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THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAMILY AND PEER CONNECTEDNESS AND SPIRITUALITY  
WITH COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT

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## **Abstract**

Annually, a multitude of late adolescents begin the milestone of attending college. Academia and the college experience can be rigorous, and it is important that the student maintains connections or establishes new ones to minimize the stresses of college. Students may maintain a strong connection to their parents, turn to peer relationships to cope with college demands, or may seek God or another deity to bear the burden. This study examined these factors of family connectedness, peer connectedness, and spirituality as they related to college adjustment. I hypothesized that undergraduates who experience the most positive college adjustment will be those who establish connections with their college peers. Correlational results revealed relationships between peer connectedness and the full scale SACQ as well as the subscales of academic adjustment and personal-emotional adjustment. Multiple regression analysis confirmed my hypothesis of peer connectedness being the best predictor of overall college adjustment, as measured by the full scale SACQ. Surprisingly, regression analysis also found spirituality to be the strongest predictor of academic adjustment. Results can be used to raise awareness among undergraduates of the importance of peer connectedness and spirituality in establishing positive adjustment to college.

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## The Relationship of Family and Peer Connectedness and Spirituality with College Adjustment

Connectedness is experienced when a person is enthusiastically involved with another person, object, group, or environment, and their participation promotes a sense of comfort, well-being, and a decrease in anxiety (Karcher & Sass, 2010). Connectedness may also be defined as being close to people, and feeling a part of specific contexts and relationships, but adolescent connectedness, in particular, highlights familial and social connectedness (Karcher & Sass, 2010). Connectedness can be traced back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs where he believed that the need to belong or feel connected was one of only a few fundamental needs. Substantial work has been done by Michael Karcher to uncover gender, ethnic, and racial group differences in connectedness in cross-cultural intervention studies. Thus far, little knowledge has been gathered concerning the domains of family and peer connectedness and whether these constructs can be measured separately and display discriminant validity on their own (Karcher & Sass, 2010). How adolescents perceive the quality of their family and peer connectedness is vital in determining whether the student views family and peer relationships as beneficial or burdensome in times of stress. College students experiencing much stress who lack peer connectedness may suffer from poor adjustment resulting in poor mental and physical health, loneliness, and academic struggles (Alvan, Belgrave, & Zea, 1996). A spiritual connection may also be an important factor in adjusting to college, and thus far, little research has been done among college students to uncover any relevant effects it may have on undergraduate adjustment.

Peer connectedness begins to materialize during adolescence and then continues on throughout the lifespan (Lee & Robbins, 1995). Someone struggling with feeling connected will begin to feel different and isolated from other people. He or she may experience difficulty in acknowledging social roles and responsibilities, possibly leading to greater distance from others. Lack of connectedness may also result in disappointment and frustration because of others'

failures to understand or correctly interpret the communication or intentions of the poorly connected individual. Disruptions at any time along the path to forming healthy connectedness may blight the individual's capability to function in everyday life (Lee & Robbins, 1995). Although disruptions in college-age individuals may be traumatic or severe, individuals by this age are not typically as structurally fragile as those in early adolescence. It is possible to still maintain substantial self-esteem and some personal relationships despite chronic interpersonal or social difficulties (Lee & Robbins, 1995). It will still be extremely important for undergraduates to maintain or establish connectedness while continuing education. In a personal interview with Penn State Behrend's director of personal counseling, Sue Daley, she shared her opinion from personal experience on the relationship of family and peer connectedness and spirituality with undergraduate adjustment to college (S. Daley, personal communication, December 7, 2011). Daley shared that over the past five years there has been an increase in the severity of mental health issues she is treating on-campus. She is hearing of greater parental dysfunctionality involving illegal substance abuse, divorce, and other moral and ethical dilemmas. In agreement with the separation-individuation process, Daley believes family plays an important part in the lives of the students she sees, but once they begin college it is the connectedness they establish with their peers that is going to have the greatest influence. From her interaction with students, spirituality does not seem to be a primary niche in the process of adjusting to college.

College students' sense of connectedness to family has been a topic of less frequent study compared to some other forms of connectedness. When studied, family connectedness has been found to contribute positively to health and academia (Waters & Cross, 2010). Waters and Cross tested three areas of high school students' family connectedness: closeness, listens, and presence, and found positive correlations between family connectedness on all three constructs

and positive adjustment. A cross-sectional study of over 36,000 adolescents found that high levels of family connectedness served as protective factors for adolescent participation in problem behaviors (Libbey, 2007). Studies have demonstrated that family connectedness is uniquely related to social-emotional outcomes in that adolescents who have a stronger family connection share more about their life experiences with family, fostering more positive social-emotional adjustment (Papini, Farmer, Clark, Micka, & Barnett, 1990). Upon coming to college, many students will move away from home and will be plunged into an environment surrounded by their peers creating a power struggle between separation from family and individuation toward peers.

A concept founded by Grotevant, Cooper, and Condon (1986), known as adolescent separation-individuation entails both separateness and connectedness to parents, and is a hallmark in adolescent development (Papini, et al., 1990). Adolescents need to maintain connectedness to their parents and simultaneously begin to individuate themselves by becoming their own person and seeking autonomy. The separation-individuation model of adolescence posits that adolescents will begin to distance themselves from their family and establish a novel sense of self via interaction with their peers. The model assumes the position that peers will gradually play a more vital role in the socialization process of other adolescents. Peers are not thought to completely take over the role of parents in the socialization process, but rather complement the progression of forming adaptive patterns of behavior leading to healthy adjustment (Papini, et al., 1990).

Peer connectedness is another valuable form of connectedness that may help an undergraduates' adjustment to college. Positive associations to non-deviant peers have been found to produce more positive adjustment outcomes for adolescents (Leadbeater, Kuperminc,

Blatt, & Hertzog, 1999). Undergraduate students just making the transition to college are likely to experience a restructuring of their social support networks as they gain autonomy from parents and meet new friends at school (Bernardon, Babb, Hakim-Larson & Gragg, 2011). For some, the experience may give root to many positive social benefits, but for other students it may lead to a feeling of isolation and a lack of connection to those sharing that environment. Experiencing connectedness to only family or peers may still put a student at risk for a loss of connection, whether it is family or peers. If an undergraduate has new friends at school but feels neglected of support from family, there can still be negative repercussions on the student's well-being (Bernardon, et al. 2011).

In a study of Latino college students, it was found that even Latino students who had been acculturated in America still showed greater familistic attitudes than Caucasians (Rodriguez, Mira, Morris, & Cardoza (2003). This study revealed that although Latinos had greater familistic attitudes, their adjustment to college and positive well-being was more related to support from their peers than family (Rodriguez et al., 2003). Research has shown that individuals not belonging to the family unit can exercise a potent influence on an individual's well-being. College students displaying greater social integration with their peers show reduced levels of psychological maladjustment and more positive feelings of well-being because non-familial social relationships can help to alleviate the stressful situations of life. Students reporting less social support from friendships have been found to experience more distress and poorer academic and social adjustment. It was found that peer support and not family support was the greatest protective factor against the feelings of distress associated with college. It is likely that these students perceive their peers, who are typically the same age, also pursuing education, and facing similar college experiences to be a better option to assist in the burdens of



college (Rodriguez et al, 2003). In another study of Latino students evaluating social support from family and friends, emotional support was found to be pertinent to adapting to the college experience (Alvan et al, 1996). Substantial research has evaluated family and peer connectedness, but an area less explored is that of spirituality and its relationship to college adjustment.

Spirituality is a search for the sacred and a process through which people endeavor to discover, hold on to, and transform what is held sacred in their lives (Pargament et al, 2004). Spiritual connectedness is an area that has not been well researched in relation to college students. Spiritual connectedness may be defined as an individual being in an actively, involved relationship with God or another deity which provides a sense of comfort, well-being, and reduced anxiety (Eubanks, 2004). Spirituality has been found to be positively correlated with coping in stressful situations. Religion and spirituality appear to be related. However, as religion becomes more institutionalized, and spirituality becomes a more personal aspect of religion the two seem more like polar opposites. The argument still exists that religiosity and spirituality cannot easily be separated (Eubanks, 2004). If religiosity and spirituality are not easily separated, then research from Francis, Robbins, Lewis, Quigley, and Wheeler (2003) on the effects of religiosity on the general health of undergraduates, may be viable to this controversy that exists between religious involvement helping to reduce college students' stress (Francis, et al. 2003). Investigators challenging this view have reported no relationship between religious involvement and stress reduction (O'Connor, Cobb, & O'Connor, 2003). O'Connor & colleagues (2003) found evidence that it was the attitude of individuals toward religiosity that is more detrimental in determining health than the religious behaviors practiced. In other words, individuals' underlying attitudinal predisposition toward religion may be more beneficial to them

than the support they may receive from public religious behaviors like attending church, or the support they may receive from personal religious behaviors like prayer. So it is individuals who perceive themselves to be in a right relationship with God or another deity who also report feeling more positive about their health. Research exists suggesting that college students use religion/spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with the major and minor life events that serve as stressors (Eubanks, 2004).

Research supports that spiritual connectedness, or a direct, personal relationship with God or another deity establishes protective qualities during adolescence to combat alcohol abuse and mental illness. This helps to provide a safe guard during a time in development when adolescents are most susceptible to depression and alcohol abuse, especially when students are not experiencing connectedness in college (Desrosiers, Kelley, & Miller, 2011).

Since little is known about the spiritual connectedness of university students it would be beneficial to further investigate the influence this variable has on students' adjustment to college. In particular, a paucity of research exists pertaining to spiritual connectedness or a student's personal faith and how this variable fits in to serving as a protective factor with family and peer connectedness.

Based on previous research, I hypothesize that peer connectedness will be found to be the best predictor of college adjustment, followed by family connectedness, and spiritual connectedness, respectively.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 114 undergraduate psychology students (81 females and 33 males); *mean age* = 21.71, *SD* = 2.56). Not every participant's data was able to be used in the study. This was a result of some of the participants not completing enough of a survey's questions for their data to be considered valid as well as some participants omitting surveys in their entirety. Participants whose data were able to be analyzed were 106 (75 females and 31 males); *mean age* = 21.17, *SD* = 2.29). Students were recruited through the psychology program's SONA System research participation pool. Student's ages ranged from 18 to 56. Participant's semester standing is characterized as 56% freshman, 21% sophomores, 12% juniors, and 11% seniors. Participant's race/ethnicity was comprised of 84% Caucasian, 8% African American, 4% Asian, 3% Latino, and 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native. Informed consent was obtained from every participant and each participant received credit in their psychology courses as compensation for their participation in the study.

### Procedure

The administration of the research took place in the college's psychology laboratory. The study was primarily conducted in groups of three to five students. Each participant completed the measurement scales in an online presentation using the survey creation tool known as Zoomerang. Informed consent was presented in a hard copy format. Each participant was given a note card with an assigned order of completing the surveys that was counterbalanced. This assured that the order of participants' surveys were different from other participants taking part in research at the same time. Upon completion of the surveys by all students, participants were

debriefed. Finally, they were thanked for their participation and asked not to share any information about the study with others.

## **Materials**

*The Developmental Assets Profile* (Search Institute, 1999). The DAP measured undergraduates' connectedness using a 58-item, self-report containing five subscales measuring connectedness to family, community, school, peer, and personal. Only family and peer context scales were analyzed in this research. Items are based on a 4 point scale from "not at all or rarely" to "extremely or almost always" and include items pertaining to family like "I seek advice from my parents" or items pertaining to peers such as "I have a college community who looks out for me" The DAP has reported relatively high reliability ( $r = .87$ ) and validity. The current study subscale for peer connectedness  $\alpha = .90$  and for the family connectedness subscale  $\alpha = .91$ .

*Spiritual Attitude Inventory* (Koenig, Paloutzian, Pargament, & Wallston, 2007). The Spiritual Attitude Inventory is a 28-item, self-report, inventory that measured adolescent spirituality and the participant's personal faith or connectedness to God or other deity. Four subscales comprise the entire inventory measuring internal locus of control, negative religious coping, existential well-being, and level of religiosity. All four subscales compose the level of spiritual beliefs, the SAI score, which was analyzed for this study. Items are based on a 5 or 6 point scale from "definitely not true" or "definitely true" as well as "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Items characterizing level of religiosity include "In my life, I experience the presence of the Divine" and "My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life" Items measuring existential well-being were reverse scored and included "I feel that life is a

positive experience” and “I feel unsettled about my future” The negative religious coping subscale included items like “I have wondered whether God has abandoned me” and “I have wondered what I did for God to punish me” Locus of control was explored by items such as “I am in control of my health” and “When I get sick I am to blame” The inventory has measured the spirituality of many diverse groups of people and maintained relatively high internal consistency coefficients ranging from  $\alpha = .73$  to  $.98$ . The current study reliability for the SAI was  $\alpha = .81$ . The subscale reliabilities are as follows: DUREL  $\alpha = .88$ , EWBS  $\alpha = .81$ , NRCOPE  $\alpha = .74$  and MHLC  $\alpha = .79$ .

*Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire* (Baker & Siryk, 1989). College student adjustment to college was measured using the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ). The instrument is a 67-item, self-report, questionnaire consisting of five subscales measuring academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, school attachment, and overall adjustment. The questionnaire acquired answers pertaining to adjustment on a 9 point scale and items measuring social adjustment consist of “I am meeting as many people, and making as many friends as I would like to at college” with scale endpoints being “applies very closely to me” or “Doesn’t apply to me at all”. Academic adjustment was measured by question like “I am finding academic work at college difficult” Measuring personal-emotional adjustment was done by asking “Being on my own, and taking responsibility for myself, has not been easy.” School attachment was measured with items like “Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to dropping out of school, and for good” The instrument has reported consistent internal reliability as well as high reliability and validity with alpha ranges from  $.92$  to  $.95$  (Dahmus & Bernardin, 1992). The reliabilities for the current study were Overall Adjustment  $\alpha = .76$ , Academic Adjustment  $\alpha = .80$ , Social Adjustment  $\alpha = .74$ , and Personal-

Emotional Adjustment  $\alpha = .73$ . Due to the nature of the items measuring attachment in the SACQ (e.g. “Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to dropping out of school, and for good”) and the subscale’s low reliability,  $\alpha = .16$ , attachment was not used in data analysis. The SACQ has displayed great accuracy in predicting college dropouts and those needing intervention for poor adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

Participants were also given a demographic survey asking them to provide their age, semester standing, sex, and race/ethnicity.

## Results

Means and standard deviations for the connectedness, adjustment, and spirituality variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptives for Peer Connectedness, Family Connectedness, and Overall Adjustment and Spirituality with Subscales*

	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Peer Connectedness	106	20.62	4.37
Family Connectedness	106	21.46	6.34
Spirituality	98	16.03	1.85
DUREL	103	3.14	1.13
EWBS	104	4.71	.74
NRCOPE	105	3.67	.39
MHLC	104	4.51	.75
Overall Adjustment	106	121.07	20.13
Academic	106	153.75	29.39
Social	106	124.18	27.13
Personal-Emotional	106	85.29	19.68

Note: Differing N's due to not all participants answering all of the measure's questions.

### Analysis Plan

To answer my research question, I examined the role of peer and family connectedness and spirituality in predicting adolescent's adjustment. The first step was to assess the relationships among the variables. To do this I measured correlations. This was followed by a

series of regression analyses. The attachment subscale of the SACQ was excluded because of low reliability ( $\alpha = .16$ ).

### Correlations

Correlations were first conducted to assess relationships. Correlations were analyzed using three subscales of the SACQ and the full scale SACQ, the family and peer subscales of the DAP, and the total SAI score and subscale scores. Correlation analyses revealed significant relationships of peer connectedness with academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and overall adjustment. A relationship was also evident between family connectedness and personal-emotional adjustment. Spirituality was related to academic adjustment. The religiosity subscale of the SAI was found to be related to overall and academic adjustment (See Table 2).

Table 2. *Correlation Matrix of Peer and Family Connectedness and Spirituality with Overall Adjustment and Subscales of Adjustment*

	Overall	Academic Adjustment	Social Adjustment	Personal-Emotional
Peer Connectedness	.25**	.24*	.15	.19*
Family Connectedness	.14	.12	.03	.20*
Spirituality	.19	.22*	.10	.11

Notes: \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

To further investigate the relationship existing between the SAI and college adjustment, correlations were run to analyze which of the SAI subscales, level of religiosity (DUREL), existential well-being (EWBS) negative religious coping (NRCOPE), or locus of control (MHLC) had the greatest relationship to overall adjustment. Level of religiosity was the only subscale found to be related to overall adjustment as well as academic adjustment (See Table 3).



Table 3. *Correlation Matrix of the Three Subscales of the SAI with Overall and Subscales of Adjustment*

	Overall Adjustment	Academic Adjustment	Social Adjustment	Personal-Emotional
DUREL	.20*	.23*	.10	.14
EWBS	.17	.17	.10	.13
NRCOPE	.04	.07	-.01	.02
MHLC	.04	-.01	.12	-.05

Notes: \*Correlation is significant at the .05 level

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

### Regression Analysis

The next set of analyses was designed to evaluate the contribution of peer connectedness, family connectedness, and spirituality on college student adjustment. Multiple regression analyses were used to analyze this primary research question. College students' scores for the SACQ as well as the three subscales (i.e., academic, social, and personal-emotional) served as the dependent variables. Thus, four separate multiple regressions were conducted on overall, academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment. The regressions examined the contribution of peer and family connectedness and spirituality on college students' adjustment indices. This step included seven individual variables (peer connectedness, family connectedness, and the total spirituality score along with the four SAI subscales). Due to the exploratory nature of this study, all four subscales of the SAI were included in the analysis. The results will first be presented for college students' overall adjustment and then by subscale.

*Overall Adjustment.* The regression model was significant for peer and family connectedness and spirituality scores with overall adjustment,  $F(3, 94) = 3.20, p < .05$ . These connection variables accounted for 9.3% of the variance in college students' overall adjustment.

Upon examination of the beta weights only one of the three connection variables was a significant predictor of college students' overall adjustment. Results indicated peer connectedness to be the only significant predictor meaning that as a students' connectedness to peers increase, for example, being actively involved with peers and experiencing a feeling of acceptance, belongingness, and meaningful existence, students' overall adjustment increases (See Table 4).

Table 4. *Regression Analysis for Connection Variables Predicting Overall College Student Adjustment*

	$\beta$	$t$	$R^2$
Step 1			
Family Connectedness	.03	.27	
Peer Connectedness	.23*	2.09*	
Spirituality	.16	1.60	
Model 1			.09

Notes: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Academic Adjustment.* The regression model was significant for peer and family connectedness and spirituality scores with academic adjustment. These connection variables accounted for 9.2% of the variance in academic adjustment,  $F(3, 94) = 3.16, p < .05$ . Upon examination of the beta weights only one of the three connection variables was a significant predictor of college students' academic adjustment. Results indicated spirituality to be the only significant predictor of academic adjustment meaning that as a student's spirituality increases, for example, your religious beliefs lying behind your whole approach to life, students' academic adjustment increases (See Table 5).

Table 5. *Regression Analysis for Connection Variables Predicting College Student Academic Adjustment*

	$\beta$	$t$	$R^2$
Step 1			
Family Connectedness	.01	.05	
Peer Connectedness	.21	1.89	
Spirituality	.20*	2.00*	
Model 1			.09

Notes: \* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .

*Social Adjustment.* The regression model was not significant. The connection variables did not contribute to any variance in college students' social adjustment (See Table 6).

Table 6. *Regression Analysis for Connection Variables Predicting College Student Social Adjustment*

	$\beta$	$t$	$R^2$
Step 1			
Family Connectedness	-.04	-.38	
Peer Connectedness	.18	1.59	
Spirituality	.08	.78	
Model 1			.36

Notes: \* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .

*Personal-Emotional.* The regression model was not significant (See Table 7). The connection variables did not contribute to any variance in college students' personal-emotional adjustment.

Table 7. *Regression Analysis for Connection Variables Predicting College Student Personal-Emotional Adjustment*

	$\beta$	$t$	$R^2$
Step 1			
Family Connectedness	.14	1.26	
Peer Connectedness	.15	1.33	
Spirituality	.08	.79	
Model 1			.07

Notes: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

The present study investigated the relationships between family and peer connectedness, assessed by the *Developmental Assets Profile* (DAP), and spirituality, assessed by the *Spiritual Attitudes Inventory* (SAI), with undergraduate adjustment to college, assessed by the *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire* (SACQ). The primary goal of this study was to explore the relationship of peer and family connectedness and spirituality with college student adjustment. Consistent with my hypothesis, peer connectedness was positively related to academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and overall adjustment. Peer connectedness was found to be the strongest predictor of overall adjustment to college. Family connectedness was found to positively relate to personal-emotional adjustment, but did not produce any significant main effects as a predictor of college adjustment. Spirituality was positively related to academic adjustment, and also produced significant results as a predictor of academic adjustment.

Prior to this, little research has investigated the relationship between peer connectedness and adjustment to college. The results from the current study revealed that peer connectedness has a positive relationship to overall adjustment to college. These results are consistent with a study conducted by Rodriguez et al., (2003), which found that support from peers had the greatest contribution to the well-being of the Latino college students studied. Peer connectedness was also found to positively relate to personal-emotional adjustment in this study which is supported by previous research from Alvan et al., (1996), which found emotional support from family and peers to lead to more positive emotional adjustment at college. Surprisingly, peer connectedness did not relate to social adjustment. This may be due to the fact that many of the items measuring social adjustment did not pertain to peer socialization, but rather interaction with professors and social activities in general.

This study also found a positive correlation of family connectedness and personal-emotional adjustment. Research exists pertaining to family connectedness and college adjustment including research by Libbey (2007) which supports the finding of this study that family connectedness is associated with emotional adjustment. Libbey's cross-sectional study of over 36,000 adolescents revealed family connectedness to relate to social-emotional outcomes. Libbey also found family connectedness to be a protective factor for adolescent participation in problem behaviors, possibly leading to maladjustment. Family connectedness may not have been found to be a predictor of college adjustment because it is likely that students perceive their peers, who are typically the same age, also pursuing education, and facing similar college experiences, to be a better option to assist with the burdens of college (Rodriguez et al., 2003). Peer connectedness cannot be solely responsible for positive adjustment to college. Although a student may have connectedness at school, if the student experiences neglect of family connectedness, negative effects can still arise compromising the student's well-being (Bernardon, et al. 2011).

Spirituality was found to be the best predictor of academic adjustment in the current research. Spirituality has not been widely researched, especially among college students and how it relates to adjustment at college. Some college students have been found to use religion/spirituality as a mechanism for coping with the stresses of life (Eubanks, 2004). Academics at college are certainly a source of stress, and current research suggests that spirituality, rather than peer or family connectedness, to be the best predictor of positive adjustment. Prior research indicates that it may be college students' perception of their relationship with God or another deity that contributes to more positive adjustment outcomes (O'Connor et al., 2003). Relating to the current research, college students who have a more

positive perception of their relationship to God may be more likely to rely upon their spirituality to manage academic stresses, resulting in spirituality being the strongest predictor of academic adjustment. Previous research also suggests that a direct relationship or connection with God or another deity possesses protective qualities against many of the issues that plague college students, such as the development of mental health problems and involvement in risky behaviors like drug use and irresponsible alcohol consumption (Desrosiers et al., 2011).

While the study did produce supporting evidence for peer connectedness relating to, and being a contributor to, undergraduate adjustment to college, there were some limitations to the research. In order for future research to reduce the limitations existing in the current research it is recommended that a larger participation pool be used, if possible, with greater diversity amongst the sample. The current sample was predominantly female so greater gender equality of male and female participants may allow future research to uncover any gender effects that may exist. The current study was done on a single college campus in the northeastern United States giving the study a low level of generalizability. Adjustment to college impacts all college students, but the current research only analyzed data gathered from students enrolled in a psychology course. To increase generalizability, research could be conducted at other universities around the United States to gain a more representative sample and include any undergraduate students enrolled. Another limitation skewing the results could be the age of some of the adult students who took part in research, for instance, participants who were in their 50's. Future research could focus more on traditional aged college students or primarily on first-year students.

Future research should look at the mechanisms underlying the relationship of spirituality and college students' academic adjustment. Future research should look at possible mediating

processes. These results suggest a need to adopt a more comprehensive plan to optimize college students' adjustment that includes spirituality. An important next step in optimizing adolescents' college adjustment is to provide opportunities for students to explore their spirituality specifically related to how this may be a beneficial coping strategy to manage the stresses of college.

In conclusion, the present study lends support to peer connectedness and spirituality as being contributors to positive overall and academic college adjustment, respectively. Overall, the study gives partial support to the separation-individuation process, in that adolescents need to maintain a connection both to their peers and spirituality.



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