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ATTRACTIVE AND EXPERT STUDENT PERSONNEL WORKERS OF THE '70'S

Donald A. Biggs, Cecelia Foxley, and S. Jane Solberg
Office for Student Affairs, University of Minnesota

Student personnel workers have argued about the relative merits of two different roles in dealing with students. In one case, the student personnel worker emphasizes his professional qualifications, his formal knowledge, and his expertness (the expert role). In the other, he emphasizes his ability to see the world as the student does, his informality, and his personal liking for the student (the attractive role). Both roles are useful and comfortable for some student personnel workers in certain instances. However, without information about how students react to these roles, arguments about the relative merits of attractive and expert roles are somewhat speculative.

This study examined student perceptions of attractive and expert student personnel workers (SPW's). Questions included: (1) Do students perceive the characteristics of attractive and expert SPW's differently? (2) Do students bring different problems to attractive and expert SPW's?

The authors developed an inventory for measuring student perceptions of attractive and expert SPW's. Students described either an attractive or an expert SPW by completing an adjective check list and by indicating from a list of eighteen problems those they would bring to an attractive or an expert SPW. Questionnaires were given to a sample of 406 University of Minnesota students.

We found that both attractive and expert SPW's are likely to be described as having warm, positive, and socially desirable characteristics. However, the eighteen adjectives rated more descriptive of attractive SPW's were all more warm and socially desirable than were the six adjectives rated more descriptive of expert SPW's.

Students were more willing to take problems dealing with registration, student activities, difficulties with a professor, and changing University rules to either an attractive or expert SPW. Students were less willing to take affective or interpersonal problems to either an attractive or expert SPW. If affective and interpersonal problems were discussed, they preferred an attractive SPW. If cognitive and informational problems were discussed, they preferred an expert SPW.

Most of the above differences in student perceptions of attractive and expert SPW's are the same for both sexes, upper division and lower division students, and students with different amounts of experience with student personnel agencies.

SPW's play many roles with students which in the past have been inadequately described. It is no longer helpful for SPW's to merely insist that they are "professionals," since such a simple role definition has limited usefulness in trying to understand how SPW's can effectively influence student development. Meaningful role definitions should consider the factors which affect a SPW's credibility and attractiveness. Both the attractive and expert roles have assets and liabilities in working with students. Although the expert SPW may have considerable credibility in his area of expertise, he may be viewed as less warm and understanding than the attractive SPW, and this could make it difficult for him to establish preliminary relationships with students. On the other hand, even though the attractive SPW finds it easier to establish relationships with students, he may find it more difficult to maintain these relationships when differences of opinion arise.

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EXPERIENCE OF NEW UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN

Ralph F. Berdie, Student Life Studies
Office for Student Affairs, University of Minnesota

University entering freshmen face a broad range of new experiences. A few of these experiences, particularly those occurring in classrooms, are required of students but by far the largest number are optional. By the end of the first quarter, most students have completed their initiation into the University and the purpose of this investigation was to learn about some of the experiences reported by students during their first three months in college.

Small samples of freshman men and women in the College of Liberal Arts and the General College of the University of Minnesota and of men in the Institute of Technology completed a checklist which provided an inventory of 32 experiences available to University freshmen. A few experiences were shared by one-fifth or more of the students. For example, large proportions of students lived at home, lived in University residence halls, had jobs, and had courses in which controversial ideas were presented.

Most experiences, however, were shared by relatively small proportions of students. Relatively few students during their first quarter in the University became involved in student activities and organizations or used University programs related to music, drama, or publications. A large proportion of men but a small proportion of women reported experiences with the University athletic program.

Many students also reported that during their first quarter in the University they had made friends with persons of races different from their own, with persons from different countries, and with faculty members. Considering the impression that many persons have that such friendships are hard to establish in a large university, students are a friendly lot.

The results reported here could cause despair and one could complain that more than one-half of the entering students fail to become friends with a faculty member during their first quarter. On the other hand, one also could interpret these results as reflecting a campus where friendship is easily established. Should one despair that fewer than two percent of new freshmen during their first quarter became involved in activities related to the governance of the University or should one derive satisfaction from the fact that by the end of the first quarter, more than 150 freshmen have become so involved?

The results presented here provide an index of status. They leave little doubt that many freshmen are not exploiting the opportunities available to them on the campus for experiences which well might contribute to student development. The results also suggest that the extent of student employment and their living arrangements, with related time spent commuting, may help explain their limited use of University resources.

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PARENTS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Donald A. Biggs, C. Edwin Vaughan, and Carolyn Donart
Office for Student Affairs, University of Minnesota

Parents of University students play an uncertain role. Students want to be independent of their parents and claim the University should not represent the interests of parents. Some faculty members and administrators also think parents have no role to play in educating students. Because such forces de-emphasize the role of parents in the education of University students, descriptions of parents' views are often no more than stereotypes. But if we are to more clearly understand the role of parents in colleges and universities, we need accurate information about their attitudes concerning contemporary campus issues. Much of our present information comes from reports appearing in the popular press, and these are often based on comments of small unrepresentative samples of parents.

This study focuses on parental attitudes about campus dissent and parental satisfaction with University management of student life. We looked at demographic characteristics of parents, characteristics of their families, some social attitudes of the parents, their attitudes about dissent, and their satisfaction with student life at the University.

A random sample (N=409) of fall 1970 University of Minnesota students was selected. In December 1970, we sent a questionnaire to their parents. Seventy-seven percent of the parents returned the completed questionnaire.

Results show that parental support for goals of student activists decreases as their tactics become more assertive. Mothers were somewhat more approving of campus dissent than fathers. Also, there was a slight trend for more educated parents to be more approving of campus dissent. Those who most strongly disapprove of dissent were somewhat older than the parents who most approved of dissent. Parents of large and small families did not have significantly different attitudes about dissent, and we found no relationship between the frequency with which parents discuss social and political issues as well as campus dissent with their college age sons and daughters and their attitudes about dissent. Parents' feelings of social alienation were not related to their attitudes about dissent. Of all the factors considered, parental attitudes about campus freedom of expression was most related to their attitudes about campus dissent. Parents who have more liberal attitudes about campus freedom of expression were more approving of dissent.

We found that most parents were quite satisfied with the management of student life at the University. Mothers were more satisfied than fathers. Parents' age, education, and occupation were not related to their satisfaction with University student life. Parents of large and small families and parents who had more and less frequent discussions about social and political issues as well as campus dissent with their college age sons and daughters did not feel significantly different about the management of student life at the University. However, fathers who agreed more with their college age sons and daughters about social and political issues as well as dissent were more satisfied with University student life. Mothers who perceived themselves as having more power to influence matters at the University were more satisfied with University student life.

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AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC PROBATION

Donald A. Biggs, Student Life Studies
Office for Student Affairs, University of Minnesota

One can question academic probation as an educational practice because the students to be helped by probation are not homogeneous in abilities or in attitudes and their experiences while on probation are varied. To understand probation, these differences in the characteristics and experiences of probation students need to be explored. This study raises four questions: 1) Why do students think they are on probation; 2) Do probation students change their life styles; 3) What are the self-made academic predictions of probation students; and, 4) With whom do students talk about their probationary status and how helpful do they find these conversations?

A questionnaire was mailed to 148 University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus students who were on academic probation Winter Quarter 1971. Students were asked about their reasons for being on probation and whether they had made changes in their life styles. They estimated their ability compared to several reference groups and indicated how important to them were high grades and doing better than others. Finally we asked students about the people with whom they discussed their probationary status and how helpful they found the conversations.

Sixty-eight per cent of the students thought they were on probation because of their bad study habits, 37% said their courses were not interesting and 37% reported that personal problems were the main reason. Students made few changes in their life styles after being on probation although 64% of them increased their study hours. Otherwise their level of involvement in most activities remained about the same. The students were mostly academic optimists--63% thought had the ability to complete college. However, even though 56% thought they would rank average or above in a professional school, only 37% thought it likely they would complete such work. Surprisingly, 47% thought their past academic work was average and 39% said it was good. Probation students were divided in their attitudes about grades--41% felt grades were important and 31% felt grades were not important. Students most often talked about their probation with friends, parents, and faculty advisers and they reported everyone to be some degree of help.

While our results suggest that probation students could benefit from study skills counseling, many are not aware of these services and some think that counseling will not help. The majority of students turn to friends, parents, and faculty advisers. To what extent can these persons help students develop responsible strategies for solving their problems?

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PEER GROUP ACTIVITIES AND DIFFERENT STUDENT SUBCULTURES

Donald A. Biggs, Student Life Studies
Office for Student Affairs, University of Minnesota

The purpose of this research was to look at differences in reference groups and friendship groups for students who described themselves as vocationals, academics, non-conformists, and collegiates. These subculture labels were proposed by Clark and Trow and represent clusters of attitudes, norms and modes of behavior. The vocational student's main reason for being in college is to prepare for an occupation. The non-conformist student is interested in learning about life but in a manner of his own choosing, while the academic student is interested in learning about life, but he thinks his classes are one way of gaining this knowledge. The collegiate student is concerned with his education but his college experiences are mainly centered about social phases of campus life.

The sample consisted of 266 students on the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis campus of which 43% were females. Twenty-seven percent were freshmen, 26% sophomores, 30% juniors, 10% seniors, 2% graduates and 2% adult specials. The questionnaire asked about students' backgrounds and current living situations and how satisfied they were with University life. Students selected the Clark-Trow subcultures which described themselves, their friends, students in residence halls, members of fraternities and sororities, and commuters. They were also asked how important each of 22 individuals or groups were to them when they made judgments about the rightness or wrongness of certain issues. Finally students described their various friendship experiences.

Most students described themselves as vocationals (36%), non-conformists (28%), or academics (30%); few (6%) described themselves as collegiates. Twice as many males as females saw themselves as vocationals while almost equal percentages of males and females saw themselves as non-conformists and as academics. A majority of students thought fraternity and sorority members were collegiates (51%) and commuters were vocationals (67%). In contrast, 45% of the fraternity and sorority members described themselves as academics and 26% saw themselves as vocationals. Commuters saw themselves as either vocationals (42%) or non-conformists (35%). Most of the students in each subculture described their friends as having a similar subculture orientation to their own.

Academics attached more importance to the opinions of members of their fraternities and sororities, their roommates and their parents than did vocationals or non-conformists. Academics had met more friends since starting college, had more friends attending the University, and were more satisfied with the University as a whole and as a place to make friends than were vocationals or non-conformists.

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