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Some Correlates of Average Level of
Happiness Among College Students¹

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In a recent study, Wessman and Ricks (1966) demonstrated that happiness is an important dimension of affective experience among college students. They have established the concept of happiness as a useful one in psychological study through the process of providing an operational definition and through identifying some of its relationships with other important personality and behavioral characteristics. In addition, they have specified how level of happiness varied in their Harvard and Radcliffe subjects as a function of academic pressures and other aspects of the college experience.

Wessman and Ricks observed daily fluctuations of feeling and mood, using 16 bipolar mood scales, in a small group of students over a ~~six-week~~ period. They were most interested in changes on the elation-depression dimension and in the relation of these changes to changes in the other mood scales and to measures of personality development. Using a Q sort designed to measure characteristics which are presumably indicative of successful and unsuccessful resolutions of Erikson's (1959; 1963) first six stages of psychosocial development, they found that the happier students described themselves as more successful at all the psychosocial stages. They were particularly distinguished from the less happy students on the scales related to Basic Mistrust, Initiative, Industry, Inferiority, Intimacy, and Isolation. Many

of the items which consistently differentiated the happy and unhappy men were those representing the stage of Industry vs. Inferiority; the unhappy men held the ideals of industry but there was a great discrepancy between self and ideal. Because the happier students were concerned, in both self and ideal descriptions on the Q sort, with the stage of Intimacy vs. Isolation, Wessman and Ricks inferred that they were more mature and developed than the less happy men.

Wessman and Ricks were concerned primarily with the whole domain of affective experience and only secondarily with the college student as a special kind of subject in a special environment. In the present study, the order of these emphases is reversed; the college student is the major concern while level of happiness is seen as a way of saying something about how the student is functioning in the college environment. Mood as an intervening variable is both a response to cues about one's functioning and a determinant of the probabilities of occurrence of certain behaviours (Nowlis, 1965). Level of happiness, as a major dimension of mood, should be a meaningful index of the student's perception of progress toward important goals and of the degree to which he feels that he is utilizing his own resources and those of the university environment*

A large-scale cross-sectional study of the four college classes was undertaken in order to test the relationships among level of happiness, personality development, and attitudes toward goal-attainment in the college environment. The exact nature of the study and of the instruments used have been reported in detail elsewhere (Constantinople, 1967; Constantinople, 1969).

It was assumed that students could give one rating which would describe their average level of happiness during the current academic year and that this rating would be related to level of personality development as measured by a modification of the Wessman and Ricks Erikson Q sort (the Inventory of Psychosocial Development or IPD). In the expectation that the relationship between level of happiness and maturity was a general one, it was hypothesized that Seniors, being more mature than Freshmen, would also be relatively happier. In general, the IPD data indicated that the Seniors were more mature than the Freshmen, particularly on the scales of Industry, Inferiority, and Identity. However, on the measure of average level of happiness, only the men showed the expected pattern of an increase from the Freshman to the Senior year. The women were significantly happier than the men in their Freshman year, showed a sharp decrease in their Sophomore year, and then recovered their Freshman year level in the Junior and Senior years. These data, together with the fact that only the males showed the expected decrease on the Identity Diffusion scale of the TPD, were considered to indicate that the college experience is more conducive to sound functioning in men than it is to such functioning in women. This inference was supported by differences in perceived goal-attainment reported by the men and women (Constantinople, 1967), in which the men reported greater perceived progress toward goals which are generally considered central to the college experience, such as "Achieving academic distinction".

Because these differences among the four college classes could have been affected by differing composition of entering classes and

by differential attrition rates over the four college years, it seemed necessary to pursue a longitudinal study of the students who were Freshmen in the original sample. The data to be reported derive in part from the responses of students tested both as Freshmen and as Seniors on the measures of average level of happiness, personality development, and attitudes toward college. The data on the relationships among these three measures are derived from the larger cross-sectional study, both because a larger sample was available and because year-to-year changes within Ss should have little effect on the magnitude of correlations among measures.

The major hypotheses tested were: 1) There will be an increase in average level of happiness from the Freshman to the Senior year among the men but not among the women; 2) There will be increases on the positive scales of Industry, Identity, and Intimacy and decreases on the negative scales of Inferiority, Identity Diffusion, and Isolation of the Inventory of Psychosocial Development (IPD) for both sexes; 3) Ratings of the importance of goals in the college experience will decrease from the Freshman to Senior year, while ratings of the perceived facilitation of goal-attainment by the university environment will increase. It was also expected that there would be sex differences on the ratings of goal objects and the relationships of these ratings to average level of happiness.

METHOD

Subjects

Data on changes in level of happiness and personality development were obtained from 48 males and 40 females who were tested both as Freshmen and as Seniors. For 39 of the men and 35 of the women data were also available on attitudes toward college both as Freshmen and as Seniors. In their Freshman year, these students were part of a large pool of 952 full-time undergraduates at the University of Rochester who were recruited from classes in ten academic departments to participate in a study of "student perceptions of themselves and of the college environment." The correlational data presented are based on the responses of 157 Freshman and Sophomore men, 125 Junior and Senior men, 189 Freshman and Sophomore women, and 110 Junior and Senior women,

Measures

All three measures used in this study have been described in full elsewhere (Constantinople, 1967; Constantinople, 1969); therefore, only brief descriptions will be presented here.

Level of happiness was measured with a 10-point bipolar scale designed by Wessman and Ricks (1966) to measure the elation-depression dimension of mood in college students. The use of descriptive statements at each point on the scale allows for cross-subject comparability in the expectation that two Ss checking the same point on the scale are experiencing approximately the same magnitude of affect. Each S was asked to indicate which one of the ten statements best described his average level of happiness or unhappiness during the current academic year.

The Inventory of Psychosocial Development (IPD) contains 60 items, five reflecting successful and five unsuccessful resolutions of each of Erikson's first six stages of psychosocial development. The items consist of single words or short phrases. In the present research, a 7-point scale has been substituted for the Q-sort format; S is asked to circle the number from 7 to 1 /which best describes how characteristic or uncharacteristic that phrase is of him. The ratings on the five items for each of the 12 subscales are summed to obtain 12 subscale scores. High scores on the positive scales and low scores on the negative scales are indicative of successful resolutions.

Attitudes toward college were measured with the Perceived Instrumentality of the College Test (PICT). This test contains 14 items, each of which might be described as a goal of the college experience. They cover a wide range of activities, from social and academic experiences to self-knowledge and felt autonomy. Two ratings are made on a 7-point scale for each item: 1) Evaluation, or its importance as a goal in the S's own college experience, and 2) Instrumentality, the degree to which the University is perceived as helping or hindering progress toward that goal. This instrument is based on Rosenberg's (1956) theory of attitude structure and is essentially an adaptation of his test of perceived instrumentality to the domain of the college and the college experience.

Proced.

In the Freshman year, two questionnaires were used to obtain the data. The first questionnaire, consisting of the IPD and the elation-depression scale, was administered in the classroom, while the second, containing the PICT, was completed at home. In the Senior year, all three measures were contained in one questionnaire which was mailed, with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study, to all participants from the original study who were still on campus. (Questionnaires were returned by approximately 50% of the subjects still available.) All measures were obtained during the first two weeks of March.

March 65
March 68

RESULTS

Average Level of Happiness

Table 1 contains the mean scores on the measure of elation-depression for males and females and for Freshmen and Seniors. As expected, there is a significant Sex X Year interaction effect ($F = 16.74, p = <.01$), with the males increasing in average level of happiness from the Freshman to the Senior year while the females show a reverse trend. The increase for the males is significant ($t = 3.07, p = <.01$), while the decrease for the females is not ($t = 1.94$). Similarly, the two sexes differ significantly in average level of happiness in the Freshman year ($t = 4.01, p = <.01$) but not in the Senior year. It seems that the men do begin their college careers in a relatively less happy state than the women but that they become more happy during the course of the four college years while the women do not. The first hypothesis is thus supported.

7

Personality Development

The mean scores for each of the four sex/class groups on the 12 subscales of the Inventory of Psychosocial Development (IPD) are presented in Table 2. Although the mean scores are comparable to those obtained with other, larger groups of students (Constantinople, 1969), the results of Type I analyses of variance (Lindquist, 1953) reveal that only a few of these differences are significant. Significant increases from the Freshman to the Senior year are evident on Autonomy ($F = 10.98$, $p = <.01$) and Identity ($F = 6.36$, $p = <.05$), while significant decreases are apparent on the negative scales of Shame and Doubt ($F = 4.96$, $p = <.05$) and Guilt ($F = 5.93$, $p = <.05$). Significant Sex X Year interactions appear for Autonomy ($F = 4.54$, $p = <.05$) and Isolation ($F = 10.96$, $p = <.01$); on the latter scale, the decrease for the males is not significant while the increase for the females is significant ($t = 2.10$, $p = <.05$). It is unclear why the main effects for sex, which have been so ubiquitous in previous analyses of similar data, failed to reach significance. The only difference between the sexes occurs on the Isolation subscale, as noted above. These results provide only very partial support for the hypothesis that Seniors are more mature than Freshmen.

Attitudes Toward College

The mean scores for the Evaluations of the 14 goal objects on the PICT are presented in Table 3 while those for the Instrumentalities are presented in Table 4. Table 5 contains a summary of the results of the Type 1 analyses of variance. It is evident

that there are more changes and more consistent year-to-year changes in the Evaluation ratings than in the Instrumentality ratings. Among the former, the eight significant changes from Freshman to Senior year all reveal a decrease in the importance of the goal object, with the largest decrease occurring on "Contributing in a distinguished and meaningful manner to some campus group^w", "Preparing for a career which begins right after graduation^h", and "Having many good friends." Sex differences are present in the ratings of 11 goal objects; on 9 of these females give higher ratings than males. The only two goal objects rated as more important by males than by females are "Achieving academic distinction" and "Preparing for a career which requires further study beyond the B.A. or B.S." Turning to the Instrumentality ratings, which reflect perceived facilitation of goal-attainment by the university environment, the changes from Freshman to Senior year are less clear-cut. There are unexpected decreases in the extent to which the college helped in goal-attainment for "Developing your ability to get along with different kinds of people^m" and "Having many good friends," Increases on ratings of Instrumentality appear on "Establishing your own personal, social, and academic values", "Becoming self-confident", "Personal independence", and "Finding a spouse." There are two significant Sex X Year interaction effects, in both of which the males show an increase while the females show a decrease on perceived instrumentality: "Acquiring an appreciation of ideas" and "Discovering your own strong points and limitations." Sex differences in Instrumentality ratings appear with respect to only two goal objects: "Developing relationships with the opposite sex" and "Preparing for a career which begins right after graduation";

on both, the females give higher ratings than the males.

In general, these longitudinal results conform quite well with those obtained in the earlier cross-sectional study comparing Freshmen and Juniors, especially in the area of sex differences. The Year effects show a generally similar pattern, particularly on the Evaluation ratings, but the earlier finding of general increases on the Instrumentality ratings is not entirely supported by the present data. They indicate that the students view the college as becoming less helpful in promoting interpersonal relations in general, but more helpful in the process of gaining confidence in their own values and goals.

Level of Happiness and Personality Development

Table 6 contains the correlations of the average level of happiness measure with the 12 subscales of the IPD. These correlations are based on the data obtained in the larger cross-sectional study. For both males and females in the Freshman year, level of happiness is most highly correlated positively with Basic Trust, Initiative, and Identity, and negatively with Basic Mistrust, Guilt, and Isolation. Correlations tend to be higher on the positive scales for the females and on the negative scales for the males, possibly a reflection of the relative preponderance of happy women and unhappy men in the Freshman year. Correlations are higher among the Seniors than among the Freshmen, with all six positive scales for the males and all six negative scales for the females showing significant correlations with average level of happiness. The strongest relationships are again found with Basic Trust, Identity, Basic Mistrust, and Isolation. It is interesting that

the stage of Industry vs. Inferiority, which Wessman and Ricks found to be most highly related to level of happiness in their Harvard and Radcliffe subjects, is only minimally related to level of happiness among University of Rochester students.

Level of Happiness and Attitudes Toward College

from (some) 681

Since the Evaluation ratings on the PICT generally correlate less than .10 with average level of happiness, only the correlations with the Instrumentality ratings are presented in Table 7. For all four sex/class groups, "Becoming self-confident" and "Developing your ability to get along with different kinds of people" are among the stronger correlations with average level of happiness, although the latter is relatively more important for Freshmen men and Senior women than it is for the other two groups. "Developing relationships with the opposite sex" is related to level of happiness in all groups except Senior women, as is "Achieving academic distinction". "Having many good friends" and "Preparing for a career which requires further study beyond the B.A. or B.S." are both related to level of happiness in men but not women, while "Acquiring an appreciation of ideas" correlates significantly among Seniors but not Freshmen. The greater number of significant correlations among the Senior men may indicate that their level of happiness is more closely tied to the achievement of goals related to the college experience, while outside factors may play a greater role in the relative happiness of Senior women.

DISCUSSION

With some exceptions, the results obtained in this longitudinal study conform quite well with those obtained in the earlier cross-sectional study. The clearest confirmation is given to the previous finding that men are significantly less happy than women in their Freshman year but are significantly happier as Seniors than they were as Freshmen. In these data, the decrease in relative Level of happiness from the Freshman to the Senior year among the women just misses being significant. With respect to personality development, only the increase in Identity from the Freshman to the Senior year was found in both the longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. It is likely that the changes in Industry and Inferiority noted in the cross-sectional study but not the longitudinal one reflect changes in class composition, with those who are not succeeding academically leaving the University before they reach the Senior year. On the measure of attitudes toward college, the decrease in rated importance of goals is confirmed, while the increase in the perceived facilitation of goal-attainment by the university environment is only partially supported. On two goals, "Developing your ability to get along with different kinds of people" and "Having many good friends", the university is perceived as less helpful by Seniors than by Freshmen, which makes sense as Seniors are more likely to have settled down with a small set of friends with whom they live and work. The perceived increases in Instrumentality ratings on "Personal independence" and "Becoming self-confident" fit nicely with the IPD increases on Autonomy and identity.

The basic problem that must be considered here is why the women show the decrease in relative level of happiness as they progress through college. Some of the other data offer some indications of why this pattern occurs. On the IPD, only the females show a significant increase on Isolation, while the males show a nonsignificant decrease. This finding may be related to the fact that Senior women generally seem much more concerned with matters of marriage than do Senior men. In any event, an increase in feelings of Isolation is apt to be accompanied by an increase in felt unhappiness. When one looks at the measure of attitudes toward college, one finds that the females tend to perceive the two goals which are often seen by society as most relevant to the functions of an academically-oriented university, "Achieving academic distinction" and "Preparing for a career which requires further study beyond the B.A. or B.S.", as less important than the men do. In addition, the females perceive a decrease in facilitation of goal-attainment on two goals where the men perceive an increase: "Acquiring an appreciation of ideas" and "Discovering your own strong points and limitations." In general, the university is perceived by both sexes as less helpful in promoting development of interpersonal relationships in the Senior year than it was in the Freshman year, and this is an area which is apt to be more important to women than men (Douvan and Kaye, 1962). "Developing your ability to get along with different kinds of people" shows a general decrease in perceived facilitation, but it is most highly correlated with level of happiness in the Senior women.

There seem to be at least three functions which a college education can fill in the life of a student: character development, vocational preparation, and interpersonal or social development. Unless a college or university works against it, there is a fair amount of evidence to indicate that character development will occur simply because the students have reached a certain age and stage of development. Vocational preparation is a specific goal of many college students, and it is obtainable to some extent in most colleges, even if it is not specifically valued by the faculty of the institution. Social competence, however, while it may be an indirect goal of residential institutions, is rarely deliberately fostered. Here seems to lie the crux of the problem for the women: the joys of academic work for its own sake seem to become increasingly less relevant as her life-goals of marriage and motherhood become more important. Social competence is an important ingredient of her identity, comparable to vocational competence in men, but her felt sphere of social influence seems to decrease through the four college years. The significant increase on the IPD scale of Isolation may reflect appropriate movement into the sixth stage of Erikson's "eight stages of man", but it may also reflect felt loneliness attendant to an unsettled identity. Unfortunately, the present data do not allow us to answer such questions. A combination of the present questionnaire plus in-depth interviews administered during each of the four college years should provide more insight into the significance of a college education for the identity of women students.

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Footnote

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Table 1

Mean Scores-on Elation-Depression Scale

	Freshman	Senior
Males	5.46	6.35
Females	6.52	5.90

Table 2
 Mean Scores on Erikson Measure of
 Personality Development

	Freshman	Senior	Freshman	Senior
	Males	Males	Females	Females
Basic Trust	23.19	23.75	23.20	23.15
Autonomy	23.90	24.15	23.30	24.32
Initiative	24.98	25.56	24.98	24.92
Industry	24.73	24.85	25.42	24.42
Identity	24.04	25.00	24.00	25.08
Intimacy	26.00	26.40	26.40	26.50
Basic Mistrust	15.21	14.85	12.68	14.05
Shame & Doubt	16.46	15.56	15.70	14.88
Guilt	15.54	13.40	14.50	13.78
Inferiority	17.48	16.54	17.58	16.82
Identity Diffusion	17.17	16.60	18.08	17.40
Isolation	15.85	14.69	13.35	15.58

Table 3

Mean Scores on PICT Evaluations

	Freshman Males	Senior Males	Freshman Females,	Senior Females
Learning how to learn from books and teachers	5.28	5.05	6.00	5.31
Acquiring an appreciation of ideas	6.23	5.98	6.65	6.34
Establishing your own personal, social and academic values	6.23	6.07	6.75	6.51
Developing relationships with the opposite sex	5.54	5.32	6.00	5.86
Contributing in a distinguished and meaningful manner to some campus group	5.15	4.08	5.31	3.89
Developing your ability to get along with different kinds of people	5.87	5.33	6.46	5.89
Becoming self-confident	5.59	6.65	5.84	5.89
Personal independence	5.77	5.99	6.23	6.17
Finding a spouse	2.97	3.19	3.83	3.86
Achieving academic distinction	5.49	4.38	5.02	4.29
Having many good friends	5.43	4.55	5.27	4.69
Discovering your own strong points and limitations	5.95	5.60	6.23	6.20
Preparing for a career which begins right after graduation	3.77	2.18	4.60	3.80
Preparing for a career which requires further study	5.69	5.64	5.24	

Table 4
Mean Scores on the PICT Instrumentalities

	Freshman	Senior	Freshman	Senior
	Males	Males	Females	Females
Learning how to learn	5.54	5.69	5.59	5.77
Appreciation of ideas	5.62	6.28	6.09	5.74
Establishing own values	5.19	5.80	5.46	5.77
Opposite sex	4.25	4.67	5.40	5.37
Campus Group	4.75	4.87	5.06	4.57
Ability to get along	5.72	5.03	5.89	5.46
Self-confident	4.38	4.30	5.10	5.31
Personal independence	5.52	5.95	6.00	5.89
Finding a spouse	3.59	4.00	3.86	4.63
Academic distinction	4.03	4.42	4.25	4.49
Many good friends	5.23	4.65	5.49	5.14
Strong points	5.43	5.74	5.95	5.60
Career	4.40	4.08	4.78	4.74
Graduate school	5.15	5.54	5.12	4.89

Table 5

Summary of Analyses of Variance: PICT

	Evaluations				Instrumentalities			
	Sex	Year	Sex X Year		Sex	Year	Sex X Year	
Learning how to learn	5.55*	6.46*						
Appreciation of ideas	7.88**	5.05*					15.16**	
Establishing own values	10.26**						6.73*	
Opposite sex	9.06**						12.45**	
Campus group		25.65**						
Ability to get along	6.60*	9.39**					12.04**	
Self-confident							4.49*	
Personal independence	4.62*						4.18*	
Finding a spouse	5.91*						9.18**	
Academic distinction	7.97**	9.60**						
Many good friends		19.09**					12.80**	
Strong points	4.75*							3.98*
Career	16.30**	23.49**					5.83*	
Graduate school	9.00**	4.86*					4.35*	

* p = .05

** p = .01

Table 6

Correlations of Erikson with Level of Happiness

	Freshman Males	Senior Males	Freshman Females	Senior Females
Basic Trust	34**	48**	33**	43**
Autonomy	12	18*	10	12
Initiative	19*	38**	36**	24**
Industry	14	25**	09	16
Identity	18*	48**	35**	42**
Intimacy	14	39**	19*	20*
Basic Mistrust	-37**	-58**	-21**	-42**
Shame & Doubt	-10	-21*	-07	-25**
Guilt	-32**	-46**	-18*	-29**
Inferiority	-13	-21*	-15	-23**
Identity Diffusion	-12	-10	-01	-21*
Isolation	-22**	-36**	-27**	-36**

* p = .05

** p = .01

Table 7

Correlations of PICT Instrumentalities with
Level of Happiness

	Freshman	Senior	Freshman	Senior
	Males	Males	Females	Females
Learning how to learn	-09	23**	06	03
Appreciation of ideas	14	29**	07	17*
Establishing own values	11	34**	20*	-01
Opposite sex	17*	30**	30**	06
Campus group	08	10	11	22*
Ability to get along	27**	26**	18*	30**
Self-confident	32**	32**	28**	23**
Personal independence	07	22*	05	09
Finding a spouse	01	30**	25**	01
Academic distinction	16*	23**	19*	-01
Many good friends	24**	22*	15	11
Strong points	10	28**	22**	24**
Career	05	-03	05	27**
Graduate school	16*	27**	10	-08

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ABSTRACT

Measures of average level of happiness and personality development were obtained from 48 males and 40 females who were tested both as Freshmen and as Seniors in college. For 39 males and 35 females, data on attitudes toward college were also available. As expected, the males showed an increase in level of happiness from Freshman to Senior year ($p < .01$), while the females showed a nonsignificant decrease. Both sexes showed significant increases on Erikson's successful resolutions of Autonomy and Identity, and significant decreases on the unsuccessful resolutions of Shame and Doubt and Guilt. On ratings of the perceived facilitation of goal attainment by the college, decreases occurred on interpersonal and social goals, while increases occurred on goals related to character development; no changes occurred with respect to academic goals.