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ABSTRACT

The study examines changes in social interest scores of freshmen in a community college over a period of one semester. The authors hypothesized that students who attended the community college for the full semester, with all of the services offered to them, should show an increase in social interest as they became more aware of their ability to contribute and found increased self-significance within the college environment. It was also hypothesized that there would be a difference in social interest by sex. Results of the study of 228 freshmen showed that although females had higher social interest scores than males, males gained in social interest over the one semester period. These results were attributed to the college environment, initially low Social Interest Interest scores, and perhaps to the college curriculum and specialized student services. While there was no relationship between social interest and socioeconomic status, there were variable relationships between social interest and academic achievement, class rank, and age. (Author/SES)

An Adlerian Approach to Measuring Change In College Freshmen*

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Changes in social interest scores of entering freshmen (N=228) were measured over one semester in a community college. Females showed a significantly higher mean social interest score ($\bar{X}$=123) than did males ($\bar{X}$=111) on pretest. Post test mean score for females was 124, and males was 116. Results indicate that males (N=107) made a significant increase in social interest over one semester while females (N=121) did not.

There appears to be no relationship between social interest and SES; however, there are variable relationships between social interest and academic achievement, class rank, ACT scores and age. Strongest relationships are to total group, but many of these do not hold for male and female subgroups.

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An Adlerian Approach to Measuring Change In College Freshmen

There is a need to study the ways in which education affects student growth. The educational system should provide a means for enhancing individual development, both intellectually and socially. Adler (1958, p. 156) felt that schools were an extension of the family and responsible for assisting in the total development of the individual. He believed that the true meaning of life is found in contributing to the whole of society. Dreikurs (1961, p. ii) states that "though we live in a democratic atmosphere, we do not know how to live democratically."

A review of the writings of Adler and his followers leads to the conclusion that the underlying dynamics of Individual Psychology is a synthesis of democratic principles. These principles are then directed toward assisting the individual to find fulfillment through self-development and cooperative effort in the social milieu. This model appears appropriate for measuring change which would have implications in a democratic context.

For Adler, the extent to which man can be truly cooperative depends on the degree to which his innate potentiality for cooperation has been developed. Adler calls this potentiality "social interest" (Dreikurs, 1950, p. 4). As man attempts to adjust to the world about him, Adler sees three interrelated life tasks which encompass the whole of human experience: work, friendship and love (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, 1956, p. 429). An additional life task, proposed by Mosak and Dreikurs (1956), has been cited as referring to the way in which an individual views himself in the world.[2] The degree to which an individual is successful in meeting these tasks is a measure of his social interest--and adjustment.

The extent to which education can be considered successful depends, in the Adlerian framework, on its ability to promote the development of social interest and prepare the individual for fulfilling the life tasks. This study attempted to measure the effectiveness of one branch of higher education, a community college, in meeting the goal of increased individual effectiveness. The study was directed toward measuring the extent to which these goals were met, using the model of Individual Psychology.

The environment in the two-year, community college is somewhat different from that of most four-year institutions in that the students are admitted on an open-door policy. The philosophy of such colleges is one of equal opportunity and specialized assistance. The effect of the school can be measured by measuring changes that take place within the individual as a result of the college experience. Within the framework of Individual Psychology, the changes should be viewed in a democratic context.

It was hypothesized that students who attended the community college studied, remained for the full semester, and had the benefit of specialized admissions counseling, carefully selected faculty advosors, remedial coursework, and personal problem counseling, should show an increase in social interest as they became more aware of their ability to contribute, and found increased self-significance within the college environment.

It was also hypothesized that there would be a difference in social interest by sex. The existence of such a difference was based on society's stress on the masculine image of competition as opposed to the more feminine image of cooperation. Adler (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, p. 47) felt that, in our culture, such traits as aggression, activity, power, bravery, etc. were considered as being masculine. The inherent relationship to personal superiority in many of these traits is antithetic to social interest. It was felt

that females would exhibit fewer of these masculine-type characteristics and that this would be reflected in a higher social interest as measured by the Social Interest Index (SII).

Other relationships were examined in order to determine their relation to social interest. These variables included: age, socioeconomic status (S , ACT scores, academic achievement (grade point average, GPA), and class rank.

Method

Subjects. The subjects (Ss) included all students from the incoming freshman class at Allegany Community College (ACC), Cumberland, Maryland, in the fall of 1971 who met the following criteria: (1) Ss were full-time students, carrying 12 or more semester hours, (2) were first-semester freshmen (having less than 12 hours of transfer credit for those with previous college experience), and (3) attended Freshman Orientation.

Three hundred and forty-four entering freshmen, based on the above criteria, attended Freshman Orientation on September 9, 1971. Of the 344 Ss, 228 were available for post test in early January, 1972. The loss of Ss was due to both attrition and subject unavailability, e.g., absences, post test scheduling problems, etc.

Since the college is open-door, and no student is denied admission, a control group of nonadmitted students was not obtainable. However, 26 Ss were obtained from a four-year college, Frostburg State College (FSC), Frostburg, Maryland, for comparison purposes.

Instrument. Social interest was measured by using the Social Interest Index (SII). The SII is a 32-item research instrument constructed specifically

to measure social interest in the context of Individual Psychology. The SII has a Cronbach-Alpha (KR-20) coeficient of reliability at .81, and test-retest reliability at .79. Content validity was established by Adlerian rater evaluation of scale items. Further validity is evidenced by an 85% agreement (20 cases) between blind behavioral evaluation ratings versus social interest scores (Greever, 1972).

Treatment. The effect of institutional experience on student growth, as measured by the SII, was studied without manipulation of the natural school environment since the effect of that environment on social interest was the variable to be measured, using the constructs of Adler.

Procedure. The entering freshman class was pretested at Freshman Orientation on September 9, 1971, and post tested during the second week of January, 1972, using the SII. The SII was administered to the FSC comparison group in early October 1971 and readministered in mid-December, 1971. Demographic data were collected on both groups.

Results

Hypothesis 1. There will be no significant positive increases in social interest, as measured by the SII, over one semester in entering freshmen.

As shown in Table 1, the null hypothesis was not accepted for the total sample ($N = 228$), ($F = 9.659$, $df = 1/226$, $p. < .0025$). However, when compared as male ($N = 107$) and female ($N = 121$) subgroups, the increase was significant for males only ($F = 11.003$, $df = 1/105$, $p. < .0016$).

Insert Table 1 about here

The conclusion is that there are significant increases in social interest, as measured by the SII, after one semester in college for freshman males attending ACC. Males, who had lower initial social interest scores, tended

to progress toward the total group mean, while females showed only a slight, nonsignificant increase in social interest scores. On this basis, it appears that social interest may be affected by the college environment, with male students who initially exhibit low social interest scores being the most affected.

The null hypothesis was not rejected for the FSC comparison group. There were no significant changes in pre- and post-test means on the SII for either males or females (Table 1). However, the small number of male Ss (N = 10) did not permit an adequate analysis of change for comparison with ACC males. Also, the time period between pre- and post-test was just over two months, which may have been insufficient to note any changes.

Hypothesis 2. There will be no significant mean differences in the social interest scores of males and females.

As shown in Table 2, the null hypothesis was not accepted for either the ACC sample ($F = 35.2182$, $df = 1/226$, $p. < .0001$), or for the FSC sample ($F = 5.8933$, $df = 1/24$, $p. < .0218$).

Insert Table 2 about here

The conclusion is that, in this study, females had significantly higher mean scores on social interest than males in both samples. This difference is possibly attributable to environmental influences imposed by the cultural values for males as opposed to females in our society.

Demographic Variables. The demographic variables of age, SES, ACT scores, GPA and class rank were examined to determine the extent to which they were related to social interest. The correlations are shown in Tables 3 (ACC) and 4 (FSC).

Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here

Age. The conclusion is that the relationship between social interest and age is variable, as shown in Tables 3 and 4. That social interest may not differ significantly with age is shown by comparing the means of 9th grade students (Friedland, 1972) to ACC college freshmen which shows that the 9th graders (N = 134) total SII score was 115 as compared to ACC freshmen (N = 228) at 117, and FSC students (N = 26) at 125. The difference in age between the 9th grade group and ACC was four years as opposed to one years' difference between the FSC and ACC samples. This would appear to support Adler's contention that social interest is learned within the environment, and that environment--rather than age--is a crucial factor.

SES. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, there do not appear to be any relationships between SES and social interest in the samples studied. Since the samples are predominently middle class students, this lack of relationship may not hold true for a broader range of SES classes. SES, using Duncan's "Socio-Economic Index and Equivalent NORC Prestige Score for Occupations in the Detailed Classification of the Bureau of the Census: 1950," (1959), for ACC showed a mean of 43, and for FSC a mean of 54. This higher mean SES at FSC and higher mean social interest score could indicate a SES-social interest relationship for different classes.

Academic Achievement (GPA). There was a significant correlation of academic achievement to social interest for the total ACC group ($r = .14$, $p. < .05$) on post test but this relationship was not true when the total sample was examined by sex subgroup. The conclusion is that in a combined group of males and females where males have a lower mean social interest and a lower mean GPA than do females, there may be a relationship between social interest and academic achievement. However, taken in their own subgroups of males and females, this relationship does not appear to exist.

Class Rank. Much the same situation exists with class rank as with academic achievement. There was a relationship between social interest and class rank for the total sample but this relationship was not evident for the subsample breakdown, as shown in Table 3 for pre- and post SII scores. Table 4 indicates, for the FSC sample, that there was no relationship between social interest and class rank for the total sample.

ACT Scores. There was no significant correlation ($p. < .05$) between social interest and composite ACT scores for the ACC sample, as shown in Table 3, except for the total sample and males on SII post test. Here ACT did assume a significant relationship in the total sample to social interest ($r = .17$, $p. < .05$) and to the male subsample ($r = .27$, $p. < .05$). The fact that these correlations occured on post test poses the question as to whether there could be a cause-effect relationship between social interest as a nonintellective factor and certain intellective factors. Since social interest is learned, it appears feasible that intellective factors could influence the rate at which social interest is acquired.

Conclusions

The study showed that females have higher social interest scores, as measured by the SII, than do males. Males gained in social interest over one semester of community college, as opposed to females. At the end of one semester, males' social interest scores more closely approximated those of the group mean. This could be attributed to the college environment, initially low SII scores, and perhaps to the college curriculum and specialized college student personnel-type services. However, it does appear that the college was successful in raising the social interest scores of males. The failure to increase the social interest of females could be due to their initially higher scores.

The most significant finding among the demographic variables was the lack of relationship between social interest and SES. This could be due to the homogenity of the samples studied and does not preclude a relationship across a broader SES range.

The relationship of social interest to the variables of academic achievement, class rank, and ACT scores is variable. Relationships that exist in the total group tend to be lost when viewed in male and female subgroups. Also, the relationship of social interest to age is variable. It does not appear that age is a strong factor in social interest. This is in line with Adlerian theory which holds that social interest is learned within the environment.

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Footnotes

1. For reprints, write to Dr. Kathryn B. Greever, 806 Forestry Tower, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia 26506.

2. This fourth life task has been referred to as self-significance (Greever, 1972).

Table 1

Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test SII Scores

Sample/ Subsample	Pretest Mean	Post Test Mean	F	df
	(ACC)			
Total Group (N = 228)	117.46	120.30	9.659*	1/226
Females (N = 121)	123.02	124.14	0.960	1/119
Males (N = 107)	111.16	115.95	11.003**	1/105
	(FSC)			
Total Group (N = 26)	124.54	123.35	0.602	1/24
Females (N = 16)	128.69	126.56	0.343	1/14
Males (N = 10)	117.90	118.20	0.002	1/8

*p. = .0025

**p. = .0016

Table 2

Comparison of Social Interest by Sex

Group	Mean Males	No. Ss	Mean Females	No. Ss	F	p.	df
ACC	111	107	123	121	35.22	.0001	1/226
FSC	118	10	128	16	5.89	.0218	1/24

Table 3

Comparison of SII and Demographic Data
(ACC)
(Correlation Matrix)

a. Total Sample[1]

	Age	SES	GPA	ACT	Class[2] Rank	SII (Post)
SII (Pre)	.15* (228)	.07 (223)	.12 (227)	.13 (189)	-.18* (219)	.57* (228)
Age		-.01 (223)	.10 (227)	.03 (189)	.18* (219)	.14* (228)
SES			.03 (222)	.15* (184)	-.04 (214)	.05 (223)
GPA				.39* (188)	-.32* (218)	.14* (227)
ACT					-.36* (183)	.17* (189)
Class Rank						-.17* (219)

1. Number of cases is indicated in parenthesis below correlation.

2. Class ranked with "1" being highest fifth and "5" being lowest fifth; therefore, negative correlations can be interpreted as showing a positive relationship.

* Significant beyond the .05 level.

Table 3 (cont'd)

b. Males[1]

	Age	SES	GPA	ACT	Class[2] Rank	SII (Post)
SII (Pre)	.11 (107)	.07 (105)	.03 (107)	.11 (84)	-.03 (101)	.47* (107)
Age		.11 (105)	.22* (107)	.05 (84)	.34* (101)	.09 (107)
SES			.02 (105)	.15 (82)	.13 (99)	.09 (105)
GPA				.42* (84)	-.18 (101)	.05 (107)
ACT					-.29* (80)	.27* (84)
Class Rank						-.05 (101)

c. Females[1]

	Age	SES	GPA	ACT	Class[2] Rank	SII (Post)
SII (Pre)	.20* (121)	.00 (118)	.10 (120)	.16 (105)	-.04 (118)	.57* (121)
Age		-.08 (118)	.03 (120)	.01 (105)	.12 (118)	.21* (121)
SES			.02 (117)	.15 (102)	-.10 (115)	-.04 (118)
GPA				.38* (104)	-.40* (117)	.13 (120)
ACT					-.49* (103)	.08 (105)
Class Rank						-.05 (118)

1. Number of cases is indicated in parenthesis below correlation.

2. Class ranked with "1" being highest fifth and "5" being lowest fifth; therefore, negative correlations can be interpreted as showing positive relationship.

* Significant beyond the .05 level.

Table 4

Comparison of SII and Demographic Data
(FSC)

Total Sample[1]

	Age	SES	Class[2] Rank
SII (Pre)	.24 (26)	.23 (26)	-.29 (26)
Age		.24 (26)	-.34 (26)
SES			.09 (26)

1. Number of cases indicated in parentheses below correlation.

2. Class ranked with "1" being highest fifth and "5" being lowest fifth; therefore, negative correlations can be interpreted as showing a positive relationship.