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ABSTRACT

This study examines college environments and behavioral manifestations of personality needs. Measures developed by G. C. Stern for 4-year colleges are applied to 2-year institutions specifically with students enrolled in programs to prepare them for employment. A survey was made of: (1) all freshmen, at a community college and a technical institute, who were enrolled in four specific occupational curricula; (2) those students who continued in the curricula into a fourth term; and (3) those students who subsequently dropped out. Results were based on demographic characteristics, scholastic aptitude, and expectations for environmental press. The findings suggest: (1) within a narrow range of variation between environmental press in the community college and the technical institute, public images of the two schools were not sufficiently different to attract students with different expectations for environmental press or divergent personality needs; and (2) the findings on variations between personality needs of students who continue and those who drop out suggest a differential selective retention power based on variations within a narrow range of intellectual interests and motivation. (CA)

EXPECTATIONS FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND PERSONALITY
FACTORS OF STUDENTS COMPARED TO DROP-OUTS
FROM TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

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During the past decade increasing attention has been directed to assessing the interaction between environments, organizational climates, personalities, and organizational and individual outcomes. Feldman provides a broad overview of research undertaken to assess the impacts of colleges (1). Stern (4) and Pace (2) have been among those who have developed measurements of college environments and behavioral manifestations of personality needs. Stern's work has led to the conclusion that characteristics of colleges attract students whose personality needs tend to be more congruent with the environmental press. Pace has investigated the existence of subcultures within institutions, such as identifiable differences between academic departments, and the relationship to the attainment of various educational goals. As is evident in the research reviewed by Feldman a variety of methods have been used to study the impacts of colleges. The study reported here is an application of the measures developed by Stern for use in four-year colleges, to two-year institutions, and specifically with students enrolled in programs to prepare them for employment. Questions directing the inquiry were:

- 1) Do two institutions, a community college and a technical institute, offering the same four occupational curricula, in addition to others, differ in environmental press to the point of attracting students with different expectations for press and different personality needs?
- 2) Do freshmen enrolled in occupational curricula in the community college and technical institute who subsequently drop out of the programs have different personality needs from those freshmen who continue into the fourth term?

B. METHOD

1. Institutions

Two institutions, a community college and a technical institute, were selected for their relative comparability on the following:

- 1) Occupational curricula offered
- 2) Public funding
- 3) Population base demographic characteristics, i.e., percent of non-white, median education, age distribution, proportion in school attendance, industrial and commercial activities, direction of change in these areas. (Determined from census data).

In addition to the occupational programs, a two-year liberal arts transfer program was offered at the community college.

The two institutions selected are relatively close to each other geographically. Thus it is possible that students could conceivably select one institution over the other, although this might entail increasing daily travel time to the school. These criteria were employed so that if discernible differences existed between the community college and technical institute such differences would be less likely to be confused with or obscured by differences resulting from the region and population base from which students in each institution were drawn.

Each institution offered occupational programs in business administration, electrical technology, nursing, leading to licensure as a registered nurse, and secretarial science.

2. Procedures

Definition of terms:

Personality needs: a taxonomic classification of the characteristic spontaneous behaviors manifested by individuals in their life transactions (4, p. 7).

Environmental press: a taxonomic classification of characteristic behaviors manifested by aggregates of individuals in their mutual interpersonal transactions (4, p. 8).

These variables are operationally defined by the 300 items of the Activities Index and the 300 items of the College Characteristics Index both developed by Stern and described fully in the recent publication People In Context (4). Analysis indicated that the 300 items clustered into factors identified as follows:

Personality Needs: Self-assertion, audacity-timidity, intellectual interests, motivation, applied interests, constraint-expressiveness, diffidence-egoism, orderliness, submissiveness, closeness, sensuousness, and friendliness.

Stern's Activities Index contains three hundred brief statements describing many different kinds of activities. The respondent checks whether the item describes an activity or event that he would like, enjoy, or find more pleasant than unpleasant, or whether the item describes an activity or event that he would dislike, reject or find more unpleasant than pleasant. (3, p. 29).

Environmental Press: Work-play, non-vocational climate, aspiration level, intellectual climate, student dignity, academic climate, academic achievement, self-expression, group life, academic organization, social form, vocational climate.

The College Characteristics Index is composed of three hundred statements about college life. Statements refer to the curriculum, teaching, classroom activities, to rules and regulations, to student organizations and activities and interests, to features of the campus and so on. Respondents express their opinion as to whether the statement is probably true or probably false about the college. (3, p. 45).

Scholastic Aptitude: For the community college respondent, composite verbal and quantitative SCAT Scores were provided; a composite ability score from a regents examination was provided for technical institute respondents.

3. Subjects

All freshmen enrolled in the four curricula at the two schools were asked to participate in the survey by completing a questionnaire, including questions on demographic characteristics, Stern's Activities Index, Stern's College Characteristics Index, and one other inventory. Data were collected on each campus, one week apart during freshmen orientation week.

From September, 1967 through Spring, 1969, lists of names of students who withdrew from the four occupational curricula were compiled. On the basis of this information and a list of students enrolled during Spring, 1969, respondents were categorized as continuing into the fourth term or having dropped out some time before.

Table 1. reports the proportion of freshmen participating in the survey.

Table 2. reports the proportions who continued in the curricula into the fourth term and who subsequently dropped out.

TABLE 1
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF FRESHMEN PARTICIPATING
IN SURVEY BY INSTITUTION AND CURRICULUM

Curriculum	Community College			Technical Institute		
	Total	N Responding	Percent	Total	N Responding	Percent
Business Administration	180	131	72.8	201	168	83.6
Electrical Technology	51	43	84.3	147	106	72.1
Nursing	53	42	79.2	72	56	77.8
Secretarial Science	112	88	78.6	196	157	80.1
Total	396	304	76.8	616	487	79.6

TABLE 2

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF FRESHMEN STILL ENROLLED DURING FOURTH TERM
AND DROPPING OUT¹ BY CURRICULUM AND INSTITUTION

	Community College		Technical Institute	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Still Enrolled	161	53.5	162	33.4
Dropped Out	140	46.5	323	66.6
Total	301	100.0	485	100.0

¹Information was not available for three community college respondents and two technical institute respondents.

C. RESULTS

1. Demographic Characteristics

Cognizant of the importance of information about basic demographic characteristics as the context in which to consider specific findings, these data are summarized first. Of freshmen respondents at the community college and technical institute.

1. over ninety percent were 25 years of age or less;
2. slightly over 1/2 were male;
3. over 90 percent were single;
4. Approximately 3/4 were from families where the breadwinner was employed in lower status white collar clerical and sales, skilled, semi- and unskilled occupations;
5. about 70 percent reported that the highest level of parents' education was high school or less.

Freshmen who continued during the fourth term did not differ significantly from those who dropped out on most demographic variables. Men were disproportionately higher among those dropping out. This difference attained

statistical significance for the technical institute. Results were suggestive that students dropping out were from families of slightly higher socioeconomic status and had attained higher educational levels.

2. Scholastic Aptitude

Cooperating institutions provided scores on measures of scholastic aptitude for all students for whom data were available. Since the measure of scholastic aptitude differed for the two schools, data for each school were tabulated separately. On the basis of all scores, the total number of students in the community college were categorized as upper 1/3, middle 1/3, and lower 1/3. Students in the technical institute were categorized in the same manner, based upon the distribution of scores for all technical institute respondents. Table 3 presents the distribution of drop-outs and students still enrolled by institution and scholastic aptitude category.

If scholastic aptitude were a major determining factor for dropping out, it would seem to follow that a disproportionate number of drop-outs ought to be categorized as lower 1/3 on scholastic aptitude.

For the community college, the proportion of drop-outs in the middle 1/3 and lower 1/3 scholastic aptitude categories is the same (35.4%) and exceeds the proportion (34.1%) for the total population by only 1.3 percent. Conversely 29.1 percent of the drop-outs are in the upper 1/3 scholastically. Students still enrolled are distributed in equal proportions among the three scholastic categories. Thus for the community college, scholastic aptitude does not appear to be a major factor in dropping out. The findings for the technical institute differ slightly in that 34.6 percent of drop-outs are in the lower 1/3 scholastically compared with 31.7 percent of the total population and 36.7 percent are in the middle 1/3 as compared to 35.7 percent of the total. However, 28.6 percent of the drop-outs are in the upper 1/3 scholastically, in relation to 32.5 percent of the total. Of those still enrolled, proportions progress in the expected direction, with 39.7 percent

TABLE 3

PERCENT IN SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE CATEGORIES BY INSTITUTION AND BY DROPPING OUT¹ AND STILL ENROLLED IN CURRICULA DURING FOURTH TERM

	Community College				Technical Institute			
	N	Upper 1/3	Middle 1/3	Lower 1/3	N	Upper 1/3	Middle 1/3	Lower 1/3
		Percent	Percent	Percent		Percent	Percent	Percent
Dropped Out	127	29.1	35.4	35.4	297	28.6	36.7	34.6
Still Enrolled	151	33.1	33.1	33.1	156	39.7	33.9	26.2
Total	278	31.7	34.1	34.1	453	32.5	35.7	31.7

¹Total N for which data were available.

in the upper 1/3; 33.9 percent in the middle 1/3 and 26.2 percent in the lower 1/3. The extent of the variation in the expected direction is still less than might be expected if dropping out were equated primarily with ability, and did not attain statistical significance.

3. Expectations for Environmental Press

Table 4 reports the factor mean scores of freshmen on the College Characteristics Index.

TABLE 4

COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS INDEX FACTOR MEAN SCORES OF FRESHMEN STUDENTS BY INSTITUTION

FACTOR	Community College			Technical Institute		
	N=303	\bar{X}	SD	N=486	\bar{X}	SD
Work-Play		14.22	4.84		14.53	4.64
Non-Vocational Climate		20.16	4.68		19.38	5.14
Aspiration Level		24.12	4.54		24.47	4.32
Intellectual Climate		31.73	6.92		30.68	6.86
Student Dignity		17.82	4.12		16.31	3.68
Academic Climate		13.78	3.74		13.86	3.51
Academic Achievement		35.87	6.37		35.39	6.25
Self-Expression		28.40	5.39		27.77	5.41
Group Life		26.90	4.50		27.91	4.72
Academic Organization		36.24	6.22		36.10	5.99
Social Form		31.59	5.98		33.67	5.71
Play-Work		25.78	4.84		25.47	4.64
Vocational Climate		29.84	4.68		30.62	5.14

The high degree of similarity in the expectations held by both groups is evident. The largest differences in factor means occur for Social Form (2.08), Student Dignity (1.51), Intellectual Climate (1.05) and Group Life (1.01). Community college freshmen had the higher mean scores on Intellectual Climate and Student Dignity. Thus community college freshmen expected an environment somewhat more oriented to scholarly activities and to treating students as mature adults than did technical institute students. Technical institute students expected an environment which would be more oriented to concern for the welfare of students and provide opportunities for developing social skills of a formal nature, as well as providing for activities of a warm friendly nature than did community college respondents. The variances were small, however, and thus the serious question as to the extent to which these have educational import. The correlation coefficient computed for the two sets of mean scale scores was .963 and significant beyond the .01 level. In brief, the similarities in expectations of the two groups for environmental press are far more pronounced than the differences.

Factor mean scores on the College Characteristics Index of community college freshmen dichotomized on the basis of dropping out or continuing into the fourth term are reported in Table 5.

As can be noted, differences in mean scores between students who subsequently dropped out and those who continued rarely exceeded 1 point.

Table 6 reports comparable data for technical institute freshmen. Differences in means were small, often less than 1, but in the factor of academic achievement was 1.27 and on self-expression was 1.9. The great similarity in means for the two categories in each school was reflected in the correlation coefficients computed between scale mean scores. For community college drop-outs compared with those still enrolled it was .99; for technical institute categories it was .98. Both with 28 df^1 of freedom were significant beyond the .01 level.

¹Correlations were computed between group means on the 30 CCI scales which combine as factors.

TABLE 5

COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS INDEX FACTOR MEAN SCORES OF
COMMUNITY COLLEGE FRESHMEN BY DROPPING OUT OR STILL
ENROLLED IN CURRICULA DURING FOURTH TERM

FACTOR	Dropped Out			Still Enrolled		
	N=140	\bar{X}	SD	N=161	\bar{X}	SD
Work-Play		14.05	4.37		14.40	5.23
Non-Vocational Climate		19.84	4.20		20.40	5.07
Aspiration Level		24.01	4.32		24.29	4.71
Intellectual Climate		31.88	6.80		31.66	7.07
Student Dignity		17.37	3.96		18.22	4.22
Academic Climate		13.77	3.54		13.81	3.93
Academic Achievement		35.92	6.61		35.87	6.20
Self-Expression		28.47	5.67		28.36	5.18
Group Life		27.24	4.65		26.62	4.39
Academic Organization		36.26	5.68		36.27	6.69
Social Form		32.23	6.16		31.04	5.81
Play Work		25.95	4.87		25.60	5.23
Vocational Climate		30.16	4.20		29.60	5.07

TABLE 6

COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS INDEX FACTOR MEAN SCORES OF
TECHNICAL INSTITUTE FRESHMEN BY DROPPING OUT OR
STILL ENROLLED IN CURRICULA DURING FOURTH TERM

FACTOR	Dropped Out			Still Enrolled		
	N=323	\bar{X}	SD	N=162	\bar{X}	SD
Work-Play		14.61	4.71		14.42	4.47
Non-Vocational Climate		19.47	5.30		19.25	4.81
Aspiration Level		24.52	4.34		24.36	4.30
Intellectual Climate		30.44	6.90		31.15	6.80
Student Dignity		16.06	3.52		16.84	3.95
Academic Climate		13.73	3.47		14.09	3.56
Academic Achievement		34.96	6.25		36.23	6.20
Self-Expression		27.13	5.44		29.03	5.15
Group Life		27.72	4.87		28.27	4.40
Academic Organization		35.32	5.95		36.65	6.06
Social Form		33.72	5.94		33.57	5.25
Play-Work		25.39	4.71		25.53	4.47
Vocational Climate		30.53	5.30		30.75	4.81

* Figure 1 charts the profiles of the expectations for environment held by freshmen categorized as dropping out or still enrolled during fourth term.

Personality Needs

Factor mean scores on the Activities Index for men and women in each school are reported in Table 7.

A comparison of male freshmen mean scores in the two schools shows that only on two factors did differences of factor mean scores exceed one point, i.e., on closeness (1.67) and submissiveness (1.19), and in each case community college men had the higher mean scores. The correlation coefficient computed for scale mean scores was .96 significant beyond the .01 level.

Similarly comparing factor mean scores of women, differences of means exceed 1 only on submissiveness with women at the technical institute having the lower score. The correlation coefficient between scale mean scores for community college women and technical institute women was .96 significant beyond the .01 level.

TABLE 7
ACTIVITY INDEX FACTOR MEAN SCORES OF FRESHMEN
STUDENTS BY SEX AND INSTITUTION

FACTOR	N=	Community College		Technical Institute	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
Self-Assertion		20.63	16.65	19.86	16.39
Audacity-Timidity		21.70	15.16	21.77	14.67
Intellectual Interests		21.83	21.19	21.04	21.47
Motivation		24.94	24.24	24.96	24.16
Applied Interests		17.03	17.22	16.76	16.54
Orderliness		18.34	21.55	18.65	20.12
Submissiveness		21.93	25.83	20.74	24.38
Closeness		24.18	29.20	22.51	28.96
Timidity-Audacity		18.29	24.84	18.20	25.33
Constraint-Expressiveness		20.83	18.23	21.51	18.01
Diffidence-Egoism		17.48	18.13	17.87	18.18
Sensuousness		15.70	18.91	15.16	19.22
Friendliness		13.18	13.76	13.37	14.54
Expressiveness-Constraint		19.40	21.77	18.49	22.20
Egoism-Diffidence		12.52	11.87	12.13	11.81

* Figure 1 deleted due to poor reproducibility.

Tables 8 and 9 report personality need factor mean scores for community college drop-outs and still enrolled and technical institute drop-outs and still enrolled. Differences in mean scores were small exceeding 1 point for community college categories on self-assertion 1.36; intellectual interests, 1.59; motivation, 1.04; diffidence-egoism, 1.14; sensuousness, 1.34. Differences in mean scores exceeding 1 for technical institute categories were on audacity-timidity 2.72; orderliness, 2.09; closeness 2.17; and constraint-expressiveness 1.10. Mean scores of drop-outs were slightly higher on self-assertion and audacity-timidity, motivation and constraint than those who continued.

Figure 2^{*} charts profiles for the four categories.

Correlation coefficients between factor mean scores for the two categories in the community college and in the technical institute were .98 and .94 respectively, significant beyond the .01 level.

Stern (1963) states that the personality need factors of intellectual interests, motivation, applied interests, orderliness and submissiveness constitute an educability dimension, however no normative data are available. In view of its potential relevance to dropping out or continuing in the program, educability scores were computed.

Table 10 reports the results.

As is evident from the following tables, educability scores of drop-outs vary only slightly from those still enrolled in either school.

*
Figure 2 deleted due to poor reproducibility.

TABLE 8

ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTOR MEAN SCORES OF COMMUNITY
COLLEGE FRESHMEN BY DROPPING OUT AND STILL
ENROLLED IN CURRICULA DURING FOURTH TERM

FACTOR	Dropped Out			Still Enrolled		
	N=140	\bar{X}	SD	N=161	\bar{X}	SD
Self-Assertion		18.30	7.21		19.66	7.30
Audacity-Timidity		18.84	6.58		19.01	6.95
Intellectual Interests		20.79	7.24		22.38	7.19
Motivation		24.10	6.27		25.14	5.87
Applied Interests		16.68	6.05		17.62	5.64
Orderliness		19.44	6.78		20.00	6.50
Submissiveness		23.88	5.47		23.38	6.01
Closeness		25.61	6.00		26.40	5.82
Timidity-Audacity		21.16	6.58		20.99	6.95
Constraint-Expressiveness		20.11	6.10		19.37	6.79
Diffidence-Egoism		18.34	4.29		17.20	4.65
Sensuousness		16.39	5.55		17.73	5.08
Friendliness		13.19	3.90		13.64	3.65
Expressiveness-Constraint		19.89	6.10		20.89	6.42
Egoism-Diffidence		11.66	4.29		12.80	4.65

TABLE 9

ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTOR MEAN SCORES OF TECHNICAL
INSTITUTE FRESHMEN BY DROPPING OUT OR STILL
ENROLLED IN CURRICULA DURING FOURTH TERM

FACTOR	Dropped Out			Still Enrolled		
	N=323	\bar{X}	SD	N=162	\bar{X}	SD
Self-Assertion		18.56	6.64		17.94	7.05
Audacity-Timidity		19.62	6.69		16.90	6.38
Intellectual Interests		21.54	7.78		20.62	7.80
Motivation		24.82	6.10		24.09	6.54
Applied Interests		16.64	5.50		16.71	5.69
Orderliness		18.93	6.14		20.02	5.75
Submissiveness		22.12	5.91		22.81	5.56
Closeness		24.59	6.38		26.76	6.04
Timidity-Audacity		20.38	6.69		23.10	6.38
Constraint-Expressiveness		20.31	5.86		19.21	6.77
Diffidence-Egoism		17.88	4.34		18.25	4.05
Sensuousness		16.75	4.99		17.27	5.48
Friendliness		13.72	3.57		14.17	3.72
Expressiveness-Constraint		19.69	5.86		20.92	6.59
Egoism-Diffidence		12.12	4.34		11.75	4.05

TABLE 10

EDUCABILITY SCORES OF FRESHMEN BY DROPPING OUT, STILL ENROLLED,
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND INSTITUTION

	Community College		Technical Institute	
	Drop-Outs	Still Enrolled	Drop-Outs	Still Enrolled
Intellectual Interests	20.79	22.38	21.54	20.62
Motivation	24.10	25.14	24.82	24.09
Applied Interests	16.68	17.62	16.64	16.71
Orderliness	19.44	20.00	18.93	20.02
Submissiveness	23.88	23.38	22.12	22.81
Educability Score	104.89	108.52	104.05	104.25

D. CONCLUSIONS

Variations between the community college and technical institute were insufficient to attract students with significantly different expectations for press or significantly different personality needs.

Freshmen who dropped out of occupational curricula prior to the fourth term did not differ significantly on most demographic variables from freshmen who continued. A disproportionate number of men were among drop-outs from both schools, but attained statistical significance only for the technical institute.

Scholastic aptitude was not significantly related to dropping out or continuing at either institution, although proportional variations were in the expected direction for technical institute respondents.

Freshmen enrolling in these four curricula shared very similar expectations for the college environment. Freshmen at the community college, whether they subsequently continued or dropped out, expected an environment somewhat more oriented to scholarly activities and to treating students as mature adults than did technical institute freshmen. Freshmen at the community college who subsequently dropped out had lower expectations for students

being treated as mature adults than did those who continued. Technical institute freshmen who continued had higher expectations for an environment which would provide opportunities for developing social skills of a formal nature (self-expression) than did technical institute freshmen who subsequently dropped out and community college freshmen. All technical institute freshmen irrespective of subsequent continuance or dropping out had slightly higher expectations than community college students that the environment would be more oriented to concern for the welfare of students (social form) as well as providing for activities of a warm friendly nature (group life).

In terms of the similarities, both community college and technical institute freshmen expected environments highly supportive of academic achievement; opportunities for developing leadership potential and self assurance; activities conducive to warm, friendly relationships and the welfare of students; and lastly opportunities for participating in a form of collegiate life involving play activity, amusements, athletics and so on. Expectations of both groups were approximately 1 standard score above the normative means (derived by Stern from juniors and seniors) for aspiration level, intellectual and academic climates, academic organization and vocational climate. Mean scores were below the normative mean on the three factors of work-play, non-vocational climate, and student dignity. These expectations coincide rather closely with that described by Stern (4, p. 173) as the freshmen myth held by students entering four year institutions.

In brief, freshmen who dropped out did not differ markedly in expectations for environmental press from freshmen who continued into the fourth term.

With reference to personality needs, variations did occur between those freshmen who dropped out and those who continued, although only one of the mean differences attained statistical significance.

A consistency in direction of mean differences is worth noting. Community college freshmen who subsequently dropped out consistently had lower mean scores on factors related to intellectual orientation than did those who continued. The converse of this was true for the freshmen at the technical institute who subsequently dropped out. Mean scores were higher on every factor for those who dropped out than for those who continued. Difference in means on the audacity-timidity factor for technical institute categories was significant at the .001 level. Scores of technical institute drop-outs exceeded the mean scores for drop-outs from the community college also. The similarity of profiles of drop-outs from the technical institute to profiles of those who continued at the community college, on the factors of intellectual interests and motivation poses the question as to whether drop-outs would have continued had they been enrolled at the community college. The same question can be posed for drop-outs from the community college for mean scores on intellectual interests and motivation were almost equivalent to those of students who continued at the technical institute.²

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that within the narrow range of variation between environmental press in the community college and technical institute, public images of the two schools were not sufficiently different to attract students with different expectations for environmental press or divergent personality needs. The findings on variations between personality needs of students who continue and those who drop out, suggest a differential selective retention power based less on scholastic ability or demographic variables than on variations within a narrow range of intellectual interests and motivation.

²Such a possibility becomes more plausible in view of the fact that descriptions of press by fourth term students obtained in the larger project characterized the technical institute as less supportive of intellectual pursuits. These data were obtained as a part of the larger project of which the findings reported above were a part. This project was funded through the U. S. Office of Education, and Rutgers Research Council. (See Figure 3)*

* Figure 3 deleted due to poor reproducibility.

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