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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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June 22, 1982

Mr. Guy L. Coté
St. John's College
Oxford, ENGLAND

Dear Mr. Coté:

It has unfortunately taken much too long for me to respond to you. I was pleased to receive your letter and the paper on the education scale. The latter is certainly a very careful and effective piece of work. Your major conclusion, that the VSS is a suitable scale to represent the complex forms of educational experience of British men, is carefully and thoroughly investigated, and it is generally well-supported. I think that this is a genuine contribution to the measurement of an important but previously unscalable dimension. As you acknowledge, the component scales are themselves subject to some criticism (because of the subjective basis on which they are founded), but the overall results are quite impressive. I have a few comments, suggestions and criticisms, but none of them are intended to detract from your accomplishments.

Although you refer in the letter to the "proposal" by Campbell and me, the paper makes reference to our draft paper, so I assume you have seen both of those documents. If you have, you will know that your findings closely parallel our own--especially with respect to the importance of qualifications (ETN) as a component of educational attainment and the relative meaninglessness of years of schooling, once the other measures are included. Not only are our overall R^2 s similar to yours but the contributions of the various components or dimensions are also. The use of a single scale (such as VSS) has many advantages, but, of course, it does not permit the analysis of the differential contributions of the various components to the explanation of various dependent variables.

You will be interested to know that a revision of the paper you cite will be published in the American Sociological Review this month. Also, Campbell and I have obtained a small grant (not the large amount we hoped to get and which was associated with the proposal you presumably saw) to do a direct comparison between the American OCG II data set (Featherman and Hauser, Opportunity and Change) and the Oxford Mobility Survey. We are beginning that work this summer. I would appreciate it if you would pass along that information to our many friends at Nuffield.

I think on pp. 20-21 you overstate the difference between the analysis we did and that which you present. Actually, we used exactly the same dependent variables you did for Occupation and Authority. Also, while of course it is true that using an age cohort brings together men who have been in the labor

St. John's College,
Oxford, England.

March 22, 1982

Dear Mr. Kerckhoff,

I enclose a draft paper I have written about "An Education Scale" in which you may be interested.

Keith Hope passed on to me a copy of a proposal on the "Dimensions of Educational and Occupational Attainment in Great Britain" which you and Mr. Campbell wrote, and to which I refer in my paper.

I am a graduate student in Sociology and have been taught by Keith Hope and John Goldthorpe. My thesis is in the area of unequal development, migration and occupational attainment, and uses the education scale which I describe in my paper. I may incorporate the latter in my D. Phil. thesis.

I would be most grateful for your comments, if you care to make any. If you wish to try out my scale and the description is not sufficient for you to reproduce it, I can send you the SPSS programme which I used to compute it, using the Oxford Data Tape.

It would be most interesting to know if you have done any further work with the Oxford Survey.

Yours sincerely,

Guy L. Coté