SEPARATE WAYS, WORLDS APART: EXPLORING CHANGES IN FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT ATTACHMENT LEVELS

A Chapter Style Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education

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SEPARATE WAYS, WORLDS APART: EXPLORING CHANGES IN FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT ATTACHMENT LEVELS

By Robert D. Peterson

We recommend acceptance of this thesis in partial fulfillment of the candidate's requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education, in Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education.

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First-generation college students are a prominent population in higher education. This quantitative study examined differences in college student attachment towards parents and peers based on first-generation student status and academic class standing. Participants took the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). Data analysis revealed that first-generation students have significantly different levels of trust, communication, alienation, and attachment towards their parents than non-first-generation students. Academic class standing was not found to be significantly related to attachment scores. The discussion states that first-generation college students have unique relationships with their parents. Both first-generation college students and their parents may require more resources, guidance, and support than non-first-generation students in order to stay and succeed in college.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take just a brief moment to thank the following for this achievement: God; my thesis committee (Dr. Chris Bakkum, Dr. Carmen Wilson, Barbara Stewart) for sticking it out with me and helping me achieve this study; my parents, Dan and Darlene Peterson, as well as my extended family and my current partner Justine Grant for all their emotional support and encouragement; my friends and family here at UW-La Crosse including the departments of Residence Life, Student Support Services, Graduate Studies, and Institutional Research; my staff members in Hutch Hall including my supervisor, Andy Mammel, and the 400 residents that have given me a great experience as an Assistant Hall Director; and many others I am probably forgetting here on paper but not in my mind. This has been a long and arduous process but it is something that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Publishing a thesis is no small feat and I could not have done this alone – your kind words, support, and encouragement have helped me carry this thing through to the end. Finally, I would also like to thank you, the reader, for holding this book in your hands right now. It is because of your interest in this subject that makes my work on first-generation students a worthwhile endeavor. I hope that you find this text informative, and unbiased but also in complete support of the first-generation student population. Whatever brought you to this place, I hope you find what you’re looking for in these pages. And hey, if you don’t, maybe this will be your inspiration to do your own research and add to the depth of this area of higher education.

Sincerely,

~ Rob Peterson
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Throughout recorded human history, rites of passage have been established to mark progress, maturity, and adulthood. They can be religiously associated, like baptism or a bar mitzvah. They can be socially constructed, like quinceañeras, sweet sixteens, or other age milestones. For the American millennial, the new rite of passage is attending an institution of higher education – better known in popular culture as college. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported nearly 71% of 2009’s high school graduates are enrolled in a college or university (U.S. Department of Labor), 2010). However, these students all come to college with very different backgrounds. Attending college is not about simply turning a certain age; it is a complicated process that requires knowledge about the process and a strong support system.

By definition, a rite of passage is something that is completed generation after generation. With this line of thinking in mind, it becomes clear that a specific demographic goes into college at a disadvantage – the first-generation college student. First-generation college students occupy one of the larger demographics in the higher education population today (McCarron and Inkelas, 2006). They are students with parents who do not have college degrees. Because they are the first in their family to attend college, first-generation college students are placed in a foreign
environment that their parents may understand little to nothing about. While many students attend college close to home, first-generation college students may feel like college life is a world away from everything that they had previously known. The relationships they have with their parents may evolve, stagnate, or even dissolve because of the radical change in both parties’ lives. How do first-generation college students adapt over the course of their college careers while working to stay close to their families? How does the student’s attachment to their parents change as they rely more on themselves or their peers? These are questions that form the core of this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

First-generation and low-income students often find the college transition difficult (Tinto, 1993; Wartman & Savage, 2008); their dropout rates are significantly higher than their traditional college student counterparts (The Pell Institute, 2008). Yet attachment studies on college students often study the “traditional” group of students – white, middle to upper-class students with college graduate parents. First-generation students, however, are a group in which the importance and effect of the student-parent relationship is relatively unknown and requires more research (Wartman & Savage, 2008, p. 73). Often, first-generation students are members of low-income and racially underrepresented college populations. Not only does being labeled as a “college student” differentiate the student from their family and community, but these students also tend to lack the tools for managing their college experience that non-first-generation students often obtain from their families (Rendon, Garcia, & Person, 2004). Attachment research focuses on the student-
parent bond and yet the first-generation dynamic is largely unobserved from the quantitative perspective.

Student-parent relationships differ based upon individual characteristics such as gender, first-generation status, and race. For example, research suggests that attachment theory may be a better lens through which to look at student development in women, as they are more likely to report that parental support and encouragement helps them remain in college (Barnett, 2004). Whether or not a student’s parents attended college is also an important factor. While both first-generation students and non-first-generation students generally receive similar levels of encouragement and emotional support from their parents, “parents who have been to college themselves and know the system provide support in different ways from parents who have never been to college” (Wartman & Savage, 2008, p. 92). The amount of parental involvement in the college student’s life (both received and initiated) has increased over the past decade yet the effects of the student-parent relationship in first-generation students are relatively unknown from a quantifiable standpoint (Wartman & Savage, 2008, p. 73).

The current body of literature and the gaps in understanding how the first-generation college student’s attachment levels impact their adjustment and success in college leads to this study’s two research questions: Do college student attachment levels towards their parents differ based on first-generation status; and, do college student attachment levels towards their parents differ based on academic class standing? It is expected that the first-generation students will display different levels of attachment to their parents than their non-first-generation counterparts in higher
education. It is also expected that first-generation student attachment levels will
differ across academic classification. A senior first-generation student, for example,
may have resolved many of the issues that faced them as a freshman.

**Significance of the Problem**

First-generation students continue to be a growing population in higher
education (Terenzini et al, 1996) and many underrepresented, non-white populations
within higher education also are more likely to be classified as first-generation
college students. Institutions of higher education continue to seek diverse students
for enrollment; many of these students will identify as first-generation college
students. If first-generation college students enter college with significantly different
attachment levels than traditional college students, student affairs professionals can
use this information to better prepare and assist first-generation students in their
adjustment to and success in college.

**Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to determine if first-generation students have
significantly different relationships – in terms of attachment scores – with their
parents and peers than non-first-generation college students. First-generation college
students, like other groups that rarely identify with the traditional college
demographic, need specialized support. Many qualitative studies have described the
trials faced by first-generation students, but there is a lack of quantitative research.
The importance and purpose of this study lies in the fact that first-generation college
students experience higher attrition rates than their non-first-generation counterparts.
All freshmen students need support in adjusting to college, and first-generation
college students may not have the same familial support as students whose parents hold four-year degrees.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are certain limitations to be taken into consideration with this study. The sample and population itself of this study lacks much of the diversity that still needs to be researched. While race and ethnicity are not being examined in this study, first-generation students often identify with underrepresented populations. Because first-generation students are more likely than their non-first-generation counterparts to identify with underrepresented and low socioeconomic populations (The Pell Institute, 2008), this study may have produced more significant results at a more dynamic and diverse institution. Choosing academic class standing as the other independent variable means that gender and race cannot be explored as potential affecters of college student attachment. The survey itself is administered over the internet; an in-person survey might have resulted in a better response rate and a richer sample in terms of gender, ethnicity, and first-generation student status.

**Implications of the Study**

This study aims to answer significant questions regarding the first-generation student population, whether or not the null hypotheses are rejected. First-generation college students are more likely to drop out of college than non-first-generation college students (The Pell Institute, 2008), and qualitative research has discovered that the first-generation student/parent dynamic is strained, complex, and a contributor to how successfully the student moves through the college process (Wartman and Savage, 2008; Bryan and Simmons, 2009). Understanding more about
the first-generation student population can help shape the amount and type of support available to these students, as well as their parents. The instrument used in this study is the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and measures total attachment as a combination of three factors – trust, communication, and alienation. Specific guidance regarding first-generation students will be given, directly related to the significant findings of the data analysis.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, a “first-generation” student is any college student whose parents have not completed a four-year degree. Prior research has dictated that students with parents who have attended college but haven’t completed their degree are still counted as first-generation students, as are parents who have a two-year degree from technical and community colleges, online programs, and the like (Bryan & Simmons, 2009). Parental involvement is a process whereby parents become involved in their college students’ lives in order to support their transition as well as maintain and develop ties. Examples include learning more about the college process, providing encouragement and guidance to their children, establishing relationships with the college institution, and potentially retaining that institutional connection beyond the college years. Attachment – derived from Bowlby’s (1983) work on infant-parent relationships – measures the strength of the “secure base” necessary for children to explore and develop. The instrument measuring parent attachment in this study looks at attachment through levels of trust, communication, and alienation.
Chapter Summary

As the need for a college education becomes increasingly important in America, higher education institutions will have to be adequately prepared to support many different student populations. The first-generation college student is one of them. While there is a sufficient qualitative body of research to provide a base for understanding this population, there is almost no quantitative research done to establish these claims. The purpose of this study is to provide empirical evidence into the unique relationship that first-generation students share with their parents and peers.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Research regarding first-generation college students is not a new phenomenon, including research conducted on better understanding the relationships that first-generation college students form (Thayer, 2000; Pascarella et al, 2004; Bryan and Simmons, 2009; Gofen, 2009, etc.). Exploring attachment theory in college students is also integrated into higher education research (Allen and Land, 1999; Cassidy and Shaver, 1999; Arseth et al, 2009; etc). Both bodies of literature have been used to inform this study in addition to theories behind college student maturation towards relationship-building. The synthesis of this knowledge, however, has not been included in one quantitative study. This section discusses how college student personnel viewed college student parental and peer attachments in two phases: When Arthur Chickering introduced separation-individuation in the landmark Education and Identity (1969); and second, when John Bowlby’s attachment theory gained relevance in higher education. Research was reviewed for both separation-individuation and attachment studies, determining what has been discovered as well as what gaps still exist.

Separation-Individuation Theory

While both Bowlby (1969) and Chickering (1969) published their landmark texts in the same year, Chickering’s text was the first to gain ground in higher
education (Bowlby’s theory hadn’t yet been applied to college students). Prior to Chickering, the focus on holistic college student development was lacking. Yet Chickering himself noted that the introduction of his theory was met with anything but fanfare: “Those concerned with higher education…doubted that colleges and universities should be concerned about students’ personal values, ways of thinking, [or] modes of thinking…Fostering self-esteem, healthy relationships, and socially responsible behavior was not a priority” (Chickering, 1993). Despite the initial reluctance to accept Chickering’s theory of college student education and identity development, his theory is now well-accepted in higher education and student affairs (Baepler, 2010). Chickering conducted research in the 1960s that led him to his “seven vectors” theory.

According to his research, adolescents (as well as adults) develop and mature in seven core areas: Developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. While all seven are equally important in exploring college student development, the “moving through autonomy toward interdependence” is the vector that is relevant to this research study. Chickering himself did not originate the concept of “moving through autonomy toward interdependence” (Coates, 2003); but he did stress the development of emotional autonomy, goals development, and recognition of one’s interdependence with others. The move away from dependence on parents to increased reliance on peers as well as the ability to seek help and use systematic problem-solving methods is important in this developmental stage. Recognition of interdependence follows
from independence as students work to balance the extremes of individuality and conformity (Chickering, 1993). The college student must do all of this while developing and reframing their relationships with their caregivers. For both the first-generation college student and traditional college student, this means a relationship that primarily served one role – dependence on the parent(s) – changes over a short period of time.

Chickering (1993) based his theory on research that was initially targeted at child development. In addition to incorporating child development psychology, Chickering also applied psychosocial and cognitive research – most notably, the work of Jean Piaget (1952), William Perry (1970), and Erik Erikson (1968) among others – in establishing his vector for “moving through autonomy toward interdependence.” Through their work, Chickering established the theory that independence stems from a “level of separation from parents, an increased reliance on peers, authorities, and institutional support systems, and growing confidence in one’s own self-sufficiency” (Chickering, 1993, p. 117). Unlike attachment theory, Chickering states that an adolescent’s prolonged contact with parents while in college can create a dynamic of dependence. A study of economically dependent male college students “found that prolonged student status tends to foster emotional dependence, decelerate the progress of vocational identity formation, and have negative repercussions for their identification…physically, morally, personally, and socially” (Chickering, 1993, p. 131) when measured against non-college-going adolescent men. Likewise, many college women “had difficulty forming peer relationships…[if they] had parents who were distrustful of the outside world and who believed that only family could really
be counted on. When a preoccupation with security blocks identification with peers or role models and links students with rescuer figures who reinforce dependence, autonomy can stall” (p. 131). “Moving through autonomy toward interdependence” does not call for a total withdrawal from parental contact; it does, however, suggest that a failure to develop a semblance of autonomy during the college years can hinder a student’s growth.

The ultimate goal of Chickering and the separation-individuation vector – interdependence – is the state of balancing autonomy and support (Chickering, 1993). According to multiple research studies (Rice et al, 1995; Mattanah et al, 2004; Kalsner and Pistole, 2003) college students develop more complex relationships over the course of their college careers. Interdependence, according to Chickering, “means respecting the autonomy of others and looking for ways to give and take with an ever-expanding circle of friends” (p. 140) – the goal is not a complete separation from parents but a reevaluation of their relationships. College students who work towards interdependence find that it is possible to explore their own identity in college while maintaining their ties to their parents. Freedman (1962) was one of the first to chronicle how undergraduate students who began their college careers as rebels eventually matured. They experienced an increase in understanding and warmth to their parents. Asking for assistance, Chickering argues, is a mark of interdependence. In this respect, those students who have developed interdependence actually retain an individual self (separation-individuation) while still finding benefit in a reevaluated relationship with their parents/guardians and peers (attachment).
Studies on Separation-Individuation in College Students

Separation-individuation still remains a popular topic of research on college students. Instruments like the Psychological Separation Inventory (Hoffman, 1984), the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (Bray, Williamson, and Malone, 1984), and the Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scales and Family Intrusiveness Scale (Gavazzi and Sabatelli, 1987) are several examples of statistically valid and reliable instruments still used to analyze college students’ levels of separation-individuation (Lopez and Gover, 1993). Because of its masculine focus, studies on separation-individuation have been beneficial in determining separation-individuation levels based upon gender. Chodorow (1989) and Gilligan (1982) argue that gender identity and separation-individuation are intertwined. Men distance themselves from their mothers and identify with their masculine fathers, leading to an emphasis on separateness and autonomy; women are more likely to value “interpersonal connectedness” because of their attachment to their mothers (Gnaulati and Heine, 2001, p. 60).

Separation-individuation studies have also examined race and ethnicity differences. In the same study that measured gender differences, Gnaulati and Heine (2001) noted that most early research was done from a male, Eurocentric perspective. This can inadvertently “represent a value system potentially biased against individuals from non-European-American cultures and diverse ethnic groups” (p. 60). However, their exploratory study on ethnic differences did not find that diverse ethnic groups had different levels of separation-individuation compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Their findings are consistent in their inconsistency; previous research
on ethnicity and separation-individuation in late adolescence often yielded inconsistent results. Research on non-white family dynamics (Hill, 1995; McClanahan and Holmbeck, 1992; Fleming and Anderson, 1996) reported increased levels of control, overprotection, strong family cohesion, and boundary fusion – factors that have been connected with “faulty separation-individuation” in adolescents. However, Vega, Patterson, Sallis, Nader, Atkins, and Abramson (1986) reported that Hispanic and non-Hispanic families showed similar levels of adaptability and cohesion. Asian American and African American studies report that family dynamics vary by the age of the adolescent as well as the level of acculturation (Feldman and Quatman, 1988; Abe and Zane, 1990; Lassiter, 1987). In short, separation-individuation has shown no clear pattern when differentiating between races and ethnicities.

Attachment Theory

Psychologist John Bowlby spent his entire career devoted to better understanding the parent-child relationship (1980, 1988). The crux of his argument for attachment theory rested in his opinion that a child’s maladjustments to life stemmed from some sort of deprivation of love, safety, and care from the parent (specifically, the mother). Bowlby’s drive to provide empirical evidence for attachment theory was a result of something that affected his own life. His father, a surgeon, was away for most of his childhood. In his place, Bowlby was raised by a nanny and became emotionally devastated when she left later in his childhood (van der Horst, 2010, p. 28). He used this life experience to later conduct psychoanalytic sessions with children who also lost their maternal bonds early in life. Bowlby’s
research and subsequent publication led to his conclusion that “the basic idea underlying his theory is that children need a loving mother or mother substitute to develop into emotionally healthy adults, and that separation experiences (even minor ones) at an early age may jeopardize this development” (van der Horst, 2010, p. 25).

The premise of Bowlby’s work suggested a different way to analyze child behavior than the prevailing theory of the time. Bowlby was dissatisfied that there was a lack of research on the caregiver-child relationship and that theorists such as Freud (1949) suggested that infants simply followed “libidinal” drives. Another theory – child dependency – simply inferred that a child’s dependence on their caregiver was simply a product of necessity and this affection would regress upon aging (Sears, Rau, and Alpert, 1965). Bowlby instead conceptualized the idea of a “secure base” that allowed infants to explore their world; removal of the “secure base” led to infant distress. Bowlby predicted that adolescents and even adults – not just infants – would retain behaviors of attachment; according to his work, “secure attachment is associated with independent exploratory behaviour rather than dependence” in adolescents and adults (Prior and Glaser, 2006). According to Bowlby, individuals from infancy to adolescence who are both “emotionally stable and self-reliant are likely to have parents who are available to provide support when needed while simultaneously encouraging autonomy” (Kenny and Rice, 1995).

Because attachment has proven useful in infancy and adolescents, attachment can be considered as an enduring emotional bond that spans across time.

College students in particular exhibit attachment behaviors that prove beneficial to their success. Instead of making a clean break from parents when they
mature, college students often perform acts such as calling home or discussing concerns with their parents. According to Kenny and Rice (1995), this suggests healthy behavior instead of dependency or a lack of self-growth. Attachment theory “challenges the traditional implications of separation-individuation by suggesting that, for students leaving home, having parents as a secure base may actually support rather than threaten the development of competence and autonomy” (Wartman and Savage, 2008, p. 25). Conversely, Wartman and Savage (2008) remarked that students who tried to forcefully break apart from their parents can sometimes become withdrawn, isolated, and even become at-risk for behavioral problems. Too heavy of an emphasis of separation-individuation can lead to developmental issues. Separation-individuation is also viewed as more of a male-centric perspective on student development while attachment theory has been viewed as an alternative theory from a feminist perspective (van der Horst and van der Veer, 2010). A number of researchers consequently “began to look at a history of secure attachment with parents as comparable, or perhaps, even better predictor of college adjustment than separation-individuation” (Mattanah, Hancock, and Brand, 2004, p. 214).

**Studies on Attachment in College Students**

As college student research progressed and separation-individuation reached its peak in popularity, Bowlby’s attachment theory began gaining ground in academia. Researchers were looking for an alternative to the masculine-focused concept of autonomy. No longer were students expected to make a clean break from their parents in the name of individual development and growth. Attachment theory and its more relationship-focused concept provided an alternative to separation-
individuation. More contemporary developmental perspectives “emphasize that close parent-adolescent attachments during the [college] period facilitate developmental progress by providing the late adolescent with a ‘secure base’ from which to explore and develop competencies within the extrafamilial world” (Lopez and Gover, 1993, p. 560). Much like the research on separation-individuation, several instruments that measured attachment gained credibility during the 1980s including the Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker et al, 1979), the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (Kenny, 1987), and the instrument used in this study, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987).

Previous research has attempted to find differences in attachment levels using both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on college students. Lapsley (1990) originally found that there were no significant differences between freshmen and upperclassmen attachment scores to parents and peers. Rice et al (1995) reported similar findings in a cross-sectional study with one exception to the Lapsley (1990) study – that women reported statistically significant higher trust and communication scores with their peers than men. In the same publication, Rice et al (1995) also conducted a two-year, time sequential design that was designed to address “the prospective interrelationships among attachment and student development and adjustment…research questions were pursued regarding the stability or change in attachment, the association between attachment and later independence from parents, and the association between attachment and various dimensions of adjustment” (p. 468). The research found that participants’ social-interpersonal adjustment and separation anxiety were more likely to be influenced by current perceptions of
attachment and less affected by previous perceptions of attachment. Academic and emotional adjustment, however, were linked to current and prior attachment bonds.

Like separation-individuation theory, attachment theory has also been used to try to determine significant differences between genders and across races. Van IJzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2010) conducted a study that used the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) instrument to explore attachment styles in young adults based on age, gender, race, and even socioeconomic status. Gender and race were found to have no statistical differences in attachment styles – an identical result to using gender and race variables in separation-individuation studies. Van IJzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2010) did find that younger adults (adolescents) were more likely to possess insecure and dismissive attachment styles. Their study also incorporated the instrument in several different languages to explore culture as a variable, but “the evidence from countries where the AAI has been used is compatible with the idea that attachment theory and attachment classifications are likely to be cross-culturally universal” (p. 206).

The Separation-Individuation and Attachment Theory Relationship

A common – but incorrect – assumption is that researchers and psychologists will support either separation-individuation or attachment. Mahler was considered a follower of the traditional Freudian vein of psychoanalysis; Bowlby was pegged as a dissident (Coates, 2003). Separation-individuation theory was considered complementary to Freud’s libido theory; attachment theory eschewed traditional internal thought for external behavior. Yet Mahler and Bowlby as well as their respective theories share much in common. The two researchers each experienced
traumatic and turbulent childhoods and used those experiences to fuel their desire in an attempt to understand their own actions. Additionally, their theories can be viewed as complementary because of their core focus – the caregiver/child dynamic:

Both attachment theory and separation-individuation theory include the real mother and infant, as well as the concepts of internalization and internal representation…Both dyadic partners have to be considered, starting with their observed interactions, so graphically demonstrated in studies of normal and deviant attachment and separation-individuation. Neither body of theory addresses infant development in relation to objects other than the primary caregiver. The impact of the mother’s unconscious fantasies on the infant, as well as the infant’s influence on the mother during different developmental phases, must also be considered. In summary, attachment theory and separation-individuation theory are in some respects complementary…The infant’s continuing attachment to the mother during separation-individuation was assumed essential to the mastery of separation anxiety, and to the attainment of separateness. Separateness is a necessary complement to attachment. (Blum, 2004, p. 551).

Likewise, the separation-individuation/attachment dynamic exists in college student research. Both quantitative and qualitative research has investigated college students’ relationships with their parents and peers. Other dimensions of college student research such as college adjustment have been predicted with a combination of separation-individuation and attachment theories. A recent study, for example, was “designed to test a model wherein current feelings about the process of separation and individuation would mediate the effects of secure attachment relationships on dimensions of college adjustment” (Mattanah, Hancock, and Brand, 2004, p. 214).

**First-Generation College Student Research**

Research on the first-generation college student abounds; many studies have investigated the barriers that first-generation college students face when entering higher education, as well as the demographic-specific risk to attrition. Services such
as TRIO and the McNair Program were established to help students of lower socioeconomic status financially; Hahs-Vaughn (2004) writes of the benefits of these financial programs. Her study also provided empirical evidence that first-generation students have a statistically significant different college experience than their non-first-generation counterparts. Struggling financially, for example, is just one area where first-generation students had different experiences than traditional college student experiences. Hahs-Vaughn (2004) also found that first-generation and non-first-generation peers differ in nonacademic experiences. Because first-generation students “are less able to rely on family for support in college, there is a higher reliance on support from faculty, advisors, and peers while in college. The need for mentoring, academic, and social support within the college environment becomes a necessity for success of first generation students” (2004, pp. 496-7).

First-generation students also have diverse family backgrounds. Studies show a high correlation between first-generation student status and a non-white ethnicity (Pell Institute, 2008), meaning a majority of first-generation students come from a non-white background. Race and ethnicity are not determined to be statistically significant differences in first-generation college students and attachment, but it is important to mention this important piece of demographic information. Both first-generation students and underrepresented ethnicities are increasing populations in higher education enrollments. While their attrition rates are higher than non-first-generation students (Pell Institute, 2008), recent data demonstrates that they have not stopped trying. The National Center for Education Statistics concluded that 47% of
incoming freshmen were first-generation students during the 1993-1996 time period (Gofen, 2009, p. 105).

Previous research on first-generation college students took the perspective that they succeeded *despite* their background. London (1989) suggested that first-generation students confront many of the anxieties and difficulties that their traditional counterparts face, but they also experience significant cultural, social, and academic transitions. A subsequent study by London (1992) describes how moving to college forces first-generation students to “renegotiate” the relationships with their families as well as themselves. The act of simply deciding to go to college “may signify to the family that the student is interested in moving to the middle class and attaining a white-collar position not previously held by a member of the family. Even if students are not necessarily concerned with upward mobility, they may still struggle when they find themselves in a new social status group in college” (London, 1992; Wartman and Savage, 2008). Gofen (2009) further analyzes the struggles that first-generation college students can face:

Evaluating family background and parental involvement indicates that first-generation students experience a strong ‘culture shock’ in college as college represents a fundamentally different culture compared to their parents’ way of life. Sometimes, parents and friends even encourage them not to go to college, and they would therefore need to reflect their family culture in order to pursue a nonfamilial academic goal. Hence, not only do they generally come from lower income homes where parents lack the knowledge of the campus environment and the enrollment process but also encounter, on average, a lower level of family support and a lower level of importance placed on college by parents. (pp. 105-106)

Recent research, however, suggests that “although they face many challenges, [first-generation college students’] families are often facilitators of their success… breaking the intergenerational cycle of educational level inheritance involves day-to-
day family life that prioritizes education through nonmaterial resources, conceptualized as ‘family capital’” (Gofen, 2009, p. 104). McCarron and Inkelas (2006) found a positive relationship between parental involvement and the educational aspirations of first-generation college students. These students rely on their parents’ support as they move to college since the process is rife with “major difficulties.” Comparing these findings with those that Gofen (2009) cites makes it evident that first-generation college students’ success very much depends on the level of parental support. McCarron and Inkelas (2006) conducted a longitudinal study that determined that parental support for first-generation student aspirations of college is a major predictor for their entrance into higher education. This support becomes increasingly important when these students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The link between poverty and educational attainment is unmistakable (Mayer, 1997), yet Crosnoe et al (2002) found that parents’ perceived efficacy of their children’s success can overcome economic disadvantage. The psychological effect of economic disadvantage on parents, for better or worse, can be passed on to their children. Thus, a parent who eschews the negative appraisals of their poverty can strengthen the bond with their children and therefore foster a relationship that instills confidence for their collegiate aspirations.

This relationship is not just a one-way street from parent to child. Significant research has been conducted on first-generation college students’ perceptions of their parents. Bryan and Simmons (2009) write that adolescents’ “decision-making regarding educational and occupational pursuits are influenced by family members. Parents play an extremely influential role [as] adolescents picked parents as
influencers more than any other group of people…[including] siblings, other relatives, and peers, with teachers and ‘others’ being the smallest group, thus reinforcing the impact of parental influence” (p. 392). Bryan and Simmons (2009) used this as a base for performing a qualitative study on first-generation college students using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of human development. They interviewed first-generation students who reported having very strong ties with their families and/or communities. The authors’ analysis found seven main influences on first-generation college students – close-knit families and communities, separate identities, knowledge of college procedures, pressure to succeed, returning home, the pervasiveness of poverty, and the importance of early intervention programming.

The most important finding relevant to this study was that many participants reported having “separate identities” – trying to balance the person they were before college with the person that is being shaped by college. The researchers found that:

The most commonly described experience was feeling uncomfortable expressing their new views and ideas with their family members…the participants communicated their surprise over this identity shift, as they were not prepared to change to this extent. For many of the participants, going to college magnified something they always knew deep within themselves: They were different than many people in their families and communities…there was a dichotomy experienced between their ‘intellectual’ friends and their home community. Each participant struggled with separateness and recognized the inevitable changes that had and will occur in their family lives. However, it was still painful for them to discuss. (Bryan and Simmons, 2009, pp. 396-7).

First-generation college students can also feel an overwhelming pressure to succeed from both their parents and their home communities. Some are embarrassed to pursue a liberal arts degree rather than be a doctor, lawyer, or another financially viable career suggested by their mother, father, or former teachers (Bryan and Simmons, 2009). This is not the only burden first-generation college students carry
when talking to their parents about their college process. Even if a student’s parents provide emotional support and wish the best for their children, Ceja (2006) found that the impact parents actually have in the college process is quite limited. One segment of the qualitative interviews described the experience of how students told their parents which colleges they wanted to attend, what major they wanted to declare, etc., and the parents’ responses. Ceja found that “students…were engaged in the double-duty task of learning and experiencing the college choice process themselves while also informing and familiarizing their parents with it” (2006, p. 98). While choosing a college and attending college is not an impossible task for adolescents, a first-generation student’s experience is much different than the traditional student who can rely on their parents for information, guidance, and support with higher education as a whole.

The balance of first-generation students going away to college while maintaining the close family dynamic back home – is a very difficult one. This researcher maintains that this duality cannot remain unchanged over the course of first-generation students’ college careers – and neither can their attachment levels toward their parents and peers. Previous research indicates that first-generation college students are directly affected by parental support. But, as mentioned above, that support can cover a wide spectrum from full emotional support to almost none at all. Parents may feel they are being abandoned by their children, and vice-versa. Even if parents are on board with their child going to the foreign world of higher education, the stable, tightly knit relationship will have to be constantly renegotiated. For first-generation students, familial stability may have been one of the few
constants in their life. Altering and developing this relationship may have significant impacts on their emotional well-being as well as their attachment styles.

Understanding more about first-generation college students is a pressing issue because first-generation college students are not a disappearing demographic. Recent research has shown that 87% of high school seniors without degree-holding parents decide to immediately enroll in higher education immediately after graduation (Choy, 2001). Students who lack knowledge about the college process – requirements, entrance, and so on – are also the same students who often come in with less developed time management skills, finances, and information about the bureaucracies of higher education (Thayer, 2000). Wartman and Savage (2008) explain that both the decision to enter college and physically attend college may have significant – if yet unknown – effects. They write that, despite the wealth of information on first-generation students, “the nature of the relationship between socioeconomic class and the parent-student dynamic once students are enrolled in an institution of higher education, especially for low-income, first-generation students, is an area where more research is needed” (p. 73).

As first-generation students progress through their college careers, the parent-child relationship may shift dramatically. Because first-generation students’ attachment styles are directly affected by the relationship with their parents, this shift can be quite profound and stressful on the student. Therefore, pursuing a study on attachment levels in first-generation students across academic class standing can help shed some light on the shift in attachment styles these students may experience. This information can be in turn used to help counsel and mentor students if they are having
trouble adjusting to college, facing pressure from their family to remain close to home, or experience adjustment-related stressors.

**Chapter Summary**

Summarized in the research analyzed above, the bodies of literature on both first-generation college students and attachment theory are extensive. These two bodies of work have never been integrated in an empirical research study. The current study uses the qualitative research done on first-generation students as a framework for studying them with quantitative means. The specific instrumentation used in this study measures the student-parent relationship in ways that are closely aligned with previous research on this demographic. Although separation-individuation and attachment theory are becoming complementary in academia, a single instrument measuring attachment levels based on the unique relationships that first-generation students develop with their parents. First-generation students are a unique group of individuals who face more barriers to higher education enrollment, retention, and graduation than their non-first-generation counterpart. Additionally, many first-generation students come from a dynamic that focuses heavily on the family. This makes the decision to go to college seem potentially selfish and therefore more complicated than one might originally think.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Description of the Population

This study examined undergraduate college students attending the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L). UW-L is located in La Crosse, Wisconsin, a city of approximately 50,000 and located in the southwestern part of the state. The total enrollment of UW-L is approximately 10,000 students, with 8,800 of those identifying as undergraduates. As of the 2009-2010 academic year, 58.8% of students were women while 41.2% were men; 6.8% identified as multicultural students, and 3.8% were international students. The average undergraduate age was 21 years. Empirical data on the percentage of students who identified as first-generation students was not available, but conversations with UW-L faculty in the Student Support Services office suggested that an average incoming class at UW-L contained a range of 30-40% first-generation students.

Description of the Sample

The participants in this study were derived from a stratified sample. Participants were classified by academic class standing (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior). Two thousand undergraduate students – 500 from each academic class – were randomly selected from the population. Of the 2,000 students randomly selected, 508 of these students completed the survey. A stratified sample was chosen
for this study because “various subgroups in the population may have different
opinions or behave differently because of some characteristics that the group
members have in common” (Ravid, 2005, p. 25). Institutional Review Board (IRB)
approval was granted before contacting participants and can be verified in the
appendices section of this work.

**Description of the Research Design**

This research design chose first-generation student status (first-generation and
non-first-generation) and academic class standing (freshman, sophomore, junior,
senior) as the independent variables, yielding a two-by-four factorial design. The
dependent variables were the attachment scores derived from the Inventory of Parent
and Peer Attachment (IPPA) – trust, communication, alienation, and total attachment.
The two null hypotheses are: 1) College student attachment levels towards their
parents do not differ based on first-generation status; and 2) College student
attachment levels towards their parents do not differ based on academic class
standing. The only known threat to internal validity was the instrumentation itself;
because the survey was completed online, participants were unable to clarify a
question should it cause them confusion. Selection-treatment interaction could also
pose a threat to the validity of the research design. Since participants knew what the
survey was about, certain groups of students may be more or less inclined to take the
instrument; for example, participants who identify (or feel they identify) as first-
generation students may be more likely to complete the instrument because of its
relevance to them.
The sample received an e-mail inviting them to participate in this study. Clicking the link led participants to a web page that included information about the study as well as the voluntary consent form. Selecting “Yes” signified their agreement to participate in the study; selecting “No” returned them to the UW-L home page. Participants were notified that there were no anticipated physical or mental risks to their participation in the study. Participants agreeing to the consent form began with a short demographic survey. Completion of the demographic survey was followed by the Inventory of Parent and Peer attachment (IPPA). The questions on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) were non-invasive and the participants were given the option to quit the study at any time. The only inconvenience to the participant was the amount of time needed to complete the instruments, with the average time of completing around 20 minutes. Upon completion, participants could choose to submit their e-mail address to enter into a gift card drawing. Participants were informed that submitting their e-mail address was solely for the purpose of attaining a gift card; the primary researcher would not contact them or retain their e-mail addresses after the drawing took place.

**Instruments**

Participants completed a demographics survey as well as the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). The questions in the demographic survey included gender, age, race, first-generation student status identifiers, as well as some information about the participant’s parents’ education levels. The primary purpose of this portion of the survey was to collect gender, race, and first-generation student status data to be later reported and analyzed. Additionally, this survey allowed the
primary researcher to confirm each participant’s first-generation student status – for example, if a participant identified as a first-generation student on one question of the demographic survey but later selects that one parent has earned a college degree, that participant’s results went into the non-first-generation participant pool.

The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was first created in 1987 by Dr. Mark T. Greenberg, The IPPA was developed in order to “assess adolescents’ perceptions of the positive and negative affective/cognitive dimension of relationships with their parents and close friends -- particularly how well these figures serve as sources of psychological security” (Greenberg, 2009, p. 2). Trust, communication, and alienation are the three vectors that are scored within this instrument, testing for the mother (or first parent), father (or second parent), and peers. The primary audience used to develop the IPPA was participants in the age range of 16-20 years – traditionally aged high school and college students.

Participants respond to statements on a five-point Likert scale, anchored at “almost or never true” (1) to “almost always or always true” (5). The version used in this study comprises 75 statements that ask participants about their relationship with their parents and peers, measuring attachment across different kinds of relationships.

Since its inception, Greenberg has revised the IPPA to improve its validity and reliability. The instrument’s latest revision (2009) revealed that test-retest reliability scored a .93 for the parent section of the instrument and .86 for the peer section; internal reliability has ranged from .87 to .92.
Data Analysis

The level of significance chosen for this study was $p<.05$. In order to reject the null hypothesis, there must be a statistically significant difference in the means to produce a critical $p$-value. Since $p<.05$ was chosen for this study, any statistically significant difference ($p<.05$) has less than a five percent chance of being attributed to chance. Data were analyzed with a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA). The Student-Newman-Keuls post-hoc test was used to evaluate the patterns of statistically significant differences for the main effect of academic class standing and any significant interactions.

Chapter Summary

This study examined undergraduate college students attending the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L). Two thousand undergraduate students – 500 from each academic class – were randomly selected from the population. The two null hypotheses are: 1) College student attachment levels towards their parents do not differ based on first-generation status; and 2) College student attachment levels towards their parents do not differ based on academic class standing. Participants completed a demographics survey as well as the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). ANOVA and the Student-Newman-Keuls post-hoc test were chosen to analyze the results.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Demographics

The participants were 508 undergraduate students – 130 men, 377 women, and 1 that did not identify with either biological sex. The participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 50 though the mean age was 20 and only 6 participants identified as “older than 27.” Reported ethnicities were 92% Caucasian, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% Hispanic, 1% African American, 1% Native American, and 1% Biracial/Multiracial. This distribution is consistent with the data reported by UW-L’s “Quick Facts” (UW-L, 2010) as 93% of the 2009-2010 UW-L population identified as Caucasian, and the other 7% identified with traditionally underrepresented ethnicities in higher education. Of the 508 participants, 221 (43%) self-reported as first-generation college students while 287 (57%) self-reported that they had at least one parent with a four-year degree. A review of the individual results found that seven participants mistakenly identified as first-generation students while marking that at least one parent had a four-year degree. Conversely, six participants responded that they were not first-generation students but later reported in the survey that neither parent held a four-year degree.

Out of the sample, 156 (31%) participants identified as freshmen, 115 (23%) as sophomores, 110 (22%) as juniors, and 125 (25%) as seniors. Of the two thousand
students contacted to take the instrument, 508 students took the survey, constituting a 25.5% response rate. The survey’s duration mean was 24 minutes – close to the 20 minute approximation identified at the survey’s informed consent page. The results of the total sample’s attachment scores are displayed in Table 1. The instrument measures total attachment as the combination of three individual components – trust, communication, and alienation. Means range on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “never or almost never true,” 5 = “always or almost always true”). Higher means equate to higher levels of trust, communication, alienation, or total attachment for that specific population, depending on the factor being examined. Overall, participants registered high levels of trust, communication, and total attachment as well as low levels of alienation with all three groups (mother, father, and peers).
Table 1. Total Attachment Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alienation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Attachment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attachment Score Differentiation by First-Generation Status**

One of the two hypotheses outlined at the beginning of this study posited that first-generation college students would have different attachment scores towards their parents than their non-first-generation counterparts. The results in Tables 2 through 5 display the means, standard deviations, and levels of significance based on first-generation status. First-generation student means, compared to non-first-generation students, were lower for trust and communication and higher for alienation towards all three subgroups (mother, father, peers). Total attachment scores were also routinely lower for first-generation students compared to their non-first-generation counterparts.
counterparts. Mean differences found to be statistically significant are highlighted in Tables 2 through 5.

Table 2 shows that first-generation students displayed significantly lower levels of trust towards both parents (mother and father). There was no significant difference for the peer subgroup. Table 3 shows that first-generation students also displayed significantly lower levels of communication towards both parents (mother and father). The peer subgroup did not reveal a significant difference based on first-generation student status. First-generation students did have higher alienation scores than the non-first-generation group for all relationships; however, Table 4 shows that none of these results were statistically significant. Finally, Table 5 shows that first-generation students exhibited significantly lower levels of total attachment toward their first parent (mother) than their non-first-generation counterparts. First-generation students also had lower total attachment means towards the father and peer subgroups, but these means were not statistically significant compared to the non-first-generation group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-generation M (SD)</th>
<th>Non-first-generation M (SD)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>4.26 (.65)</td>
<td>4.42 (.55)</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>4.09 (.76)</td>
<td>4.24 (.72)</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>4.32 (.65)</td>
<td>4.33 (.61)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Significance of First-Generation Student Status on Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-generation M (SD)</th>
<th>Non-first-generation M (SD)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>3.77 (.81)</td>
<td>4.00 (.73)</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3.37 (.93)</td>
<td>3.58 (.88)</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>4.05 (.68)</td>
<td>4.09 (.73)</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Significance of First-Generation Student Status on Alienation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-Generation M (SD)</th>
<th>Non-First-Generation M (SD)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2.11 (.74)</td>
<td>2.04 (.73)</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>2.24 (.71)</td>
<td>2.16 (.75)</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>2.27 (.66)</td>
<td>2.22 (.61)</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Significance of First-Generation Student Status on Total Attachment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-generation M (SD)</th>
<th>Non-first-generation M (SD)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>3.97 (.67)</td>
<td>4.14 (.60)</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3.72 (.72)</td>
<td>3.86 (.74)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>3.97 (.59)</td>
<td>4.11 (.54)</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attachment Score Differentiation by Academic Class Standing

The second research questioned investigated whether attachment scores differ by academic class standing. Statistically significant results are displayed in Tables 6 through 8. Results show that academic class standing was related to the trust and communication means for the first subgroup (mother). Academic class standing was also related to different alienation levels towards the third subgroup (peers). Academic class standing was not related to scores on any of the other factors. No subgroup reported statistically significant differences in total attachment scores based on academic class standing. Additionally, the first subgroup (mother) reported no significant differences for alienation. The second subgroup (father) reported no
significant differences for trust, communication, or alienation. Finally, the third subgroup (peers) reported no significant differences for trust or communication.

When examining each individual academic class, Table 6 reveals that seniors had significantly higher levels of trust toward their first parent (mother) than sophomores and juniors. Seniors also displayed higher levels of communication toward their first parent (mother) than juniors. Juniors, as seen in Table 8, displayed higher, statistically significant levels of alienation towards their peers than the other three academic classes. Juniors also displayed significantly lower attachment levels toward their first parent (mother) than freshmen, sophomores, and seniors. All other mean differences based on academic class standing and attachment factors were not statistically significant. Additionally, the Student-Newman-Keuls post-hoc test did not find any significant interactions between first-generation student status and academic class standing.
Table 6. Significance of Academic Class Standing on First-Parent (Mother) Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>4.37&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.27&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.25&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.51&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Analysis using Student-Newman-Keuls post-hoc test; means with the same-lettered superscript are not significantly different.

Table 7. Significance of Academic Class Standing on First-Parent (Mother) Comm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>3.92&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.85&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.72&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.10&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Analysis using Student-Newman-Keuls post-hoc test; means with the same-lettered superscript are not significantly different.

Table 8. Significance of Academic Class Standing on Peer Alienation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>2.18&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.45&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.13&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Analysis using Student-Newman-Keuls post-hoc test; means with the same-lettered superscript are not significantly different.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current research was to provide a quantitative base for the body of purely qualitative research investigating the first-generation college student population. Results from the data analysis reveal some significant findings. The two research questions were: 1) Is first-generation student status related to parent and peer attachment; and 2) Is academic class standing related to parent and peer attachment. It is the first of these two questions that exhibited the most prominent findings. While not all of the means were statistically significant, first-generation student status was related to lower trust and communication levels, higher alienation levels, and an overall lower level of total attachment. Additionally, the mean scores for trust and communication for both parents, as well as total attachment towards the first parent (mother) were significantly different between first-generation students and non-first-generation students. These findings are consistent with the research on first-generation students outlined in chapter two. Because of these statistically significant results, the first null hypothesis – college student attachment levels towards their parents do not differ based on first-generation status – is rejected.

Academic class standing, on the other hand, failed to produce both clear and significant results. This is consistent with Lapsley’s (1990) findings that no significant differences between freshmen and upperclassmen attachment scores
occurred with either parents or peers. There is no clear or reasonable explanation for the data revealing juniors’ higher alienation levels. Previous research into separation-individuation and attachment theory can help explain why seniors had higher levels of trust and communication with their first parent. As individuals are exposed to the college process and mature, they begin to transition away from a dependent relationship with their parents into one of interdependence. These results, however, do not provide enough evidence to support the theory that academic class standing has a significant role in affecting college students’ attachment to parents and peers.

As a result of the data, the second null hypothesis – college student attachment levels towards their parents do not differ based on academic class standing – fails to be rejected on the basis that not enough statistically significant levels of attachment were found in the data analysis. Additionally, the Student-Newman-Keuls post-hoc test revealed no significant interactions between first-generation student status and academic class standing.

While only one of this study’s null hypotheses was able to be rejected, the findings discovered from the data analysis are still very important to the field of first-generation student research. Wartman and Savage (2008) concluded in their text that empirical evidence on the first-generation student must be acquired; this study provides such a base. This study reaffirms the literature on first-generation college students in that the relationships with their parents are peers significantly different from non-first-generation students. Because the first-generation students surveyed in this study displayed lower levels of trust and communication with their parents, special attention needs to be given to this population. Due to their parents’ lack of
college knowledge, first-generation students should be approached with the mindset that they may not have the basic tools for college success that non-first-generation students may have. Higher education professionals could also look at ways to improve the first-generation student/parent relationship by providing resources for students, resources for parents, and even counseling sessions for first-generation students on the college adjustment process.

The results also suggest the importance of peers to the millennial student population, with or without first-generation student status. The peer subgroup routinely scored high levels of trust, communication, and total attachment. While the results are not statistically significant, first-generation participants in this study scored higher levels of attachment towards their peers than their non-first-generation counterparts. Because millennial students put a high value on their peers’ opinions and input (Howe and Strauss, 2007), first-generation students in particular may be more likely to go to their friends for advice about the college process than their parents. While this is neither a positive nor a negative effect for the first-generation college student, it does reinforce the need to educate first-generation students’ parents so they can contribute to their student’s college development and adjustment.

There are several limitations with this particular study. While the sample drawn for this study is statistically similar to its comparative population, the population itself lacks much of the diversity that still needs to be researched. The number of first-generation students who took the survey was substantial enough to produce significant results; however, 92% of the survey’s participants identified as white. Because first-generation students are more likely than their non-first-
generation counterparts to identify with underrepresented and low socioeconomic populations (The Pell Institute, 2008), this study may have produced more significant results at a more dynamic and diverse institution. Additionally, the choice of using academic class standing as the other independent variable meant that gender and race could not be explored as potential affecters of college student attachment.

The survey itself was administered over the internet and resulted in a 25% response rate; while this rate is considered acceptable, an in-person survey most likely would have resulted in a better response rate and a richer sample in terms of gender and ethnicity. The participants were significantly more likely to identify as women than men, and while higher education in America is shifting towards women as the majority, there still needs to be an appropriate amount of focus on men in higher education given that they are now a minority. Based off of the demographics of the host institution, males were an underrepresented group in this study. Wartman and Savage (2008) do suggest that attachment theory “may better describe female students’ relationships with their parents” though they later write that “other theorists have still drawn the conclusion that no significant gender differences exist in the attachment relationship” (p. 46). This dispute suggests that using the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) may not have been the best instrument to gather responses from men, though gender was not used as an independent variable.

The results of the current study suggest several recommendations for future research. One of the goals of this study was to determine if college student attachment levels changed through the college process. The data did not produce any consistently significant differences between freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior
students. College is still an incredibly transformative period in an individual’s life (Tinto, 1993) but this study’s findings are consistent with the theory that college student development is a steady – albeit slow – process (Chickering, 1969; Allen and Land, 1999; Gnaulati and Heine, 2001). This study was done as a cross-sectional design; it would be interesting to use a longitudinal design. Although there is much research on first-generation students in college, work needs to be done to discover what happens with first-generation student development when they exit college (either through graduation or attrition). Studies show that first-generation students are significantly more likely to drop out of college (The Pell Institute, 2008) so exploring their developmental process after leaving college may help understand more about why they drop out as well as their chances of re-entering and graduating from college.

The fact that this study’s significant findings derive from the first-generation student variable implies that there is still an enormity of research needed to be done on this specific population. There is a fairly large body of qualitative research on first-generation students; the next step is to apply this knowledge to more quantitative studies. Specific examination should look at differences between gender, race, and socioeconomic status – especially since first-generation students come from disproportionately underrepresented and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Choy, 2001). Specific attention should be paid to different kinds of higher education institutions. Two-year, public colleges are more likely to be attractive to prospective first-generation college students (Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, and Perna, 2008) due to parental pressure, financial assets, and/or other deciding factors. Conversely, first-
generation students who choose to attend “elite,” private institutions may receive even more alienation from their parents and peers because of its stark contrast to their upbringing.

Bryan and Simmons (2009) stressed the importance of early intervention programming for first-generation student college going. This study suggests that early intervention programming should continue not just for the benefit of the first-generation student but the parent(s) as well. The quantitative results of this study reinforce that the first-generation student reports less trust and communication with their parents when compared to the non-first-generation student. While entering college will still create a sense of separate identities for the first-generation college student, equipping parents with knowledge of the college process as well as resources to help their child succeed in college may help ease this eventful life transition. Regardless of how much the first-generation parent knows about the college process, their student puts just as much of an emphasis on how their parents support them while away from home.

Finally, student affairs professionals should stress the importance of identifying first-generation students in their line of work. From an enrollment management standpoint, first-generation students are more likely to drop out after their first year of school (The Pell Institute, 2008) – administrators may find it beneficial to begin identifying and recording first-generation status as it is not widely reported outside of governmentally funded programs such as TRIO. Student affairs professionals who work closely with students in a housing, advising, or counseling capacity may find that asking about first-generation status is beneficial to supporting
them. First-generation students don’t often think of their own status as something “special” and thus rarely talk about being a first-generation student as challenging – after all, they are the first in their family to go to college. If they do not receive early intervention programming or have parents who lack knowledge of the college process, they often receive incomplete and/or incorrect information about the college process. Student affairs professionals should recognize that these students may need to be informed of even the most basic of college procedures in order to help them succeed in higher education.

This study examined college student attachment to parents and peers by setting out to answer two research questions – whether college student attachment levels towards their parents differ based on first-generation status and academic class standing. Previous research into this subject suggested that first-generation students would exhibit different attachment scores than their non-first-generation counterparts, though no quantitative research had been done to reaffirm this claim. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was used to test the two hypotheses, and the resulting data led to the rejection of one null hypothesis. The conclusion that first-generation college students display different attachment scores to their parents and peers led to several practical and professional implications. It also suggested that the results of this study may be the tip of the iceberg for quantitative first-generation student research.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL FORMS
ATTACHMENT A - APPLICATION FOR UNIVERSITY IRB REVIEW

(All submissions must be typewritten) Date 10-14-10

1. a. Principal Investigator/Project Director (if thesis or undergraduate research project, student’s name):
   Robert D. Peterson

   b. Applicant Status: (Check all that apply)
      ☐ Faculty
      ☐ Academic Staff
      ☑ Graduate Student
      ☐ Undergraduate Student

   c. Investigator/Project Director Local Address:
      1725 State Street, Whitney Center 103

   d. Investigator/Project Director Local Telephone #: 789-2548
      E-mail: peterson.robe@uwfax.edu

2. a. Title of Proposed Project: Separate Ways, Worlds Apart: Exploring Changes in First-Generation College Student Attachment

   b. Project Period: Begin Date: 9-8-10   End Date: 4-15-11

   c. If a student project of any type, Faculty Advisor’s Name, Department, and Phone:
      Name: Dr. Christine Bakkum
      Signature: ☒
      Department: Psychology/SAA
      Phone #: 785-8853   E-Mail: bakkum.cht@uwfax.edu

* Names and Signatures of Thesis Committee Members:

   Dr. Carmen Wilson                                  Signature
   Name                                               ☒
   Barbara Stewart
   Name                                               Signature

3. If the researcher believes his/her project may be reviewed under expedited procedures (p. 6-9) and/or falls
   within the exemptible category, (p. 4-5) please check the appropriate box(es) below
   ☐ Expedited
   ☐ Exemptible

   a. If expedited, please indicate the number(s) of the categories listed on pages (6-9) #7
   b. If exemptible, please indicate the number(s) of the categories listed on pages (4-5)

4. By signing this application, I agree to comply with any decisions made by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
   IRB in regard to the above named research project, and or the standards of professional ethics in my field of
   study.

   ____________________________  10-14-10
   Signature
   Date

The IRB has reviewed the above research project and has determined that:

1. ☐ APPROVAL IS GRANTED - as submitted or as modified per attached (check one)
   ☐ a. the protocol does not contain procedures which place human subjects at risk, or
   ☐ b. the protocol contains procedures which place human subjects at minimal but acceptable
      risk, or
   ☐ c. the protocol contains or is likely to contain procedures that may place human subjects at greater
      than minimal risk; however, the risk(s) are outweighed by the sum of the anticipated benefits of
      the research.

2. ☐ APPROVAL NOT GRANTED

   The following IRB members participated in this review:

   ____________________________
   ____________________________

   On behalf of the board:

   ____________________________
   IRB Chairperson or Coordinator Signature
   Date
NARRATIVE STATEMENT

1. This study aims to provide empirical evidence that first-generation students display different levels of attachment from their traditional college student counterparts. Attachment theory – which will be explained at greater length within the literature review – looks at how students who consider their parents a “secure base” will be more likely to venture into the world and explore their own identity formation. While the data collection will only take place from January 2011 to March 2011, the primary researcher began researching this study in the spring of 2010 and will be completed on April 15, 2011. Participants will take a demographic survey along with the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). It was developed in order to assess perceptions the the relationships with their parents and close friends – particularly how well these figures serve as sources of psychological security. Trust, communication, and alienation are the three vectors that are scored within this instrument, testing for the mother (or first parent), father (or second parent), and peers.

2. Participants in this study will be a minimum of 240 undergraduate college students attending the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L). UW-L is located in La Crosse, Wisconsin, a city of approximately 50,000 and located in the southwestern part of the state. The total enrollment of UW-L is approximately 10,000 students, with 8,800 of those identifying as undergraduates. As of the 2009-2010 academic year, 58.8% of students were women while 41.2% were men. 6.8% identified as multicultural students, and 3.8% were international students. The average undergraduate age was 21 years. Empirical data on what percentage of students identify as first-generation students is currently unavailable but conversations with UW-L faculty in the Student Support Services office suggest that an average incoming class at UW-L contains a range of 25-40% first-generation students. The sample’s demographics in this study will strongly resemble, if not reflect, the population demographics once the data is collected.

3. Not applicable.

4. Participants that take the online survey will first be introduced to a preface page that includes information about the study as well as the voluntary consent form. Clicking “I consent to taking this survey” will be the participant’s way of agreeing to take part in the study; conversely, clicking “I do not consent to taking this survey” will prompt a short message thanking them for their time, redirecting them to the UW-L home page. The voluntary consent form also informs the participant that they can quit the study at any time; an incomplete survey will not be analyzed and all information collected from that survey will be discarded.

5. No personally identifiable information will be obtained through this study; the only information collected aside from the instrument itself is the participants’ demographics (gender, race, academic class standing, and parents’ education levels). The study will be conducted through a secure online survey program (Qualtrics) and
the data will be analyzed by the primary researcher and his thesis committee. Participants’ demographic information will be disclosed upon publication for statistical analysis purposes but the publication will not have any personally identifiable information.

6. There are no real risks to this study, physical or mental. The questions are non-invasive and the subjects can opt out of the study at any time, including while taking the surveys. The only inconvenience to the subject is the amount of time to take the instruments, which are estimated to take thirty (30) minutes to complete.

7. Not applicable.

8. Participants may choose to benefit from this study by voluntarily choosing to enter their school e-mail address upon completing the surveys for a chance to win a gift card to local businesses. While the actual implications of the study have yet to be discovered because the study itself has not been carried out, the study aims to provide an insight into if and/or how first-generation students differ from non-first generation students in attachment styles. Healthy levels of attachment have been shown to be a positive indicator of, among other things, college adjustment and identity development. If the study determines that the differences in attachment levels between first-generation and non-first-generation students are statistically significant, future direction can be provided to help further understand and support the first-generation student demographic.
Protocol Title: “Separate Ways, Worlds Apart: Exploring Changes in First-Generation College Student Attachment”

Principal Investigator: Robert D. Peterson
1725 State Street
103 Whitney Center
La Crosse, WI 54601

Emergency Contact: Robert D. Peterson
Phone: (608) 789-2548
E-mail: peterson.robe@uwlax.edu

Purpose and Procedure
- The purpose of this study is to determine if first-generation college students and non-first-generation college students have significantly different levels of attachment to their parents and peers. The study aims to provide empirical evidence about the first-generation student demographic in order to better understand and support these students.
- My participation will involve filling out two surveys. The first instrument is to determine demographics such as gender, race, and first-generation student status. The second instrument is the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment and involves answering questions regarding the relationship with parent(s) and peers.
- Filling out the surveys should take no more than 30 minutes.
- Testing will take place over the use of a web survey program (Qualtrics).

Potential Risks
- There are no known risks to participating in this study. Please refer to the “Rights and Confidentiality” section in regards to withdrawing from the study.

Rights and Confidentiality
- My participation in this study is entirely voluntary.
- I can choose to withdraw from this study at any time by contacting the principal investigator.
- The results of this study may be published in scientific literature or presented at professional meetings and conferences using grouped data only.
- All information will be kept confidential through the use of coded instruments. No personally identifiable information will be collected.

Possible Benefits
- I can choose to enter for a gift card drawing upon completing the survey and will require an e-mail address in order to contact them upon winning the drawing.
Questions regarding study procedures may be directed to Rob Peterson, principal investigator at (608) 789-2548 or peterson.robe@uwlax.edu, or Dr. Christine Bakkum, Psychology/Student Affairs Administration program, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse at (608) 785-8953 or bakkum.chri@uwlax.edu. Questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the UW-La Crosse Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at either (608) 785-8124 or irb@uwlax.edu.
Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your request for information concerning the research that we have conducted on adolescents’ perceived attachment to peers and parents. First, we have enclosed a copy of our article in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* in 1987 that introduced the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. We have also enclosed a manual providing information on our factor analyses of the scales, information on reliability of the scales, and a scoring key.

Since the study reported in the 1987 paper was carried out, we have revised the IPPA. In her dissertation, Gay Armsden modified the IPPA so as to separately assess perceived quality of attachment to mothers and fathers (instead of parents together). We have enclosed a copy of this unpublished measure, The IPPA (Mother, Father, Peer Version), and a page of scoring information. In her study of over 400 college students, Gay has found that most of the same items fall on the same factors for mothers and father separately that we found in the factor analysis of parents together on the IPPA. However, there were enough differences in loadings that we judged it best to discourage the use of subscales in the revised version of the IPPA until further research could be done. Recommended scoring for this version thus involves total scores for Mother, Father, and Peer, but no subscale scores. However, while scoring subscales is not advised, we have included instructions for doing so, since many researchers have requested this information.

If you have further questions, please feel free to call (814 863-0112) or e-mail Gay Armsden at (g.armsden@gmail.com), or write. If you decide to use our measures in data collection, please let us know. We would also appreciate a copy of papers that utilize the measure(s).

Sincerely,

Mark T. Greenberg, Ph.D.            Gay Armsden, Ph.D. Professor
                                      Research Consultant
INVENTORY OF PARENT AND PEER ATTACHMENT (IPPA)

AUTHORS:

Gay Armsden, Ph.D.
Ph.D. Research Consultant
230 Ilihau St.
Kailua, HI 96734

Mark T. Greenberg,
Professor
Human Development
Penn State University
State College, PA 16802

Variables Measured:

- Parent and Peer Attachment (original version)
- Mother, Father, and Peer Attachment (revised version)

Instrument Description:

The IPPA was developed in order to assess adolescents’ perceptions of the positive and negative affective/cognitive dimension of relationships with their parents and close friends -- particularly how well these figures serve as sources of psychological security. The theoretical framework is attachment theory, originally formulated by Bowlby and recently expanded by others. Three broad dimensions are assessed: degree of mutual trust; quality of communication; and extent of anger and alienation. The development samples were 16 to 20 years of age; however the IPPA has been used successfully in several studies with adolescents as young as 12. The instrument is a self-report questionnaire with a five point likert-scale response format. The original version consists of 28 parents and 25 peer items, yielding two attachment scores. The revised version (Mother, Father, Peer Version) is comprised of 25 items in each of the mother, father, and peer sections, yielding three attachment scores. The IPPA is scored by reverse-scoring the negatively worded items and then summing the response values in each section.

RELIABILITY:

Three week test-retest reliabilities for a sample of 27 18- to 20-year-olds were .93 for parent attachment and .86 for peer attachment.

For the revised version, internal reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) are: Mother
attachment, .87; Father attachment, .89; Peer attachment, .92.

VALIDITY:

Among late adolescents, parental attachment scores are moderately to highly related to Family and Social Self scores from the Tennessee Self Concept Scale and to most subscales on the Family Environmental Scale (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Parent attachment scores of 12- to 18-year-olds are also moderately correlated with scores on the FACES, and with the degree of positive family coping (communication among family members and relatives concerning problems) (Lewis, Woods, & Ellison, 1987). In a sample of 10- to 16-year-old psychiatric patients, less secure parent attachment was related to clinical diagnosis of depression, parent rating of the adolescent’s depressive symptoms, and to patient’s self-reported level of depression (Armsden, McCauley, Greenberg, Burke, & Mitchell, 1991). Attachment to parents has been found to discriminate delinquents from non-delinquents among 12- to 17-year-olds (Redondo, Martin, Fernandez, & Lopez, 1986). Late adolescents experiencing more secure mother and father attachment report less conflict between their parents and experience less loneliness (Armsden, 1986).

Peer attachment is positively related to social self concept as assessed by the Tennessee Self Concept Scale and family expressiveness on the Family Environment Scale, and is strongly negatively correlated with loneliness. Peer attachment is modestly correlated with parent attachment as assessed by the IPPA as well as measures of general family functioning and self concept as family member (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Armsden, 1986; Lewis et al., 1987).

Scores on the IPPA have also been found to be associated with a number of personality variables. Among late adolescents, parent and peer attachment are correlated with positiveness and stability of self-esteem, life-satisfaction, and affective status (depression, anxiety, resentment/alienation, covert anger, and loneliness) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Armsden, 1986). The relationship of attachment and affective status holds even when degree of negative life-change is controlled (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Quality of attachment to parents and to a lesser extent, peers, is associated with self-reported tendencies toward the use of more problem-solving coping strategies relative to emotion-managing efforts in stressful situations (Armsden, 1986). Among early to middle adolescents, parent attachment, and to a lesser extent, peer attachment, were found to be associated with lesser hopelessness and less externally oriented locus of control and with greater self-management (coping) skills (Armsden et al., 1987; Lewis et al., 1987).

Scores on the IPPA were not found to be significantly related to socio-economic status among a sample of 400 18- to 20-year-olds. In the same study, negligible but significant positive correlations were obtained between attachment and
parents’ education levels (Armsden, 1986).

**SUGGESTIONS IN USAGE:**

(1) The revised version of the IPPA (Mother, Father, Peer version) separately assesses mother and father attachment; the authors recommend its use over the original version whenever possible.

**REFERENCES:**


To: Robert Peterson

From: Bart Van Voorhis, Coordinator
Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects

Date: November 23, 2010

Re: RESEARCH PROTOCOL SUBMITTED TO IRB

The IRB Executive Committee has reviewed your proposed research project entitled: “Separate Ways, Worlds Apart: Exploring Changes in First-Generation College Student Attachment.”

The Committee has determined that your research protocol will not place human subjects at risk. The attached protocol has been approved and is exempt from further review per 45CFR46, 46.101(b)(2). Also, a waiver of signed consent has been granted in accordance with 46.117(c)(1)(2). IRB records should be retained for at least 3 years after completion of the project.

Since you are not seeking federal funding for this research, the review process is complete and you may proceed with your project.

Good luck with your project.

cc: IRB File
Christine Bakkum, Faculty Advisor
APPENDIX B

INSTRUMENTATION
Demographics Survey

1) What is your biological sex?
   ___ Male
   ___ Female
   ___ Other

2) What is your age in years?
   ______

3) What is your academic class standing at the time of this survey?
   ___ Freshman
   ___ Sophomore
   ___ Junior
   ___ Senior

4) What is your race?
   ___ White/Caucasian
   ___ African American
   ___ Native American
   ___ Hispanic
   ___ Asian/Pacific Islander
   ___ Biracial/Multiracial
   ___ Other
5) Are you a first-generation student? (For this study’s purposes, a first-generation student is a student whose parents do not hold a four-year degree.)
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

6) What is the highest level of education your first parent has completed?
   ___ Some high school
   ___ High school degree or equivalent
   ___ Some college
   ___ Two-year degree (Associate’s)
   ___ Four-year degree (Bachelor’s)
   ___ Some graduate school
   ___ Master’s degree
   ___ Doctoral degree

7) What is the highest level of education your second parent has completed?
   ___ Some high school
   ___ High school degree or equivalent
   ___ Some college
   ___ Two-year degree (Associate’s)
   ___ Four-year degree (Bachelor’s)
   ___ Some graduate school
   ___ Master’s degree
   ___ Doctoral degree
   ___ I do not have a second parent
Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Revised)

This questionnaire asks about your relationships with your mother. Each of the following statements asks about your feelings about your mother or the woman who has acted as your mother (e.g., a natural mother and a step-mother). Answer the questions for the one you feel has most influenced you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never or Almost Never True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Sometimes True</th>
<th>Often True</th>
<th>Always or Almost Always True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. My mother respects my feelings. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I feel my mother does a good job as my mother. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I wish I had a different mother. 1 2 3 4 5
4. My mother accepts me as I am. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I like to get my mother’s point of view on things I’m concerned about. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel it’s no use letting my feelings show around my mother. 1 2 3 4 5
7. My mother can tell when I’m upset about something. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Talking over my problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed or foolish. 1 2 3 4 5
9. My mother expects too much from me. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I get upset easily around my mother. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I get upset a lot more than my mother knows about. 1 2 3 4 5
12. When we discuss things, my mother cares
about my point of view.

13. My mother trusts my judgment.

14. My mother has her own problems, so I don’t bother her with mine.

15. My mother helps me understand myself better.

16. I tell my mother about my problems and troubles.

17. I feel angry with my mother.

18. I don’t get much attention from my mother.

19. My mother helps me talk about my difficulties.

20. My mother understands me.

21. When I am angry about something, my mother tries to be understanding.

22. I trust my mother.

23. My mother doesn’t understand what I’m going through these days.

24. I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest.

25. If my mother knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it.
The next set of questions asks you about your relationship with your male Parent (i.e. father or whomever takes care of you).

1. My father respects my feelings. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I feel my father does a good job as my father. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I wish I had a different father. 1 2 3 4 5
4. My father accepts me as I am. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I like to get my father’s point of view on things I’m concerned about. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel it’s no use letting my feelings show around my father. 1 2 3 4 5
7. My father can tell when I’m upset about something. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Talking over my problems with my father makes me feel ashamed or foolish. 1 2 3 4 5
9. My father expects too much from me. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I get upset easily around my father. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I get upset a lot more than my father knows about. 1 2 3 4 5
12. When we discuss things, my father cares about my point of view. 1 2 3 4 5
13. My father trusts my judgment. 1 2 3 4 5
14. My father has his own problems, so I don’t bother his with mine. 1 2 3 4 5
15. My father helps me understand myself better. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I tell my father about my problems and troubles. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I feel angry with my father.    1 2 3 4 5
18. I don’t get much attention from my father.    1 2 3 4 5
19. My father helps me talk about my difficulties.    1 2 3 4 5
20. My father understands me.    1 2 3 4 5
21. When I am angry about something, my father tries to be understanding.    1 2 3 4 5
22. I trust my father.    1 2 3 4 5
23. My father doesn’t understand what I’m going through these days.    1 2 3 4 5
24. I can count on my father when I need to get something off my chest.    1 2 3 4 5
25. If my father knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it.    1 2 3 4 5

The next set of questions asks you about your relationship with your close friends.

1. I like to get my friends’ point of view on things I’m concerned about.    1 2 3 4 5
2. My friends can tell when I’m upset about something.    1 2 3 4 5
3. When we discuss things, my friends care about my point of view.    1 2 3 4 5
4. When I discuss things, my friends care about my point of view.    1 2 3 4 5
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I wish I had different friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>My friends understand me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>My friends help me to talk about my difficulties.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>My friends accept me as I am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>I feel the need to be in touch with my friends more often.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>My friends don’t understand what I’m going through these days.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>I feel alone or apart when I’m with my friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>My friends listen to what I have to say.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>I feel my friends are good friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>My friends are fairly easy to talk to.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>When I am angry about something, my friends try to be understanding.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>My friends help me to understand myself better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>My friends care about how I am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I feel angry with my friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>I can count on my friends when I need to get something off my chest.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I trust my friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>
21. My friends respect my feelings. 1 2 3 4 5
22. I get upset a lot more than my friends know about. 1 2 3 4 5
23. It seems as if my friends are irritated with me for no reason. 1 2 3 4 5
24. I can tell my friends about my problems and troubles. 1 2 3 4 5
25. If my friends know something is bothering me, they ask me about it. 1 2 3 4 5