The Relationship Between Stress, Satisfaction, and Emotional Intelligence in College Students

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS, SATISFACTION, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Presented to

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Western Kentucky University

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Master of Arts

By

Jessica Elizabeth Largen

March 2004
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS, SATISFACTION, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Director of Thesis

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Thank you.
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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS, SATISFACTION, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Jessica Elizabeth Largen            March 2004            58 Pages

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The relationship between stress and satisfaction has been well documented. However, little is known about the possible mediating effect that emotional intelligence may have on that relationship. This study addressed the role emotional intelligence plays between stress and satisfaction. By collecting measures of stress, life satisfaction, satisfaction with school, and emotional intelligence, this researcher examined the question “Does emotional intelligence serve as a moderator in the relationship between satisfaction and stress?” Results indicated that, after removing the effects of stress, emotional intelligence and satisfaction demonstrated a positive significant relationship. Emotional intelligence was related to the Big Five factors of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Emotional Stability. No relationship was found between stress and life or college satisfaction. The results suggest that if college students can utilize emotional intelligence as a coping mechanism in the college environment, they will experience greater satisfaction that could then lead to a more positive college experience for the student and possibly a decreased rate of attrition for universities.
Introduction

When individuals describe life satisfaction, “they are typically referring to a relatively lasting, justified, good feeling and attitude about their lives” (Moller, 1996, p. 256). People place different values on various aspects of their life, however. For example, some individuals may need to succeed in their job to experience satisfaction, while others may perceive being a good parent as the major requirement for their own life satisfaction. Various components of one’s life will impact one’s level of life satisfaction. For example, a college student receiving good grades still may not feel a sense of life satisfaction if he/she is suffering in his social life. Alternatively, a second student may be satisfied socially, but unhappy because of his/her grades.

An individual’s level of life satisfaction can influence many areas of his/her life. Satisfaction is a particularly important concept to study in college students. A college student that experiences lower levels of satisfaction may have a higher likelihood of exhibiting negative behaviors. These behaviors might include such things as skipping classes, having difficulty forming a social support system, and consuming alcohol. Additionally, it is rational to believe that students experiencing dissatisfaction with college life will be more likely to be dissatisfied with life in general.

One variable that might help predict satisfaction with college life is the amount of stress a college student encounters. Historically, the concept of stress has been difficult to define. One possible reason for this difficulty is the wide array of situations that can cause an individual stress. Hans Selye defined stress as “a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it” (Petri, 1996, p. 79). Stress is a response that occurs when an individual has to adjust to environmental conditions. Stress can be both positive
and negative. Stress is defined ideographically, as each individual interprets an environmental stressor differently. One can observe college freshmen in their first semester at college and note varying levels of the stress response ranging from low to high, even though the students are exposed to the same stressors. The current study will investigate stress factors likely to predict satisfaction with college life.

A second variable that might help predict satisfaction with college life is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence involves an individual’s capacity to observe one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1993). Emotional intelligence also allows one to distinguish between one’s own and others feelings and to utilize this knowledge to direct one’s thinking and actions. Explanations of this concept in the popular press have classified emotionally intelligent individuals as more socially effective and have included personal attributes relevant to successful personal and social functioning. The underlying concept of emotional intelligence is to be in control of one’s emotions. Emotional intelligence can be learned and tends to increase with maturity. Currently, there is some debate among industrial/organizational psychologists whether emotional intelligence is an independent construct or simply a combination of other already established constructs (DeNisi, 2003).

Given the relatively young age of most college students and individual differences in the process of maturation, it seems likely that emotional intelligence would be an important variable to consider in predicting satisfaction among college students. Two individuals with the same level of stress may not experience the same amount of life satisfaction, possibly because one individual has high emotional intelligence and the other has low emotional intelligence. The current study will investigate this relationship.
and determine whether stress and emotional intelligence play significant roles in
determining a college student's level of satisfaction.

In the following sections, a case will be made for the importance of studying
satisfaction in a college sample. Variables that have been found to influence satisfaction
will be reviewed. Definitions of stress will be presented, as well as factors that have been
discovered to influence the impact of stress on individuals. Finally, the concept of
emotional intelligence will be defined and examined and will be investigated as a
possible moderator between stress and satisfaction.

Satisfaction

The research on satisfaction will be reviewed, with a particular focus on coping
resources, perceived stress, happiness, and physical health. The research discussed
indicates the importance of studying satisfaction in a sample of college students.

Satisfaction with life has been studied in the scientific community with some
frequency. Satisfaction has been linked to a variety of outcomes such as grade point
average, coping resources, attrition, happiness, health, perceived stress, and self-esteem
(Benjamin & Hollings, 1995; Bhagat & Chassie, 1978; Cotton, Dollard, & deJonge,
2002; Healy, 1991; Riggio, Watring, & Throckmorton, 1993; Simons, Aysan, Thompson,
Hamarat, & Steele, 2002). It is especially important to study satisfaction in college
students because a more satisfied student will likely exhibit these outcomes in a positive
direction.

Much research has focused on satisfaction with college life. For example, Bailey
and Miller (1998) examined life satisfaction and life demands in college students. The
main goal of their study was to establish whether life satisfaction in college students was
associated with active involvement in life. They proposed that students with lower levels
of satisfaction would lead more restricted lives with regard to responsibilities and
obligations and would experience unsatisfactory social relationships. The researchers
noted that earlier studies reported that lower levels of satisfaction were characteristic of
women who had undertaken more traditional responsibilities rather than more life-active
responsibilities. Bailey and Miller also investigated social relationships and how they
contribute to satisfaction in college students. It had been shown in previous research that
women typically score higher on measures of social support than do men. This finding
could be particularly relevant as regards satisfaction because those with more social
support likely have higher levels of satisfaction. Social support can offer a barrier that
helps lessen the tiring aspects of an active life style (Bailey & Miller).

Bailey and Miller (1998) assigned both male and female college students to either
high, moderate, or low satisfaction groups to establish differences in their perceived
decision-making styles, time demands, personal stress, and role responsibilities. It was
hypothesized that both men and women in the high satisfaction group would lead a more
active life, exhibit lower stress levels, engage in more pleasing social relationships, and
ask others for assistance more often when making decisions than those individuals in the
moderate and low satisfaction groups. Bailey and Miller found that most of the students
were generally satisfied with their lives. However, the students with the highest levels of
satisfaction were happiest when responsibilities in their life increased. The students who
were very satisfied with their life acquired much gratification from pleasant dating and
family relationships.

There are three approaches to classifying events related to satisfaction and
distress. First, events can be positive or negative. Second, events can refer to actions that relate to an individual’s current state of being or to actions that relate to an individual’s past. Third, events can be delineated from whether the individual had control in the event or the individual is merely a recipient of the event (Reich & Zautra, 1981). Reich and Zautra indicated individuals experience greater satisfaction when they have a feeling of control of life events. When events are seen as positive, individuals believe they influenced or were in control of these positive events. Zautra and Reich categorized events as either origin events or pawn events. Origin events are those over which the individual perceived having control, and pawn events were those that passively occurred to the individual.

To study the relationship between personal causation variables, Reich and Zautra measured the effects of naturally occurring origin and pawn events and compared them to satisfaction and distress measures. They manipulated the origin activity level by persuading individuals to carry out and initiate numerous, little, or no positive self-chosen activities. The researchers hypothesized and found that individuals who participated in more positive self-chosen origin activities assessed their lives and events as more satisfying than individuals who participated in fewer positive origin activities. They found that individuals who depicted numerous positive origin experiences scored higher on measures of satisfaction than did individuals that did not experience many origin events or individuals who were pawns for positive experiences. Individuals who reported numerous positive pawn experiences were more likely to experience more negative life events and more distress than individuals with fewer positive pawn experiences. Thus, this study suggests that college students who are actively engaged in positive self-
selected activities are more satisfied with their college experience.

The link between satisfaction and perceived stress in college students has been well substantiated. For example, Simons, Aysan, Thompson, Hamarat, and Steele (2002) examined coping resource availability and the level of perceived stress as predictors of life satisfaction in a sample of college students. The researchers reported that the high levels of perceived stress in college students is associated with depression and low life satisfaction levels. They noted that as students experience higher levels of stress, their levels of satisfaction decrease. Simons et al. found that 41% of the variance in satisfaction with life can be accounted for by coping resource effectiveness.

The role of student as an occupation has been compared with other occupations such as teachers, nurses, correctional officers, and human service workers. Cotton, Dollard, and deJonge (2002) found that students had higher levels of stress and lower levels of satisfaction than the other occupations. Their study showed that students who suffer distress or experience dissatisfaction in school are not as likely to function as well as other students and are more likely to have higher attrition rates. Cotton et al. found some support for the idea that control over time has a positive effect on a student’s assessment of work and life satisfaction, work load, and work role. They discovered that elevated levels of distress and dissatisfaction in the students were related to work environment variables such as low control, low support from students, and high work pressure. The researchers noted that elevated levels of distress and dissatisfaction seem to be a function of the role of student as an occupation. Furthermore, the resulting levels of satisfaction predicted academic performance levels (Cotton, et al.).

In sum, satisfaction is an important variable to study for a variety of reasons
(Bailey & Miller, 1998; Reich & Zautra, 1981; Simons, et al., 2002). Level of life satisfaction has been linked to many important variables such as engaging in self-chosen activities, increased life responsibility, and perceived stress. Examining life satisfaction and satisfaction with college is important to the understanding of the underlying dynamics of satisfaction in the college population. Next, the relevant stress literature will be reviewed with a particular emphasis on factors that impact stress such as new responsibilities, increased work load, social connectedness, and time management behaviors.

**Stress**

The following sections will examine stress research and will discuss important factors that influence stress. The review of this literature will help establish that the concept of stress is important in understanding college student satisfaction.

Stress is an inherent factor when entering college for the first time (Misra & McKean, 2000). Stress is going to occur in new college students. Learning to control emotions and handling obstacles that are causing stress are key to the successful functioning of any college student. Stress has been studied in a variety of situations and has been related to variables ranging from time management to gender differences to student retention. For the purposes of the current study, stress is defined as the evaluation of an actual event that is causing an individual tension such as a death in the family or being fired from work.

It is important to note key sources of stress for typical college students. Ross, Niebling, and Heckert (1999) found the top five sources of stress in a college sample included a change in sleeping habits, vacations or breaks, change in eating habits,
increased work loads, and new responsibilities. They also found that stress results primarily from the interaction between a stressful event and the individual’s perception of and reaction to the stressful event. Thus, determining the primary sources of stress are key to identifying which coping strategies should be utilized by college students. Vigoda (1998) believed that the breakdown of the traditional family plays a role in increased stress levels in college students. In addition, more students are coming into college unprepared for the new responsibilities and heavier workloads that are to ensue. Vigoda identified another cause of stress in the unusually long blocks of time students must fill themselves rather than having adults who plan for them.

Homesickness and loneliness are two issues that can cause stress for incoming college students. Some individuals have more difficulty adjusting to the new social aspect of college life and may experience feelings of disconnectedness in their new environment. These students may attribute this feeling to an unfriendly campus climate. Lee, Keough, and Sexton (2002) examined social connectedness, social appraisal, and perceived stress in college women and men. They hypothesized that social appraisal would mediate the effects of connectedness on perceived stress, that men would be more likely to appraise the university climate in a negative manner, and that social connectedness would be more negatively related to perceived stress for men. Lee et al. found that students who adjust well to the new social situation and feel connected to their new environment are prone to appraise the campus climate in a more positive manner. For women participants, the negative effect of social connectedness on perceived stress was somewhat mediated by a negative appraisal of the university environment. However, only 9% of the variance was accounted for by this model, indicating that other factors
contribute to stress in the lives of college students.

Health habits of stressed and non-stressed individuals have also been a topic of interest in the stress research literature. Hudd, Dumlao, Erdmann-Sager, Murray, Phan, Soukas, and Yokozuka (2000) examined the effects of health habits, health status, and self-esteem on stress in a college student population. The researchers identified two primary categories of stressors: life events and chronic strains. Life events take into account the buildup of many experiences and the resulting stress. Chronic strains include issues such as role conflict and role overload. Learning to balance conflicts and new responsibilities is commonplace in the life of a first-year college student. Daily needs, academic performance, and meeting new people are all areas in which the student needs to find a suitable balance. This major transition period is also compounded by the fact that support from high school friends and family is reduced and possibly cutoff. The process of integrating oneself into the new college community is stressful.

Hudd et al. found that 63.8% of females reported often feeling stress and 36.3% of males reported frequently being stressed. They also found that individuals who experienced higher levels of stress were more prone to exhibit unhealthy behaviors. For example, 72.7% of stressed students drank soda in the previous 24 hours, whereas 53.4% of the less stressed group had; 78.2% of the stressed group had eaten junk food, while 61.9% of the less stressed group had. Of the stressed group, 43.8% indicated that they exercised on a regular basis, whereas 60.9% of the less stressed students had. Students that were more stressed reported less satisfaction with their grade point average, weight, and fitness level. The results indicated that individuals who expressed
higher levels of stress saw themselves as less healthy, had lower levels of self-esteem, and were more likely to engage in unhealthy habits (Hudd et al., 2000).

Macan, Dipboye, Phillips, and Shahani (1990) examined the relationship between college students' time management behavior and stress. Procrastination and poor time allocation, two key poor time management behaviors, were proposed as possible sources of stress and poor academic performance. Macan et al. found those who utilize good time management behaviors reported lower job stress and showed fewer physical symptoms of stress. Those engaging in good time management behaviors experienced low role ambiguity and low role overload. They found a positive relationship between time management behaviors and measures of satisfaction and that those individuals engaging in good time management behaviors displayed greater satisfaction in both personal life and work life. One major finding of this study was that when individuals feel more in control of their situation, they experience lower levels of stress. It was also found that individuals displayed less satisfaction with both personal and work life when role demands were high, which resulted in more psychological and physical tension (Macan et al., 1990). The results of this study suggest that stress may be an important predictor of life satisfaction.

Research on stress has also examined student retention and factors contributing to retention. Satisfaction may play an important role in understanding the impact of stress on student retention. Identity development and a disconnection from parental support are two possible stress-inducing dilemmas. New social relations and disagreements with roommates are other possible sources of stress for incoming students (Bray, Braxton, & Sullivan, 1999). Social integration involves the relationship between a student and the
social system of the university. Extracurricular activities, faculty and administration relations, and peer group association are all functions involved with the concept of social integration.

Bray et al. (1999) examined the influence of stress-related coping strategies and satisfaction on college student retention rates. Previous research had found that almost 50% of individuals starting two-year colleges and more than 25% of individuals starting four-year universities withdraw by the end of their first year. Bray et al. contended that stress was an essential component of learning motivation and that students performed at lower levels when undergoing very low or very high levels of stress. A moderate level of stress provides an environment that is compatible with the best possible learning and performance. Bray et al. identified two major categories of coping. The first category is reactive and deals with the student's reappraisal of the stressful event and how the student feels about the event. The second category is active and deals with the action that the student takes to handle the stressful event. For successful coping, a balance between these two approaches needs to occur. Bray et al. found that the coping strategy chosen by an individual to deal with a stressful event does, in fact, influence attrition. This research suggests that freshman orientation programs should address stress management issues to prepare the students for the stressful events they will be experiencing. Preparing students for these events could possibly reduce attrition rates in first-year college students.

In sum, previous research indicated there is likely a relationship between stress and satisfaction (Lee, et al., 2002; Macan, et al., 1990). Macan et al. (1990) indicated that individuals exhibit less satisfaction with their personal life as well as their work life when role demands were high, which in turn created more psychological and physical tension.
for the individual. Lee et al. (2002) found that when students felt more satisfied and connected to their new environment, they were more likely to evaluate campus climate in a positive manner and exhibit less stress than those who did not feel connected to their new environment. The concept of emotional intelligence will be examined in the following section. Emotional intelligence is defined and the emotional intelligence literature is reviewed. This review suggests emotional intelligence may play a key role in the stress and satisfaction relationship.

Emotional Intelligence

Attending college for the first time can be a stressful event for many individuals and likely has a significant impact on their level of satisfaction. There are factors that mediate between the stressful event of attending a new school and one's level of resulting satisfaction (Makinen & Pychyl, 2000; Simons et al. 2002). A potential moderator of the stress-satisfaction relationship is emotional intelligence.

Salovey and Mayer (1993) presented a solid framework of the concept of emotional intelligence. They defined emotional intelligence as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p. 189). Emotional intelligence centers on one’s ability to recognize his/her own emotional state as well as others’ emotional states and to utilize this information to solve problems and control behavior. According to Salovey and Mayer, emotional intelligence enables one to gain an accurate appraisal of feelings, which then determines a range of emotional expressions. Individuals who master this appraisal can then better distinguish and react to their own emotions and better relay these emotions to other
Dr. Reuven Bar-On (1997), author of the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory, defined emotional intelligence as "an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 14). Bar-On contends that emotional intelligence is a significant element in predicting an individual’s ability to lead a successful life and achieve psychological well-being. Bar-On constructed his emotional intelligence test with the underlying concept of an individual’s ability to succeed in life, not their actual success. There are fifteen components measured by the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory that are central to his construct of emotional intelligence. They include self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, self-actualization, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationship, reality testing, flexibility, problem solving, stress tolerance, impulse control, optimism, and happiness. The higher an individual scores on the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory, the greater his/her ability to manage environmental demands and pressures (Bar-On, 1997).

Self-appraisal and expression of emotions are key components of emotional intelligence. The ability to distinguish and comprehend emotions in both oneself and other people are also key concepts in emotional intelligence. Individuals who are higher in emotional intelligence should have a higher capacity to experience empathy (Schutte, Malouff, Bobik, Coston, Greeson, Jedlicka, Rhodes, & Wendorf, 2001). Previous research has shown that when utilizing a performance measure of emotional intelligence, participants who scored high on emotional intelligence also scored high on measures for empathy. Individuals with high emotional intelligence should have a greater capacity to
socially integrate, resulting in a solid social structure. When individuals are able to positively interact with each other, they feel increased satisfaction and lower stress (Salovey & Mayer, 1993).

Salovey and Mayer (1993) maintained that individuals experience moods on a direct level and a reflective level. The reflective level deals with one's ability to retrieve knowledge about his/her own moods as well as other individuals' moods, thereby signifying motivation and the capacity to monitor, assess, and control one's emotions. Salovey and Mayer argued that even though moods generally last longer and are felt more intensely by individuals, they should be equally managed and regulated by emotionally intelligent individuals.

Salovey and Mayer (1993) contended that individuals who display emotional intelligence should be particularly skilled at regulating emotions in themselves and others. Emotions that are positive in nature may allow for better cognitive organization, which may connect varied thoughts and ideas. Emotions can aid in motivation and performance in carrying out complicated intellectual assignments. An individual possessing emotional intelligence has achieved a limited form of positive mental health (Salovey & Mayer, 1993). A sense of awareness of self and others' feelings, identifying, labeling, and communicating internal states, and an openness to both positive and negative facets of internal experience are just a few reasons those with higher emotional intelligence are generally pleasant to be around and often enhance other individuals' moods.

Schutte et al. (2001) examined emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations. Emotional intelligence was conceptualized as the capability to distinguish, comprehend,
control, and utilize emotions in an adaptive manner both in oneself and in other people. Previous research has shown that emotional competence, a construct related to emotional intelligence, is a key factor in social development and also influences the quality of interpersonal relations. Schutte et al. posited that emotional intelligence is possibly related to characteristics that foster relationships as well as the quality of the relationship.

Seven different studies (Schutte, et al., 2001) were conducted that measured various elements of interpersonal relations. In Study 1, the researchers found that individuals scoring higher on emotional intelligence also scored higher on self-monitoring and empathic perspective taking. In Study 2 the researchers found that individuals scoring higher on emotional intelligence also scored higher on perspective taking. In Study 3 the researchers found that one's capacity to comprehend other people's emotions and control and regulate one's own emotions was related to superior social skills. Cooperation is a key component of maintaining pleasant interpersonal relationships. The researchers found that in Study 4 individuals with higher scores on emotional intelligence also had more cooperative responses in the prisoner's dilemma paradigm. The researchers found that in Study 5 individuals scoring higher in emotional intelligence had higher scores for close relationships, including more associations and emotional involvement with other individuals. In Study 6 the researchers found that individuals scoring higher on emotional intelligence indicated higher levels of marital satisfaction and that individuals that rated their partners higher on emotional intelligence indicated higher levels of marital satisfaction than those rating their partners lower on emotional intelligence. The researchers found in Study 7 that individuals expected higher satisfaction levels in relationships with potential partners with higher levels of emotional
intelligence. Thus, Schutte et al. demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence typically experience more pleasant and satisfying interpersonal relationships, which in turn can positively affect one’s general life satisfaction.

There are, however, those that dispute emotional intelligence as a solitary construct. Davies, Stankov, and Roberts (1998) conducted a study that examined the psychometrics of self-report and objective indices of emotional intelligence as a means to determine whether emotional intelligence is a unique construct. The other objectives of their study were to investigate emotional intelligence in relation to indexes of cognitive ability and social intelligence and explore the relationship between various emotional intelligence measures and various personality variables. Their findings indicated that self-report measures of emotional intelligence were too closely correlated with personality traits and objective measures suffered from inadequate reliability.

In sum, managing and regulating emotions in oneself and others is the basic concept underlying emotional intelligence. The research reviewed demonstrated that those higher in emotional intelligence display better social skills, experience more emotional involvement with others, have a greater capacity to experience empathy, and even enjoy higher levels of marital satisfaction (Salovey & Mayer, 1993; Schutte et al., 2001).
Current Study

Learning to control and regulate one’s emotions is a central component in the concept of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence could be utilized as a coping mechanism to increase one’s level of satisfaction and decrease one’s level of stress. Social support is a key factor in increased satisfaction and decreased stress in the college climate. Emotional intelligence may be very useful in both building and maintaining quality social relationships (Schutte et al., 2001). Due to the relative newness of the construct of emotional intelligence, it is important to further explore the components and underlying processes of emotional intelligence and how it may relate to satisfaction in college students. The present study will examine satisfaction with college life, satisfaction with life in general, and the role stress and emotional intelligence play in determining a college student’s level of satisfaction. A sample of undergraduates will complete measures of these four variables. The following hypotheses will be examined.

Previous research indicated there is a relationship between stress and satisfaction (Lee, et al., 2002; Macan, et al., 1990). This study will further examine this relationship.

Hypothesis 1a: A significant negative relationship will be found between stress and life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1b: A significant negative relationship will be found between stress and college satisfaction.

Previous research (Palmer, et al., 2002) has shown that emotional intelligence accounts for individual differences in life satisfaction. This study will examine if the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction exists after accounting for the effects of stress.
Hypothesis 2a: Emotional intelligence and life satisfaction will demonstrate a positive significant relationship after removing the effects of stress.

Lee et al. (2002) indicated there is unaccounted for variance when examining the relationship between stress and satisfaction. The current study will determine if emotional intelligence can account for the variability in the stress and college satisfaction relationship.

Hypothesis 2b: Emotional intelligence and college satisfaction will demonstrate a positive significant relationship after removing the effects of stress.

Although not specifically a part of the current thesis, data will also be collected on three of the Big Five measures of personality (Schultz & Schultz, 1998), Extraversion, Emotional Stability, and Conscientiousness. Landy (2003) suggested emotional intelligence is merely a combination of Extraversion and Emotional Stability. He contends that Extraversion and Emotional Stability almost completely capture the reliable portion of the variability in emotional intelligence. However, Mayer and Salovey (1993), contend that emotional intelligence is a unique construct. Accordingly, three additional hypotheses will be explored.

Hypothesis 3a: Emotional intelligence will be related to the Big Five factor of Conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 3b: Emotional intelligence will account for variability in satisfaction beyond that explained by Emotional Stability and Extraversion.

Hypothesis 3c: Emotional intelligence will be correlated with Emotional Stability and Extraversion.
Method

Participants

One hundred freshmen, 70 females and 30 males, from a southeastern university participated in this study. Eighty-three percent of the participants were Caucasian, 11% were African American, 2% were Asian, 1% was Native American, and 3% were classified as Other. The mean age for the participants was 18.61 (SD = 3.28). At the discretion of the instructor, these participants were given bonus credit in their respective courses for their participation in this study. Informed consent forms were read and signed by all of the participants. The risk to the participants engaged in this study is negligible. Three participants were excluded from the study due to their Inconsistency Index score on the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory. This index is obtained by adding the differences in scores between the responses of ten pairs of similar items. If this score is higher than 12, the results are most likely invalid. Therefore only 97 participants were included in the data analyses for this study.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the participants’ college grade point average, high school grade point average, and hours worked per week. The mean for college grade point average was 2.42 (SD = 1.26). The mean high school grade point average was 3.29 (SD = .58). The mean hours worked per week was 8.5 (SD = 11.59).

Instruments

Six different instruments were used to measure various constructs in this study. The first instrument, utilized to measure stress, is the College Schedule of Recent Experience-Modified (CSRE-M; See Appendix A). It is a 47-item questionnaire designed to gain information about the occurrence of certain recent events in an individual’s life.
experience (Anderson, 1972). The respondent circles the appropriate number (ranging from 0 to \( \geq 4 \)) that corresponds to the number of times during the last year that the individual experienced each of the items. For example, the respondent would circle "0" if the event has not occurred to the individual in the past 12 months, the respondent would circle "1" if the event has occurred one time to the individual in the past 12 months, etc. The CSRE-M is specifically designed to be used in a college sample; consequently, the items are tailored to be relevant to college students. The estimated completion time of this measure is less than 15 minutes.

The second instrument is an adapted version of the Hoppock Job Satisfaction Survey (See Appendix B). The original scale is a four-item questionnaire used to assess job satisfaction (Hoppock, 1935). However, for the purposes of this study, the scale was modified to assess satisfaction with school by replacing the word "job" with the word "college." It is believed that the strong psychometric properties of this scale will make it useful for gaining a measure of school satisfaction. The estimated completion time of this measure is less than five minutes. Responses to the questions are given in a Likert-type format.

The third instrument is the Satisfaction with Life Scale (See Appendix C). This scale is a five-item questionnaire designed to measure an individual’s level of satisfaction with life in general. Responses to the items are given in a Likert-type format. This scale has shown high levels of internal consistency as well as high levels of reliability (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The estimated completion time of this instrument is less than five minutes.

The fourth instrument is BarOn’s Emotional Quotient Inventory. This measure
evaluates individuals on five subscales which include interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood. This instrument takes about 35 minutes to complete and is suitable for individuals over 16 years of age. There are 133 items on the EQ-i scale and responses are given in a Likert-type format. Participants are expected to respond to statements about themselves such as, “I have strong impulses that are hard to control” and “It’s easy for me to make friends.” The Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from .69 to .86 and the instrument had an average internal consistency of .76, as reported by BarOn (Reiff, 2001). After one month, test-retest reliability was reported by BarOn as .85 (Reiff, 2001). Content, face, factor construct, convergent, divergent, criterion group, discriminant, and predictive validity were all supported in the constructs that are measured by the EQ-i.

The fifth instrument is the Faces Scale of Satisfaction (Kunin, 1955). This scale consists of a series of six faces that depict a various range of emotions from very satisfied to very unsatisfied (See Appendix D). This scale will be attached to 13 items representing various facets of college life (Noel-Levitz). Respondents will place a check mark under the face that most closely resembles how the respondent feels about a certain facet. The estimated completion time of this instrument is less than ten minutes.

The sixth instrument is a subset of items measuring the Big Five Personality Factors of Extraversion, Emotional Stability, and Conscientiousness (See Appendix E). This instrument contains phrases that describe people’s behavior. Some examples of the phrases include “have frequent mood swings,” “get upset easily,” “worry about things,” “shirk my duties,” and “follow a schedule” (“International,” 2001). Respondents will use a five-point Likert scale in order to describe themselves. The estimated completion time
of this instrument is less than ten minutes.

The participants were also asked to fill out a short demographic form which consisted of answering questions about their gender, age, race, college grade point average, high school grade point average, and current academic classification at the university.

Procedure

Data were collected from a number of participants across several administrations. The nature and goals of this study were explained to the participants. The researcher made sure that each participant read, understood, and signed the informed consent form indicating that their participation is voluntary. The respondents remained anonymous. It was also explained in the inform consent form that the risks in participating in this study were negligible.

Upon entering the designated experiment room for this study, the researcher briefly explained that this study helps the researcher meet her thesis requirements for obtaining a master’s degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology at Western Kentucky University. The participants were informed that this study is interested in events and activities in college and their perceptions of and reactions to these events. The participants were informed that their responses would be anonymous and participation in this study is voluntary. Each participant was given a number two pencil for completion of the Emotional Quotient Inventory. Each participant was handed a packet containing all six instruments. The instruments may be found in the Appendix. Each instrument was printed on a different sheet of colored paper. Once all packets were distributed, the participants were instructed to open the packet and pull out the yellow sheets which
consisted of the Satisfaction with Life Scale and demographic form. The instructions for the test were then read aloud and participants were instructed to begin completing the instrument. Upon completion of the scale, participants were instructed to place the scale back into the packet and wait for further instruction from the researcher. Next, the participants were instructed to pull out the pink sheet which consisted of the Faces Satisfaction Scale. The instructions were then read aloud for this instrument and participants were instructed to place the scale back into the packet upon completion and wait for further instruction from the researcher. Next, the participants were instructed to pull out the blue sheet which consisted of the Hoppock Job Satisfaction Survey. The instructions were then read aloud for this instrument and participants were instructed to place the scale back into the packet upon completion of the instrument and wait for further instruction from the researcher. Next, the participants were instructed to pull out the green sheet which consisted of the College Schedule of Recent Experience-Modified. The instructions were then read aloud for this instrument and participants were instructed to place the scale back into the packet upon completion of the instrument and wait for further instruction from the researcher. Next, the participants were instructed to pull out the orange sheet which consisted of the Big Five measures. The instructions were then read aloud for this instrument and participants were instructed to place the scale back into the packet upon completion of the instrument and wait for further instruction from the researcher. Finally, the participants were instructed to pull out the white sheet which consisted of the Emotional Quotient Inventory. The instructions were then read aloud for this instrument and participants were instructed to place the scale back into the packet upon completion of the instrument and wait for further instruction from the researcher.
Upon completion of the final instrument, the participants were thanked for their participation and the questionnaires were then gathered from the participants to be analyzed by the researcher.
Results

The means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for the independent and dependent variables may be found in Table 1.

Hypothesis 1a

Hypothesis 1a stated that a significant negative relationship would be found between stress and life satisfaction. In order to address this hypothesis, a correlation coefficient was computed between stress and life satisfaction. A correlation of $r(91) = -0.00, p > 0.05$ (one tailed) was found, therefore Hypothesis 1a is not supported. There was not a significant relationship between stress and life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1b

Hypothesis 1b stated that a significant negative relationship would be found between stress and college satisfaction. For this hypothesis, two correlation coefficients were computed, one for each measure of college satisfaction. The first correlation, computed between stress and the modified Hoppock measure of college satisfaction, indicated $r(91) = 0.17, p > 0.05$ (one tailed). Therefore, Hypothesis 1b was not supported by the Hoppock measure of college satisfaction. The second correlation computed between stress and the Faces measure of college satisfaction, indicated $r(85) = 0.08, p > 0.05$ (one tailed). Hypothesis 1b also was not supported. Thus, a significant negative relationship was not found between stress and either measure of college satisfaction, failing to support Hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 2a

Hypothesis 2a stated that emotional intelligence and life satisfaction would demonstrate a positive significant relationship after removing the effects of stress. A
Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations for the Independent and Dependent Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. High School GPA</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. College GPA</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conscientiousness</td>
<td>35.92</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Extraversion</td>
<td>33.21</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Emotional Stability</td>
<td>31.07</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. College Satisfaction (Hoppock)</td>
<td>20.09</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. College Satisfaction (Faces)</td>
<td>56.26</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>24.95</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>96.29</td>
<td>13.81</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Stress</td>
<td>26.19</td>
<td>12.45</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* GPA = Grade Point Average.

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
partial correlation coefficient was computed in order to address this hypothesis. A partial
correlation of $r_{ei,ls,st} = .38, p < .05$ was found; therefore Hypothesis 2a was supported.
After removing the effects of stress, a significant positive relationship was found between
emotional intelligence and life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b

Hypothesis 2b stated that emotional intelligence and college satisfaction would
demonstrate a positive significant relationship after removing the effects of stress. Given
that two measures of college satisfaction were used in this study, two partial correlation
coefficients were calculated in order to address Hypothesis 2b. The partial correlation
coefficient between emotional intelligence and college satisfaction measured with the
modified Hoppock scale was $r_{ei,ls,st} = .44, p < .05$. Hypothesis 2b was supported when
using the modified Hoppock scale. The partial correlation coefficient between emotional
intelligence and college satisfaction measured with the Faces scale was $r_{ei,ls,st} = .40, p <
.05$. Hypothesis 2b was also supported when using the Faces scale. Thus, emotional
intelligence and college satisfaction demonstrated a positive significant relationship after
removing the effects of stress.

Hypothesis 3a

Hypothesis 3a stated that emotional intelligence would be related to the Big Five
factor of Conscientiousness. In order to address this hypothesis, a correlation coefficient
was computed. The correlation between emotional intelligence and Conscientiousness
was $r = .28, p < .05$; therefore, Hypothesis 3a was supported. The data indicated a
significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and the Big Five
personality factor of conscientiousness.
Hypothesis 3b

Hypothesis 3b stated that emotional intelligence would account for variability in satisfaction beyond that explained by the Big Five factors of Emotional Stability and Extraversion. A regression analysis was performed in order to address Hypothesis 3b. Extraversion and Emotional Stability and, subsequently, emotional intelligence were the independent variables; life satisfaction was the dependent variable. Extraversion and Emotional Stability demonstrated a significant relationship with life satisfaction scores ($R = .36, p < .05$). The inclusion of emotional intelligence failed to significantly contribute to this relationship ($R = .37, p < .05$; $\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1,88) = .67, p > .05$). Therefore, it was determined that emotional intelligence did not account for unique variability in life satisfaction beyond that accounted for by Emotional Stability and Extraversion. This finding fails to support Hypothesis 3b.

A regression analysis investigating the relationship between Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and emotional intelligence (independent variables) and college satisfaction as measured by the modified Hoppock scale (dependent variable) was conducted to address the second part of Hypothesis 3b. Extraversion and Emotional Stability demonstrated a significant relationship with college satisfaction scores ($R = .47, p < .05$). The inclusion of emotional intelligence failed to significantly contribute to this relationship ($R = .49, p < .05$; $\Delta R^2 = .03, F(1,88) = 3.02, p > .05$). Therefore, emotional intelligence did not account for unique variability in college satisfaction as measured by the modified Hoppock scale beyond that accounted for by Emotional Stability and Extraversion. This finding fails to support part 2 of Hypothesis 3b.

A regression analysis was performed between Emotional Stability and
Extraversion and college satisfaction measured by the Faces scale in order to address the third part of Hypothesis 3b. A regression analysis investigating the relationship between Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and emotional intelligence (independent variables) and college satisfaction as measured by the Faces scale (dependent variable) was conducted. Extraversion and Emotional Stability demonstrated a significant relationship with college satisfaction scores \((R = .34, p < .05)\). The inclusion of emotional intelligence was found to significantly contribute to this relationship \((R = .40, p < .05; \Delta R^2 = .05, F(1,88) = 5.15, p < .05)\). Therefore, in this case, emotional intelligence accounted for unique variability in college satisfaction as measured by the Faces scale beyond that accounted for by Emotional Stability and Extraversion. This finding provided partial support for Hypothesis 3b.

Thus, there was inconsistent support for Hypothesis 3b. Hypothesis 3b was not supported by the measure of life satisfaction and the Hoppock measure of college satisfaction. Hypothesis 3b was supported by the Faces scale measure of college satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 3c**

Hypothesis 3c stated that emotional intelligence would be correlated with Emotional Stability and Extraversion. Correlation coefficients were computed between emotional intelligence and Emotional Stability and emotional intelligence and Extraversion. The correlation between emotional intelligence and Emotional Stability was \(r = .52, p < .05\), and the correlation between emotional intelligence and Extraversion was \(r = .41, p < .05\). Therefore, emotional intelligence was correlated with Emotional Stability and Extraversion. Thus, Hypothesis 3c was supported.
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of emotional intelligence in perceptions of stress and satisfaction in a college population. Measures of life satisfaction, college satisfaction, stress, and emotional intelligence were collected from one hundred undergraduate freshmen to evaluate this proposed relationship. The following sections will discuss the findings and significance of each hypothesis. Following the discussions of each hypothesis, implications of the results will be addressed. Finally, limitations of this research and future directions will conclude the discussion section.

Hypothesis 1a

Hypothesis 1a stated that a significant negative relationship would be found between stress and life satisfaction. The results of this study found no direct relationship between stress and life satisfaction. Hypothesis 1a was not supported.

Prior research addressing stress and satisfaction in a college setting typically included variables beyond stress and satisfaction (Bray, et al.; Cotton, et al.). Other variables included in the research include time demands, decision-making styles, or role responsibilities (Bailey & Miller, 1998). However, in the current study, a direct relationship was expected between stress and satisfaction. Perhaps this hypothesis was too broad and should have taken into account other mediating factors such as an individual’s social support system. Rationally, one could assume a connection between an individual’s social support system and one’s personal satisfaction with life or level of stress one endures in a college setting.
Hypothesis 1b

Hypothesis 1b stated that a significant negative relationship would be found between stress and college satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported when tested with two measures of college satisfaction: a Faces Scale and a modified Hoppock scale of college satisfaction.

It was expected that stress and college satisfaction would exhibit a negative relationship due to the more direct nature of this relationship. The somewhat nebulous concept of life satisfaction encompasses a multitude of factors within one’s life, whereas college satisfaction is limited to college experience and includes far fewer mediating factors with college stress. College satisfaction can be conceptualized as a specific subset of life satisfaction. To further illustrate this point, research has shown that individuals who entered college for the first time and displayed a sense of connectedness to their new college environment were more likely to exhibit less stress and feel more satisfaction than students who did not display a sense of connectedness with their new environment (Lee, et al., 2002). The relationship between college stress and college satisfaction seems more direct than the relationship between life satisfaction and stress for college students.

Hypothesis 2a

Hypothesis 2a stated that emotional intelligence and life satisfaction would demonstrate a positive significant relationship after removing the effects of stress. The current study found this to be the case; emotional intelligence and life satisfaction demonstrated a positive significant relationship after removing the effects of stress.

There are numerous factors that can contribute to an individual’s level of life satisfaction. According to this study, after the effects of stress were removed, emotional
intelligence was one of these factors. Given that the foundation of emotional intelligence lies within one’s ability to distinguish and react to one’s own emotions and better relay these emotions to others, it is logical to assume that this factor would contribute positively to one’s life satisfaction. An individual who is more in control of his/her own emotions and better able to recognize and react to emotions in others would likely be a more satisfied individual. Previous research has shown that those scoring higher in emotional intelligence had higher scores for close relationships as well as experiencing more associations and emotional involvement with others (Shutte, et al., 2001).

**Hypothesis 2b**

Hypothesis 2b stated that emotional intelligence and college satisfaction would demonstrate a positive significant relationship after removing the effects of stress. In the present study, it was found that emotional intelligence and college satisfaction demonstrated a positive significant relationship with each measure of college satisfaction after removing the effects of stress.

Previous research has focused on social connectedness, stress, and resulting feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with college (Lee, et. al, 2002). Lee et al. showed that students who adjusted well to college life and felt more connected to their new environment were more satisfied with college life and exhibited less stress than those who did not adjust well and did not feel connected. However, only 9% of the variance was accounted for by their model. Therefore, emotional intelligence could also be a factor that plays an important role in the stress and college satisfaction relationship, as was demonstrated in the present research.
**Hypothesis 3a**

Hypothesis 3a stated that emotional intelligence would be related to the Big Five factor of Conscientiousness. The current study found that emotional intelligence was related to the Big Five factor of Conscientiousness; therefore Hypothesis 3a was supported.

Characteristics of individuals who score high on the Big Five factor of Conscientiousness include personal descriptive adjectives such as dependable, responsible, organized, and reliable. These individuals are more likely to be very motivated and display ethical behavior than those scoring low on Conscientiousness. Characteristics of individuals who score low on this factor include disorganization, carelessness, and unreliability. It has been suggested that Conscientiousness is related to emotional intelligence (DeNisi, 2003), but more research is needed to confirm this proposition. The results of the current study indicate support that emotional intelligence is related in some capacity to the Big Five factor of Conscientiousness.

**Hypothesis 3b**

Hypothesis 3b stated that emotional intelligence would account for variability in satisfaction beyond that explained by emotional stability and extraversion. This hypothesis was tested with each of the three measures of satisfaction. When tested using life satisfaction as the dependent variable, it was found that emotional intelligence did not account for unique variability in life satisfaction beyond that accounted for by emotional stability and extraversion. Therefore, part 1 of Hypothesis 3b was not supported. When tested using college satisfaction as measured by the modified Hoppock scale as the dependent variable, it was found that emotional intelligence did not account for unique
variability in college satisfaction beyond that accounted for by emotional stability and extraversion, thus part 2 of Hypothesis 3b was not supported. Finally, when tested using college satisfaction measured by the Faces scale as the dependent variable, it was found that emotional intelligence accounted for unique variability in college satisfaction beyond that accounted for by emotional stability and extraversion. Therefore, part 3 of Hypothesis 3b was supported. In sum, there was inconsistent support for Hypothesis 3b.

Emotional Stability and Extraversion are two of the Big Five factors of personality. Emotional Stability, also sometimes labeled as Neuroticism, is typically characterized by an individual’s susceptibility to psychological distress. Individuals who score high on Emotional Stability usually display nervous and insecure behavior and tend to worry excessively. Whereas, those scoring low on Emotional Stability tend to display a more calm, secure, and relaxed demeanor. Individuals scoring high on the factor of Extraversion are usually described as assertive, highly talkative, optimistic, and energetic. Conversely, those scoring low on Extraversion are described as reserved, quiet, and solitary.

Hypothesis 3b was included in this study because it has been suggested that emotional intelligence is simply a combination of the Big Five factors of Extraversion and Emotional Stability. Landy (2003) proposed that Extraversion and Emotional Stability almost completely capture the reliable portion of the variability in emotional intelligence. The results for Hypothesis 3b provide some support to Landy’s proposition; however, more research is needed.

Emotional intelligence was related to satisfaction for one of the three dependent measures used to test Hypothesis 3b. When Emotional Stability and Extraversion are
removed, emotional intelligence was no longer correlated with life satisfaction and the modified Hoppock measure of satisfaction. However, when Emotional Stability and Extraversion are removed, the Faces scale of college satisfaction still demonstrated a significant relationship. Therefore, emotional intelligence contributes unique variance to the relationship of emotional intelligence and satisfaction as measured by the Faces scale beyond that attributable to Extraversion and Emotional Stability. Thus, it is plausible to consider Extraversion and Emotional Stability as components of emotional intelligence. However, there is more to emotional intelligence than simply these two constructs.

_Hypothesis 3c_

Hypothesis 3c stated that emotional intelligence would be correlated with Emotional Stability and Extraversion. Hypothesis 3c was supported.

This finding supports Landy's contention that emotional intelligence is simply a combination of Emotional Stability and Extraversion. This relationship warrants further research before a conclusive statement can be made. However, with this sample of college students, Emotional Stability and Extraversion were found to be related to emotional intelligence.

_Implications_

The results of this study suggest that although causal conclusions cannot be made, it appears likely that college freshmen with greater emotional intelligence will have more positive life satisfaction and lower levels of stress. Current stress and satisfaction research suggests there are many factors such as health, social connectedness, time management behavior, and role demands that affect one’s level of stress and satisfaction (Hudd, et al., 2000; Lee, et al., 2002; & Macan, et al., 1990). Emotional intelligence may
be one of the key factors that can help to further elucidate this relationship. Developing emotional intelligence may help college students lower their stress and increase their satisfaction. In turn, it may ultimately help universities lower their attrition rates, as satisfied students are less likely to drop out.

It is difficult to draw implications from the findings for Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b, possibly due to the stress measure that was utilized in this study. A correlation was expected between measures of satisfaction and stress. However, the measure of stress used (i.e., a measure of generalized stress for adult population) may not have been sensitive to the stressors present in the freshman year of college. A measure of stress more appropriate to a freshman college population may have yielded different results.

It was unclear why Hypothesis 3a was not supported. The review of the literature led us to expect that emotional intelligence would not be correlated with the Big Five factor of Conscientiousness. Although Landy (2003) had suggested that the Big Five factor of Conscientiousness was possibly related to emotional intelligence, the current study sought to disprove this postulate. However, the current results indicated a connection between the two variables, thus providing credence to Landy’s speculation.

Hypothesis 3b was supported for one dependent variable. When the effect of Emotional Stability and Extraversion were removed, emotional intelligence was not found to be correlated with the measure of life satisfaction and the modified Hoppock scale of college satisfaction. When the two Big Five factors are removed a correlation was still found with the Faces scale of college satisfaction. Emotional intelligence contributed unique variance beyond the two Big Five factors in explaining satisfaction as
measured by the Faces scale. Perhaps the two Big Five factors can be considered components of emotional intelligence, not necessarily replacements for the construct of emotional intelligence. One possible explanation of the differing results from the measures of satisfaction is that the Faces scale is a global measure, whereas the other scales can be seen as more facet driven measures. However, the results addressing Hypothesis 3c indicated that emotional intelligence was correlated with Emotional Stability and Extraversion, which suggests that perhaps emotional intelligence is not a new independent construct, but an extension of Emotional Stability and Extraversion. More research is needed to explore the implications of this finding.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study relate to the generalizability of results, the research design, and the stress measure that was utilized. First, this study chose to examine satisfaction, stress, and emotional intelligence in college freshman. This decision therefore limits the generalizability of results to other populations, such as employees in the workforce.

Next, this study was correlational in nature. Therefore no causal implications can be made from these results. No control group was utilized, which also limits the inferences that can be made from this study. The results of this study must be interpreted with a degree of caution because of the correlational design.

The third limitation of this study involves the stress measure chosen for the study. The stress measure may not have adequately captured the stressors and events that are likely to be present in the freshman year of college. The measure used employed life experiences and events that were more applicable to a general adult population rather
than events specific to college life. This lack of specificity toward a college population is a potential explanation of why the stress measure was correlated with only one of the other measures used in this study, the measure of the Big Five factor of Extraversion. It should also be noted that the sample size in this study could have been larger but was limited due to the number of emotional intelligence measures available.

**Directions for Future Research**

Further research should be conducted to explore the construct of emotional intelligence. A significant amount of research was discovered on the topics of stress and satisfaction in college populations, but few research studies have concentrated on the concept of emotional intelligence. Additionally, more research is needed to determine if emotional intelligence is a valid construct in itself or just an extension of other constructs such as the Big Five factors of Emotional Stability and Extraversion. Research should utilize populations other than college students to address this issue. Also, larger sample sizes should be utilized in future research.

**Conclusion**

The present study addressed the role of emotional intelligence in the stress and satisfaction relationship. With a growing need to address the rising attrition rates in universities, the current study investigated emotional intelligence as a possible coping resource that college students may utilize to increase satisfaction in the college environment. The results of this study indicated that stress and emotional intelligence were not related; however, when the effects of stress were factored out, a relationship was found between emotional intelligence and satisfaction. The main goal of the study was to show that emotional intelligence was a moderator between stress and satisfaction. There
are two possible reasons why this relationship was not demonstrated: the stress measure was not sensitive to college experiences and the sample size was less than ideal.

Emotional intelligence was found to relate to satisfaction. Intuitively high levels of satisfaction should result in greater student commitment to continue in college. Emotional intelligence exhibited some degree of relatedness with satisfaction, therefore warranting further research with an alternative measure of stress more appropriate for a collegiate sample. If emotional intelligence can be utilized within a student’s arsenal of coping mechanisms, potential benefits for both the university and the student in the form of lower attrition rates and a more satisfied student may be realized.
References


Conference of the Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Orlando, FL.


satisfaction. *Social Indicators Research, 53*(1), 1-16.


Appendix A

College Schedule of Recent Experience-Modified
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSRE-M</th>
<th>ID___________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Instructions:** Circle the appropriate number that corresponds to the *Number of times* during the *last year* (12 months period) that you:

1. entered college. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
2. married. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
3. had either a lot more or a lot less trouble with your boss. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
4. held a job while attending school. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
5. experienced the death of a spouse | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
6. experienced a major change in sleeping habits (sleeping a lot more or a lot less, or a change in part of the day when asleep). | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
7. experienced the death of a close family member. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
8. experienced a major change in eating habits (a lot more or a lot less food intake, or very different meal hours or surroundings). | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
9. made a change in or choice of a major field of study. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
10. had a revision of your personal habits (friends, dress, manner, associations). | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
11. experienced the death of a close friend. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
12. have been found guilty of minor violations of the law (traffic tickets, jay walking, etc.). | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
13. have had an outstanding personal achievement. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
14. experience pregnancy, or fathered a pregnancy. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
15. had a major change in the health or behavior of a family member. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
16. had sexual difficulties. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
17. had trouble with in-laws. | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
18. had a major change in the number of family get-togethers (a lot more or a lot less). | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
19. had a major change in financial state (a lot worse off or a lot better off than usual). | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
20. gained a new family member (through birth, adoption, older person moving in, etc.). | 0 1 2 3 ≥4 |
<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>changed your residence or living conditions.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>had a major conflict in or change in values.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>had a major change in church activities (a lot more or a lot less than usual).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>had a marital reconciliation with your mate.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>were fired from work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>were divorced.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>changed to a different line of work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>had a major change in the number of arguments with spouse (either a lot more or a lot less than usual).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>had a major change in responsibilities at work (promotion, demotion, lateral transfer).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>had your spouse begin or cease work outside the home.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>had a major change in working hours or conditions.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>had a marital separation from your mate.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>had a major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>had a major change in the use of drugs (a lot more or a lot less)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>took a mortgage or loan less than 10,000 (such as purchase of a car, TV, school loan, etc.).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>had a major personal injury or illness.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>had a major change in the use of alcohol (a lot more or a lot less).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>had a major change in social activities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>had a major change in the amount of participation in school activities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>had a major change in the amount of independence and responsibility (for example: for budgeting time).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>took a trip or a vacation.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>were engaged to be married.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>changed to a new school.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>changed dating habits.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
45. had trouble with school administration (instructors, advisors, class scheduling, etc.).

46. broke or had broken a marital engagement or a steady relationship.

47. had a major change in self-concept or self-awareness.
Appendix B
Modified Hoppock Survey of Satisfaction
College Questionnaire

Simply circle the number that is next to the statement that most closely represents your own feelings about your experience in college. Thank you for your participation.

1. Which one of the following shows how much of the time you feel satisfied with college?
   (circle one)

   1 never
   2 seldom
   3 occasionally
   4 about half of the time
   5 a good deal of the time
   6 most of the time
   7 all of the time

2. Choose one of the following statements which best tells how well you like college.
   (circle one)

   1 I hate it.
   2 I dislike it.
   3 I don't like it.
   4 I am indifferent to it.
   5 I like it.
   6 I am enthusiastic about it.
   7 I love it.

3. Which one of the following best tells how you feel about changing colleges?
   (circle one)

   1 I would quit this college at once if I could.
   2 I would go to almost any other college if I could.
   3 I would like to change colleges.
   4 I would like to exchange the present college for another one.
   5 I am not eager to change colleges, but I would like to do so if I could go to a better one.
   6 I cannot think of any other college I would like to attend.
   7 I would not exchange attending this college for attending any other college.

4. Which one of the following shows how you think you compare with others?
   (circle one)

   1 No one dislikes his/her college more than I dislike mine.
   2 I dislike my college much more than most people dislike theirs.
   3 I dislike my college more than most people dislike theirs.
   4 I like my college as well as most people like theirs.
   5 I like my college better than most people like theirs.
   6 I like my college much better than most people like theirs.
   7 No one likes his/her college better than I like mine.
Appendix C

Satisfaction with Life Scale and Demographic Form
The Satisfaction With Life Scale

ID __________

Directions: Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line following that item. Please be open and honest in your responding. The 7-point scale is:

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly disagree
4 = Neither agree nor disagree
5 = Slightly agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly agree

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal. ________
2. The conditions of my life are excellent. ________
3. I am satisfied with my life. ________
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life. ________
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing. ________

Please answer the following demographic information:

Circle One:

Male  Female

Age: ________

Circle One:

Caucasian  African American  Asian  Native American  Other

College Grade Point Average: __________

High School Grade Point Average: __________

How many hours per week do you work? ________

How many college hours have you completed? ________

How many college hours are you currently enrolled in? ________

Circle One: Current Academic Classification at WKU

Freshman  Sophomore  Junior  Senior  Graduate Student
Appendix D

Faces Scale of Satisfaction
Please read each statement carefully and place an X under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel with each aspect of college. Thank you for your participation.

1. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about the effectiveness of academic advising, such as your advisor's knowledge, competence, and personal concern for his/her students, that you have experienced at this university.

2. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about the campus climate of this university. For example, how this university promotes a sense of campus pride.

3. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about the campus support services at this university.

4. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about this university's concern for you as an individual. For example, your feelings about how the faculty, advisors, counselors, and staff treat you as an individual.
5. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about the instructional effectiveness you have experienced at this university.

6. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about the effectiveness of the admissions and financial aid process that you have experienced at this university.

7. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about the effectiveness of the registration process at this university.

8. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about this university’s commitment to specific groups enrolled here such as students with disabilities, part-time students, and under-represented populations.
9. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about your personal safety and security at this university.

10. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about the university’s attitude toward students to the extent to which they feel welcomed and valued.

11. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about this university’s academic aids such as the library, computer labs, tutoring and study areas.

12. Place an X in the box under the face that expresses how satisfied you feel about the effectiveness of student life programs that are offered at this university, such as athletics or residence life.
Appendix E

Self-Report Big Five Measure
Self-Report Questionnaire  

On this page, there are phrases describing people’s behaviors. Please use the rating scale below to describe how accurately each statement describes you. Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as honestly as you see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you are, and roughly your same age. So that you can describe yourself in an honest manner, your responses will be kept in absolute confidence. Please read each statement carefully, and then write the number that corresponds with your choice in the blank to the left of the statement.

Response Options:
1--Very Inaccurate  
2--Moderately Inaccurate  
3--Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate  
4--Moderately Accurate  
5--Very Accurate

1. Make a mess of things.  
2. Like order.  
3. Have little to say.  
4. Start conversations.  
5. Don’t mind being the center of attention.  
6. Have frequent mood swings.  
7. Am the life of the party.  
8. Shirk my duties.  
9. Seldom feel blue.  
10. Get upset easily.  
11. Am quiet around strangers.  
12. Often forget to put things back in their proper place.  
13. Feel comfortable around people.  
14. Talk to a lot of different people at parties.  
15. Worry about things.
Response Options:
1--Very Inaccurate
2--Moderately Inaccurate
3--Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate
4--Moderately Accurate
5--Very Accurate

_____  16.   Change my mood a lot.
_____  17.   Pay attention to details.
_____  18.   Am exacting in my work.
_____  19.   Don’t like to draw attention to myself.
_____  20.   Often feel blue.
_____  21.   Am relaxed most of the time.
_____  22.   Keep in the background.
_____  23.   Follow a schedule.
_____  24.   Leave my belongings around.
_____  25.   Am easily disturbed.
_____  26.   Get stressed out easily.
_____  27.   Don’t talk a lot.
_____  28.   Get chores done right away.
_____  29.   Am always prepared.
_____  30.   Get irritated easily.