

FIVE FAILING COLLEGE STUDENTS*

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FOR practical and theoretical reasons, the question of academic failure in college has received considerable attention on the part of educators and researchers. Broadly speaking, studies in this field fall into two categories: 1) attempts to isolate the correlates of academic performance; 2) attempts to devise and evaluate techniques for improving academic performance. While these efforts have increased our knowledge of relevant variables, produced a great number of selection devices, and tested the relative usefulness of a wide variety of remedial measures, they have not shed too much light on the dynamics of individual failure.

Since previous studies have aimed largely at establishing statistically derived predictive criteria, they have been obliged to focus upon discrete aspects of group behavior. This focus has precluded the emergence of an understanding of how any given student, as a living organism with his special assets, limitations and potentials, interacts with his particular collegiate environment in such a way as to yield the end product of academic failure. Consequently, most of these studies have not significantly advanced the development of concepts adequate to the actual complexity of the problem. Moreover, those who are engaged in practical work with individual students have found it difficult to apply static indices to the fluid reality presented by students who are in the process of failing.

In this study, definitely inductive in nature, we have attempted to explore the failure process by approaching each of five failing college students in an individual, holistic, clinical manner. By employing a method appropriate to this aspect of the over-all problem of failure, it was felt that we might uncover and elucidate some of the subtle but crucial interactions between person and situation not so apt to come to view through approaches of static or particulate type.

Subjects. Our subjects were five male freshmen in their second semester of residence in the liberal arts college of the University of Michigan during the spring of 1952. They were the first five men coming to the attention of the Dean's Office for failing, by eight honor points,¹ to attain the minimally required scholastic average for the first semester's work. As it turned out, they were all 18 years old, white, and native-born.

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¹ Honor points are computed as follows: A (excellent)=4; B (good)=3; C (satisfactory)=2; D (unsatisfactory but not requiring repeat)=1; E (failing)=0. Students are required to maintain a C or 2.0 grade point average. Thus a student carrying a program of 15 course credits in a given semester is obliged to earn 30 honor points, an average of 2 points (C grade) per credit hour.

Procedure. On the basis of a previous arrangement with us, the Assistant Dean interviewed these first five reported failures. He outlined our proposed study and tried to enlist their cooperation as subjects, pointing out they might gain from the study, in terms of improved functioning, as well as contribute to it. However, it was made clear that their participation was voluntary.

Each student then was given an appointment with us, and in the initial meeting, the purpose of our study was reviewed. The students were told our procedure would consist of a series of interviews in which we would attempt to bring to light the reasons for their failure and help them to avoid failure in the future. Also, they were told certain psychological tests would be used to supplement the interview material and that, if necessary, they might be asked to take special physical tests or examinations. Arrangement was then made for regular contacts for the remainder of the semester.

After the end of the semester, effort was made to follow the student's progress. This follow-up procedure could not be rigidly systematic since the exigencies of each case required different handling. Thus, for example, the two subjects who withdrew from the university at the end of the second semester could not be called in for face-to-face interviews.

In general, we tried to be as flexible as possible in our approach to the collection of data. Certainly the course and content of the interviews varied from student to student depending, to a great extent, upon the material and structuring which each student brought forth. Effort, however, was made to cover as completely as possible all significant aspects of the respective personal and environmental situations, as far as contact and available material enabled. The inquiry covered, of course, past history as well as the university period, and included among others such factors as vocational goals, family composition and relationships, significant attitudes, study habits, health, and extracurricular activities. In addition, the following psychological tests were administered: the Kuder Vocational Preference Record (Form CH), the American Council on Education Psychological Examination for College Freshmen (1949 Edition), and an abbreviated version (50 items) of the Michigan Sentence Completion Test.

Findings. Our results will be presented in the form of individual case descriptions or protocols. In these protocols, we shall try to reconstruct the unfolding of the failure outcomes. This will involve a portrayal of significant predispositional and situational factors together with their dynamic interaction.

Case A. A is florid, pudgy and baby-faced. He was excessively polite and deferential during our initial interview. He would answer almost every question with a "Yes, sir" or "No, sir," endeavoring to give the impression

of being very cooperative. Actually, A had to be prodded to give information, and even then tried not to reveal much about his feelings and intentions.

A, a premedical student, received the following grades for the 15 credit hours taken during the first semester: German, E; Chemistry, D; English, C; and History, B. This poor performance could hardly have been predicted on the basis of his superior intellectual endowment, his total ACE score being at the 97th percentile for Michigan freshmen. However, his academic record in high school was very inconsistent. Good grades were coupled with barely passing ones. Nevertheless, he graduated twenty-sixth from the top of a class of 138 and received a tuition scholarship to the university.

A is the second of three children. His brother is three years older; his sister, eight years younger. His father is a skilled industrial worker; his mother, a housewife. Both parents are high school graduates, but neither attended college. The family has always lived in a Michigan industrial town of medium size.

A's father takes little interest in the development of his children. The mother, on the other hand, appears to be keenly concerned with their academic, social and vocational activities. In this regard, A feels she definitely preferred his brother to himself. While generally critical of A's progress, she tended to approve and laud the achievements of his brother. She often would draw explicit, and from A's viewpoint, invidious comparisons between them, engendering resentment in A toward her.

A's brother, now an ensign in the Navy, also attended the university, majoring in music. A, following his brother in school, took many of the same classes, and teachers consistently held up the latter as a shining example for A to emulate. His brother invariably received better grades, more prestige, and more social success. It is also interesting to note that A, like his brother, was a clarinetist and played in the same high school and university marching bands. A considers his brother clearly superior on that instrument, saying of him, "He *plays* the clarinet. I play at it." As this statement would indicate, A was inclined consciously to admire his brother a great deal. On the surface, there was little animosity between them. According to A's account, his brother played the role of a kindly mentor, and A always described him in the most favorable terms.

Clinically speaking, A is an exceedingly immature, suggestible, unstable, dependent, naïve person. He is very sensitive and easily upset by any sort of stress. He is characterized further by a definite inertness, passivity and lack of animation. Habitually, he worries about future events and ruminates about past shortcomings. When angry, he pouts and sulks in a manner strikingly similar to that of a young child. His general lack of differentiation extends into the sexual area, where he seems to be neutral in terms of drive and interest.

A tends to take the easy way out, the path of least resistance. He gives lip service to various aspirations and intentions. Behaviorally, however, he is very quickly upset and discouraged in the face of the mildest frustrations. Instead of attempting to mobilize his resources in the face of external difficulties, he tends to retrench and withdraw. He tries to coast along by inhibiting his spontaneous feelings and ideas, especially ones which he thinks may antagonize others. In spite of his rigorous attempts at blandness and conformity, his feelings are easily touched. This leads to a constant state of internal confusion and disorganization in contrast to his overt flatness.

In addition to his emotional problems, A suffered from the aftereffects of rheumatic fever. The acute phase of his condition had its onset two years prior to his enrollment at the university. Physical examination at the university disclosed rheumatic heart disease with mitral stenosis, probably not of high grade, but of sufficient degree to warrant avoidance of physical activity causative of marked dyspnea or fatigue, including strenuous competitive sports of all types. A was of rather dysplastic build and about ten pounds overweight. Also, there was some elevation in blood pressure, with a range of 134/80 to 126/60.

The foregoing clearly indicates that A brought definite psychological and physical liabilities to the university scene. These liabilities soon took their toll as he was confronted with the realities of campus life. In this regard, the outstanding factor seems to have been the emotional problems which derived from his family background. These generated intense feelings of inferiority which led to an admission of defeat even before he attempted to cope with the challenges presented by the university. He was reluctant to reveal his full resources in open competition for fear of being shown up as a worthless failure. This excessive fear of failure set the stage for and ensured the actuality of failure.

A corollary of A's emotional vulnerability was his lack of mature motivation for college work, and of appreciation of educational values. He came to college because it seemed the thing to do, because his brother had gone, and because, according to his own admissions, he wanted to be a physician in order to evoke the sort of love and reverence that people in his community gave to his own family doctor. This motivation is in keeping with his dependency needs, probably reinforced by his own illness experience, and is not vitiated by the fact that his high scores in scientific and social service interests on the Kuder are supportive of medicine as a vocational goal.

As might have been expected on the basis of his tendency to withdraw and escape from external difficulties, A got into various sorts of trouble soon after his freshman year began. In the first place, he devoted an inadequate amount of time to study, an average of one hour per day. In view of the high level of competition at the university, one hour of study per day is

woefully inadequate, even for a student of superior intellectual endowment. Moreover, he spent a great deal of time in conversations with casual acquaintances. He had no dates with girls and attended no social functions, but he went to the movies very frequently, and on week ends and vacations he usually went home.

Because of his personality qualities, he was rejected by his two roommates with whom he shared a triple room. A felt they had taken sides against him. He was resentful toward them, but unable to express it. Because of his tension, it was impossible for him to study effectively if they were in the room.

As the semester progressed, A's participation in the marching band became an increasingly important element in his total pattern of difficulty. The band required two to three hours of practice per day in addition to the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions during the football season. Furthermore, playing at out-of-town games often required an entire week-end of A's time. In A's case, the band was definitely a drain of energy as well as time. While university physicians granted him permission to participate in this activity, his illness history created anxiety about his ability to keep up with the other students in the band.

At the end of the first five weeks, it was apparent that A was headed for serious academic difficulty. He was called to the Faculty Counselors' Office at this time for a routine checkup, as were the other four students in our study, and urged to improve his academic performance. A's course, however, evidenced no constructive change and continued steadily to worsen, finally resulting in failure at the semester's end.

Our contact comprised nine interviews. A did not return after the ninth interview, but gave no indication that he was desirous of breaking off his contacts with us. At our last meeting, however, he was again in serious academic difficulty and reported he had already discontinued his attendance in two of his courses. Apparently A derived no benefit from the interview sessions, and it was our feeling that he never really accepted the fact that he had emotional problems which were interfering with his academic work. Because of his fear of self-revelation, it was impossible to make any progress in resolving his underlying emotional conflicts. Consequently, his symptomatic behavior persisted and led, ultimately, to further academic failure.

At the end of his second semester, he was asked to withdraw from the university for academic reasons, and before leaving, at the suggestion of the Assistant Dean, came to see us again. At this time, we discussed a general rehabilitation plan which he might follow. Tentatively, he expected to get a factory job and arrange for counseling assistance through a mental hygiene clinic in his community.

In February 1953, in reply to a brief follow-up questionnaire, A reported that he was attending another college where his average for the first semes-

ter, 1952-53, was A—. He added that he was feeling very well and enjoying himself as a student. He had not, however, followed through on any of the remedial measures which we had discussed. Instead, he had decided "to get to work and keep my academic work up to date." Medicine was still his vocational goal. Concerning the series of interviews which he had with us, he stated he enjoyed our discussions, but that his ideas on the work of a psychologist prevented him from viewing those interviews in any way which would have helped him.

We can only speculate upon the factors which seem to have spurred A on to his currently successful academic performance. It is possible that he found the life of a factory worker unsavory. Perhaps this brush with reality frightened him into a remobilization of his resources. In addition, the requirements and competition at his present school may be somewhat less demanding than those which he encountered at Michigan. Also, he may not have been involved in extracurricular activities. In any case, it is impossible to determine whether he will be able to sustain his successful performance. In his answer, we get an interesting validation of our previously stated impression that he had remained emotionally detached in the interviews with us. Although we still do not know what ideas he had about the work psychologists do, we may safely guess that his notions were negatively toned.

Summarizing A's case, we find an immature, tensional and inert person, lacking in mature motivation for college work and appreciation of educational values, and without constructively worked out vocational goals. Moreover, he was plagued by intense feelings of inadequacy as a consequence of unresolved sibling rivalry with an older brother, who he felt was favored by his mother. His emotional liabilities were increased by anxiety over a physical handicap, mitral stenosis; and because of his make-up, A tended to recoil from the challenge of a university curriculum. Thus, in spite of superior intellectual endowment, his study habits were very insufficient. He fell behind early in the semester, and when confronted with the fact that he was failing, tended to become more negligent in meeting assignments. In this regard, his participation in the marching band was an added impetus toward failure since it was a drain on his time and energy, especially during the first, and for him most crucial, half of the semester. Finally, A's poor interpersonal relations with his roommates made it more difficult for him to study in his room with any real effectiveness.

Case B. B is short, well built, and presents a clean-cut, well-groomed appearance. Physically no essential deviation was noted, although there was a slight tendency to elevation in blood pressure, 130/70. He was polite, cooperative and soft-spoken in the interview situation. B seemed to answer our questions in a frank and straightforward manner. He let it be known that

he felt his academic difficulties were entirely attributable to a lack of effort on his part. Thus, although he was not antagonistic to our procedure, B gave notice that he regarded it to be irrelevant to his actual situation. As to the question of personality or behavioral difficulty, B considered himself adequately adjusted. Since he appeared satisfied with himself and his analysis of his failure, his cooperation in the interviews seems to have stemmed from a desire to please university authorities. There was also, perhaps, a shred of curiosity and feeling that by "playing along" he might get some gem of information for nothing.

B was enrolled in the preidental curriculum. The final grades for his first semester of 15 credit hours were: History, C; Spanish, E; Zoology, C; and English, C. Concerning these grades, the results of B's university aptitude tests cast a little doubt on his intellectual preparedness for college work. His total ACE score was at the 41st percentile for Michigan freshmen. While this indicates more than adequate endowment as far as the general population is concerned, it placed him below the average of the student group with which he was obliged to compete.

A review of B's high school experience also indicated that some of his academic difficulties might have been anticipated. He attended a parochial high school in a large industrial city. Most of B's good grades were in courses on religion, and otherwise, he achieved only three grades of 85 or over. Nevertheless, he graduated twenty-sixth from the top of his class of 98, and was awarded a tuition scholarship to the university.

In the course of our sessions, other background factors pertinent to our study gradually unfolded.

B is the oldest of four children. His brothers are now 17 and 12. His sister is 15 years old. His father is a lawyer with a comfortable practice. The parents of B's father were Armenian and followed the Greek Orthodox Church. B's mother has an Irish-Catholic background. She is a high school graduate, but never attended college.

The differences between B's parents in the cultural and religious spheres seem to have created a good deal of stress for B and his siblings. B's father agreed at his wife's insistence that their children be reared in the Roman Catholic faith. Nevertheless, the father continued to maintain close ties to his Armenian friends and relatives. As a result, the children were exposed to implicit, if not explicit, cross pressures. Furthermore, B's mother was openly hostile to his father's Armenian contacts and often aired her views to the children. Finally, in addition to the cultural conflicts, the parents seemed to have many antagonisms on the personal level. Their quarrels were frequent and bitter.

B attempted to cope with this rift by adopting his mother's standards and values as fully as possible. In fact, he quickly became her favorite, her

companion and protector. He would invariably defend her in her quarrels with his father and accepted all of her disparagements of the latter.

As a consequence of his strong attachment to his mother, B was distant and hostile to his father. B reports having been punished frequently and severely by him in childhood. On the other hand, in recent years, B has reacted so strongly that he recalls on one occasion having struck his father in the face.

In line with his gradual appropriation of his father's role in the family constellation, B has served as chief disciplinarian for his siblings. He has been especially harsh with one of his brothers whom, it is assumed, he regards as the most serious rival for his mother's affection.

B's family situation thus contributed to his development as an assertive egocentric individual. When things are going his way, he is likely to be pleasant enough, even affable. However, when crossed or frustrated he is quickly angered and vindictive.

B tends to satisfy his needs in an immature, aggressive, and frequently impulsive manner. In this regard, it should be noted that his past is colored by a history of semidelinquent behavioral episodes. For example, he has been given to "hot-rod" cars which he drives at dangerous speeds and without mufflers to dampen the engine noise.

For boys of his socioeconomic class, B seems to have had more than the usual amount of activity and experience with girls, with many transitory liaisons since 15.

As might have been expected, B was quite popular in high school, where he generally assumed a leadership position in the formal and informal groups in which he participated. For example, at various times during his high school career he was a class president, vice-president of the student council, altar boy, writer for the yearbook, and a member of the Newman Club. In addition, he had unsuccessful tryouts with the track and football teams.

B has virtually no insight into his inner functioning. He tends to "shoot first" and forget about asking questions later. In other words, when under inner stress, he tends to rely upon an acting out of his feelings rather than a contemplation or analysis of them.

B is not altogether unruffled, however. He is driven by an acute sense of inadequacy which apparently stems from his marginal social position and rejection by the father. Usually, only the compensatory reactions are manifest. Occasionally, however, he reveals some of his self-doubt in a more direct manner. For example, he still takes very much to heart his family's derogatory references to his appearance as an infant.

Shortly before entering the university, B selected dentistry as a vocational objective. This decision evolved out of contact with a friend's father who was a dentist. Apparently this man, and especially his lucrative practice,

made a good impression on him. Actually, B reports initial repulsion at the thought of drilling or pulling someone's teeth. However, he claims that he "got over" this feeling after having adopted dentistry as a suitable career. Nevertheless, B's vocational interests, as measured by the Kuder, deviate from his educational objectives. His high scores were in the artistic and literary fields; his low scores, in the computational and clerical areas.

We have, then, a picture of B's major strengths and shortcomings. In the following presentation, we shall indicate how B's make-up interacted with the pressures which impinged upon him during his first semester at the university.

Above all, B wanted to be different from his father. This sort of orientation, based upon intense personal dislike, left B without any positive vocational direction. His choice of dentistry was fortuitous and, as we have noted, not in line with his objectively measured vocational interests. Moreover, as the result of his social and cultural conditioning, B never developed any fondness for formal education. On the contrary, his ideal was to be "one of the gang," which in his case had been a group of pleasure-bent semidelinquents who valued the unbridled force of a "souped-up" automobile more than the power of the written word. It is understandable, therefore, that he found his courses puzzling, abstract and unrewarding. Even when his interest was temporarily stimulated, his low tolerance for frustration precluded consistent study. He never devoted more than one hour per day to course work preparation, a fact which by itself may have been sufficient to guarantee his academic demise.

Unfortunately, B's high school preparation did not assist in offsetting his lack of thirst for knowledge. For example, he noted that he had never been required to write an English composition in high school. As a result, B found himself completely in the dark when confronted with the demands of his college course in English composition. Furthermore, this lack of training in language usage seems to have adversely affected his work in related college courses, such as Spanish.

In addition to the chronic parental stress and strife and his antagonism to his father, two factors increased B's over-all emotional turmoil during the first semester. First, his father suffered a heart attack shortly after B's arrival on campus. This worried B greatly, not because he felt sorry for his father, but rather because of his reluctance to shoulder any burden of responsibility for his mother and siblings if his father died. Secondly, B was preoccupied over a relationship with a girl with whom he had become deeply involved, physically as well as emotionally, prior to the beginning of his freshman year. He spent a great deal of his time writing to her and thinking about her. On week ends and vacation periods, he would invariably drop his academic work, however urgent, in order to visit her. Furthermore,

his parents were violently opposed to the girl. Their opposition increased his upset over the situation. Shortly after the end of the first semester, he finally decided to break off his relationship with her. By that time, however, the impact of the relationship upon his studies had left its mark.

As is true of all of our subjects, B got into academic difficulty early in the semester. He was called in routinely by the Faculty Counselors' Office at the five-week mark for a discussion of his situation with, however, very little effect. His academic situation continued to deteriorate as time wore on and the direction of his ultimate failure was never altered.

We saw B for a total of eight interviews. He terminated his contacts on a unilateral basis. Several times before his last interview, the question of what he was "getting out of it" was raised by both B and his interviewer. In each case, the question was answered in the negative by him. This is not at all surprising in view of the fact that he was convinced, in the initial session, that nothing could materialize from our meetings.

B's final grades at the end of the second semester were below the minimum academic standards. A check with the registrar's office revealed that B was granted permission to register for the fall of 1952, on a probationary basis. However, he failed to register at that time, and also for the spring semester, 1953.

A follow-up telephone call to B in March 1953 disclosed several reasons for his decision to remain out of school. Not being in the upper half of his class, he felt that he might be drafted at any time. In view of this possibility, his motivation to continue his studies diminished considerably beyond its usual low ebb. Moreover, he was again emotionally involved with a girl and much more interested in his romantic pursuits than in any academic ones. Finally, he claimed his family was low in funds. He felt it would be a waste of money to enroll with the prospect of the draft facing him. Incidentally, this latter point does not seem to have been a vital one since he admitted that his father was quite insistent that he continue at the university. In fact they had such a dispute about this issue that they have not been on speaking terms since B refused to go back to school.

B indicated he had been in excellent health since his departure from school. He had been free of illnesses and accidents, but reported "ups and downs" with his girl friend. He also indicated he had some misgivings about the Army, into which he was to be inducted shortly after the date of our telephone conversation.

In reviewing his job history subsequent to leaving college, B reported a variety of sales and clerical positions. His latest job was that of clerk-typist for a large industrial firm. When asked about his vocational future, B stated he wished to go into police work, feeling such work would offer him constant variety and stimulation. This reported switch in vocational aspiration struck

us as being an interesting confirmation of our clinical impressions. In the first place, it underscored the shallowness of his initial interest in dentistry. In the second place, it indicated that his readily explosive, hostile impulses were pressing for more constant fulfillment. By becoming a policeman he may be able to express these basically antisocial impulses in a socially acceptable manner. In regard to the interview sessions we had conducted, B admitted he derived little, if any, benefit from them. He attributed this lack of benefit to his own apathetic attitude toward his situation at that time.

To sum up, B is an impulsive, egocentric boy who was poorly equipped for college work because of his low tolerance for frustration, his tendency to devalue intellectual pursuits, deficiencies in his preuniversity preparation, lack of mature attitude and judgment with respect to vocational goals, and open repudiation of paternal aspirations and values. From the beginning of the semester, this configuration of factors produced an almost entirely negative academic orientation. While B went through the motions of attending classes with fair regularity, he devoted much less time to study than his relatively mediocre intellectual assets would have warranted. Moreover, he found that, contrary to some of his high school experiences, the exercise of his personal charm and his considerable techniques of interpersonal manipulation in the classroom could not serve as a substitute for productive effort. Although he participated in no organized extracurricular activities during the semester, his involvement with a girl from his home city diverted a significant amount of his attention and interest away from his academic commitments. A final factor which helped to cement B's failure was the sudden heart attack which his father suffered shortly after B's arrival on campus. His father continued to be in critical condition throughout the semester. B was quite perturbed by the prospect of his father's death since it implied the assumption of family responsibility with which he did not wish to be burdened.

Case C. C is tall, lean and angular. When he first came to see us, he was quite shy and soft-spoken. He was genuinely cooperative and indicated that he hoped some good might result from our talks. Yet the strangeness of the situation seemed to inhibit his ability to communicate. He blushed frequently and appeared tense and awkward, seeming to want and need a good deal of structuring in order to cope with the ambiguities of the interview situation. Apparently, introspection was foreign to him, and he had never previously considered his inner functioning to be an appropriate object of exploration. However, as he became more accustomed to our procedure, C took more initiative in bringing out material relevant to his academic problem.

C, who was majoring in business administration, took 17 credit hours

during his first semester, definitely a heavy load for entering students. His final grades were: Military Science, C; Spanish, D; Mathematics, D; English, C; and Geology, C. Incidentally, he was the holder of a tuition scholarship. Also, he was a member of the university basketball squad.

In general, C had earned an outstanding academic record in high school. He finished twenty-fifth from the top in a class numbering 320. Most of his grades were equally divided between A's and B's. He had only three C's. These grades, in contrast to those he received in his first semester at the university, reflect C's very superior intellectual endowment. His total ACE score was at the 99th percentile for Michigan freshmen.

In addition to his academic achievements, C was prominent in extra-curricular activities, especially in athletics. He participated in basketball, baseball and track. C was most proficient in basketball and was chosen for the all-conference team in that sport. As to his other activities, C was a sports writer for his school's newspaper and treasurer of an industrial auto club. Finally, although he was not employed outside of school during the regular academic year, he worked as a machinist and greenkeeper during summer vacations.

The following account summarizes the additional background factors which seemed later to affect his functioning at college.

C is the youngest of three children. His sister, age 22, is now married and has a child of her own. His 20-year-old brother is single and in the Air Force. Both of his siblings are high school graduates. However, neither attended college. All of the children were reared in a small city in a nearby state.

His parents had relatively little formal education. His father left school during the eighth grade. He began working as a laborer in a foundry, and after 25 years in the same plant was elevated to his present position of plant manager. C's mother was obliged to drop out of school after the tenth grade in order to help support her family.

C reports that his home life has always been satisfactory. He denies any conflict between himself and his parents or siblings. Apparently, he regards all of them with respect and affection. His father and brother have always been positive models for his own development and he hopes to go into business with them after graduation from college.

Aside from a variety of broken bones and teeth which were incurred while playing basketball in high school, C reported that his health had always been good. C's physical examination upon entering the university was essentially negative, although when seen in connection with the study, he seemed rather strained and somewhat drawn-looking. It should be added that there is a history of "nervousness" in the mother, also migraine, gastrointestinal upsets and "hives"; tuberculosis in the sister, and convulsions in the brother and sister. Nothing suggestive of convulsive disorder, however, was noted

with respect to the student himself. Also, there is a report of "night sweats" until two years ago, but with clinical and X-ray examinations here negative for tuberculosis.

C impressed us as a naïve, simple person who generally takes himself for granted. He tends to be passive, self-effacing and conforming in his social relations. He appears singularly free of value conflicts, having completely accepted the conventions of his parents and siblings. He tends to shy away from activities which might promote the growth and development of his inner resources. In this regard, his sphere of genuine interests is largely limited, first, to basketball and, second, to business success after graduation. C's pattern of vocational interests, as measured by the Kuder, tended to support his stated objective, business. C's high scores on the Kuder were in the areas of computational and clerical interest.

Although the range of his genuine interests is narrow and immature, he pursues them with a dogged persistence. His tenacious single-mindedness leads him to be "cagey" and manipulative in contrast to his usual directness in interpersonal relations. C is not above "making deals" or playing one person off against another if he feels that such tactics are necessary for the achievement of his success strivings; however, he feels no guilt or conflict in connection with these "deals" since they, too, are part of his cultural context and conditioning.

In general, he appeared to be free of significant emotional strain and symptoms. He showed little overt indication of tension or anxiety. He seemed quickly to forget the past. As to the future, he rarely became concerned with it. If anything, there was a kind of blandness and flatness of affect which seemed a little overdone in view of the uncertainty of his situation.

With these background factors in mind, let us return to the university situation, in order to describe how C's response to the life here led to his academic difficulties.

When we examine C's basic motivations, we are impressed by their inappropriateness insofar as college work is concerned. First, C's entire emotional life was centered about basketball. His parents are enthusiastic sport fans and actively encouraged his participation in basketball. Moreover, C's older brother, and in many ways his hero, was a star basketball player in high school. Finally, C's family has always lived in an area in which basketball is regarded more as a dedication than simply a game.

A second motivational factor which dampened C's enthusiasm for college course work was his devaluation of intellectual activities. This devaluation stemmed from three sources: a need to conform to the militant anti-intellectualism of his fellow athletes; an identification with his parents who never stressed the importance of formal education; and a desire to remain on an equal basis with his siblings, neither of whom attended college.

A corollary of C's rejection of intellectual pursuits is the fact that he had no clearly defined vocational goals, the attainment of which would require college preparation. In high school, C had been vaguely attracted to mathematics and architecture; however, he was never able to tolerate a picture of himself as an intellectual or someone who relies upon intellectual resources as a major work activity. Instead, his hope of long standing is to go into some form of business with his father and brother. While his Kuder profile does indicate an integration of vocational interests and objectives, the attainment of C's specific life goals would not necessarily be precluded by the absence of a college degree.

The foregoing motivational pattern soon paved the way for C's academic difficulties. Starting with the first day of the semester, in spite of his heavy load academically and otherwise, C began to indulge himself in a variety of escapist activities. Cards, movies and aimless conversation consumed a good deal of the time which he might have devoted to study. Actually, he spent an average of an hour per day on his course preparation. Such little study as he did engage in was not consistent, however. Often a full week would intervene between study sessions. In this regard, it should be noted, he was merely transferring to college the poor study habits which he had developed in high school. C had never found it necessary to do any serious studying before college since he found that he was able to "get by" admirably on his superior intelligence and the preferential treatment accorded to him by virtue of his athletic prominence.

It is paradoxical that basketball, the activity which really brought him to college, soon began to contribute heavily to C's academic distress. Long before the actual basketball season began, C attended practice sessions which he stated lasted $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 hours per day. This routine often held for week ends also, especially during the season when the team traveled to out-of-town games. C was often so fatigued from the rigors of the practice that he fell asleep immediately after the evening meal.

Another incapacitating result of C's participation in basketball was the feeling that the circumstances for development and training in the game were not as adequate here as might be. This sense of frustration reinforced his generally apathetic attitude toward the university. In addition, his disappointment with the local basketball situation led him to become preoccupied with thoughts of enrolling at another college where basketball is more prominent and more strongly emphasized. C felt he might be able to make a better arrangement for himself at this other college; i.e., he thought he would get a more substantial scholarship and have less academic work. In general, C's preoccupation with leaving the university limited the sense of urgency which his impending academic failure might otherwise have mobilized.

A further difficulty was a part-time job with the university. This work, such as cleaning up the ice rink late in the evening, was needed for support, but represented a drain on time and energy, particularly in the light of the requirements of his athletic and academic commitments.

In view of the presence of the previously described failure-inducing factors, it is not surprising to find that C found himself on an academic warning list five weeks after the semester began. Thereafter, C continued his steady downward spiral toward failure.

We had a series of 12 weekly interviews with C. He never missed any of our appointments and was always on time. The interviews were terminated by mutual agreement shortly before the end of the semester.

C seemed to derive some benefit from our interviews. Progress was made largely in terms of a clarification of his goals and the steps required to implement them. He came to see that the entire academic side of his college life represented a means to his athletic ends. Of course, his fondness for his studies did not increase, but he began to work more effectively after he realized that in order to fulfill his basketball aspirations, he would have to meet the minimal academic requirements. As a result, he became more adjusted to his situation. One symptom of this adjustment was his decision to remain at the university.

At the time we terminated our contacts, C expressed confidence in his ability to improve his academic standing by performing well on the imminent final examinations. This confidence was not entirely unwarranted as his average did improve and he was granted permission to continue at the university.

In March 1953, upon our suggestion, C returned for a follow-up interview. He appeared somewhat heavier and more robust, having gained about 15 pounds. Emotionally, he appeared more poised and confident. He spoke freely about himself and his situation. Regarding his final grades at the end of his third semester, C reported that his record was slightly above minimum requirements. He was still officially on academic probation at the beginning of his sophomore year, but had been given special permission to engage in varsity basketball. Thus, C was able to continue his basketball career which, he reaffirmed, was still his sole motive for attendance at the university. As to his ultimate vocational goal, C was more certain than before that he would wind up in some business enterprise together with his father and older brother.

Although he did not make an outstanding showing on the varsity basketball team, he feels much better about this sphere of activity, particularly since his present coach, whom he regards very highly, is from his home state and advocates the style of play with which C is most familiar and adept. All in all, C seems to have settled down to a rather stable pattern of

adjustment, which the fact that he had no outside job during his sophomore year seems to have facilitated.

Epitomizing, we have here a boy conditioned in a rather special and limited milieu, whose entire emotional life and motivation centered about basketball, with no appreciation of educational values as such, or genuine academic interest. Furthermore, he had no clearly stated vocational goal which would involve college preparation. On entrance, he had been allowed to carry a decidedly heavy academic program in addition to a very demanding extracurricular load—his basketball project and a part-time job. Poorly prepared as to study habits, from the outset he indulged in various escapist activities, a tendency reinforced by the anti-intellectual values of his athletic associates. With this beginning and the very little time given to study, he soon fell behind academically. As the weeks proceeded, C felt increased dissatisfaction and frustration respecting his athletic situation. Adding to the discomfort already present were the necessity for spreading himself very thin and the fatigue incident particularly to his participation in athletics. Thus, without constructive clarification of his total operative situation, things led by the end of the semester to the inevitable outcome of failure, in spite of certain very positive qualities such as high intellectual ability, emotional stability, and capacity for maintained application to accepted goals.

Case D. D has reddish hair and is of tall, athletic build. He presents a "wholesome," well-scrubbed appearance. He was very abashed and inhibited during our first interview. Showing many signs of tension, D blushed frequently, squirmed in his chair, blocked in his speech, and kept his eyes averted a great deal of the time.

In spite of his discomfort and difficulty in communication, it was apparent that D was trying his best to cooperate with us. In fact he acknowledged, shortly before the end of this first interview, that he had been greatly troubled about his situation and had hoped for the opportunity to get some help in dealing with his problems. He added that he would be pleased to do whatever he could to facilitate our study.

D was enrolled in the premedical program. His final grades for the 17 credit hours of course work which he took during his first semester were: English, C; Chemistry, D; Zoology, D; French, C; Military Science, C. In addition to his formal course work, D was playing the trumpet in the university marching band.

In high school D had very good grades. He consistently earned A's and B's. He had only four C's and no D's or E's, and graduated tenth from the top in a class numbering 48. As compared to other Michigan freshmen, however, D was distinctly at an intellectual disadvantage. His total ACE score was at the 29th percentile for entering freshmen.

D reported that he never had to work hard for his high school grades. The competition in his small school was negligible. Most of his classmates were not interested in extending their education beyond high school. Thus, they were not too strongly motivated to study or specially to apply themselves academically. D, by contrast, had always been oriented toward college and was pressed by his parents, if not himself, to do the work necessary to make a good showing.

D was very prominent in the extracurricular activities of his high school. Again, he attributes his prominence in these activities largely to the urging of his parents. Since he was the son of the town's outstanding and most civic-minded physician, his name carried an aura of great prestige. Because of this, his efforts to gain status within the school were enhanced by his father's reputation. D participated, at various times, in the following activities: football, basketball, band, student council, dramatics and class office. In high school, then, D was in the favored position of the "big frog in a little pond."

D is the oldest of three children. He has two sisters aged 17 and 11. D's relations with them have been cold and distant.

D's parents, both college graduates, met while students at the same school. His mother was employed as a social worker for six years prior to her marriage. During this period, D's father was getting his medical training. When he received his medical degree, D's parents married and his mother gave up her position and has not resumed employment since that time.

D was born about two years after the marriage. For two years preceding and four years after D's birth, his father practiced medicine in a number of localities in the Middle West, with the family finally settling in their present home in a rural community about fifteen years ago. Subsequently, his father prospered both financially and socially. He became very active in the affairs of his community and soon gained the admiration and respect of his fellow townsmen. D's mother also participated in many civic activities. However, her influence is by no means as weighty and extensive as that of her husband.

Although both of D's parents have been strict in their dealings with him, it appears that his father's vigilance has been more demanding, harsh and impersonal. He always wanted D to be a professional of some kind, especially a physician. As a result, he tried to instill in D what he felt were the attitudes and habits necessary for professional success. It is important to note that D's vocational interests, as measured by the Kuder, in no way supported the goal of medicine which he avowed for his father's sake. Instead, his high scores on the Kuder were in the areas of musical and clerical interest.

In general, D's father emphasized the virtues of self-control and self-denial. He insisted that D set up a time schedule which covered all of his daily activities. He was especially careful to see that ample time was set

aside for study. Furthermore, he insisted that D adhere religiously to this schedule. He would permit no exceptions or deviations. Whenever D attempted to relax or "ease up," his father would invariably scold him, and if pressed, would threaten him with a variety of punishments.

In the light of the rigid structuring of his home life, it is not surprising to learn that D's social life was minimal and superficial. This was true in spite of his extensive extracurricular activities in high school. His father approved of these formalized activities but frowned upon the more spontaneous, informal relationships which D tried to develop outside of school. In short, D's father was exceedingly utilitarian in his values. He felt that school activities were a practical means to an end, since they helped in one's advancement, while more personal relationships were a waste of time.

Because of his father's strictness, D's developmental years were full of frustration and dissatisfaction. While his mother was a bit less exacting, she offered D no real solace, warmth or affection, and hence was no emotional counterweight to the model set by his father.

As a result of this prolonged domination, D developed a "flattened," cowed appearance. He became a basically insecure, shy, passive, sensitive and retiring individual. D never rebelled outwardly and, in fact, grew exceedingly inhibited about expressing any of his true feelings toward others. As a result of his chronically suppressed and regressed feelings, he appeared to be under a high level of tension. D's pattern of inhibition is further reinforced by his very strict religious views and conditioning.

Physically no significant deviation was observed in D's case, although there is a history of asthma and hay fever, with some present tendency. "Sick headaches" are reported for one parent. D further indicates that as a child and until about ten he had been rather "sickly," having been subject to "bronchitis, sinus trouble, and colds."

When D's background and make-up are viewed against the situation which confronted him at the university, it is easy to see that his chances for academic success were minimal.

Even before he attended his first class, D's schedule was loaded with imminent stress. He registered with a program of 17 credits, including two laboratory courses. This heavy program was certainly not indicated by D's relatively inferior ACE scores. Even if he had been a much brighter student, D would have been unduly penalized by the burden of two laboratory courses.

In addition to carrying a very heavy course load, D participated in the marching band, the considerable demands of which have been described in Case A. Although the band was D's only extracurricular activity, it consumed precious study time which, in view of his emotional blocks and intellectual limitations, he could scarcely afford to miss.

As the semester progressed, several additional stressful factors came into play. D was assigned to a dormitory room which he had to share with two other students. As was true in Case A, D felt his roommates were solidly united against him. As a result, he felt tense in their presence. This tension was an added distraction to his already well-established difficulty in studying.

Another situational difficulty which soon confronted and upset him was the great discrepancy between his position as a university freshman and the status which he enjoyed in high school. Since he had been virtually the most prominent member of his high school, D was severely jolted by the anonymity and impersonality into which he was plunged at the university. This situation evoked his basic sense of inferiority and deprived him of much of his motivation to achieve, since he was no longer certain that his efforts would meet with social rewards and recognition.

The absence of parental supervision also created problems for D. In high school, D's parents played the role of coercive agents who made it impossible for him to avoid the responsibility of study and preparation. Although he had inwardly resented their supervision, he had, in spite of himself, developed a reliance upon it. The lack of parental control, therefore, deprived him of a crutch and also permitted him to follow through more effectively on his resistance against study.

A final factor which helped to incapacitate D in his academic functioning was his abstinence from pleasurable activities. D renounced dating since he felt it necessary to keep his nose to the grindstone at all times. Moreover, his strict religious scruples precluded the enjoyment of even the most superficial contacts with girls. In reality, he wasted a good deal of time in day-dreaming and in superficial conversations with his dormitory acquaintances. Nevertheless, he reported he would have felt too guilty to take time out for the specific purpose of enjoying himself. This renunciation of enjoyment, of course, added to his level of tension.

We have seen how certain aspects of D's make-up clashed with situational factors to engender academic difficulty. However, the strength of D's basic emotional conflicts alone might have precluded successful academic adjustment, even in the absence of specific environmental exigencies. Chief among these conflicts is his unconscious rebellion against paternal domination. This rebellion, seemingly provoked, in large measure, by the freedom of campus residence, took two forms: 1) chronic and extensive hostile fantasies in which he is retaliating against his father; 2) passive resistance in the areas of study and concentration. Both tendencies severely inhibited the full use of his intellectual resources in formal academic work. For example, D would sit for hours with an open book without reading or absorbing a single page. In this way, D not only repudiated the vocational goal (medicine)

which his father set for him, but also the means (studying) of achieving it.

As an outgrowth of the poor relationships with his parents, D developed a lack of confidence in his ability to attain any vitally important objective, including that of his vocational goal. Because of the way his parents treated him, D internalized a good deal of self-disparagement. When faced with difficulties inherent in his course work, he quickly became discouraged and disheartened. Thus, having gotten behind early in the semester, and benighted with respect to the complex of dynamics by which he was beset, D could draw upon no solid emotional or intellectual resources within himself to stem his steady drift toward ultimate failure.

D was seen for a total of 12 interviews. Our contacts were terminated by mutual agreement shortly before the end of the semester. We both felt that considerable progress had been made in the areas covered by our sessions. He expressed himself as very grateful for the help which he felt he had received, and his attitude toward himself and his future seemed distinctly more optimistic. However, the way was left open for D to return for further help if he felt that such help was necessary in the future.

The remedial aspect of our interviews centered about the student's interpersonal conflicts with his parents, especially his father. We uncovered the fact that he had stored up a great deal of hostility for his father. Moreover, we concluded that since he did not feel strong enough to express this hostility in an overt, straightforward manner, he developed an unconscious, indirect way of striking back. This devious channel of retaliation was centered in the academic area. By not studying, by refusing to concentrate when studying, and by being generally apathetic in terms of scholastic strivings, D was unconsciously trying to hurt his father by frustrating the latter's well-laid plans. This, essentially, was the core of the emotional insight which D acquired during our sessions. He was also able to perceive some of the variations on this major emotional theme. For example, he could see that his fear of rejection was responsible for his reluctance to express himself more openly to his father and to parental surrogates like ourselves.

The interviews seemed to help D acquire a more realistic picture of himself. By virtue of his eminence in high school, D developed a rather distorted notion of his own basic capacities. For example, when asked how he compared in ability with other Michigan students, he unhesitatingly replied that he was well above the average. The truth, however, as indicated by his aptitude scores, is that he is considerably *below* the average here. When this fact was first brought to his attention, he was quite incredulous. However, he soon came to realize that his high school world was a narrow one indeed, as compared to life on a university campus.

Insofar as they were woven into the fabric of his emotional conflict, D's

study habits were discussed and analyzed. We also explored briefly his social adjustment on campus and methods for increasing his participation in this area.

As a result of our interviews, D appeared to develop an increased amount of insight into and control over his emotional conflicts. In the main, he came to see that his academic blocks and difficulties largely represented a symbolic means of retaliating against parental domination. This insight helped to diminish his emotional resistance against study. Moreover, he began to express a desire to develop some of his own interests and inclinations.

At the end of his second semester, D showed a slight improvement in his academic performance. As a result of these grades, D was permitted to register for his sophomore year in the fall of 1952. However, he continued on a probationary status since his grades were not sufficient to make up for his original academic deficiency.

In March 1953, at our suggestion, D came to see us again. He reported that he was still on probation since his grades for the fall semester, 1952, were not high enough to make up for his previous deficiency. Moreover, he had dropped medicine as a vocational goal. Instead, he had changed to business administration which, he hoped, might still lead to some sort of professional career. On this score, he was still being very much influenced by his father who cautioned him against any sort of work which would involve his employment by others. Above all, the father stressed the virtues of independence and self-sufficiency. Finally, D had joined a social fraternity and was much more active in the whole area of interpersonal relations.

In general, D seemed much more relaxed in spite of the fact that his academic status was by no means secure. He reported that he was enjoying life more fully because of his social contacts and because he no longer felt such a great need to fulfill his parents', especially his father's, expectations.

In spite of his increased sense of well-being, D's academic performance for the fourth semester did not show significant improvement. Realizing the scholastic situation was not improving sufficiently, he came to see us just before the semester ended. He felt he might be asked to withdraw from the university, which incidentally turned out to be the case, and wished help in planning for the future. In this connection, he was considering two possibilities, military service or transfer to another college, of which he seemed inclined to favor the latter. As to his continued poor showing, D felt that while he had been able to discard the specific educational aspirations (medicine) of his father, he had not yet been able to develop positive goals for himself. In short, he had a notion of what he was against, but no strong feeling for what he wanted to affirm.

In reviewing D's case, we have a basically insecure, unaggressive, shy, passive and immature boy whose limited self-confidence was further under-

mined by the discrepancy between his anonymous position on campus and the eminent status which he enjoyed in high school, with its poor conditioning to academic application. Moreover, living away from home seemed to provoke a symbolic rebellion against long-standing parental domination. This rebellion was expressed in the form of resistance against study, especially in those courses directly related to the vocational objective, medicine, which his parents had imposed upon him, but which he inwardly repudiated. Since D's intellectual resources were low in comparison with other Michigan freshmen and not buttressed by a firmly rooted set of self-imposed work habits or by an appreciation for educational activities and values per se, his neglect of study soon had a negative effect upon his academic performance. Thus, a very demanding program, including two laboratory courses, led to immediate difficulties. As the semester continued, D's participation in the university marching band added significantly to the burdens of his course work. Interpersonal tensions with his roommates also contributed to his academic ineffectiveness because he found it virtually impossible to work in their presence. Finally, D's abstinence from pleasurable activities served to enhance his steady drift toward failure since it afforded him no relief from the accumulating stress.

Case E. E is average in height and weight. He has dark hair and a somewhat swarthy complexion. In our first interview, E was a study in bland distrust. He wore a constant but humorless smile that often resembled a smirk. When questioned, he responded grudgingly and in a perfunctory manner. Although he agreed to cooperate with us, it was obvious that his resistance to genuine cooperation was intense. In fact, he was moved to voice skepticism in our project and in the possibility of deriving any help from our interviews. E felt certain his failure was entirely attributable to his lack of application. Furthermore, he was convinced he could generate his own resources in order to work more effectively in the future. E's manner, in short, expressed the feeling that he would be doing us a reluctant favor by "going along" with our schedule of interviews.

In spite of E's reluctance, the interviews were quite informative and, together with other available data, yielded the following pattern of failure. Before presenting this pattern, we should note that his actual record for the 17 course credits which he took during his first semester in the premedical program was: English, C; Chemistry, D; History, B; German, E; and Military Science, C.

In general, E had an excellent scholastic record in high school. His grades were largely A's and B's. He had only three C's and one D. At graduation, he stood sixty-first from the top in a class numbering 530. He participated in the French Club and was a member of the golf team.

E describes his high school years as routine and uneventful. Apparently,

he was not very popular socially and did not derive much gratification from his interpersonal relations with his classmates. He regards his success in golf as the most noteworthy aspect of his high school career.

E is an only child. When he was four years old, his father was killed in an airplane crash. His mother remarried one year later. Her second husband was of the Jewish faith, to which she, originally a Catholic, became converted and in which E was reared. His stepfather, a successful attorney, was very active in church affairs in his community. He was president of the town's synagogue and one of its original founders. E states that his mother was quite faithful in her adherence to Jewish ritual and dietary laws. However, E feels that he and his stepfather are more genuinely involved in the Jewish faith.

E reports, too, that his mother and stepfather were quite strict with him. They insisted upon his keeping regular hours for sleep and study, and E was always punished for any deviation from their standards. He does not feel especially close to either his mother or stepfather. His attitude toward the latter is a combination of respect, fear and awe. While E also tends to distrust his mother, he occasionally feels some affection for her.

In general, E is distant in his attitude toward his other family relations. A noteworthy exception, however, was his strong attachment to his paternal grandfather. There seemed to be a bond of genuine mutual affection between them. E was markedly upset when his grandfather died during E's first semester at the university. He was unable to attend classes regularly or to study consistently for several weeks following his grandfather's death.

E has no memory of his true father. In this regard, his mother has tried to keep from him the details of his father's life and her relationship with him. In fact, it was not until the age of 15 that E, driven to the newspaper files of the public library by curiosity, doubt and longing, discovered how his father died and, to some extent, how he had lived.

E feels that his youth was uneventful and not especially gratifying. As a matter of fact, when portraying his past, E conveys a picture of emotional emptiness and quiet frustration.

Physically, no gross deviation was noted. However, he reports a history of asthma and hay fever, particularly marked during childhood. His mother, too, was subject to these conditions and to "sick headaches." E's blood pressure shows some elevation tendency, fluctuating from 130/90 to 140/80. E reports frequent headaches and a tendency to "colds," two or three having occurred during the first semester; one continued rather severely for about a week, requiring two days in bed. E further reports he had lost some 15 pounds during the final examination period. On the whole, he seemed of definitely highly strung, sensitive type and, from the physical health standpoint, in some degree under par.

E has good intellectual resources. His total ACE score was at the 78th

percentile for Michigan students. He is especially well endowed in the area of quantitative reasoning. On the Kuder, he was high in scientific, artistic, and social service interests. His low scores on the Kuder were in the mechanical, computational and clerical fields. This pattern of interests is certainly in line with his premedical enrollment. When asked about his vocational goals, he disavowed serious interest in any field except medicine.

Having summarized the potentialities which E brought to the university situation, let us now trace the course of his failure.

To begin with, he registered, as indicated, for 17 hours which was more than the required number of credits and represented definitely a heavy load, especially for an entering student.

If E had a more genuine conviction in his stated vocational goal or fewer personality difficulties, his heavy schedule might have been counterbalanced by his substantial intellectual aptitude. Instead, his emotional deficiencies immediately began to interfere with his academic functioning in a variety of ways.

E's depressive, withdrawn personality was, perhaps, his greatest liability. Because E tends to turn his hostile feelings inward toward himself, his usual subjective mood is one of deep-seated boredom and apathy. These feelings markedly reduce his general level of activity and effectiveness. With respect to academic pursuits, his mood pattern precluded consistent study or concentration. In the one or two hours a day which he allotted for course work preparation, E would dip from book to book in a random, unorganized, bemused manner. Moreover, inner fantasies, especially of a sexual nature or expressive of hostility to authority figures, or others threatening closeness, would constantly intrude upon him when he tried to focus his attention upon work at hand.

As might be anticipated in this mental state, E derived very little real enjoyment or gratification in his daily activities. In spite of the fact that he joined a social fraternity and spent a good deal of time trying to please his fraternity brothers in an effort to gain their acceptance, E tended to fear and distrust others. He was constantly on the defensive, and although he developed some shallow techniques of ingratiating, E never permitted himself to develop close interpersonal relations. Consequently, his interpersonal experiences were emotionally hollow. This was especially true of his relationships with girls. While he felt compelled by social convention to go out with girls, his dates were drab and joyless affairs. As a result of the barrenness of his social life, E's incentive to work and produce was further diminished.

We have just seen how E's depressive, in-turned pattern tended adversely to affect his functioning on campus during his first semester. Yet this depressive pattern is, in itself, largely symptomatic of a fundamental emotional conflict, namely, E's deeply unconscious rebellion against his mother and stepfather. Inwardly, E has always resented his mother for marrying his

stepfather. On the other hand, E fears and hates his stepfather because the latter replaced him as the center of his mother's attention. Moreover, E's stepfather has treated him in a punitive and domineering manner. Because of his fear of total rejection, E has been reluctant openly to express his hostile feelings toward his parents. Instead, as we have emphasized, he tended to turn such hostile feelings against himself. Nevertheless, on an unconscious level, E attempts to retaliate against his parents by shirking on tasks which they impose upon him. Thus, in not coping adequately with his academic responsibilities, E blocks the fulfillment of the expectations which his parents have of him.

A clear example of E's tendency to frustrate the vicarious aspirations of his parents is pointed up by E's lack of genuine conviction in his stated vocational goal. E's stepfather had always wanted him to be a physician. Because of his fear of alienating his father, E accepted medicine as a vocational goal. E even went to the extent of parroting interest in the field and answering questions (including interest profiles) in such a way as to avoid the expression of resistance toward and conflict about medicine. Inwardly, however, he had never ceased to repudiate his father's aspirations, including the one in question.

We have seen how E's emotional make-up, together with situational factors, including his somewhat lowered physical tone and particularly the heavy course load, conspired to promote his academic failure. One additional factor is worthy of mention. This concerns the death of E's paternal grandfather, an event which occurred toward the middle of the first semester. E had been very devoted to this man and his death was a shocking blow. Consequently, E not only lost a period of classwork, but also was made more personally insecure. This insecurity, in turn, had a negative effect upon E's scholastic functioning.

E took it upon himself to terminate our contacts after nine interviews. We had not discussed termination, and in the ninth session he gave no indication that he would not return.

His reactions in the interview situation were uniformly apathetic and defensive. He maintained the feeling tone which he revealed in the initial interview situation. We were able to glean a certain amount of factual data from him. This information was usually given grudgingly and without elaboration. As to his feelings, we were usually in the position of making inferences about them. Occasionally, when pushed at point-blank range, he would briefly reveal his actual feelings. This was especially true in connection with his mother, stepfather and grandfather. His more habitual reaction, however, was to express a sort of neutrality in regard to his emotional reactions. His usual posture was one of passivity and subdued defiance. He never volunteered information spontaneously.

The remedial aspects of our interviews were concerned with a discussion

of his current resources and pressures. We talked about his vocational interests in relation to his educational objectives and intellectual potentials. We discussed study habits somewhat, especially in regard to his fraternity activities and obligations. Aside from these issues, we tried to help him to break through his apathy which, far from being restricted to our sessions, appeared to undermine all of his activities. However, his departure from the interview situation made it impossible to bring any such change to fruition.

At the time of his last interview, E reported that he was satisfied with the way his academic work was progressing. He felt he would pass his second semester courses and be able to continue at the university. Actually, his final grades for the second semester courses were of minimally passing level, but he was requested to withdraw from the university because his over-all average was still below the required minimum. However, on appeal, E was permitted to enroll for the summer session. His grades for the summer of 1952 were also barely passing. E then registered for his sophomore year, and a check on his standing for the fall semester, 1952, revealed no improvement.

In March 1953, at our suggestion, E made a follow-up visit to our office. Physically, he seemed in better tone than previously, but psychologically, his situation appeared unchanged. He was still very apathetic and floundering. He reported being in academic difficulty as a result of poor classroom attendance and reluctance to study. It is interesting to note that he had changed his educational objective. When asked, he stated that after the end of his summer session, he decided to give up medicine in favor of psychology. He remarked that his father did not react violently to this decision since it had become obvious that E was unable to cope successfully with the premedical courses. However, in spite of what would appear to be a liberation from goals set for him by his father, E continued to manifest extreme difficulty in mustering up enough motivation to meet his academic commitments.

E apparently had done a good deal of introspection regarding his emotional difficulties. Yet he took no steps to secure help in their amelioration. He noted that during the interviews we had conducted for the purposes of the study, he had been in no frame of mind to cooperate genuinely, or to confide in us about his innermost feelings. He wondered whether he might now take the opportunity to obtain our aid in dealing with his current problems. We assured him that we would be pleased to try to help him. However, in keeping with his former tendency, he failed to appear for appointments which were arranged at his initiative and convenience. He was not seen again by us.

Our impression was that E was skating very close to the brink of academic, as well as psychological, disaster. Assuming that he fails to pass his courses, as he most probably will do in the absence of outside assistance, he is faced

with the possibilities of separation from the university and induction into the military service. Aside from the strain such adjustment would represent, it would lead to further reduction of his already impaired sense of personal worth, and also to a reinforcement of his experiences of rejection. Further emotional withdrawal would be likely to follow. Our pessimism concerning E's future seems to have been well founded. At the end of the semester, E was dropped from the university for academic reasons—with recourse, some time later, to intensive psychiatric attention.

In retrospect, we find E to be a decidedly vulnerable personality, in some degree of schizoid quality, somewhat reduced in tone physically especially his first semester, and with deep-lying hostility toward his mother and stepfather. This hostility was manifested in resistance against academic achievement and inward repudiation of vocational goals which his parents imposed upon him. This sort of emotional predisposition, together with a lack of mature interest in academic course work, resulted in poor study habits. Moreover, in spite of his superior intellectual resources, E found it difficult to concentrate since he was constantly preoccupied by fantasies of hostile or sexual content. E's inability to handle his assignments quickly resulted in difficulty in meeting the demands of his decidedly heavy course load. Although apprised of his failure early in the semester, he was too ridden by apathy and depression to rally. His depressed, futilistic mood was deepened by the death of his paternal grandfather, an event which occurred toward the middle of the first semester. E had been very close to his grandfather and had relied upon him for a good deal of emotional support. As a result of his personality pattern, E was not able to find any real pleasure in his social or recreational activities. Hence, his incapacitating moods never abated during the semester. Although he was in a social fraternity and did develop some superficial techniques of ingratiation, his fraternity participation actually contributed to his failure as the semester progressed because of the increasing demands which were made upon his time by fraternity responsibilities.

DISCUSSION

Despite the small size of our sample, a surprisingly wide gamut of failure-inducing factors was brought to view—physical, mental, social, economic; intrinsic and extrinsic; underlying and immediate; and in varying constellations. Where a given factor was present in two or more cases, its impact appeared to vary from case to case, depending upon its own weight and its relationship to other elements in the total individual configuration. Further, it seems within broad limits that no single factor can be taken to be absolute in itself relative to failure potential. All situations, as intimated, were found to be multifactorial, i.e., living fields of force, with the relative strengths of many of the factors tending to shift with the passage of time. It was also

found that intercurrent events, such as the death of a relative, depending on the other factors and circumstances involved, may well be of critical moment. In addition, from the foregoing, certain personal and situational determinants of the failure process seem to stand out in terms of both incidence and relevance. In this connection, while we are in no position validly to generalize from this limited and statistically uncontrolled exploratory study, some discussion of these determinants may prove helpful for understanding and the pointing up of further research.

Among the personal vulnerabilities which the students carried into the university situation, one of the most telling factors appears to be a lack of adequate motivation to engage in academic pursuits. Not one of our students had any real love of knowledge or respect for the products of scholarship. Nor did their cultural backgrounds imbue them with the value of intellectual growth and self-actualization. On the contrary, in every case, higher education was viewed in narrow, utilitarian terms—as a means of achieving vocational goals. Moreover, these vocational goals were, in themselves, largely founded on the sands of social prestige or financial security rather than on the granite of solid desire to perform the activities demanded by the particular vocation. Thus, our five subjects were characterized by a definite shallowness of motivation for the work they were expected to do at the university, and that which they would be called upon to do if they fulfilled their educational objectives. This lack of motivation appropriate to a university situation made it difficult for them to tolerate the tensions and demands which are an integral part of sustained intellectual effort.

In addition to their motivational deficiencies, our five students were, in differing degrees, handicapped by various personality elements, and disturbed psychodynamics decidedly significant to the failure process. Outstanding was the quality of immaturity—in operation, attitude and outlook. As a group, our students were still quite dependent upon their parents and parental surrogates for guidance, support, direction and control. In spite of the rebelliousness against parental authority which characterized the majority of our subjects, all five of them seemed to be relatively incapable of relying effectively upon their own emotional and intellectual resources in coping with the stresses and ambiguities which faced them at the university. Moreover, this rebelliousness against the parents, even where held in check while at home during the high school years, showed a tendency under the freedom of campus residence to express itself symbolically by resistance to study.

Finally, owing to a certain lack of effective focus with respect to intellectual challenge and participation and to educational values per se, in the preuniversity period, among other things, none of the five students gave

evidence of adequate work habits and attitudes relative to assignments at the university level.

Regarding outstanding situational determinants of the failure process as it occurred in our subjects, four of the five students appear to have been adversely affected by the demands of their extracurricular activities. Moreover, three of these four were also burdened by course loads in excess of normal requirements, while two of the five seemed definitely troubled by their housing conditions.

On the practical side, in the first place, several implications present themselves with respect to the evaluation of applicants for admission. While these aspects are not new to educators, they are in this study thrown into high relief and emphasize the importance of very careful, realistic examination and special attention as to the nature and sources of admission data. Thus, we have the matter of physical and mental health, maturity, intelligence, and motivation for higher education. Also to be carefully assessed would be the quality of the applicant's preuniversity preparation, actual academic adaptation and educational interest, as well as adaptation to the secondary school experience extra-academically and as a social context. The foregoing, patently, would be of special significance where scholarship awards were in question.

Following admission, a comprehensive and sufficiently implemented program of orientation would certainly seem indicated, and should afford a thorough evaluation of the individual situation, with follow-up, taking into account among others such factors as the student's physical, mental and emotional state, academic load, vocational choice, extracurricular activities, finances, outside work, and rooming arrangements. Included in the above, of course, should be referral to related agencies for special aspects, as for example, health, both physical and mental. This type of orientation, flexible and adapted to the individual, should be of real assistance to the student in getting off to a good start, the lack of which, we have seen, seems to be a key factor in the failure process. Of course, ideally and for larger schools, such an approach in any full sense would be difficult and expensive. However, the practical implications cannot be denied.

With reference to actual failure, even of moderate degree, it is interesting that only one of our cases finally achieved a passing average. It would seem, from our Michigan series, that for freshmen who fail to attain the minimum required academic level even by eight honor points, the outlook is not good. Our findings on this point, incidentally, are in keeping with the results of a recent Dean's Office survey.

As things are, therefore, initial failure need not be catastrophic or of major proportions to be meaningful prognostically. Consequently, students

showing definite signs of failure should be carefully evaluated with respect to the actual factors involved before the granting of permission to continue in attendance. Further, if such permission is granted, effort should be made to provide the student with the ongoing help and attention appropriate to his particular needs and circumstances. Relative to this category of attention, as well as that at entrance, the importance for the personnel involved of adequate orientation respecting human dynamics as well as academic aspects, presents itself for very serious consideration.

As to the results remedially considered, begging the question of our competence and what the facts actually made accomplishable, decidedly a conjectural point, it should be realized that the objective of this study was primarily exploratory, with the number of contacts possible limited, ideally speaking, even for this purpose. Also, in spite of explanations, contact in these cases was to some extent special and official with a certain inferential quality of obligation rather than representing customary routine for such academic contingencies. In addition, of course, our students had already failed, rendering the remedial problem more difficult and complicated than it might have been earlier, when academic troubles first began and before the semester had ended. Notwithstanding these limitations, however, two students at least were really positively motivated toward the enterprise and seemed to derive significant benefit from their participation in the study.

Finally, we wish to underscore the value of the inductive approach to the failure process, perhaps the most important yield of this study. By approaching the living, reacting student in this way, it appears possible to uncover a variety of elements and patterns which might escape notice if a purely deductive, static or particulate design is followed. That is, with other approaches, in order to understand and go forward with such a problem, a sufficient quantum of direct, holistic experience with the failure process as such, on an individual basis, obviously is primary and fundamental. Further explorations of this type with other student populations in a variety of educational settings may well help to crystallize our concepts, yield important new facts, establish the bases for productive hypotheses, and derive meaningful guides for applied work.