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THE RELATIONSHIP OF ADOLESCENT ATTACHMENT PATTERNS TO
COLLEGE STUDENT ADJUSTMENT

by
Cathleen M. Hutchison

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
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at
Rowan University
May 20, 2002

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 5/20/02

ABSTRACT

Cathleen M. Hutchison
THE RELATIONSHIP OF ADOLESCENT ATTACHMENT PATTERNS TO
COLLEGE STUDENT ADJUSTMENT
2001-2002

Dr. Mary Louise Kerwin
Master of Arts in Applied Psychology

The purpose of the present study was to examine if a relationship exists between attachment to parents and peers and college student adjustment during the freshmen year. Forty-seven undergraduate freshmen students between the ages of 18-19 participated in this study. Each participant completed four questionnaires including a demographic information survey, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, the Texas Social Behavior Inventory, and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. Correlation analyses determined that there was a significant positive relationship between attachment to parents and peers and college student adjustment. Analyses of Variance determined that there were significant differences between gender in adjustment to college, and in mother and peer attachment. No significant differences were found regarding gender and father attachment or residency status and adjustment to college or attachment patterns.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Cathleen M. Hutchison

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2001-2002

Dr. Mary Louise Kerwin

Master of Arts in Applied Psychology

This study investigated relationships among college adjustment and attachment, as well as effects of gender and residency status on adjustment and attachment. A positive relationship exists between college adjustment and parental and peer attachment. Males and females differed on adjustment, mother, and peer attachment. No significant differences were found among residency status, adjustment, or attachment.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Attachment theory has been studied in infants and children for a long time (Bradford & Lyddon, 1994). Attachment describes the relationship bond people have with others, primarily caregivers (Ainsworth, 1989). Attachment in infancy has been shown to affect later childhood behaviors, and more recently adolescent and adult behavior and relationships (Bradford & Lyddon, 1994). One of the most frequent ways of studying attachment in young children is with the Strange Situation (Ainsworth, 1989). The Strange Situation measures a child's reaction when a parent or caregiver leaves the room and the child is left with a stranger (Ainsworth, 1989). Attachment, once measured, is broken into three categories: secure attachment, avoidant attachment, and resistant attachment. Infants who are securely attached show a preference for their parents, are upset upon separation from their caregiver, but can be calmed when reunited. Infants who exhibit avoidant attachment react similarly to either a stranger or parent, are often indifferent when separated from their parents, and have a tendency to avoid their parents upon reunification. Infants who exhibit resistant attachment are not easily comforted seek their parents, without exploring, remain close to their parents prior to a separation, and display some anger when reunited (Ainsworth, 1989).

Recent interest in attachment theory has extended from studying infants and children into studying the effects of attachment in late adolescence (Larose & Bernier, 2001). Attachment theory in late adolescence is theoretically related to attachment in

infancy (Kenny & Rice, 1995). Attachment theory is based on how individuals respond to stressful situations. In infants, attachment is operationalized using the Strange Situation, where parents leave the infant, and the infants' reaction is measured. A parent leaving an infant is typically a stressful event for the infant. Adolescent attachment patterns are often measured during the transition from high school to college. Adjustment to college is one example of an analogous, naturally occurring Strange Situation that occurs in adolescence (Kenny & Rice, 1995). The new environment in which adolescents are placed tests their ability to adapt to new situations. This transition is typically a stressful event for them, and adolescents' reactions are measured. Secure attachment in late adolescence is characterized by independence, while still relying on parents for help and emotional support when a problem arises (Kenny & Rice, 1995). Adolescents who are securely attached take risks in leaving home to attend college or in forming interpersonal relationships (Kenny & Rice, 1995). Securely attached adolescents also rate themselves as self-reliant, trustworthy, emotionally stable, and view themselves as good and worthy people (Kenny & Rice, 1995). Avoidant or resistant attachment in adolescence may be exhibited by an inability to form relationships or by a lack of ability to trust others (Harvey & Byrd, 2000). Often adolescents who are characterized as having an avoidant or resistant attachment pattern report more depressive and anxiety symptoms, are untrusting of others, and report lower self esteem (Harvey & Byrd, 2000; Kenny & Rice, 1995).

Attachment theory has also been applied to adolescence in studying how it impacts academic performance during the first year of college. Adjustment to college varies greatly among students. Some students adjust rather quickly and without any

significant problems, while others have a much more difficult time, especially with academic, social, and emotional issues (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Kenny & Perez, 1996; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Lapsley, Rice, & FitzGerald, 1990). The course load is typically greater in college than in high school, and this can often lead to stress among some students (Kenny & Perez, 1996). Social and emotional adjustment can be difficult for some students in having to make new friends or deal with isolation or lack of support, especially during the first semester at college (Kenny & Perez, 1996; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989).

Understanding those factors that affect adjustment to college is important for several reasons. One, colleges and universities will be better equipped to develop programs and orientations that ease the transition to college. Second, college counselors often treat freshmen that are having a difficult time adjusting to school. Understanding the role of attachment, or the ability to form healthy interpersonal relationships or rely on others, will help those counselors develop more effective intervention and treatment plans. Finally, the more professionals understand about the transition from high school to college, the more high schools and parents will be better prepared to help students.

Past research has shown a positive relationship between college adjustment and attachment. Students with a secure attachment rate themselves higher on various measures of college adjustment, while students with avoidant or resistant attachment rate themselves lower in college adjustment (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Lapsley, Rice, & FitzGerald, 1990; Rice et al., 1995). Other research has also supported this theory in finding that student with more secure attachment styles report less psychological symptoms and higher levels of social competency (Bradford & Lyddon, 1993; Kenny &

Donaldson, 1991). Because students with higher levels of attachment are also reporting lower levels of symptomology and higher competency it can be suggested that this is also indicative of higher levels of college student adjustment. Past research has been conducted involving freshmen students enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses. The setting of the previous research has been both private and public universities, in both rural and urban areas. Some studies examined attachment using the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, the Parental Attachment Questionnaire, or the Psychological Separation Inventory. Adjustment has been measured using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, the California Adjustment Inventory, or the Texas Social Behavior Inventory.

There are conflicting reports in the present research on whether gender affects attachment and college adjustment (Kenny & Rice, 1995). Some research has shown that females report higher levels of attachment to family than males (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989). Other research has suggested that there are no differences in parental attachment between genders (Lapsley, Rice, & FitzGerald, 1990; Rice et al., 1995). One potential reason for this conflicting research is the different measures used to examine attachment patterns. In summary, conflicting past research indicates the need for further studies examining the relationship between gender and adolescent attachment to parents.

Another important factor in college adjustment, whether students are commuters or live on campus in residence halls, has rarely been studied. One research study examining attachment and adjustment found no difference in commuters and residential students ratings of attachment and adjustment (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993). This study

however, involved participants from an urban university. Students who commute to college generally stay with their parents, while students living in residence halls are essentially living independently for the first time. Students commuting to college would not face the same adjustment process as those staying on campus. It is essential to study attachment and college student adjustment as a function of residency status more thoroughly among different populations.

The purpose of the present study is to replicate and extend previous research, which suggests that college student adjustment is predicted by adolescent attachment (Lapsley, Rice, & FitzGerald, 1990). Lapsley et al. (1990) studied attachment, college student adjustment, and identity in the freshmen and upper-class years. Their study involved the administration of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, and the Aspects of Identity Questionnaire. Their sample was recruited from a private, highly selective, Catholic University. Lapsley et al. (1990) examined gender without finding significant effects in ratings of parental attachment. Because of conflictual past research it is important to examine gender effects for all dependent variables, especially parental attachment in this study. Lapsley et al. (1990) did not examine residency status and any role it may have in understanding adjustment or attachment patterns. The present study will utilize only freshmen students and will not explore identity. This study will explore effects of residential status. Finally it should be mentioned that the population used in this study may be different than in Lapsley et al. (1990). The present study recruited students from a large public university that does not have a religious affiliation. This may create differences in results based on differing financial, educational, and religious backgrounds. Freshmen who report higher

levels of attachment will report better college adjustment than those who report lower levels of attachment. Females will differ from men in reports of attachment and college adjustment, with females reporting higher levels of attachment and reporting better scores of adjustment than males. Commuters and residential students will differ in their reports of attachment and college adjustment, with residential students reporting better levels of adjustment and higher levels of attachment.

Chapter 2

Method

Participants

Forty-seven freshmen year students, age 17-19 years old, attending a public university in the Northeastern United States participated in this study. Students were recruited from the Psychology Department subject pool and received credit for research participation. Students were also recruited from a freshmen residence hall located on campus.

Design

Gender and residency status (whether students lived on or off campus) were the independent variables in this study. The dependent variables were ratings of college student adjustment and ratings of attachment to parents and peers.

Measures

Demographic Information. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire which asked questions regarding gender, age, residency status, with whom they currently live, marital status, Grade Point Average, involvement in Greek life, if they were a parent, and also if they had ever attended college before. Participants had four options regarding residency status, whether they live at home, on campus, off campus but not with their parents, or some other living arrangement. Each sheet was numerically coded, and corresponded with other questionnaire materials to match participant response while

maintaining confidentiality. Demographic information was kept separate from other testing materials.

Attachment. Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) is a self-report measure that assesses attachment to both parents and peers. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment is a 75-item questionnaire, with 25 items used to measure attachment to peers and 50 items for parental attachment (25 items for mother attachment and 25 items for father attachment). This measure is appropriate for adolescents aged 16-20 years old and was developed based on Bowlby's theory of attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The mother and father subscales of attachment can be summed together for an overall attachment to parents score (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Each subscale asks questions about trust, acceptance, and feelings of isolation or loneliness. Participants respond on a Likert scale from one to five on each item. Over a three-week period, the test-retest reliability ranges from .86 to .93 (Armsden, Mc Cauley, Greenberg, Burke & Mitchell, 1990). Armsden and Greenberg (1990) have also reported internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the mother attachment subscale of .87, the father attachment subscale of .89, and for the peer attachment subscale of .92.

College Adjustment. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989) measures college student adjustment. The SACQ is a 67 item self report scale with four subscales that measure academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and goal commitment/institutional adjustment. Participants respond on a Likert scale from one to nine on each item. Scores are totaled and higher

scores indicate better college adjustment. The SACQ has a full-scale reliability ranging from .92 to .95, and subscale reliability from .77 to .91 (Kramer & Conoley, 1992).

Adjustment. Texas Social Behavior Inventory (Helmreich, Stapp, & Ervin, 1974) is a self-report measure of individuals' feelings of social competence. The Texas Social Behavior Inventory is a 16-item questionnaire. Participants respond on a Likert Scale for each item, scores are then totaled. Higher scores indicate stronger feelings of social competency. McIntire and Levine (1984) have reported an internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .92, and a test-retest reliability of .93 for college students. Construct validity has been suggested by significant positive relationships between the Texas Social Behavior Inventory and the Self Esteem Scale and the California Psychological Inventory, and no relationship between the Texas Social Behavior Inventory and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from the General Psychology Participant Pool. Eligible freshmen students were asked to sign up for a one-hour time slot. Groups consisted of a maximum of ten people. Each group from the Psychology pool completed their questionnaires in the Psychology Conference Room. Students were also recruited within a freshmen dormitory on campus. All students were first given informed consent, and then handed a packet of questionnaires. The packet contained the demographic questionnaire first, then the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, the Texas Social Behavior Inventory, and finally the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. Students were instructed to read all directions at the beginning of each survey and to complete their questionnaires in the order in which they received them. After participants

completed and turned their packet into the Principal Investigator they were given debriefing information. The debriefing paper again explained that the purpose of the study was to examine relationships and college student adjustment, during the freshmen year. Contact information for the principal investigator and the faculty sponsor was given, should any participant have any further questions regarding the study. The debriefing also listed information regarding the University Counseling Center, including the phone number, in case their participation aroused any feelings or issues that they wanted to discuss with a professional staff member.

Chapter 3

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Participants in this study included 20 males and 27 females aged 18-19 years old. Seven participants lived at home with their parents and commuted to college, four participants reported living with a friend on campus, 35 participants were living on campus and living with at least one roommate, and one student reported living alone on campus. One of the 47 participants was currently married, and none of the participants was a parent. All participants were freshmen who never attended college before. Six participants reported being involved in Greek Life as a member of a fraternity or sorority, and 41 participants reported not being involved with Greek Life. Participants reported their Grade Point Average with a mean of 2.77, and a range of 0.4 to 4.0.

There were three measures used in this study, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, and the Texas Social Behavior Inventory. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment had three scales, one measuring attachment to mother, attachment to father, and attachment to peers. The possible range for each scale was 25-125. The mean score for the mother attachment scale was 95.55, the father attachment scale was 87.36, and peer attachment was 103.28. The mother and father attachment scales can be summed together to obtain overall attachment to parents (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The range for the parental attachment including both mother and father was 50-250, with a mean of 181. The

Texas Social Behavior Inventory had a possible range of scores from zero to 64, with the average score of 41.68. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire had several subscales, the range of possible scores for the full-scale adjustment was 67 to 603, with a mean score of 418.94. The academic adjustment subscale had a range from 24 to 216, with a mean of 143.96. The social adjustment subscale had a range from 20 to 180, with an average score of 131.85. Both the personal-emotional subscale and the goal commitment/institutional adjustment subscales had a possible range of 15 to 135. The personal emotional subscale had a mean of 84.68, and the goal commitment/institutional adjustment subscale had an average score of 106.64.

A paired-samples T-Test was conducted to determine if there was a difference between overall attachment to mother and overall attachment to father. Feelings of attachment to mother significantly differ from reports of father attachment ($t_{(46)} = 2.950$, $p = .005$). A paired-samples T-Test was also conducted to determine if any differences exist between overall attachment to mother and overall attachment to peers. Feelings of attachment to mother significantly differ from reports of peer attachment ($t_{(45)} = 3.227$, $p = .002$). Finally a paired-samples T-Test was conducted to determine if any differences existed between reports of attachment to father and peers. Feelings of attachment to father significantly differ from reports of peer attachment ($t_{(45)} = 4.915$, $p < .001$).

Validity of Measures

Correlations were run to ensure the validity of the measures used in this study. The correlation between students' self report of Grade Point Average and the academic adjustment scale of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire was statistically significant ($r = .606$, $p < .01$). Next, participants' reports on the social adjustment scale

of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire and the Texas Social Behavior Inventory were examined. There was a positive statistically significant relationship between these two measures ($r = .327, p = .025$). Finally a correlation was measured between the attachment to college or institution subscale of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire and the attachment to peers subscale on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment scale. There was also a significant positive relationship between these two measures ($r = .369, p = .012$).

Relationship Between Adjustment and Attachment

The second set of analyses that were conducted were correlations to determine if there was a relationship between overall adjustment to college, as measured by the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, and attachment to parents and peers, as measured by the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. The results suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between overall adjustment to college and attachment to peers ($r = .463, p = .001$). There is also a significant relationship between college student adjustment during the freshmen year and attachment to an individual's mother ($r = .486, p < .001$) and attachment to an individual's father ($r = .378, p = .004$). A correlation was then conducted on the relationship between college student adjustment and attachment to parents, including mother and father. This also indicated a significant positive relationship between the two variables ($r = .422, p = .002$). A correlation was also used to determine the relationship between social adjustment, as measured by The Texas Social Behavior Inventory and overall college student adjustment. There is a significant positive relationship between these two measures ($r = .354, p = .05$).

Effect of Residency and Gender on Adjustment and Attachment

Next, a 2 (gender) by 2 (residency) Analysis of Variance was conducted to determine if residential students differed from students commuting to college, and to determine if an effect for genders exists in their reports of attachment to their parents or peers or on their adjustment to college. Students originally had five options regarding residency status, however all forty-seven participants either lived on campus or at home with their parents. There was no significant difference between residential students and students who commute to college on reports of overall college adjustment ($F_{(1, 43)} = 2.355, p = .132$).

College Adjustment

Males and females differed significantly on reports of adjustment to college ($F_{(1, 43)} = 7.63, p = .008$). As hypothesized, females ($n = 27$, mean = 429.22) reported significantly higher scores on college student adjustment than males ($n = 20$, mean = 405.05). The analysis did reveal a significant interaction effect between gender and residency regarding students' overall adjustment to college ($F_{(1, 43)} = 4.407, p = .042$).

Tests of simple effects were conducted next to further examine the interaction effect between gender and residency status. First, males and females who lived on campus were studied to determine if there were any differences on reports of overall college adjustment. Using the Bonferoni correction ($\alpha = .025$), males and females living on campus did not differ significantly on reports of overall college adjustment ($F_{(1, 38)} = 1.443, p = .237$). Next males and females who commute to college were compared regarding their reports of college student adjustment. Males and females who commute to college did not differ significantly on reports of college student adjustment ($F_{(1, 5)} =$

4.956, $p = .077$). Finally a Cross Tabs Chi Square Analysis was conducted to determine if the proportion of male and female participants occurred equally at each level of residency. Male and female commuter and residential students participated at the expected proportion of 50% each ($\chi^2 = 3.016$, $p = .082$).

A 2 (gender) by 2 (residency) Analysis of Variance was also used to determine if males and females or commuter students and residential students differ on their reports of social adjustment as measured by the Texas Social Behavior Inventory. Males and females did not differ significantly in regards to social adjustment ($F_{(1, 43)} = 2.249$, $p = .141$). Students who live on campus as compared to those who commute to college do not differ significantly on reports of social adjustment ($F_{(1, 43)} = 1.017$, $p = .319$).

Attachment to Mother

Males and females also differed significantly on attachment to their mothers ($F_{(1, 43)} = 5.331$, $p = .026$), with females ($n = 27$, mean = 99.9) reporting more secure attachment styles than males ($n = 20$, mean = 89.7). There was no significant difference between students who live on campus and students who commute on reports of mother attachment ($F_{(1, 43)} = .951$, $p = .335$). The interaction between gender and residency was not significant in regards to mother attachment ($F_{(1, 43)} = 1.453$, $p = .235$).

Attachment to Father

Males and females did not differ significantly on their reports of father attachment ($F_{(1, 43)} = 1.661$, $p > .204$). Commuter students and residential students did not differ significantly on reports of father attachment ($F_{(1, 43)} = .020$, $p = .887$). The interaction between gender and residency was not significant in regards to father attachment ($F_{(1, 43)} = 1.890$, $p = .176$).

Attachment to Parents

There was a significant difference between males and females on reports of attachment to both mother and father ($F_{(1, 43)} = 4.707, p = .036$). Females ($n = 27$, mean = 188.7) reported significantly higher attachment ratings to both parents than males ($n = 20$, mean = 170.7). There was no significant difference between residency status in overall parent attachment ($F_{(1, 43)} = .062, p = .805$). The interaction between gender and residency was not significant in regards to parental attachment ($F_{(1, 43)} = 1.888, p = .177$).

Attachment to Peers

Males and females did not differ significantly on reports of attachment to their peers ($F_{(1, 42)} = 1.383, p = .246$). Residency status was also not a significant main effect in regards to attachment to peers ($F_{(1, 42)} = .265, p = .609$). Finally an interaction effect between gender and residency status, on attachment to peers was not significant ($F_{(1, 42)} = .040, p = .843$).

Predicting College Adjustment

Finally a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine what factors predicted overall college student adjustment. The predictors were gender, residency status, mother attachment, father attachment, and peer attachment. The model was statistically significant using the enter method ($R^2 = .385, F_{(5, 40)} = 4.998, p = .001$). Attachment to mother was a statistically significant predictor of college student adjustment ($\beta = .289, t_{(40)} = 1.983, p = .05$). Peer attachment was also a statistically significant predictor of overall ratings of college adjustment ($\beta = .343, t_{(40)} = 2.531, p = .015$).

Chapter 4

Discussion

One purpose of the present study was to determine if there is a relationship between attachment patterns to parents and peers and college student adjustment during the freshmen year. The results of this study suggest that both mother and father attachment and attachment to peers are positively related to college student adjustment. Participants who report stronger feelings of attachment to both parents and peers also report higher levels of overall adjustment to college. Adjustment to college in this study refers to academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal – emotional adjustment, and also attachment to the institution itself. This suggests then that students who are more securely attached to their parents and peers will have less difficulty in the transition to college during the freshmen year.

A second purpose of this study was to examine differences between gender and residency status in self-reported measures of college student adjustment during the freshmen year and feelings of attachment to parents and peers. It was hypothesized that males and females would report significantly different ratings of college student adjustment and also of attachment to parents and peers. Males and females did in fact differ in reports of adjustment to college, with females reporting better adjustment to college than males. Females also reported more attachment to mother and to parents than males. Males and females did not differ significantly in reports of father attachment or

attachment to peers. This also suggests that because both genders are reporting on average the same level of peer attachment, that peers are equally important in the lives of freshmen students. One implication of this finding then would suggest that it is critical to encourage and facilitate freshmen students' interactions with friends for both males and females.

Further examination revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between overall ratings of mother attachment and father attachment. This suggests that patterns of relationships between mothers and their children may be different than between fathers and their children, however more research on this specific idea would need to be further researched.

It was also hypothesized that residency status would affect adjustment and attachment patterns. There were no differences found between those students who live at home with their parents and those students who are living on campus with respect to college student adjustment or attachment relationships. Only seven of the forty-seven participants were living off campus, and all of these individuals were living at home. However, the very limited number of participants that were living off campus could explain why there were no differences between the two groups. It may be likely that a significant effect for residency status would have been found, had the number of students living on and off campus been more similar.

An interaction effect did exist for residency status and gender in regards to parent attachment and overall college adjustment. However after conducting Tests of Simple Effects it is likely that this interaction effect was due to the low frequency of participants who commute to college. Also, when comparing gender and residency status, among

college student adjustment, there was only one male who commuted to college that participated in this study. Because so few commuters participated in this study, and the unequal gender representations among each residency status, the results should be interpreted with caution. Further research would need to be conducted to determine if in fact a true interaction effect exists between residency status and gender on reports of attachment and adjustment.

Further testing revealed that both mother attachment and peer attachment are significant predictors of college student adjustment, replicating previous research in this area (Lapsley et al. 1990). Gender, residency status, and father attachment do not significantly predict adjustment. This suggests then that one of the most important parts of the college experience is interaction with other students. This further supports additional development of college programs that not only orient students to the institution, but also promotes and encourages peer interaction. Programs that are intended to help freshmen students meet other students are a necessary aspect to college adjustment. Further research on what type of programs and how to involve both students living on campus and commuters is necessary to further explore how colleges and universities can encourage meeting other new students and the overall adjustment process.

The results of this study suggest that in general relationships with mothers, fathers, and peers are extremely important in facilitating the transition from high school to college. This study also suggests that gender is an important factor in the transition to college. Studies like the present one then help college administrators in understanding that one of the potential areas to be observant if adolescents are having trouble adjusting

to college is their relationship patterns to parents and also peers. The transition to college can be very difficult and being aware of any key factors that may play a role in helping ease that transition is very important. The differences in regards to gender also had strong implications to college administrators. It suggests that there may be a need to have differential programs or plans of action for males and females that are experiencing trouble adjusting to college.

This study also provides information for those staff at a college or university who help students during the transition to college, including administrators, professors, advisors, and also counselling center staff. If these key people are aware that the freshmen's relationship patterns with their parents or peers may be influencing the ease or trouble they are having with adjustment to college, those freshmen could be referred to a counselling center staff person. This person would then have an idea on how to treat the individual or at least a potential starting point for individuals. It may also allow them to form support groups initially to help minimize poor adjustment.

The results of this study should be used with caution. This study utilized a small sample size, especially in regards to freshmen students who commute to college. Some of the participants in this study were recruited in their residence hall. This method of data collection limits the generalizability of the studies results. The majority of participants were also Caucasian. This study was also intended to analyse only students who were attending college for the first time and between the ages of 17 and 19 years old. This study was conducted in the middle of the second semester of freshmen year. Finally, the measures used to describe feelings of adjustment and attachment were all self-report measures, which could have affected the validity of the results.

There is a need for further research to be conducted on this topic. The number of adolescents attending college following high school graduation is continuing to rise. Many colleges have larger entering freshmen classes each year. An increase in the number of students attending a college could indicate fewer resources available to the students. Understanding how to minimize problems during the transition from high school to college is critical. Further research is needed also regarding the process of adjustment to college for students who commute. These students often feel isolated and do not feel a sense of attachment to their college or university. Finding ways to target this population is extremely important. This research also needs to be conducted comparing first semester freshmen to second semester freshmen. Many students change during the course of their first year in college and it is important to understand how that effects their adjustment to college and whether relationships to parents and peers change over the course of the freshmen year of college.

The results of this study support previous research in suggesting that a positive relationship exists between college adjustment and attachment patterns. These findings illustrate that relationships with parents and peers are critical in students' adjustment to college during their freshmen year. Males and females did differ in reports of attachment to parents in this study. Lapsley et al. (1990) did not find significant gender effects but most other research has suggested this difference exist. This study also found similar results to Holmbeck and Wandrei (1993) in regards to residency status and college student adjustment. Both studies did not find any differences on college student adjustment between students who live on campus and those who commute to school.

However, it should again be mentioned the limited number of commuter students who participated in this study.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

I agree to participate in a research study called "The Relationship of Adolescent Attachment to College Student Adjustment." This study is being conducted by Cathleen Hutchison, Graduate Student, Rowan University and is supervised by Dr. Mary Louise Kerwin, Psychology Department, Rowan University. The purpose of this study is to examine relationships between college freshmen and their parents and peers, and how that relates college student adjustment during the freshmen year. The data collected in this study will be analyzed and used to complete a Master's Thesis.

I understand that I will be asked to complete three questionnaires and provide some demographic information. My participation in the study should not exceed one hour.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all data collected will be kept confidential. I understand that there are no physical risks involved with the completion of this study.

I agree that information obtained from this study may be used for educational purposes provided that I am in now way identified and that my name is not used.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

If I have any questions or problems regarding my participation in this study I may contact either Cathleen Hutchison at (609) 569-9918 or Dr. Mary Louise Kerwin at (856) 256-4500.

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Introductory Psychology Professor _____

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

ID # _____

Age _____

Gender ____ Male ____ Female

Year in School

_____ Freshmen
_____ Sophomore
_____ Junior
_____ Senior

Residency Status

_____ I live at home with my parents
_____ I live in a dorm on campus
_____ I live in an apartment on campus
_____ I live off campus, but not with my parents
_____ Other (Please Explain)

Who are you currently living with?

_____ Friend
_____ Roommate
_____ Sibling
_____ Parents
_____ I live alone

Marital Status

Are you a parent?

_____ Never Married
_____ Separated
_____ Divorced
_____ Married

_____ Yes
_____ No

Are you in a fraternity or sorority?

_____ Yes
_____ No

What is your Grade Point Average (GPA)? _____

Have you attended college besides at Rowan University?

_____ Yes
_____ No

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Information

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between attachment style to parents and peers and college student adjustment during the freshmen year. Attachment style refers to the bond that an individual has with important people in their life. Attachment has recently been shown to affect adolescent and adult behavior and relationships (Bradford & Lyddon, 1994).

Previous research has shown a positive relationship between college adjustment and attachment; students with a secure attachment rate themselves higher on various measures of college adjustment, while students with avoidant or resistant attachment rate themselves lower in college adjustment (Bradford & Lyddon, 1993; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Lapsley, Rice, & FitzGerald, 1990; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1988; Rice, et al., 1995).

Thank you for participation in this study. If at any time you have any further questions regarding your participation in this study, you may contact Cathleen Hutchison at (609) 569-9918 or Dr. Mary Louise Kerwin, faculty sponsor, at (856) 256-4500.

If your participation in this study has elicited any feelings of discomfort that you would like to speak further about with a professional, please contact Rowan University's Counseling Center at (856) 256-4222.