

RECENT RESEARCH:
IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT PERSONNEL
ADMINISTRATORS

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"Practice in higher education, as in politics, remains largely untouched by the facts and principles of science." With this sentence Nevitt Sanford introduces his book on The American College. If we really stop to think about it, it all but incredible that the colleges and universities which have done so much to advance agriculture and industry through research, have done so little to apply scientific methods to improve higher education.

The situation is changing, however. The powerful research capabilities of colleges have finally been turned upon themselves as the objects of study. Whereas we used to study the responses of students only because they were convenient subjects for psychological experiments, we now consider the student a worthy object for educational research. In the new, educational research we're not so much interested in the ways in which students are like all other students and like all human beings but rather in their unique reactions to their educational environments. Rather than serving as a convenient representative of the human race, the student as a distinct human being is the focus of much of the new educational research.

And so, we are beginning to build a body of knowledge about the characteristics of students and colleges. The enormous increase in research does not, of course, go all the way in answering Sanford's criticism. It is, alas, sadly true that educational practice remains largely untouched by research. It has been said that it takes anywhere from 10 to 60 years to change educational practices. Let us hope that improvements in research and in the dissemination of new knowledge may gradually narrow that gap.

What do we in education really know about students? Perhaps Newsweek's observation during some of the noisier student demonstrations last year is correct. They wrote "The message is coming through loud, but not clear." To clear up the message, the researchers are taking a much broader and a considerably longer look at students. It's broader in the sense that we need to expand our understanding beyond academic aptitude and achievement, and it's longer in the sense that we need to know more about where the student has been and where he is going.

What does some of the recent research have to say about the student's background and attitudes as these relate to his education? For research on background I shall draw from some of the work of the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education and for information on attitudes, I would like to talk about some of the Educational Testing Service research on the College Student Questionnaires.

In collecting and emphasizing biographical information about people, the researcher runs into a certain amount of resistance. Some of the resistance probably stems from the folklore in democratic America that it is not who your parents are or what your background is but rather what you are that counts. On the other hand, there is some evidence in recent research that what you are, in educational motivation at least, is affected by who your parents are, or at least by what they think about education and things educational.

My overly-simplified hypothesis for this morning is that what we know about the parent may be as good a predictor of college attendance and persistence as what we know about the student. Starting in 1959, the Center for Higher Education

at Berkeley took a long look at 10,000 high school graduates in 16 communities across the United States. These students were followed through the next four years, with some of the following questions in mind. Who went where to college? Who didn't go to college? What characteristics differentiated those who stayed in college from those who dropped out? What difference do home and community have upon college decisions?

It is to this last question that I want to speak this morning. In a nutshell, the Medsker-Trent research indicated that indeed the home environment does effect the future education of the student. It appears that the appreciations which parents evidence for education and culture is one of the major factors in the student's decision to attend college. As a matter of fact, the father's occupation turns out to be more important than either the student's academic ability or his past record of high school achievement. A student from a home in the higher occupational categories was simply more likely to go to college than a student from the lower occupational levels, and ability and achievement did not overcome this background factor. The chance of a student from a family in the highest occupational levels going on to college was better than 70 percent--regardless of his ability; for the lowest occupational levels, his chance dropped to the low 30s, again regardless of ability. A poor student from a high occupational home was actually somewhat more likely to go to college than a good student of low occupational status.

From some of the other data in the study, there is reason to believe that it is not the occupation itself nor the financial rewards, but rather it is the value system of the home that has the influence on college attendance. For example the college graduates mentioned financial and academic difficulties just as frequently as did the dropouts, but how much and what kind of reading the parents did had more effect on college attendance than the student's own reading habits. And the frequency of the graduate's discussion of world affairs with family and friends was also an important factor in college attendance. Only about half of those who

entered college stayed four years, and those who did were not necessarily the most able. They were distinguished in part by the fact that they felt that their parents were interested in them and had encouraged them to go to college. The college persisters were also much more likely to describe their parents as loving, energetic, and ambitious. One might think that once the student had made the decision to enter college, parental attitude wouldn't be so vital, but the story as told by the statistics is that for students remaining at college 70 percent of the parents had encouraged their attendance when they were in high school, compared to 48 percent for the dropouts, and 15 percent for the bright high school graduates who did not attend college.

It should not surprise student personnel administrators to know that the students who reported any kind of regular attention from teachers or counselors were those who were already highly motivated and strongly supported by their parents. I suspect that these were the students who came to the personnel offices. It seems to be an administrative fact of life, at least in my experience, that we tackle the problems that are immediately at our door step. These are frequently sufficient in number to keep us from looking any further. But the clear implication of this research is that student personnel administrators must make provision in the program for reaching the able student who lacks cultural background and educational encouragement.

Nationally we have worked quite conscientiously to remove the economic barriers to higher education so that anyone who has the will to go to college can find the way. Since World War II the criteria for selection to the colleges in the country have shifted from the ability to pay the tuition to the ability to do the academic work. And yet socio-economic status is still a vital determiner of college education. What surprises us a little is that it is not so much in the "economic" any more as in the "socio" that socio-economic considerations have their effect. The fact is that now that many capable students can find a way to go to college, they cannot seem to find the will. The role of the college personnel worker in the

original college decision is minimal, of course, but his opportunity for working with the low socio-economic student who has made the first step must be considered maximal.

While I think that the pervasiveness of educational values should be stressed because it is something that student personnel administrators can perhaps do something about and because it is a relatively new problem with the rapid drawing power of the new community colleges, I do not want to leave the impression that the occupational level of the father tells the whole story in college attendance and persistence. Many factors interact to form a complex pattern of educational motivations. The student's personality, for example, has quite a bit to do with both the fact of college attendance and the purpose for it. It is quite possible, however, that much of the personality, as measured by the Omnibus Personality Inventory* may further reflect the value orientations of the home.

The college-going group were distinguished from the non-college group by different profiles on all five scales of the OPI which were given to the group as high school seniors. In general the college group showed a greater liking for reflective thought; they were more independent and unconventional; and the college women scored considerably higher on the complexity scale than their non-college counterparts. Even in high school the group that chose to go to college were more socially mature, more curious, more tolerant, more interested in abstract ideas, and had a higher theoretical orientation than were those who did not continue their education.

I want to mention one further finding from this study because it will be of particular interest to those of you who work in junior colleges. This study

*A research instrument developed by the Center for the Study of Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, California.

was carried out in communities, matched insofar as possible for their similarity of cultural, economic, and demographic characteristics. Where they differed was in the type of public college which was present in the community. Four of the communities had junior colleges, four contained extension centers, four had state colleges, and two had no public college at all.

As might be expected, high school graduates in communities with public junior colleges were the most likely to continue their education. In the junior college communities 53 percent went on to college; at the other end of the scale were the communities with extension centers where only 34 percent went to college and the towns with no public colleges where 33 percent continued their education.

The contrast of the influence of the local college facilities was most vivid for high ability students from homes of differing occupational levels. The type of local college did not make much difference for high ability students from high occupational homes. They were likely to go away to college anyway. Even in the communities with no public colleges, 80 percent of the bright, high occupational level students went to college. In the case of the able student from a low occupational level, however, it varied from 53 percent going on in the junior college community to only 22 percent in the no-college community.

It is reasonably clear from repeated research studies that there are measurable background and personality traits which differentiate college-going students from the non-college group. It is also becoming well established that different kinds of students select different types of institutions. We have put a great deal of stress upon the selectivity exercised by the so-called selective colleges, but we haven't paid any real attention to the selectivity which the student uses in choosing a college. And of the two selection processes the student's is likely to have a much broader impact upon the overall educational picture of the country.

As one energetic researcher* figured it, Harvard exercised its option of selectivity by accepting only one of three qualified applicants. But the real selectivity came in the fact that only one of 40 qualified students applied to Harvard. Thus, the major decisions about who would be members of Harvard's freshman class were not made in the Harvard Admissions Office but rather in the homes and high schools throughout the country. What are the characteristics of the some 145,000 students who would have qualified for admission to Harvard but who did not even let Harvard know of their existence? The question boils down to who goes where to college, and all research is unanimous in the finding that institutions of higher education are differentially attractive to different students. It was this recognition that led ETS to attempt to design an instrument that would enable colleges to study the characteristics of their own student bodies. It is trite but true that in education you must start where the learner is, and this is just as true for the co-curricular as it is for the curricular programs.

For the past three years Dr. Richard Peterson of ETS has worked on the development of the College Student Questionnaires. This is one of the instruments offered through ETS's new Institutional Research Program for Higher Education. The purposes of CSQ are three:

1. To offer a well designed questionnaire covering the important biographical and attitudinal characteristics of students as they enter college, as well as a second questionnaire to give a comparable description at any point thereafter.
2. To provide computer and data processing services so that even those in institutions lacking access to data processing equipment can obtain rather complete information about the non-academic characteristics of their students.
3. To provide consulting assistance in the form of written materials, workshops, campus visits, etc., which will help institutions to use the data for appropriate institutional planning.

Automatic with the development of a research instrument is the continual study

Dyer, Henry. "Changing Roles in College Admissions." Phi Delta Kappan, March, 1965. 318-321.

that takes place. As college administrators you may be especially interested in the students' reactions to their colleges as ETS has studied them through use of the CSQ. These reactions are seen in many of the 200 items of the CSQ, but I'd like to concentrate particularly upon some of the CSQ scales--hopefully without getting too involved in statistics. CSQ Part 2 is a questionnaire designed for students who have had some experience on the campus. It contains eleven short ten-item scales with the following designations:

Family Independence	Satisfaction with Faculty
Peer Independence	Satisfaction with Major
Liberalism	Satisfaction with Students
Social Conscience	Study Habits
Cultural Sophistication	Extra Curricular Involvement
Satisfaction with Administration	

Since all of you are administrators in some capacity, let's talk first about the Satisfaction with Administration Scale (SA), which is defined as:

"a generally agreeable and uncritical attitude toward the college administration and administrative rules and regulations. High scores imply satisfaction with both the nature of the administrative authority over student behavior and with personal interactions with various facets of the administration."

It consists of items such as:

43. Would you agree that most of the existing rules and regulations on this campus are logical and necessary?
52. On the basis of either direct experience or conversations with student friends, what is your impression of the courtesy and efficiency with which student problems are taken care of by various administrative or personnel divisions on this campus (e.g. admissions, registrar, loans, housing, etc.)?

In our preliminary data involving 6,000 students at 16 colleges, we found students not as critical of administration as the popular press might have one believe. For example, two-thirds of the students disagreed with the statement that "this college treats students more like children than adults." Sixty percent of the students found the "quality of assistance with personal problems generally helpful." Sixty-one percent found the administrative officers courteous and efficient. Sixty-four percent of the students, however, felt that the students had a rather weak voice in the formulation of regulations which affected them, and

43 percent felt that the college had too much authority over student life. These percentages are taken across the 16 colleges; the range of response for individual items shows considerable variation from campus to campus.

The Satisfaction with Administration (SA) Scale scores were uniformly positively associated with the other satisfaction scales. Satisfaction with administration, however, was negatively associated with a cluster of traits which describe the independent, non-conforming student. Those who expected an occupational future in the creative arts and those who said that their primary requirement in a job was the freedom to be creative and original, showed negative correlations with the SA scale of $-.27$, an $-.37$, respectively. Those who preferred independent study to classroom work and those who had no formal religion also tended to be more dissatisfied with the administration.

Although sorority and fraternity students generally represent the more conforming students, administrative regulations apparently touched them, and they scored lower on the SA scale than did commuters. Not too surprisingly those who found parties and social life the greatest source of satisfaction at college were not especially pleased either with the administration. As experienced administrators might expect, freshmen tended to be less critical of the administration than did seniors.

Aside from the relatively high intercorrelation among the four satisfaction scales, the highest correlation with the SA scale was found for those students describing themselves as non-conformists on the Clark-Trow typology*. The non-conformists were significantly more critical of administration, of fellow students, and even of faculty than were other groups of students.

Neither the academic nor the collegiate types of students showed any consistent

*The student indicates which of four descriptive paragraphs in the CSQ is most accurate as a self-description of his "philosophy of education." The four types are academic, collegiate, vocational and non-conformist.

attitude toward administration but the vocationally oriented students tended to have a positive reaction to the administration, just as the academic type tended to be favorably inclined toward the faculty.

It would seem reasonable to hypothesize that satisfaction with administration depends both upon the administration and upon the particular mix of students on the campus. Other things being equal, a high proportion of non-conformists in the student body would probably result in lower SA scores. I suspect, however, that other things are not equal. And although I have not had an opportunity to study the data of individual colleges from last spring's administration, I would guess that colleges such as Antioch and Sarah Lawrence, which have large proportions of non-conformists, do not necessarily show depressed SA scores because to some extent their administrative procedures have been deliberately designed to accommodate such students. Much of their "image" is designed to attract the non-conforming student. The question, however, remains an interesting one for further study.

Another scale in which student personnel administrators might be interested is the one on extra-curricular involvement (EI). The scale on EI is designed to measure

"relatively extensive participation in organized extra-curricular affairs. High scores denote support of and wide involvement in student government, athletics, religious groups, pre-professional clubs, and the like. Low scores represent disinterest in organized extra-curricular activities."

Most of the items in the scales are concerned with the extent to which the student has participated in a variety of extra-curricular activities during the past year, but there are also some items indicating the extent of interest in following student government activities, athletics, etc.

Using only those correlations which are statistically significant, the correlations of EI scores with other items on the CSQ would describe the student high in extra-curricular involvement as one who has well organized study habits, is relatively dependent on his peers, has spent more money than the average student over the past year, dates frequently, attends religious services more frequently than average, is not a married student and is not living at home, but rather is

living either in a dormitory or sorority or fraternity. (Incidentally, dormitory residents show a higher degree of extra-curricular involvement than do the Greeks in our sample.) A career as a trained technician most especially does not appeal to the student with a high EI score and neither does he think that the opportunity to be creative is a primary job requirement. He has no consistent position on whether the opportunity to help others is a primary job requirement. He is more likely to find his greatest satisfaction in friendships than in course work. Some of the highest correlations for the EI scale are found with the Clark-Trow typology. The student active in extra-curricular activities generally describes himself as collegiately oriented ($r = .39$). He does not typically describe himself as vocational ($r = -.30$) nor as non-conformist ($r = -.24$). The correlation of EI with the academic orientation to education is also negative ($r = -.14$).

Let me conclude by spending a few moments on the scale on cultural sophistication since it presumably is one of the goals of education and since the interests which it measures are the type so lacking in the homes of the lower occupational levels which I described earlier.

The definition of the scale for cultural sophistication is,

"an authentic sensibility to ideas and art forms, a sensibility that has developed through knowledge and experience. Students with high scores report interest in or pleasure from such things as wide reading, modern art, poetry, classical music, discussions of philosophies of history, etc."

The items on the scale for cultural sophistication would be items such as these.

How interested are you in modern art?

How much would you say you know about the history of painting.

How many times during the past year or so have you gone to an evening lecture on some serious topic (other than required lectures)?

As one could clearly guess, the non-conformists and academics show a tendency to be culturally-sophisticated with positive correlations of .28 and .32 with the CS scale whereas the vocational and collegiate are relatively unconcerned with cultural pursuits, showing negative correlations of -.30 and -.11 respectively. The culturally-sophisticated student has a strong preference for independent academic

work as opposed to organized classroom work, and he prefers a career which will involve work in the creative arts--the correlations for these latter two preferences being on the order of .52. Business majors and engineers score rather consistently below average, while humanities majors and students planning to go on to graduate school tend to make high Cultural Sophistication scores. It is interesting that this scale shows one of the greatest differences between freshmen and senior students--the seniors tending to be more culturally sophisticated than the freshmen. I have a hunch that this would vary greatly from college to college--much as it seems to vary considerably from engineering specialties to humanities specialties.

While the relationships I have discussed from three of the thirteen scales of the CSQ lend considerable credibility to the validity of the instrument, the interest and the value of the CSQ is its use to describe the students on a given campus. Research has shown beyond all doubt that students differ greatly from campus to campus and if college administrators are to serve the needs of the students, it seems essential to have available information about students as they enter the institution and as they graduate. Although the research problems in longitudinal studies are numerous and difficult, higher education can make little progress without real knowledge about the impact of the college on the student. This, it seems to me, is part of the business of student personnel administrators.

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