Into a PSE is a Good Investment in Today's Job Market	94.8	91.4	96.2	90.9	94.9	93.8	94.2	89.2
People Who Have a PSE Get Jobs That Are Much More Satisfying	82.2	81.3	72.5	85.1	73.7	71.3	74.6	75.3
The Best Way To Get a Prestigious Job is Through A PSE	82.7	76.0	79.4	78.0	79.6	79.8	83.3	73.3
Most of Their Friends Think it's Important to Get PSE	82.2	82.5	72.3	80.9	83.8	85.4	84.7	86.6
They Have Role Models at Home or at School	74.7	75.6	79.2	79	73.5	70.6	72.5	74.5
PSE Will Pay Off in the Long Run	68.9	61.7	57.9	45.1	73.4	54.3	66.6	49.2
Investments Like Real Estate and the Stock Market Are Not Better Than PSE	77.3	77.7	75.5	63.2	82.7	78.7	76.8	71.1
You Can Learn Enough About The Real World Without PSE	41.8	40.2	41.8	44.2	39.9	37.3	30.4	35.4
Good Jobs Can Be Found Without PSE	28.2	33.7	26.0	41.0	20.8	25.4	25.8	26.2

Source: Longitudinal Survey of Low Income Students.

Table A4: High School Grades (All Students)

	Born in Canada		Immigrant	
	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin
Overall Grade Average in Last Year of High School				
Below 70%	5.0	6.2	3.6	4.0
70%s	35.8	29.9	30.3	27.0
80%s	48.3	51.0	52.6	48.4
90%s	10.9	12.9	13.4	20.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Overall Grade Average in Last Year of High School (Means)	81.5	82.0	82.6	83.6
Grade Average in Highest Level High School Math Course				
Below 70%	26.5	24.1	17.9	13.7
70%s	31.0	27.8	24.9	21.9
80%s	28.1	28.6	38.2	33.6
90%s	14.4	19.5	18.9	30.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Grade Average in Highest Level High School Math Course (Means)	77.5	78.9	80.4	83.0
Grade Average in Highest Level High School Language Course				
Below 70%	9.3	9.1	6.7	12.5
70%s	30.2	33.8	30.4	33.9
80%s	46.4	43.8	47.0	38.9
90%s	14.1	13.3	16.0	14.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Grade Average in Highest Level High School Language Course (Means)	81.5	81.0	82.1	80.4

Source: Longitudinal Survey of Low Income Students.

Table A5: Regression Results (College and University Students)

	Born in Canada		Immigrant	
	Non-Vismin	Vismin	Non-Vismin	Vismin
College				
Percentage Who Leave PSE in First or Second Year	25.5	20.2	23.3	17.1
Percentage Point Difference	NA (Baseline)	-5.3	-2.2	-8.4
Regression Estimate of Percentage Point Difference, Without Controls	NA (Baseline)	-5.5	-2.1	-8.6 ^{***}
Regression Estimate of Percentage Point Difference, With Controls	NA (Baseline)	-6.2 ^{**}	0.8	-8.3 ^{***}
University				
Percentage Who Leave PSE in First or Second Year	9.6	5.3	8.3	3.8
Percentage Point Difference	NA (Baseline)	-4.3	-1.3	-5.8
Regression Estimate of Percentage Point Difference, Without Controls	NA (Baseline)	-4.5 ^{***}	-1.1	-5.7 ^{***}
Regression Estimate of Percentage Point Difference, With Controls	NA (Baseline)	-2.4	-0.7	-3.8 ^{***}

Source: Longitudinal Survey of Low Income Students. Students are counted as leavers if they left PSE prior to their second interview, which took place in the winter of 2008, during their second year.

*/**/*** indicates statistical significance at the 10/5/1% level.

Control variables were used to account for gender, province, community size, family structure, parental education, parental income and high school grades.

Non-Vismins born in Canada were used as the base line group. The three other groups were entered in a logistic regression as dummy variables. Marginal effects report the differences between the dummy variable groups and the base line group.