

INVESTIGATING PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS AND ACADEMIC  
OUTCOMES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

THESIS

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The transition to college is a milestone event for many young adults. Wrought with new challenges such as increased independence, new social settings, demanding workloads, challenging academics, and overall unfamiliarity, navigating this new terrain is not an easy task. Sadly, recent figures suggest that only 55 percent of first year college students enrolled in any given institution are likely to obtain a degree from that institution within six years (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004). When a student leaves a university without a degree, numerous entities are adversely affected. The student, and/or student's family, receives no return on the financial investments made toward the college education, and the student's future earning potential declines dramatically (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1999). In addition, the university suffers decreased revenues due to loss of future tuition and alumni fees, and society overall pays a price as educated citizens are needed to ensure continued social, political, and economic development of the country.

With so much at stake, it is imperative for all involved parties to discover ways in which they can assist students in their journey towards degree attainment. To date, numerous academic, non-academic, and institutional factors have been identified as contributing to student achievement in the college years. For example, student competencies (Lotkowski et al., 2004), family socioeconomic status (Blecher, 2006;

Lotkowski et al.; Strage, 2000), overall social integration and support (Blecher; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Lotkowski et al.; Strage), and faculty availability (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Strage) have all been connected to academic achievement and degree acquisition. While universities are increasingly working to provide informed faculty, academic advisors, university counseling services, and opportunities for social interactions among students (Kuo, Hagie, & Miller, 2004), those unaccustomed to utilizing such resources might fail to access these types of support and fall between the cracks. However, established support relationships, such as the parent-child relationship, could act as buffer against student difficulties during this challenging time (Kuo et al.).

While alternate support networks might be available to college students during their academic career, a recent investigation of college student attachment relationships indicated that parent and peer attachment relationships served different needs for students (Klohnen, Weller, Luo, & Choe, 2005). In addition, separate findings revealed college students accessed support from family members more than college advisors and counselors (Kuo et al., 2004). Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, only the parent-child relationship will be evaluated. Peer, institutional, and personal influences on academic success, although important, are beyond the scope of this investigation.

The support provided by parents is imperative during this time of college student development, as it might guide the student through difficult tasks and promote academic achievement. In fact, previous research has extensively highlighted the positive relationship between parental involvement and beneficial academic outcomes for children and adolescents (Fan, 2001; Fass & Tubman; Nord & West; Patrikakou, 2004; Richaud De Minzi, 2006). However, little is known about the influences the parent-adult child



relationship might have on college students' academic achievements. Furthermore, even less is known about the ways in which patterns of parental involvement evolve throughout the college students' undergraduate education, and how those changes consequently influence the student.

Additional research is therefore needed to investigate how the parent-adult child relationship influences college students' academic achievement, as well as what happens to this relationship throughout the students' undergraduate education. Moreover, an investigation into college students' perceptions of a beneficial parent-adult child bond is essential to provide insight into an evolving relationship at a time of increased student autonomy, assertion of independence, and separation from parents. This research will examine the unique role the parent-child attachment relationship plays in the lives of college students and provide suggestions for how students, parents, and institutions can effectively use this valuable source of support.

### Theoretical Framework

Given past research, the idea that the parent-adult child relationship is influential in an offspring's academic functioning can best be viewed through the lens of attachment theory. According to Bowlby (1969, 1988) and Ainsworth (1973, 1991), the attachment relationship between a child and caregiver is learned during infancy and continues throughout the child's lifetime. Secure attachments are established through the parents' ability to meet a child's physical, emotional, and social needs (Davila & Levy, 2006; Haight et al., 2003).

The establishment of a secure attachment relationship between the parent and the child has been shown to produce positive outcomes for the child such as healthy

psychological, social, and cognitive functioning (Haight et al., 2003; Richaud De Minzi, 2006). This foundation extends beyond childhood, however, as it sets the framework by which the offspring interacts with his or her world throughout the lifespan. According to Bowlby (1988), “no concept within the attachment framework is more central to developmental psychiatry than that of the secure base” (p.3). Healthy attachment affords the child emotional security so that he or she can ultimately become an autonomous individual (Goldhaber, 2000).

Therefore, the attachment relationship fosters independence grounded by supportive nurturing relationships with the parents. Overall, the attachment model requires both connectedness and independence (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Through a secure parent-child relationship, parents have the ability to assist the child in problem solving while encouraging self-sufficiency. This allows the parent to remain a “secure base” and source of support in the child’s life, while promoting autonomous exploration.

Adult parent-child attachment relationships portray similar attributes as the preceding child attachment relationships, as the way in which a parent treats the child generally persists unchanged (Bowlby, 1988). This attachment relationship is crucial in college when the adult child has the ability to fully experience autonomy, yet might encounter unfamiliar or overwhelming times where support and guidance are needed. Findings have indicated the closeness of the adult attachment relationship has been linked to increases in adult children’s level of self-esteem (Amato, 1994; Kenny & Sirin, 2006), happiness (Amato), life satisfaction (Amato; Love & Murdock, 2004), and overall well-being (Love & Murdock). Furthermore, research has revealed that the attachment relationship between the mother and adult child has a more predictive influence on the

adult child's psychological functioning and well-being than peer relationships (Klohnen et al., 2005), supporting the need to focus an investigation on the parent-child relationship's influence on college student functioning.

Therefore, based on previous research, attachment theory is a relevant framework to explore the parent-child relationship and its influence on student functioning during the college years. A secure parent-adult child attachment relationship should provide students with the tools necessary to transition to college, such as self-confidence, motivation, the ability to seek out support, and a willingness to take on new challenges. An attachment theorist would postulate that secure parent-child attachment relationships influence achievement outcomes across all levels of functioning throughout the lifespan. The parent-child relationship would ideally set the foundation for a support structure that encourages independence, self-reliance, competence, and trust in the self and others. An attachment theorist would hypothesize these attributes would also apply to the college setting, and furthermore, should directly influence college student adjustment and academic achievement.

### Problem Statement

The primary goal of all colleges should not be fulfilled until students leave those institutions with degrees. To effectively meet this goal, all involved parties must decipher how to best support college students throughout their undergraduate education. Unfortunately, parents, students, and institutions are receiving mixed-messages about the importance of parental involvement at a time of increased student challenges and increased autonomy. This research will utilize quantitative data and individual interviews

to gain a thorough understanding of the parent-young adult relationship during this unique time as well as its influence on student outcomes.

Also, as studies have firmly characterized features of secure attachment relationships between parents and young children, this relationship could appear different to college students. Researchers have stressed the need for a more consistent operational definition of parental involvement (Fan, 2001), as well as the importance of investigating multiple facets of involvement (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). A thorough investigation into students' perceptions of beneficial parental involvement would add to the body of literature on actual dimensions of involvement during the college years. Parents and students can use these results as a guide to negotiate beneficial levels of involvement during the college experience. In addition, institutions of higher education could use the information to advise and encourage incoming students and their parents to maintain appropriate forms of parental involvement early in the educational process.

Much of the past research on college students has been a snapshot of the college experience at a given time. Researchers have stated a larger, more diverse sample is in order, as well as an investigation of trends in these relationships and how they affect students over time (Hong & Ho, 2005; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). This three-year investigation, including a diverse sample of college students, will add to the understanding of changes to parent-college student experiences over time.

### Research Questions

*Research Question 1:* What is the connection between the parent-adult child attachment relationship and college student academic achievement? How is it expressed

in terms of the three PAQ sub-scales (quality of the relationship, parents facilitating independence, and parental support)?

*Research Question 2:* What is the relationship between perceived parental expectations and college student academic achievement?

*Research Question 3:* How do parental relationship factors explain academic achievement? Do they directly explain academic achievement or does adjustment mediate the relationship between parental factors and achievement?

*Research Question 4:* How does the attachment relationship change throughout the undergraduate education? How do these changes relate to student academic achievement?

*Research Question 5:* How do college students qualitatively define beneficial parental involvement in the college years?

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This study will focus on the influence the parent-child attachment relationship and parental expectations have on college students' adjustment and academic functioning. As such, crucial subject matter relating to these variables will be explored. Specifically, the following literature review will discuss the parent-child relationship throughout the lifespan, the influence of parental involvement and parental expectations on children, support through transitional periods, and the uniqueness of the college environment for parents and students.

#### **Defining Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement can be defined in numerous ways. Specifically, operational definitions have included active participation in home and school activities (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hong & Ho, 2005), allocation of parental resources (Grolnick & Slowiaczek), and parental expectations and attitudes regarding education (Hong & Ho). Overwhelmingly, previous research has investigated the influence of parental involvement and expectations on school aged and adolescent children's academic achievement and overall well-being. Findings undeniably support the idea that children and adolescents who have involved parents experience higher levels of academic success and beneficial social and emotional developmental outcomes (Amato, 1994; Fass & Tubman, 2002; Nord & West, 2001; Patrikakou, 2004; Richaud De Minzi, 2006).

Unfortunately, studies have also shown that as children grow older, parents become less involved with their academic affairs (Liu, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 1997). This is a troubling phenomenon due to the fact that entering college students will most likely need guidance from their established support structures to assist them through this transitional period, and to sustain them through their undergraduate education. Continued guidance from parents in the form of maintaining involvement and providing support (Hong & Ho, 2005; Patrikakou, 1997; Wong, Wiest, & Cusick, 2002), fostering independence (Strage, 2000; Wong et al., 2002), and declaring expectations (Fan, 2001; Patrikakou, 1997; Trusty, 2000) has been shown to contribute to students' positive outlook on challenges, their abilities to overcome adversities, and achieve academic success. Parental involvement could therefore be viewed as a valuable resource, contributing to students' navigational success through the undergraduate education, resulting in increased academic achievement.

#### The Foundation of the Parent-Child Relationship

It is widely held that the parent-child relationship sets the framework for a child's development. This attachment bond is established early in infancy and acts a mechanism for the offspring's survival (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1988). Specifically, young children communicate distress to their parents with the expectation that their caregivers will resolve their troubles. Parents who are available and responsive to the needs of their children set a foundation for a secure relationship. Secure children feel confident that their caregivers will assist them in times of need (Ainsworth & Bowlby). It is through the security in this parent-child relationship that children are able to feel safe

in and explore the world around them (Ainsworth & Bowlby; Bowlby; Neswald-McCalip, 2001).

Secure parental relationships promote optimal developmental growth throughout a child's life, as these relationships dictate the child's social, emotional, cognitive, and communicative competencies (Haight, Kagle, & Black, 2003; Neswald-McCalip, 2001; Richaud De Minzi, 2006). During the course of a secure parent-child relationship, parents serve as a permanent resource for their children, and offspring can use their parents as guides to assist them in problem solving throughout life. The foundation of this secure attachment relationship is parental involvement (Duchesne, Ratelle, Larose, & Guay, 2007). As previously stated, infant children form attachment bonds with caregivers who are involved and responsive to their needs (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1988; Haight et al.; Neswald-McCalip).

Continuing beyond infancy, involvement remains a crucial determinate of secure relationships and subsequent child outcomes. For example, individuals who are securely attached to their caregivers maintain positive opinions about exploration and have the ability to seek out help when required (Bowlby, 1988; Neswald-McCalip, 2001). Moreover, through parental involvement and the expression of parental expectations, children are exposed to their parents' beliefs about their competencies and aptitudes. In turn, this influences their motivation, self-esteem, and self-worth during problem solving, and is especially important in times of transition and stress (Davila & Levy, 2006; Kenny & Sirin, 2006).

The parent-child relationship is also rich in history and experience. Securely attached offspring will have a record of trusting and relying on their parents in times of



need (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1988; Neswald-McCalip, 2001). Of great importance is that the secure attachment relationship is one that promotes autonomy, as opposed to dependency (Love & Murdock, 2004). The child is taught to trust the environment in which he or she lives as well as to trust in his or her own competencies to succeed (Ainsworth & Bowlby; Bowlby; Seiffe-Krenke, 2006). This relationship continues to operate as an enduring and influential bond throughout the lifespan of the child (e.g. Ainsworth & Bowlby; Davila & Levy, 2006; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Neswald-McCalip).

While findings support the powerful influence the attachment relationship has on the life of a securely attached offspring, an inadequate amount of research has been undertaken to assess the impact the parent-child attachment relationship (specifically the quality of this relationship, parental support, and parental expectations) has on young adults during the transition to college. In addition, little is known about the relationship's influence on academic functioning. Undoubtedly, more research is needed to accurately define ways in which this relationship influences children during this crucial time in their lives.

#### Parental Involvement and Educational Outcomes

In addition to attachment, the relationship between parental involvement and academic functioning of primary and secondary students has been extensively examined (e.g. Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hong & Ho, 2005; Nord & West, 2001; Wong et al., 2002). Research has indicated that parental involvement promotes academic achievement and supports beneficial developmental outcomes for school-aged children (Grolnick & Slowiaczek; Hong & Ho; Nord & West; Wong et al.). Specifically, children whose

parents are involved in their schooling are more likely to remain in school, do better academically, and have fewer behavioral problems than children whose parents are not involved in their schooling (Nord & West, 2001). For example, in an examination of 16,145 first through twelfth graders, Nord and West found that high involvement of fathers increased the likelihood of a student receiving an “A” grade by 42% when compared to students whose fathers had low involvement. High involvement of mothers also increased the likelihood of students receiving an “A” grade by 20% when compared to students with mothers who had low involvement (Nord & West).

Parental involvement has also been indirectly associated with academic success via its influence on student motivation (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hong & Ho, 2005; Wong et al., 2002). In an examination of sixth and ninth grade students, Wong and colleagues found that parental attachment and parental involvement contributed to student motivation and academic success. Additionally, findings acknowledged a positive correlation between students’ preferences for challenging tasks and parental attachment (Wong et al.). This suggests that students’ motivation plays a large role in their willingness to take on challenging tasks and their ability to apply the persistence necessary to achieve academic accomplishments.

Moreover, a separate examination of sixth and eighth graders found that motivation mediated the relationship between the student environment and educational outcomes (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). These deductions reinforced the strong influence children’s beliefs about themselves had on outcomes in the educational setting. Consequently, facilitating interactions that increase levels of student motivation could be one of the best ways to increase student motivation and academic achievement.

Further, parents have the ability to indirectly influence their children's academic achievement through modeling and their expression of cultural norms as well. Findings indicate that parental norms have a positive direct influence on students' academic intentions and persistent behaviors (Bank, Slavings, & Biddle, 1990). For example, Bank and colleagues found that students with parents who were employed in jobs that required a degree were more likely to remain in school than students with parents employed in professions that did not require a degree. This implies environmental factors associated with the parent might influence the ways in which the college student views his or her appropriate role in the surrounding world. Consequently, cultural norms, independent of parental expectations for the child, could have an impact on student behaviors.

The literature supports the idea that parents have the ability to contribute to their children's academic achievement through their involvement. Either through direct supportive interactions, or more indirect means such as the transmission of cultural norms, children are absorbing messages about their role in world and the classroom. A gap exists, however, in our knowledge of how parental involvement influences the academic achievement and motivations of young adults. This investigation will add to the literature on parental involvement and student outcomes by examining college student academic achievements, as well as student perceptions of involvement practices during the college career.

### Parental Expectations and Educational Outcomes

Parental expectations have also been found to influence children's academic achievement, independent of parental involvement. Specifically, parental expectations are a vital component in raising a child's own academic expectations and motivations. When

expressed positively, these valuable ideas of self-efficacy, self-motivation, and attainment levels have been found to consequently elevate a child's academic achievement (Bank, Slavings, & Biddle, 1990; Fan, 2001; Liu, 1998; Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004; Patrikakou, 1997; Trusty, 2000).

Much of the literature on this topic relies upon data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS-88). The NELS-88 longitudinal study consists of approximately 24,500 eighth grade students who were surveyed on all facets of their lives, such as educational, personal, institutional, and familial characteristics (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The questionnaires were distributed to a nationally representative sample in 1988, and follow-up data were collected in 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000. Separate in-depth analyses of the data revealed parental influences shaped children's perceptions of their aptitudes, which indirectly influenced academic achievement (Fan, 2001; Patrikakou, 1997). Moreover, a significant indirect relationship was discovered between parental aspirations for their children and academic success achieved via increased student motivation (Hong & Ho, 2005). In addition, it was found that students' long-term personal academic expectations were positively related to parental expectations (Trusty, 2000).

Research has also suggested that beneficial outcomes of parental expectations were consistent across groups. Specifically, parent and student reports have revealed that parents' aspirations for their children's academic achievement had a positive influence across ethnic group samples, academic subjects, genders, and socioeconomic status groups (Fan, 2001; Liu, 1998). In addition, parental expectations had the ability to serve as an influential form of parental involvement when students reached a level of learning

beyond the aptitudes of the parent (Patrikakou, 2004). Such findings reinforce the powerful influence expectations could have in promoting student success, regardless of preexisting barriers.

Overall, findings suggest parental expectations are positively related to students' academic motivation and expectations, and therefore influence academic achievement (Fan, 2001; Hong & Ho, 2005; Liu, 1998; Patrikakou, 1997). Most of the studies, however, have focused on school-aged children living within the home. More research is needed to investigate the relationship between parental academic expectations and college students' academic achievement. This study will fill this gap through its examination of perceived parental expectations of college students, independent of attachment relationship factors.

#### The Parent-Adult Child Relationship

The attachment relationship between the parent and adult offspring can be viewed as a manifestation of the early attachment relationship (Bowlby, 1988). Although adults have established intimate bonds with people other than their parents by this time, empirical evidence has highlighted the extent to which the parent-adult child bond still affects the parent and the child. For example, recent research has revealed that the parent-child relationship remains a powerful determinant of offspring well-being into adulthood (Amato, 1994; Kenny & Sirin, 2006; Knoester, 2003; Love & Murdock, 2004). Specifically, young adults' closeness to their mothers and fathers has been found to be independently and positively associated with the young adults' life satisfaction (Amato; Love & Murdock), happiness (Amato), and level of self-esteem (Amato; Kenny & Sirin).

Moreover, the closeness of the parent-adult child relationship has also been connected to decreased levels of offspring distress (Amato; Kenny & Sirin).

Additional findings revealed that the adult child's and parents' well-being were associated with one another, suggesting that changes in the psychological well-being of the adult child might have caused changes in the well-being of the parent and vice versa (Knoester, 2003). Contrary to previous findings, however, the quality of the parent-adult child relationship and amount of contact did not affect these relationship trends (Knoester). This suggests the parent-child relationship, regardless of quality, influenced the lives of both the parent and the child. On the other hand, findings have revealed the amount of contact between the parent and adult child was not strongly nor consistently associated with offspring well-being (Amato, 1994; Kenny & Sirin, 2006), necessitating the need for a delineation between parental contact and beneficial involvement patterns in the lives of adults.

For parents of young children, the messages are clear that parental involvement is associated with positive student outcomes across all domains. However, beginning in secondary education, and peaking when the child is college-aged, established parental involvement patterns are affected by increased child independence and separation from the family. Furthermore, parents receive mixed messages about their appropriate role in the lives of their adult children when they are in college (Daniel, Evans, & Scott, 2001; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Renegotiating levels of support, communication, and interactions with adult children are difficult tasks, especially when there are no clear guidelines as to what is most beneficial for the college student.

Overall, parents and students must be careful not to underestimate the powerful influence the attachment relationship has on the lives of adult children. This research will add to the body of literature that explores the adult attachment relationship, and the ways in which it impacts the lives of adult children. In addition, it will investigate this relationship during a transitional period in the adult child's life, at a time that is filled with new challenges yet requires independence from parents.

#### Support Structures and Transitional Periods

Beginning college is considered a major transition period for young adults. For many, the transition includes moving outside of the family home for the first time (Seiffge-Krenke, 2006), the renegotiation of peer networks (Duchesne et al., 2007), increased academic demands (Duchesne et al.), and an overall unfamiliarity with appropriate behaviors within these new settings. Due to a lack of life experiences, students might not possess the internal tools required to overcome these periods of transition and stress. In addition, pre-entrance and post-enrollment research has suggested entering college freshmen students overestimate their ability to socially and academically adjust to the college environment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). As a result, students will generally turn to their established relationships as a base of support and security in their exploration of this new world. Consequently, parents are crucial sources of support at this time, as securely attached children have learned to rely on their established parent attachment relationship as a secure foundation in times of need (Davila & Levy, 2006; Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004).

Research has documented the link between college student adjustment and academic success (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Findings

indicated that the more a college student had academically, socially, and emotionally adjusted to the college environment, the more likely he or she remained in college and obtained a degree (Baker & Siryk; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt). In addition, findings indicated a student's ability to overcome new stressors relied heavily upon the support systems he or she had in place at the time of the stressful event. For example, DeBerard, Spielmans, and Julka (2004) concluded that a college student's total level of support, as defined by perceived support from family, friends, and significant others, was significantly and positively correlated with college achievement. It has also been suggested that perceived support, in terms of perceived accessibility to interpersonal resources, could have acted as a buffer against stressful stimuli (Cohen & Willis, 1985).

One way to measure the strength of the support network a parent and child have in place is to investigate the facets of the attachment relationship. Fass and Tubman (2002) indicated that parental attachment (described in terms of parent trust, communication, and alienation) contributed to overall social competence of undergraduate students, which aided students in their transition to college. Specifically, they found that parental attachment was significantly and positively correlated with self-esteem, locus of control, optimism, scholastic competence, and intellectual ability (Fass & Tubman).

Similarly, previous researchers have found a relationship between secure parental attachment and increased student academic, social, and personal-emotional college adjustment (Mattanah et al., 2004; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993). Interestingly, this relationship held true for freshman students and upper-classmen (Mattanah et al.), as well as men and women (Holmbeck & Wandrei). Further research found students whose



adjustment declined over a two-year period in college, perceived their parents as less supportive and less involved than students who maintained stable or increased levels of adjustment during that time (Duchesne et al., 2007). Yet, separate research failed to find a significant connection between the parental attachment relationship and college adjustment (Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994).

As adjustment to college has been found to be an important predictor of academic success (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994), more research is needed to investigate the relationship between parental attachment and students' overall adjustment. Specific parental influences might play an important role in assisting students to overcome transitional periods in their lives. These relationships have demonstrated the ability to shape college students' perceptions of challenging tasks, self-esteem, and competency (Fass & Tubman, 2002; Mattanah et al., 2004), however, more empirical evidence is needed to establish exactly how the attachment relationship, college adjustment, and academic success are interrelated.

### The College Context

The college environment is filled with barriers that hinder parental involvement in the lives of their attending children. Logistically, physical distance between parents and adult children could create difficulties in interactions, and new means of communication must be negotiated to fill the needs of the student and the parent. Institutional barriers also exist in the form of inconsistent guidelines for parental involvement and an increased focus on individualism (Daniel et al., 2001). While some might presume that college students rely upon faculty members for guidance, findings have indicated that college faculty members were less influential in the lives of college students than parents,

highlighting the importance of parental involvement during this crucial time (Bank et al., 1990).

Overall, a shift in the societal definition of adulthood has allowed for parents to increasingly remain actively involved in their children's lives, which has translated into involvement in the child's college experience (Daniel et al., 2001). In addition, unclear societal norms exist regarding the appropriate chronological sequence of adult development, such as the age at which adult children leave their parents' homes (Seiffge-Krenke, 2006). This blurred definition of adulthood, coupled with an uncertain progression of adult life events, adds to the ambiguity of appropriate parental involvement in the lives of their college-age children.

### Summary

Starting in infancy, the parent-child relationship sets the foundation for the child's future endeavors (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1988). Empirical findings have established the positive influence a strong parent-child attachment bond can exert on the lives of children and adolescents. Specifically, parents' involvement has been associated with beneficial social, emotional, and cognitive child outcomes (Haight et al., 2003; Neswald-McCalip, 2001; Richaud De Minzi, 2006). As this relationship transcends the lifespan (Ainsworth & Bowlby; Davila & Levy, 2006; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kenny & Sirin, 2006), its influence should be measurable during all periods of the child's life. However, the college years are marked with increased autonomy and independence from the parent (Seiffge-Krenke, 2006). In addition to separation from the parent, the student will experience new challenges, and support will be a crucial determinate of adjustment

and academic achievement during this time (DeBeard et al., 2004; Fass & Tubman, 2002; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Mattanah et al., 2004).

Currently, parents and students are receiving mixed messages about the appropriate role of their relationship during the college years (Daniel et al., 2001; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). More information is needed to assess the role the attachment relationship has in the lives of college students and how it is related to students' college adjustment and achievement. By specifically examining students' perceptions of their parents as sources of support and independence, the overall quality of the attachment relationship, and parental expectations over time, a portrait of the parent-child relationship during the college years will be accessible. Furthermore, by comparing this relationship to student adjustment and academic achievement outcomes, a more thorough understanding of the influence of this relationship during the undergraduate education will be achieved.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

This study was created to examine the parent-adult child relationship during the college years and the influence this relationship might have on student adjustment and achievement. A multi-method study was utilized to provide for a thorough understanding and comprehensive analyses of the subject matter. The first portion of this study involved a secondary data analysis of the three-year quantitative data collected as part of the “College Success Study.” The second portion of the study included a qualitative analysis of online interviews with 58 third-year college students.

#### Procedures

##### *Quantitative Procedures*

All original quantitative data were part of the “College Success Study,” an ongoing project directed by Drs. Ani Yazedjian and Michelle Toews and funded by Texas State University-San Marcos. The “College Success Study” was designed to longitudinally investigate predictors of success for college students enrolled in a four-year public university in Texas. Data collection began in the spring semester of 2005, whereby all African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic second semester freshman students (N=2459) were sent an email through the Office of Institutional Research asking if they would like to participate in an electronic survey. Students who responded to the online survey were entered into a drawing to receive various amounts of monetary

payments as compensation for their time. Follow-up electronic surveys were administered to the original participants in 2006 and 2007, and students who responded to these were provided with incentives for their participation in the research.

### *Qualitative Procedures*

Instant messaging technology was utilized to facilitate the electronic interviews with participants. Instant messaging technology has emerged as one of the most convenient and efficient means of communicating in the workplace and in the home (Farmer, 2005). Currently, research maintains that 86% of college students have used the Internet and 85% of college students owned their own computers (Jones, 2002). In addition, 62% of all adults ages eighteen to twenty-seven (Farmer, 2005), and nearly three-fourths of college students are experienced using instant messaging technology (Jones, 2002). Furthermore, universities have begun utilizing this type of communication in academic advising sessions, help desk inquiries, student-teacher conferences, and class participation requirements (Farmer, 2005). Therefore, conducting interviews in this way followed the growing trend towards utilizing online chat room technology for a number of communication purposes. In addition, using private online chat rooms for the interviews furthered student anonymity, allowed for interview times which were more convenient for student schedules, and provided an instant transcript file of the interview for review.

The electronic interviews followed a strict protocol. To recruit participants for the online interview, an invitation email (Appendix A) was sent to all Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American third-year college students who completed the aforementioned College Success survey. This email described the current study and offered \$20 in compensation for student participation. Students who responded to the invitation email

were sent a follow-up email (Appendix B) that allowed participants to choose from a series of dates and timeframes to schedule an interview time. Instant-message accounts were created for all interview participants who scheduled an interview time and for the researcher. These password-protected accounts were void of any identifiable information about the participants.

Confirmation emails (Appendix C) including the interview day, date, and time as well as the necessary login instructions were sent to study participants as soon as interviews were scheduled. Finally, reminder emails (Appendix D) were sent one day before the scheduled interviews. These reminder emails also included the interview day, date, and time, and all necessary login information.

To complete the online interviews (Appendix E), participants logged into the private chat rooms at their scheduled interview times with the usernames and passwords provided to them. Once logged in, the researcher greeted the participants and posted a consent form for their review. Participants were asked to type their agreement in place of their signatures for consent after they reviewed the consent form. Students who completed the online interviews were compensated with \$20.

## Participants

### *Quantitative Participants*

In year-one, 794 students responded to the College Success survey in its entirety. This sample was comprised of Caucasian (74.3%), Hispanic (21.2%), and African American (4.5%) students. It included 583 females (73.4%) and 211 males (26.6%).

For the purpose of this study, only students who participated in both years one and three of the College Success study were used (N=168). This sample was comprised

of predominately Caucasian students (74.0%), followed by Hispanic (23.0%) and African American (3.0%) students. The sample included 138 females (82.1%) and 30 males (17.9%), with all of the students born in 1985 (36.3%), 1986 (61.9%), or 1987 (1.8%). GPAs for the sample ranged from 1.85 to 4.0, with a mean GPA of 3.11.

### *Qualitative Participants*

All year-three respondents were invited to participate in the follow-up online interview. Interviews were scheduled with all students who wished to participate. Ultimately, complete interviews were conducted with fifty-eight students. These interviews ranged from 17 minutes to 69 minutes, with a mean interview length of 34.3 minutes. The interview sample included 13 males (22.4%) and 45 females (77.6%), of Caucasian (72.4%), Hispanic (20.7%), and African American (6.9%) ethnicities.

### *Instruments*

#### *Quantitative Measures*

*The parent-child attachment relationship.* Participant responses to the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ; Kenny, 1987; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991) were used to measure the parent-adult child relationship (Appendix F). The PAQ consists of 55 items designed to measure young adults' continued attachment relationship with their parents. The questionnaire describes the attachment relationship in terms of three subscales: affective quality of the relationship, parents as sources of support, and parents as facilitators of independence. Participants responded to the Likert-type items using a five-point scale, whereby one represented "not at all" or "0-10%" and 5 represented "very much" or "91-100%." A sum of each subscale was used in this study. Reported test-retest reliability was .92 for the overall measure, and the three subscales ranged from .82 to .91

(Kenny & Donaldson). Cronbach's alphas for the PAQ were .93 for male participants and .95 for female participants overall (Kenny), and alphas calculated for each of the three subscales were .96 for quality of the relationship, .88 for parents as facilitators of independence, and .88 for parents as providers of support (Kenny & Donaldson). The current study yielded Cronbach's coefficient alphas of .93 for quality of the attachment relationship, .84 for parents as facilitators of independence, and .82 for parents as sources of support in year one. Year three alphas were .94, .82, and .81 respectively.

*Parental expectations.* The role of parental expectations was evaluated through the use of three specific items from the Michigan State University Freshman Assets Survey (Appendix G; Villarruel & Gardner, 2003). These items explicitly asked the students to what degree they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "It is important to my parent(s) that I do well in college", "if I receive a bad grade my parent(s) would be upset," and "my parents made it clear what was expected of me in college." Responses ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). A sum of the responses was used in this study with higher scores denoting greater parental expectations. Cronbach's alphas for the current research were .71 for year one and .68 for year three.

*Academic achievement.* Academic achievement was calculated using the students' overall grade point averages for each year of the survey. These scores were obtained as part of the College Success Study through the University's Office of Institutional Research.

*College adjustment.* The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1984; 1986) was used to assess participants' level of adjustment to the



college setting (Appendix H). The SACQ is comprised of 67 items used to measure college students' academic, social, institutional, and emotional-personal adjustment to college. Student responses were measured using a Likert-type scale from one to nine, with one representing "doesn't apply to me at all" and nine representing "applies very closely to me." A total of the items was used in this study with higher scores on the measure denoting healthier student adjustment. Reported reliability for the overall scale included Cronbach's alphas ranging from .92 to .94 (Baker & Siryk). The alpha for this sample was .96.

### *Qualitative Measure*

Electronic interviews were used to explore college students' perceptions of the parent-adult child relationship during their undergraduate education. Utilizing instant messaging technology, qualitative data were collected from a convenience sample of College Success survey participants. A series of open-ended questions were created with the purpose of establishing an operational definition of what it means to have a quality parent-adult child relationship, appropriate levels of parental support, parents who facilitated independence, and beneficial parental expectations (Appendix E). This inquiry worked towards an overall goal of reaching a more complete understanding of the parent-college student relationship. Additional questions were asked of participants as needed in order to explore relevant subject matter, clarify text, and/or to develop a more thorough understanding of student responses.

## Data Analysis

### *Quantitative Analysis*

Descriptive statistics were run to establish sample characteristics such as participants' genders, ethnicities, and ages. Pearson correlations were conducted for all variables to explore the relationships between parental relationship factors and college student outcomes. In addition, regression analyses were used to investigate to what extent parental factors predicted adjustment and achievement. Separate regressions were run to examine in-year associations and across-time associations. Furthermore, a separate analysis was conducted to establish if adjustment mediated the relationship between the parental factors and academic success.

### *Qualitative Analysis*

All qualitative data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Deductive category application was utilized for the analysis, whereby pre-formulated aspects of the analysis based on theory, such as the survey questions themselves, were connected with the interview data (Mayring, 2000). For example, interview questions were created with the intention of gathering information regarding parent-adult child relationship factors deemed important by the attachment literature. Specifically, the questions were aimed at investigating the three subscales included in the Parent Attachment Questionnaire (Kenny, 1987; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991), the affective quality of the relationship, parents as facilitators of independence, and parents as sources of support. Memos were

utilized throughout the coding process to keep track of emerging ideas, summarize collected data, and assist in making connections (Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

The data were analyzed in accordance with the four steps outlined by Graneheim and Lundman (2004). Specifically, the first two steps in this analysis approach called for an initial immersion in the data followed by a reduction of the data into relevant categories or concepts. The final two processes included expanding the identified concepts into elevated logical levels through assigning codes to the data and establishing linkages between the data codes to determine themes present (Graneheim & Lundman; Kairuz, Crump, & O'Brien, 2007). In practice, interviews were coded by two independent coders. Each coder reviewed the interviews in their entirety once before beginning the coding process. Interviews were then divided into sets: 1-20, 21-40, and 41-58. Coders started with interviews 1-20 and created a list of categories and codes based on themes emerging from the interviews themselves. The coders then convened to discuss coding themes, compared question by question coding, and created a master coding key to use for coding the remaining interviews. All discrepancies in coding were discussed between the coders until a consensus was reached. This process was repeated for interview batches 21-40 and 41-58.

The coding categories and master coding key were continuously revised throughout the coding process in order to incorporate all student responses. Interviews were then read a third time and re-coded based upon the final coding key that included all student responses. As recommended by Berg (1989), the final categories that surfaced represented all aspects of the students' responses and, when possible, matched the exact wording used by the students.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study focused on five research questions: (1) What is the connection between the parent-adult child attachment relationship and college student academic achievement? (2) What is the relationship between perceived parental expectations and college student academic achievement? (3) How do these parental relationship factors explain academic achievement? Do they directly explain academic achievement or does adjustment mediate the relationship between parental factors and achievement? (4) How does the attachment relationship change throughout the students' undergraduate education? (5) How do college students qualitatively define beneficial parental involvement? The following results from the survey data and student interviews strive to answer these important questions.

#### Quantitative Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were executed to determine the correlations between parent-adult child relationship variables and student academic outcomes in year one and year three. Year one (Table 1) findings indicated the quality of the parent-child relationship ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ), parents as sources of support ( $r = .36, p < .01$ ), and parents as facilitators of independence ( $r = .32, p < .01$ ) were all positively related to students' adjustment to college during the freshman year. No relationship was found between parental expectations and freshman year college adjustment. In addition, both

the quality of the parent-child relationship ( $r = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and parents as sources of support ( $r = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were positively related to freshman year grade point averages (GPA). However, parents as facilitators of independence and parental expectations were not found to be significantly linked to freshman year GPA.

Table 1.

Year One Parental Relationship and Student Outcomes

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.Adjustment1	1					
2.GPA1	.272**	1				
3.Quality1	.444**	.200*	1			
4.Independence1	.316**	.098	.620**	1		
5.Support1	.362**	.255**	.704**	.346**	1	
6.Expectations1	.133	.109	.139	-.103	.219**	1

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

Year three results (Table 2) revealed the quality of the parent-child relationship ( $r = .47$ ,  $p < .01$ ), parents as facilitators of independence ( $r = .39$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and parents as sources of support ( $r = .42$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were all positively correlated with college adjustment during the third year. In addition, no relationship was discovered between parental expectations and third year college adjustment. Furthermore, the quality of the parent-child relationship ( $r = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and parents as facilitators of independence ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were both positively correlated with third year GPA, but parents as sources of support and parental expectations were not found to be significantly related to GPA in year three.

Table 2.

Year Three Parental Relationship and Student Outcomes						
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.Adjustment3	1					
2.GPA3	.364**	1				
3.Quality3	.469**	.283**	1			
4.Independence3	.394**	.205**	.695**	1		
5.Support3	.423**	.106	.697**	.449**	1	
6.Expectations3	.105	.034	.169*	.031	.372**	1

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

In-year and across-time regressions were used to explore to what degree the parent-adult child relationship variables predicted variances in student outcomes. Results from year one indicated that, as a group, the quality of the relationship, parental support, parents as facilitators of independence, and parental expectations explained 23.1% of the variance in freshman students' adjustment to college ( $F=10.44$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $r^2=.231$ ). However, the quality of the parent-adult child relationship in year one was the only significant predictor of adjustment ( $\beta=.30$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Parents as sources of support, parents as facilitators of independence, and parental expectations did not independently contribute to the variance in freshman adjustment. Additional findings revealed parent adult-child relationship variables, when combined, explained a small percentage of the variance in freshman GPA ( $F=2.44$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $r^2=.062$ ). However, none of the year one variables significantly contributed to this variance.

Year three findings indicated, as a group, the relationship variables explained 22% of the variance in year three students' academic adjustment ( $F=9.873$ ,  $p<.001$ ,

$r^2=.219$ ). However, none of the variables in year three were statistically significant predictors of adjustment. Furthermore, the year three parent-adult child relationship variables combined explained a slight amount of the variance in year three GPA ( $F=2.75$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $r^2=.069$ ). However, the quality of the parent-adult child relationship in year three was the only significant predictor of GPA ( $\beta=.32$   $p<.05$ ).

In order to reveal whether the quality of the parent-adult child relationship influenced year three GPA directly or was mediated by student adjustment, four steps outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) were utilized. The first step included performing a regression analysis to explore whether the parental relationship variables explained GPA. These findings revealed the quality of the parent-adult child relationship in year three was the only significant predictor of student GPA (Table 3). The second step included running a regression with the mediator variable, adjustment, on the parental relationship variables, to explore whether these variables predicted adjustment outcomes. This step concluded the parental relationship variables were not significant predictors of student adjustment. Thus, the analysis was stopped at this point, as college student adjustment could not have mediated the relationship between the quality of the parent-adult child relationship and GPA if relationship variables did not influence adjustment. Therefore, college student adjustment did not mediate the relationship between the quality of the parent-adult child relationship and GPA, and the quality of the relationship was a direct predictor of GPA.

Table 3.

## Student Adjustment as a Mediator of Academic Achievement

	<i>B</i>		95% CI	<i>B</i>
Testing Step 1				
Outcome: GPA				
Independent Variables: Quality of Relationship	.01*	.01	.00, .02	.32
Parents as Facilitators of	.00	.01	-.01, .02	.04
Parental Support	-.01	.01	-.03, .01	-.17
Parental Expectations	.01	.03	-.05, .06	-.02
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>			.07	
<i>F</i>			2.753*	
Testing Step 2				
Outcome: Adjustment				
Independent Variables: Quality of Parental	.02	.01	.00, .04	.23
Parents as Facilitators of	.01	.01	-.02, .04	.10
Parental Support	.03	.02	-.00, .06	.22
Parental Expectations	-.04	.06	-.00, .06	-.06
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>			.22	
<i>F</i>			9.873***	
Testing Step 3				
Outcome: GPA				
Mediator: Adjustment	.15**	.04	.06, .23	.30
Independent Variables: Quality of Parental	.01*	.01	-.00, .02	.30
Parents as Facilitators of	-.00	.01	-.02, .01	-.02
Parental Support	-.02*	.01	-.03, -.00	-.26
Parental Expectations	.01	.03	-.05, .07	.03
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>			.15	
<i>F</i>			4.885***	

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Across time regressions were run to determine to what extent relationship variables in year one predicted student outcomes in year three. These results revealed the relationship variables in year one predicted a small percentage of the variance in year three GPA ( $F=3.531$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $r^2=.088$ ), though none of the year one variables significantly contributed to this variance.



### Qualitative Analysis

Utilizing qualitative content analysis methods, interviews from fifty-eight respondents were analyzed to investigate student perceptions regarding the role of parents during the college years.

*Quality of the relationship.* Content analysis findings revealed most students described their relationship with their parents as positive (86.2%). The majority of students who described their relationships as positive explicitly used the terms “close,” “very close,” “good,” and “great.” In addition, many students who described their relationships in this way reported their levels of communication and/or levels of trust as indicators of a positive relationship. For example, one student reported, “[The relationship is] very good. We have open communication and [my parents] are very open to how I feel and what I need to say. They listen to me when I need them to and encourage me to do things I want in my life.”

Some students (10.3%) provided less salient answers to this inquiry, and their descriptions of their relationships were categorized as neutral or unable to decipher. Some of these students reported having mixed relationships. For example, one student described the relationship as “pretty close concerning some things [and concerning] others we seem very distant.” Another student reported, “As for my relationship with them at this time, my dad still doesn’t know how to communicate with me. My mom actually communicates too much.” Similarly, one student’s description of her relationship alluded to the fact that the relationship did not exert a positive or negative force in the student’s life:

I am not that close with my parents. Currently my mom and step-dad live in two

different locations but are not separated, just physical location. As a junior in college I live with my mom but we keep very different schedules and hardly talk. When we do talk it's only in short conversations. I don't usually tell her everything that is going on and she doesn't care when I come and go.

Very few students (3.4%) described their relationships as negative. Interestingly, the two students who described their relationships in this way mentioned the behaviors of one or both of their parents as the negative factor. For example, one student stated the relationship was "Pretty shaky. My parents have done things which I do not agree with since I've come to college and I can't condone their behavior." The other student described a home life with a step-mom who was difficult to get along with:

[The relationship is] definitely not ideal. I have no contact with my real mom and have lived with my dad and step-mom since I was about 9. My step-mom and I fought quite a bit over the years and I never had very in-depth conversations with either of them. My step-mom and my dad had very different ideas of raising kids and disciplining. My dad wanted us to learn from our mistakes but it was mostly my step-mom's way to restrict us from a lot. To this day I can't stand being at home for more than a day. It's almost like she tries to make me mad sometimes.

*Independence.* Almost all students interviewed felt their parents trusted them to make their own decisions (96.6%). Many students expressed this was due to the fact that they were good decision-makers and deserved their parents' trust. This milestone of trust seemed to be a source of pride for both the students and their parents. For example one student conveyed, "I think they like it when I take matters into my own hands and make my own decisions. They're good ones. It shows independence and confidence, and that

they taught me well.” According to the respondents, parents communicated this trust to their adult children through direct statements of trust, the absence of questioning student decisions, and through their allocation of money to the student. One student illustrated this point:

Interviewer: How do your parents feel about your ability to make your own decisions?

Interviewee: Great. I don't make many mistakes. I don't think they've been unhappy with anything they know about that I've done in college.

Interviewer: What exactly do you mean by “great?”

Interviewee: They have full confidence in my decision making. An example: they give me money for bills, tuition, rent, etc. and expect me to take care of it all.

There's no oversight, no asking if I'm wasting money, etc.

Some students (30.4%) also described their parents trusted them to make their own decisions but maintained involvement by providing advice. “Well, I know they feel that I am old and wise enough to make my own decisions. When I do ask them for help or something, they may give me their opinion or suggestions but always tell me to make decisions to my best knowledge or [ask] how I feel about it.”

*Support.* When asked about what types of situations students specifically reached out to their parents for support, students overwhelmingly indicated financial support (72.4%). Interestingly, many students (24.1%) reported they only used their parents for financial support while in college. These students explained they did not feel like they could approach their parents for other types of support and/or they simply did not mention any other ways they specifically asked for support. For example, when asked

about what ways he uses his parents for support, one male student who described a negative relationship with his parents reported the following:

Very little... [my parents] have helped a couple times with money, but I have always had problems with asking them for help with anything, even when it is something I really need help with. They make it seem like I am asking for the impossible every time I ask for something, even if it's simple. I really don't ask them for much anymore. I guess after raising five kids they just want to be done [with] needy kids.

Most students who reported they only asked their parents for financial support did not echo this sentiment of having unapproachable parents however, and most likely only mentioned financial support because it could have been what they considered to be the bulk of the parental support they received in college.

Asking for financial support was followed in frequency by students asking their parents for assistance with college-specific issues such as coursework, scheduling, major selection, etc. (39.7%) and help with relationship dilemmas (39.7%). For example one student reported:

They've always helped me financially paying for my education for me, but there's been times when I've struggled with decisions on what to do with my life. [For example] if I can actually make a career out of my chosen major, acting and directing, and how I should handle stuff like study abroad opportunities and other course stuff. I usually ask their input on stuff like that. I went through a really rough breakup my sophomore year and they helped me through that the entire

year, just by giving comfort and advice and coming up a few weekends a month to be with me.

Students also indicated they were accessing their parents for general emotional support (31.0%). “Well... money of course! I’ve needed their help financially throughout my three years in college. I’ve also needed their encouragement. I need to hear from them that they KNOW I can do this. I’ve also had to ask them for advice with friends, professors, bosses...” Some students indicated they went to their parents for advice on employment and future planning (12.1%) as well. For example, “I asked for help with financial situations and decisions regarding career paths.”

When responding to the question on how parents reached out to them to provide support, the majority of students reported that their parents showed support to them by calling, emailing, and/or mailing cards/packages to them (56.9%). One student described this in detail:

As I said before, I talk to my mother often and my father at least once a week. My mother always sends mail and care packages, and every so often she’ll come to Texas State and take me out to dinner, for a ‘mother/daughter date.’ I can always talk to them if I start to stress about school, or anything in my life. They’ve both been there for me, and I don’t think I would have made it this far without them.

Another way in which students’ perceived parental support was through parental encouragement (53.5%). Many students mentioned that receiving supportive and inspirational statements from their parents was beneficial in their college lives. “They always encourage me and they let me know they support me with decisions I make. They just tell me they are there for me for whatever happens.”

Visits (43.1%) were also reported at a high rate as a way in which parents showed support. “They come up here to visit me whenever I ask them to, or just pop in every once in a while. My mom calls me if she doesn’t hear from me just to see how my day is going. They support me in my extracurricular activities, just by being there.”

In addition, many students (32.8%) felt their parents provided support to them through all forms of financial assistance, such as money for books, tuition, and monthly living expenses, and assistance with unanticipated costs. Many students (25.9%) also specifically mentioned parents’ asking questions about their lives as a type of support they received from their parents while in college. “They ask me how I’m doing in college, and if I am doing well, in reality my parents just offer moral support for me.”

Generally, students’ viewed their parents as capable of supporting them while they are in college (86.2%). “As of now, my parents have never neglected to support me in what I need. They’ve always tried to help me out with [whatever] and however they can.” A small number of students had a neutral or indifferent opinion of their parents’ ability to support them (8.6%). For example, one respondent explained how a lack of involvement could be positive and negative, “It’s alright. I mean they aren’t breathing down my neck which is nice, but they aren’t motivating me at the same time. But that’s how they raised me.”

Very few students felt their parents were incapable of supporting them while in college (5.2%). These students generally felt their parents were incapable of providing the emotional support they needed. “I feel that my parents are quite able to support me financially in college. But I feel like they don’t really support me emotionally. Even in

the few occasions when I've turned to them for emotional support, I don't feel like what I needed was provided, which is why I stopped turning to them emotionally."

Interestingly, some students (13.8%) mentioned their parents' lack of a college education as a factor in the parents' support capabilities.

I think college is such a different experience from any other time in a person's life. That a lot of it is something you have to do on your own. Neither of my parents finished college, so they can't really identify with a lot of the problems I go through sometimes, but they try really hard and it helps a lot to know I have that support.

Finally, when asked exactly how often they accessed their parents for support, students conveyed they used their parents for support frequently while in college. Specifically, the largest group of students described using their parents for support on a weekly basis (29.3%). This meant the students reported accessing their parents for support between 1 to 6 times per week.

Weekly contact was followed in frequency by monthly contact (24.1%). Students who had monthly contact responded that they used their parents for support 1 to 3 times per month. Finally, many students said they had daily contact (19.0%) with their parents where they accessed some type of support. These students conveyed a strong reliance on their parents. For example, some responses included, "Honestly, it's an everyday thing. Not getting to talk to my mother everyday has a definite effect. Just a simple 'Hi and I miss you,' helps me a great deal, if only to put a smile on my face" and "Every single day... I NEED them." Interestingly, some students with daily communications delineated between contact with their parents and actual support. For example:

Interviewer: How often do you use your parents for support?

Interviewee: Very often. Like I said, I speak to them several times a day so I am always telling them what's going on and they're giving me feedback.

Interviewer: Just to clarify... "very often" would be several times a day?

Interviewee: Well I wouldn't say I get their support on everything small I do. But very often meaning maybe several times a week.

This statement illustrated how students had some personal standard where they felt general communication ended and support began.

Finally, a select group of students maintained they rarely used their parents for support while in college. These students generally claimed they asked for support from their parents once to twice per semester (12.1%). Some examples given for this lesser amount of contact were the parents' inability to meet the students' needs, the general independent nature of the students, and the use of peers for support over parents for some situations.

*Expectations.* When asked what their parents expected of them, students understood they were expected by their parents to graduate (50.0%), to do their best/ work hard (50.0%), make good grades in college (46.55%), be responsible (44.83%), create a successful future after college (24.14%), and to find happiness (20.7%). From the reported frequencies of these responses, one can see there was no main emerging expectation shared by all college students, however, the vast majority of students were clear as to what was expected of them by their parents. Only one student was unsure of the expectations his parents held, stating "I don't really know, we've never had a conversation about it."



Students believed these expectations were conveyed in varying ways. For example, half of the students reported their parents expressed their expectations by directly stating them (50.0%). Many of the students who stated they had parents who directly communicated their expectations also mentioned being comfortable with this practice and experiencing this throughout their lives.

We've talked often about their expectations. They ask me how I'm doing in my classes and if I enjoy the degree plan I've chosen. If they feel that I'm not trying or that something is keeping me from doing my best, they'll ask me about it. They've often told me how well they'll believe I'll do in anything I try, and I feel comfortable discussing their expectations of me with them. It's been an open dialogue my entire life.

The remaining students felt their parents' expectations were conveyed only in an implied manner (34.5%) or through both stated and implied methods (13.8%). One student described how her parent communicated her expectations in an implied manner through leading by example, "She treats me with respect and teaches by example. She expects me to act and treat others the way she does, the way I was raised. She has always had high expectation[s] ever since I could remember. I think that is why I am the way that I am."

Most students felt generally positive about the expectations their parents held for them (63.8%). For example, when asked how her parents' expectations made her feel, one student responded:

They make me feel like I need to be a good person. They make me feel like if I screwed up and made any MAJOR wrong decisions that my parents would be

disappointed in me. They make me feel like I am lucky to have parents that have expected the best of me and have made me be the person I am today, and thankful that I did have expectations that made me into a successful person.

Surprisingly, almost one-third of students were neutral or indifferent to their parents' expectations (32.8%). Reasons for indifference to these expectations included students' had the same or higher expectations for themselves, were accustomed to parental expectations, or did not think about the expectations because they came naturally. When asked how her parents' expectations made her feel, one student illustrated how they did not play a large role in her motivation while enrolled in college. "They are things that I expect of myself. I guess I'm happy that they have an interest in my future but they don't really make me feel any particular way."

A select few students described parental expectations as being negative in their lives (3.45%). These students indicated frustration with expectations when things were difficult for them. Regarding her parents' expectations for all As, one female student stated, "The grades part annoys me sometimes. I think she sees that and doesn't ask very often. When I'm suffering during a semester I don't want to be asked about it. She doesn't know that I had a bad semester but I still get annoyed." Another student also described how low parental expectations could negatively influence student outcomes. "I don't like having expectations. When I have expectations to live up to I settle too easily for mediocrity."

For further analysis, all interviews were coded for student responses that indicated their expectations were the same as or exceeded their parents' expectations. Interestingly, one-third of all students stated they felt this way (32.8%). This sentiment was present in

descriptions of positive, neutral, and negative feelings regarding parental expectations. Statements included, “I put more pressure on myself than they ever put on me,” “My parents expectations don’t really affect me because I hold myself accountable for higher expectations,” and “I’ve always been harder on myself when it comes to school than they ever have.” In contrast to this, some students specifically stated they thought their parents’ expectations directly motivated them (19.0%). For example, “I try to do well at everything anyway, but these expectations make me try harder than if I was doing something just for myself” and “[the expectations] give me added incentive to do my best.”

*The college context.* When asked how their relationships have changed since the students enrolled in college, students most commonly perceived that their relationships had grown closer and were more positive (60.3%). Many of these students felt an increase in parental trust and student independence facilitated the more positive relationship. Furthermore, it was common for students to mention their relationships had evolved into a more mature and friend-like dynamic (43.1%).

Well, I am the oldest of four kids and when I was in high school my parents were pretty strict on curfews, calling houses to make sure parents were there when I would ‘go out’, etc. And since I’ve been in college they have complete trust in me. They have never asked me to be home at a certain time when I stay with them, they have never scolded me for staying out late at night, they of course don’t call or really bug me about the places I go out. I have a more friendship with my parents now. I talk to them like friend to friend now. I know that they trust me

completely and know that they don't have to worry or set boundaries with me anymore.

In addition, some students who described they have closer relationships with their parents in college referenced a transition from the difficulties in their relationships while the students were in high school.

Oh my God it has gotten so much better. High school is just such a difficult age for any kid and there's so much fun stuff going on and so much to figure out for yourself that I didn't appreciate my parents or their need to talk to me or give me their input nearly as much as I do now. I used to pick fights and not talk to them about my day or decisions or anything. But now that I'm in college I find that they actually have a lot of wisdom and good advice to share with me. I love talking to my parents now and they rarely annoy me. I just find that as I become my own person I look up to them as individual people with their own pasts and history and not just as boring parents.

Perceptions of a closer relationship were followed in frequency by responses that the relationship had not changed (22.4%). These students generally described their parents as maintaining a stable level of involvement throughout their lives. This level could be high involvement such as, "I don't think our relationship has changed at all. My parents have always been caring and concerned and had the same expectations of me and they have always been supportive and tried to steer me in the right direction" or low involvement, "My relationship hasn't changed really that much even in high school we didn't talk much I just went to school and to work and hungout outside of the house pretty much the same now." While most described their relationships as closer and

improved, some students indicated their relationships had become more distant and improved (12.1%).

We have become more relaxed. There is no longer that little bit of tension that most people experience their high school years, and not that it was bad! My parents are my best friends but I think that they now know that I can make most decisions for myself (they do still pay my bills). They trust me and let [me] go. I think in a small way we have separated a little bit (although they moved here to San Marcos last year so that could be debated), but it has just gotten so much more relaxed.

Finally, a few students felt their relationships had grown to be increasingly negative (5.2%). These were also the students who indicated poor parental relationships throughout the interviews and did not disclose if and how college was a factor in the deterioration of the relationships.

Overall, over three-fourths of students described their parents' level of involvement in their lives as positive and that they liked it as it was (79.3%). For example, "[the level of involvement is] good actually. I wouldn't want it any more so, because then I'd feel like they weren't letting me go at all, and weren't letting me be on my own per say [sic]" and "I think [the level of involvement] is just right because I can still feel independent without them breathing down my neck, but I always know I can go to them whenever I need to." These students generally described their parents as finding a working balance between involvement and separation.

A select group mentioned they would like to change something about their parents' current level of involvement (20.7%). Very few of these students indicated they

would prefer less involvement. In fact, the vast majority of these students conveyed they wanted their parents to be more involved in their lives, especially in their interests.

It makes me a little sad sometimes. My boyfriend's parents are really involved in his life. He only talks to them about once a week too, but they always ask about what's going on with school and appear genuinely interested. So, seeing how involved they are in his life makes me realize how uninvolved and seemingly uninterested my parents are in my life, and that is sometimes very saddening.

*Summary of qualitative findings.* In sum, the vast majority of students (84.5%) reported they had positive relationships with their parents, and revealed they accessed their parents for many different types of support while in college. Students continued to use their parents for support frequently in their third year, and were generally confident in their parents' abilities to provide what they needed while in college. In addition, students were aware of the expectations their parents held for them (98.3%), although these expectations were considered to be a positive influence by only a slight majority (63.8%) of participants.

It was overwhelmingly reported (96.56%) that parents trusted their third year students to make their own decisions, and most students reported a positive change had occurred in the relationship since enrolling in college. These relationship changes were considered positive for both relationships that had become closer and relationships that had become more distant. Overall, a large majority of students (79.31%) were satisfied with their parents' current level of involvement.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The first goal of this study is to investigate the connection between the parent-adult child attachment relationship and college student academic achievement. In particular, this relationship is examined in terms of the three PAQ subscales (quality of the relationship, parents as facilitators of independence, and parental support). The following discussion will examine each subscale individually.

#### **Quality of the Relationship**

Year one and year three findings indicate a significant positive relationship exists between the quality of the parent-adult child attachment relationship and student grade point average (GPA). In other words, the more positively students in this sample perceive the quality of their relationships with their parents, the higher their academic achievement levels. These results are aligned with findings from research on children and adolescents, which has extensively exemplified the positive influence the parental relationship has on academic outcomes for younger students (Fan, 2001; Fass & Tubman; Nord & West; Patrikakou, 2004; Richaud De Minzi, 2006). In addition, these results are consistent with claims that the parent-child relationship remains a powerful determinant of offspring well-being into adulthood (Amato, 1994; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kenny & Sirin, 2006; Knoester, 2003).

Emerging research has documented the understudied role of parents in college students' lives. Ptacek, Pierce, Eberhardt, and Dodge (1999) found the higher parents rated their attachment relationships with their college-age children, the more those college students reported receiving support and the less the students reported conflict within the relationship. Furthermore, they asserted the greater the relationship depth and relationship support perceived by the students, the more likely the college students utilized problem-focused coping skills to deal with challenges. Therefore, the quality of the attachment relationship might indirectly be related to GPA, as facets of the attachment relationship could reduce conflict in the students' lives, improve their quality of life, and influence student coping skills, which are important indicators of student success.

According to the questions included in the PAQ designed to specifically measure affective quality of the attachment relationship, indicators of a high quality attachment relationship include parents who are available, responsive, and understanding of the students' needs (Kenny, n.d.). In addition, the student perceives these relationships as positive, open, and communicative. The availability of a relationship such as this for students surely sets a secure foundation by which students feel safe to navigate the challenges associated with college life, and further provides them with tools to successfully do so.

Student interview responses support the idea that the quality of the attachment relationship is a beneficial facet of their lives. Overall, a majority of students regarded their relationships with their parents as positive (86.2%). These findings are consistent with quantitative research that reported a majority of college students had high quality



relationships with their parents (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Furthermore, according to the third-year student interviews, descriptions of many of the positive parental relationships included the presence of open communication and trust within the relationship. In addition, 86.2% of third-year interview respondents felt their parents were able to adequately provide support for them while in college, and further analysis revealed many of these students perceived their parents were available to them and involved in their lives. Thus, many similarities exist between the quantitative indicators of the quality of the attachment relationship and student reports of indicators of positive parental relations.

Data from both the student surveys and interviews support the idea that the overall quality of the attachment relationship is associated with beneficial college student outcomes. Furthermore, high quality relationships could be described as those in which parents are available, open, communicative, and responsive to student needs. These findings are consistent with the premise of attachment theory, whereby a secure base is required to maintain a high quality parent-child relationship (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1988). They suggest the foundation of the relationship, or overall ideas about the ways the relationship functions, are important during the college transition and throughout the college tenure, and that this foundation might be related to college student success.

#### Parents as Facilitators of Independence

Student reports of parents as facilitators of independence were not significantly linked to freshman year GPA in year one but were significantly related to GPA in year three. The lack of relationship between facilitating independence in year one could be due

to the difficulties associated with the initial transition to college whereby students might require more support from parents and are less focused on parental contributions to their independence. Furthermore, the importance of parents as facilitators of independence in year three but not in year one might be indicative of students' mastery over the initial transition to college, which is implied from their continued enrollment at year three. For example, students' utilization of parents in year one to overcome the transitional period to college might allow students to pursue other goals in year three, such as independence from their parents.

According to the PAQ, parents who facilitate student independence encourage student decision-making, trust the student, and treat the student as an adult (Kenny, n.d.). Furthermore, students perceive these parents as being respectful of their thoughts and privacy, rather than controlling, restrictive, or critical when interacting with the student. Responses from the student interviews at year three found the vast majority of students experienced their parents as facilitating independence. Specifically, 96.6% of students in their third year maintained their parents trusted them to make their own decisions. These students revealed their parents not only trust them to make good decisions, but also did not question the decisions they made. These qualitative findings support the quantitative data indicating parents as facilitators of independence is important to students in year three.

This further epitomizes the role of the attachment relationship, as the ultimate goal is offspring self-sufficiency. Specifically, healthy parental attachment affords individuals emotional security so they can, in due course, become autonomous individuals (Goldhaber, 2000). From an attachment theorist's point of view, these

findings are aligned with presumptions regarding the attachment relationship during times of transition. Previous research has documented the fact that securely attached children learn to rely on their established parental attachment relationships as secure foundations in times of need (Davila & Levy, 2006; Mattanah, 2004). Presumably, this sample of students turned to their established support structures during the college transition in year one, and thus would have been less focused on their need for independence during that time. However, by year three, the students have endured the initial transition and their needs have changed. Thus, the relationship dynamic between the student and parent must change as well, facilitating this need for independence in adulthood.

Findings from student interviews in year three support this idea. For example, when asked how their relationships had changed since enrolling in college, most students communicated experiencing changes within the relationship through the college years (72.4%). Furthermore, these students indicated changes were generally considered positive and occurred in the form of increased parental trust and student independence. Thus, compared to year one, year three students might require less support and desire more independence in their parental relationships. Future research could explore whether these changes are due to familiarity with the college environment, mastery of challenges associated with the transition to college challenges, or an evolution of student needs as a function of their personal growth and maturity.

#### Parents as Sources of Support

According to the PAQ (Kenny, n.d), students who perceive their parents as supportive view them as available, trustworthy, encouraging, and helpful. In addition,

they believe their parents are able to meet their needs. Findings from this research revealed that parental support was positively related to student GPA in year one, however it was not related to GPA in year three. These findings suggest the more first year college students feel comfortable utilizing their parents for support, the higher their grade point averages. Furthermore, year three data imply students' utilization of parents for support later in the college years is not related to their academic achievement levels.

Findings that parental support and academic achievement were related in year one are consistent with literature regarding the utilization of parents for support during this time, and subsequent beneficial student outcomes (Mounts et al., 2006; Valentiner, Anderson, & Boswell, 2006; Walker & Satterwhite, 2002; Wintre & Bowers, 2007). For example, in their examination of first-year college students, Wintre and Bowers recently reported that perceived parental support was a direct predictor of college graduation. Reports of high parental support have also been linked to fewer withdrawals among college students (Walker & Satterwhite), and lower levels of support from parents have been related to higher levels of student loneliness during the college transition (Mounts et al.).

In contrast, in year three, students' perceptions of their parents as sources of support were not significantly related to their GPAs. The absence of a relationship between parental support and academic achievement in year three might also be attributed to students' mastery over the initial transition to college as highlighted above. In addition, students might have ample time to construct additional support structures by year three, such as established peer support systems, which could deemphasize the role of parental support in year three.

Furthermore, the lack of a relationship between parental support and GPA in year three could be due to students' comfort level with college by the third year. Specifically, students might require less parental support in year three due to their own personal abilities to overcome college stressors. In support of this assumption, in their examination of first and second-year college students, Ptacek, Pierce, Eberhardt, and Dodge (1999) found that the more securely students rated their relationships with their parents, the less they accessed support. Ptacek and colleagues asserted that securely attached individuals might have better coping mechanisms in place due to their ability to explore away from their secure parental bases throughout their lives. Thus, these students have less of a need to rely on others, as they have established coping mechanisms to deal with challenges.

However, reports from third-year student interviews somewhat refute the idea that students are not using their parents for support in year three. For example, students reported using their parents for support frequently and for many purposes in year three. Specifically, their accounts revealed almost half of the students interviewed (48.3%) accessed their parents for support at least on a weekly basis. In addition, 86.2% of students regarded their parents as capable of meeting their needs, and over half of the students (53.5%) revealed parental encouragement was an important aspect of the way in which students felt supported by their parents. Types of support students indicated they accessed from their parents in the third year included financial support (72.4%), help with college issues such as coursework (39.7%), assistance with relationships (39.7%), emotional support (31%), and future planning (12.1%). In other words, this sample of students demonstrated they use their parents for a number of supportive purposes and they engage in these practices often. Future studies should explore the actual amount of

support students access at year one and year three to reveal whether the perception of support, the frequency with which it is accessed, and/or student needs change throughout their college careers. This type of information could provide insight into whether the actual student behaviors regarding parental support change or whether only the student outcomes change.

These findings can best be explained through, and reinforce the claim of attachment theorists that the attachment relationship remains influential throughout the lifespan (Ainsworth 1973, 1991; Bowlby 1969, 1988). While healthy attachment relationships between parents and children have produced positive outcomes for younger children and adolescents such as healthy psychological, social, and cognitive functioning (Haight et al., 2003; Richaud De Minzi, 2006), less is known about the influence of these relationships on college students. Based on the results of this study, one could assume these childhood outcomes have either set a foundation for accessing support and/or that these positive relationships persist into adulthood and provide young adults with support needed to navigate the college transition. The absence of a relationship between support and GPA at year three, while surprising, might actually illustrate the ultimate achievement of the attachment relationship, autonomy. That is, the third-year college student, having utilized parental support for the initial transition to college, might have conquered the transition and thus requires less parental support in year three. It follows, less need for parental support might be the reason for the absence of a relationship between parents as sources of support and student achievement at this time.

### Attachment Relationship Factors as Predictors of Achievement

Further analysis sought to investigate to what extent the attachment relationship factors predicted freshman GPA. Findings reveal that when considered as a whole, the quality of the relationship, parental support, parents as facilitators of independence, and parental expectations, explain a small percentage of the variance in freshman GPA (6%). However, none of these variables independently predict GPA. These findings suggest that, for the most part, parental relationship factors are not good predictors of grade point average in year one for this sample.

Even though the parental factors did not predict freshman student GPA, this does not necessarily indicate the attachment relationship does not influence student outcomes. For example, parental relationship variables as a group predicted 23.1% of the variance in freshman students' adjustment to college, and adjustment to college has been found to be an important predictor of academic success and persistence to graduation (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Wintre & Bowers, 2007). In addition, parental attachment has been positively associated with peer attachment, self-esteem, locus of control, optimism, scholastic competence, and intellectual ability, which aided in college adjustment (Fass & Tubman, 2002). The same ideas might apply to this sample. While the attachment relationship might not directly predict a large amount of variance in GPA, it does appear to assist students in their adjustment to college life, thereby contributing to their ability to succeed academically and overall.

Attempts to examine to what extent year three relationship variables predict year three GPA were met with similar outcomes as in year one. Specifically, as a whole, the relationship variables account for a small amount of the variance (7%) in GPA. However,

in year three, the quality of the relationship independently contributes to this variance. Furthermore, the subsequent findings from the mediator analysis confirm the parent-adult child relationship quality directly influences GPA, and does not do so via its influence on college student adjustment.

The fact that the quality of the parent-child relationship is a significant predictor in year three and not in year one is a surprising finding. As researchers have postulated, facets of the attachment relationship are thought to remain largely stable throughout the lifespan (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Davila & Levy, 2006; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kenny & Sirin, 2006). Perhaps the changing nature of the lives of college students and their relationships from year one to year three explains these findings. Many of the third-year students interviewed expressed their relationships had evolved into a more mature, friend-like relationship, which students simultaneously reported as being a positive influence in their lives. Therefore, the parent-adult child relationship might need to undergo this evolution into a more mature relationship in order to exert a significant influence on college outcomes such as GPA.

While these findings were statistically significant, the small amount of variance in GPA these variables explained suggests that overall, parent-adult child attachment relationship variables are not good predictors of GPA in year three either. Similar to year one, relationship variables as a group in year three predicted 22% of academic adjustment scores, therefore proposed connections between academic adjustment and academic achievement could be applicable to year three results as well.

It is important to note that the present study utilized an overall measure of adjustment to college, as determined by the total score on the SACQ, and did not



investigate the adaptation to college subscales separately. Emerging research has asserted these subscales may contribute differently to college student achievement, thus examining the subscales independently could offer a more thorough explanation of the role college adjustment plays in academic achievement. For example, in their examination of the relationship between the SACQ subscales and college retention, Wintre and Bowers (2007) found goal and institutional commitment was a positive predictor of college persistence, whereas social adjustment was a negative predictor. Furthermore, they found academic adjustment indirectly influenced persistence, while personal-emotional adjustment was not related to college persistence. Thus, examining the adjustment subscales independently might have influenced the current findings in regard to academic achievement. Future research could benefit from examining the subscales in an analysis, as opposed to using the overall SACQ score.

#### Parental Expectations and Academic Achievement

The second aim of this research was to reveal the relationship between perceived parental expectations and college student academic achievement. Surprisingly, parental academic expectations were neither significantly related to nor predictive of GPA for students at year one or year three. These findings are in opposition to accounts of the positive influence of parental expectations at earlier periods in students' lives. For example, during childhood and adolescence parental expectations have been found to contribute to students' positive outlook on challenges, their abilities to overcome adversities, and achieve academic success (Fan, 2001; Patrikakou, 1997; Trusty, 2000). Furthermore, parental expectations have been found to greatly contribute to younger

students' academic achievement via their influence on students' motivation (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Wong, et al., 2002).

Studies examining parental expectations influence on college students' achievement have been less affirmative. For example, Walker and Satterwhite (2002) found that 63% of Caucasian and 43% of African American college students reported feeling their parents put pressure on them to succeed in college, however, over 60% of both of these groups did not perceive these pressures as either positive or negative. Furthermore, their findings suggested the students' personal expectations for their grades were the most significant in explaining GPA (Walker & Satterwhite). In addition, Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005) also found familial expectation motivations held by Latino college students were unrelated to their student outcomes. Therefore, the quantitative data results seem to be in line with emerging data exploring the role of parental expectations in the lives of college students.

Student responses to the interview questions regarding parental expectations shed some light on the discrepancies between the positive influence the expectations have at earlier periods in children's lives but not in college. Specifically, 63.8% of year three students indicated parental expectations were a positive force in their lives, however, over one third of students were neutral or indifferent to their parents' expectations (32.8%). The reasons cited for students' indifference to parental expectations included students' sharing the same or having higher expectations for themselves, high familiarity of parental expectations, and/or not thinking about expectations because they came naturally to the student. When asked how students felt about their parents' expectations, more

students mentioned their expectations were the same or exceeded their parents' expectations (32.8%) than described parental expectations as motivating (19.0%).

Thus, by college, students might incorporate parental expectations into their own expectations, thereby minimizing the effects of the perceptions of such expectations. In addition, adult children could determine their own expectations for college, separate from their parents' expectations. Research has documented that students' motivations for attending college based on their own personal interests and desires predicted their college adjustment (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005).

Finally, the measure used to assess parental expectations might contribute to the lack of relationship within these findings. The three questions asked of this sample in regard to parental expectations were, "It is important to my parent(s) that I do well in college," "if I receive a bad grade my parent(s) would be upset," and "my parents made it clear what was expected of me in college." None of these questions specifically address the parents' types of expectations or the students' perceptions of these expectations. Thus utilizing this measure for expectations might produce an inadequate account of how parental expectations influence students' lives. Future research could include a measure that explores the actual parental expectations held and students' understanding of such expectations.

#### Changes in the Relationship Over Time

The third aim of this study was to investigate changes in the parent-college student relationship over time. As previously noted, two findings stand out in regard to changes in the attachment relationship over time and student academic outcomes. First, parents as facilitators as independence was not correlated with GPA in year one but was

significant in year three. Second, parental support was significantly related to year one GPA but was not correlated with year three GPA. These findings suggest students could be using parents for different purposes in year one and year three and/or that dynamics within the parent-adult child relationship evolve throughout the college tenure.

Student responses to the online interview support this idea. When asked about how students' relationships have changed since they enrolled, students overwhelmingly described their relationships as changing in a positive manner (72.4%), and many of the students who described this change as positive felt the relationships improved because of an increased parental trust and increased independence from their parents. Furthermore, 43.1% of the students indicated their relationships transitioned into a more mature and friend-like dynamic. These descriptions of changes in the parent-adult child relationship that have occurred since the student enrolled in college support the premise that this relationship undergoes some sort of a transformation during this time. Findings regarding which factors are related to student outcomes provide good evidence that the transition to college, and students' mastery over this transition, might play a large role in this change from reliance on parents to independence from parents.

#### Towards an Operational Definition of Parental Involvement During College

The final inquiry of this study included the goal of more clearly defining parental involvement during the college years. Data from the interviews with third-year students explain how students perceive parental involvement during the college years. First, participants portrayed that parents are already doing a good job of maintaining appropriate levels of involvement in students' lives, as over three-fourths of students (79.3%) described their parents' level of involvement as positive and that they liked it as

it was. Sentiments echoed by many of the students included a description of their parents as finding a balance between involvement and separation, whereby the parents were available when the students needed support, but did not intrude upon the students' lives or devalue their thoughts. Much can be learned from the select group of students (20.7%) who stated they wanted to change something about their parents' current level of involvement. Interestingly, the vast majority of these students conveyed they wanted their parents to be more involved in their lives, especially in their personal interests. These findings demonstrate that students desire their parents to remain involved in their college lives and adult interests.

As almost three-quarters of the students interviewed accessed their parents for some type of support at least once a week, providing support seems to be the most essential way parents can remain involved in students' lives. Overall, a majority of students (86.2%) felt their parents were capable of supporting them in college. Examples of supportive acts recognized by students included phone calls, emails, letters, packages, words of encouragement, personal visits, and financial contributions. A quarter of students also specified that their parents asking direct questions about their lives was an important way in which they stayed involved. Situations where students relied upon parents for support while in college included financial support and assistance with coursework, major selection, relationships, personal emotional needs, and future planning. The student responses imply parents are finding ways to remain involved in the lives of their adult children while in college. In addition, they affirm that college students, even in their third year, require and access support from their parents, and do so frequently. The main theme that seems to emerge is that beneficial involvement is not

defined as any one particular type of involvement, instead beneficial involvement is more about parents being available, interested, and meeting the individual needs of the adult-child.

### Summary of Findings

In sum, the results of this research suggest parents are very much involved in the lives of college students, and the parental relationship during the college years is associated with college student outcomes. Some of the more interesting results found in the data were evidence that the influence of the parent-adult child relationship changed in regard to the utilization of parents as sources of support and parents as facilitators of independence from year one to year three. The way in which these roles trade places from year one to year three suggest an evolution might take place in the parent-adult child relationship during the college years. Most likely, these changes occur due to the initial transition to college and the mastery of its challenges via reliance on parental support.

Futhermore, the quality of the parent-adult child relationship was a predictor of student academic achievement in year three but not in year one. This supports the idea that the relationship undergoes a change during the college years. Responses from the student interviews reveal many of the relationships matured into a more friend-like dynamic with increased communication and trust. While this research was purposefully limited to exploring the influence of the parental relationship on college students' academic achievement, future research could examine relationships of parents and adult children who are not enrolled in college to explore whether this evolution in the relationship takes place only in the college setting or also in other contexts.

These findings support the tenets of attachment theory, as the college transition could be considered a strange situation in the college student's life, much like the strange situation in Ainsworth's (1991) attachment research. Specifically, this research suggests students are relying on their parents for support while in college, and this support is especially vital in conquering the initial transition to college. Subsequently, once this has been achieved, students practice the goal of the attachment relationship, autonomy. Thus, the attachment relationship is important for college student development, as this relationship provides tools and support necessary to navigate the college environment and achieve degree attainment.

### Strengths and Limitations

Although much of the past research on college students has been a snapshot of the college experience at a given time, this research investigates trends in the parent-adult child attachment relationship and student outcomes over a period of three years. Furthermore, this study includes a diverse sample of college students, and therefore adds tremendously to the body of research investigating the parent-adult child relationship and factors that influence students' degree attainment.

In addition, this research is a multimethod study, and thus the utilization of qualitative and quantitative research methods generated a more detailed account of the parent-adult child relationship during the college years. While each of these methods has its own inherent strengths, and produces relevant data in this research, the results from both were further analyzed in combination to provide a more thorough understanding of the data. Given these improvements, however, this research includes limitations that should be considered when reviewing the findings and when planning future research.

First, the utilization of a convenience sampling method limits the generalizability of the results, as students who were asked to participate might be different from the population of all college students. In addition, students who responded to the surveys and follow-up interview might have been fundamentally different from those who chose not to participate. For example, students might have been more inclined to participate in the research if they had positive relationships to report and/or were in good academic standing. Social desirability bias might influence the findings as well, as students could have provided answers that portrayed themselves and their parents in a more positive manner than actually existed. Therefore, findings could be skewed overall in a more positive direction, and might not be representative of the population at large.

The study sample is also comprised of a large amount of female students. Specifically, 82.1% of students who participated in the survey were female and 17.9% of interview participants were male. While national attendance rates reveal more female students are enrolled in college than male students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), the rates are estimated to be 56.9%, and therefore this sample over-represents female college students. Furthermore, while the percentage of Caucasian respondents (74%) is somewhat aligned with the national proportion of college students who are Caucasian (67.1%), the Hispanic population is over-represented and the African American population is under-represented in this sample (U.S. Census Bureau). Therefore, caution should be used when applying findings to college students at a national level.

The results of this research rely upon students' self-reports of the parent-adult child relationship. As Ptacek et al. (1999) found, parent and child reports of the depth of their relationships were not highly correlated. In other words, parent and child



perceptions of the attachment relationship might vary. Thus, future research could include both parent and student perceptions regarding their relationships in order to gain more insight into the facets of the parent-adult child relationships. Doing so would also allow for an exploration into whose perceptions (parent or student) are related to academic outcomes.

The measures used also could influence findings in this research. For example, the current study uses the students' overall GPA score at the end of the semester as the only indicator of academic achievement. The utilization of this measure does not take into account improvements in student GPA nor any other marker of academic achievement such as achievement test scores, instructor comments, and/or actual progress in hours towards a college degree. Future studies could incorporate multiple variables to measure knowledge and academic achievement. Doing so would provide a more comprehensive view of student achievement.

In addition, the measure used to assess parental expectations only includes three questions which specifically asked the student to indicate to what degree they agreed with the following: "It is important to my parent(s) that I do well in college," "If I receive a bad grade my parent(s) would be upset," and "My parents made it clear what was expected of me in college." The limited scope of these questions could contribute to the absence of a relationship between expectations and academic outcomes. Future research should use a more thorough measure of parental expectations.

Parenting style might also be a confounding variable, as it could be associated with parental relationship factors and student outcomes. Future studies could include an examination of parenting styles (i.e. authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive), in

addition to the parental relationship variables examined in this research. This would further explore not only how students feel about their relationships with their parents, but also highlight which parenting styles the students are referring to, thereby providing more evidence regarding which parenting practices are most influential and beneficial for college students.

### Implications

Parents and post-secondary institutions have a vested interest in college students. It is imperative that awareness is raised as to the benefits of continued parental involvement during the college years. This research can be utilized by parents and students in their quest to renegotiate levels of parental involvement during the transition to college and throughout subsequent years. It is important for parents to understand they remain important facets of their children's lives into adulthood, and therefore should continue to offer support and remain involved in their college students' interests.

Institutions of higher education will benefit from assisting students towards degree completion. The findings of this study should encourage universities to facilitate the continuation of the parent-adult child relationship for the betterment of the student. Universities can utilize this information as they advise incoming students on ways to manage the transition to college. Specifically, they can inform students that their established support networks are important during the transition to college, and that continuing to access their parents for support during the college years can be beneficial to them.

In addition, institutions could provide literature to parents of college freshmen informing them of the importance of their continued involvement in the lives of their

children, and provide them with ways in which parents can remain involved. Through establishing university sponsored parent-student activities, providing meeting facilities for families, creating parent organizations, initiating parent support groups, and offering workshops for parents who wish to remain involved but would like more information on how to do so, universities can send a message to parents and students that this relationship has a place in the college environment. Delivering this message to parents and students during students' first year appears to be crucial, as establishing positive parental involvement patterns predicted overall adjustment to college.

In closing, researchers should continue to investigate all factors that might assist college students in degree attainment. Surprisingly, as the parental relationship greatly influences younger children's educational endeavors (Fan, 2001; Fass & Tubman; Nord & West; Patrikakou, 2004; Richaud De Minzi, 2006) and has been associated with well-being throughout the adult years (Amato, 1994; Kenny & Sirin, 2006; Love & Murdock, 2004), it remains an understudied topic in research on predictors of college success. These findings support the idea that this relationship can be utilized as a valuable tool to enhance students' adjustment to college and promote retention. While this study adds to the literature on the attachment relationship during the college years, a call for more research is in order, to gain a thorough understanding of this relationship and how it influences the lives of college students.

## APPENDIX A

### INVITATION E-MAIL

Dear [STUDENT'S NAME],

Thank you for your recent participation in the University Success Project. Your thoughtful responses will provide valuable information regarding student experiences at Texas State.

My name is Brittany and I am currently a graduate student working on my Master's thesis in Family and Child Studies. I would really appreciate it if you could help me out. I am conducting some follow-up interviews with students in order to learn more about the role parents play in the lives of college students.

This follow-up interview will be conducted via TRACS (similar to Blackboard) and will be scheduled at your convenience. We will send you an anonymous username so that no information you provide can be traced back to you. The interview should take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time. In return for completing the interview, you will receive \$20.

Please reply to this email if you are interested in participating in the follow-up interview. I will provide you with an anonymous username, the interview directions, and a schedule of available interview times.

These interviews are part of a longitudinal study conducted by Drs. Ani Yazedjian and Michelle Toews, faculty members at Texas State University-San Marcos, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. If you have any questions about any portion of this study, please call Dr. Ani Yazedjian at (512) 245-2412 or Dr. Michelle Toews at (512) 245-2405.

Thanks in advance for your help.

Brittany

## APPENDIX B

### SCHEDULE E-MAIL

Dear [Student Name],

Thank you for helping me find out more about the role parents play in the lives of college students! I appreciate your quick reply.

This follow-up interview will be conducted via TRACS, so you can complete the interview at a time that is most convenient for you. It should take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time. In return for completing the interview, you will receive \$20. I have assigned you an anonymous username below so that no information you provide can be traced back to you.

Current available interview times are:

[Listed Interview Times]

Please let me know **three** interview times you would be available to complete your interview. I will then send you a confirmation email with the time reserved for you and a reminder email the day before the scheduled interview. If none of the times I've listed work for you, please let me know and we can work something out.

To complete the interview, you will need to visit [www.txstate.edu](http://www.txstate.edu)

Select **TRACS** (on the bottom left of the screen).

Sign in using user id: **univsuccess###@yahoo.com** and password: [###] (the login boxes are at the top right hand side of the page)

Select **Univ Success###** (at the top of the page)

The interview will be conducted in the "chat room" which should pull up once you enter the Univ Success[##] project page.

Please let me know if you have difficulty accessing TRACS or have any questions regarding the interview.

Thank you again for participating in this interview! I look forward to learning more about the role parents play in the lives of Texas State college students.

Sincerely,  
Brittany

## APPENDIX C

### SCHEDULE CONFIRMATION E-MAIL

Hi [Student Name],

[Scheduled Day, Date, and Time] will be your interview time. Please let me know if you have any questions before then. I will send you a reminder email the night before your interview.

I look forward to chatting with you!

Thanks again,

Brittany

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW REMINDER EMAIL

Hi [Student Name],

This is just a reminder that our interview is scheduled for [Interview Time]. I'll be logged in and will meet you in the TRACS chat room at that time. Please let me know if you have any issues logging into TRACS using the anonymous username and password I provided you. I have included the login instructions again below.

To complete the interview, you will need to visit [www.txstate.edu](http://www.txstate.edu)

Select **TRACS** (on the bottom left of the screen).

Sign in using user id: **univsuccess[##]@yahoo.com** and password: [###] (the login boxes are at the top right hand side of the page)

Select **Univ Success[##]** (at the top of the page)

The interview will be conducted in the "chat room" which should pull up once you enter the Univ Success[##] project page.

Please let me know if you have difficulty accessing TRACS or have any questions regarding the interview.

Talk to you tomorrow,  
Brittany

## APPENDIX E

### ONLINE INTERVIEW

- Hi [Assigned Username]. Thank you again for helping me find out more about the role parents play in the lives of college students. Are you ready to start our interview?
- [Student Response]
- Great! First, I need you to read through the following consent form (I will post it next) and let me know if you agree to participate in the interview by sending me back a message that says “I agree” or “I decline”.
- **THE CONSENT FORM:**  
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this follow-up interview. We will be discussing the role parents play in the lives of college students. This interview will be conducted via TRACS. You have already been sent an anonymous username so that no information you provide can be traced back to you. The interview should take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time. In return for completing the interview, you will receive \$20.

We will not use your real name in any of our final reports. Any information you give us and everything you say will be kept confidential. We will not share the information with university personnel. Interview transcripts and other personal information will be kept in a secure location in Dr. Yazedjian’s office at the University.

If you decide to participate, we request that you type in “I Agree” at the bottom of this form. By agreeing to participate, it means that you agree to take part in the study and that you know what the study is about. Please feel free to ask questions about the study. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You should know that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. You will not suffer any negative consequences for choosing not to participate in or choosing to withdraw from the interview. We will email you a copy of the consent form for your records.

These interviews are part of a longitudinal study conducted by Drs. Ani Yazedjian and Michelle Toews, faculty members at Texas State University-San Marcos, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. If you have any questions about any portion of this study, please call Dr. Ani Yazedjian at (512) 245-2412 or Dr. Michelle Toews at (512) 245-2405.



You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this study. By typing “I Agree” below, you are indicating that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. (THIS IS THE END) I'll wait for your response.

- [Student Response]
- Great! We'll begin. I'll now ask you a series of questions that I'd like for you to answer as best you can.
- How would you describe your relationship with your parents?
- [Student Response]
- In what types of situations have you asked your parents for help while in college?
- [Student Response]
- What types of things do your parents do to show you support while you are in college?
- [Student Response]
- How often do you use your parents for support?
- [Student Response]
- How do you feel about your parents' ability to support you in college?
- [Student Response]
- How do your parents feel about your ability to make your own decisions?
- [Student Response]
- What do your parents expect of you?
- [Student Response]
- How have your parents expressed these expectations to you?
- [Student Response]
- How do these expectations make you feel?
- [Student Response]
- We just have two more questions to go now. Thank you for your thoughtful responses [Assigned Username]. In what ways has your relationship with your parents changed since you enrolled in college?
- [Student Response]
- How do you feel about your parents' level of involvement?
- [Student Response]
- Thank you [Assigned Username]! That's all I have for you. Would you like to add anything else at this time?
- [Student Response]
- We are all done then. Regarding the \$20 payment... Do you receive paychecks from Texas State?
- [Student Response]
- [Message about how the student will receive his or her \$20 for participating based on the above response]
- THANK YOU! Have a great week.

## APPENDIX F

### PARENTAL ATTACHMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following pages contain statements that describe family relationships and the kinds of feelings and experiences frequently reported by young adults. Please respond to each item by filling in the number on a scale of 1 to 5 that best describes your parents, your relationship with your parents, and your experiences and feelings. Please provide a single rating to describe your parents and your relationship with them. If only one parent is living, or if your parents are divorced, respond with reference to your living parent or the parent with whom you feel closer.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all (0-10%)	Somewhat (11-35%)	A Moderate Amount (36-65%)	Quite a Bit (66-90%)	Very Much (91-100%)

#### **In general, my parents....**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>_____ 1. are persons I can count on to provide emotional support when I feel troubled.</p> <p>_____ 2. support my goals and interests.</p> <p>_____ 3. live in a different world.</p> <p>_____ 4. understand my problems and concerns.</p> <p>_____ 5. respect my privacy.</p> <p>_____ 6. restrict my freedom or independence.</p> <p>_____ 7. are available to give me advice or guidance when I want it.</p> <p>_____ 8. take my opinions seriously.</p> <p>_____ 9. encourage me to make my own decisions.</p> <p>_____ 10. are critical of what I can do.</p> <p>_____ 11. impose their ideas and values on me.</p> | <p>_____ 12. have given me as much attention as I have wanted.</p> <p>_____ 13. are persons to whom I can express differences of opinion on important matters.</p> <p>_____ 14. have no idea what I am feeling or thinking.</p> <p>_____ 15. have provided me with the freedom to experiment and learn things on my own.</p> <p>_____ 16. are too busy or otherwise involved to help me.</p> <p>_____ 17. have trust and confidence in me.</p> <p>_____ 18. try to control my life.</p> <p>_____ 19. protect me from danger and difficulty.</p> <p>_____ 20. ignore what I say.</p> |
|---|---|

- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. are sensitive to my feelings and needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. are disappointed in me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. give me advice whether or not I want it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. respect my judgment and decisions, even if different from what they would want.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. do thing for me, which I could do for myself
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. are persons whose expectations I feel
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. treat me like a younger child.

---

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Somewhat	A Moderate Amount	Quite a Bit	Very Much
(0-10%)	(11-35%)	(36-65%)	(66-90%)	(91-100%)

---

**During recent visits or time spent together, my parents were persons...**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I looked forward to seeing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. with whom I argued
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. with whom I felt relaxed and comfortable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. who made me angry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32 I wanted to be with all the time
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33 towards whom I felt cool and distant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. who go on my nerves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. who aroused feelings of guilt and anxiety.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. to whom I enjoyed telling about the things I have done and learned.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. for whom I felt a feeling of love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. I tried to ignore.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. to whom I confided my most personal thoughts and feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. whose company I enjoyed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41. I avoided telling about my experiences.

---

**Following time spent together, I leave my parents...**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 42. with warm and positive feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 43. feeling let down and disappointed by my family.
-

---

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all (0-10%)	Somewhat (11-35%)	A Moderate Amount (36-65%)	Quite a Bit (66-90%)	Very Much (91-100%)

---

**When I have a serious problem or an important decision to make...**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 44. I look to my family for support, encouragement, and/or guidance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 45. I seek help from a professional, such as a therapist, college counselor, or clergy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 46. I think about how my family might respond and what they might say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 47. I work it out on my own, without help or discussion with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 48. I discuss the matter with a friend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 49. I know that my family will know what to do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 50. I contact my family if I am not able to resolve the situation after talking it over with my friends.
- 

**When I go to my parents for help...**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 51. I feel more confident in my ability to handle the problems on my own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 52. I continue to feel unsure of myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 53. I feel that I would have obtained more understanding and comfort from a friend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 54. I feel confident that things will work out as long as I follow my parent's advice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 55. I am disappointed with their response.

## APPENDIX G

### PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

For each of the following statements, please circle the number that best describes how you usually feel:

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
It is important to my parent(s) that I do well in college.	1	2	3	4
If I receive a bad grade my parent(s) would be upset.	1	2	3	4
My parents made it clear what was expected of me in college.	1	2	3	4

## APPENDIX H

### STUDENT ADAPTATION TO COLLEGE QUESTIONNAIRE

**For each of the following statements, please circle the number that best describes how you usually feel:**

		Applies Very Closely to Me					Doesn't Apply to Me at All			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	I feel that I fit in well as part of the college environment									
2.	I have been feeling tense or nervous lately.									
3.	I have been keeping up to date on my academic work.									
4.	I am meeting as many people, and making as many friends as I would like at college.									
5	I know why I'm in college and what I want out of it.									
6	I am finding academic work at college difficult									
7.	Lately I have been feeling blue and moody a lot									
8.	I am very involved with social activities in college.									
9.	I am adjusting well to college.									
10.	I have not been functioning well during examinations.									
11.	I have felt tired much of the time lately.									
12.	Being on my own, taking responsibility for myself, has not been easy.									
13	I am satisfied with the level at which I am performing academically.									
14.	I have had informal, personal contacts with college professors.									
15	I am pleased now about my decision to go to college.									
16	I am pleased now about my decision to attend this particular college									
17	I'm not working as hard as I should at my course work									
18.	I have several close social ties at college									

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. My academic goals and purposes are well defined.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 20. I haven't been able to control my emotions well lately.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 21. I'm not really smart enough for the academic work<br>I am expected to be doing now.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 22. Lonesomeness for home is a source of difficulty for me now.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 23. Getting a college degree is important to me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 24. My appetite has been good lately  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 25. I haven't been very efficient in the use of study time lately.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 26. I enjoy living in a college dormitory. (Please omit if<br>you do not live in a dormitory; any university housing<br>should be regarded as a dormitory.)                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 27. I enjoy writing papers for courses.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 28. I have been having a lot of headaches lately.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 29. I really haven't had much motivation for studying lately.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 30. I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities<br>available at college.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 31. I've given a lot of thought lately to whether I should<br>ask for help from the Psychological/Counseling Services<br>Center or from a psychotherapist outside of college. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 32. Lately I have been having doubts regarding the value<br>of a college education.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 33. I am getting along very well with my roommate(s)<br>at college. (Please omit if you do not have a roommate).  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 34. I wish I were at another college or university.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 35. I've put on (or lost) too much weight recently.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 36. I am satisfied with the number and variety of courses<br>available at college.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 37. I feel that I have enough social skills to get along well<br>in the college setting.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 38. I have been getting angry too easily lately.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 39. Recently I have had trouble concentrating when<br>I try to study.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 40. I haven't been sleeping very well.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 41. I'm not doing well enough academically for the amount of work I put in.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 42. I am having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at college.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 43. I am satisfied with the quality or the caliber of courses available at college.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 44. I am attending classes regularly.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 45. Sometimes my thinking gets muddled up too easily.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 46. I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in the social activities at college. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 47. I expect to stay at this college for a bachelor's degree.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 48. I haven't been mixing too well with the opposite sex lately.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 49. I worry a lot about my college expenses.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 50. I am enjoying my academic work at college.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 51. I have been feeling lonely a lot at college.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 52. I am having a lot of trouble getting started on homework assignments.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 53. I feel I have good control over my life situation at college.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 54. I am satisfied with my program of courses for this semester/quarter.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 55. I have been feeling lonely a lot at college lately.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 56. I feel I am very different from other students at college in ways that I don't like.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 57. On balance, I would rather be home than here  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 58. Most of the things I am interested in are not related to any of my course work at college.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 59. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to transferring to another college.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 60. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to dropping out of college altogether and for good.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 61. I find myself giving considerable thought to taking time off from college and finishing later.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 62. I am very satisfied with the professors I have now in my courses.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |



- |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 63. I have some good friends or acquaintances at college with whom I can talk about any problems I have.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 64. I am experiencing a lot of difficulty coping with the stresses imposed upon me in college.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 65. I am quite satisfied with my social life at college.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 66. I'm quite satisfied with my academic situation at college  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 67 I feel confident that I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

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