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**SELF-EFFICACY AND THE ROLE OF FRIENDSHIP DURING
THE COLLEGE FIRST -YEAR EXPERIENCE**

BY

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Bachelor of Arts in Communications, The University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, 2006

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Counseling

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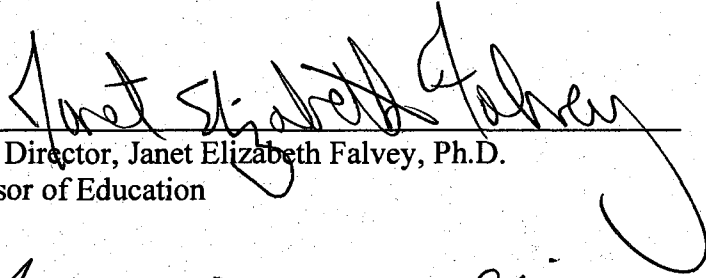
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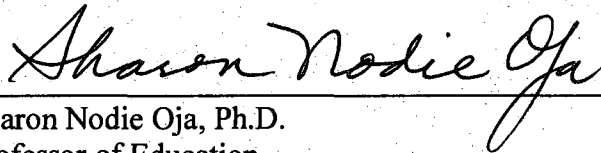
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In the first class of my graduate career, Professor Dave Hebert told the story of a man in a mental institution who one day was lying in his bed, both yelling and screaming in his room. Another person entered the room and asked the man, "What's wrong?" The man in the bed replied, "I need help, there is a rope around me and I can't untie it!" The person who walked into the room looked at this man lying in the bed, seeing that there was no rope around this "crazy" person, and told him, "What are you talking about? There is NO rope around you" and then left the room. The "crazy" man in the bed continued to yell and scream that he needed help, help to get out of this rope he was reporting to have around him. A counselor walked in the room and asked the man, "What's wrong?" The man lying in bed replied, "I need help, there is a rope around me and I can't untie it!" Unlike the man before, the counselor walked over to this man and proceeded to help him untie his invisible rope.

I am extremely grateful to all of my professors in the Counseling Program for helping me learn and understand how to help untie invisible ropes.

I would like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Elizabeth Falvey, Dr. Dwight Webb, and Dr. Sharon Nodie Oja for their guidance and advisement that aided in the completion of this thesis study.

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ABSTRACT

SELF-EFFICACY AND THE ROLE OF FRIENDSHIP DURING THE COLLEGE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE

By

Susan Lynn Marder

University of New Hampshire, May, 2009

The need for further investigation into the variables that are related to college first-year students' success in school is critical in determining how to increase the retention rates of college students. This study examines the correlations between friendship, college adjustment, and self-efficacy, with college adjustment and self-efficacy being measured by the College Adjustment Test (CAT), and the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSES), respectively. The sample was obtained from two universities located in New England. Ninety students participated; sixty-six (73.3%) were female, and 24 (26.7%) were male. The Spearman Rho correlation was used to determine the degree of the relationship between self-efficacy and the composition of friendships during the college first-year adjustment period. Results applied to all three research questions indicated no significant relationship between self-efficacy and how the participants' majority of friendships were composed, and between self-efficacy and when the participants met their best friend(s).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research shows that students whose level of adjustment and personal performance levels are low tend to perform poor academically, are more likely to have a substantially higher rate of withdrawal from college, and are less likely to graduate on time (Martin, Swartz-Kulstad, & Madson, 1999). Research also suggests that self-efficacy can influence academic success in college (Margolis, 2005).

The purpose of this study is to examine the self-efficacy of college freshman during the time period they are adjusting to college, and to examine the relationship between their self-efficacy and the friendships they form either during adolescence or at the beginning of their college experience. In exploring variables that may contribute to college retention rates, new programs can be created to improve the quality of life for young adults so they can be more successful in their college careers.

Research Problem

Albert Bandura defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 1995). According to Bandura's social learning theory, it's important to recognize how we model the behavior, attitude, and emotional reactions of others (Bandura, 1995).

Research has recognized that many external factors such as the environment, family,

social upbringing and friendship can play a part in the development of a person's self-efficacy (Lansford, Antonucci, Akiyama, & Takahashi, 2005).

During early adolescence, teenagers often invest a considerable amount in their peers and in their friendships for support, so it can be assumed that friendships during adolescence have a considerable effect on a teenager's adjustment to school (Wentzel, Caldwell, & McNamara-Barry, 2004). Research also shows that self-efficacy can influence motivation, academic success, academic behavior, and achievement in college (Margolis, 2005). In examining the role of friendship during the college transition period (where students are on the edge of adolescence) and looking at its relationship to self-efficacy, this study will explore whether there is a significant relationship between friendship and first-year student's self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is an important part of college students' success during their college careers. Paul and Brier (2001) argue that the first year of college is the most difficult period of adjustment students face; therefore, it's extremely important that researchers figure out the complex web of social and intellectual interactions that face these students and develop programs that help create a smoother transition for incoming first-year students. Researching friendship during this transition period, and looking at the role it has in relationship to self-efficacy, will provide significant data that may help create important prevention programs that will not only ease the transition for many incoming first-year students, but help contribute to creating higher self-efficacy among them.

Bandura (1997) emphasized the role that perception has in influencing self-efficacy. It is this perception that largely contributes to a person's success in college. Researching factors that commonly coincide with high or low self-efficacy may thus

provide insight about the social development and success rates of college freshman. For example, a factor like academic grades is often related to high or low self-efficacy. Hsieh, Sullivan, and Guerra (2007) report that college students who are at risk of dropping out of school tend to have difficulties adjusting in college due to their low academic achievement (among other factors). Student retention is now one of the leading challenges faced by colleges and universities, which reiterates the need to research factors that are related to a student's success in school (Hsieh et al., 2007).

Researching self-efficacy is also important because of the relationship that it has with student's confidence and success in school. By examining friendship and its relationship to self-efficacy during the college transition period, this study aims to clarify factors to address in effective programming and interventions related to enhancing self-efficacy among first-year students.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of adolescent formed friendships?
 - a. There will be significantly positive associations between self-efficacy and the existence of adolescent formed friendships.
2. During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of friendships formed at the beginning of their college experience?
 - a. There will be significant associations either positive or negative between self-efficacy and the existence of newly formed friendships.

3. During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of friendships formed both in adolescence and in college?

a. There will be no significant associations between self-efficacy and the existence of friendships formed both in adolescence and in college.

Definition of Terms

Self-Efficacy: The level of confidence an individual has in their ability to execute a course of action or to attain specific performance outcomes (Bandura, 1997).

Adolescent Formed Peer Relationships: Friendships formed during a person's adolescence, which is specifically targeting friendships that form between the ages of 10 - 17 years.

Newly Formed Peer Relationships: Friendships formed during the beginning of a person's college experience, which is specifically targeting friendships that have existed for no more than 3 to 6 months prior to this study.

College Transition Period: This time period begins when first-year students arrive on campus and continues through the first-year of undergraduate study, when they are typically 18-19 years of age.

Assumptions

The main assumption of this study is that the published assessments used - the *New General Self-Efficacy Scale* to report on perceived self-efficacy, and the *College Adjustment Test* to report on feelings about adjustment to college will accurately measure a participant's actual self-efficacy as well as thoughts and feelings towards their adjustment. Since students are self-reporting on the *Research Questionnaire*, it will be

assumed that they are honest in their personal opinions of themselves, their self-efficacy, and their feelings.

In examining how perceived self-efficacy associates with adolescent or newly formed peer relationships, it will not be assumed that significant correlations between the two factors imply causation. That is, correlational data will not enable us to determine that high or low self-efficacy is being caused by either existing or non-existing adolescent formed friendships or newly formed friendships, respectively.

Summary

Research suggests that many external factors such as environment and friendship can be related to the development of a person's self-efficacy (Lansford et al., 2005).

Research also shows that self-efficacy can influence motivation, academic success, and achievement in college (Margolis, 2005).

Martin, Swartz-Kulstad, and Madson (2005) show that when college students are significantly maladjusted and perform poorly in school, they are more likely to withdraw from college. This implies a relationship between college student's adjustment and academic performance.

Friendship in adolescence plays a large role in personal development. Since the college transition period is a sensitive time for students to adjust to new life circumstances, knowing factors that are related to the development of self-efficacy will be helpful in creating more incentives and programs that can improve the quality of life for young adults so they can be more successful in their college careers and beyond.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Friendship, the college transition period, and self-efficacy have often been researched separately. This literature review will look at the role of friendship during early adolescence, the factors that contribute to a successful college transition, and how self-efficacy can be related to the success of students during their college careers.

Friendship

Adolescents entering middle and high school are confronted with two important tasks; to achieve and to get along cooperatively with others (Davis-Kean, Rowell-Huesmann, Collins, Bates, & Lansford, 2008). Bronk (2008) examined 25 adolescents in the 6th and 9th grade and inquired about their conceptions of a good life, which Bronk (2008) also contributed to positive adolescent development. They found that adolescents report family, friends, material comforts, being happy, and achieving personal goals as being important to their positive development.

This study is significant because it shows that positive development in adolescents can be linked to the value they place on family, friends, and achieving personal goals. The current research will aim to study the idea that friendships for young adults in college are related to beliefs about achieving their personal goals (self-efficacy) and adjustment to school.

Wentzel, Caldwell, and McNamara-Barry (2004) examined student's friendships during early adolescence and the characteristics of friends that were related to the

student's social and academic adjustment during middle school. The main question that Wetzel et al. (2004) addressed was, "How is having a friend related to an individual's adjustment to middle school?" Over a two-year period, they looked at 242 middle school students and the relationships between friendship status, pro-social behavior, classroom grades, and emotional distress. They found that students without friendships scored significantly lower on pro-social behavior and GPA scores than those students who had existing friendships (Wetzel et al., 2004). They also found that students without friends reported significantly higher levels of emotional distress than did the students who had existing friendships (Wetzel et al., 2004).

This study is significant because it shows that in early adolescence, the existence of friendships can play a large role in pro-social behavior, GPA, and emotional distress, all of which can effect a student's development and adjustment. Similar to this study, the current research will examine the role that friendship plays during a first-year student's college transition period, and will also look at the relationship between friendship and personal self-efficacy.

McNamara-Barry and Wentzel (2006) examined the positive influence of friendships on social development and pro-social behavior. They also looked at an individual's goals to behave pro-socially and if it was a motivational process that linked the perception of their friend's pro-social behavior and their own personal pro-social behavior (McNamara-Barry & Wetzel, 2006). They researched 208 high school students, finding that that a friend's pro-social behavior was significantly and positively related to a student's own pro-social goal pursuit.

This research suggests that friends can influence an individual's behavior, and that the existence of friendship in high school is related to positive adjustment. It also showed that in high school, friendship behaviors were positively related to a student's pursuit of their own goals. The current study will further examine the role of friendship and its relation to self efficacy among an older college population.

Pittman and Richmond (2008) examined the relationship between friendship and psychological adjustment in terms of college students' first-year experiences. They defined psychological adjustment to include a student's self-perception, which was defined by their scholastic competence and self-worth. Pittman and Richmond (2008) found that when they surveyed 79 students at the end of their first year of school, the quality of the student's friendships and psychological adjustment were significantly and positively correlated.

Pittman and Richmond (2008) discuss their findings by explaining that freshmen go through multiple transitions during their adjustment to college, including changes in their academic environment and friendship networks, both of which can have a significant relationship to the development of their self-worth. This research helps to explain the importance of friendship and how it can affect self-worth, and it helps to distinguish between the college freshmen who succeed in school with high self-worth, and those who don't succeed and who tend to have lower levels of self-worth, all being related to the quality of their friendships. Pittman and Richmond (2008) also explain that college freshmen who do not have a sense of connection to friends during their first year of college will likely experience increased stress and emotional distress, both of which can influence self-efficacy.

The College Transition Period

Paul and Brier (2001) examined the phenomenon of students' preoccupation with and concern for the loss of or change in precollege friendships (friend-sickness) as a significant source of distress for students related to their college adjustment. Paul and Brier (2001) looked at 70 students and the associations between friend-sickness, precollege predictors, and dimensions of college adjustment 10 weeks into their first-year of school. They found that friend-sickness was significantly and positively associated with feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, and the number of precollege friends in students' social networks (Paul & Brier, 2001). Friend-sickness was also significantly negatively associated with the existence of college friendships and high self-esteem.

This research shows that students had more difficulty adjusting to college when they were in the absence of their friends from high school, and that they were more likely to be lonely and have low self-esteem during this transition in the absence of their friends. This research concludes not only that the college transition period is a sensitive time for students missing their friends, but also that the importance of friendship during this developmental period can play a large role in student's self-efficacy, the subject of the current study.

Martin, Swartz-Kulstad, and Madson (1999) researched the relationship between personal, social, and well-being variables (related to academic self-confidence) and adaptation to college. They collected data from 60 first-year students during their first semester of college and reported that 44% of participants experienced personal difficulties during their first semester that interfered with doing well in classes, and that academic self-confidence was found to be significantly and positively related to a

student's adaptation to college (Martin et al., 1999). These points are important in revealing that personal factors can be related to college adjustment, such as peer relationships, and that these factors can then be related to academic self-confidence.

In looking at students during their college transition period, research suggests that friendship is related to development, and that development is related to success in school. These findings inform the current study to investigate how these factors are related to self-efficacy. If friendship during the college transition plays as large a part in the development of self-efficacy as it does in a student's social development, then programs that help improve self-efficacy levels, that enhance a student's ability to succeed and achieve goals, are just as necessary as those that are used to develop more social networks for students during school.

Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) examined the association between self-efficacy and both academic performance and college adjustment, and found that a student's level of self-efficacy at the beginning of the year significantly predicted his or her college adjustment at the end of the year. This led them to conclude that a higher level of self-efficacy predicted a higher level of self-perceived college adjustment (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007).

The implications of their findings for this study are that, if college students' self-efficacy was found to predict college adjustment at the end of their school year, then at-risk students could be identified early by assessing their self-efficacy levels at the beginning of the school year. College students adjusted better to college when they had more confidence in their academic ability and self-efficacy (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007).

The body of research examining relationships between self-efficacy, academic outcomes, and the adjustment of first-year students encourages further investigation into the self-efficacy levels of college freshmen so that interventions can be tailored to help make the transition smoother for students beginning their college experience.

Self-Efficacy

Lansford, Antonucci, Akiyama, and Takahashi (2005) researched the impact that social relationships have on an individual's psychological well-being in both Japan and in the United States. Their definition of psychological well-being included the characteristics of self-esteem and self-efficacy. In Japan, 1641 participants were surveyed in comparison with 1498 participants in the U.S. Both samples were obtained from the general population. Lansford et al. (2005) found that not only did having a best friend relate to high self-esteem, but it also accounted for high levels of self-efficacy in both countries. This point is significant in showing that the presence of friendship can often co-occur with the presence of high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Lansford et al. (2005) also concluded that high levels of positive characteristics in friendships were related to lower depression rates, high self-esteem, and high levels of self-efficacy. These findings highlight the importance of self-efficacy and how it may be related to the existence of adolescent and/or college formed friendships.

Hsieh, Sullivan, and Guerra (2007) examined the differences between students' self-efficacy beliefs and their motivation and goals toward learning and succeeding in school. The research looked at successful students (GPA above 2.0) and unsuccessful students (GPA below 2.0) to determine if they differ in their self-efficacy levels. Hsieh et al. (2005) found that GPA was positively correlated to both self-efficacy and goal

orientation. They also found that self-efficacy was significantly correlated to students' GPA and success rate in school.

This research contributes to the understanding that high levels of self-efficacy and success in college often coincide with one another, and supports the importance of researching self-efficacy among first year students to identify factors that are related to varying self-efficacy levels. Hsieh et al. (2005) also point out that the study suggests the importance of researching how motivation and self-efficacy are both related to college success and retention. By researching self-efficacy and the presence of friendships formed in adolescence or in college, the current study will help examine specific factors that are related to self-efficacy.

Lane, Lane, and Kyprianou (2004) researched the relationships between self-efficacy, self-esteem, and academic performance. They defined self-esteem as a person's sense of value or self-worth, and self-efficacy as a student's belief in their own ability to complete a task (Lane et al., 2004), and they found that a positive perception of academic success was significantly associated with high self-esteem and high self-efficacy. Good academic performance was also associated with high self-efficacy.

Lane et al. (2004) point out that knowledge of the sources of self-efficacy could facilitate the design of interventions to raise college performance through increasing self-efficacy. This is an important point, and a major motivation for exploring how certain friendships can coincide with high and low levels of self-efficacy.

Devonport and Lane (2006) offer more specific research in regard to student retention rates, coping skills, and self-efficacy among first-year students attending college. They questioned students about their self-efficacy in regard to time management,

learning resources, working in groups, working well in lectures, and communication (Devonport & Lane, 2006). They found that most students who stayed in school and continued their coursework for their freshman year tended to have initially higher self-efficacy scores than those who withdrew from their classes.

Devonport and Lane (2006) also found that students who withdrew from school had significantly lower self-efficacy levels, which negatively affected their ability to manage their time, use resources, work in groups, and communicate. This indicates that the interaction that students are receiving in classes, whether it is communication or working in groups is important in relation to student's self-efficacy levels. Those who withdrew from school in the first-year tended to have low self-efficacy levels. These results indicate the importance of having group interaction and how much it can be related to a college freshman's self-efficacy (Devonport & Lane, 2006). The relationship between self-efficacy and performance in school suggests that self-efficacy could be used to help better a student's learning experience, and that the factors surrounding self-efficacy are important to research so that the college first-year experience can be more successful for a general student population that may include students with both high and low self-efficacy.

Elias and Macdonald (2007) examined the tendency for prior academic performance and academic self-efficacy to help predict college academic performance. They found that academic self-efficacy accounted for a greater amount of variance in GPA (college success) and that academic performance was significantly affected by previous academic experiences, which in turn helped to shape academic self-efficacy (Elias & Macdonald, 2007). They concluded that academic self-efficacy is linked to

factors such as school grades and academic motivation. In the various ways that self-efficacy seems to coincide with past academic performance or present academic success, the research consistently finds that self-efficacy is a significant marker of success in college, especially for students at the beginning of their college careers.

Summary

Research shows that self-efficacy plays an important part in a college student's adjustment to their college experience as a whole, most significantly in their adjustment to classes which can determine academic success. The research examining self-efficacy advocates for more effective counseling interventions that can help raise the self-efficacy levels of college freshman, which would in turn increase retention rates and improve the motivation and success of college freshman.

College freshmen who are experiencing the transition period from high school to college are most often looking to either old friendships for support or creating new friendships during their transition period. Because of this fact, assessing their self-efficacy levels based on their friendship network at this transition time in their college career would be useful in helping to determine the factors most commonly associated with college success.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

A correlational study was designed to determine the extent of relationship between first-year college students' perceived self-efficacy levels and friendships formed in either adolescence or college.

Sample and Participants

Two samples of undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses were obtained from one mid-size university (N = 5; 14,000 enrolled) and one small university (N = 55; 2,000 enrolled) located in New England. The targeted sample included college freshmen who were currently transitioning into college life. Both men and women were included in this survey so that gender differences and trends among self-efficacy and friendship could be analyzed. Students were excluded from the survey if they reported no current existing friendships, since the data is focusing solely on a students' self-efficacy and its relationship to friendship.

Instruments

The three instruments used in this study include the *New General Self-Efficacy Scale* (NGSES) (G. Chen, personal communication, November 11, 2008; see Appendix D), the *College Adjustment Test* (CAT) (University of Texas at Austin, 2008; see Appendix E), and a *Research Questionnaire* (see Appendix F) that collected demographic information and questions about self-esteem and friendship relationships.

New General Self-Efficacy Scale

The NGSES (G. Chen, personal communication, November 11, 2008) consists of 8 items that are rated on a 5 point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* and aims to assess a person's belief in their overall competence to effect their performance across a wide variety of achievement situations (Scherbaum, Chen-Charash, & Kern, 2006). An example of an item on this scale is, "I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself." A higher score on this and all 8 items reflects a higher level of general self-efficacy (Scherbaum et al., 2006).

Internal consistency reliability for the NGSES ranges from .85 to .90; it demonstrates high internal consistency that is above the generally accepted cutoff of .70 for exploratory research (Scherbaum et al., 2006). In an analysis of the NGSES in comparison to the *General Self-Efficacy Scale* (Scherbaum et al., 2006) and the *General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale* (Scherbaum et al., 2006), the NGSES showed high discriminant and content validity in terms of its measurement of general self-efficacy (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001).

The College Adjustment Test

The CAT (University of Texas at Austin, 2008) consists of 19 items that are rated on a 7 point scale ranging from *not at all* to *a great deal* and aims to assess the degree to which students have experienced thoughts or feelings about their adjustment to college (Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990). This test creates three subscale scores, the first of which assesses the level of positive college adjustment where the average score on item numbers 9, 10, 12, 13, 18 and 19 refer to the level of positive college adjustment. An example of an item from this subscale is, "Liked your classes" (Pennebaker et al., 1990).

The second subscale assesses the level of negative adjustment where the average score on item numbers 4-8 and 14-17 refer to the level of negative college adjustment. An example of an item from this subscale is, "Worried about how you will perform academically at college" (Pennebaker et al., 1990). The final subscale assesses the level of homesickness experienced where the average score on item numbers 1-3, 11, 15, and 16 refer to the level of homesickness the participant is experiencing. An example of an item from this subscale would be, "Missed your parents and other family members" (Pennebaker et al., 1990).

Internal consistency reliability for the CAT has a Cronbach alpha of .79, and its test-re-test reliability with introductory college students was $r = .65$ (Pennebaker et al., 1990). Factor analysis revealed three stable factors that accounted for 46% of the variance on the CAT; these included general negative affect about coming to college, positive affect or optimism, and home sickness (Pennebaker et al., 1990).

Research Questionnaire

The *Research Questionnaire* was developed to gather information regarding how the majority of student's friendship groups were composed, how (and if) they felt their friends influenced their self-esteem or adjustment to college, and personal feelings regarding their self-esteem and college adjustment. These variables were chosen to be examined so that correlations between how the students categorized the majority of their friendships, self-esteem, and college adjustment could be compared with their individual ratings on the NGSES and the CAT. All of which would help to draw conclusions regarding the significance of the relationships between self-efficacy, college adjustment, and friendship.

Procedure

In gaining permission to administer surveys to first-year students, an email was sent (see Appendix B) to the professors of introductory psychology courses asking permission to take five minutes of their class time to promote this study and arrange a time outside of class where students could complete the surveys. Promotion of this study took place during the last five minutes of class, and students signed up on a voluntary basis to participate in the research.

In the presence of the researcher, a packet including an informed consent form (See Appendix C), the *New General Self-Efficacy Scale* (NGSES), the *College Adjustment Test* (CAT), and the *Research Questionnaire* were handed out to student participants who volunteered to take the surveys. Administered to groups of 15 to 20, each student individually read the informed consent form, filled out the NGSES and the CAT, and then they completed the *Research Questionnaire* in the final section. The students were allowed 20 minutes to complete all the assessments in the packet, which was then returned to the researcher when they were completed.

Planned Data Analysis

The three research questions posed in this study inquire about a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy levels and either existence of adolescent formed friendships, newly formed college friendships, or both. In examining the data, a correlational study using the Spearman Rho Test was used in analyzing the relationships between the variables. The Spearman Rho Test is useful in analyzing the strength of the

relationship between two or more ordinal variables. The Spearman Rho correlational matrix will also help compute associations between variables, in this case self-efficacy and friendship during the college transition period.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter presents a description of the data and findings that were produced from a correlational study that examined three research questions:

1. During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of adolescent formed friendships?
2. During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of friendships formed at the beginning of their college experience?
3. During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of friendships formed both in adolescence and in college?

Findings

Two samples that totaled 90 participants were gathered from one mid-size university (N = 35; 14,000 enrolled) and one small university (N = 55; 2,000 enrolled) located in New England. All participants were drawn from introductory psychology courses. Sixty-six participants (73.3%) were female, and 24 (26.7%) were male. Seventy-two participants (80%) were freshmen, while 18 (20%) were sophomores. Twenty-nine participants (32.2%) lived on-campus, 23 (25.6%) lived off-campus, 37 (41.1%) commuted to campus, and 1 (1.1%) reported "other" for their residential status.

The mean age for the sample was 20.11 years old with a standard deviation of 3.68. The mean GPA for the sample was 3.26 with a standard deviation of .48.

The *New General Self-Efficacy Scale* (NGSES) (Chen, 2008; see Appendix A), the *College Adjustment Test* (CAT) (University of Texas at Austin, 2008; see Appendix B), and a *Research Questionnaire* collecting demographic information and questions about self-esteem and friendship relationships (see Appendix F) were completed by all 90 participants.

The Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to conduct all descriptive and statistical analysis (SPSS, 2007). All correlational relationships in this study were analyzed using the Spearman Rho test due to the small cell sizes and nonparametric distribution of the data (SPSS, 2007).

Descriptive Statistics

Two questions from the *Research Questionnaire* collected information regarding friendship relationships. The first question asked participants to describe the make-up of the majority of their current friendships. The second question asked participants to describe the time period in which they met their current best friend(s). Table 1 represents how participants categorized their friendships for each variable.

Table 1

Friendship Variables

	Childhood		Adolescence		College		Both		Neither		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Majority of Friendships	0	0%	16	17.7%	8	8.8%	64	71.1%	2	2.2%	90
Best Friends	18	20%	5	50%	6	6.6%	21	23.3%	0	0%	90

The *New General Self-Efficacy Scale* measured self-efficacy on a 5 point scale, with a score of “1” equating low self-efficacy and a score of “5” equating high self-efficacy. Table 2 represents the range of participant’s scores on the 5 point scale, the mean, and the standard deviation.

Table 2
Self-Efficacy Scores

Self-Efficacy	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	Total
Score	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %			
# of participants	--	1 1%	37 41%	47 52%	5 6%	4.05	.507	90

The *College Adjustment Test* measured positive adjustment, negative adjustment, and level of homesickness on a 7 point scale, with an average score of “1 to 2” equating “not at all”, an average score of “3 to 4” equating “somewhat”, and an average score of “5 to 7” equating “a great deal”. Table 3 represents how the participants rated their college adjustment experiences.

Table 3
College Adjustment Experiences

College Adjustment Score	1 to 2	3 to 4	5 to 7	Mean	SD	Total
Level of Positive Adjustment	--	42	48	5.05	.88	90
Level of Negative Adjustment	22	51	17	3.88	1.23	90
Level of Homesickness	23	52	15	3.75	1.16	90

Statistical Analysis

A Spearman Rho Test was chosen to investigate all three research questions. A Spearman Rho Test is typically used to determine the strength of the relationship between two or more ordinal variables. A correlational matrix is used to compute associations between ordinal variables.

In analyzing the data, the inability to separate out the participants who identified their current majority of friendships or best friends as being composed from solely adolescence, college, or both adolescence and college directly effected what associations could be examined with self-efficacy. Due to this fact, all three research questions were addressed by examining the associations between self-efficacy and how participants typically identified their majority of friendships and best friends in each of the four categories (childhood, adolescence, college, and adolescence and college) as a whole.

Results of Research Questions

Research Question One- During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of adolescent formed friendships? The research hypothesis stated that there would be significantly positive associations between self-efficacy and the existence of adolescent formed friendships.

Research Question Two - During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of friendships formed at the beginning of their college experience? The research hypothesis stated that there would be significant associations either positive or negative between self efficacy and the existence of friendships formed at the beginning of their college experience.

Research Question Three - During the college freshman transition period, is there a relationship between students' perceived self-efficacy and the existence of friendships formed both in adolescence and in college? The research hypothesis stated that there would be no significant associations between self-efficacy and the existence of friendships formed both in adolescence and in college.

The Spearman Rho revealed no significant association between self-efficacy and how the participants majority of friendship groups were composed ($r = .074, p = .489$) and no significant association between self-efficacy and when the participants met their best friend(s) ($r = .104, p = .332$) (see Table 4).

Based upon the results in relation to all three hypotheses, college student's self-efficacy had no significant relationship to how they reported the majority of their friendship groups were composed (including adolescence, college, both adolescence and college, or neither) and what time period they reported to have met their best friend(s) (including childhood, adolescence, college, or both adolescence and college).

Table 4

Spearman Rho Correlation Matrix for Friendship and Self-Efficacy

		Majority of Friend- ships	Importance of Friend- ships	Best Friends	Friends Influence on Self- Confidence	Friends Influence on College Adjustment	Self- Efficacy Level
Majority of Friend- ships	Rho	--	.095	.061	.154	.035	.074
	<i>p</i>		.372	.569	.146	.745	.489
Importance of Friend- ships	Rho	--	--	.016	.324	.241	.064
	<i>p</i>			.878	.002**	.022*	.550
Best Friends	Rho	--	--	--	.148	-.022	.104
	<i>p</i>				.164	.837	.332
Friends Influence on Self- Confidence	Rho	--	--	--	--	.452	.166
	<i>p</i>					.000**	.117
Friends Influence on College Adjustment	Rho	--	--	--	--	--	.010
	<i>p</i>						.927
Self- Efficacy Level	Rho	--	--	--	--	--	--
	<i>p</i>						

Rho = Correlation Coefficient

p = Significance Level

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

Additional Findings

In using the *New General Self-Efficacy Scale*, the *College Adjustment Test*, and the *Research Questionnaire* inquiring about friendship relationships, additional significant findings were discovered in relation to self-efficacy and a multitude of variables related to college adjustment, the importance of friendships, and the level of influence that friendships have on a person's self-confidence. These findings are reported because the strength of their associations reaffirm previous research relating to each variable's relationship with one another.

According to Table 4, the importance of friendship was significantly and positively associated with how participants rated the level of influence their friends have on their self-confidence ($r = .324, p = .002$), and with how they rated the level of influence their friends have on their college adjustment ($r = .241, p = .022$). Also, how participants rated the level of influence their friends have on their self-confidence was significantly and positively associated with how participants rated the level of influence their friends have on their college adjustment ($r = .452, p = .000$).

In referring to Table 5, the participants' personal confidence in their adjustment to college was significantly and positively associated with the following variables; adjustment from high school to college ($r = .216, p = .041$), the level of positive affect they were experiencing about college ($r = .640, p = .000$), and their self-efficacy scores ($r = .583, p = .000$). Participants' personal confidence in their adjustment to college was significantly and negatively associated with both the level of negative affect about college ($r = -.360, p = .000$) and the level of homesickness they were experiencing ($r = -.265, p = .012$).

Table 5 also reports that adjustment from high school to college is significantly and negatively associated with both the level of negative affect they were experiencing about college ($r = -.263, p = .012$) and the level of homesickness they were experiencing ($r = -.246, p = .019$). Adjustment from high school to college was significantly and positively associated with self-efficacy scores ($r = .209, p = .048$). Participants' self-efficacy scores were positively associated with the level of positive affect they were experiencing about college with ($r = .531, p = .000$) and negatively associated with the level of negative affect they were experiencing about college ($r = -.346, p = .001$).

Table 5

Spearman Rho Correlation Matrix for College Adjustment and Self-Efficacy

		Personal confidence in adjust- -ment level	Adjust- -ment from high school to college	Positive affect about going to college	Negative affect about going to college	Homesick- -ness level while in college	Self- efficacy level
Personal confidence in adjust- -ment level	Rho	--	.216	.640	-.360	-.265	.583
	<i>p</i>		.041*	.000**	.000**	.012*	.000**
Adjust- -ment from high school to college	Rho	--	--	.112	-.263	-.246	.209
	<i>p</i>			.295	.012*	.019*	.048*
Positive affect about going to college	Rho	--	--	--	-.394	-.278	.531
	<i>p</i>				.000**	.008**	.000**
Negative affect about going to college	Rho	--	--	--	--	.611	-.346
	<i>p</i>					.000**	.001**
Home- -sickness level while in college	Rho	--	--	--	--	--	-.193
	<i>p</i>						.069
Self- efficacy level	Rho	--	--	--	--	--	--
	<i>p</i>						

Rho = Correlation Coefficient

p = Significance Level

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary and Interpretation

The current research aimed to assess the self-efficacy of college freshman during the time period they are adjusting to college, and examined the relationship between their self-efficacy and friendships they formed either during adolescence or at the beginning of their college experience.

Summary of Findings

Findings from the current research show that there is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and how participants reported the majority of their friendship groups were composed, or between self-efficacy and the time period in which they reported having made their best friend(s).

Because most of the friendships reported were formed in both adolescence and in college (and not one or the other), it was difficult derive conclusions about how these sources of friendship differed in the ways they affected a college student's self-efficacy during their college first-year experience. The fact that 71% of the sample reported to have friendships from both of these areas implies that more often it is the case that college students keep friends from both high school and newer college friends rather than having friends from either category exclusively. Because of this, the makeup of friendships doesn't seem to be as related to self-efficacy as does the presence of friendships in general.

Campus organizations and student clubs need to more actively address the necessity that is friendship in relation to college student's success in school. Previous research has implied as does the current research reiterate that the presence of friendship contributes to positive college adjustment, and positive college adjustment is related to high self-efficacy.

Campus activities such as dorm competitions, bonfires, first-year dance mixers and activities that center on the facilitation and communication of first-year students that promotes inclusion and involvement of students who may go to out-of-state schools where their adolescent friend network is less available. In such situations, the rapid inclusion of a new college friendship base seems critical in positively contributing to a first-year student's transition into college life.

Summary of Additional Findings

Additional findings of the current research support previous studies of these variables of interest in a number of ways. First, participants who regarded their friendships as important had significant and positive associations with how they rated the influence of their friends on their own self-confidence and college adjustment. These results support a similar finding by Pittman and Richmond (2008) in which they concluded that the quality of student friendships and psychological adjustment were significantly and positively associated. The current research, and the study just mentioned, reiterates the idea that the value placed on friendships is significantly related to adjustment.

In the study, participants who reported to be positively adjusting to college also had significant and positive associations with how they reported adjustment from high

school to college, the level of positive affect they were experiencing, and their self-efficacy scores. These results affirm a similar finding by Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) concluding that a student's self-efficacy at the beginning of the year significantly predicted their college adjustment by the end of the year. How students adjust to college appears to be related to their self-efficacy.

Third, participants' personal confidence in their ability to adjust to college had negative associations with both the level of negative affect and homesickness they were experiencing. These are similar to a finding by Paul and Brier (2001); students who were negatively adjusting to college were significantly associated with friend-sick/homesickness and low self-esteem. The higher a student's self-confidence, the less likely they are to experience negative college adjustment and homesickness.

Finally, current research found that self-efficacy scores had significant and positive associations with the level of positive affect students were experiencing, and had significant and negative associations with the level of negative affect they were experiencing related to college. Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) found that students adjusted better to college when they had more confidence in their academic ability and self-efficacy. Both studies suggest that self-efficacy is significantly related to college adjustment, therefore a critical component in creating a seamless transition for college students.

The first year of college for incoming students is often met with both exciting new experiences and challenges to a new way of living independently away from their parents. Ultimately, the goal of first-year orientation programs is to help students with

their transition from high school to college and to work towards success in college and in their community, and extends throughout their first-year of school.

This study shows that the majority of students come to college with an existing friendship network from adolescence, and that they continue to build on that with new college friendships. These friendships, in turn, help to sustain self-confidence and positive adjustment to college. Friendship and a sense of community are thus significant components of college life. Activities that aim to bring together students of different backgrounds, lifestyles, interests, and groups of friends are the most successful in creating new friendship networks.

A second component of college life that seems to be addressed later on in the first-year is more academic based. When students realize that they may need help with their grades, as a last resort they may turn to tutor or a professor's guidance to improve their academic standing. This component of the pursuit of success in school needs to be address from the first week a student starts at a college campus. While there are always plenty of activities that surround building new friendships (which are important to success, as was previously mentioned), there needs to be a larger push toward implementing workshops that center on college life and management from an academic standpoint.

Academic counseling would also be another example of a service that could be required for first-year students to be able to track their progress and have a resource available to check in or seek help from if they need help with their homework or are having difficulty with a certain subject. A certain way to help increase a student's self-

efficacy is to work with them in completing goals and tasks related to their academics so that they can have more confidence in themselves.

In advising college first-year students, all of these variables need to be researched further so that programs can be molded not only around concepts that are mentioned in these additional findings, but to discover the root of students' individual values and what contributes to their success. The origin of friendships is just one variable of the many that can contribute to a students' commitment to excellence in college.

Implications

Based upon the results of this current research, most college freshmen report friendships from both adolescence and college. While the results suggest that the presence of friendships beginning in adolescence or college was not significantly related to self-efficacy, friendship was found to be related to self-confidence, which some would consider to be a component of self-efficacy.

In comparing previous research to the current research, the importance of friendship is evident in college adjustment, where students who highly value their friendships are more likely to adjust successfully to college. Also, the current research was able to confirm what previous research has found, that students who are positively adjusting to college are more likely to have higher self-efficacy than those who are negatively adjusting to college.

With college adjustment being related to self-efficacy and the importance of friendships, orientation and first-year programs need to specifically address these components in their programs and resources. Being able to provide resources and community for first-year students, where they can create more supportive relationships

and continue to experience successes, can only help in the process of making students' successful in their first-year.

Community involvement to promote academic success usually includes first, academic clubs that are both useful for making friends and receiving tutoring in a difficult subject. Student clubs and tutoring programs that incorporate arts and crafts or food as a way to invite students to get involved and feel welcome while also receiving tutoring help with their subject of interest is helpful in working toward improving first-year students' academic standing, which would in turn improve their self-efficacy. This academic self-efficacy is, in turn, related to the positive affect students feel regarding being in college.

Limitations

The first limitation to this study is that most students reported having friends from both adolescence and college, so it was difficult to draw conclusions about how each source of friendship differed in the ways they related to a college student's self-efficacy. Therefore, the original hypothesis could not specifically be addressed. Instead, conclusions made in relation to the research questions were gathered from associations comparing all friendship groups and their relationship to self-efficacy and college adjustment.

The second limitation to this study is the fact that the sample was relatively small, only 90 participants. Also, the profile of the sample is very limited, due to the fact that the sample was taken from one specific region in the United States (New England) where values related to friendship may differ from those values that exist in the South or in the

West. Because there was no information gathered regarding ethnicity or socioeconomic status, one cannot apply these findings with confidence to college freshman in general.

The final limitation is that only 26% of this sample was male. Men and women experience friendship relationships differently, with friendships among women being slightly more frequent and involved than those usually found among men (Berman & Murphy-Berman, 1988). For this reason, the male-to-female ratio in this study could have affected its results.

Recommendations for Further Research

While the current findings show a link between both the importance of friendship and college adjustment, and link positive or negative affect about going to college with self-efficacy levels, the current research was unable to compare associations between the specific make-up of friendship groups and their relationships to self-efficacy. In the future, a study looking at the origin of friendship groups in relation to self-efficacy could look more in-depth at the friendship group variable, having specific questions asking about friendships and how they are composed and then, depending on how participants answer these questions, having more exploration of the friendship group categories in relation to self-efficacy.

In future studies, a larger sample size would be more representative of the general college population. Consideration of additional factors such as ethnicity and in-state versus out-of state status may also affect how the sample would report the majority of their friendships and the value they place on those friendships. Future studies would also need to address finer distinctions among the variables being examined, in this case self-efficacy, friendship, and college adjustment.

The current findings and previous research show the importance of self-efficacy and friendship in relation to college adjustment and success. Future studies are needed to provide a better understanding of these variables and how they can be incorporated into new programs to enhance the success of transitioning students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

University of New Hampshire

Research Conduct and Compliance Services, Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building, 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

11-Dec-2008

Marder, Susan
Education, Morrill Hall
62 College Road
Durham, NH 03824

IRB #: 4447

Study: Self Efficacy and the Role of Friendship During the College Freshman's First Year Experience

Approval Date: 09-Dec-2008

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b) with the following comment(s):


1. As the researcher intends to recruit psychology students for this study, the researcher should contact Professor Andy Leber, coordinator of the psychology department's subject (401) pool, so that he understands how her work will be independent of the subject pool. The researcher might want to ask Professor Leber to assist her by providing access to the subject pool.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. (This document is also available at <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html>.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,


Julie F. Simpson
Manager

cc: File
Falvey, Janet

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH LETTER

Date:

Re: Permission to promote thesis study to students

Dear: (Psychology department faculty member),

My name is Susan Marder and I am a graduate student in the Graduate Program in Counseling in the Department of Education. Currently, I am working towards collecting data for my Master's Thesis. The title of my study is "Self-Efficacy and the Role of Friendship during the College Freshmen Experience."

I am writing to request permission from you to take five minutes of your class time to promote my study to your students and arrange a time outside of class for student's to participate. My study is quantitative and consists of a general self-efficacy survey, a college adjustment survey, and my own demographic questionnaire which includes questions about the student's existing friendships.

Your assistance would be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to our future collaboration.

Sincerely,

Susan Marder
Graduate Program in Counseling
603-828-6587

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

University of New Hampshire – Research Consent Form

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy (which is defined as the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome) and the role of friendship during the college freshman first year experience.

Description: With your permission, you will be asked to answer questions about your own self-efficacy, adjustment to college life, and current friendships. You will be given 20 minutes to complete the two surveys and questionnaire provided for you. There are no anticipated risks or benefits associated with this study, and because of the voluntary nature of your participation, you will not be compensated. All data that is collected in relation to this study will remain confidential, and direct results will only be accessible to the researcher. Results will be reported in general format, including the averages of the participant's responses to specific questions.

1. You understand that the use of human subjects in this project has been approved by the UNH Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research.
2. You understand the scope, aims, and purposes of this research project and the procedures to be followed and the expected duration of your participation.
3. You have received a description of any reasonable foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with being a subject in this research, have had them explained to you, and understand them.
4. You have received a description of any potential benefits that may be accrued from this research and understand how they may affect you or others.
5. The investigator seeks to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research.
6. You understand that your consent to participate in this research is entirely voluntary, and that your refusal to participate will involve no prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.

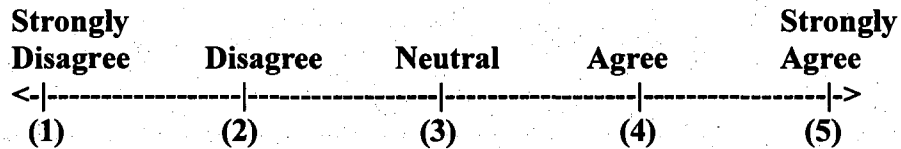
APPENDIX C (continued)

7. You further understand that if you consent to participate, you may discontinue your participation at any time without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.
8. You confirm that no coercion of any kind was used in seeking your participation in this research project.
9. You understand that if you have any questions pertaining to the research you can call Susan Marder at 603-828-6587 or email at s.marder@yahoo.com and be given the opportunity to discuss them. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject you can call Julie Simpson in the UNH Office of Sponsored Research, 603-862-2003, to discuss them.
10. You understand that you will not be provided financial incentive for your participation by the University of New Hampshire.
11. You certify that you have read and fully understand the purpose of this research project and the risks and benefits it presents to you as stated above.

APPENDIX D: NEW GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001, ORM)

Please use the scale below to rate your agreement (or disagreement) with each of the following statements about yourself.



1. ____ I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.
2. ____ When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.
3. ____ In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.
4. ____ I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.
5. ____ I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.
6. ____ I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.
7. ____ Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.
8. ____ Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.

APPENDIX E: THE COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT TEST

The College Adjustment Test

Use a 7-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 _____

APPENDIX F: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Age: _____

Gender (please circle): male female

Overall GPA (best estimate):

1. What is your current year in school?

- a. Freshman
- b. Sophomore
- c. Junior
- d. Senior

2. In terms of your student residential status, which option best describes your living situation;

- a. Live on campus
- b. Live off-campus
- c. Commuter
- d. Other _____

3. How would you best describe the majority of friendships that currently exist in your life?

- a. Friendships existing from adolescence
- b. Friendships existing since the beginning of college
- c. Friendships existing from both adolescence and the beginning of college
- d. No currently existing friendships from adolescence or college.

4. When thinking about your best friend(s), during what time period in your life did you meet them?

- a. Childhood (5-10 years old)
- b. Adolescence (10-17 years old)
- c. College (18+ years old)
- d. Adolescence (10-17 years old) and College(18+ years old)

APPENDIX F (continued)

5. How would you best describe the level of influence (if any) that your best friend(s) have on your personal self-confidence?

- a. Very influential
- b. Moderately influential
- c. Somewhat influential
- d. Slightly influential
- e. Not at all influential

6. What best describes your confidence level in social situations?

- a. Very confident
- b. Moderately confident
- c. Somewhat confident
- d. Slightly Confident
- e. Not very confident

7. How would you describe the level of influence (if any) that your best friend(s) have on your ability to adjust to college?

- a. Very influential
- b. Moderately influential
- c. Somewhat influential
- d. Slightly influential
- e. Not at all influential

8. How confident are you in your ability to adjust to college and be successful in school?

- a. Very confident
- b. Moderately confident
- c. Somewhat confident
- d. Slightly confident
- e. Not very confident

9. Which of the following most accurately describes how it was for you to adjust from your high school experiences to college life?

- a. Very difficult
- b. Moderately Difficult
- c. Somewhat Difficult
- d. Somewhat Easy
- e. Moderately Easy
- f. Very easy

APPENDIX F (continued)

10. How important are your friendships to you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not important

Extremely important