

"Family Structure and The Freshmen Year: Influence of Parental Marital Status and  
Custody Arrangement on First-Year College Adjustment"

By

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degree of Master of Science.

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine how first-year college adjustment is impacted by family structure. More specifically, the study aims to determine if the current definition of family structure needs to be revised to account for different custody arrangements when assessing its impact on first-year college adjustment. Traditional first year college students were recruited for participation in this study, 82 freshmen chose to take part. Eligibility was determined based on a prescreening questionnaire that examined age, parental marital status, and current college housing arrangement. The survey contained the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, College Adjustment Test, and demographic questions related to campus involvement, division of parental custody, family background, parental contact and academic history. Participants were divided into the “married” group (N=39), the “co-parenting” group (N=21), and the “single parenting” group (N=22) based on their parents’ marital status and custody arrangement, if the parents were divorced. Significant differences were found in terms of high school grade point average, as well as grade point average from the first semester of college. Further research is needed to continue assessing the possible revision of the present definition of family structure; larger numbers of participants and more equivalent group sizes will aid in increased statistical power.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Significance of Study**

College dropout rates, also referred to as attrition, are constantly a major concern for university administrators. It is estimated that between 13 and 25 percent of students at four-year institutions will leave following their first year of college (Tinto, 1994). In order to reduce the attrition that occurs between the first and second year of college, it is essential that factors of adjustment be determined and clearly understood so that interventions may be developed. At first glance, attrition may seem to be solely the concern of educators and administrators, but this issue is also a concern for college campus counseling centers. The most prevalent function of college counseling centers is to provide therapeutic interventions when a student's personal problems interfere with his or her ability to adequately perform in the academic arena, but these centers also serve as a resource for students, faculty, and administrators on how to intervene with struggling students before they drop out of the university (Sharkin, 2004). The three main reasons that students seek counseling from a campus counseling center are for psychological concerns, academic underperformance, and uncertainty about continuing their college education (Sharkin, 2004). While these three separate issues bring students into counseling, it is possible that they are interconnected, such that psychological concerns trigger academic underperformance, which then leads to uncertainty about staying in college. Unresolved family problems, such as divorce, have the potential to trigger the domino effect suggested above.

The divorce rate in the United States peaked in the early 1980s and has been in slight decline ever since. Despite this decline, approximately 45 percent of first marriages end in divorce, which means that a large number of children still feel the disheartening effects of parental divorce (National Center of Health Statistics, 2010). Family plays a major role in almost

every facet of life and adjustment to college is no different, but the influence of family structure on first-year college adjustment has been sparsely and inconsistently examined. Previous research on this topic has defined family structure as whether a student's parents are married or divorced (i.e., Feenstra, Banyard, Rines, & Hopkins, 2001). However, when this definition has been used to guide research, the findings have been incongruent. It is possible that when examining family structure, individuals with divorced parents should be further separated into subgroups based on type of custody arrangement. Therefore, the present study will define family structure as the marital status and living arrangement of a college student's nuclear family, prior to attending college. Due to the potential revision of the family structure definition, and the need for research consistency in the college adjustment area, further empirical exploration is needed. By evaluating if different custodial arrangements have an impact on how students adjust to college, it may allow educators and counselors to determine which groups of students are more at-risk. This understanding can in-turn lead to proactive interventions for helping at-risk individuals adjust to college.

### **Goals of Study**

The first goal of this study is to determine if the current definition of family structure in research needs to be revised. Due to the lack of literature on how different divorce custody arrangements can impact first-year college adjustment, this study aims to explore the impact of family structure on first-year college adjustment from a unique perspective. Rather than simply comparing the adjustment scores of students whose parents are married and divorced, the study further divides students with divorced parents into two categories: those with a sole custody arrangement following divorce, and those with a joint custody arrangement. For the purposes of this paper, those with a sole custody arrangement will henceforth be referred to as "single

parenting,” while those with joint parent custody arrangement will henceforth be referred to as “co-parenting.” Furthermore, various aspects of college adjustment will be assessed in this study; the College Adjustment Test (CAT; Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990) examines positive and negative affect, homesickness and overall adjustment, while the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1984) measures academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, attachment, and full-scale adjustment. The second goal of this research project aims to add to the sparse and inconsistent research that currently is associated with family structure and first-year college adjustment. By building upon the current base of literature, the results and implications of this study will hopefully lend to a more accurate understanding of how a student’s first-year college adjustment is influenced by his or her family structure. Furthermore, by bringing consistency to this research topic, it may aid counseling psychologists and university administrators in understanding if students are more at-risk for dropping out of college because of their family structure.

### **Research Questions**

- Are there differences in first-year college adjustment between students whose parents are married, divorced with a joint parenting arrangement (“co-parenting”), or divorced with a sole custody arrangement (“single parenting”)?
- Do the different family structure groups have specific college adjustment advantages/skills that the other groups do not possess?
- Does the definition of family structure need to be revised in order to include categories of various custody arrangements among divorced families, instead of looking simply at divorced families as a whole?



## Chapter Two: Literature Review

College attrition rates have been a source of distress for educators since the early twentieth century. In the 1930s, the United States Department of Education conducted a study indicating that overall undergraduate attrition by the time of graduation was 45 percent (McNeeley, 1938). However, more recently the National Center for Education Statistics (2007) indicated that 24.5 percent of college students drop out before the beginning of their second year of college. According to Kalsner (1991), less than 15 percent of attrition is due to academic misconduct and dismissal, meaning that 85 percent of leaving students do so voluntarily. Other than academic dismissals, the four common themes associated with attrition are: adjustment and transition issues, lack of academic preparedness, uncertainty about the benefits of attending college, and financial problems. The attrition rates are highest during and immediately following the conclusion of the freshman year, and are most commonly caused by transition and adjustment issues (Kalsner, 1991). By gaining a better understanding of the factors that influence college adjustment, it may be possible to reduce the number of dropouts that are caused by transition and adjustment issues. Universities can do everything in their power to create opportunities for students to get involved, but until there is a clear understanding of the factors that influence college adjustment, attrition rates will continue to haunt university administrators.

While improving retention is important to university administrators, it is also important to college campus counseling centers. Oftentimes university administrators call on these centers to intervene with at-risk students or to help combat attrition through other avenues. Some people may view college counseling centers in the same way that they view other counseling venues, simply as an outlet for a college-aged person to work on their interpersonal problems, which are unrelated to the college environment. However, contrary to this belief, college counseling centers

see clients for a wide variety of problems, and only a few of those problems are solely related to interpersonal problems or psychological distress. Van Brunt (2008) provided an overview of the major findings in research on the relationship between students seeking counseling services and the corresponding college retention rates. Van Brunt's findings indicated that students with emotional and personal problems were at risk for dropping out of college. Furthermore, students who were engaged in counseling had a higher retention rate than students who were not, and counseling helped students to address their difficulties and continue their education.

Turner and Berry (2000), found that 70 percent of students who attended counseling at a campus counseling center reported that their academic performance was impacted by the personal problems for which they were seeking counseling. Furthermore, Turner and Berry found that the retention rate for students who were involved in counseling was approximately 85 percent, while the retention rate for the general student body population was approximately 74 percent; indicating that college students who engage in counseling are more likely to stay in college.

Although research shows that college students who engage in counseling are more likely to remain in college, in order to fully capture how first-year students are adjusting to college, it seems more beneficial to examine levels of college adjustment in the general population.

### **Historical Trends in College Adjustment Research**

Past literature has extensively explored many variables that can influence college adjustment. For example, a student's high school grade point average is a strong predictor of college academic adjustment and success (Friedman & Mandel, 2009). Research has shown a positive relationship between self-esteem and college adjustment (Boulter, 2002; Hickman, Toews, & Andrews, 2001). Another major predictor of college adjustment is personality, which

includes self-perceptions and adaptability to change. Holmbeck and Wandrei (1993) found that the degree to which students believe they are in control of their environment and capable of adapting to change, has a profound effect on a student's adjustment to college. Toews and Yazedian (2007) found that in conjunction with self-esteem, peer and parental support are also major predictors of first-year college adjustment.

In addition to the factors listed above, the role of parents and family greatly influence many facets of first-year college adjustment. According to the literature, separation-individuation and parental attachment are two of the most researched predictors of college adjustment (e.g., Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Lapsley, Rice, & FitzGerald, 1990; Rice, FitzGerald, Whaley, & Gibbs, 1995). Separation-individuation can be explained as a lack of negative feelings, such as guilt, fear of rejection, or anxiety toward the process of separation. Furthermore, separation-individuation can be considered a developmental process that is initiated by departure from parents, significant others, and peers, which leads to individuation and the development of a well defined, autonomous self (Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004). Research in the 1980s indicated that college students with increased levels of separation-individuation reported less loneliness and depression, as well as higher levels of social and academic adjustment to college (Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman & Weiss, 1987; Lapsley & et al., 1989).

However, in the 1990s there was a shift in active scholarly research, from separation-individuation to attachment as a major predictor of college adjustment. Attachment can be defined as a permanent bond that is formed between a parent and child, which endures throughout the life span (Rice et al., 1995). Secure attachment is initially formed during infancy and childhood, when primary caregivers, often the mother and/or father, provide the necessities to meet the basic needs of the child, as well as a safe and encouraging environment in which the

child can explore and grow (Funder, 1997, pp. 393-396). Secure attachment in college-aged students often allows the individual to feel that his or her parents, or primary caregivers encourage independence and new experiences (Kennedy, 1999). The research on college adjustment predictors, including attachment, suggests that students with secure attachment to their parents reported better academic, emotional, and social adjustment (see: Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Lapsley et al., 1990). More recent literature has begun to focus on the combination of separation-individuation and parental attachment as predictors of college adjustment (e.g., Mattanah et al., 2004; Rice et al., 1995).

While there have been copious amounts of research on the influence of separation-individuation and attachment on college adjustment, it is possible that other factors may also play an important role. Napoli and Wortman (1998) found that parental support of postsecondary education was positively related to academic and social adjustment. Another study indicated that students with supportive parents, who never attended college, reported lower levels of college adjustment than did students with supportive parents, who had experienced some amount of time in college (Nunez, Cuccaro-Alamin, & Carroll, 1998). It is possible that parents who had experienced some amount of college were more aware of the stresses associated with college, and were more capable of offering constructive criticism and advice.

Familial influence on college adjustment has also been explored from the angle of the student's relationship with his or her parents. Wintre and Yaffe (2000) found that the role of parents provided a small but significant contribution to college adjustment. Even in situations where the parenting style did not contribute directly to the explained variance of the models, it contributed indirectly by influencing other predictor variables. According to Hannum and Dvorak (2004), the presence of family conflict interfered with strength of attachment, which was

therefore related to psychological distress and social adjustment in the college setting. They also explained that familial conflict often precipitates divorce and that the combination of familial conflict and structural changes due to divorce inhibits the attachment levels between father and child. Their study found that paternal attachment strongly predicted first-year social adjustment and competence, while maternal attachment strongly predicted psychological well being, which is consistent with other research in the field (see: Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002; Rice, Cunningham, & Young, 1997). In 2000, Lopez, Melendez, and Rice indicated that college students with divorced or separated parents described their early relationship with both the mother and the father as less warm and less caring, than did college students with married parents.

Research has provided inconsistent findings with regard to the influence of family structure on college adjustment. Some research has shown that there is no difference between students from divorced families and intact families, when it comes to college adjustment (see: Feenstra et al., 2001; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1988). Hannum and Dvorak (2004) found that family structure was a significant predictor of social adjustment in college; students with intact families adjusted significantly better in terms of their social adjustment than did students whose parents were divorced. Other studies have shown that students with divorced parents are at higher risk for psychological distress and negative college adjustment (see: Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000; McIntyre, Heron, McIntyre, Burton, & Engler, 2003). Even though all of the above studies measure college adjustment, each study focuses on different aspects of the college adjustment process. For example, Feenstra et al. (2001) focused on general college adjustment in terms of family structure and other family variables, while Hannum and Dvorak (2004) focused on the effects of divorce, internal family conflict and patterns of attachment on psychological distress and social adjustment in college.

Currently, the literature regarding the influence of family structure on academic adjustment in college is sparse. The primary purpose of attending college is to receive higher education, and since family structure influences college adjustment, it is essential to further explore this relationship on college academic adjustment. By determining the effects of family structure on academic adjustment, universities and their counseling centers may be able to reduce attrition rates by creating interventions, which would help students adjust more appropriately to college and the associated academic demands.

Parrish (2010) examined the influence of family structure on homesickness, overall adjustment, and academic adjustment between first-year college students of married and divorced parents and found no significant differences. However, as an experimental analysis, the divorced group was further divided into “single-parenting” and “co-parenting” subgroups. “Co-parenting” can be defined as two divorced parents cooperating and sharing responsibility in the process of raising their children, which generally involves a joint-custody arrangement (DeGenova, 2008). “Single parenting” can thus be defined as a sole custody arrangement, in which one parent is solely responsible for raising the child. These experimental analyses revealed that there were no significant differences between individuals whose parents were married, or whose parents were co-parenting, following divorce. When these two groups (married and co-parenting) were compared with peers being raised by a single parent following divorce, the difference in academic adjustment trended toward significance with regard to a measure of academic adjustment, which has yet to be tested for reliability and validity. These further analyses hint that the definition of family structure may need to be revised, to include both parental marital status and division of custody for individuals with divorced parents. Therefore, instead of just having one divorced group that includes all types of custody arrangements,

perhaps there should be a group for divorced parents who co-parent, and a separate group for divorced parents who practice single parenting, due to a sole custody arrangement.

All of the above literature on family structure and college adjustment have measured only certain types of adjustment instead of exploring all of the facets of adjustment in one study, which is part of the driving force behind the inconsistency. For example, it is possible that family structure has an impact on academic adjustment, but not on social adjustment. Therefore, the present study aims to look at the big picture, by examining the impact that family structure can have on multiple facets of adjustment, such as academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and overall adjustment. It is also important to note that with the exception of the study by Parrish (2010), all of the above studies on family structure place no parameters on how long parents had been divorced. Past research (Wallerstein, Corbin, Lewis, & Hetherington, 1988) has indicated that following divorce, children often exhibit a downturn in academic, emotional, and behavioral adjustment, but that most children recover within two to three years following the divorce. Therefore, it is necessary to design a research study that will incorporate the suggested revised definition of family structure, while examining multiple facets of first-year college adjustment and controlling for the academic, emotional, and behavioral effects that are seen in the first few years following divorce. In order to prevent this downturn from interfering with data, the new study design should only include participants with divorced parents, if their parents have been divorced for longer than three years.

Although the rate of divorce peaked in the 1980s and is currently declining slowly, Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (2002) have estimated that between 32 and 40 percent of all children in the United States will experience parental separation and divorce during their lifetime. Since a large number of children will experience this, it is essential that research consistency and

further insight be gained on how the revised definition of family structure influences the different facets of college adjustment. While there is no literature supporting the notion that students from divorced families will adjust better to college or to life in general, there are some aspects of the divorce experience which have led the author to hypothesize that students with divorced parents may adjust more successfully to college in terms of overall adjustment and academic adjustment.

First, studies have shown that divorce leads to academic downturn for the first few years following the divorce, but academic performance recovers after the first few years (Wallerstein et al., 1988). In the present study it was required that participants in the divorced condition have parents who have been divorced for four or more years in order to ensure that the participants were not experiencing this academic downturn immediately following divorce. Second, as mentioned above, first year adjustment can be a stressful event for students, but since those with divorced parents have already experienced a major life stressor, they may generally come to college with strategies and characteristics that help them more effectively cope with college stressors than their peers with intact families (McIntyre et al., 2003).

From the perspective of attachment theory, it is appropriate and healthy for students to experience separation anxiety as they adjust to college. Students returning to their hometown on the weekends or habitually communicating with their parents during the first few months of college is normal, and could appropriately be compared to an infant fussing when he or she wants to be held by their mother. However, the fixation on homesickness and separation anxiety generally diminishes by the end of the first semester (Berman & Sperling, 1991). In terms of homesickness, it is possible that students with divorced parents may be less homesick for one of two reasons. First, homesickness requires that students have a strong bond at home, but some children of divorce may not feel a strong attachment to one parent (D. H. Karpowitz, personal



communication, February 22, 2010) and therefore may not be as homesick, which could lead to a less traumatic transition to college. The second potential explanation for decreased levels of homesickness may be that students with divorced parents have had to make the transition to living with only one parent at a time, therefore homesickness may have gradually dissipated over time because the student has adjusted to not spending time with both parents; if this is the case, these students may report less homesickness during their first year of college. One final aspect of divorce, which may help students of divorced parents adjust more successfully to college, is the increased responsibility and independence that is often associated with living in a single-parent household. According to DeGenova (2008), older children in divorced families may need to take on more responsibility to help maintain family functioning than their peers in intact families. They may be asked by the parent to help cook meals, take care of younger siblings, or clean around the house more so than their peers with intact families. Additionally, children with divorced parents may need to find a job in order to help support the family. These tasks may be a difficult adjustment, but they may also help the student mature more quickly, which can greatly aid them in the college adjustment process.

**Married & divorced: co-parenting versus sole custody.** Copious research has shown that children adjust best when they live with both their mother and their father, in an environment with relatively little conflict; however, it may be more beneficial to the child's adjustment for the parents to divorce if there is high conflict in the home environment (Karpowitz, 2009; Lopez et al., 2000; McIntyre et al., 2003). Furthermore, research has shown (e.g., Hannum & Dvorak, 2004; Wallerstein et al., 1988) that when divorce occurs, children tend to make more successful adjustments to the new family arrangements when continued contact with both parents occurs following a divorce. Karpowitz (2009) suggested that when contact

with both parents is continued following a divorce it can lead to better adjustment for the child, which is in line with the trend that Parrish (2010) found indicating that when the participants' parents were divorced, those who spent time with only one parent on a regular basis reported lower levels of adjustment, than those who spent time with both parents regularly. Therefore, it is possible that co-parenting following divorce can lead to better first-year college adjustment than sole custody arrangements. One possible reason for this is the student still has regular contact and support from both the father and the mother, even if they are not living under the same roof. However, in a sole custody situation, it is possible that the student no longer communicates with the non-custodial parent, thus leaving only one line of support when making the adjustment to college.

Based on the literature review above, and the trends discussed from Parrish (2010), it is necessary that a research study examine the various aspects of college adjustment with a modified definition of family structure, that accounts for different types of custody arrangements following parental divorce. Although the trends toward significance, found by Parrish (2010), suggest that there may be differences between those whose parents engage in single parenting following divorce and those whose parents engage in co-parenting following divorce or those whose parents remain married, the following hypotheses are written in the direction of the null.

### **Hypotheses**

**Academic adjustment.** In terms of academic adjustment, as measured by the academic adjustment subscale of the SACQ, as well as high school grade point average, and grade point average earned during the first semester of college, there will be no difference between individuals in the married, co-parenting and single parenting groups.

**Social adjustment.** There will be no difference between individuals in the married, co-parenting and single parenting groups in terms of Social adjustment, as measured by the SACQ.

**Personal-emotional adjustment.** There will be no difference between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups in terms of Personal-Emotional adjustment, as measured by the SACQ.

**Attachment to college.** In terms of the student's attachment to the idea of college, there will be no difference between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups, as measured by the SACQ.

**Overall adjustment to college.** There will be no difference between individuals in the married, co-parenting and single parenting groups in terms of overall college adjustment, as measured by both the Full-Scale Adjustment on the SACQ and the Overall Adjustment Scale of the CAT.

**Affect.** There will be no difference between individuals in the married, co-parenting and single parenting groups in terms of Positive Affect & Negative Affect, as measured by the CAT.

**Homesickness.** There will be no difference between individuals in the married, co-parenting and single parenting groups in terms of Homesickness, as measured by the CAT.

## **Summary**

Despite the large field of research on college adjustment, Parrish (2010) introduced a new avenue of research when it comes to family structure and its impact on first-year college adjustment. By revising the definition of family structure to include “co-parenting” and “single parenting” as subcategories of the traditional divorce group, it is possible that more relevant differences can be found. The present study aims to determine if levels of college adjustment differ based on parental marital status and custody arrangements. By gaining insight on this topic,

university administrators and college counselors can begin to better understand if there are predisposing characteristics that put students at-risk for dropping out of college.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### Participants

Students who were enrolled in the Introductory Psychology course at the University of Kansas were recruited to participate in this study; participation in psychological research studies is one way to fulfill a required component of this course. Students, both male and female, interested in taking part in psychological studies filled out an online mass prescreening, which included determinants for this study (see Appendix A). Participants were selected based on the criteria of age, academic standing at the university, marital status of their parents, and their current college housing arrangement. For inclusion, participants had to be “traditional” second semester freshmen, meaning that they graduated from high school in the spring and started college in the fall of the same year, thus making them between the ages of 18 and 19. Students whose parents were married were eligible to participate in the study; however, students with divorced parents were eligible to participate only if their parents had been divorced for four or more years. By placing parameters on the amount of time since the parental divorce, a more homogenous group was recruited for the study, and there was a reduced likelihood that these students were experiencing academic underperformance due to maladjustment from the divorce. Lastly, in order to be eligible for participation, students had to live in community style, on-campus living arrangements; at the University of Kansas these options were limited to residence halls, scholarship halls, and Greek housing. Since living off-campus, in an apartment or other setting, requires more adjustment and maturity than on-campus living, it was decided that using only participants who lived on campus allowed for a more homogeneous sample. After assessing the prescreening questionnaire, a total of 436 students were eligible for participation in the present study, 350 with married parents and 86 with divorced parents. Due to system limitations,

it was not possible to determine specifically how many participants from the “co-parenting” and “single parenting” conditions were eligible for participation, rather the prescreening measure simply determined that the parents had been divorced for at least four years. Determination of inclusion for the custody specific groups took place when students with divorced parents completed the study. A total of 84 eligible participants elected to take part in the present study. Data from two participants was not included in the final analysis; one failed to complete the entire questionnaire packet, while the other reported that they were an international student. Although being an international student was not initially considered when determining eligibility, there are many more factors involved in adjustment to college for international students, and therefore this individual was disqualified. These two individuals are not included in the number of participants below. The “married” condition (N=39) consisted of participants whose parents are married. The “co-parenting” condition (N=21) was comprised of participants whose parents are divorced with a shared custody agreement. The “single parenting” condition (N=22) included individuals whose parents were divorced with a sole custody arrangement. Table 1 contains the gender break down for each of the three marital groups, as well as the average amount of time since divorce for the individuals in the single parenting and co-parenting groups.

Table 1  
*Participant Information by Group and Gender*

Parental Marital Group	Males	Females	Total	Average Time Divorced
Married	14	25	39	
Co-parenting	12	9	21	10.24
Single parenting	10	12	22	12.95
Total	36	46	82	

## Measures

**Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire.** The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1984) is a 67-question self-report measure, which assesses college adjustment in terms of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and general adjustment. The authors of the assessment utilized a test of internal consistency, rather than test-retest reliability because they felt that the variables being measured are not necessarily stable and enduring properties, but rather they are states that can vary due to changes in the student's environment, life events, and possibly personality characteristics. The coefficient alpha for the full-scale ranged from .92 to .95, while the reliabilities of the subscales ranged from .77 (personal-emotional adjustment) to .91 (attachment and social adjustment). Due to copyright laws, the questionnaire cannot be included as an appendix; therefore a more thorough description of the assessment is provided below.

*Academic adjustment.* The academic adjustment subscale contains 24 items that measure four different educational demands that are important in the college setting. *Motivation* examines a student's attitudes toward assigned academic work, academic goals, their motivations for being in college, successful completion of assigned academic work, and their sense of educational purpose. *Application* examines how well the student is translating their motivation into true academic effort, as well as how the student is doing when it comes to meeting the academic demands and requirements associated with college. *Performance* assesses the academic functioning and the efficacy of the student's academic efforts. Last, *academic environment* measures the student's level of satisfaction with the academic offerings and opportunities at their specific university.

*Social adjustment.* The social adjustment subscale is comprised of 20 items that examine the interpersonal-social demands that are vital to successful adjustment in college. This subscale can be further divided in to four item clusters that more specifically assess a student's social adjustment to college. *General social adjustment* looks at the extent to which the student is getting involved with social activities and the degree of success to which the student is having in doing so. The *other people* cluster examines how the student is forming relationships with others on campus. *Nostalgia* reviews how a student is dealing with the social relocation that is associated with moving away from home and their primary support group. Last, *social environment* assesses the student's level of satisfaction with the social aspects that college is providing.

*Personal-emotional adjustment.* The personal-emotional adjustment subscale contains 15 questions that aim to determine the degree to which the student is experiencing general psychological distress and related somatic symptoms. The subscale can be further divided into *psychological* and *physical* clusters. The *psychological* cluster specifically assesses the student's sense of psychological well-being, while the *physical* cluster aims to determine the student's sense of physical well-being.

*Attachment.* The attachment subscale is examined with 15 questions that assess how the student is feeling about being in college, in general, as well as how the student is attached to the particular university that he or she is attending. Essentially, the subscale focuses on the quality of bond that the student has with the particular institution. It is important to note that there are six items that are exclusive to the attachment subscale, while eight items are also included on the social adjustment subscale, and one item is included on the academic adjustment subscale. The *general* cluster of items looks at how the student feels about attending college in general, while



the *this college* cluster explores the degree of satisfaction the student has with attending the specific university in which they are enrolled.

**College Adjustment Test.** The College Adjustment Test (CAT; Pennebaker et al., 1990) is a 19-question self-report measure, which assesses college adjustment in terms of a student's positive affect, negative affect, homesickness, and overall adjustment (see Appendix B for CAT and scoring rubric). The questionnaire explores the negative affect (i.e. "felt anxious or nervous"), positive affect or optimism (i.e. "felt optimistic about your future in college"), and homesickness (i.e. "missed your home") associated with adjusting to college. Each of the 19 questions are answered using a Likert-scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning "not at all" and 7 meaning "a great deal." Pennebaker et al. (1990) have tested the reliability and validity of the CAT, with a Cronbach alpha of .79 and a two-month test-retest of .65.

**Demographic Information.** Several demographic questions were written for the purpose of this study, in order to assess the amount of communication between students and their parents as well as to determine who initiated these encounters, to assign participants to the correct marital condition, and to reassess eligibility for participation in the study (see Appendix C for demographic questions). Additionally, questions regarding the participant's academic history examine the participant's high school grade point average, first college semester grade point average, the number of credit hours taken during their first semester, and the number of credit hours the participant was enrolled in at the time of the study. As previously mentioned, high school grade point average was collected as a predictor of success in college (Friedman & Mandel, 2009). First semester grade point average and the number of credit hours taken during the first semester were used as a measure of academic adjustment and success, while the current number of credit hours was used as a measure of academic motivation. Questions about campus

involvement were included in order to provide support and context for social and overall college adjustment.

### **Procedures**

Eligible participants were contacted via email to inform them of eligibility and to provide instructions for involvement if they were interested in participating in the study. After signing up for a timeslot of their choice, participants came to the designated location on campus, at the time in which they selected to participate. Upon arrival, the participants were asked to sign in, so that the researcher could award the present participants credit for participation; following the session, the sign-in sheet was shredded to maintain the anonymity of the participants. After signing in, participants were given the Information Statement (see Appendix D for Information Statement) and asked to review the sheet. Since there was no risk involved with this study, it was determined that a signed consent form was not necessary; however, the Information Statement emphasized that the participants could withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. Next, the participants who chose to participate were given a 14-page questionnaire to fill out. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were given a Closing Information Statement, which provided contact information for the investigators if the participants were interested in the results of the study, as well as counseling services on campus if the participants felt that they needed to seek help (Appendix E for Closing info Statement).

## Chapter Four: Results

### Analytic Approach

Eleven hypotheses were tested, each via a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), with an alpha level of .05. The independent variables, or fixed factors, were the three marital groups: married, co-parenting, and single parenting. The eleven dependent variables were: all five scales of the SACQ (academic, social, personal-emotional, attachment to college, and full-scale adjustment), all four scales of the CAT (positive affect, negative affect, homesickness, and overall adjustment), high school grade point average, and grade point average from the first semester of college. When significance was found, Tukey's Honestly Significant Differences (HSD) post hoc analysis was utilized to determine mean differences between groups. This particular post hoc measure was selected for utilization because it is less conservative than other available post hoc analyses (Smith, 1971). For the hypotheses in which no significance was found, means and standard deviations are reported in Figure 1, which can be located in Appendix F.

### Academic Adjustment

**SACQ.** The univariate analysis revealed that there was not a difference between the three groups in terms of the academic adjustment subscale of the SACQ,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, the hypothesis that there would be no differences between groups, in terms of the SACQ subscale on academic adjustment, was supported.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics for High School GPA*

Parental Marital Group	N	M	SD	95% Confidence Intervals	
				Married	Co-Parenting
Married	39	3.607	0.317		
Co-Parenting	21	3.263	0.485	[0.06, 0.63]**	
Single Parenting	22	3.334	0.574	[-0.01, 0.56] *	[-0.39, 0.25]

Note. \* indicates  $p < .05$ ; \*\* indicates  $p < .01$ .

**High school grade point average.** A one-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the relationship between marital group and high school GPA. The ANOVA revealed significance on the measure of high school GPA between the three marital groups,  $F(2,79)=5.084$ ,  $p=.008$ ,  $R^2=.11$ . These results suggest the hypothesis that there would be no significant differences between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups, in terms of reported high school grade point average, should be rejected.

Tukey's HSD tests were utilized as follow-up tests to evaluate the pairwise differences among the means. There was a significant difference in the means between the married and co-parenting groups, as well as between the married and single parenting groups, but there was not a significant difference in means between the co-parenting and single parenting groups. Specifically, individuals in the married group reported a significantly higher high school GPA than did those in the co-parenting group. Further, individuals in the married group also reported significantly higher high school GPAs in comparison to individuals in the single parenting group. The 95% confidence intervals for the pairwise differences, as well as the means, standard deviations, and significances levels for each of the three marital groups are reported in Table 2.

**First semester grade point average.** The hypothesis posited that there would be no difference between the three groups in terms reported grade point average for first semester of college. However the univariate analysis revealed significance,  $F(2,79)=5.190$ ,  $p=.008$ ,  $R^2=.12$ , which suggests that the null hypothesis should be rejected.

Due to the finding of significance, Tukey's HSD post hoc tests were utilized to evaluate the pairwise differences between the means reported for first semester of college GPA. There was a significant difference in the means reported between the married and co-parenting groups, as well as between the married and single parenting groups, but there was not a significant

difference in means reported between those in the co-parenting and single parenting groups. Individuals in the married group reported higher grade point averages for their first semester of college, than did those in the co-parenting group or the single parenting group. The 95% confidence intervals for the pairwise differences, as well as the means, standard deviations, and significances levels for each of the three marital groups are reported in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Descriptive Statistics for First Semester of College GPA*

Parental Marital Group	N	M	SD	95% Confidence Intervals	
				Married	Co-Parenting
Married	38	3.318	0.459		
Co-Parenting	20	2.860	0.788	[0.053, 0.862]**	
Single Parenting	21	2.887	0.669	[0.033, 0.829] *	[-0.485, 0.431]

Note. \* indicates  $p < .05$ ; \*\* indicates  $p < .01$ .

### **Social Adjustment**

The social adjustment to college hypothesis stated that there would be no differences between individuals in the three different marital groups. The univariate analysis revealed that there are no statistically significant differences between the three marital groups, in terms of social adjustment to college,  $p > .05$ . Therefore the null hypothesis is supported, as there are no differences between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups, in terms of social adjustment to college.

### **Personal-Emotional Adjustment**

The univariate analysis revealed that there were no differences between the individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups,  $p > .05$ . Therefore the null hypothesis was supported, as there are no statistically significant differences, in terms of personal-emotional adjustment, between individuals in the three marital groups.

### **Attachment to College**

The hypotheses regarding attachment to college stated that there would be no differences between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups, in terms of how attached individuals are to the idea of college, as measured by the attachment scale of the SACQ. The univariate analysis revealed that, in terms of attachment to college, there are no statistically significant differences between individuals in the three marital groups,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis for attachment to college was supported.

### **Overall Adjustment to College**

**SACQ.** The univariate analysis for the Full-Scale measure on the SACQ revealed that there are no statistically significant differences between individuals in the three marital groups  $p > .05$ . The hypothesis posited that there would be no differences in overall adjustment to college as measured by the Full-Scale adjustment measure on the SACQ, between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups, which was upheld by the aforementioned results.

**CAT.** The hypothesis posited that there would be no difference between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups, in terms of overall college adjustment, as measured by the overall adjustment scale on the CAT. The univariate analysis indicated that, in terms of overall adjustment scores on the CAT, there are no statistically significant differences between individuals in the three marital groups,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was supported, as there are no differences.

### **Affect**

**Positive affect.** The univariate analysis measuring the differences in positive affect, as measured by the CAT, between individuals in the three marital groups revealed that there were

no statistically significant differences,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, these results support the hypothesis that there would be no differences in positive affect scores between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups.

**Negative affect.** The hypothesis regarding negative affect, as measured by the CAT, stated that there would be no differences between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting conditions. The univariate analysis for negative affect indicated that the hypothesis is supported, as there are no statistically significant differences between individuals in the three marital groups,  $p > .05$ .

### **Homesickness**

The univariate analysis revealed that in terms of homesickness, there are no statistically significant differences between individuals in the married, co-parenting, and single parenting groups,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, the hypothesis that there would be no differences between the three marital groups was supported by the results, and the null hypothesis was accepted.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

Although only two of the ANOVAs yielded significant differences, research on the influence of family structure on first-year college adjustment is still needed in order to determine if redefining family structure to include two distinct categories for individuals from divorced families, based on custody arrangement, is necessary. This chapter will allow for interpretation and discussion of results, as well as a discussion of limitations in the present study, future directions for related research, and conclusions that can be drawn from the present study.

### Discussion and Implications of Results

**High school grade point average.** As mentioned in the results section, the ANOVA and Tukey's HSD post hoc analysis revealed that individuals in the married group had significantly higher high school grade point averages than did those in the co-parenting and single parenting groups; however, there was not a significant difference in the mean high school GPA reported between individuals in the co-parenting and single parenting groups. The finding of these differences would support the notion mentioned in the literature review, that individuals experience academic downturn in the first few years following divorce, which may account for the lower high school GPA's reported for those in the single and co-parenting divorce categories. Although this is possible, it is important to note that for those in the single parenting group, the average amount of time since the divorce was 12.95 years, and the average for those in the co-parenting was 10.24 years, so the academic downturn following divorce may not be a major cause for the found differences. Another potentially more reasonable explanation is that the challenge of bouncing between two households, or only having one parent as a major support system as opposed to two, may cause individuals from divorced families to have to spend more time working in order to help support their family/families or spend more of their energy



compensating for not having both parents living together. Either of these situations would leave less time and energy for the student to focus on their academic pursuits. The other possibility is that differences were found because of the large difference in size between the married group and the two divorced groups.

**Grade point average for first semester of college.** Due to significantly lower high school GPAs for individuals in the co-parenting and single parenting groups than those in the married group, it would make sense that the ANOVA and Tukey's HSD for reported grade point average from the first semester of college was significantly lower for the two divorce groups than it was for the married group. Earning a lower grade point average in high school would suggest that the individuals in the single parenting and co-parenting groups had fewer or less effective academic coping skills, which translated to the college setting and resulted in lower grade point averages during their first semester of college. Another potential reason for individuals in the two divorced groups to report lower grade point averages for their first semester in college is that individuals with less secure attachment due to the divorce may experience heightened separation-individuation troubles, which may have an additional impact on their grades, if one were to take a systems view. However, since there were not significant differences between the three groups on the Academic Adjustment measure of the SACQ, a qualitative approach to this topic would be beneficial in order to determine any real differences that cause individuals in the co-parenting and single parenting groups to report significantly lower high school and first semester of college GPAs, but to report no significant differences in terms of academic adjustment. As mentioned in the high school GPA results discussion, it is possible that these findings yielded significant differences because of the size differences between the married group and the two divorce groups.

## Limitations

In the section below, limitations of the study are explored, including those related to the questionnaires administered, the participant pool, data analysis, generalizability, and alternative explanations of the results.

**Questionnaires.** The first limitation of the questionnaires was the fact that both the SACQ and CAT utilized a Likert-scale. The utilization of Likert-scales poses a problem because participants can often settle into a pattern when it comes to selecting answers. Additionally, the presence of a neutral option on both assessments allowed participants the opportunity to more easily avoid deciding their true feelings or thoughts on each item. The utilization of the Likert-scale is also troublesome because of individual differences of the participants, as selecting “mostly agree” or “strongly agree,” may mean different things for two participants. Despite the limitations of Likert-scale questions, this method was most feasible and realistic for utilization in the present study, as both assessments have been studied and determined to be valid and reliable. The second limitation of the questionnaire is that it is entirely a self-report assessment packet, and therefore, responses can be altered from the truth either intentionally or unintentionally, and there is the potential for individual differences in responses, as previously mentioned. In continuation with the discussion on the challenge of self-report, the report of divorce custody divisions in the demographic portion of the assessment packet proved particularly difficult to interpret. Since participants were asked what percent of time they spent with their mother and father prior to leaving college, if the parents were divorced, participants simply had to estimate a percentage, rather than stating, for example, “I lived with my mother during the week, and my father on the weekends.” This forced estimation created the potential for participants to be placed in the wrong divorce classification (either single-parenting or co-parenting). In order to

safeguard against this error, participants were also asked to answer a yes or no question about if they spent time with each parent during the month. Although this safeguard was put in place, there is still a limitation in the sense that some individuals may have been incorrectly classified.

**Participants.** As mentioned in the Methodology section, a convenience sample was utilized by recruiting participants from an Introductory Psychology course who were required to engage in a certain number of psychological studies and assessments as part of their course grade. Since the participants were externally incentivized to engage in studies, it is possible that participants were less likely to be honest or carefully consider the questions before responding. Since there is a deadline for the students in the Introductory Psychology course to complete their participation in the research, it is possible that there are differences in the participants who completed the study when it first became available and those who waited to participate on the last available day. There is the possibility that those who participated at the beginning of the study are more proactive and academically focused, while those who waited until the last day are more prone to procrastinate and may be less academically adjusted. The final limitation with respect to participants was that due to the low number of participants in the single-parenting and co-parenting conditions, there is limited statistical power for the results. It is possible that since there were almost twice as many individuals in the married group as there were in the co-parenting and single parenting groups, that differences may have been present between the groups; however, the disparity in numbers may have prevented the results from showing significant differences, even if differences were truly present.

**Data analysis.** As previously mentioned, two undergraduate research assistants ran the participants and entered their survey answers into the computer. When the primary researcher checked the data entry, many errors were found; therefore, the primary researcher checked and

corrected more than one hundred data entry errors in order to ensure that all of the data was correct before it was analyzed.

**Generalizability.** Since the study only included participants at one large public university, the results can only be generalized to the University of Kansas. Furthermore, since the participants were all second semester traditional freshmen enrolled in an introductory psychology course, the findings of this study can only be generalized to freshmen in their second semester of college who are enrolled in an introductory psychology course.

**Alternative explanation of results.** For those with divorced parents, there were not any questions included in the survey packet about how the divorce impacted the participant or how the participant currently feels toward the parents and the divorce situation in general. For those whose parents have remained married, there were not questions about how their parents' relationship has impacted them. While these questions are not a necessity, this information may have helped to understand what role the relationship between the parents plays in their child's college adjustment process. Additionally, there were not any questions to assess other past or present life stressors, which could either positively or negatively impact one's adjustment to college.

### **Future Directions**

Although there were only two significant findings in this study, it is still imperative that research is conducted on how divorce impacts first-year college adjustment. If this study is replicated in the future, the most pertinent goal should be to have more equivalent numbers of participants in each of the groups, in order to allow for more statistical power and accuracy when it comes to finding significant differences. One potential avenue for future research is to replicate the present study with students at multiple colleges across the United States. By including

colleges and universities of varying locations, sizes, costs, and cultural backgrounds in one large study, it would allow the findings to be more generalizable to higher education institutions in the United States. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to collect a random sample of students rather than utilizing a convenience sample of students who are enrolled in an introductory psychology course.

If this study were to be replicated in the future it may be beneficial to gather some additional information from participants in order to better understand how divorce impacts college adjustment. Since the SACQ has a large emphasis on academic adjustment, it may be beneficial to ask participants if they have recently received a very good or very poor grade on an exam or assignment, as this may impact their report on items related to their academic adjustment and performance. It may also be beneficial to ask about current life stressors, as these may impact how the participant reports his or her adjustment. It may be helpful to include a measure of parental attachment, as well as self-report items related to the participants' perceived relationship with each parent, and their perception of the accessibility to each parent.

## **Conclusions**

Although only two of the eleven hypotheses yielded significant differences, additional research with more equivalent participant sizes is needed in order to successfully answer the research question of if the traditional definition of family structure needs to be revised to include multiple groups for individuals from divorced families based on the various custody arrangements. Due to the limited number of significant differences found and the quantitative rather than qualitative data collected, it is difficult to postulate if individuals in the three different marital groups have specific college adjustment advantages that the other groups do not possess; in order to determine if the groups have different skills that lend to college adjustment, a more

qualitatively based study must be conducted. Divorce is a trend in America that does not seem to be disappearing anytime in the near future, and with increasing numbers of individuals choosing to pursue post-secondary educations, both college counselors and university administrators need to garner an understanding of how family structure plays into their students' successes or failures in the academic arena. If more concrete findings can be established, it is possible that both college counseling centers and university administrators can develop interventions tailored to each marital groups' needs that will help the individuals more successfully adapt to all of the demands of the transition to college.

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**Appendix A: Prescreening Questionnaire****1. Current Age:**

- a. younger than 18      b. 18      c. 19      d. 20      e. Older than 20

**2. My First Semester at KU was:**

- a. Fall 2010  
b. Spring 2010  
c. Fall 2009  
d. Before Spring 2009  
e. Other

**3. Parents' Marital Status:**

- a. Married  
b. Separated or Divorced Less than 4 years  
c. Separated more than 4 years  
d. Divorced 4 years or more  
e. Never Married

**4. If your parents are divorced, please select the percentage that best describes the amount of time that you lived with your MOTHER during the academic year (August-May), prior to attending college?**

- a. 0%      b. 1-25%      c. 26-50%      d. 51-75%      e. 76-100%

**5. If your parents are divorced, please select the percentage that best describes the amount of time did you lived with your FATHER during the academic year (August-May), prior to attending college?**

- a. 0%      b. 1-25%      c. 26-50%      d. 51-75%      e. 76-100%

**6. If your parents are divorced, did you spend time with each parent during the month, on a regular basis?**

- a. Yes      b. No

**7. Please select your current college housing:**

- a. Residence Hall (Dorm)  
b. Scholarship Hall  
c. Greek Housing  
d. Off-Campus

## Appendix B: College Adjustment Test (CAT) & Scoring Rubric

Use a seven point scale to answer each of the following questions, where:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			A great deal

Within the **LAST WEEK**, to what degree have you:

1. Missed your friends from high school \_\_\_\_\_
2. Missed your home \_\_\_\_\_
3. Missed your parents and other family members \_\_\_\_\_
4. Worried about how you will perform academically at college \_\_\_\_\_
5. Worried about love or intimate relationships with others \_\_\_\_\_
6. Worried about the way you look \_\_\_\_\_
7. Worried about the impression you make on others \_\_\_\_\_
8. Worried about being in college in general \_\_\_\_\_
9. Liked your classes \_\_\_\_\_
10. Liked your roommate(s) \_\_\_\_\_
11. Liked being away from your parents \_\_\_\_\_
12. Liked your social life \_\_\_\_\_
13. Liked college in general \_\_\_\_\_
14. Felt angry \_\_\_\_\_
15. Felt lonely \_\_\_\_\_
16. Felt anxious or nervous \_\_\_\_\_
17. Felt depressed \_\_\_\_\_
18. Felt optimistic about your future at college \_\_\_\_\_
19. Felt good about yourself \_\_\_\_\_

### CAT Scoring Rubric:

Positive affect =  $q_9 + q_{10} + q_{12} + q_{13} + q_{18} + q_{19}$

Negative affect =  $q_4 + q_5 + q_6 + q_7 + q_8 + q_{14} + q_{15} + q_{16} + q_{17}$

Home sickness =  $q_1 + q_2 + q_3 + q_{15} + q_{16} + (8 - q_{11})$

Overall adjustment =  $(64 - (q_1 + q_2 + q_3 + q_4 + q_5 + q_6 + q_7 + q_8)) + q_9 + q_{10} + q_{11} + q_{12} + q_{13} + (32 - (q_{14} + q_{15} + q_{16} + q_{17})) + q_{18} + q_{19}$

### Appendix C: Demographic Questions

1. Please indicate your current college housing arrangement:

Residence Hall (Dorm)      Scholarship Hall      Greek Housing      Off-Campus

2. Please list the names of all organizations that you are currently, actively involved with (academic, athletic, religious, social, volunteer, etc.):

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3. Overall, how many hours per month do you spend with these organizations? \_\_\_\_\_

4. In the last week, approximately how many times have you talked to your **MOTHER** on the phone? \_\_\_\_\_

5. In the last week, approximately how many times have you corresponded with your **MOTHER**, via e-mail or text message? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Who initiates this contact most of the time?

Me

My Mother

Equal Initiation

7. In the last week, approximately how many times have you talked to your **FATHER** on the phone? \_\_\_\_\_

8. In the last week, approximately how many times have you corresponded with your **FATHER**, via e-mail or text message? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Who initiates this contact most of the time?

Me

My Father

Equal Initiation

10. Please indicate your gender:

Male

Female

11. Please indicate your current age: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C continued: Demographic Questions

### Family Information

12. Parent's Marital Status (select one):

Married                      Divorced

13. If your parents are divorced, please indicate how many years they have been divorced:

\_\_\_\_\_

14. If your parents are divorced, what **percent** of time did you live with your **MOTHER** during the academic year (August-May), prior to attending college? \_\_\_\_\_

15. If your parents are divorced, what **percent** of time did you live with your **FATHER** during the academic year (August-May), prior to attending college? \_\_\_\_\_

16. If your parents are divorced, did you spend time with each parent during the month, on a regular basis?

Yes                              No

17. On a scale of 1 to 7 please rate the quality of your parents' relationship.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7  
 Poor                              Average                              Very Strong

18. Do you currently have a job? If yes, please indicate how many hours a week you work.

No                              Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ number of hours per week

19. Approximately how far is KU from your home? You can use approximate miles or hours it would take to drive home.

\_\_\_\_\_ miles                      hours (please circle which measurement you are using)

20. Approximately how many times did you visit your hometown last semester?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C continued: Demographic Questions**Academic Information

21. Please provide your high school GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

22. Please provide your college GPA for the fall semester of 2010: \_\_\_\_\_

23. How many credit hours were you enrolled in, for the fall semester of 2010? \_\_\_\_\_

24. How many credit hours are you enrolled in, for spring semester of 2011? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Information Statement

**Approved by the Human Subjects Committee University of Kansas, Lawrence Campus (HSCL). Approval expires one year from 11/20/2010. HSCL #18360**

The Department of Psychology at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You must be 18 years of age or older to complete this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

We are conducting this study to better understand how family structures and environments influence the young adult's adjustment to college life. The questionnaire packet includes two adaptation to college questionnaires, a survey about your attachment to your parents, and a demographic questionnaire. The packet is expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The content of the questionnaires should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of how family environment influences adjustment to college. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate in this project and that you are over the age of eighteen.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or email. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (785) 864-7429, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, or email [mdenning@ku.edu](mailto:mdenning@ku.edu).

Sincerely,

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## Appendix E: Closing Information Statement

Thank you very much for participating in this research study. If you are interested in learning the about the results of this study please contact the Principal Investigator, Lauren Parrish at [Lparrish87@gmail.com](mailto:Lparrish87@gmail.com). Results of the study should be available after July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The following contacts have been provided in case you feel that you need someone to talk to:

### **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Watkins  
Memorial Health Center  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
(785) 864-2277  
[www.caps.ku.edu](http://www.caps.ku.edu)

### **KU Psychological Clinic**

340 Fraser Hall  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
(785) 864-4121  
[psycl@ku.edu](mailto:psycl@ku.edu)

If you have any other questions concerning this study, please feel free to contact us by phone or email. Once again, thank you very much for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

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## Appendix F: Figure of Non-significant Results

Figure 1

### *Descriptive Statistics for Non-significant Results*

Measure	Married		Co-parenting		Single Parenting	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic Adjustment	150.18	22.26	140.19	24.76	148.24	26.69
Social Adjustment	135.64	24.51	126.79	29.45	132.82	28.61
Personal-Emotional Adjustment	94.90	18.70	87.52	18.16	86.45	16.53
Attachment	110.55	16.45	102.41	24.79	104.73	17.54
Full-Scale Adjustment (SACQ)	443.09	63.28	411.61	71.96	427.97	61.31
Overall Adjustment (CAT)	89.23	16.57	87.24	15.85	85.27	15.44
Positive Affect	31.95	4.98	29.52	6.71	32.45	4.38
Negative Affect	30.79	9.90	30.95	10.86	33.59	10.87
Homesickness	21.82	7.07	21.67	6.02	23.68	5.96