The Relationship Between Freshman College Student Satisfaction and College Adjustment

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRESHMAN COLLEGE STUDENT SATISFACTION AND COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Psychology
Western Kentucky University
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRESHMAN COLLEGE STUDENT SATISFACTION AND COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT

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In this study, I explored the relationship between freshman college student satisfaction and college adjustment. Using the College Student Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSSQ) and the College Adjustment Scale (CAS), the "Interpersonal Problems" subscale was found to be moderately predictive of college student satisfaction. No other subscales were predictive. Contrary to expectation, grade point average (GPA) was not a significant factor. Some gender differences were found. Suggestions for program implementation were suggested.
Chapter I

Introduction

The time spent in college is an experience that can have a long lasting effect upon an individual. Considering the magnitude of changes and opportunities that can stem from attending college, it should not be surprising that these experiences can cause life long changes. Satisfaction with one’s college experience is related to how these changes can affect an individual (Astin, 1993). College satisfaction may be defined not only in the terms of the overall undergraduate experience but also as encompassing subordinate and individual differences that play a part in the overall experience. These areas can include interactions with instructors, students, the administration, and the general collegiate environment.

Ose (1997) reported that students who had a strong sense of purpose at a particular institution experienced more overall satisfaction. In addition, having an experience that significantly affected one’s college experience (such as joining a social organization) or being involved in campus activities increased overall satisfaction. The author also found that being a transfer
student was related to lower satisfaction. Transfer students tended to be less involved in campus activities than non-transfer students because of time constraints, fewer friends, and difficulty in finding information about the possible organizations in which they could be involved.

Not only transfer status but also age may be related to satisfaction with college. In a study of undergraduate women, Sturtz (1971) found that those over the age of 25 were more satisfied with college than those younger than 25. This finding appeared to be related to the younger women's protesting many of the college's policies (i.e., visitation policies). In addition, the older women saw class attendance as more of a privilege than an obligation. Although they were less involved in campus activities than younger women, the older women reported more overall satisfaction than the younger women. This result may be explained as due to the two groups having different ideas about college. Policies and regulations may have been more important to the younger group, while family responsibilities and maturity may have kept the older group from having the time to spend on contemplating policies and rules. Furthermore, more maturity may lead to more well-defined goals and the actions needed to achieve those goals. In a study conducted by Donohue and Wong (1997) involving traditional and nontraditional (25 and older) students,
nontraditional students appeared to be more satisfied with college and had higher achievement motivation. These studies were consistent in finding that age appears to be a significant factor in college satisfaction, although one can not be certain that it is age and not cohort membership that is related to the differences in satisfaction.

Academic performance, as defined by GPA, was once thought to be related to satisfaction, and a study by Pennington, Zvonkovic, and Wilson (1989) offers some support for this idea. In their study, the results showed a relationship between how satisfied a student was and how motivated that student was to work. However, a study by Bean and Bradley (1986) achieved different results. These authors found that there was not a significant relationship between satisfaction and motivation. On the other hand, self-concept is significantly related to academic performance (Geredes & Mallinckrodt, as cited in Panori, Wong, Kennedy, & King, 1995). One’s self-concept may also be significantly related to college satisfaction (Panori, Wong, Kennedy, & King, 1995). Putting the two together, one could speculate that there is a relationship between satisfaction and academic performance.

Another variable hypothesized to be related to academic performance is institutional type. Betz, Starr, and Menne (1972) found that there were major differences between
public and private institutions and between individuals who attend those institutions. Participants in public institutions reported higher satisfaction in the areas of social life and working conditions. Perception of receiving a higher quality of education, expectation of obtaining more positive feedback from work, and increased feelings of student worth are the factors that were more often related to satisfaction among participants from private institutions.

Several studies have attempted to predict satisfaction in college. For example, Betz, Klingensmith, and Menne (1970) surveyed 643 students and found that when year and residence were held constant, there were no sex differences in satisfaction. However, the student’s year in school and that individual’s type of residence were related to many areas of college satisfaction. Students involved in either a sorority or fraternity were more satisfied with both their social life and working conditions than those students who were not members of such organizations and who lived in residence halls. A related study involving 243 students (Bailey & Miller, 1998) showed that more involved students appeared to be happier than those students who were not as involved. Some of the areas identified as “busying” a student’s life were academics, dating, family relations, social functions (with a sorority or fraternity), jobs, and
committees. Results also indicated that perceived stress did not necessarily increase when students became more involved on campus. The authors concluded that having friends to share experiences with and to consult about decisions helped to alleviate stress and may have thus contributed to increasing satisfaction. Findings from Bailey and Miller (1998) supported some of the findings from Pennington, Zvonkovic, and Wilson (1989). Living environment, GPA, work hours, and Greek affiliation were all associated with increased satisfaction. A trend was also seen in the degree of satisfaction. The longitudinal study revealed that overall college satisfaction tended to be high at the beginning of the semester, decrease around midterms, and then go back up at the end of the semester. A change in environment and/or anticipating and meeting deadlines were two possible explanations for this trend. How a student perceives the college environment and the pressures involved was once found to be the strongest predictor of college satisfaction (Witt & Handal, 1984; Astin, 1993).

Satisfaction with college appears to be greater when students attend an institution distant from home and when they live on campus (Astin, 1993). A higher level of satisfaction is also seen when students and professors frequently interact with one another. However, when the faculty are more research-oriented rather than student-
oriented, student satisfaction is less. Although a research-oriented faculty was found to be related to higher student satisfaction with the school's facilities, satisfaction overall was diminished when faculty were more research-oriented (Astin, 1993).

Astin (1993) further found that students' reported levels of overall satisfaction were at their highest when they were taking classes in their major areas as opposed to when they were taking general education courses. The lowest levels of satisfaction involved areas such as rules governing campus, academic advising, and financial aid. Overall satisfaction also decreased as the amount of television watched increased. The authors concluded that both watching television, and thus withdrawing from social support, and not taking advantage of the opportunities available through student life contributed to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction difference.

Finally, Astin (1993) concluded that overall satisfaction is not the only factor that is associated with a college experience. A student's experience in college is also associated with the student's adjustment to college.

**Adjustment to College**

For the purposes of the present study, adjustment to college was conceptualized as how well an individual
reportedly functions within the college environment. Brooks and DuBois (1995) found that individual factors such as age, problem solving skills, and emotional stability as well as environmental factors such as daily inconveniences, availability of a support system, and distance from home were significant predictors of the adjustment of freshman college students. Fleet, Hewitt, Blankstein, Solnik, and Van Brunschot (1996) found that the amount of anxiety, substance abuse, and/or academic concerns was related to how adjusted to college a student felt. Likewise, depression, suicidal thoughts, and physical complaints were found to increase as self-reported adjustment to college decreased. Research concerning some of these areas will now be reviewed.

Anxiety

Anxiety has been investigated in a number of studies, and a major focus in several studies has been what is called the helplessness-hopelessness theory. Swendsen (1998) defined the helplessness-hopelessness theory as an individual’s anxious feelings due to his/her loss of control over a particular situation that persists for a prolonged period of time and that affects many areas of his/her life. When the individual loses control, the person by definition feels helpless, as if he or she cannot do anything about it. Thus, an individual may start to lose hope that the
situation will ever change and be different. It is easy to see how anxiety can stem from feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. The helplessness-hopelessness syndrome is more often exhibited by individuals who have more of a pessimistic attributional style, rather than an optimistic attributional style (Ralph & Mineka, 1998). Such individuals make a negative interpretation of an event and apply it to other events and situations. Thus, if a student has a pessimistic attributional style and receives a poor grade on an exam, he/she may attribute that poor grade to other factors, including internal factors. Making pessimistic attributions could lead the student into feeling helpless in college, thus illustrating the helplessness-hopelessness syndrome. This display of helplessness and hopelessness was found to be coupled with an increase in anxiety (Swendsen, 1998).

There have also been a number of studies of the relationship between anxiety and personality characteristics. Ralph & Mineka (1998) researched how self-esteem affects an individual’s state of anxiety. In their study they monitored students taking a test. They discovered that anxiety concerning the exam was present immediately following the results of the test for those individuals who performed poorly on it. However, after two days the initial anxiety subsided. Those students with high
self-esteem replaced their anxiety over the poor grade with feelings of being worthy and intelligent individuals. Those with lower self-esteem, on the other hand, did not replace the anxiety; instead, they generalized it to feelings of not being capable enough to adequately perform in college.

In addition to self-esteem's being related to anxiety, introverted individuals and individuals high in neuroticism have been found to be more anxious (Eysenck & Gray as cited in Gershuny & Sher, 1998). Some evidence suggests that introverted people do not seek as much external stimulation and validation as non-introverted individuals do. Thus, they do not have large social networks and do not receive as much reinforcement from others. These individuals are not receiving some of the benefits that a social network can offer, such as being able to decipher self-related information, referencing themselves to others, and forming a schema of how they effectively fit into their new environments (Eysenck & Gray, as cited in Gershuny & Sher, 1998). The lack of this reinforcement could lead to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, or it could give individuals difficulty in trying to compare themselves to a social network. Individuals high in neuroticism, because they are consistently worried or anxious about an event, allow punishment to affect them more than individuals who are higher in emotional stability. These individuals high
in neuroticism have a tendency to make an negative event worse than it actually may be, and thus also prolong their anxiety related to that event (Eysenck & Gray as cited in Gershuny & Sher, 1998). When individuals were given the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ: Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) and the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Derogatis & Spencer, 1982), there were high scores of global anxiety found among individuals who scored low in extroversion and high in neuroticism (Gershuny & Sher, 1998). Those individuals who did not actively seek validation from individuals and who were harsher on themselves appeared to have more anxiety. Related studies found that college students who used self-evaluation and validation more than other-evaluation and validation had higher levels of anxiety (McWhirter, 1997; Norton, Cox, Hewitt, & McLeod, 1997). Thus, there does seem to be a link between certain personality characteristics and anxiety, and developing a strong social network to evaluate and reference oneself can be an important aspect of college adjustment.

**Depression**

Depression is often thought to be an extension of or as stemming from anxiety. Beck (as cited in Tarlow & Haaga, 1996) found that a major component of depression is a poor self-concept. Self-esteem was found to be related more to depression than it was to anxiety. Tarlow and Haaga (1996)
took their research a step further and asked participants to answer questions about their depression. Their results indicated that the lower the self-esteem an individual had, the more that individual was withdrawn and not participating in society. This nonparticipation was linked to a state of depression from having a lowered self-esteem and few external contacts. Tarlow and Haaga (1996) studied these interactional effects of depression and self-esteem and concluded there was a decreased feeling of adequate adjustment to college.

In a related study, Fleet, Hewitt, Blankstein, Solnik, and Van Brunschot (1996) found that the lack of problem-solving abilities was associated with decreased chances of having good mental health. The authors also found that a lack of problem-solving skills was related to self-esteem, perhaps because of the importance those skills play in society, and because the individuals feared making mistakes in the future. Zervas and Sherman (1994) found that some depressed individuals reported their perception that others, especially their parents, wanted them to be perfect. This increased pressure on the students seemed to keep them from making the adjustment from the home to the college environment. Having parents set extremely high expectations of college students was related to decreased self-esteem and increased depression (Zervas & Sherman, 1994).
Depression also appears to be related to other personality characteristics. Sarason, Pierce, Shearin, Sarason, Waltz, & Poppe (as cited in Priel & Shamai, 1995) discovered that the lower the amount of social support an individual perceived receiving, the more likely he/she was to be depressed and unhealthy. The more positively a person views his/her social support, the more secure the person feels overall. In addition, Kashubeck & Christensen (1995) reported “that the degree of family dysfunction was associated with internalized shame, addictions, emotional problems, and object relations deficits” (p. 433). It is easy to see how having feelings of shame and emotional problems could be related to college adjustment.

Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal ideation can be thought of as being almost any thoughts involving suicide. The range could be from making actual plans for dying to simply discussing suicide (Zhang & Jin, 1996). While depression is often linked to suicidal ideation, Durkheim (as cited in Zhang & Jin, 1996) suggested that there is more to suicide than depression. The author notes that although several persons may experience similar situations, only some of them commit suicide.

If a student has a close family that is rich in communication, love, and support, then there appears to be less suicidal ideation. Few conflicts between students and
their parents, in addition to a sense of belongingness, appears to help students deal with some of the pressures that they may encounter while in college (Zhang & Jin, 1996; Silvern, Karyl, Waelde, Hodges, Starek, Heidt, & Min, 1995; Kenny & Perez, 1996; Schmeck & Nguyen, 1996; Kazantzis & Flett, 1998). These findings support the Bernard and Bernard (as cited in Whatley & Clopton, 1992) research that found that adolescents who did not attend college had lower suicide rates than those who did attend. The separation from family and close friends was a factor in the increased suicide rate among college students. After university students were given a number of tests and questionnaires, stepwise regression and correlations revealed that amount of perceived social support was related to amount of suicidal ideation. Greater support was correlated with less ideation. However, an examination of the factors leading up to suicidal ideation showed that the social support did not outweigh depression or hopelessness (Whatley & Clopton, 1992).

Finally, having a self-defeating personality may also play a part in suicidal ideation. Schill (as cited in Lester & Schaeffler, 1993) defines a self-defeating personality as someone who repeatedly makes decisions that end in disappointment; not accessing better plans, even if they are accessible; and/or not taking the steps needed to
achieve a goal when the chance arrives. Lester & Schaeffler (1993) surveyed a small number of adolescents and college students and found that high self-defeating tendencies were associated with high suicidal ideation in college students; this finding raises the question of the role the self-defeating personality plays in suicide.

Substance Abuse

While there have been numerous studies conducted about substance abuse in the college environment, there has been little done in the area of substance abuse and adjustment. Sadowski, Long, & Jenkins (1993) found mixed results in a survey of college students who admitted to using substances (i.e., alcohol, marijuana, etc.) on campus. Half of the students surveyed indicated that using a substance helped them to adjust to the college environment by letting them forget about the difficulties they had had in switching environments and by facilitating their social life. On the other hand, the rest of the participants indicated that while using a substance did increase their social arenas, it hurt them academically. However, the research also revealed that those students who attended treatment school or community programs reported increased feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy. The increase in self-esteem, in turn, was related to higher overall satisfaction with the college experience.
Academic Problems

For college students, problems in the area of academics can stem from alcohol use. Self-reported alcohol use is correlated negatively with earning lower grades, primarily due to the fact that students who frequently attend alcohol-related events are spending less time studying (Wood, Sher, Erickson, & DeBord, 1997). Other factors related to academic performance are depression and self-esteem. Increases in depression and decreases in self-esteem appear to be associated with making internal causal attributions. These attributions are then generalized to academic experiences (Flett, Blankstein, Occhiuto, & Koledin, 1994). Tomlinson-Clarke (1998) found that the severity of academic problems varied according to the year in college, with the juniors and seniors having the least amount of difficulty. With academic ability controlled, when academic, social, and emotional adjustment were compared, academic adjustment was shown to be the best predictor of the overall college experience.

Hypotheses

This study was designed to predict college student satisfaction for second semester freshman. Hatcher, Kryter, Prus, and Fitzgerald (1992) have suggested that the amount of satisfaction one experiences depends upon the investments
(costs, rewards, incentives, etc...) one puts into a task; more investments lead to more satisfaction. On the other hand, one’s views of investments may depend upon the events that the student encounters. Daily and affective events can affect the satisfaction that a student experiences. An increase in life vigor and confusion, along with a decrease in depression, negative affect, and amount of illness, can lead to increased satisfaction. Thus, since one’s investments are related to the college experience, it follows that one’s adjustment to college could be related to one’s satisfaction with one’s college experience (Pilcher, 1998). Nafziger, Couillard, Smith, and Wiswell (1998), using the College Adjustment Scale (CAS), found that counseling center clients, when compared to nonclients, had significantly higher elevations on the Anxiety (AN), Depression (DP), and Self-Esteem (SE) scales. While the adjustment between the clients and nonclients was different, the levels of overall satisfaction in the two groups was not compared. The present study examined factors of adjustment and how these factors relate to satisfaction. Specifically, the question to be answered was can the College Adjustment Scales (CAS) predict second semester freshmen satisfaction in college as measured by the College Student Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSSQ)?
Chapter II
Method

Participants

Entering freshman at a south central comprehensive university had the opportunity to participate in an orientation program prior to entering college. Participation in orientation was voluntary. One of the components of orientation involved completing the CAS. There were 1,017 students who completed the CAS; those still enrolled in the Spring semester were given the CSSQ.

There were 104 surveys collected. The survey sample contained 94 whites and 9 blacks. Fifty-six students were females and 48 were males. Race and gender were not reported for one participant.

Materials

The measures used were the College Adjustment Scales (CAS) (Anton & Reed, 1991) and the College Student Satisfaction Questionnaire, Form D (CSSQ) (Betz, Betz, & Menne, 1989).
The College Adjustment Scales

The College Adjustment Scales (CAS) is an instrument designed to measure psychological obstacles among college students; that is, the CAS was developed to address the need for a screening and evaluation instrument specifically designed to assess the experience and expression of adjustment problems in college students throughout the college years. Emphasis was placed on designing an instrument that would provide the professional responsible for problem assessment and intervention with the information most valuable for rapidly assisting the student (Anton & Reed, 1991, p. 13).

The instrument has nine scales, a detailed description of which can be found in Appendix A. For the questions on each scale, students rated how much a statement pertained to them on a 4-point scale. A summary of the scales follows:

1. Anxiety (AN) - a measure of clinical anxiety, focusing on common affective, cognitive, and physiological symptoms (e.g., "I seem to be worried constantly about something").

2. Depression (DP) - a measure of clinical depression, focusing on common affective, cognitive, and physiological symptoms (e.g., "I’ve lost interest in the things I’ve always enjoyed").

3. Suicidal Ideation (SI) - a measure of the extent of recent ideation reflecting suicide, including thought of suicide, hopelessness, and resignation (e.g., "No one would miss me if I were to die").
4. Substance Abuse (SA) - a measure of the extent of disruption in interpersonal, social, academic, and vocational functioning as a result of substance use and abuse (e.g., "I've missed classes or work because I partied the night before").

5. Self-Esteem Problems (SE) - a measure of global self-esteem which taps negative self-evaluations and dissatisfaction with personal achievement (e.g., "I'm afraid to ask for what I need").

6. Interpersonal Problems (IP) - a measure of the extent of problems in relating to others in the campus environment (e.g., "I seem to disagree with others more than I agree with them").

7. Family Problems (FP) - a measure of the difficulties experienced in relationships with family members (e.g., "My family doesn't understand me").

8. Academic Problems (AP) - a measure of the extent of problems related to academic performance (e.g., "I have difficulty concentrating while studying").

9. Career Problems (CP) - a measure of the extent of problems related to career choice (e.g., "I need to know myself better in order to choose a career").

(Anton & Reed, 1991, p.1)

Validity and Reliability Evidence for the CAS

Anton and Reed (1991) conducted various studies to test the validity of the CAS. One of the studies grouped students receiving counseling in one group and students not receiving counseling in the other group. While the means were not reported, the authors concluded that a difference was found between the nine scales. A discriminant analysis also found that higher scores on anxiety and suicidal ideation were characteristic of the group that was receiving counseling services.
In order to show evidence for convergent and discriminant validity, the CAS scales were correlated with several well-developed instruments. Those instruments were the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS), the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI), the Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP), the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (MAST), a version of the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST), Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory (global self-esteem scale only) (MSEI), and the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III (FACES-III). Results from the studies demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity for the CAS scales (Anton & Reed, 1991). Finally, the authors concluded that the findings from the above studies provide evidence supporting the validity of the CAS. The results... suggest that the CAS is a sensitive measure of adjustment problems in college students... The pattern of correlations found... also supports the convergent and discriminant validity of the CAS. The replication of the pattern of correlations between the CAS and the NEO-PI across three independent samples, of which two samples were nationally recruited, attests to the stability of these relationships (Anton & Reed, 1991, p. 20).
Reliabilities for the scales were found to be high. Internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged from .80 to .92 for the various scales. Specific internal consistency reliability coefficients are: Anxiety .89, Depression .84, Suicidal Ideation .86, Substance Abuse .83, Self-Esteem Problems .86, Interpersonal Problems .80, Family Problems .84, Academic Problems .87, and Career Problems .92 (Anton & Reed, 1991).

The College Student Satisfaction Questionnaire

The College Student Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSSQ) is designed to measure the amount of satisfaction a student has with the college experience. The authors of the CSSQ believe that “a better understanding of the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of students can lead to reasoned changes in the college environment, which, in turn, should help students move toward improved adjustment and a higher level of performance in the student’s learning” (Betz, Betz, & Menne, 1989, p. 5).

The instrument has five scales, a detailed description of which can be found in Appendix B. Each of the scales is composed of questions that can be answered on a 5-choice Likert-type scale, with choices ranging from Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied. A summary of the scales is as follows:

1. Working Conditions - examines the comfort of residence, adequacy of study and lobby areas, as well as the value of meals (e.g., “The chances of affording a comfortable place to live”)
2. Compensation - examines the relationship between what the student puts in (i.e. homework) and the rewards received (i.e. grades), as well as how the student's wants and ambitions are affected by what they put in (e.g., "The amount of work required in most classes")

3. Quality of Education - examines the relationship between students and faculty, course requirements, and teaching strategies (e.g., "The chance to take courses that fulfill your goals for personal growth")

4. Social Life - examines the chances to meet others, make friends, and be involved in social activities (e.g., "The opportunity to make close friends here")

5. Recognition - measures how valuable a student feels due to reports from faculty and other students (e.g., "The way professors talk to you when you ask for help")

(Betz, Betz, & Menne, 1989, p. 10)

Validity and Reliability Evidence for the CSSQ

During the 1968-69 school year, Starr, Betz, and Menne (1972) gave the CSSQ to a total of 1,968 Iowa State University students. Academic status was obtained on those students later in the fall of 1969. The information obtained from the Registrar led to the students being divided into three groups:

1. Those students who were no longer registered students, and whose cumulative grade point average for the previous year was less than 2.0 (Academic Dropouts);

2. Those who were no longer registered but whose grade point average was 2.0 or above (Non-academic Dropouts);
3. Those who were still registered (Non-dropouts).

(Betz, Betz, & Menne, 1989)

A comparison of the satisfaction scores of the three groups showed that the Academic Dropouts had the lowest amount of satisfaction. The Nonacademic Dropouts had the next highest amount, and finally the Non-dropouts had the most satisfaction. A factor analysis was also conducted on the CSSQ, with the results showing validity for the scales as they were developed (Betz, Betz, & Menne, 1989).

Research has also shown the high reliability of the CSSQ. Reliability coefficients (coefficient alpha) for public and private universities were found to be comparable: Working Conditions (.82 public, .82 private), Compensation (.84 public, .83 private), Quality of Education (.78 public, .79 private), Social Life (.80 public, .82 private), Recognition (.82 public, .84 private), and total (.94 public, .94 private). Thus, reliability for the individual scales ranged from .78 to .84 for public universities, and from .79 to .84 for private colleges. The total score reliability for both groups was .94, and test-retest reliabilities ranged from .83 to .90 (Betz, Betz, & Menne, 1989).
Scoring

CAS: The CAS is scored by summing the number of responses in each of the nine categories. High scores are associated with adjustment problems, whereas lower scores are related to the absence of adjustment concerns.

CSSQ: The CSSQ is scored by summing the responses for each of the five scales. A total score is calculated by summing all 70 reactions. Higher satisfaction is indicated by higher scores, with lower scores pointing toward less satisfaction.

Computer readable bubble forms were used for both measures.

Procedure

Time was set aside during the Fall 1998 freshman orientation during which students were administered the CAS. The students were readministered the CAS along with the CSSQ during the Spring semester of 1999. A detailed description of the instructions given to students is provided in Appendix C.

Fewer than one percent of the initial 1,017 students enrolled in the 1999 Spring semester were commuters. Due to this small percentage, commuter students were eliminated from this study. There were 879 students who were given the CSSQ and readministered the CAS. The measure was handed to
the residence hall directors by the author. The students were asked to mail the instruments back to the author. Instructions for the CSSQ, which were taken and modified from Betz, Betz, and Menne (1989), can be found in Appendix D. Demographic data were also collected.

There were 104 surveys returned. Hall directors were contacted once during collection to encourage student compliance. The final survey sample consisted of 48 males and 56 females. There were 94 whites and 9 blacks. There was one participant for whom gender and race information was not reported.
Chapter III

Results

In order to examine changes in college adjustment for the participants, self reported adjustment ratings at the beginning and conclusion of the freshman year were examined. Nine paired samples t-tests were performed to examine differences in CAS responses between the two test administrations. An alpha level of .01 was adopted to control for inflation of type I errors. This analysis showed a significant increase in substance abuse, $t = 2.33$, $p < .01$, and a significant decrease in family problems, $t = 3.80$, $p < .01$. No significant differences were found for the other seven scales. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the nine scales of the CAS at each measurement time.

In an attempt to further understand the relationship between college adjustment and college satisfaction, correlations between the second CAS administration and the CSSQ were computed. Composite scales of the CAS (academic problems, anxiety problems, interpersonal problems, depression problems, career problems, suicide ideation, substance abuse, self-esteem, family problems) were
correlated with the composite scales of the CSSQ (social life, work conditions, compensation, recognition, quality of education) both with and without GPA partialled out. These correlations showed that GPA was minimally related to adjustment and college satisfaction. Table 2 shows the correlations (both with and without GPA partialled out) between the subscales of the second CAS administration and the CSSQ subscales.

Given the large number of correlations, an adjustment was made to control for inflation of Type I errors. All correlations were evaluated at the $p < .001$ level such that the overall probability of a Type I error was $p < .05$. Several significant or marginal correlations between the interpersonal problem subscale of the CAS and the subscales of the CSSQ were found: social life and interpersonal problems, $r = -.34$, compensation and interpersonal problems, $r = -.37$, recognition and interpersonal problems, $r = -.29$, and quality of education and interpersonal problems, $r = -.30$. There were not any significant correlations with the work conditions subscale.

Because the interpersonal problems subscale of the CAS was found to be related to several aspects of college adjustment, gender differences were examined to see if the effect was the same for males and females. The two significant correlations for the males were compensation
with academic problems, $r = -.53$, and recognition with academic problems, $r = -.50$. There were only marginal correlations for the females: social life with interpersonal problems, $r = -.42$, and academic problems with substance abuse problems, $r = -.42$. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations on all second CAS administration and CSSQ subscales for both males and females. Table 4 shows the correlations between the subscales of the second CAS administration and the CSSQ subscales after controlling for GPA for the males. Table 5 shows the correlations between the second CAS and CSSQ subscales for the females.
Chapter IV
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between college student satisfaction and college student adjustment. It was hypothesized that satisfaction with college could be predicted by a student’s adjustment to college. Relationships were found between college student satisfaction and college student adjustment, but these relationships were few in number.

The differences measured between the first and second administration of the CAS were minimal, but expected. Substance abuse increased over the time period measured. This finding echoes the results of Sadowski, Long, & Jenkins (1993). Alcohol appears to be an instrument in coping with the college environment. Family problems also decreased during this time frame. These findings lead one to wonder about a relationship between substance abuse and frequency of family problems. College has often been viewed by students as a time to experiment. Leaving home to attend a university offers students the opportunity to experiment with drugs and to change perspectives on family problems. According to Coons (as cited in DeCoster & Mable, 1974),
this process of taking on a new view of the family is called resolving the parent-child relationship.

The results of this study revealed that an inverse relationship existed between a student’s social life and a student’s interpersonal problems. Although no causative relationship was identified in this study, interpersonal problems can affect a student’s social life, which can affect the student’s satisfaction with college. This finding is consistent with the previously cited research by Bailey and Miller (1998), who showed that involvement on campus is related to satisfaction.

Interpersonal problems were also found to be related to a student’s feeling of compensation. The more problems a student had internally, the less likely he or she was to feel rewarded for efforts academically. When a student does not feel rewarded for the exertions put forth, the student may be less likely to work as hard in the future. This idea is compatible with Ralph and Mineka’s (1998) helplessness-hopelessness theory. Marginal correlations were found, suggesting that interpersonal problems also hint at a relationship with feeling like a worthwhile individual and with feeling as if a quality education was received.

Anxiety is commonly felt among college students as well as others, but the degree varies. This researcher found that as anxiety rose, students reported feeling less
compensated for their academic efforts, as well as feeling less like valuable individuals. These two findings are consistent with one another, but it is unclear which feelings arise first, the anxiety or the pain of feeling that one is a worthless individual. In addition, the higher a student perceived the quality of education, the more anxiety over the future and career decreased.

A comparison of the differences between the two genders showed that academic problems play a part in males, but not in females, feeling compensated for their academic work and feeling like useful individuals. The more males reported feeling important and rewarded for their work, the fewer problems they reported. These results are similar to the findings of Fleet, Blankstein, Occhiuto, and Koledin (1994), who reported that increases in self-esteem were associated with a decrease in academic problems. However, it is ironic that academic success (GPA) had no relationship to adjustment or satisfaction when both genders were considered together. Thus, it appears that males may be more externally driven to avoid academic problems than females. For females, academic problems and satisfaction were not shown to be related. The suggestion is the relationship for females between satisfaction and adjustment is not composed of a single variable but is multivariate.
Limitations

This study should be interpreted cautiously due to the small number of students who returned completed surveys. The low response rate may have contributed to the modest amount of significant findings. This study was conducted roughly one month before the end of the Spring semester when students are starting to think about final examinations. Conducting the study earlier in the semester might have increased the response rate.

Implications

There are two main implications stemming from this research. The first implication concerns the administering of the CAS. If the CAS is routinely given at the beginning of the Fall term to entering freshman, then it could be given again later in the freshman year and possible subsequent years. This information would be useful in recording and dealing with the problems college students face as they proceed through their college experience. As problems in college decrease, satisfaction with college may increase. The second implication from this study involves the possible addressing of interpersonal problems. These interpersonal problems can be confronted and/or resolved through various university areas such as academics and student life. Offering a wide variety of services to help resolve some of these interpersonal problems should be
considered when attempting to meet a student’s needs as effectively as possible. If these interpersonal problems were dealt with effectively, satisfaction with college would likely increase.
References


Derogatis, L. R., & Spencer, M. S. (1982). *The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI): Administration, scoring, and procedures manual-1*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University School of Medicine, Clinical Psychometrics Unit.


problem-solving ability, and psychological distress. 


Swendsen, J. D. (1998). The helplessness-hopelessness theory and daily mood experience: An idiographic and cross-


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety problems 2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal* 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal* 2</td>
<td>19.72</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression* 1</td>
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<td>Depression* 2</td>
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<td>13.39</td>
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<td>Substance Abuse 1</td>
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<td>Family problems 2</td>
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Note: 1 stands for the CAS administration during Freshman orientation, while 2 denotes the administration for this study.

*refer to problems in this area

** p < .01
Table 2

Correlations of subscales between the second CAS and the CSSO*

<table>
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<td>-.11 (-.12)</td>
<td>-.35** (-.30)</td>
</tr>
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<td>-.37** (-.31)</td>
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<td>Depression problems</td>
<td>-.30 (-.28)</td>
<td>-.14 (-.15)</td>
<td>-.20 (-.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career problems</td>
<td>-.18 (-.17)</td>
<td>-.08 (-.10)</td>
<td>-.23 (-.19)</td>
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<td>-.09 (-.11)</td>
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<td>.13 (.16)</td>
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<td>Family problems</td>
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Note: Values in parenthesis are correlations with GPA not partialled out.

**p < .01
Table 2 (con't)

Correlations of subscales between the second CAS and the CSSQ*

<table>
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<td>-.27 (-.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
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<td>-.30 (-.29)</td>
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<td>problems</td>
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</tr>
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<td>-.19 (-.21)</td>
<td>-.28 (-.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career problems</td>
<td>-.26 (-.23)</td>
<td>-.32** (-.29)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Suicidal ideation</td>
<td>-.12 (-.14)</td>
<td>-.25 (-.24)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>-.15 (-.18)</td>
<td>-.17 (-.19)</td>
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<td>Self-Esteem problems</td>
<td>.18 (.19)</td>
<td>.18 (.19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
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<td>-.22 (-.12)</td>
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*Note: Values in parenthesis are correlations with GPA not partialled out.

**p < .01
Table 3

Means and standard deviations for both genders on all subscales

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<td>13.05 (4.17)</td>
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<td>Quality of Education</td>
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<td>47.89 (9.10)</td>
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Note: Standard deviations are in parenthesis
Table 4

Correlations between subscales on second CAS and CSSQ for males*

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<th>Work Conditions</th>
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<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career problems</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal ideation</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
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<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.09</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>Family problems</td>
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*After controlling for GPA

**p < .01
Table 4 (con’t)

Correlations between subscales on second CAS and CSSQ for males*

<table>
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<td>-.28</td>
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<td>-.24</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Family problems</td>
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<td>-.19</td>
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</table>

*After controlling for GPA

**p < .01
Table 5

Correlations between subscales on second CAS and CSSO for females*

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<td>-.39</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career problems</td>
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<td>-.09</td>
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<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
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<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.21</td>
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*After controlling for GPA

**p < .01
Table 5 (con't)

Correlations between subscales on second CAS and CSSQ for females*

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<thead>
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<th></th>
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<tr>
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<td>Career problems</td>
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<td>Family problems</td>
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<td>-.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*After controlling for GPA

**p < .01
Appendix A

Description of CAS scales
Description of CAS scales

Anxiety:
Scores on this scale reflect the extent to which the student is currently experiencing the physical and psychological correlates of anxiety. Students with high scores on this scale are likely to be experiencing muscle tension, increased vigilance and scanning of their environment, and signs of autonomic hyperactivity such as rapid and shallow respiration. These students may also have excessive concerns and worries about real or expected life events, which may be experienced as intrusive and unwanted thoughts.

Depression:
This scale measures the degree to which a student is experiencing the physical and psychological correlates of depression. Students with high scores on this scale are likely to be easily or chronically fatigued and to have lost interest or pleasure in normally enjoyable activities. Such students are often affected by feelings of sadness and hopelessness that they cannot seem to combat on their own. Social withdrawal or isolation from their friends and peers may also be present.

Suicidal Ideation:
Scores on this scale reflect the extent to which a student reports thinking about suicide or engaging in behaviors associated with suicide attempts. Students with high scores on this scale are likely to have had thoughts of suicide and may view suicide as a viable solution to their problem. They may also have attempted suicide in the past. Scores in borderline or elevated ranges should always be interpreted as requiring a follow-up evaluation.

Substance Abuse:
Scores on this scale reflect the extent to which a student is experiencing difficulties in interpersonal, social, academic, and vocational functioning as a result of substance abuse. Students with high scores on this scale may be experiencing guilt or shame about their substance use or embarrassment about behaviors they engaged in while abusing drugs or alcohol. Discord in relationships with friends or love ones resulting from the use of alcohol or drugs may also be present. Excessive absence from classes or work, with associated decline in performance, may also be present.

Self-Esteem Problems:
This scale is a measure of general, or global, self-esteem. Students with high scores on this scale tend to be self-critical and dissatisfied with their perceived skills,
abilities, or achievement in comparison to their peers. They may see themselves as unassertive, excessively sensitive to criticism from others, or physically or sexually unattractive.

**Interpersonal Problems:**
This scale measures the degree to which the student has difficulty in relating to others. High scores on this scale may reflect excessive dependence on others and increased vulnerability to the vicissitudes of the relationships, and/or a distrustful, argumentative style of relating to others.

**Family Problems:**
This scale measures the extent of family problems which are frequently experienced by college students. Students with high scores on this scale may be experiencing difficulty achieving emotional separation from their families and learning to live more independently. High scores may also indicate worry or concern over problems occurring in a conflicted or tumultuous family.

**Academic Problems:**
Scores on this scale reflect the extent to which the student experiences difficulties in academic performance. Students with high scores on this scale are likely to suffer from poor study skills, inefficient use of time, and poor
concentration ability. Test anxiety may also be a prominent problem for these students.

**Career Problems:**

This scale measures difficulties in setting career goals and in making decisions instrumental to career goal attainment. High scores on this scale suggest that the student is experiencing anxiety or worry in selecting an academic major or future career. Difficulty in selection may be related to a lack of information about choices, undifferentiated career interests, or an absence of clear career goals.
Appendix B

Description of CSSQ scales
Description of CSSQ Scales

Working Conditions:
The physical condition of the students's college life, such as the cleanliness and comfort of her/his place of residence, adequacy of study areas on campus, quality of meals, facilities for lounging between classes

Compensation:
The amount of input (e.g., study) required relative to academic outcomes (e.g., grades), and the effect of input demands on the student's fulfillment of her/his other needs and goals

Quality of Education:
The various academic conditions related to the individual's intellectual and vocational development, such as the competence and helpfulness of faculty and staff, including advisors and counselors, and adequacy of curriculum requirements, teaching methods, and assignments

Social Life:
Opportunities to meet socially relevant goals, such as dating, meeting compatible or interesting people, making friends, participating in campus events and informal social activities

Recognition:
Attitudes and behaviors of faculty and students indicating acceptance of the student as a worthwhile individual.
Appendix C

Specific Instructions for Administration of the CAS
Specific Instructions for Administration of the CAS

This is the CAS item booklet. On the front page are directions for completing the CAS. First, complete the information requested at the top of the Black CAS answer sheet. Go ahead and do that now.

Again, look at the directions on the item booklet. The booklet contains 108 statements. Read each statement carefully and decide whether or not it is an accurate statement about you. For each statement, mark the letter on the Black answer sheet that best represents your opinion.

If the statement is false or not at all true, mark the letter "F". If the statement is slightly true, mark the letter "S". If the statement is mainly true, mark the letter "M". If the statement is very true, mark the letter "V". Note that the items are numbered down the rows of the answer sheet. If you make a mistake or change your mind, erase completely and then mark the correct response. ERASE COMPLETELY! Please answer each item as openly and as honestly as possible. Be sure to answer every item and to use a No. 2 pencil. You can take as much time as necessary to complete the CAS.

---

Appendix D

Specific Instructions for Administration of the CSSQ
Specific Instructions for Administration of the CSSQ

This booklet contains 70 items regarding satisfactions and dissatisfactions of college students. Its purpose is to give you a chance to tell how you feel about the school you’re attending...what things you are satisfied with, and what things you are not satisfied with.

First, record the following information in the appropriate blanks on side two (Back) of the Blue answer sheet (please print): your name and your identification number (social security).

Next, in the questionnaire booklet, you will find 70 statements about your college or university. Read each statement carefully, and then decide how satisfied you are with that aspect of your school described in the statement.

Finally, mark your answers on side one of the Blue answer sheet by blackening the space, numbered A, B, C, D, or E which best represents how satisfied you are. Use the following key:

A-If you are VERY DISSATISFIED
B-If you are SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED
C-If you are SATISFIED, no more, no less
D-If you are QUITE SATISFIED
E-If you are VERY SATISFIED

Be sure to use a No. 2 pencil (not a pen)