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## Do University and College Students Have Dislike or Affection for Their Parents? An Attitude Scale for Personnel Procedures

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## DO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS HAVE DISLIKE OR AFFECTION FOR THEIR PARENTS?

### AN ATTITUDE SCALE FOR PERSONNEL PROCEDURES <sup>1</sup>

EARLE E. EMME

#### THE PROBLEM

An understanding of the adjustment problems of university and college students reveals that many factors <sup>2</sup> are involved in student adjustment. To be sure, academic courses still constitute the main show for many students. Other students are very much interested in the so-called side shows, such as athletics, social relationships, economic and religious situations, the library, boarding and rooming conditions, as well as personal contacts with teachers in and out of classes, counselors and administrative officers. Consequently many students find themselves in a totality of campus on-rush, the roots and outreaches of which are not always known or understood.

Many of the student adjustments of the campus center in the relation students sustain to their parents even though they may be many miles distant.<sup>3</sup> Some students find it necessary to keep in very definite touch with their parents each week by telephone, or by correspondence, or by visitation. Sometimes the parents and at other times the students take the initiative in one or all of these three forms of association. In many situations, however, the intense relationship between students and parents must be constantly refreshed or the student just cannot get along in school. Students in such an intense parental situation find themselves highly involved in their campus adjustment.

Other types of students do not find it necessary or desirable to keep this parental contact so constant and intensive. They make their own decisions without, or with but little reference to their parents, while others actually dislike their parents.

Educational leaders fully acquainted with university and college

<sup>1</sup> The writer is indebted to the following for coöperation in the project: to Dr. George Hill, University of Pennsylvania, for helping secure student descriptions from two Universities; to Dr. J. E. Kirkpatrick, Morningside College, for helpful counsel; and to Miss Sulamith Bereskin for assisting in certain of the statistical procedures.

<sup>2</sup> Emme, E. E., "The Adjustment Problems of College Freshmen and Contributory Factors." Jr. of Applied Psychology. Vol. XX, No. 1, pp. 60-76.

<sup>3</sup> Emme, E. E., "The Adjustment Problems of College Freshmen." Nashville, Tenn. Cokesbury Press. 1933. Pages 65-68. (A check-list of student-parental problems in a college.)

students recognize that a considerable percentage of student mortality during the freshman year as well as that of a later period in the Junior or Senior college reveals that the relation between parents and the student is a very significant one in personality adjustment. One of the primary factors in this relationship ranges from the point where students strongly dislike their parents to the place where they have intense affection for their parents.

If the student advisor had some way of knowing where students rated with respect to this dislike or affection variable, much of the student mortality might be avoided and many students could objectively work toward a happier relationship with their parents while away at school as well as in other of their campus adjustments.

#### PURPOSE OF THE TEST

This attitude scale has been constructed to measure the extent to which college and university students dislike or have affection for their parents.

#### HOW THE TEST WAS CONSTRUCTED

1. Some 1,000 student descriptions of college and university students' attitudes toward their parents were secured in writing from ten colleges and universities as a sampling of all types of students.

2. From these descriptive student situations some 350 statements were formulated which expressed the student's attitude toward the parents. The following criteria were used in constructing the statements:

- a. Statements expressing the attitude of the student and not the parents were selected.
- b. The major campus relationships related to parents were included.
- c. To avoid ambiguity statements having single rather than dual ideas were chosen.
- d. Conduct statements indicating what students do about their attitude toward their parents were preferred.
- e. Statements which could be endorsed at both ends of the scale were naturally eliminated.

3. Six mature raters, two professionally trained and four advanced students, evaluated the 350 statements and retained 140 upon which their agreement was rather definite as to placement on a linear scale from A to K as indicated.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
(Strong dislike)					(Neutral)					(Strong affection)

4. Three hundred and thirty-eight undergraduates, graduates, professional people and Professors shared in the rating process. About half of them were undergraduates, others were teachers in High Schools and Colleges, as well as a few who were engaged in other professions than educational, but acquainted with college life.

The rankings of each of the 140 statements by the 338 raters were arranged in tabular form as shown below for statement No. 41, which is "I cater to my parents quite a bit because they like me to do it."

Class A ( 0.5 — 1.5) by	0 raters
Class B ( 1.5 — 2.5) by	0 raters
Class C ( 2.5 — 3.5) by	0 raters
Class D ( 3.5 — 4.5) by	0 raters
Class E ( 4.5 — 5.5) by	10 raters
Class F ( 5.5 — 6.5) by	45 raters
Class G ( 6.5 — 7.5) by	75 raters
Class H ( 7.5 — 8.5) by	123 raters
Class I ( 8.5 — 9.5) by	60 raters
Class J ( 9.5 — 10.5) by	20 raters
Class K (10.5 — 11.0) by	5 raters
	<hr/>
	338 raters

From these data, the median scale value for each statement was calculated, using the standard formula for the median. The statements were then arranged in the order of their scale values, ranging from 1.16 to 11.0. Alongside each scale value, the quartile deviation for that statement was recorded, in order that statements showing too great a deviation might be eliminated, thereby making the remaining statements more reliable for testing the variable covered by this attitude test. The average quartile deviation for the remaining 58 statements is .576. The standard formula for quartile deviation was used to get the various scale values.

#### ELEVEN SAMPLE STATEMENTS OF THE TEST

<i>Scale Value</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Mother</i>	
16	F1	M1	Sometimes I like my parents and then again I feel the opposite.
22	F2	M2	I have always felt a general friendly relationship existed between my parents and myself.
15	F3	M3	My attitude toward my parents is one of indifference.
28	F4	M4	There is a complete understanding between my parents and myself.
18	F5	M5	I consider my parents merely as good friends.
12	F6	M6	I do not feel near to my parents.
28	F7	M7	I chose a particular school so I could be near my parents.
3	F8	M8	Many times I feel like breaking off all relations with my parents.

- |    |     |     |   |
|----|-----|-----|---|
| 4  | F11 | M11 | Usually I feel like doing the opposite from what my parents tell me.          |
| 30 | F13 | M13 | I get so homesick that I am in a despondent mood for days at a time.          |
| 7  | F37 | M37 | I cannot keep from constantly criticising my parents' actions and mannerisms. |

In taking this attitude test of 45 statements the student encircles the number of the statement which applies to his relationship with both parents; when the relationship applies to only one parent the number in the appropriate parental column is encircled.

The scale values preceding the statement do not appear in the students' test forms but can be found in the manual.

The student's score on the test is the average scale value of all the statements checked and is interpreted according to the following table.

<i>Range of Scores</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1 — 5	Intense dislike
6 — 9	Considerable dislike
10 — 13	Some dislike
14 — 17	Variation between mild affection and mild dislike
18 — 21	Some affection
22 — 25	Considerable affection
26 — 30	Intense affection

#### RELIABILITY

The test of 58 statements was given to 154 freshmen and sophomores. By use of the chance halves (odds-evens) method, a rather high coefficient of reliability of  $.936 \pm .004$  was found. It should be noted, however, that this reliability is based on the student's attitude toward his father and mother jointly. In other words, the students checked those statements in which they felt the same toward one parent as they did toward the other. It is possible that an occasional student did not check a statement when it applied to only one of his parents. It is expected that this reliability will be lowered somewhat by use of a separate column for each parental attitude.

However, the reliability has been strengthened by further scaling of statements. The 58 statements have since been reduced to 45. The thirteen statements eliminated from the test were those whose scale values were the most divergent from the individual students' scores on the test.

#### VALIDITY

Fifty-four case studies, as a sampling of the total 154 students, were made. These included 18 college freshmen, 18 college sophomores, and 18 high school seniors selected on the basis of the fol-

lowing criteria: three different school classes, three qualities of school work, three degrees of dislike, and three degrees of affection. The following outline diagram sets forth the four criteria.

Class	Quality of School Work	Dislike	Affection
A. H. S. Senior	G. Good	D. Some	D' Some
B. Freshman	H. Average	E. Considerable	E' Considerable
C. Sophomore	I. Poor	F. Intense	F' Intense

Under the above system of classification fifty-four combinations of various student types of attitude (Case) situations were selected as samples. In this brief statement only a few cases can be cited as samples.

*The data show that this Dislike-Affection Attitude test indicated student attitudes toward their parents which the sampling of 54 case records confirm.* Three different types of students' attitudes will be reported very briefly to illustrate the above finding.

For example, BIF, from the above diagram, B represents freshman, I a poor student, and F intense dislike. Socially he was very well liked, athletically he was superior but he did very poor school work. The record reveals that he could never get along with his parents. He resented it very much when his parents came many miles to visit him three times during the year. He would not have gone home during the Christmas vacation had he not been compelled to do so. The discovered score of 5 on this test, indicating "intense dislike," fits the above case study picture.

BGF' represents a freshman young woman, who was very good in scholarship and with a score of 28 on this test reveals she felt a very strong affection for her parents. She was in the highest decile group on the intelligence test and appeared to get along nicely. However, weekly visits and frequent phone calls by her parents plus her constant concern for conditions at home indicated that the affection was very intense. The Dean of Women says this young woman never has had a date and as a social substitute finds her enjoyment in her parents rather than with her classmates and friends.

CGE represents a sophomore young woman who has an excellent school record but with a score on this test of 9 indicates "considerable dislike" for her parents. She was brought up in a home of unusual educational and social privileges but under very strict parental domination. She attended the Junior College of her home town during her freshman year. As a sophomore she was in attendance at a college some distance from home. Her resentment against

this parental domination led her to "cut loose." As a result her school work suffered. Her associates had not met her parents' approval and her very conduct and general attitude about the college reflected this dislike for her parents by doing the things they did not approve.

#### USES FOR THE TEST

Two major uses of the test are apparent at this early stage.

1. *The test furnished important supplementary data as part of the total case-picture of the student's campus adjustment.* Both students, BGF' and CGE, were passing in their school work. Socially the former was not participating and the latter was going to excess. The test score given early in the school year indicated one of the possible difficulties which proved to have very important supplementary significance when added further to other test scores in the total battery and when considered in the light of facts secured in other ways. The faculty advisor of CGE could not understand the attitude of this young woman who had come from such a fine home. When the "considerable dislike score" was revealed, the advisor went to the roots of the situation, and needed sympathy was given to this girl who was hungry for a chance to be independent. Naturally many interviews and conferences followed during the year in order to help this young woman to a happy campus adjustment. Thus this test will not give the final solution but it will give indispensable supplementary aid in the guidance of students.

2. *The test sometimes takes on the form of major diagnostic significance in understanding the student in his total life situation.* BIF is a good illustration. He entered into everything with zest except his school work. He was well liked by most students and appeared to get along nicely. Students were surprised to hear him say he did not want to go home to visit, etc. His score of 5 indicating "strong dislike" revealed some difficulty at home. An investigation showed his parents have been over-anxious for their children and tried to tell this young man recently what vocation he should choose, what he must do to succeed, etc. Being of an independent nature he flatly refused to follow such orders. He dropped out of school before the first year was completed and went on a long trip to get away from parental domination. Other cases might be cited to point out how parents and students not getting along came to a point of understanding or even appreciation of each other. Discussion of considerable length might indicate religious issues, choice

of a vocation or life partner, finances, and many other factors highly involved in the student-parental relationship which this test uncovered.

Still other cases reveal that this test gives a clue to relationships in the home which take on primary significance as far as counseling and guidance of the students is concerned, while under campus responsibility.

There seem to be no types or classification of students in their relation to their parents largely because there are so many possible factors involved in the various attitudes. But it can be said that the home usually constitutes one of the student's primary relationships. If there is strong dislike there is something marring a happy home connection; if the affection is too intense, homesickness, inability to get down to school work and other reactions are characteristic.

The major purpose of the test then is to discover deep-seated forms of dislike or affection. Further experimentation may reveal further uses for the test than the two indicated above. (The Complete Test may be secured from the writer.)

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