



# The Effects of Social Support on Adjustment to College

Paul Enlow

Advisor: Jackson Goodnight, PhD



## Introduction

- Emerging adulthood is a complicated time of life which overlaps the college years (Arnett, 2000).
- Social support and friends are both linked to positive adjustment to college (Halamandaris & Powers, 1999; Peirce, Saranson & Saranson, 1981; Pittman & Richmond, 2008).
- Friends have also been shown to influence attitudes and behaviors (Akers & Lee, 1996; Berndt, 1999).
- Perceived and received social support can affect adjustment outcomes (Haber et. al, 2007).
- Having more precollege friends was found to be associated with poor adjustment to college (Paul & Brier, 2001).
- There are three hypothesis of this study:
  - Students will be better adjusted academically if friends are focused on academics
  - In-person interactions will be associated with better adjustment to college
  - Having more close friendships originate in college will yield better adjustment

## Methods

Participants:

- N = 194
- Age range = 18-21 ( $m = 18.89$ )
- 48.2% = 1<sup>st</sup> year students, 41.5% = 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, and 10.4% = 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> years students

Procedure:

- Participants were recruited via sona-systems
- Participants provided informed consent and completed questionnaires
- Questionnaire assessed academic values of participant and friends, grades, quality of friendships, adjustment to college, and friendship styles.

## Abstract

The transition to college is a new and exciting time in a student's life, but it is also stressful. Friendship has been found to influence how well a student adjusts to college life, but the influences of individual aspects of friendship are not well understood. This study examined associations between multiple aspects of friendship and the transition to college as indicated by overall satisfaction and academic achievement. It was found that friends attitudes towards academics are not associated with academic adjustment. However, face-to-face contact with friends was associated with better adjustment to college. Also, being less connected to home and willing to make new friends was found to be associated with improved adjustment.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Analysis of Positivity about College

DV = Positive Feelings About College					
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Impersonal Interactions	.117	.102	.092	1.143	.255
Face-to-Face Interactions	.154	.082	.151	1.868	.063
Quality of Friends	.789	.108	.467	7.313	.000
Diff. In Academic Values	-.712	.258	-.195	-2.759	.006

Table 2. Multiple Regression Analysis of Feelings of Acceptance

DV = Feelings of Acceptance					
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Impersonal Interactions	.226	.095	.187	2.32	.018
Face-to-Face Interactions	.091	.077	.095	1.19	.237
Quality of Friends	.803	.099	.505	8.112	.000
Connection to Home	-.340	.098	-.242	-3.461	.001

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis of Average Grades

DV = College Grades					
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Friends' Academic Values	-.001	.173	-.001	-.008	.994
Face-to-Face Interactions	.240	.078	.219	3.08	.002
Impersonal Interactions	-.122	.099	-.090	-1.24	.218

## Results

- Friends' attitudes were not associated with college grades.
- Face-to-face interactions were associated with better academic adjustment
- Non-face-to-face interactions were not associated with academic adjustment
- Having higher quality friendships in college was associated with positive adjustment and acceptance
- Being less connected to home was associated with more acceptance.
- A difference in academic values between friends was associated with negative adjustment

## Discussion

Summary of Findings and Conclusion:

- It was found that friends attitudes did not have as consistent of an association with adjustment as hypothesized
- Face-to-face interactions were found to be associated with positive adjustment
- Quality of college friends and being less connected to home were associated with positive adjustment to college.
- These findings suggest having more face-to-face interactions and being open to creating new friendships in college will lead to a smoother transition from high school to college.