

Affectivity and Interpersonal Orientation  
In College Seminarians:  
Their Relationship to Persistence in the Seminary

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### Abstract

American Catholic priests have been scientifically scrutinized as probably no other comparable group. However, the literature is often contradictory. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the dynamics of the interpersonal need for affection and its expression through self-reported behavior. Of particular interest was the relationship between affectivity and a student's decision to persist in the seminary or discontinue seminary studies.

Subjects for this study were drawn from the senior class of Saint Meinrad College. Subjects were divided in two groups on the basis of their decision to persist in the seminary or leave. The Fundamental Interpersonal Orientation- Behavior (FIRO-B) questionnaire was administered to all subjects. A multivariate analysis of variance was then performed on the data.

Results indicated no significant difference in interpersonal orientation or affective need satisfaction between "persisters" and "leavers." Although the sample population of seminarians had a somewhat higher mean score on the wanted affection scale of the FIRO-B than most of the comparison groups, there was no correlation with the decision to remain in the seminary for graduate theological studies. More data needs to be collected for a more thorough and fruitful discussion of the issues related to intimacy and affective need satisfaction in the lives of priests and seminarians.

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

The personalities and lives of American priests have been subjected to scientific scrutiny as probably no other comparable group. However, the literature is often contradictory. The 1971 Study on Priestly Life and Ministry commissioned by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) reported several interesting findings. Sixty-six per cent of the priests sampled were classified as "underdeveloped," in the sense that they had not achieved the level of psychological growth appropriate for their chronological age. The authors discuss one of the characteristics of these men:

The chief area in which the underdeveloped priests manifest their incomplete growth is in their relationships with other persons. These relationships are ordinarily distant, highly stylized, and frequently unrewarding for the priest and for the other person. (NCCB, 1971, p. 89)

Other studies indicate no evidence that priests are deficient when compared to other groups in American society (Greeley, 1972; Kennedy & Heckler, 1972). If the Roman Catholic clergy are not highly self-actualized it does not necessarily follow that they are less emotionally mature than most other adult American males (Bloom, 1971). Using the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) conducted a study which reported that the mean scores of Catholic clergy on the capacity for intimate contact was only somewhat higher than the non-self-actualized control group. However

every comparison group on which we have data indicates no significant difference in contrast to the mean scores of priests; the mean score of the young priest is actually higher than that of young Catholics in colleges on the POI (Greeley, 1972).

The NCCB study (1971) indicated that Church leadership, Catholic lay people, and priests themselves often saw the priest as something of an "iron man." The implication of the report is that the priest can cope with the aloneness of his life, the frustration of his ministry and the difficulties of his own personal growth and development without any emotional support (much less affection) from anyone. One of the conclusions evident from these studies is that the problem of intimacy is as real for the priest as it is for anyone else.

Gill and Amadeo (1980) stated the problem of intimacy in the life of the priest with the following questions:

How close to another person, how openly honest with one's feelings, and how tender and affectionate can a celibate be without risking falling in love or entering into too exclusive a relationship? The conscience, or superego, may once again clash with deep yearnings or needs. Many priests... revealed a growth paralyzing anxiety over their relationships with both women and men. 'If I become a close friend of a woman will I risk becoming sexually involved?' 'If I share my life too deeply and emotionally with another male person, is it going to reveal a homosexual tendency in myself that I cannot accept?' (p. 16)

Anxiety and tension will be inevitable in the life of the priest unless answers are found to the question of intimacy and realistic decisions are reached and lived out. Recently, a proliferation of literature concerning celibate sexuality and affective need satisfaction among priests and seminarians has

emerged (e.g., Goergen, 1974; Greeley, 1973; Kraft, 1979; Tyrrell, 1979). Kosnik, Carroll, Cunningham, Modras and Schulte (1979), in a study commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America stated that priests and religious:

must know how to experience a healthy affective maturation in their own persons; to give and receive friendship with persons of their own sex and of the opposite sex; to express the possibility of a unique personal encounter that at some moment in their lives invites to an intimate, exclusive, and lasting relationship. (p. 209)

The Jesuits, the largest religious order of men in the Catholic Church, recently devoted an entire issue of their journal to the topic of affectivity and sexuality and its relationship to the identity of priests and religious. An acknowledgement is made that:

many new and difficult problems are being experienced by (us) and other religious orders whose apostolic style, human relationships, modes of prayer, lifestyles and rearranged value systems reflect the changing post-Vatican II times... 'Getting in touch' with one's emotions 'openly' and 'gut-level communication' have become virtues for our times. (Gill, 1978, p. 46)

Similarly, a statement by the Bishops Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry of the NCCB articulated:

a circle of close friends is essential to the personal development and consequently the ministry of the priest. It is through sharing and loving relationships with others that the priest experiences growth and happiness...The inability to form such relationships should be noted and be a part of one's evaluation in pre-ordination years. (USCC/NCCB, 1977, p. 65)

The purpose of this study is to examine the dynamics of the interpersonal need for affection and its expressed behavior among college-level seminarians. This present study will consider the specific behavior of seminarians in addition to

examining affectivity within the larger parameters of the general population. Some questions to be investigated in the literature review are as follows:

What is the relationship between intimacy and personal identity formation in human maturation?

Does psychological testing reveal any differences in personality orientation or traits between those who remain in the seminary (persisters) and those who drop out of the seminary program (leavers)?

Are there any significant differences in the psychological make-up of Roman Catholic seminarians that would distinguish them from the general adult male population or other students preparing for church ministry?

#### Review of Literature

It is apparent that the term "intimacy" is applied to a wide range of human encounters: eg., marriage, friendship, competitive situations (Breckel & Murphy, 1981; Goergen, 1974). The term is also used interchangeably among some authors with sexuality and genital expression (Bartsch & Dawson, 1979). For the purposes of this present investigation the use of the term intimacy will be limited to its application in celibate friendships.

Evelyn and Joseph Whitehead (1979) define intimacy as "the ways one is brought 'up close' to other people-- not only in romance and sexuality, but in friendships, in cooperation, in planning and collaborative effort, in conflict and negotiation" (p. 259). For the Whiteheads, "intimacy" comprises a large repertoire of behaviors and experiences. Intimacy embraces the strengths that enable one to work closely with another in situations where there is personal disclosure and

mutuality. It is this strength which enables one to commit oneself "not to humankind in general or to idealized movements, but to particular persons in concrete relationships" (p. 259). Donald Goergen (1974) uses the word intimacy to designate the highest possible interpersonal experience, the experience of union or oneness with another. For Goergen, intimacy in human living is crucial for personal growth, self-esteem and the feeling that life is worthwhile. He attempts a distinction between intimacy and genitality, but concedes that no clear and distinct boundaries exist between them.

We must not kid ourselves... the experience of intimacy in the adult is not totally separable from genital feelings and anxiety. We should not be naive in thinking that a non-genital intimacy will be achieved easily. (p. 189)

Erikson (1950) went beyond the traditional psychoanalytic psychosexual phases that end with the "genital phase." In his eight stages of psychosocial development Erikson departs from emphasizing the relationship between genital sexuality and emotional maturity. Before considering the critical stages of human maturation leading to adulthood, Erikson proposes that late adolescence is the critical period when the personality must "take root." He focuses on the achievement of ego synthesis in late adolescence that gives one a sense of ego identity. In a later paper, Erikson (1978) states: "It is only when identity formation is well on its way that true intimacy, which is really a counterpointing as well as a fusing of identities is possible" (p.136). Ego identity, according to Erikson's theory, involves the feeling of completion that comes from feeling loved

and needed as well as being able to share oneself and one's experience with another. The capacity for intimacy can be achieved only as feelings of self assurance and of being a reasonably independent and integrated individual develop (Erikson, 1961).

Erikson's theory posits that as one leaves home one ordinarily experiences the dissipation of family bonds as a disconcerting experience. The young person struggles against self-absorption and isolation and seeks affiliation and love. At this point the need for intimacy and interdependence with another asserts itself and gains dominance as a motivation. Much of the feeling of having a specific identity comes from being needed and wanted by another person. Thus it is evident that intimacy and identity come together; persons can only risk being close to and affected by another if they have a reasonably consistent sense of who they are in separation from the other. If one's sense of self is too diffuse, then one can be emotionally disintegrated by the encounter. Conversely, if personal boundaries are too rigid there is no way one person can get close enough to have an effect on another (Erikson, 1950).

Sullivan (1953), a contemporary of Erikson, observed the need for emotional intimacy as fully emerging in the pre-adolescent stage of development. Sullivan acknowledges many obvious correlates to emotional intimacy which arise much earlier than adolescence. These include such needs as compeers and playmates in childhood and the formation of juvenile gangs.

However, Sullivan does not perceive true emotional intimacy until the ages of 8 1/2 to 10. This form of intimacy most often occurs with a particular member of the same sex who becomes a "chum" or close friend-- creating a relationship somewhat similar to genuine interpersonal love. According to Sullivan, this relationship is a specific type of interest, of a magnitude and intensity which has previously not occurred. As the striving for intimacy continues in adolescence, the need for particular love shifts for most people from someone of the same sex to someone of the opposite sex. At this point intimacy ceases to be merely a need for contact comfort and becomes a much deeper emotional need (Goergen, 1974).

The observations of priest-psychologist Henri Nouwen (1969) have supported Sullivan's findings. Nouwen maintains that the need for intimacy to be accepted and understood is crucial for the human development of adolescents. If confusion results, a search mechanism can develop for the one, true, faithful friend who is waiting somewhere to remove all feelings of frustration and loneliness. Regardless of when the actual moment or phase of development occurs, the need for emotional intimacy becomes primary. Consequently, the problem of intimacy in particular friendships is very often experienced as the core problem in the emotional life of the young adult (Sullivan, 1953).

Nouwen (1969) acknowledges that individuals differ in their needs for closeness. He maintains that one must have distance in certain relationships in order to have intimacy in others. There is a tension between distance and intimacy in

the interpersonal life which requires a vital balance. Nouwen writes about this tension in the life of the priest:

Very often he has lost his private life, where he can be himself; nor has he a hierarchy of relationships with guards and thresholds. Being friendly to everybody, he very often has no friends for himself. (p. 131)

Contrary to Nouwen (1969) and Kennedy and Heckler (1972), Greeley (1972) found that the capacity for friendship and indeed the actual possession of intimate friends was no less among the Roman Catholic clergy than any other comparable group of adult American males. Greeley also found no evidence to support the frequent assertion that priests are passive dependent personalities. His study indicated, however, that one of the principal difficulties of the priest was his tendency to be less able than other adult males to cope with aggressive feelings. According to Greeley, the priest is, if anything, passive-aggressive. In his interpersonal relationships, the priest is more likely to be the "nice-guy" rather than the dependent child. There was also no indication that priests who entered the seminary later in life or those who had more post-ordination educational experience were more emotionally healthy than their peers. The Greeley study failed to find a strong correlation between the amount of time spent in the seminary and an individual's emotional maturity. He postulated that other factors are at work which have more influence than seminary formation.

The literature dealing with seminarians often employs the terms "persisters" and "leavers" to distinguish individuals who choose to remain in the seminary as opposed to those, who at

some point, drop out before completion of the program or before ordination. Lee (1968) used the Cattell Sixteen Personality Factor Inventory (16 PF) as well as the Kuder Inventory and a number of attitudinal response questions to compare 60 students who persisted in the seminary with 60 students who voluntarily left. The 120 subjects were part of a group tested before high school graduation and followed up during college seminary. The majority of leavers did not differ in personality from the majority of persisters. However, the utilization of the analysis of variance, regression analysis and cluster analysis revealed some differences. Persisters were significantly more submissive while leavers were higher in self-esteem. Students who were more feminine in interests and personality as well as those who displayed conformity of attitudes and behavior were more likely to remain in the seminary while those who displayed creativity on the tests were more likely to leave.

In a comparison of Rorschach responses of seminarians (both persisters and leavers) with each other and with the general adult male population, Houck and Dawson (1978) found some significant differences. The results indicated that a majority of seminarians were introversive, non-conforming, and not at ease in their ability to form and maintain interpersonal relationships. Anxiety appeared to be related to emotional needs which were not satisfied. Both persisters and leavers tended to be anxious but both groups manifested adaptive ego strength which was not expected by the experimenters. Not only have Roman Catholic seminarians been compared to one another in

terms of those who leave the seminary and those who remain, they have also been compared to ministry students of other Christian denominations.

Campagna and O'Toole (1981) in a comparison of the psychological profiles of Roman Catholic seminarians with male Protestant seminarians found the Catholic group to be significantly more group reliant, more feminine, less self-assertive, less dominant, and less self-accepting than the Protestant sample. These findings would appear to support those of Lee (1971) who concluded that group reliance correlated highly with persistence in the seminary.

It is apparent that the social context and environment of Roman Catholic seminaries may have been underestimated in the literature on seminarians. Many studies report the importance of group reliance or independence from individuals and groups within the seminary community (Campagna & O'Toole, 1981; Bloom, 1971; Lee, 1968; Lee, 1971). However, few studies investigate the communal environment of the seminary and its effects on the seminarian's affective need satisfaction.

Schutz (1966) maintains that the need for affection is a corporate as well as an individual phenomenon. He postulates that every interpersonal relation (i.e. a group of two or more) follows the same course of resolution. Relationships begin with the Inclusion Phase which involves the confrontation of individuals with each other and the establishment of oneself as a specific individual. The Control Phase occurs after problems of inclusion have sufficiently resolved and group members are well

established in their roles. Shared responsibility and its concomitant-- the distribution of power and control are of prime concern in this phase. Finally, the Affection Phase occurs after people have come together to form a group and have distinguished themselves in terms of responsibility and power. The major task of this phase, according to Schutz, is emotional integration. The behavior characteristic of this stage involves the manifestation of positive feelings, jealousies, pairing behavior, direct personal hostility, and generally heightened emotional feelings between pairs of people. The anxieties of this stage involve not being liked or not being close enough to other individuals as well as too much intimacy (Schutz, 1966).

During the Affection phase each member strives to obtain for himself or herself their most comfortable position regarding the initiation and reception of affection behavior. Thus Schutz envisions a group attempting successively to achieve an optimal amount of interchange and an optimal degree of initiating and receiving with respect to the group regarding interaction, responsibility, and emotional closeness. According to Schutz, "Since all groups have members with interpersonal needs that must be satisfied by the other members, this analysis should hold for any interpersonal relation" (Schutz, 1966, p. 171).

It is evident that there are no definitive conclusions one can draw from the literature on interpersonal want and expression and affective need satisfaction among seminarians and priests. Changes in church and society in the last fifteen

years have radically altered the role of the priest and consequently his interpersonal style. Further research is necessary in order to understand the dynamics of the interpersonal relationships of those engaged in preparation for ordained ministry in the Catholic Church. Examination of interpersonal affective need satisfaction is not the only approach worthy of consideration but certainly merits further study.

### Hypothesis

The formal hypothesis of this study is as follows:

- H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in interpersonal orientation (specifically the need for affection and its expression in behavior) between seminary persisters and leavers.
- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference in interpersonal orientation between seminary persisters and leavers.

## CHAPTER II

Subjects The subjects for this study (N=32) were members of the senior class of Saint Meinrad College, a small midwestern Roman Catholic college-level seminary. Questionnaires were given to the entire class of 35 students; 32 were returned.

Instrumentation The Fundamental Interpersonal Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) questionnaire was administered. The FIRO-B (Schutz, 1960) is a measure of characteristic behavior toward others in the areas of inclusion, control, and affection. The purpose of the FIRO-B is to measure how an individual behaves in interpersonal situations, and to provide an instrument that facilitates the prediction of compatibility and interaction between people. Two aspects of behavior in each of the respective dimensions are assessed: the behavior a person expresses toward others and the behavior he or she wants others to express toward him or her. The FIRO-B encompasses six scales: Expressed and Wanted behavior in the areas of inclusion, control, and affection.

The interpersonal need for Inclusion is defined as the need to establish and maintain a satisfactory relationship with people with respect to interaction and association.

The interpersonal need for Control is the need to establish and maintain a satisfactory relationship with others with respect to love and affection.

The interpersonal need for Affection is the need to establish and maintain a satisfactory relationship with others with respect to love and affection.  
(Schutz, 1960, p. 4)

The FIRO-B is both reliable and stable. The average

reproducibility index is .94. Test-retest correlations are over .70 (Schutz, 1967).

Procedure Subjects will be assigned into two groups on the basis of their reported vocational plans. Group One (N=22) will consist of those students entering a school of theology or novitiate in the fall of 1982; Group Two (N=10) will comprise those students who are not continuing their seminary studies in the fall of 1982.

A 2 x 2 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will be performed on all subjects (N=32) in order to ascertain whether there is a statistically significant difference between groups across the six scales.

## CHAPTER III

Results The results of the experiment support the null hypothesis: no significant difference in the interpersonal orientation was found between persisters and leavers. Moreover, no significant differences were found in the more pertinent expressed and wanted affection scales across both groups.

The multivariate analysis of variance yielded insignificant overall discrimination between the two groups. Univariate F ratios were not found to be statistically significant.

All subjects of this study (both persisters and leavers) had relatively high affection needs. Persisters had a slightly higher wanted affection ( $W_a$ ) mean score than did leavers (4.9 as opposed to 4.2). Among 12 comparison groups found in the FIRO manual, only traveling salesmen and nurses had higher mean scores on  $W_a$  (6.9 and 5.9 respectively) than did the sample population of seminarians.

Both persisters and leavers had unusually low mean scores on expressed control ( $E_c$ ), 2.5 and 3.0 respectively. Persisters had lower mean scores on  $E_c$  than any other comparison group in the FIRO manual. Seminarians' mean scores on the  $W_c$  scale were slightly higher than on the  $E_c$  scale (3.5 for persisters and 3.6 for leavers). The only comparison group which scored lower than the sample group of seminarians on the  $W_c$  scale were the creative architects.

Mean inclusion scores were somewhat more similar to those of the comparison groups. Persisters scored 5.8 on  $E_i$  and 4.1

on  $W_i$  while leavers scored 5.0 on  $E_i$  and 3.4 on  $W_i$ . Perhaps it is worth noting that persisters have a higher score on expressed inclusion behavior than on wanted inclusion. However, leavers apparently did not engage in the appropriate behavior necessary to satisfy their inclusion needs.

### Discussion

The MANOVA results were not significant, suggesting no differences in interpersonal style between persisters and leavers in the senior class of Saint Meinrad College. Although the review of literature established that intimacy and affective need satisfaction were indeed important elements in human development and seminary formation, it is evident that there is no strong correlation between the variables investigated and one's decision to continue studies for the priesthood. The results of this present study confirm the findings of Vaughn (1963) and Greeley (1972), in which no significant differentiation between persisters and leavers was discovered on other psychological variables.

Perhaps one of the most delimiting aspects of this study is that it does not take into account the subject's motivation for persisting or leaving. It is possible that some students remain in the seminary because they find the environment conducive to their personal need satisfaction, regardless of their degree of emotional maturity. Persisters may find emotional support or fulfillment in the seminary which facilitates their persistence; leavers may be dissatisfied with institutional rules and regulations and project their feelings onto

the system (Houck & Dawson, 1978).

It is evident that a more refined distinction between successful and unsuccessful seminarians is needed, rather than the typical division between those who leave and those who stay. The quality of a seminary student who persists may vary considerably with the demands of seminary formation and academic programs, the quality of administration and faculty, the morale of the student's peer group, and other situational factors. A longitudinal study could be developed and utilized in which norms for seminarians (at the time of testing) who later reach ordination and maintain successful functioning as priests could be utilized as a predictor of staying or leaving. Obviously, this type of study would require the cooperation of seminary and diocesan personnel in developing an evaluation instrument (Kennedy & Heckler, 1972).

Further research is necessary to help clarify issues of intimacy and affectivity in the lives of priests and seminarians. Because of the dramatic changes in Roman Catholic seminary education in the last decade, there is a continual need for further research; studies on priests and religious can become rapidly obsolete. Insights from psychological investigations of seminarians can be helpful in tailoring formation programs more conducive to their personal growth and development. Futrell (1981) observes:

Since formation is a process of human growth toward ever deeper and more authentic integration in vocational identity, it is necessary to provide the right environment for growth at the right time, according to the stage of development. (p. 34)

Futrell maintains that seminary formation is a process which involves identifiable stages of growth. The entire "integrative process" has successive stages-- each with their own immediate goals and dynamics. Clearly, more data is required for a more thorough discussion of the issues.(Futrell, 1981).

Although much remains to be investigated, the benefits of psychological research have focused attention on the crucial need for priests and seminarians to develop their capacities to become full human beings-- integrating the intellectual and spiritual with the emotional and social components of their personalities. Gill and Amadeo (1980) observe:

During recent years, reeducation through courses, workshops, encounter groups, and individual counseling and psychotherapy has helped countless celibate religious and clergy around the world become capable of accepting and spontaneously expressing their emotions in a fully human way.  
(p. 17)

Growth, as priest-psychologist James Zullo has observed, "is not a question of having been victorious over previous conflicts, but rather of having synthesized those conflicts into human strength for maturity."

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MANOVA

UNIVARIATE F-RATIOS, with ndf1=1 & ndf2=30

variable among mean sq. within mean sq. F-Ratio eta sq.

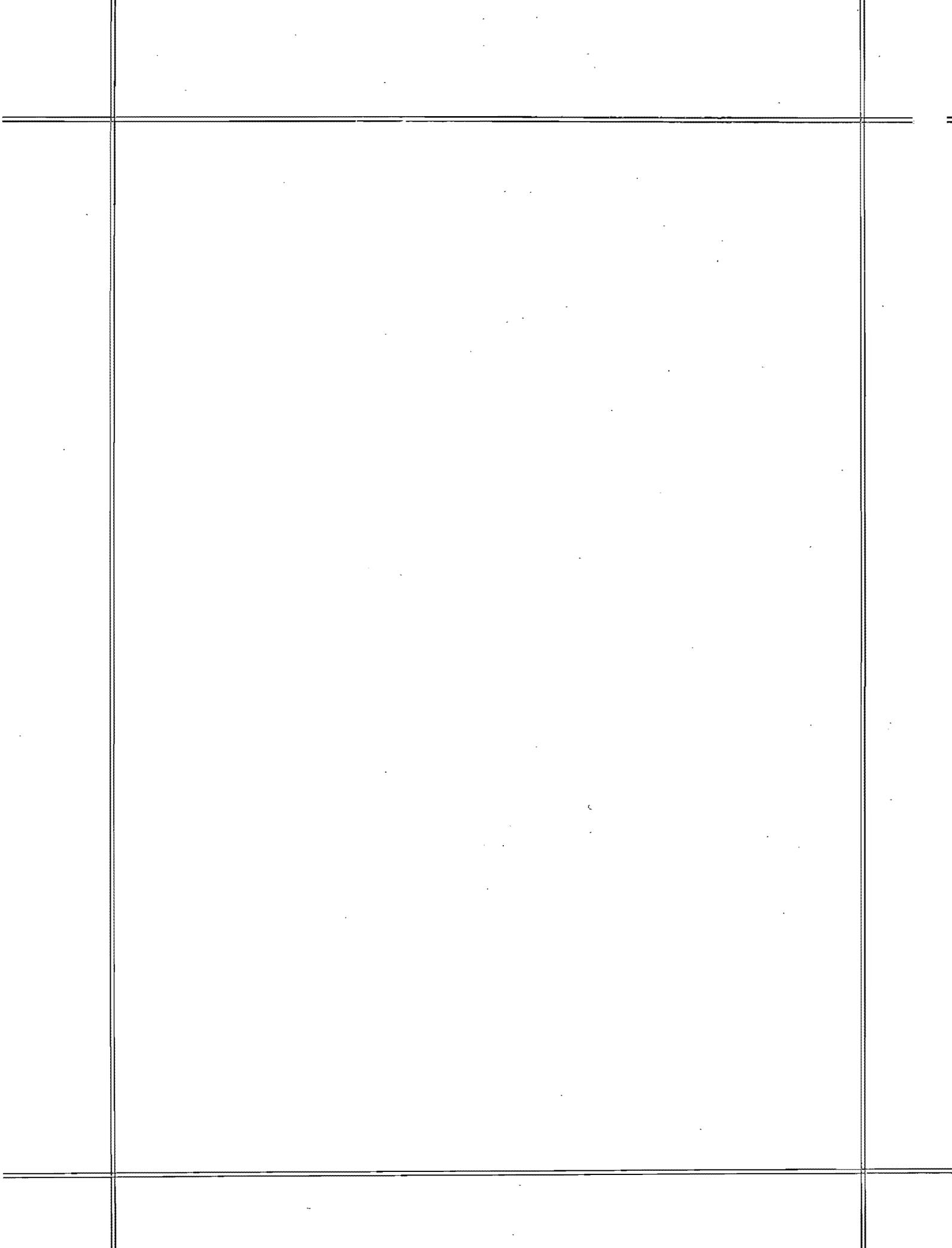
1	E <sub>i</sub>	4.1051	3.32879	1.23321	.039484
2	E <sub>c</sub>	2.04546	6.18182	.330883	.0109091
3	E <sub>a</sub>	3.02786	5.27303	.574217	.0187811
4	Sum E	15.0958	17.1458	.880441	.0285113
5	W <sub>i</sub>	3.72784	10.833	.344118	.0113405
6	W <sub>c</sub>	.0204468	4.92849	4.1487E-03	1.38271E-04
7	W <sub>a</sub>	.184113	5.82303	.031618	1.05282E-03
8	Sum W	4.91418	25.9518	.189358	6.27234E-03
9	Sum E+W	37.2368	61.8254	.60229	.0196812

FIRO-B SCORES FOR TWELVE OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

Scale	MEAN											
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l
E <sub>i</sub>	6.4	5.6	5.6	5.5	4.6	4.9	2.7	2.7	5.4	3.8	5.1	5.2
W <sub>i</sub>	7.0	6.2	5.4	5.6	5.4	3.8	4.6	1.7	4.0	2.6	4.6	3.4
E <sub>c</sub>	5.6	5.5	4.9	4.1	2.9	2.6	4.7	5.4	3.4	2.9	3.0	3.1
W <sub>c</sub>	4.4	4.9	5.4	4.6	4.7	4.4	5.5	3.1	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.1
E <sub>a</sub>	6.1	4.1	4.0	4.2	3.7	3.2	4.4	2.6	3.6	3.2	4.4	3.7
W <sub>a</sub>	6.9	5.2	5.0	4.8	5.0	3.9	5.1	4.4	4.9	3.9	5.9	4.3

- a. Traveling salesmen from a large pencil company (age 25-65)
- b. Harvard Business School students (age 24-38)
- c. University of California Medical School students (age 23-33)
- d. Harvard Freshmen (age 16-20)
- e. Radcliffe freshmen (age 16-20)
- f. Operation Deepfreeze personnel (age 22-64)

- g. Education administrators (age 26-64)
- h. Creative architects (age 36-65)
- i. Psychology majors, North Texas State College (mixed)
- j. Physics majors, North Texas State College (mixed)
- k. Nurses, University of California Medical School (age 23-55)
- l. Teachers (mixed)



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