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College Academic Success: Prior Motivations and Perceptions of Parents

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Abstract: What makes a student succeed or fail in college? The study investigates the relationship between autonomous motivation and success in higher education, with success defined as positive attitudes toward college (e.g., interest, value for college) and being in the honors program instead of on academic probation. The study is based on two hypotheses. First, college students who have parents that foster their autonomy will be more successful. Second, students who chose to attend college for autonomous reasons will be more successful. For the study, 99 participants in the honors program or on academic probation completed a survey assessing parental warmth, parental autonomy, perceived choice, interest and enjoyment, social life interest and enjoyment, effort and importance, social life effort and importance, pressure and tension, and value and usefulness. Students reporting higher levels of perceived parental warmth and autonomy were more likely to be in the honors program than on academic probation. Students reporting higher levels of perceived choice were not more likely to be in the honors program. However, these students were more likely to report higher levels of positive attitudes for college.

Keywords: *academic success, college, motivation, parent perceptions*

In today's society a college degree is the new high school diploma. A college degree is necessary to attain many entry-level jobs. A study done by Symonds, Schwartz and Ferguson (2011) found that people with a high school diploma only account for 41% of the work force. Additionally the earning gap between those with a college education and those without is approximately one million dollars over a lifetime (Symonds, Schwartz & Ferguson, 2011). Despite this gap, many people are not completing the education required to be successful. Only one in three will achieve their dream to go to college. Furthermore only 4 out of 10 Americans in their mid-twenties will earn associates or bachelor's degree. After six years, those enrolled in a four-year college, only 56% of students will achieve a bachelor's degree (Symonds, Schwartz & Ferguson, 2011).

Consequently, it is critical that we gain knowledge regarding why students succeed or struggle in college. Many factors contribute to students' success (or lack of) in college. Self-Determination Theory is used in the current study as a theoretical framework for investigating factors of college success. Self-Determination Theory proposes that autonomy-supportive environments are associated with motivation; furthermore autonomous forms of motivation are associated with academic success. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the extent to which autonomous motivation is related to college academic success and the degree to which autonomy-supportive parenting styles predict autonomous motivation in college. In the context of this study, success refers to being in the honors program and holding positive attitudes toward college (interest and value for college, willingness to put forth effort,) while non-success refers to being on academic probation and holding negative attitudes toward college (elevated levels of pressure and tension).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains the various factors that are related to motivation and achievement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Motivation within this framework is characterized as controlling (extrinsic) or autonomous (intrinsic). Autonomous motivation is seen as superior because it is associated with positive outcomes such as well-being and achievement. Further, the Self-Determination Theory framework suggests that three basic psychological needs must be satisfied in order for growth and well-being. These three psychological needs are: competency,

relatedness, and autonomy. In this review, I will define autonomous motivation, review the research on the relationship between autonomous motivation and achievement, and then review the research on how autonomous environments support the development of autonomous motivation.

Defining autonomous motivation

Autonomy deals with the independence to make choices (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009). Intrinsic motivation, also known as autonomous motivation, is choosing to engage in a task because the task is enjoyable in itself (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Germeys, De Witte, Schreurs, Schaufeli, & Vansteenkiste, 2011). Choosing to play the piano for the sake of loving to play is an example of autonomous motivation. In contrast, extrinsic motivation, described as controlled motivation, is choosing to engage in a task to receive an external reward or avoid some sort of punishment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Lin, McKeachie, & Yung Che, 2001). An example of this would be choosing to play the piano for reason to avoid getting grounded. The relationship between the words intrinsic/autonomous and extrinsic/controlled are useful when describing how the SDT explores motivation.

However, Self-Determination Theory currently is not simply a dichotomy with extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Instead, motivation is viewed as a continuum ranging from controlling motivation to autonomous motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). External regulation (i.e., the type of extrinsic motivation defined above) is the most controlling while intrinsic motivation is the most autonomous. In between are the constructs of interjected regulation (engaging in a task out of social pressure or guilt), identified regulation (engaging in a task because one recognizes it is worthwhile and valuable), and integrated regulation (engaging in a task because it is part of one's identify) (Reeve, Jang, Hardre, & Omura, 2002). In general, external and integrated regulations are seen as controlling forms of motivation while the others are seen as autonomous forms of motivation. In their Organismic Integration Theory, which is a sub-theory of Self-Determination Theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) propose a process of internalization by which extrinsic behavior becomes more autonomous. When internalization is reached, the behavior becomes more autonomous than controlling.

Autonomous motivation and academic achievement

Research has found evidence that shows autonomous (intrinsically motivated) people do better in school. Intrinsically motivated people have been shown to have higher grade point averages, be more curious and be more involved (Conti, 2000; Kahoe & McFarland, 1975; Lin, McKeachie & Yung Che, 2001). Also intrinsically motivated people are evaluated to have lower test anxiety (Germey et. alt., 2011; Yi-Guang, McKeachie & Yung Che, 2001). Furthermore grade point average can be evaluated as a reflection of intrinsically motivated performance (Kahoe & McFarland, 1975). Yi-Guang, McKeachie and Yung Che (2001) found that students with high intrinsic levels of motivation were scored with being lower on test anxiety. Miserandino (1996) illustrated those students who report being more internally motivated were also more involved and had more curiosity in school activities.

In terms of the relationship between motivation and achievement, Conti (2000) found that intrinsic motivation was a predictor of GPA in the first semester of college. The study was composed of 82 northeastern college students, who were given the College Goals Questionnaire (CGQ), which asks about life goals and motivations for attending college (Conti, 2000). To measure autonomy the CGQ has participants identify their four most important goals, and for each goal, rate the importance of five reasons for choosing the goals. Conti's (2000) data indicated that the autonomy of the goals and reflecting on the goals were associated with success.

In line with Conti's (2000) results, other studies have found that college students who choose to be more autonomously motivated are

associated with more positive outcomes. Following from the data, college students who chose to attend college for more autonomous motivation and display more autonomous motivation while in college were found to have higher mean course grades (Yi-Guang, McKeachie & Yung Che, 2000) and have a higher GPA in challenging courses (Kahoe & McFarland, 1975).

In summary research has found that autonomous motivation is associated with more positive aspects of behavior. Thus autonomously motivated people are predicted to be more successful, yet we need to know what fosters autonomous motivation. Given the association between autonomous motivation and positive outcomes, it is important to understand what conditions foster autonomous motivation. While school has been linked as a possible condition, parents have tremendous influence over their children; thus parents have the power to foster this positive motivation. However more research is needed to confirm these relationships.

Fostering autonomous motivation

To understand how success can be affected by autonomous motivation, one must understand what in fact fosters autonomous motivation. The Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) is a sub-theory of SDT concerning the development of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). CET explains that social contexts influence motivation. Specifically, it proposes that intrinsic motivation is fostered by three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Competence is described as a feeling of being masterful of your behavior and feeling effective and efficient, where as relatedness is described by having meaningful connections to other people (Sheldon & Filak, 2008). Autonomy, as defined by Kenyon and Koerner (2009), is a construct that underlines the independence to make choices, pursue goals and control ones behavior. The three psychological needs are essential to SDT; however most attention has been placed on how autonomous environments can foster autonomous motivation. Thus autonomy supportive environments predict autonomous motivation i.e. intrinsic motivation.

Autonomy supportive environments are those that support choice and interests. Most research has focused on creating autonomous learning environments in school. These learning environments in school consist of four essentials to support students' autonomy: (1) nurture inner motivational resources by providing choice, (2) rely on informational language (as opposed to controlling or manipulative language), (3) communicate value in uninteresting activities along with adding rationales to requests, and (4) acknowledge and accept students' expression of negative affect (Deci, 1995). However, the home environment also plays a central role in shaping motivation patterns, and research has looked at how parenting styles (autonomous versus controlling) influence motivation.

Parenting styles and autonomous motivation

Parents exercise influence on their children's behavior, academics, motivation, work and autonomy (Baumrind, 1971; Kenyon & Koerner, 2009; Ratelle et. al., 2005). Certain parenting styles foster more autonomous motivation; parents operating under the authoritative parenting style influence their children in a more positive way (Baumrind, 1967; Turner et. al, 2009)

Authoritative parents are more likely to grant yes to choices comparatively to authoritarian parental styles (Baumrind, 1971). Authoritative parenting is characterized by encouragement of autonomy and reasoning; authoritarian parenting, on the other hand, directs the decisions of children (Baumrind, 1966). Baumrind's (1971) seminal work looked into patterns of parental authority and the relationship towards their children's behavior. Independence was seen more in children whose parents had more of an authoritative style compared to the others. In daughters, being achievement oriented was also a result of authoritative parental styles rather authoritarian parental styles. Other work by Baumrind (1967) found that the majority of students who were autonomously motivated came from parents with an authoritative style. Turner et. al. (2009) found

that authoritative parenting, compared to authoritarian parenting, was predictive of students' academic performance. Further, it was predictive of positive traits, such as being independent and achievement orientated.

Several resources have supported the notion that parents have an influence over children's autonomous motivation. Parental autonomy support is associated with higher achievement, mediated by the development of autonomous motivation (Strage & Brandt, 1999, Ratelle et al., 2005). Strage and Brandt (1999) indicated that autonomy granting from parents was a predictor of GPA. Ratelle et al. (2005) found several findings. The results showed that perceived parental involvement correlates to their children's autonomy, which predicts persistence. They also found that perceived parental autonomy predicts students' autonomous motivation. Buzukashivly, Kaplan and Katz (2011) showed that parent's involvement to do homework was correlated to a higher perceived competence, which thus was correlated with their children's autonomous motivation to do homework. Several resources have supported the notion that parents have an influence over children's autonomy Joussemet et. al. (2005) discovered that maternal autonomy support was positively related to academic achievement. Kenyon and Keorner (2009) found that parents who had higher expectations in emotional and functional autonomy were more likely to have children with higher levels of autonomous motivation. However, not all the research is consistent. For example, Fulton and Turner (2008) provided evidence that parental warmth instead of autonomy was predictive of GPA.

While there are findings in opposition to the idea that autonomy is a factor in producing success, the majority of studies show that parents can affect success through autonomy granting (Fulton & Turner, 2008). In a study done by Fulton and Turner (2008), participants under the age of 23 were asked to recall parenting practices from their senior year. The measures that were used were the Student's Perception of Control Questionnaire along with Steinberg et al.'s measures, which looked into parental supervision, warmth and autonomy granting. Data suggested perceptions of control to be predictors of GPA.

In conclusion, people who are given more choice and autonomy tend to be more intrinsically motivated persons. Consequentially, certain parental styles can foster autonomous motivation in their offspring. Parents influence autonomy, being autonomous promotes intrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation is directly related to success. Therefore, autonomy supportive parenting styles are predicted to be correlated with success in college. On the contrary other work on parents has provided that perceptions of parents do not change through time; rather, as children age parents have less influence on academic achievement (Strage & Brandt, 1999). However, this is not the case with most research done on parents, though more research is needed to confirm these results.

CURRENT STUDY

The current research addresses the question of how parenting styles relate to students' motivation for attending college and motivation while in college. In addition, it addresses the question of how such motivation relates to success in college. Success is defined as being in the honors program and lack of success is defined as being on academic probation. I hypothesized that students will be more likely to report attending college for autonomous reasons and being autonomously motivated (i.e., seeing college as interesting, valuable) if their parents used a more autonomous parenting style. I also hypothesized that students will be more likely to be in the honors program if they chose to attend college for autonomous reasons and see college as interesting and valuable.

This study is needed to address several gaps in the research. Most research on autonomy and academic achievement has focused on k-12 students instead of college students. More research is needed in this area to see if these constructs are responsible for success in college. The potential benefits of this research are that we

will be able to identify factors related to students' success in college.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample for this study was taken from the population of honors students and students on academic probation at a mountain west university. The directors of the programs, who agreed to participate, sent out the survey anonymously via email. The sample consisted of 101 participants, 49 from the honors program and 52 from academic probation, with no control group. The characteristics of the sample were 23 males and 75 females, of those there were: 73- Caucasian, 9- Latino, 6- African American, 2- others and 9-not reported. Two participant's results had to be thrown out for not completing the entirety of the survey. The characteristics of the sample consist of being at least a sophomore and being in either an honors program or on academic probation. Academic probation consists of having a GPA less than a 2.0 and the honors program is with students whose GPA is a 3.25 or higher. Further, requirements to enter the honors program include an official transcript, a letter of introduction and two letters of recommendations. The participants in this study were all over the age of 18. The Institutional Review Board approved the study. However at the end there is an opportunity for the participants to send their email to the directors to be entered in a raffle.

Materials

The design for this experiment is a survey. The survey had 34 questions on it assessing attitudes toward college and perceptions of parents. The survey is based off of the Self Determination theory and adapts items from two previously validated scales (Ryan, 1982). The first scale is the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory. This scale has five subscales: perceived choice, value and usefulness, pressure/tension, interest/enjoyment and effort/importance. Perceived choice is a construct used to measure participant's autonomous motivation (α= .64). Perceived choice had a low alpha, however dropping an item did not make a significant difference. A sample question form the scale would include, *I believe I had some choice about going to college*. The next construct was value and usefulness, which was measured by how much value participants perceived their college education to be (α= .77). Participants were asked items such as *I believe being in college could be beneficial to me.* The fourth subscale pressure and tension, evaluated if participants felt pressure to succeed in college (α= .73). An example of this subscale would be *I feel pressured to succeed in college.* Interest and enjoyment was used to measure how enjoyable participants found their college experience (α= .90) along with their social life (α= .86). Questions like *I enjoy being in college very much* were included. Effort and importance is the last scale on the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory, this scale measures how much effort students put into either their social life (α= .80) or getting into college (α= .88). Item 2 was dropped because it correlated very weakly with the other items. The questions on this scale involve items like *it was important to me to have a social life.*

The other scale is the Perceptions of Parents scale and includes two subscales. The first subscale is perceptions of parental autonomy, which consists of questions assessing whether parents are perceived as being controlling or supporting autonomy (α= .78). An example of items on this subscale was *my parents/guardians are usually willing to consider things from my point of view*. The second subscale was perceptions of warmth, this subscale evaluated if participants perceive their parents to provide warmth (α= .78). Questions like *In high school my parents/guardians accepted me and liked me how I was* were included.

Students completed the survey online using a five-point Likert scale. The first page consisted of a consent form. They agreed to participate before completing the survey. The survey also included a series of demographic questions: ethnicity, gender, and age. The survey can be found in Appendix 1. Once the surveys are completed they

came back to me with no identification. Each sample population (honors and probation) had a unique link to the survey in order to separate the groups.

Procedure

The director of each department had a list of all the students that meet the criteria then automatically send out the link to the surveys to each participant. Participants were instructed to read the consent form stating that there are no inherent risks in this study, yet at any time they are allowed to drop out of the study. Participants allocated their consent by completing and returning the survey. If consent is agreed participants thus filled out all sections of the survey. Numeric identifiers were used to classify each person and which program they belong to. All the participants were anonymous. To achieve this, the directors of both academic probation and the honors program sent out the surveys to the two sample groups and the data was set up to return to me. Both sample groups had a different link when sending the information back to me. Nowhere in the survey did it request their name or email address to be written down. However at the end there was an opportunity for the participants to send their email to the directors to be entered in a raffle. I did not receive this information.

The dependent variable in this study is academic success in college, which was operationalized as (1) either being on academic probation or in the honors program and (2) expressing positive attitudes toward college. The independent variables are perceived parental warmth and parental autonomy. Perceived choice for attending college is both an independent and dependent variable.

RESULTS

The current research evaluated whether students' prior motivations for attending college and perceptions of parents led students to be more successful in college. Table 1 lists the descriptive statistics for honors versus academic probation students. There was a significant difference across these 2 groups in terms of gender with more females in honors (X^2 (1, N=99)=3.67, p< .05). However, there were no gender differences in terms of any of the outcomes variables, hence we did not control for gender in subsequent analyses. There was also a significant difference in terms of ethnicity between the honors and academic probation groups (X^2 (2, N=99)= 7.68, p< .05). Further, we found that there was a statistically significant difference between ethnicities in terms of perceived choice (F (2)= 3.38, p< .05). Post hoc comparisons found that students in the other categories scored higher than white students. No statistically significant differences were found for any other outcome variables. Consequently, we controlled for ethnicity when examining the relationship between perceived choice and college success but not in the other analyses.

Table 1 also compares students on academic probation with students in the honors program on variables of interest. T-tests for parenting style variables were run to calculate the differences. Significant differences were found on two of the three primary predictors. Students in the honors program report their parents to be higher in warmth than students on academic probation (H, M= 4.37; AP, M=3.89), with the difference being statistically significant (t (97)=-3.03, p< .05). Similarly, the same trend followed when students reported their parents on the construct of autonomy (H, M=3.74; AP, M=3.27), with a significant statistical difference as well (t (97)=-2.72, p< .05).

A marginal difference was indicated between the honors students and the academic probation students when perceived choice was analyzed; however, the difference was not found to be significant, (t (97)=-.724, p< .05). The two groups did not display a significant difference on social life variables; that is, they reported comparable effort and importance and interest and enjoyment.

To further explore these relationships, I used regression analysis to investigate whether perceived choice mediated the relationship between parental warmth and perceptions of the value and usefulness of college (see Table 3). In step one, parental warmth was found to be a

significant predictor (β= .219, p< .05). However, in step two when perceived choice was added, it was no longer significant (β= .164, p< .05). Perceived choice was a significant predictor at step two (β= .230, p< .05). Further, parental warmth and perceived choice are significantly correlated. These findings indicate a mediated relationship as illustrated in Figure 1. That is, parental warmth predicts higher levels of perceived choice in attending college and perceived choice then predicts greater perceptions of value and usefulness of college.

Similarly, a regression analysis was used to investigate whether perceived choice mediated the relationship between parental warmth and perceptions of college student's interest and enjoyment in school (see Table 4). In step one, parental warmth was found to be a significant predictor, yet the trend did not follow in step two when perceived choice was added (β= .220, p< .05). Parental warmth was no longer significant (β= .148, p< .05). Perceived choice was a significant predictor at step two (β= .298, p< .05). As mentioned earlier parental warmth and perceived choice are significantly correlated. Thus, the findings indicate a mediated relationship, illustrated in Figure 2. Furthermore, this means parental warmth predicts higher levels of perceived choice in attending college then perceived choice predicts greater perceptions of interest and enjoyment in school.

To determine if student's perceptions of their parents led them to find their involvement in college more interesting and enjoyable and have more value a regression analysis was conducted. Parental warmth was looked at both a predictor of interest and enjoyment along with value and usefulness, neither were significant. However when perceived choice was added to the regression both interest and enjoyment (β= .30, p< .01) and value and usefulness (β = .23, p< .05) became significant (table 3& 4; figure 1). A regression analysis was also done on parental autonomy and pressure and tension, it was found to be not significant. Again when perceived choice was factored into the regression (β= -.32, p< .01) it became a significant negative correlation (table 5; figure 2).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	Honors Program		Academic Probation	
Gender	68.6% Female		85.1% Female	
Ethnicity	63.5% White; 26.9% Other; 9.6% Not reported		85.1% White; 6.4% Other; 8.5% Not reported	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Perceived Choice	3.93	.80	3.82	.697
Parental Warmth	4.37	.841	3.89	.739
Parental Autonomy	3.74	.880	3.27	.845
Social Life Effort & Importance	3.35	.90	3.20	.714
Social Life Interest and Enjoyment	4.23	.782	4.11	.511

I also used a regression analysis to evaluate if perceived choice was also a mediator variable for parental autonomy and pressure/tension (Table 5). The analysis in step one indicated, parental autonomy was a significant predictor (β = -.211, p< .05). However once perceived

Table 2
Correlation matrix of autonomy, values and perceptions of parents

Variable	Mean	SD	Correlations							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Predictors										
1. Perceived Choice	3.87	.744								
2. Parental Warmth	4.12	.821	.239*							
3. Parental Autonomy Outcomes	3.50	.890	.232*	.514**						
4. Interest & Enjoyment	4.07	.815	.334**	.220*	.124					
5. Value & Usefulness	4.62	.480	.269**	.219*	.067	.471**				
6. Pressure & Tension	3.77	.733	-.358**	-.182	-.256*	-.223*	-.110			
7. Effort & Importance	3.23	1.03	.392**	.193	-.097	.112	.119	0		
8. Social Life-Interest & Enjoyment	4.17	.653	.171	.160	.069	.402**	.318**	-.070	-.023	
9. Social Life-Effort & Importance	3.27	.806	.032	.174	.085	.290**	.147	.059	-.030	.594**

Note: n= 99. Pearson correlations were used. * p<.05; ** p<.01

choice was added in step two parental autonomy was no longer a significant predictor (β = -.151, p< .05). Further, perceived choice was determined to be a significant predictor at step two (β = -.311, p< .05). Perceived choice is significantly correlated with parental autonomy as well. A mediated relationship was found to exist (Figure 3). That is parental warmth also predicts higher levels of perceived choice and perceived choice predicts lower levels of the pressure and tension college students face trying to succeed.

Table 3
Regression analysis predicting value and usefulness

Predictor	B	SE B	β	R^2
Step 1				.048
Perceptions of Parents- Warmth	.128	.058	.219*	
				.098
Step 2				
Perceptions of Parents- Warmth	.096	.058	.164	
Perceived Choice	.148	.064	.230**	

Note: * p<.05; ** p<.01

Table 4
Regression analysis predicting interest and enjoyment

Predictor	B	SE B	β	R^2
Step 1				.048
Perceptions of Parents- Warmth	.218	.098	.220*	
				.132
Step 2				
Perceptions of Parents- Warmth	.147	.097	.148	
Perceived Choice	.327	.107	.298**	

Note: * p<.05; ** p<.01

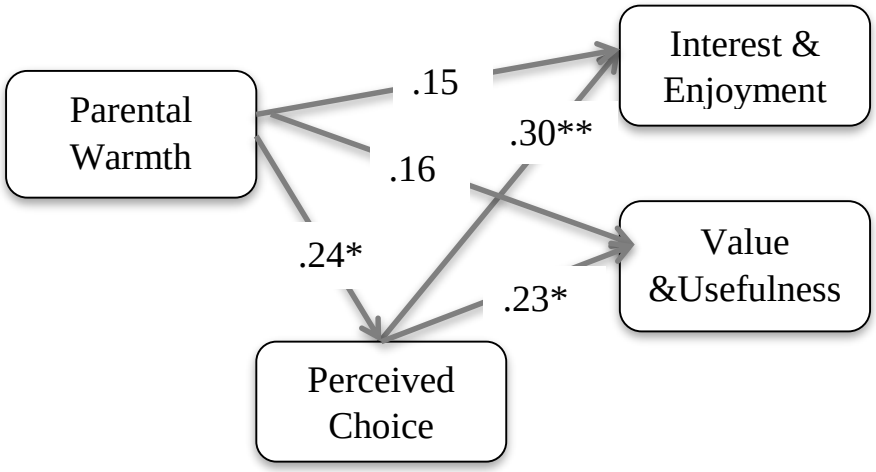

Figure 1. Regression Analysis predicting interest/enjoyment and value/usefulness

Table 5
Regression analysis predicting pressure and tension

Predictor	B	SE B	β	R^2
Step 1				.065
Perceptions of Parents- Autonomy	-.211	-.256	.011*	
				.160
Step 2				
Perceptions of Patents- Autonomy	-.151	-.183	.060	
Perceived Choice	-.311	-.315	.001*	

Note: * p<.05; ** p<.01

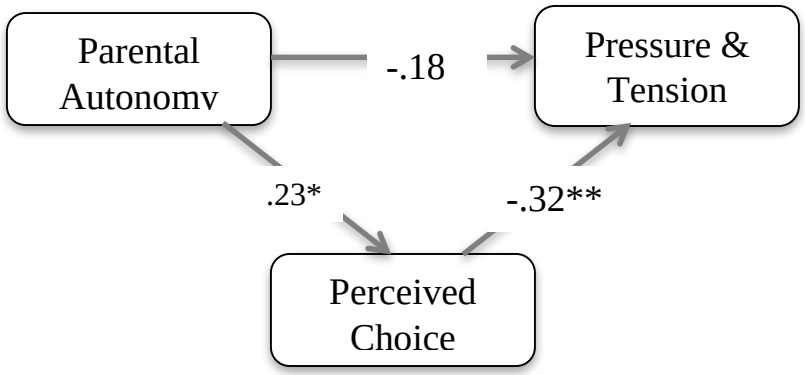

Figure 2. Regression analysis predicting pressure and tension

DISCUSSION

The goal of the current research was to explore if college students prior motivations and perceptions of parents predicted them to be more successful in college. The findings in the current study support the hypothesis by suggesting that students who choose to attend college for more autonomous reasons did better. The findings also indicate that students who report choosing college for autonomous reasons had perceived their parents to foster their autonomy. These results are consistent with previous research (Yi-Guang, McKeachie & Yung Che, 2003; Kahoe & McFarland, 1975; Miserandino, 1996; Kahoe & McFarland, 1975).

Similar to other research (Yi-Guang, McKeachie & Yung Che, 2000; Kahoe & McFarland, 1975), the current study suggests that people who are more autonomous tend to do better in college. Students in the honors program reported higher levels than academic probation students on autonomy (variable: perceived choice). Furthermore higher achieving students also report choosing to attend college for more autonomous reasons. As Miserandino (1996) found, the data from the current study imply these students evaluated their reasons to be more internally motivated. Thus the data indicate that the more autonomous reasons for attending college the better students will do in college.

Additionally, once in college higher achieving students report having less pressure and tension to succeed and find the experience to be more valuable and useful. These results might be attributed to the different types of pressures students face. Students on academic probation may face pressures due to failing out of school. While honors students do not face the pressure of getting kicked out of school, they may feel pressure from getting kicked out of honors

program and maintaining their high status. This finding is supported by previous researchers such as Yi-Guang, McKeachie and Yung Che (2000). We found that students who have more of autonomous motivation rather controlling have less test anxiety. The more autonomous the reason for attending college, the more effort students put forth; this was evident when looking at the scores of the honors students on the effort and importance subscale. Additionally, honors students may be more autonomously motivated due to the type of courses they take. To be a participant in the honors program, students must take at least four honors courses and complete an in depth senior project. Previous researchers' (Kahoe & McFarland, 1975) findings suggest people who are autonomously motivated are more likely to do better in challenging courses.

Our results confirm the claim that students who perceive their parents to have fostered their autonomy and granted them warmth were involved in the honors program. This is in agreement with a vast amount of research that concludes perceptions of parents predict achievement (Baumrind, 1971; Joussemet et. al., 2005). Parental styles, especially authoritative parenting styles, are associated with students being more successful in college (Baumrind, 1971).

Limitations

While the hypothesis was confirmed, the study had several limitations. Classification of participants was considered a limitation, for example students can be classified as academic probation from failing one class. Furthermore, students who were early in their academic career, and have not adjusted to the college environment, may be categorized as an academic probation student. However not all students who succeed are represented by the honors program, thus a more diverse population was not achieved. Additionally, no average (B or C) students were represented in the sample.

Another limitation of the study was the institution. Also, a majority of the population at the college was Caucasian so the sample was represented more by this ethnicity. Different ethnicities were not represented enough to see if a main change would occur between different demographics.

The last limitation of the study was the study was based around the students' point of view. A parent who may have fostered autonomy in their children, yet the child did not report it is lacking a new perspective. The child's point of view may also be skewed, since the time lapse from high school to the survey may have distorted the true relationship the students had with their parents. However, to fix this limitation it conflicts with the limitation of classification.

Directions for Future Research

For future research the nature of the sample could be altered, such as sampling different groups on the GPA scale. Also, a change in results might come from replicating the research at a highly selective college. Students at this type of institution have higher credentials to get in and possibly harder to stay in. So the question becomes why do students fail out of those institutions? Is it due to motivation or the difficulty of the program? Highly selective and more open enrollment colleges have different populations that may need to be explored more.

A long-term study would also help to eliminate the limitations of the current study. Evaluating students' motivations and perceptions of parents while in high school, and then measuring students' motivations, perceptions of parents and academic achievement may lead to different results. However, the current study shows the perceptions of parents do matter and reasons for attending college influence how successful students will be in college.

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APPENDIX 1.

Likert Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 (SA-SD)

Interest/ Enjoyment

1. I enjoy being in college very much
2. I think being in college is quite enjoyable
3. I think being in college is boring
4. While I am in college, I think about how much I enjoy being here
5. I enjoy having a social life very much
6. I think that having a social life is quite enjoyable
7. I think having a social life is boring
8. While I participate in a social life, I think about how much I enjoy doing it

Perceived Choice

1. I believe I had some choice about going to college
2. I felt it was not my own choice to go to college (R)
3. I went to college because I wanted to
4. I didn't really have a choice about going to college (R)

Value/ Usefulness

1. I think that being in college is useful for my future
2. I think being in college is an important activity
3. I believe being in college could be of some value to me
4. I believe being in college could be beneficial to me

Pressure/ Tension

1. I feel very tense about succeeding in college
2. I am anxious while trying to succeed in college
3. I feel pressured to succeed in college
4. I am very relaxed while trying to succeed in college

Effort/ Importance

1. I didn't try very hard to get into college
2. It was important to me to get into college
3. I didn't put much energy into getting into college
4. I tried very hard at getting into college
5. I didn't try very hard to have a social life
6. It was important to me to have a social life
7. I didn't put much energy into having a social life
8. I tried very hard to have a social life

Perceptions of Parents

1. In high school my parents/guardian told me how to run my life (R-A)
2. In high school my parents/guardian accepted me and liked me how I was (W)
3. In high school my parents/guardian made me feel very special (W)
4. My parents/guardian are disapproving and un-accepting of me (R-W)
5. In high school my parents/guardian insist upon my doing things their way (R-A)
6. My parents/guardian are usually willing to consider things from my point of view (A)