

THESIS

HOW DO PERSONALITY, LIFE EVENTS, AND GENDER INTERACT TO AFFECT  
COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT?

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## ABSTRACT

### HOW DO PERSONALITY, LIFE EVENTS AND GENDER INTERACT TO AFFECT COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT?

Research has suggested that people who are high in certain dispositional personality traits like Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience are better able to adapt to the stress that comes with the transition into college. Conversely, persons low in Emotional Stability (Neuroticism) have been shown to demonstrate poor social and emotional development, higher rates of anxiety and depression in college, and steeper attrition rates. As a college diploma has become the springboard for success in our society, resiliency research has begun to focus on how negative life events may affect the ability for young adults to transition from high school to college life. This study examined the relationship of the Big Five personality variables and college adjustment using Life Events and gender as moderators. Participants consisted of 301 undergraduate psychology students currently attending a large western university. The results from hierarchical regression analyses showed that while Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Emotional Stability individually significantly accounted for a significant amount of the variance in college adjustment there was no evidence to support the presence of either a two or three-way interaction between these traits, gender and life events. The three-way interaction found between gender, Life Events and Openness to Experience, however, significantly improved predictions regarding college adjustment. Implications for research and practice are considered.

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## CHAPTER I

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive research has shown the adverse effect that negative life events have on the individual's wellbeing (Anthony, 1987; Hess, 2002; Kumpfer, 2002; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1990). While previous research has repeatedly demonstrated a relationship between stressful situations and the development of maladaptive outcomes, only recently has attention been paid to the majority of individuals who effectively cope with stress and adversity (Anthony; 1987; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). The new focus on the potential for adequate adjustment in the face of adverse experiences and trauma has contributed to the development of the concept known as "resilience."

The notion that many, if not most, individuals adjust adequately to trauma has provided a basis for research that has aided our understanding of the diversity of human experience. Interest in resilient outcomes sprung from a series of landmark longitudinal child development studies that looked at behavioral responses in children who had been exposed to traumatic or adverse conditions (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982). A surprising pattern of results emerged from these studies: many of the children who were thought to be genetically and/or environmentally (poverty, crime) predisposed to negative adaptation actually succeeded in developing in adaptive and normative ways. Rather than focusing primarily on the etiology and individual characteristics of the children who demonstrated the expected maladaptive behavior, these researchers sought to understand the characteristics that helped this sub-set of at-risk children to demonstrate average or above average development.

Resilience, as described by Tusaie, Puskar, and Sereika (2007) is the capability of the individual to adapt in a more effective manner than would have been anticipated when

confronted by significant life stressors or risk. To be considered resilient individuals must meet two criteria: they must be classified as high risk, and they must demonstrate adaptation that exceeds base-rate expectations (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). This positive adaptation has been documented in response to a variety of ecological and developmental stressors, disease and trauma (Anthony, 1987; Kumpfer, 2002; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Hess, 2002).

Early research in this area found that resilient children demonstrated higher rates of future oriented optimism and enhanced coping skills, factors which contributed to the variance in outcomes (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1979). Further study has revealed various protective factors that mitigate the force of negative events (Kumpfer, 2002; Werner & Smith, 1982). Environmental factors such as high-quality schools, access to healthcare, participation in extracurricular activities, availability of mentorship support, contribute to successful outcomes (Rutter, 1993, Tusaie, Puskar & Sereika; 2007). Family factors such as secure attachment of the child to the parent, warm and authoritative parenting, high parental expectations, socioeconomic advantage, and extended kinship networks have also been shown to enable positive outcomes (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1979). Individual characteristics like optimism, intelligence, impulse control, agreeableness, future orientation, interpersonal and ideological curiosity, and religious belief also appear to protect against maladaptive responses (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Park et al., 1996).

Researchers in the field of resilience have historically struggled to agree on a common definition and have frequently adjusted the already loose criteria to fit their specific research interests. According to Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990), resilience applies to three circumstances: a) positive outcomes despite high-risk status, b) maintenance of psychological fitness when faced with significant stress, and/or c) the capacity to heal from trauma. Most research into the factors that influence resilience divide into two theoretically based camps

(Abbey & Andrews, 1985; Costa & McCrae, 1980; Kumpfer, 2002; Werner, 2001). *The Life Events Perspective* proposes that life events have the greatest predictive value in determining resilient outcomes (Abbey & Andrews; 1985) whereas the *Personality Dispositional Perspective* maintains that certain stable personality traits influences an individual's potential to attribute either positive or negative meaning to the life-events (Costa & McCrae, 1980; Komarraju, Karau & Schmeck, 2009; Kumpfer, 2002).

### ***The Five-Factor Model of Personality***

The Five-Factor Model of personality (FFM) allows researchers to examine the effects that the five distinct individual traits (extroversion, emotional stability, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience) have on behavioral outcomes (Costa & McCrae, 1980). Individuals scoring high on extroversion tend to be sociable, outgoing, affable, gregarious, warm, expressive, and energized by social interaction. People scoring high on emotional stability typically present as pleasant, relaxed and confident. Highly conscientiousness individuals would likely be described as reliable, consistent, responsible, trustworthy, and rule bound. High scorers on the agreeableness scale tend to be regarded as participative, helpful, obliging, and motivated to interact peaceably with others. An individual, who scores high on openness to experience, is characterized as creative, forward thinking, artistic, rational, and thoughtful (McCrae & Costa, 1980, 1982, 2003).

The theoretical premise for the Five Factor Model is known as the lexical-semantic hypothesis (Bagby, Marshal, & Georgiades, 2005). The lexical-semantic hypothesis proposes that significant and socially important differences in personality can be found by examining common personality descriptors that have become semantically encoded for use in our everyday vocabulary (Cattell, 1946; Digman, 1990). Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, researchers have used factor analytic methods to demonstrate support for this Step. Investigations using data collected

from both cross-sectional and longitudinal designs have consistently supported the existence of five factors underlying personality (Costa & McCrae, 1980, 1981). Those five stable traits have been shown to be independent of time, age, sex, race, and culture (Bagby, Marshal & Georgiades, 2005; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Samuel, et al., 2010). Additionally, since its development in 1963, The Five Factor Model of Personality Assessment has been rigorously replicated in studies that support both the coherence of the factor structure and the validity of the content (Costa & McCrae; 1994). Repeated scientific inquiry has proven the specific traits to be independent of rater, language, and time (Ehrler et al., 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1986).

The widespread use of Big Five Personality Inventory in research and practice is due in large part to the universality and practical parsimony of the five-factor theory of personality (Digman, 1990). For example Lounsbury, Saudargas, et al. (2004) found that while an individual's expressed satisfaction with various characteristics of the college environment accounted for 24% of the variance in global life satisfaction for that individual, the predictive utility of environmental satisfaction dropped to 6% after controlling for personality factors. Additionally, researchers have found that the agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion were significantly negatively correlated with expressed intention to withdrawal from college (Lounsbury, Saundargas, & Gibson, 2004).

### ***Personality and Life Events***

While the majority of previous life-events research has proposed a direct causal link between life-events and an individual's adjustment, recent research has begun to look at personality factors whose influence on the prevalence of life-events may contribute to an individual's wellbeing. That is to say that an individual's endogenous personality traits determine the likelihood of whether a person will continue to experience positive or negative life

events for the entire course of their lifespan. (Bleindorn, Kandler, Hulsheger, Angleitner, & Spinath, 2010; Fergusson & Harwood, 1987; Headey & Wearing, 1989).

The association between specific personality traits and an individual's increased likelihood of exposure to negative life events has been repeatedly demonstrated (Headey & Wearing, 1989; Stewart & Sanderman, 1989). In their landmark longitudinal study, Headey and Wearing (1989) collected personality and life events data from a series of four panels comprised of Australian adults. Individuals who reported higher levels of Extraversion were found to endorse experiencing significantly more positive life-events, such as obtaining a promotion, getting married, and expanding their social network (Headey and Wearing, 1989; Magnus, Diener, Fujita, and Pavot, 1993). Additionally, individuals low in Emotional Stability reported experiencing significantly more negative life events and interpersonal problems (Ehrler, Evans, and McGhee, 1999). This strong correlation between Extraversion and Emotional Stability on experience of life-events has been shown to be stable across time as well (Magnus et al., 1993; Horwood and Fergusson, 1986). While many studies have demonstrated a connection between Emotional stability and Extraversion and negative life events; inconclusive and often contradictory evidence has prevented researchers from making any predictions concerning the relationship between Openness, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness to the reported experience of negative life events (Komarraju, Karau & Schmeck, 2009; Magnus, Diener, & Pavot; 1993).

Because personality development theoretically precedes negative outcomes that may occur later in life, it is important to look at the possibility that an external force such as the interaction between negative life events and personality may influence the adjustment outcomes. In order to speak to the real effect of these events on college outcome, research must control for the magnitude of effect that personality has on determining the way in which individuals interact with and upon their social world. *The Personality Perspective* has been criticized for the



presumption of stability made by research that utilizes personality as a predictor variable for behavioral outcomes. In fact longitudinal studies like the one conducted over a fifty-year time frame by Haan et al. (1986); have demonstrated the importance of “role shifts” which occur as a result of events or environmental transitions which occur in young adulthood such as marriage, employment and college enrollment. This research has found that, at least for college students, considerable change in the expression of personality traits can occur between freshman year and graduation. In fact, Siegler, Zondermand, Barefoot, Williams and Costa, McCrae (1990) estimated that a mere 50% of the variance in college students’ personality traits remains stable through late adulthood. Studies have demonstrated that college students often experience small to moderate increases on the traits of emotional stability, extraversion and agreeableness from their freshman to senior years (Costa and McCrae, 1994; Siegler et. al., 1990).

### ***Personality Dispositional Perspective***

Advocates for using personality factors as the main predictor variables for adjustment outcome research argue that the objective details of an event may not be as important as the meaning that an individual attaches to the event. Experts who have been critical of this approach assert that an individual’s experience of life events is more complicated and nuanced than a simple “positive” or “negative” event categorization allows for (Costa & McCrae; Magnus, Diener, Fujita, 1993, Swearingen & Cohen, 1985). They propose that the meaning that a person ascribes to important events in their life contributes to choices and behaviors that either protect or expose them to future harmful experiences. Thus, a person’s personality traits can be seen as instrumental in determining whether the negative life event will repeat itself later in life. For example, Clausen and Jones (1993) found that “planful competence,” a factor, that’s defining characteristics (dependability, goal-setting, painfulness and desire for productivity) conceptual overlap with the Big Five trait of conscientiousness, enables individuals to successfully assess

the potential negative consequences of situations. The researchers found that this ability to foresee consequences allowed the individuals to devise ways to avoid potential pitfalls (Clausen & Jones, 1993).

Research examining the relationship between personality variables and corresponding subjective interpretations of stressful experiences has generated evidence for the role of personality traits in the appraisal and processing of stressful events (Headey & Wearing; 1989). For example, several studies have demonstrated an association between having higher rates of Emotional (In) Stability and experiencing elevated levels subjective stress in response to a variety of environmental stimuli (Campbell-Sills, Cohan & Stein, 2005; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Additionally, persons who endorse high levels of Emotional (In) Stability, report experiencing significantly more symptoms of depression, anxiety, and lowered self-esteem (Campbell-Sills, Cohan & Stein, 2005; Ehrler, Evans, & McGhee, 1999; Friborg, Barlaug, Martinussen, Rosenvinge & Hjemdal, 2005; Hopwood et al., 2009).

Resiliency research has similarly begun to incorporate the use of personality scales to examine the relationship that these stable traits have on the prevalence of better than expected outcomes for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (Werner, 2001). This research has demonstrated a powerful link between the Extraversion sub-trait of “sociability” and the development of a positive social orientation towards success in work and life domains. It seems that possessing a gregarious and optimistic personality may be especially important in times of stress, when stable attributes like personality may help to effectively buffer against the stress which the increased academic, social, and psychological demands commonly induces (Campbell-Sills, Cohan & Stein, 2005; Hopwood et al., 2009; Werner, 2005).

## *College Transition*

The transition from the rigidly structured environment of high school to the independent living and autonomy that defines college life marks one of the most stressful times in a young adult's life. Predicting an individual's ability to adjust positively to the social, academic and emotional rigors of college life is an area of research that holds important implications for interventions designed to target at-risk populations and thereby increase national graduation rates (Lounsbury, Saudargas, & Gibson; 2004; Okun & Finch, 1998).

To confront the real-world implications of what is termed, "poor adjustment," one need only refer to our nation's dangerously elevated college dropout rates. A recent national survey of colleges and universities revealed that 24-45% of entering freshman drop out by the end of their first year (American College Testing, 2008). While, research studies have generated a long list of demographic, psychological and environmental risk factors that correlate highly with attrition rates, few studies have endeavored to explain the process by which these risk factors combine and interact in ways that lead to poor adjustment (Lounsbury, Saudargas, & Gibson; 2004).

Research has demonstrated that college students report experiencing an increase in the frequency of "daily hassles" related to academic achievement, social competence and emotional adjustment (Vollrath, 1988). While the rate of experienced daily hassles has been shown to increase during the transition to college (Vollrath, 1988), many students are able to limit the impact of the increased demands and habitual stresses related to increased social commitments, increased academic rigor, and the heightened anxiety which the responsibility of independent decision-making demands (Feldt et al., 2010). For example, Park and colleagues (1996) found that college students were able to demonstrate a significant amount of resilience in the face of stressful experience if the individual perceived the impetus or the magnitude of the outcome to be controllable. This is to say that if the individual perceived the event as being influenced by

their own actions, they were better able to cope and adaptive positively to it (Park et al., 1996).

The problem with this line of research, which is referred to as the *life event* or *life course perspective*, is that the experience of many negative life events, such as failing a test or suffering rejection of a romantic partner, have also been shown to be heavily influenced by individual personality factors (Abbey & Andrews, 1985; Costa & McCrae, 1980, 1981; Digman, 1990; Masten, 1994).

### ***Personality and College Adjustment***

Several studies have examined the relationship between the Big Five personality subscales and factors associated with academic achievement in college. Komarraju, Karau, and Schmeck (2009) recently demonstrated that the Big Five personality traits collectively outperformed academic motivation by significantly accounting for 15 percent of the variance in GPA. While conscientiousness has been found to be significantly related to increased levels of institutional commitment, academic achievement and GPA (Wagerman & Funder, 2007), emotional stability has been found to predict several drop-out related risk factors, including limited social integration, lack of institutional commitment and organizational involvement in undergraduates (Lounsbury, Saudargas, & Gibson; 2004; Okun & Finch, 1998).

Although several studies have examined the relationship between the Big Five traits and factors related to success in college, such as college satisfaction and intention to withdraw, there have been few studies that examine personality's effect on the major domains of academic, social and emotional college adjustment. Most studies that have examined the predictive value of personality traits on college success use maladaptive measures like dropout or attrition rates as their outcome variable of interest. Lounsbury, Saundargas and Gibson (2004) found that the Big Five Traits of Emotional Stability and Conscientiousness jointly explained 17% of the variance in withdrawal intention. Emotional stability has been also been shown to predict Social

Adjustment to college (Lidy & Kahn; 2006). While these studies consider the role that personality can play as both as a predictor and a mediating variable in explaining variance, social support, institutional commitments, and health (Lounsbury, Saudargas, & Gibson; 2004), experts in the field of personality research believe that continued reliance on correlational data analysis provides limited information and insufficient predictive power (Rothstein & Goffin, 2006). Both the *Life Event* and *Personality Perspective* models theoretically establish a direct pathway of prediction from personality to outcome and may be failing to account for the additional interactive role that environmental stressors/events which are out of the individual's control can play in determining the degree of predictive impact that personality variables have on outcome variables like college adjustment (Friborg et al., 2005).

### ***Current Study***

For this study I utilized an interactive model of resilience to examine the multi-dimensional relationship between negative life events and personality. In this way I could more fully explore the moderation effect of high and low levels of negative life events have in determining the strength of each personality trait's impact to help account for variability in outcome, thereby increasing the predictive ability of the model across contexts. I used an interactive model to look at the interaction between particular predictive IPIP personality subscales and life events in relation to college adjustment.

By using the Life Events Questionnaire (Masten, 1988), which contains event items that have been judged to be either out of the control or independent of personal choice or action (such as the death of loved one), I effectively tested for the direct influence of adverse life events on personality and college adjustment.

*Research Question 1:* How much of the variance in College Adjustment can be explained by Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness and Openness to Experience?

### **Hypotheses**

Previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Openness and Emotional Stability and college adjustment (Bardi & Ryff, 2007; Connor & Paunonen, 2007; Kappe & Henk, 2010; Schnuck & Handel, 2011). Hence, it is expected that these previously demonstrated relationship will be reproduced in this study.

Hypothesis 1 follows:

Hypothesis 1: Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experience are expected to be associated with higher Full Scale College Adjustment (CAQ-FS) scores.

Previous research has consistently demonstrated a strong positive relationship between Conscientiousness and academic adjustment (CAQ-A) (Kappe & Henk, 2010; Wagerman & Funder, 2007). Additionally, several studies have found significant correlations between Emotional stability and academic achievement (Cole, 2007; Kappe & Henk, 2010). It is expected that this relationship will be replicated in this study. Hypothesis 2 follows:

Hypothesis 2: Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability will be associated with the higher scores on the Academic Adjustment subscale (CAQ-A).

Previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between Emotional Stability and emotional adjustment to college (Cole, 2007; Masten, 2003). Therefore it is expected that this relationship will be replicated in this study. Hypothesis 3 follows:

Hypothesis 3: High scores on Emotional Stability will be associated with higher scores on the Emotional Adjustment (CAQ-E).

Previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between Extraversion, Emotional stability and social adjustment in college students (Vollrath, 2000). This relationship is such, that persons who are outgoing and content are more likely to demonstrate high levels of social adjustment. It is expected that this positive relationship will be replicated in this study. Hypothesis 4 follows:

Hypothesis 4: Emotional Stability and Extraversion will both be positively correlated with Social Adjustment (CAQ-S), such that students who are outgoing, energetic and emotionally secure persons will demonstrate better social adjustment to college.

Previous research has provided evidence that supports a negative relationship between life events and Extraversion and Emotional Stability, such that experiencing greater numbers of negative life events is associated lower levels of Extraversion and Emotional Stability (Headey and Wearing, 1989; Magnus, Diener, Fujita, and Pavot, 1993). Hypothesis 5 follows:

Hypothesis 5: Emotional Stability and Extraversion will be negative correlated with Life Events (LEQ) scores, such that persons who are outgoing, energetic and emotionally secure will report experiencing significantly less negative Life Events (LEQ). Additionally, High LEQ scores are also hypothesized to be associated with lower overall college adjustment (CAQ-FS).

*Research Question 2:* Do female and male college students significantly differ by personality traits, negative life events and college adjustment outcomes? Hypothesis 6 follows:

Previous research has consistently shown that men tend to score higher on Emotional Stability and Extraversion, whereas, women, tend to score higher on Agreeableness than men (Costa et. al, 2001, Feingold, 1994, Ferguson, Sanders, O’Heir, & James, 2000).

Hypothesis 6: Males are predicted to score significantly higher on Emotional Stability and Extraversion than their female counterparts whereas women are predicted to score significantly higher on Agreeableness than men. Conversely, it is predicted that males will

report experiencing significantly less negative Life Events (LEQ) than women (Cole et. al, 2008; Shirley and Rosén, 2010).

*Research Questions 3-4:* Do negative Life Events (LEQ) moderate the relationships between personality variables (Openness, Extraversion, Emotional stability, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness) and college adjustment (CAQ-FS) for men and women? Is strength or direction of the predicted positive relationship between the personality variables and college adjustment affected by experiencing a high number of negative life events? In other words, do levels of negative life events moderate the relationship between both gender and personality and the full-scale College Adjustment (CAQ-FS) outcomes?



## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

#### *Participants*

Data come from the three hundred and one students who completed the series of personality and adjustment assessments in September and October of 2009. Respondents were drawn from an introductory psychology research pool at a large western university. In return for participating in this study, participants received course credit. Informed consent was obtained from each individual by giving them a form containing a brief description of the project and a discussion of potential risks involved in participation. Participants were briefed on the anonymous and confidential nature of the study, and identifying information was recorded on the demographic form only, which was separated from the survey data collected on each participant. Upon completion of the study, each participant was thoroughly debriefed in writing as to the purpose of the research project.

Participants consisted of 163 (52.4%) female and 138 (45.8%) male students. Demographic data revealed a majority of freshman, 222 (73.8%), followed by 49 (16.3%) sophomores, 20 (6.6%) juniors, 7 (2.3%) seniors and 3 (1%) reported being in their fifth year or above. In terms of ethnic identification, a significant majority of students identified as White, non-Hispanic, 236 (78.4%), followed by 14 (4.7%) who identified as African American/Black, 13 (4.3%) as American Indian/Native American, 7 (2.3%) as Asian American/Asian, 23 (7.6%) as Hispanic/Latino, 2 (<1%) as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 6 (2%) as Other. The average age was 18.69 years of age ( $SD = 1.45$ ).

## ***Measures***

### **Personality**

Personality was measured using the Internal Personality Item Pool-Interpersonal Circumplex (IPIP), which is a brief 50-item assessment version of the 64-item Five Factor Personality Inventory (Markey & Markey, 2009). This test measures the five basic FFM personality constructs of Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, and Extraversion will be explored Items for this measure will be International Personality Item Pool (IPIP), a broad-bandwidth personality inventory consisting of 2036 items. The five sub-scales consist of 12 items, which are rated on a five point Likert scale (see Appendix A). Item responses range from *not at all true* (1) to *very true* (5). While this assessment is significantly shorter than other established personality inventories it has been shown to demonstrate the psychometric properties of longer measurement tools (Markey & Markey, 2009). Correlations between the IPIP short form and NEO-PI-R (a measure of the FFM developed by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae) range from .70 to .82 (International Personality Item Pool, 2001). The mean internal consistency for the short form has been shown to be .84 (International Personality Item Pool, 2001).

### **Negative Life Events**

Negative life events scores were obtained from the Life Events Scale using a modification of the Life Events Questionnaire-Adolescent version (LEQ-A; Gest et al., 1999; Masten et al., 1994). This measure was taken from the Project competence project, which was constructed for use on adolescents. Two recent studies have since validated its use with young adult populations (Cole et. al, 2007 & 2008). While the original Life Events Questionnaire was designed to examine only events that had occurred during the past 12 months, the revised Life Events Questionnaire was adapted (Cole, Rosén & Malach, 2007) to look at the potential impact

of events occurring at any point throughout the lifespan of the participants (see Appendix B). The measure is a 67-item questionnaire asking participants to indicate “yes” or “no” as to whether a particular life event has occurred in their lifetime. Of the 67 items, only 24 are scored. The 24 items retained were deemed to be the most important by Project Competence researchers (Gest et al., 1999; Masten et al., 1994). The 24 items have been judged to target negative events that are independent of an adolescent’s actions. Independence of the event is important, as Masten et al. (1994) notes that subjective events inflate the correlation between life events and adjustment and provides a poor indication of competence. Items contained in the measure include events such as parental separation or divorce, death of a family member or relocation of primary residence. Coefficient alpha for the present study demonstrated internal reliability to be at acceptable levels ( $\alpha = .75$  for the 24 scored items).

### **College Adjustment**

The College Adjustment Questionnaire (CAQ) was developed for use on undergraduate students and was created specifically for this project by Shirley and Rosén (2010). This 14-item questionnaire asks college students to rate “how true” statements about college experiences are for them, “at this point in time.” Items were designed to cover the three major domains of academic, social and emotional functioning (see Appendix c).

The basis for the three domains has been established by the rational, theoretical and empirical cooperation and agreement of experts in the field of adjustment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). The Academic Adjustment subscale focuses on the individual’s ability to meet educational demands by asking questions related to motivation for learning, and university scholastic achievement. The Social subscale looks at the social aspects of the undergraduate experience by asking questions about relationship satisfaction and socialization. The Emotional Adjustment subscale is designed to contribute to the understanding the individual’s

emotional/psychological experience by asking questions related to the coping success in adapting to the unique stresses related to college life.

Responses to the questions were measured using a 5-point Likert type scale, with response options ranging from *not at all true* to *completely true* (see appendix A for full measure). Reported subscale reliabilities in this sample are good, with alphas of 0.89, 0.84, and 0.78, respectively. Full-scale reliability in was also found to be at acceptable levels (alpha=0.83). The measure also demonstrates good factorial and construct validity in this sample (Shirley & Rosén, 2010). See appendix C for the measure.

### **Demographic Data**

Descriptive information about the sample was gathered using a Demographic Information Form developed for this study. Categories of information included, age, gender and race/ethnicity. In order to determine the unique contribution made by both personality factors and negative life events in predicting college adjustment, other established predictors of academic, social and emotional adjustment needed to be controlled (Masten, 1990). The participant's current age was included as a control variable due to the results from several longitudinal research studies. These studies found evidence that developmental maturation was strongly associated with appreciable increases in levels of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experience (Helson, et al., 2002; Shrivastava et al., 2003).

Additionally, Life Events (LEQ) research has proposed that minority status may account for a significant amount of the variance in adjustment outcomes associated with high levels of negative Life Events. In one study specifically, non-White adolescents were found to be significantly more vulnerable (demonstrated higher rates of delinquent behavior and lower levels of academic and social adjustment) to the adverse effects of high levels of negative life events than youths who identified as White, non-Hispanic (Masten, 1998). In order to control for this

documented effect, ethnicity was dummy coded than entered as a fixed factor variable prior to the variables of interest for each of the multiple regression Steps.

### ***Procedure***

Listed below is the procedure outlined in the study by Shirley and Rosén (2010), from which the data for the current study comes:

“Participants were given an informed consent form that provided a description of the study and any potential risks from participating in the study, as well as an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. All students filled out survey packets containing demographic questions, CAQ, LEQ and IPIP questionnaires. In order to maintain participant confidentiality, the names of the study participants were not linked with the survey packets in any way. Students received a debriefing form at the end of the study and were thanked for their participation.”

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

To properly conduct multiple linear regression analysis, several assumptions about the data must first be tested. To test for violations of normality, each of the predictor variables included in the regression analyses were examined separately. The distribution of scores on the all six of the independent variables (Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and LEQ) and the four dependent variables (CAQ-FS, CAQ-S, CAQ-E, CAQ-A) were visually inspected for evidence of skewness and kurtosis. All variables demonstrated suitable normality except for the Life Events (LEQ), which displayed a significant negative skew (had an absolute value of greater than 0.7). In order to correct for this assumptive violation, LEQ was square root transformed before it was entered into regression analyses. This type of “reflected transformation” procedure is often recommended for the statistical investigation of negatively skewed data (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003; Tabachnik & Fidel, 2007).

Another assumption of multiple regression is the presence of linearity and homogeneity of variance across levels of the predictor variables (homoscedasticity). To check for violations of these assumptions, scatter plots were generated using the predicted values for all possible pairs of independent and dependent variables. Visual inspection of the plots verified that linearity and homoscedasticity were maintained. It is important to note that while heteroscedasticity may have been problematic prior to the square root transformation described earlier; the transformation successfully eliminated the heteroscedasticity of the Life Events (LEQ) variable.

### *Locating Outliers*

Because the multiple regression technique used in this study is particularly sensitive to outliers (very high or very low scores), it is critical to check for the presence of extreme scores that may exert undue influence on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Outliers were located through a variety of methods. First the data was graphically rendered by using a box-plot graph, which assists in the visual detection of extreme scores. In order to evaluate the statistical significance of the extreme data points within each variable, we first calculated the studentized residuals. All cases with a studentized residual exceeding  $\pm 2$  were removed (Belsey et al., 1980). This led to the removal of fourteen cases. Next, the Cook's distance value for each case was examined (Cook, 1982). Cases containing Cook's Distance values higher than  $4/n$  (.0133 for this dataset) were removed (Bollen & Jackman, 1990). This led to the removal of six offending cases. In all, twenty cases were identified as outliers and removed from the analysis.

### *Preliminary Analyses*

To assess the direction and strength of the relationship between the Big Five personality variables, Life Events (LEQ) and the college adjustment variables (CAQ-FS, CAQ-S, CAQ-A, and CAQ-E), a number of Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed. Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and intercorrelations for the criterion variables including; full scale College Adjustment, (CAQ-FS), Academic Adjustment (CAQ-A), Emotional Adjustment (CAQ-E), Social Adjustment (CAQ-S), and the Big-Five subscales; Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness, and negative Life Events scores (LEQ). Results generated from regression analyses were used to test Hypotheses 1-5.

### Hypothesis 1: Overall College Adjustment

As can be observed from Table 1, with respect to the correlations between personality and college adjustment variables, the pattern displayed is consistent with previous research conducted on personality. As was predicted, Conscientiousness ( $r=.25, p<.001$ ), Emotional Stability ( $r=.62, p<.001$ ), Openness to Experience ( $r=.16, p<.001$ ), and Extraversion ( $r=.40, p<.001$ ), were all associated with higher levels of College Adjustment (CAQ-FS). The significant positive relationship found between overall CAQ and Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experience suggests that persons who are outgoing and energetic, as well as self-disciplined and achievement oriented are also likely to demonstrate superior adaption to college, while students who are low in these traits are more likely to report below average adjustment. Agreeableness ( $r=.08, p>.05$ ) was the only personality variable not found to be associated with College Adjustment.

### Hypothesis 2: Academic Adjustment

All predictor variables demonstrated associations with academic adjustment in the expected directions. Specifically, moderately high correlations between Academic Adjustment (CAQ-A) and Conscientiousness ( $r=.30, p<.001$ ), Emotional Stability ( $r=.18, p<.001$ ), Openness to Experience ( $r=.17, p<.001$ ) were observed. In addition, Agreeableness ( $r=.16, p<.001$ ) also demonstrated a small but significant association with improved Academic Adjustment.

### Hypothesis 3: Emotional Adjustment

In keeping with the predicted results, high scores on Emotional Stability ( $r=.58, p<.001$ ) were strongly associated with higher scores on the Emotional Adjustment (CAQ-E) subscale. Additionally, higher levels of both Conscientiousness ( $r=.17, p<.001$ ) and Extraversion ( $r=.25, p<.001$ ) were associated with significantly higher levels of Emotional Adjustment.



#### Hypothesis 4: Social Adjustment

As hypothesized, higher levels of Emotional Stability ( $r=.47$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and Extraversion ( $r=.52$ ,  $p<.001$ ) were strongly associated with better Social Adjustment (CAQ-S). Taken together these results suggest that persons who are out-going and confident are likely to be more socially engaged and satisfied with their friendships than persons who have lower levels of these traits. Conversely, students who are low on these traits are more likely to experience having trouble making friends, and are more likely to feel overwhelmed by the social pressures that are often part of college life.

#### Hypothesis 5: Life Events

As hypothesized, higher levels of Emotional Stability ( $r=-.26$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and Extraversion ( $r=-.17$ ,  $p<.001$ ) were associated with significantly lower scores on the negative Life Events Questionnaire (LEQ). This observed relationship suggests that students who are characteristically more social and outgoing, as well as secure in themselves are likely to have experienced significantly less negative Life Events (LEQ). As predicted, a negative association between Life Events scores (LEQ) and full-scale College Adjustment was observed ( $r=-.22$ ,  $p<.001$ ), suggesting that individuals who have experienced a greater amount of negative life events are likely to be less well adapted to college life in general. Conversely, individuals who report experiencing a small number of negative life events are more likely to smoothly transition from high school to college life.

#### ***Gender Differences in Personality Traits and Life Events***

Consistent with our research questions regarding adjustment, a series of independent sample  $t$  tests were conducted to compare men ( $n=132$ ) and women ( $n=148$ ) on their levels of personality traits (Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness

and Conscientiousness), number of negative Life Events (LEQ) and College Adjustment scores (CAQ-FS, CAQ-A, CAQ-S, CAQ-E). Results revealed that men and women differed significantly in their reported levels of Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience and Agreeableness. Specifically, men ( $M=38.33$ ,  $SD= 5.59$ ) scored significantly higher on Openness to Experience than women ( $M=36.78$ ,  $SD=5.74$ ),  $t(278)=-1.55$ ,  $p=.023$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means was moderate, ( $\eta^2=.09$ ). Men ( $M=34.72$ ,  $SD=7.49$ ) also endorsed significantly higher levels of Emotional Stability than women ( $M=32.41$ ,  $SD=7.5$   $t(278)=-2.31$ ,  $p=.011$ ). The magnitude of differences in the means was large ( $\eta^2=.14$ ). Scores on Agreeableness, were significantly higher in women ( $M=42.44$ ,  $SD=4.92$ ) than in men ( $M=40.01$ ,  $SD=6.03$ ,  $t(278)= 3.71$ ,  $p=.00$ ). The magnitude of the difference in means was large ( $\eta^2=.22$ ).

Contrary to our predicted results, no significant differences in reported levels of Extraversion, or Conscientiousness were found between men ( $M=34.85$ ,  $SD=7.58$ ) and women ( $M=35.25$ ,  $SD=8.08$ ). Additionally, men and women did not differ significantly on Life Events or College Adjustment (CAQ-FS, CAQ-A, CAQ-S, CAQ-E). Overall, these results suggest that the personalities of men and women may differ substantially. Men were found to be more Emotionally Stable and Open to Experience than women, while women were higher on Agreeableness than their male counterparts. The observed gender differences on Agreeableness and Emotional Stability are consistent with previous research (Costa et. al, 2001, Feingold, 1994, Ferguson, Sanders, O’Heir, & James, 2000). See Table 2 for full results.

### ***Moderation Analyses***

In keeping with the our proposed moderation hypothesis, Life Events (LEQ) was hypothesized to effect the strength and/or direction of the observed relationship between personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience

and Conscientiousness) and College Adjustment (CAQ-FS). The potential moderation effect of Gender on these relationships was also explored.

To test our final set of hypotheses a series of moderated hierarchical regressions were run. In order to test for the interaction between gender, personality and life-events in predicting college adjustment, Aiken and West's (1991) procedure for testing three-way interactions was followed. According to Aiken and West (1991), the first requirement for running a moderated multiple regression involves centering each of the continuous predictor and criterion variables that you will be including in your analyses. Centering the variables at their mean reduces the potential for multicollinearity and enhances the interpretability of the results (Barron & Kenny, 1986). I created centered variables for each of the continuous main effect variables by subtracting each variable's mean from each individual observation (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Given the previously documented significant differences between men and women and the exploratory nature of our final research question, the potential moderation effect of gender on the relationship between College Adjustment (CAQ-FS) and the interaction of personality and negative Life Events (LEQ) was also assessed. The effect of Gender was accounted for by the addition of a dummy coded moderator variable (Women-0, Men-1) in the both main effects and interaction analyses (Aiken & West, 1991). The control variable, Ethnicity, was broken into two groups via dummy coding. Persons who self-identified as White formed one category and the other category consisted of persons identifying as Hispanic, Black, Asian, Native American and Other (White vs. Non White). Age was entered as continuous control variable in the in the same step as Ethnicity.

Another requirement for testing three-way interactions stipulates that all of the first and second order terms involved in the two and three-way interactions must be entered into the hierarchical regression. Accordingly, I created interaction terms for each of the two-way

interactions (Personality X LEQ, Personality X Gender, Gender X LEQ) by multiplying each variable by the other two. I then created a three-way interaction (Personality X Gender X LEQ), by multiplying each of three predictor variables by one another. A separate series of hierarchical regression analyses were run for each personality variable (Openness to Experience, Emotional Stability, Extraversion and Conscientiousness) previously found to be associated with significant change in the full-scale College Adjustment (CAQ-FS) outcome variable.

All equations were estimated by using the following entry methods: age and ethnicity were entered on Step 1. On Step 2, I entered in the predictor variable of interest. On Step 3, I entered the main effects for the hypothesized moderator variables, gender and Life Events. On Step 4, I entered all of the possible two-way interactions for the variables of interest Gender X Life Events, Life Events X Openness, Personality X Gender were entered. On Step 5, I entered the three-way interaction Personality X Gender X Life Events. Tables 3-7 summarize the results of four separate regression analyses that were run to examine the two and three way interactions between each of the personality variables (Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience and Extraversion) associated full scale College Adjustment (CAQ-FS).

### ***Openness to Experience, Life Events, Gender and College Adjustment***

Results for Step 1 of the moderated multiple regression analyses revealed that the control variables of Ethnicity and Age, did not account for a significant amount of the variance in CAQ-FS,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $p = .509$ . In fact, the coefficients for the control variables were found to be non-significant across all five steps contained in these analyses (see Table 3).

As was expected, Openness accounted for significant variance in college adjustment outcomes. Examination of the  $\beta$  weight from Step 2, demonstrated that having high Openness to Experience is ( $B = .19$ ,  $\beta = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ ) independently predictive of better College Adjustment after controlling for the effects of Ethnicity and Age. The  $R^2$  change associated with the full Step

was .31 ( $p < .05$ ). In other words, adding personality to the Step explained an additional 3.1% of the variance in College Adjustment ( $\Delta R^2 = .026, p < .05$ ).

In Step 3 there were significant main effects for both Openness to Experience ( $B = .06, \beta = .05, p < .001$ ) and Life Events ( $B = -1.67, \beta = .48, p < .001$ ) while Gender ( $B = .35, \beta = .03, p = .66$ ) did not significantly predict College Adjustment. These results suggest that increases in Openness to Experience positively predicts College Adjustment, while having experienced greater numbers of Life Events (LEQ) resulted in significantly poorer College Adjustment outcomes.

Blocks of the two-way interactions incorporating openness, gender and life events were entered on the Step 4. While there were no significant main effects found for the individual interaction terms and their inclusion did not significantly add to the overall explanatory power of the model,  $\Delta R^2 = .009, p = .435$ .

Results for Step 5, revealed a significant three-way interaction, Openness X Gender X LEQ ( $B = .46, \beta = .56, p < .05$ ). This interaction helped to explain an additional 2% of the variance in College Adjustment scores (CAQ-FS),  $\Delta R^2 = .02, p = .02$ . The Life Events variable ( $B = -2.08, \beta = -.262, p = .001$ ) maintained its statistical significance, while all other variables were found to be non-significant (see Table 3), indicating the presence of a partial interaction. The main effect for Life Events indicates that for Women with an average level of Openness to Experience, 37.51, a one-unit increase in the square root of LEQ will result in a 2.075 unit reduction in overall College Adjustment.

While the observed significant three-way interaction tells us that there is a global difference between the slopes of the regression lines additional plotting and probing are critical to the accurate interpretation of these results (Aiken & West, 1991). As mentioned, one-way is to plot predicted values for the outcome variable (College Adjustment) for the representative

groups. A common procedure recommended Aiken and West (1991), involves plotting the regression equations for both men and women, at both high and low values of each of our continuous variables. Openness and Life Events were plotted at one standard deviation above (+1 *SD*= “high”), and below (-1 *SD* =“low”) their respective means. Next I created plots that demonstrated the regression of College Adjustment for men and women at different levels of Life Events, by creating four separate simple regression equations. The four possible combinations of the conditional values for “Men” and “Women” (1, 0) and Openness and “Low” (-1 *SD*) and “High” (+1*SD*) Life Events were cast into a series of regression equations then plotted at points of interest for Openness, which were chosen to be 1 *SD* above and below it’s mean. The graph in Figure 1 displays the plotted regression equations for men and women at both high and low values of both Openness to Experience and Life Events. Visual inspection suggests that men who are open to new experiences and have experienced a high number of negative life events appear more likely to report better college life outcomes.

In order to fully explore the true nature of the three-way interaction, a series of post-hoc significance of simple slope tests were run. This procedure is recommended by Aiken and West (1991) to determine the strength and direction of the hypothesized relationship at different levels of the moderator variables (Aiken & West, 1991; Dawson & Richter, 2006). For the purpose of these analyses, conditional values for each of the moderators were chosen. For gender, because it is dichotomous, our values stayed the same as those originally assigned to women and men (0 and 1). Due to a lack of theoretical justification for a particular cut-off point for either the predictor variable or moderator, I chose to follow the recommendations made by Cohen and Cohen (1993) and substituted “Hi” and “Low” values for Openness and Life Events which were: 1 *SD* above and 1 *SD* below their respective means.

Results of the first simple slope test revealed that when college adjustment was the dependent variable, the simple slope for men with high negative Life Events was significant,  $t(270)=2.67$ ,  $p=.02$ . Demonstrating that, as LEQ scores increase the slope representing the relationship of Openness to college adjustment becomes significantly more positive. The simple slope for the regression line describing the relationship between low levels of LEQ,  $t(270)=-1.03$ ,  $p=.33$ , and college adjustment was not significant. The slopes from women reporting both low,  $t(270)=1.74$ ,  $p=.11$ , and high levels of LEQ,  $t(270)=-1.06$ ,  $p=.3$ , were similarly found to be non-significant. The significant observed difference between the simple slopes for men and women further suggests that the relationship between the interaction of Openness and Life Events is not the same for both men and women. Further post hoc testing revealed that high values of Openness to Experience combined with high values of negative life events significantly predicted college adjustment only for the male group of respondents (see Figures 2 and 3).

### ***Emotional Stability, Life Events, Gender and College Adjustment***

Results for Step 1 of the moderated multiple regression analyses indicated that the control variables of Ethnicity and Age, do not account for a significant amount of the variance in CAQ-FS,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $p = .509$ .

Results from Step 2 of the moderated regression analyses demonstrated that Emotional Stability significantly predicted College Adjustment after controlling for the effects of Ethnicity and Age. Examination of the  $\beta$  weight from Step 2, demonstrated that having high levels of Emotional Stability independently predicted ( $B = .54$ ,  $\beta = .62$ ,  $p < .001$ ) better College Adjustment. This finding supports our earlier correlational findings and suggests that students who have high levels Emotional Stability are better adjusted to overall college life.

The addition of the two moderator variables (LEQ, Gender) in Step 3 did not help to account for a statistically significant amount of additional variance in College Adjustment,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.311$ . Emotional Stability remained significant ( $B = .53$ ,  $\beta = .61$ ,  $p < .001$ ) when controlling for the effects of Gender ( $B = -.58$ ,  $\beta = -.04$ ,  $p = .377$ ) and Life Events ( $B = -.53$ ,  $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p = .185$ ) ( $B = .529$ ,  $\beta = .607$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which did not uniquely contribute to predicting College Adjustment in Step 3.

In Step 4 ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.00$ ,  $p = 0.270$ ) and 5 ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.00$ ,  $p = 0.347$ ) the addition of the two-way and three-way interaction variables failed to jointly contribute to explaining any additional variance in College Adjustment (see Table 4).

### ***Extraversion, Life Events, Gender and College Adjustment***

Results for Step 1 of the moderated multiple regression analyses indicated that the control variables of Ethnicity and Age, do not account for a significant amount of the variance in CAQ-FS,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $p = .509$ .

Results from Step 2 of the moderated regression analyses demonstrated that Extraversion significantly predicted College Adjustment after controlling for the effects of Ethnicity and Age. Examination of the  $\beta$  weight from Step 2, demonstrated that having high levels of Extraversion ( $B = .34$ ,  $\beta = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ) independently predicted better College Adjustment. This finding supports the results of our earlier correlational analyses and suggests that students who have high levels Extraversion are better adjusted to overall college life.

In Step 3, the moderator variables were entered, and were found to account for a significant amount of the variance in College Adjustment, above and beyond the effect of Extraversion and the control variables,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $p = 0.03$ . Both Extraversion ( $B = .31$ ,  $\beta = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Life Events (LEQ) ( $B = -1.06$ ,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p = .021$ ) were found to uniquely contribute



to explaining the variance in College Adjustment, while the effect of Gender was found to be non-significant ( $B = .81$ ,  $\beta = .06$ ,  $p = .273$ ).

In Step 4 ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.680$ ) and 5 ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.00$ ,  $p = 0.439$ ), the addition of the two-way interaction variables (Step 4) and three-way interaction variable (Step 5) failed to significantly explain any additional variance in College Adjustment (see Table 5).

### ***Conscientiousness, Life Events, Gender and College Adjustment***

Results for Step 1 of the moderated multiple regression analyses indicated that the control variables of Ethnicity and Age, do not account for a significant amount of the variance in CAQ-FS,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $p = .509$ .

Step 2, demonstrated that Conscientiousness significantly predicted College Adjustment after controlling for the effects of Ethnicity and Age. Examination of the  $\beta$  weight from Step 2, demonstrated that having high levels of Conscientiousness ( $B = .27$ ,  $\beta = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ ) independently predicted better College Adjustment. This finding supports the results from our earlier correlational analyses and suggests that students who have high levels Conscientiousness are better adjusted to overall college life.

In Step 3, the moderator variables (LEQ and Gender) were added to the regression equation. Step 3, which included the control variables, Conscientiousness, LEQ and Gender, was found to account for a significant amount of the variance in College Adjustment,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.04$ ,  $p = 0.003$ . In Step 3, both Conscientiousness ( $B = .25$ ,  $\beta = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Life Events (LEQ) ( $B = -1.41$ ,  $\beta = -.18$ ,  $p = .003$ ) were found to uniquely explain a significant amount of the variance in College Adjustment, while the effect of Gender was found to be non-significant ( $B = .91$ ,  $\beta = .07$ ,  $p = .243$ ).

In Step 4 ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.616$ ) and 5 ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.132$ ), the addition of the two-way interaction variables (Step 4) and three-way interaction variable (Step 5) failed to significantly explain any additional variance in College Adjustment (see Table 5).

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

Previous research has established strong support for the significant role that personality plays in predicting adjustment. In particular, individuals high in Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness have consistently demonstrated better overall adjustment to college life than students who score low on these adaptive traits (Headey and Wearing, 1989; Magnus, Diener, Fujita, and Pavot, 1993). Traditionally, dispositional personality research has treated personality as a stable phenomenon that independently affects individual functioning in both consistent and predictable ways. However, recent resiliency research has begun to explore ways in which environmental factors like, the experience of negative or stressful life events may interact with one's personality traits to facilitate or impede successful adjustment. My findings support the need for additional personality research that examines these potential relationships. While the bulk of literature investigating outcomes for people who have experienced significant negative events in their lives has focused on maladaptive response patterns, this study's results reveal that stress doesn't always beget stress. In fact, one of the main aims of my research was to explore the complex and interactive relationship that exists between person and environment.

I began by exploring the potential interactive relationship between personality and life events on college adjustment by first examining the strength of the correlations between the predictor and criterion variables of interest. In order to test my first set of hypotheses, I ran a correlational analysis, which generated bivariate correlations between personality traits, life events and college adjustment. Results of those correlational analyses demonstrated that high levels of Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience

were significantly related to better overall College Adjustment. These results demonstrate a significant correlation between persons who are calm in temperament; energetic and outgoing, responsible and organized and intellectually curious and better than average adjustment to college life in general. In support of previous studies, there was no relationship observed between Agreeableness and College Adjustment.

Additionally, the results of the correlational analyses for Academic Adjustment supported previous findings, by demonstrating that highly responsible (Con), emotional stable (Emo), considerate (Agreeable) and curious persons (Open) are likely to demonstrate improved adjustment to the rigors of undergraduate instruction. Conversely, students who are low on these traits are likely to struggle to meet academic demands. Emotional Adjustment analyses yielded similar results, which suggested that highly responsible (Con), outgoing (Extro) and emotionally stable persons are likely to report better than average levels of emotional adjusted to college life, while students who experience low levels of the traits are more likely to report experiencing emotional problems and are more likely to have sought University counseling services. Finally we explored the personality correlates to Social Adjustment and again produced correlational results that were in keeping with previous research findings, which demonstrate a significant correlation between persons who are highly out-going and confident (Extro) and high reported levels of social engagement and satisfaction with their friendships than persons who have lower levels of these traits.

Additionally our preliminary hypothesis involving the negative relationship between high Life Events scores and college adjustment was supported. The correlational findings suggested that students who report experiencing high levels of stressful life events are also likely to report significantly worse overall adjustment to college life. Additionally, a significant negative relationship was found between Extraversion, Emotional Stability and LEQ scores.

These results suggest that students who are characteristically more social and outgoing, as well as secure in themselves, may be less likely to have experienced a significantly high number negative Life Events (LEQ).

While the replication of the previously documented relationships was critical to this study's aims, I wanted to expand upon the current knowledge base by testing whether the strength of the aforementioned correlations would change based on the gender of the student and the amount of negative life events they reported having experienced. Given that previous research had linked the experience of high numbers of negative life events to mostly maladaptive outcomes, including increased withdrawal intentions, dropout rates, substance abuse, depression and anxiety rates, I was curious to see if it would be possible for these negative experiences to produce positive outcomes.

Due to the limited scope of this project, Full-Scale College Adjustment (CA-FS) was chosen as the sole outcome variable for the series of four separately run moderated multiple regressions. These methods were designed to test whether the strength of the relationship between personality and adjustment could be moderated by life events and gender. Each of these analyses contained the proposed moderator variable (Life Events) and one of each of the four-predictor variables (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Emotional Stability). Due to the results of our preliminary tests, which supported a previous research documenting gender group differences in rates of negative life events and levels of Emotional Stability and Extraversion, gender's effect on the proposed interactions was also examined. Our investigations failed to demonstrate any significant two or three-way interactions between the Extraversion, Emotional Stability and Conscientiousness and the proposed moderators (Life Events and gender). While these results were disappointing, it is possible that they reflect the relative

homogeneity of our sample that had, on average, experienced a relatively small number of negative life events.

Unfortunately, three of the four regression models-- those involving Extraversion, Emotional Stability and Conscientiousness--failed to produce any evidence to support our moderation hypothesis. However, support for the presence of a moderation effect between Openness to Experience, gender, and life events (LEQ) in predicting college adjustment was supplied by the presence of a significant three-way interaction. With regard to overall college adjustment, results demonstrated that male students who were high in Openness and had experienced a large number of negative life events reported better than average overall college adjustment. College adjustment scores for women with similarly high levels of openness and high levels of negative life events were not significant.

These findings suggest that the process of adjusting to the novelty and rigor of college is may not be jeopardized but may be enhanced by a reported experience of a high number of negative life events combined with the students' ability to accept change, while remaining open to new ideas and experiences. Conversely, male students who are equally open to new ideas and experiences but report experiencing relatively few negative events, demonstrate the lowest levels of adjustment across all the groups. One possible explanation for this finding is that those who have experienced large amounts of negative life events and may be able to accept them as part of life, or derive some kind of importance and meaning from them, which may allow them to more readily adapt to the new experiences which are characteristic of college life.

### ***Limitations and Directions for Future Research***

The implications of the present study's results are limited by its reliance on cross-sectional and self-report data. Future research should strive to include a more diverse and populous sample, as this would allow researchers to test these preliminary findings across

various demographics. Another limitation associated with the relatively small scope of the study and its one-administration survey design, is that we were prevented from examining the differential impact that experiencing certain types of negative life events may have on the relationship between personality and college adjustment. Researchers should also consider switching from a single session data collection approach to a repeated measures procedure. This would allow researchers to examine the immediate impact that recently experienced life events might have on the relationship between personality and college adjustment. It would also be interesting to look at negative events that happened directly to one's person ("I became pregnant") as opposed to those that happened to a close friend or family member ("An unmarried member of my family became pregnant") would affect the variables ability to moderate the personality/adjustment relationship. Are events that occur directly to us more readily understood and more fluidly incorporated into our personal experience (Openness) than events that happen to others.

Another limitation of this study has to do with the restricted population from which the sample was drawn. Given that participants were all drawn from an Introductory Psychology student research pool, this sample is considered to be one of convenience. Additionally, participants self-selected into the study, which makes the generalizability of the study somewhat suspect, given that students may have been attracted to the study because of its particular focus on negative life events and resiliency.

The retrospective nature of the Life Events Questionnaire has the potential to incur significant amounts of measurement error. The LEQ asks the participant to recall events that could have happened at any point during their lives, a task which may prove difficult for the average person. Another issue to consider is that one is probing the participant for information on traumatic events, some of which may be painful or somewhat repressed in their memories.

Another limitation comes from the possible restriction of range. Most students in the study reported experiencing relatively low levels of negative life events when compared to other populations that have been sampled in the past (Masten, 1988). The homogeneity of responses on this variable could represent a restriction of range if it means that those individuals who have experienced high levels of adversity and negative life events are not making it to Universities, but are instead choosing to pursue part-time school or are opting out of the process all together. If these individuals with the highest negative life experiences are systematically absent from this study, our study ends up highlighting resilience processes for individuals who have experienced relatively few stressful life events and our results may not be generalizable to the larger population of young adults.

A third limitation that can be blamed on our small sample size and the relatively small scope of the project was our inability to examine the different facets that comprise each of the Big Five personality traits for this study. It would be interesting to learn whether men and women differ in their endorsement of the five facets of Openness, which include: Imagination, Artistic Interests, Emotionality, Adventurousness, Intellect, and Liberalism (Goldberg, 1999). Examining gender differences across the facets of this important variable would potentially allow researchers to uncover the specific facet or set of facets that are most strongly linked with resilience, regardless of gender affiliation.

Future studies should try to collect data from community samples (junior college or community college students) in addition to a university sample. A larger sampling of students drawn from various types of higher education would help to avoid the lack of dispersion and range in negative life events scores encountered in our sample. A larger sample size would also provide researchers with the power necessary to fully explore the potential differential impact that certain types life events may have on college adjustment. Due to this study's relative lack of



power our inquiries were forced to remain at the domain level of both life events and college adjustment.

Researchers should also consider switching from a single session data collection approach to a repeated measures assessment procedure, which would allow researchers to examine the rather immediate impact of recently experienced life events on the relationship between personality and college adjustment. Being able to account for the timing of the negative life events would allow researchers to examine the potential interactive effects that events and changes in personality traits have on college adjustment.

### ***Implications***

Previous work has described the relationships between personality and college adjustment, and life events and college adjustment in ways that overlook the potential for life events to significantly modify the relationship between a student's personality traits and college adjustment.

By examining the interactive relationship that may exist among the variables of gender, personality, and life events this study was able to generate results that have the potential to be replicated, refined and used to treat the adjustment needs of students whose personality or exposure to negative life events make the adjustment to college a particularly difficult task. This study was able to improve upon previous research by testing the moderation effect of life events on the relationship between personality and college adjustment, which to our knowledge had only been considered as a mediating factor. This study also added to the current resiliency literature by introducing Openness to Experience as a potential protective factor for male students who have experienced high numbers of negative life events. The finding that generate novel findings regarding the critical role that gender may play in understanding the relationship between life events and personality in predicting college adjustment.

## Tables

**Table 1.**  
*Variable Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	9	10	11	12
1. Gender <sub>a</sub>	1												
2. Age	.07	1											
3. Ethnicity	-.02	.01	1										
4. LEQ	-.10	.14*	-.21**	1									
5. Agree	-.22**	-.25**	-.04	.02	1								
6. Emo	.153*	-.12	-.02	-.26**	.121	1							
7. Con	-.07	-.02	-.06	-.10	.22**	.24**	1						
8. Open	.14*	-.01	-.01	.00	.27**	.14*	.11	1					
9. Extra	-.03	-.09	.00	-.17**	.14*	.33	.08	.16**	1				
10. CAQ-FS	.06	-.07	.00	-.22**	.08	.62**	.25**	.16**	.40**	1			
11. CAQ-A	-.10	-.3	.04	-.10	.16**	.18**	.29**	.17**	-.03	.52	1		
12. CAQ-S	.11	-.04	-.05	-.13	.02	.47**	.06	.08	.52**	.71**	-.31*	1	
13. CAQ-E	.10	-.06	.02	-.22**	-.04	.58**	.17**	.06	.25**	.76**	.24**	.33**	1
M	1.47	18.67	6.39	4.85	41.30	33.50	35.20	37.51	35.06	54.52	19.32	18.45	16.75
SD	.50	1.56	1.51	3.47	5.60	7.57	6.25	5.7	7.84	6.58	3.30	4.08	2.67

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

<sup>a</sup>Coded 1=male, 0=female

Table 2.  
*Variable Means and Standard Deviations by Gender*

Variable	Mean (Males, n=132)	SD	Mean (Females, n=148)	SD
Age	18.99	1.82	18.41	.97
Life events sum	4.49	3.39	5.16	3.54
Openness to Experience	38.33	5.59	36.78	5.74
Conscientiousness	34.74	5.91	35.62	6.53
Extraversion	34.85	7.58	35.25	8.08
Agreeableness	40.44	4.92	42.44	4.92
Emotional Stability	34.72	7.49	32.41	7.50
CAQ Full Scale	54.90	6.25	54.15	6.87
CAQ Academic Adjustment	18.97	3.43	19.63	3.17
CAQ Social Adjustment	18.92	3.91	18.02	4.20
CAQ Emotional Adjustment	17.04	2.26	16.49	2.97

Table 3.

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Openness to Experience and the Moderation effects of Life Events and Gender in Predicting Full Scale College Adjustment (N = 280)*

Variable	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4			Step 5		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Ethnicity	-.27	.97	-.02	-.54	.77	-.03	-.30	.79	-.02	-.28	.79	-.02	-.27	.79	-.02
Age	-.30	.27	-.07	.09	.22	.01	.09	.22	.02	.10	.23	.02	.12	.23	.03
Openness (O)				.54	.04	.62**	.53	.04	.61**	.59	.13	.68**	.69	.17	.80**
Life Events (LEQ)							-.53	.40	-.07	-.68	.55	-.09	-.70	.55	-.09
Gender (G)							-.58	.65	-.04	-1.3	1.7	-.10	-1.22	1.70	-.09
O X LEQ										.00	.05	.01	-.04	.07	-.12
O X G										-.15	.09	-.12	-.36	.24	-.29
G X LEQ										.35	.78	.06	.38	.78	.07
O X G X LEQ													.10	.11	.17
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.005			.031			.075			.084			.104		
<i>f</i> <sup>2</sup> <sub>50</sub>	.005			.026*			.044*			.009			.020*		

Note: Openness was centered at its mean. Life Events was square root transformed and centered.  
\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

Table 4.  
*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Emotional Stability and the Moderation Effects of Life Events and Gender in Predicting Full Scale College Adjustment (N = 280)*

Variable	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4			Step 5		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Ethnicity	-.27	.97	-.02	-.54	.77	-.03	-.30	.79	-.02	-.28	.79	-.02	-.27	.79	-.02
Age	-.30	.27	-.07	.09	.22	.01	.09	.22	.02	.10	.23	.02	.12	.23	.03
Emotion Stability				.54	.04	.62**	.53	.04	.61**	.59	.13	.68**	.69	.17	.80**
Life Events (LEQ)							-.53	.40	-.07	-.68	.55	-.09	-.70	.55	-.09
Gender (G)							-.58	.65	-.04	-1.3	1.7	-.10	-1.22	1.70	-.09
ES X LEQ										.00	.05	.01	-.04	.07	-.12
ES X G										-.15	.09	-.12	-.36	.24	-.29
G X LEQ										.35	.78	.06	.38	.78	.07
ES X G X LEQ													.10	.11	.17

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

**Table 5.**  
*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Extraversion and the Moderation Effect of Life Events and Gender in Predicting Full Scale College Adjustment (N = 280)*

Variable	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4			Step 5		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Ethnicity	-.37	.97	-.02	-.47	.89	-.03	-.06	.91	.00	-.12	.92	-.01	-.11	.92	-.01
Age	-.30	.27	-.07	-.15	.25	-.03	-.14	.25	-.03	-.15	.26	-.03	-.17	.26	-.04
Extraversion (EX)				.34	.05	.40*	.31	.05	.37*	.34	.14	.40*	.43	.18	.51*
Life Events (LEQ)							-1.06	.46	-.13*	-1.51	.63	-.19*	-1.42	.64	-.18*
Gender (G)							.81	.74	.06	-1.23	2.0	-.09	-.87	2.01	-.07
EX X LEQ										-.02	.06	-.05	-.07	.08	-.17
EX X G										.04	.10	.03	-.15	.27	-.12
G X LEQ										1.01	.90	.17	.91	.91	.16
EX X G X LEQ													.09	.12	.17
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.005			.162			.184			.189			.191		
<i>Δ</i> <i>SD</i>	.005			.157**			.022*			.005			.002		

*Note:* Extraversion was centered at its mean. Life Events was square root transformed and centered.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

**Table 6.**  
*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Conscientiousness and the Moderation Effect of Life Events and Gender in Predicting Full Scale College Adjustment (N = 280)*

Variable	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4			Step 5		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Ethnicity	-.37	.97	-.02	-.69	.95	-.01	-.12	.95	-.01	-.14	.96	-.01	-.01	.96	.00
Age	-.30	.27	-.07	-.28	.26	-.06	-.25	.27	-.06	-.23	.27	-.05	-.29	.27	-.06
Conscientiousness (C)				.27	.06	.25	.25	.06	.24	.35	.17	.33	.54	.21	.51
Life Events (LEQ)							-1.40	.47	-.18	-1.87	.64	-.24	-1.86	.64	-.24
Gender (G)							.91	.78	.07	-1.04	2.02	-.08	-.83	2.02	-.06
C X LEQ										-.06	.07	-.12	-.14	.09	-.30
C X G										.03	.13	.02	-.41	.31	-.25
G X LEQ										.96	.92	.17	.94	.92	.16
C X G X LEQ													.22	.14	.28
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.005			.261			.325			.334			.345		
<i>Δ</i> <sup>5Δ</sup>	.005			.063**			.038**			.006			.007		

*Note:* Conscientiousness was centered at its mean. Life Events was square root transformed and centered.  
 \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

## Figures

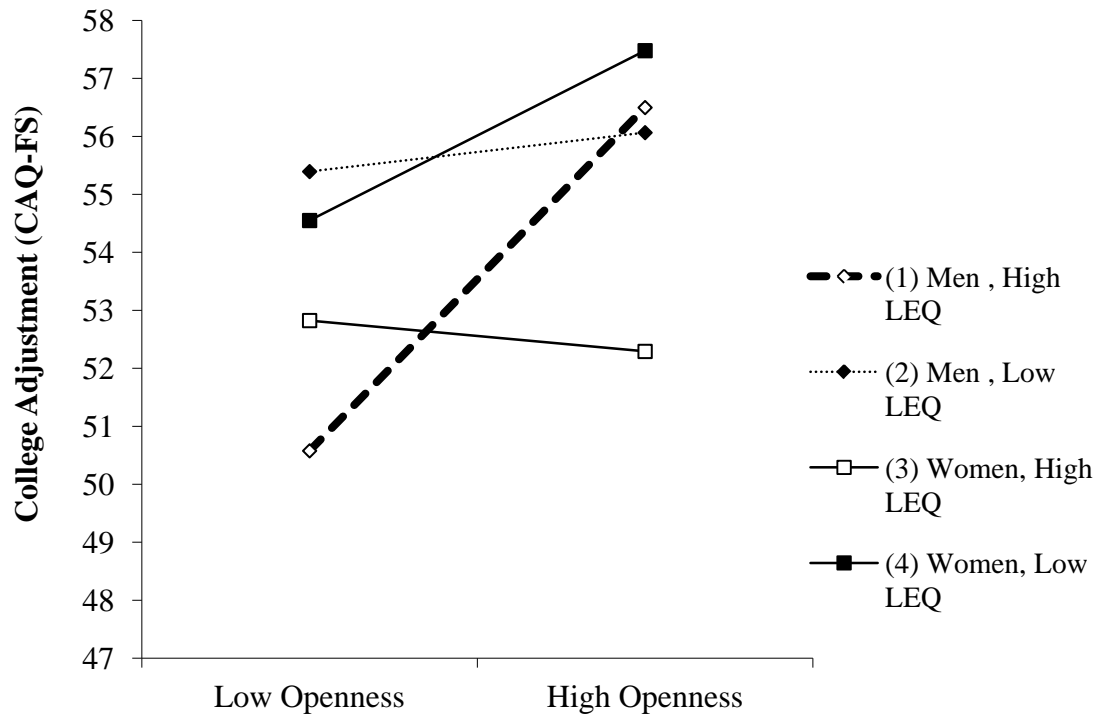


Figure 1.

*The relationship between Openness and College Adjustment with Gender and Life Events as moderators.*



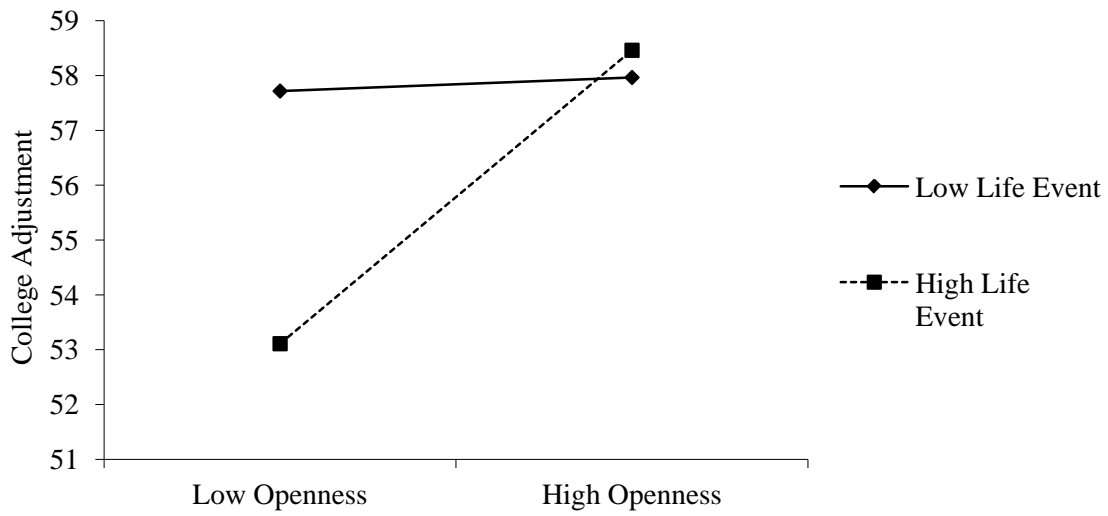


Figure 2.

*Life Events moderates the relationship between Openness to Experience and College Adjustment for Men,  $t(132)=3.223, p<.001$ .*

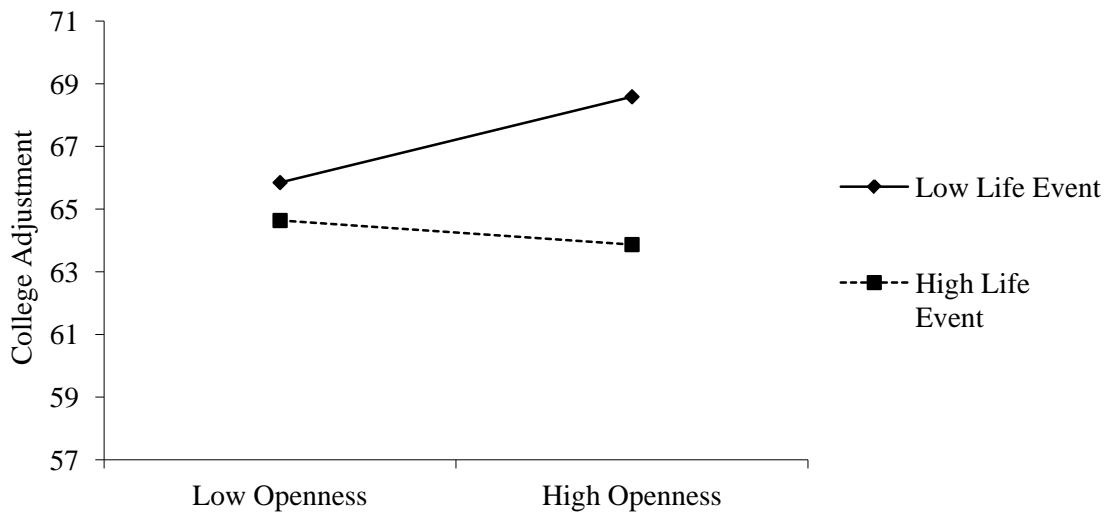


Figure 3.

*Displaying non-significant main effect of Openness to Experience and Negative Life Events on College Adjustment for Women,  $t(148)=-.441, p=.66$*

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## Appendix A

### IPIP Big Five Personality Inventory

On the following pages are phrases describing people's behaviors. Please use the rating scale below to describe how accurately each statement describes *you*. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you are, and roughly the same age. Your responses will be kept in absolute confidence to enable you to comfortably describe yourself in an honest manner. Please read each statement carefully, and then fill in the number that corresponds to your chosen response on the scale.

Response options:	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all true		somewhat true		very true

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Am the life of the party.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Feel little concern for others.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Am always prepared.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Get stressed out easily.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Have a rich vocabulary.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Don't talk a lot.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Am interested in people.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Leave my belongings around.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Am relaxed most of the time.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Feel comfortable around people.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Insult people.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Pay attention to details.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Worry about things.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Have a vivid imagination.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Keep in the background.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Sympathize with others' feelings.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Make a mess of things.

Response options:	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all true		somewhat true		very true

19. \_\_\_\_\_ Seldom feel blue.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Am not interested in abstract ideas.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ Start conversations.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ Am not interested in other people's problems.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ Get chores done right away.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ Am easily disturbed.
25. \_\_\_\_\_ Have excellent ideas.
26. \_\_\_\_\_ Have little to say.
27. \_\_\_\_\_ Have a soft heart.
28. \_\_\_\_\_ Often forget to put things back in their place.
29. \_\_\_\_\_ Get upset easily.

- 30. \_\_\_\_\_ Do not have a good imagination.
- 31. \_\_\_\_\_ Talk to a lot of different people at parties.
- 32. \_\_\_\_\_ Am not really interested in others.
- 33. \_\_\_\_\_ Like order.
- 34. \_\_\_\_\_ Change my mood a lot.
- 35. \_\_\_\_\_ Am quick to understand things.
- 36. \_\_\_\_\_ Don't like to draw attention to myself.
- 37. \_\_\_\_\_ Take time out for others.
- 38. \_\_\_\_\_ Shirk my duties.
- 39. \_\_\_\_\_ Have frequent mood swings.
- 40. \_\_\_\_\_ Use difficult words.
- 41. \_\_\_\_\_ Don't mind being the center of attention.
- 42. \_\_\_\_\_ Feel others' emotions.
- 43. \_\_\_\_\_ Follow a schedule.
- 44. \_\_\_\_\_ Get irritated easily.
- 45. \_\_\_\_\_ Spend time reflecting on things.
- 46. \_\_\_\_\_ Am quiet around strangers.

Response options:	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all true		somewhat true		very true

- 47. \_\_\_\_\_ Make people feel at ease.
- 48. \_\_\_\_\_ Am exacting in my work.
- 49. \_\_\_\_\_ Often feel blue.
- 50. \_\_\_\_\_ Am full of ideas.

## Appendix B

### Life Events Questionnaire (LEQ)

*(Items that contributed to LEQ for this study are identified with an asterisk)*

This questionnaire contains statements describing events that can happen in the life of any child or in any family. Some of them will apply to your family – meaning you, your parents, and brothers and sisters. Many will not. Please read each statement very carefully and decide whether it is something that happened to you (or your family) while you were growing up.

**If the event happened to you or your family, please circle YES. If the event *did not* happen to you or your family, please circle NO.** Please answer all of the items as honestly and quickly as you can.

	Circle One	
1. I had a new brother or sister who was born.	YES	NO
2. Our family moved to a new home or apartment.	YES	NO
3. I changed schools.	YES	NO
4. I became seriously ill or was injured.	YES	NO
*5. My brother or sister became seriously ill or was injured.	YES	NO
*6. At least one parent became seriously ill or was injured.	YES	NO
7. I was involved in a serious accident.	YES	NO
8. I was left with a visible physical handicap due to an accident, injury, or illness.	YES	NO
9. I had an important change in physical appearance which upset me (acne, braces, glasses, physical development, etc.).	YES	NO
*10. I was a victim of violence (mugging, sexual assault, robbery).	YES	NO
*11. A member of my family was a victim of violence (mugging, sexual assault, robbery).	YES	NO
*12. One of my parents died.	YES	NO
*13. A brother or sister died.	YES	NO
*14. A grandparent died.	YES	NO
*15. One of my close friends died.	YES	NO
16. Another adult came to live with my family.	YES	NO
17. I left home to live under the care of another parent, relative, or others.	YES	NO
18. I left home to live on my own.	YES	NO
19. I ran away from home.	YES	NO
*20. A member of my family ran away from home.	YES	NO
*21. My parents separated.	YES	NO
*22. My parents divorced.	YES	NO
23. One of my parents remarried.	YES	NO

24. I had at least one outstanding personal achievement.	YES	NO
25. I was voted or appointed to a leadership position (for example, class office, team captain, etc.).	YES	NO
26. I received a special award (ribbon, trophy, plaque, certificate, etc) for something <i>done at school</i> .	YES	NO
27. I received a special award for some activity <i>outside of school</i> (ribbon, trophy, plaque, certificate, etc.).	YES	NO
28. I received special recognition for athletic competition.	YES	NO
29. I did not get into a group or activity that I wanted to get into (music group, sports team, theater, etc.).	YES	NO
30. I failed a grade or was “held back.”	YES	NO
31. I did much worse than I expected in an important exam or course.	YES	NO
32. I was threatened with suspension or was suspended from school at least once.	YES	NO
33. I became pregnant. (for females)	YES	NO
34. I got someone pregnant. (for males)	YES	NO
35. An unmarried family member became pregnant.	YES	NO
*36. One of my parents had problems at work (demotion, trouble with boss or co-workers, change in working hours, etc.).	YES	NO
*37. One parent lost his or her job.	YES	NO
38. My mother began to work.	YES	NO
39. There was a change in a parent’s job so that my parent was away from home more often.	YES	NO
40. I had little contact with one parent.	YES	NO
41. I tried to get a job and failed.	YES	NO
*42. The family financial situation was difficult.	YES	NO
43. There was some damage or loss of family property (such as apartment, house, car, or bike).	YES	NO
*44. The family had funds cut off by some government agency (for example: welfare, food stamps, AFDC, disability, etc.).	YES	NO
*45. My family was evicted from a house or apartment.	YES	NO
46. I had many arguments with brother(s) and/or sister(s).	YES	NO
47. I had many arguments with my parent(s).	YES	NO
48. My parent(s) and I had many arguments over my choice of friends, and/or social activities, such as the use of the car or hours to stay out.	YES	NO
*49. There were many arguments between adults living in the house.	YES	NO
*50. There were many arguments between a parent and a former or separated spouse.	YES	NO
51. There were many arguments with in-laws or relatives.	YES	NO

52. I was not accepted by people my age.	YES	NO
53. I had suicidal thoughts.	YES	NO
*54. A member of my family committed suicide.	YES	NO
*55. A member of my family developed severe emotional problems.	YES	NO
56. I became involved with alcohol or drugs.	YES	NO
*57. A brother or sister became involved with alcohol or drugs.	YES	NO
*58. A parent had trouble with alcohol or drugs.	YES	NO
59. I got in trouble with the law.	YES	NO
60. I went to jail.	YES	NO
*61. A brother or sister was arrested or went to jail.	YES	NO
*62. A parent was arrested or went to jail.	YES	NO
63. I began to date.	YES	NO
64. I began "going steady", despite my parent's disapproval.	YES	NO
65. I got married, despite my parent's disapproval.	YES	NO
66. I broke up with a girlfriend or boyfriend.	YES	NO
67. I lost a close friend.	YES	NO



## Appendix C

### College Adjustment Questionnaire (CAQ)

(Grouped Version)

Listed below are some statements that describe how college students might be feeling about their experience with college. **Please use the rating scale below to indicate how accurately each statement describes you *at this point in time*.** Please read each statement carefully, and then circle the number that corresponds to how accurately the statement describes you.

#### Response Options

- 1: Very Inaccurate
- 2: Moderately Inaccurate
- 3: Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate
- 4: Moderately Accurate
- 5: Very Accurate

<b>Right now:</b>	Very Inaccurate				Very Accurate
<b>(Academic Adjustment)</b>					
1. I am succeeding academically	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am doing well in my classes	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am happy with the grades I am earning in my classes	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am meeting my academic goals	1	2	3	4	5
13. I have performed poorly in my classes since starting college	1	2	3	4	5
<b>(Social Adjustment)</b>					
2. I don't have as much of a social life as I would like	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am happy with my social life at college	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have had a hard time making friends since coming to college	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am as socially engaged as I would like to be	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am satisfied with my social relationships	1	2	3	4	5
<b>(Emotional Adjustment)</b>					
3. I feel that I am doing well emotionally since coming to college	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am happy with how things have been going in college	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel that I am emotionally falling apart in college	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have felt the need to seek emotional counseling since coming to college	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix D

### Demographic Information Form

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: (check one)
  - Female
  - Male
  - Transgender
3. Year in school:
  - Freshman
  - Sophomore
  - Junior
  - Senior
  - Fifth year or above
4. Ethnicity: (check all that apply)
  - African American/Black
  - Hispanic/Latino
  - Alaska Native
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - American Indian/Native American
  - White non-Hispanic
  - Asian American/ Asian
  - Some other race/ethnicity
5. Sexual orientation:
  - Bisexual
  - Gay/Lesbian
  - Heterosexual
  - Other
6. Relationship status:
  - Not in a relationship
  - In a relationship
  - Married/Civil union
  - Divorced/Separated
  - Widowed
7. Highest level of education completed by mother:
  - Elementary school
  - Two year degree
  - Some high school
  - Four year degree

- High school
- Graduate degree
- Some college

8. Highest level of education completed by father:

- Elementary school
- Two year degree
- Some high school
- Four year degree
- High school
- Graduate degree
- Some college