A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE PARENTING ON THE ADJUSTMENT OF FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The first year of university studies is usually accompanied by many new experiences, often stressful, and family members fulfil a significant role in helping to reduce students' stress and facilitate their adjustment. Research has indicated that the overall first year experience sets the tone for the subsequent well-being of students both academically and personally, and if this is negative then the university dropout rates are likely to remain high. This study seeks to determine the effects of family structure and parental autonomy-support on students' adjustment during the first year of university. The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design. Participants were selected by means of convenient sampling, and only consisted of first year university students between the ages of 18 and 25 years who were registered at the University of the Western Cape. Data was collected via an online survey consisting of three self-reported questionnaires, namely the perceived parental autonomy-support scale, the college adaptation questionnaire, and also demographic information. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Participants' right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity was observed throughout the study. The results suggest that students from two-parent families are better adjusted than students from one-parent families. Furthermore, results of the total sample suggest a significant relationship between good adjustment and autonomy-supportive parenting, while a significant negative relationship exists between poor adjustment and autonomy-supportive parenting. When determining the separate results for two-parent families and one-parent families, it was established from the regression analysis that good adjustment was only predicted by mother autonomy-support in two-parent families, accounting for 7% of the variance. Poor adjustment in two-parent families was negatively predicted by mother and father autonomy-support, and was accounted for by 11% of variance. In one-parent families, neither good nor poor adjustment was predicted by parenting behaviours.

Keywords: University students; first year students; university adjustment; family structure; parenting; parent–child relationship; autonomy-supportive parenting; emerging adults; self-determination theory

ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA   Analysis of variance

CAQ   College adaptation questionnaire

ECP   Extended curriculum programme

P-PASS   Perceived parental autonomy-support scale

SDT   Self-determination theory

SPSS   Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

US   United States of America

UWC   University of the Western Cape

DECLARATION

I, Verushka Daniels, hereby declare that *The effects of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting on the adjustment of first year university students,* is my own original work, and that I have not previously, in its entirety, or in part, submitted it for any degree or examination at any other university. All the sources used in this thesis have been acknowledged in text and in the reference list.

Full name: Verushka Daniels

Signed: Date: January 2017

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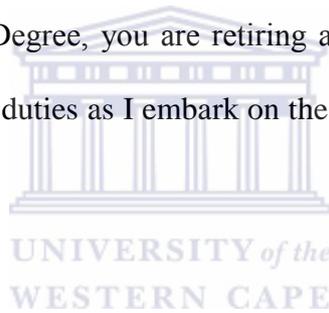
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND JOURNAL ARTICLE

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

With the increased need for graduates in the workforce, a larger focus has been given to higher education globally (Mudhovodzi, 2011). This need has resulted in increased access for previously disadvantaged students to enter universities (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007), but because the communities from which they come are still impoverished, these students often find it difficult to adjust to the new environment (Bojuwoye, 2002). Adjusting to university involves a process of change in which students' psychological and behavioural aspects are evaluated in order to establish an identity as university student (Quan, Zhen, Yao & Zhou, 2014). Parker et al. (2006) reported that students who enter university will be faced with many stressful experiences which is characteristic of the transitioning process from high school to university. Currently, the responsibility rests heavily upon the higher education institutions to create an environment in which first year students will adjust swiftly and feel supported (Sommer & Dumont, 2011; Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). However, Sharma (2012) reported that the difficulty of adjusting to university is as a result of the disjuncture between students' expectations of how university will be, versus the reality of how it is. The very first experience of the student's university adjustment sets the tone for their subsequent mental health state and academic performance (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Bojuwoye, 2002). Dyson and Renk (2006) conducted a study in which they explored the relationship between stress, coping, and depressive symptoms among university students in the adjustment phase, and their results indicated that a crucial factor which was neglected was the variable of parenting on the adjustment of first year students. Furthermore, they concluded that the preparation prior to university is a responsibility which should be taken up by family members and more

specifically parents, although this is the one component which has not yet been included as a focus area in the South African higher education redress policy (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007).

A South African study conducted by Sommer and Dumont (2011) focussed on the influence of psychosocial factors on the prediction of academic performance. They found that academic performance is related to the measure of adjustment to university, and highlighted that students who are comfortable with asking for help would adjust better to university, and this in turn would assist academic performance. Academic performance during the first year of studies has been predicted by the Grade 12 aggregate which students obtained, Although this has been a highly reliable predictor (Lourens & Smit, 2003), there remains the question of the effect of non-academic factors such as psychosocial issues which manifest in poor adjustment and which may lead to explaining first year dropout or failure rate in the South African context.

In South Africa, the university dropout rates differ significantly among racial groups with the retention rate of white students being much higher than that of non-white students (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010). From these statistics, it is apparent that the high dropout rate of non-white students is not solely the result of financial problems, since the universities offer financial assistance. The other components of adjusting to university life are as problematic (Sommer & Dumont, 2011). Since most first year students enter university directly after completing Grade 12, their inability to deal with first year adjustment challenges could be understood based on their high school background as there may possibly be a similar pattern of psychosocial problems displayed at high school where the teachers fulfilled a role beyond their professional scope to assist such students. Thus, amidst those challenges they succeed in university (Modisaotsile, 2012). Many students are not fully equipped on a psychosocial level, and their support base which is vital – especially in the first year of studies – is either

non-existent, or is unable to lend support during these first years (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). This is especially the case with first generation students entering university studies, where the family members have little understanding of the requirements of university, which limits the type of support such first years receive from their family (Nichols & Islas, 2015).

The traditional family structure consists of two biological parents in a married relationship, as well as other forms of families such as one-mother or father-only families, two biological non-residing-parent families, and step-parent families, which have been known as "alternative families" (Sun & Li, 2011). Various studies have emerged, focussing on the importance of family structure among children and this can be extended into young adulthood (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Deleire & Kalil, 2002; Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006; Nichols & Islas, 2015). Differences in family structure is more consistently linked with a person's behavioural outcomes than it is with achievement (Magnuson & Berger, 2009) and therefore an understanding of students' family context may provide insight into their adjustment to university. Furthermore, family structure affects social capital, which in turn affects students' access to and successful completion of study courses, especially in demanding fields such as the medical sciences. The parents' educational level influences the type of support they can offer to their children during their first year of university studies, which is directly linked to their parenting style (Nichols & Islas, 2015).

Magnuson and Berger (2009) found that adolescents from one- and two-parent families had differences in school achievement. Whether the two-parent family consisted of non-disrupted biological parents or step-parents, it was the number of parents which was significant in the findings. Children in multigenerational families (one parent co-residing with grandparents) with a single mother, are overall better off than children from only one-mother families; children from one-father families did not show much difference in terms of educational

achievement compared to married two-parent families (Deleire & Kalil, 2002). Children from absent-father families are more likely than others to be expelled from school and engage in troublesome activities, and they are at increased risk for anxiety and depression (Carlson, 2006). Because children in one-parent families have less parental observation owing to a number of factors such as a parent working longer hours to stretch the income, such children are most likely seen to be more at risk than their two-parent family counterparts – especially in the case of single mothers being compared to married mothers (Magnuson & Berger, 2009). Children who are raised in one-parent families are required to be more responsible and independent than in two-parent families since there is much more pressure on the parenting role of a single parent (Davids & Roman, 2013). When such students enter university, the effects of such responsibility during the first year of studies are varied, and increased stress levels, doubtfulness, fear, low self-esteem and depression are all indicative of this (Quan et al., 2014).
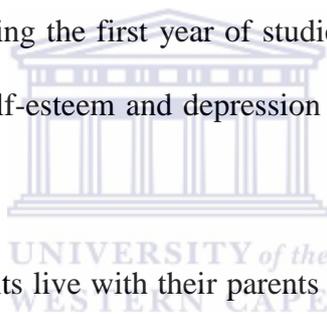
In South Africa, most young adults live with their parents and are still financially dependent (Roman, Human, & Hiss, 2012), so they may be accustomed to having parental influence when they are facing challenges since the parents are likely to notice their well-being at home. When these young adults are maladjusted in their first year of studies, they need to have a strong sense of self-awareness in order for them to identify their university-related challenges and then trust their parents enough to mention these difficulties to them. In a Canadian study by Wintre and Yaffe (2000), the results indicated that female students experienced the interest shown by their parents in their studies through frequent discussions on their overall university experience, as the most valuable characteristic of such parent-child relationships. One quality within a healthy parent–child relationship is the appreciation of individuality and acknowledging each other's differences, also referred to as autonomy (Joussemet et al., 2008). Autonomy is a quality of the parent–child relationship which may

have a positive effect on the child's adjustment to university (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000), and when parents allow their child to develop their own self-awareness, it can be assumed that such a child has been given more autonomy than those who display less self-awareness. The concept of parental autonomy-support proposes that adolescents' sense of belonging will be greater if they believe that their parents trust them enough to act autonomously and responsibly when their parents are not present (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2009; Soenens et al., 2007).

Students who feel a greater sense of connectedness will adjust better to university; parental autonomy-support results in a more positive sense of relatedness (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Luyckx, Goossens, Beyers, & Ryan, 2007). At university, the criterion for social connectedness or popularity is often characterised by students' dress code, socio-economic status and interpersonal skills. If students are from poorer backgrounds they do not, for instance, dress in high fashion, and although they may be excellent academically, if their peers do not regard them highly in social terms, they may feel excluded and often struggle to adjust (Mudhovozi, 2012). Children who are raised by autonomy-supportive parents have good well-being and are well-adjusted (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Grolnick, 2003) because their parents have raised them with a greater sense of self-awareness which increases their confidence in who they are as individuals. In a study by Rodriguez (2003), it was found that first generation students' successful adjustment to university was accompanied by the strong belief their family held in them, and the affirmation received while attempting to improve their lives through university studies. Parents who are autonomy-supportive express unconditional encouragement towards their children and display a sense of trust in their child's ability to take responsibility for themselves, and assume that their children will adjust well on their own at university.

5

Adolescents who are parented in a highly autonomy-supportive manner are more likely to adjust better to a new environment, and they are willing to ask for help when in need because they take ownership for their behaviour (Soenens et al., 2007; Mageau et al., 2015). Research regarding students in higher education indicates that perceived parental autonomy-support serves as an important contributor to adjustment (Joussemet, Landry, & Koestner, 2008) and therefore it becomes important to examine the effect of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting on the adjustment of first year university students.

1.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory of human motivation and its main focus centres around people's personal growth and development. It is a macro theory and one of its sub-theories focusses on humans' basic psychological needs and how these are satisfied or frustrated (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2008). There are three basic psychological needs which this theory deems necessary for the well-being of people, namely competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Competence refers to people's feeling of confidence to manage the requirements of their environment, while relatedness is concerned with people's connectedness with others (Ryan & Deci, 2008). Autonomy refers to people's ability to initiate their own choices (Ryan & Deci, 2008; Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). People who are highly motivated have their three needs satisfied and this results in overall positive well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The opposite is also true, that when people do not function optimally their motivation is low because their need to relate to others, feelings of competence, and their sense of autonomy is either limited or non-existent. The social environment in which these basic psychological needs are either satisfied or frustrated is vital and one such environment is the family context (Joussemet et al., 2008). Within the family environment, parents' behaviour create conditions that may either enhance their children's

autonomy or suppress it through the way in which they engage with their children (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). In view of parenting, SDT proposes two parenting behaviours namely (i) psychological control and (ii) autonomy-support (Joussemet et al., 2008). Psychological control refers to parents' use of blame and guilt as a technique to control their children mentally, and it is different to behavioural control in which parents set guidelines for acceptable behaviour and evaluates the child based on these expectations (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2009; Joussemet et al., 2008). Parents who are psychologically controlling often interfere in their children's decision-making process (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009). In contrast to this, autonomy-supportive parents develop autonomy and freedom of choice in their children and this enhances their feelings of competence (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). Additionally, because they encourage their children to be independent and have a strong sense of self-awareness (Grolnick, Price, Beiswenger, & Sauck, 2007; Soenens et al., 2007) such parents display trust in the university student's ability to adapt successfully to the new environment. Overall, autonomy-supportive parenting has positively affected children's well-being which resulted in improved adjustment at various ages (Joussemet et al., 2005; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013; Griffith & Grolnick, 2014; Marbell & Grolnick, 2012).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The South African first year university dropout rate is averaged at 50% (Letseka & Maile, 2008) and the student experience during the transition from high school into university has a great influence on students' perseverance. Obtaining a tertiary education requires much time, effort and other resources, and if students do not adjust adequately, they may fail to graduate and enter the job market – which affects their future life circumstances (Sharma, 2012; Lourens & Smit, 2003). Many first year students in South Africa come from poor communities (Bojuwoye, 2002) and they often find it difficult to cope with the demands of

the new university environment because of the vast difference in responsibility between high school and university (Sharma, 2012). Consequently, students experience increased stress levels, doubtfulness, fear, low self-esteem and depression (Quan et al., 2014). Having consideration for the households from which the majority of South African students come, as well as considering the challenges their communities face, allows greater insight into a contextual understanding of why these first year students do not cope well in a new environment (Modisaotsile, 2012). The reality is that although more students are allowed physical access into universities, they are not fully equipped for the adjustment to university since the families from which they come are mostly unaware of the impact of university on these students. Their families are therefore unable to support them adequately (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). Family life within the South African context is varied, but most children are raised in single mother-headed households (Roman, 2011). Research shows a difference between students who are raised in one-parent families and those from two-parent families, mainly because of the pressured role of a single parent (Magnuson & Berger, 2009; Deleire & Kalil, 2002). The pressure and other stressors within the home environment affect the parent–child relationship (Fuller-Iglesias, Webster, & Antonucci, 2015). Once these children attend university, their adjustment is facilitated by their ability to form meaningful relationships, which is affected by the parenting behaviour they were exposed to, despite the number of parents present (Fuller-Iglesias, Webster, & Antonucci, 2015). One type of parenting behaviour based on SDT is autonomy-supportive parenting (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy-supportive parenting has been shown to have positive outcomes on child behaviour for both internal and external behaviour (Soenens, Vansteenkiste & Sierens, 2009) and it results in child well-being and good adjustment (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Grolnick, 2003). Various studies on university adjustment experiences of first year students indicate that the role of parents and the family remains an overlooked factor in facilitating students' adjustment to university

8

(Dyson & Renk, 2006). Therefore the current study examines the role of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting on first year students' adjustment to university.

1.4   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the family structure among first year university students?
2. What is the prevalence of perceived parental autonomy-support and university adjustment among first year students?
3. Is there a significant difference between perceived parental autonomy-support and university adjustment of students from one- and two-parent families?

4. What are the effects of family structure and perceived parental autonomy-support on the university adjustment of first year students?

1.5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

AIM

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of family structure and perceived parental autonomy-support on the adjustment of first year students to university.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- Determine the family structure of first year university students.

- Assess the prevalence of the perception of parental autonomy-support.

- Assess first year students' adjustment to university.

- Compare the perception of parental autonomy-support and university adjustment of first year students raised in one and two parent families.

- Determine the effects of family structure and perceptions of parental autonomy-support on university adjustment of first year students.

1.6   HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses for the current study are:

Hypothesis 1: University adjustment is significantly different for students from one- and two-parent families.

Hypothesis 2: Students who perceive their parents as autonomy-supportive will have improved adjustment to university.

Hypothesis 3: Family structure and perceived parental autonomy-support affect the adjustment of first year students.

1.7   METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research methodology with a cross-sectional design was employed to establish the effects of family structure and parental autonomy-support on the adjustment of first year university students. Quantitative measures are used when the question is concerned with a quantifiable aspect of the phenomena (Green & Browne, 2008) by recording numerical data. This study therefore not only quantified the variables but also tested the hypotheses to test the relationship between the variables.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings in this study will contribute information regarding the influence that parents' behaviour has towards their children, on the children's overall well-being. This may be incorporated into parenting interventions to develop more positive parenting behaviours. This would not only benefit the family but also impact on the broader society. Furthermore, an understanding of the different effects which family structure has on the emerging adult at university may allow students to gain more self-awareness. This self-awareness could enable them to put relevant support measures in place to ensure their well-being on campus. This study also informs student affairs practitioners regarding their support initiatives for first year students, and it allows them to enhance existing programmes.

1.9 DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

University adjustment: The extent to which students are able to meet the demands of university life (Feldt, Graham, & Dew, 2011).

First year students: Students enrolled at a university during the first year of entering university studies.

Emerging adults: People ranging between the biological ages of 18 to 25 years, not yet fully responsible and partially dependent on parents (Arnett, 2000).

Family structure: The form of the family, whether the household is headed by one or two parents, and number of responsible adults living together with their children, with parental duties towards a dependent child (White & Klein, 2008).

Parenting: The activity in which a person or persons assume the role of rearing a child (Selin, 2014).

Self-determination theory (SDT): A theory of motivation and personality development which views all humans as having three basic needs in order to maintain overall well-being. These three needs are competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Autonomy-supportive parenting: A parenting style which is based on the self-determination theory in which parents are supportive, display warmth towards their children, and encourage them to act from an internally regulated belief system (Soenens, Vansteenkiste et al., 2007).

1.10   STRUCTURE OF THESIS

Chapter 1 is the introduction to the study on the effects of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting on the adjustment of first year university students. It provides an overview of the full thesis, describing the aims and objectives, stating the problem and also giving a background to the study. The chapter briefly introduces the theory on which the study is formulated, the research methods applied and it ends with the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 is the conceptual framework of this study. It provides an overview of the existing literature on the different concepts being studied, and the three main concepts which it focusses on are the structure of the family, whether it is a one-parent or two-parent family, autonomy-supportive parenting practices, in relation to university adjustment. The theoretical frame of these concepts is guided by the SDT of basic psychological needs. The different matters related to these main concepts are also discussed and the chapter concludes with a summary which reflects what exists in the literature regarding how these three concepts connect to each other.

Chapter 3 is an overview of the research methodology which framed the design of the study. An in-depth description of the quantitative methods which were used is discussed, alongside the data collection procedures, sampling, validity and reliability of the instruments used, feedback on the pilot study, procedures on the main study and the data analyses which were used. This chapter also provides the ethical considerations for this study.

Chapter 4 is a journal article based on this study, which was submitted to the British Journal of Educational Psychology.

Chapter 5 is the broader discussion of the study results reported in the journal article presented in the previous chapter. It also provides the limitations and further recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the theoretical premise of the SDT which serves as a foundation from which university adjustment, autonomy-supportive parenting, and family structure is understood for this study. The specific area of the SDT which will be used to underpin this study is the basic psychological needs meta-theory. Furthermore, this chapter provides insight into some of the research that has been conducted on family structure, parenting and university adjustment in both an international and a South African context. The first concept discussed in this chapter is emerging adulthood, which includes persons between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Then tertiary education at university is discussed, with specific focus on students' adjustment to university, especially during the first year of entering tertiary studies. Another focus is the notion of family structure, referring to either one- or two-parent households. Parenting styles are also conceptualised with specific focus on autonomy-supportive parenting.

2.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

SDT was developed during the early 1970s and is based on a positive approach to human motivation (Sheldon & Ryan, 2011). It views people as inherently good-willed, and able to learn from their specific cultures and to contribute positively to the lives of others (Sheldon & Ryan, 2011). SDT is a theory of human motivation that views human behaviour and personality as innate characteristics with which people are born (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These characteristics can either be enhanced or diminished by the social contexts in which people function (Ryan & Deci, 2000).   SDT is interested in understanding how autonomy is

developed, how the inherent traits of a person as well as the social environment contribute to the development of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2008). It can be related to other attachment theories which posit that humans are born with the motivation to adapt to their environment and be socially acceptable (Joussemet et al., 2008). There are three basic psychological needs in the view of SDT, which if not satisfied, lead to lowered motivation in people, and their natural inclination for growth is slowed (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The satisfaction of the three basic needs of SDT, namely competence, relatedness, and autonomy, is relevant to all cultures; it varies in various cultures simply by the form it takes (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Social environments which support the fulfilment of these three basic needs will improve people's levels of motivation, performance, and growth (Deci, Vallerand et al., 1991). Developing self-determination as an aid for educational success has been significant, particularly in the development of creativity, cognitive functioning and building self-esteem (Deci, Vallerand et al., 1991) which is also needed as students attempt to settle into university. For many years personality was considered the most important influence on a person's feeling of well-being, but recent research has highlighted the important contributions of the social environments in which one functions, such as family contexts (Lee & Yoo, 2015).

The family environment in which children are raised holds an important contribution to the development of self-determination in children, which is crucial for their entire lifespan. SDT focusses on the social contexts in which people function, and their motivation is understood in terms of the background of their social environments (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT posits that a warm and supportive environment will enhance people's positive development, whereas a hostile and cold environment could result in pressurised feelings. Psychological controlling environments aim to develop people's thinking and behaviours in a forceful and limiting way, whereas environments which are autonomy-supportive tend to encourage people's sense of choice and exert less pressure (Deci & Ryan, 2006). The family relationship

15

is a good study subject for well-being because in crisis times, family is the unit to which people turn more instinctively than non-family groups (Fuller-Iglesias, Webster, & Antonucci, 2015). Furthermore, family support may serve as a protective factor for mental health during later adulthood as much as during childhood (Fuller-Iglesias et al., 2015) and the closeness between family members supports the need for relatedness, which enhances well-being. Such relatedness is mainly developed in the parent–child relationship, and parents have a difficult task to fulfil in raising children with norms and values which are acceptable in society, while also encouraging children to develop their own sense of identity and being (Joussemet, Landry, & Koestner, 2008).

When the social environment which parents create is warm and genuine towards children, they are more likely to internalise parental wishes and thus somehow adopt these wishes as their own (Joussemet et al., 2008). If the environment is harsh and dictating, children may find less pleasure in accepting parental guidance and their motivation for engagement is forced. Autonomy is the central core of SDT and it should be clearly understood as self-directed choices instead of mere independence or permissiveness (Joussemet et al., 2008; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Sierens, 2009; Grolnick & Poemrantz, 2009). Autonomy-supportiveness is one of the three essentials for optimal parenting based on SDT, and the other two conditions are involvement in terms of time invested in children, and structure, which refers to boundaries and rules (Joussemet et al., 2008). Autonomy-supportive parenting creates better chances for kids to internalize the cultural values and perspectives, especially in the case when students travel and stay away from home to attend university then such parents can have assurance that their children will behave and function well because the good values are internalized as their own (Joussemet et al., 2008; Grolnick et al., 2007).

A study by Weinstein and Ryan (2010) indicated that people who helped others out of their own inherent desire to do so, experienced a greater sense of personal autonomy, felt

competent, and because they were able to relate to others in good doing they had better overall well-being (Sheldon & Ryan, 2011). Parental autonomy-support is positively linked to good school adjustment (Joussemet et al., 2008).

2.3   EMERGING ADULTHOOD

The typical age of students attending university usually begins at 18 years old. Given the average basic duration of a degree course as four years, students' ages can range between 18 and 25 years. This developmental phase is termed by Arnett (2000) as "emerging adulthood". During this life phase, youth are not so dependent on their parents, but they have also not taken up the responsibilities of adulthood. They are in a transitioning period between adolescence and adulthood; hence the emphasis is placed on their emergence into the adulthood phase (Arnett, 2000).

During this life phase, it is characteristic for people to explore more than in any other phase and they have a wider choice, in terms of where they want to reside, whether with or apart from parents, and whether to continue their studies or rather find employment straight after school completion. Romantic relationships are more flexible and negotiated extensively, and the anticipations of marriage and parenthood are not deemed necessary during this stage of life (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, Ramos, & Jensen, 2001; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Ravert, Kim, Weisskirch, Williams, Bersamin, & Finley, 2009). The characteristically tense parent–child relationship which is present during the teens and adolescent years usually improves during the emerging adulthood phase. It is also during this phase before marriage and starting their own families, that the dynamics of the parent–child relationship change for the emerging adult as they embrace young adulthood (Bynner, 2005). Parenting during the emerging adulthood stage is somewhat precarious, as it requires parents to "nurture the young person's increasing independence and autonomy while still providing guidance and support"

17

(Schwartz et al., 2009, p. 737) and the relationship with parents is crucial during this phase as a solid foundation for other significant relationships (Guarnieri, Smorti, & Tani, 2015).

Because emerging adults are at a stage where they are not expected to be fully responsible for every area of their lives, they enter university with the notion of leaving most responsibility to parents or adult figures (Schwartz et al., 2009) and this is why adjusting to university may also initially be experienced as a challenge; their level of responsibility is not yet fully developed. At university these emerging adults have to own the responsibility of university life, and they are often not prepared for this before they arrive on campus.

2.4   UNIVERSITY ADJUSTMENT

While noting the increased responsibility placed upon emerging adults at university, it should also be considered that there is a vast difference between secondary and tertiary education. This change between high school and university is often experienced as a big shock to first year students (Sharma, 2012) as high school does not prepare students adequately for the university experience (Mudhovozi, 2012). One of the contributing factors to the high stress levels experienced by first year students in South Africa is the financial challenge of being short of funds to pay the annual tuition fees. This stress is especially prevalent among the socially disadvantaged groups of students (Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010) as well as the change in learning climate which is more independent than at high school (Parker et al., 2006; Thurbor & Walton, 2012; Cross, Shalem, Backhouse, & Adam, 2009). When these students eventually enter university, they are at a greater disadvantage than students from better socio-economic backgrounds. It is therefore reckoned that students who achieve educational success despite these circumstances have a strong sense of resiliency (Dass-Brailsford, 2005).

2.4.1   University adjustment challenges

Adjusting to a new environment, its rules and new ways, and having to make friends, are only some of the tasks associated with the first year of university; students have mixed reactions to this new university environment (Larose & Bernier, 2001; Thurbor & Walton, 2012). The first year of university is known for being the most stressful year of the undergraduate's career (Parker et al., 2006; Dyson & Renk, 2006; Boyuwoye, 2002). It is common for people to experience stress in situations that have importance for them. University holds much meaning for the students, and they feel the need to succeed there (Boyuwoye, 2002).

First year students are dealing with physiological as well as psychological changes from adolescence into young adulthood (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Katz & Somers, 2015) and some of the initial changes which are overwhelming are finances, social matching, and being away from home (Boyuwoye, 2002). In the United States (US) , about 7% of students experience a deep level of homesickness which leads to anxiety and depression (Thurbor & Walton, 2012). Aside from simply adapting to the new university environment, it should be noted that the culture which is created at an institution gives rise to a new community of practice, and this is all new for the incoming first year student (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). It is only when students are able to detach from their previous communities of family and friends and take on the new institutional culture that they feel more engaged at university. This integration allows them to cope better during the transitioning phase (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000). The opposite of this is also true, in that when students fail to engage well with the new university community and withdraw themselves, this may be an indication of poor personal adjustment (Larose & Bernier, 2001).

The reality for many South African students is that the basic needs of their campus life are not attended to (such as money for food, clothes, accommodation) and this is threatening to their incorporation into campus life (Boyuwoye, 2002) which, in addition to the overall

challenges of first year, may lower their self-confidence further. Students in South Africa face the reality of poverty and when they enter university, the financial burden places added stress on their adjustment experience (Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010). Financial guidance is one of the functions which parents of emerging adults play during the university years (Serido, Shim, Mishra, & Tang, 2010) and owing to the large cohort of students who are from poor households where the family struggles to survive with their basic income, the financial planning aspect is often missing for these students. For those who manage to secure financial assistance via bursaries or student loans, the management of these funds may be even more stressful than before, with the added burden of not knowing how to manage their finances. This becomes another challenge to adjusting during the first year of university.

2.4.2   Suggestions to improve adjustment

Peers helping each other on campus can be a good method of dealing with adjustment issues; people who have enriched interpersonal relationships do not experience as much distress since they are able to share their concerns with others (Katz & Somers, 2015). The activities conducted during the orientation and welcome period – such as extending the duration of the orientation programme – ensure that students are familiar with the physical surroundings, and have socially inclusive recreational activities. This is important as it sets the foundation for the first years on the campus (Mudhovozi, 2012; Katz & Somers, 2015).

Families who cope well in general will serve as a support to students' coping, and students who are raised to have self-compassion will manage university challenges better (Thurbor & Walton, 2012). Because students, especially those from poorer schooling backgrounds, are often not prepared by teachers or family members for the shift from secondary school to university, they do not know what will be expected of them at university level, They then feel the challenges of adjustment more intensely (Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010; Cross et al., 2009). This finding by Pillay and Ngcobo (2010) highlights the important role which family members

play in preparation for students' university careers, since there are many challenges which may arise particularly during the first year of university. When such crises occur, its effects and approach to the situation could be better understood within the broader family context which may serve as a unit of intervention (Myer, Williams, Haley, Brownfield, McNicols & Pribozie, 2014; Patel et al., 2007).

2.5   FAMILY STRUCTURE

For many years, personality was considered to be the most important influence on a person's feelings of well-being, but recent research has highlighted the important contribution of the social environments in which one lives, namely family and school (Lee & Yoo, 2015). The majority of children will at some point in their childhood experience change in their family structure, and they will not necessarily live in households with two biological parents present (Magnuson & Berger, 2009; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007). Parents in two-biological-parent households are able to provide more time for parent–child activities than are single or social (step-parent or cohabiting non-biological) parents, due to the various demands of fulfilling multiple roles simultaneously and feeling burnt out (Magnuson & Berger, 2009; Nixon, Greene, & Hogan, 2015).

In the US, there is an increasing shift in the traditional family form to other types of families such as step-parent or extended families (Sun & Li, 2011). This is also the case in Sub-Saharan Africa, where such families have the added burden of poor socio-economic circumstances and poverty (Dintwa, 2010). There are also various reasons why children live in households headed by adults other than their biological parents (King, Stamps, & Hawkins, 2010). These reasons include imprisonment, mental illness, abuse, and parents' economic inability to see to their kids. The outcomes of step-parent families can be positively compared to those of two-biological-parent families, if in both family forms the parents provide a high

21

level of stability and warmth for the children (Sun & Li, 2011). The warmth in a home environment acts as a buffer to children (Lamb, 2012). Although there is extensive evidence which states that disruptions or changes within the family structure have negative outcomes for children, another important factor to consider is the way in which the family functions and the availability of the two essential resources of time and financial support which parents provide to their offspring (Carlson, 2006; Sun & Li, 2011).

2.5.1 Differences of family types

Some of the main reasons for the difference between outcomes for one- and two-parent households is the resource deficit resulting from limited time, energy, and finances which exists across different family types (Deleire & Kalil, 2002; Nixon et al., 2015; Carlson, 2006). Living away from one's child is more costly since resources are spread separately over different households. One-parent or step-parent families tend to have fewer resources available to the child than in two-biological-parent families (Sun & Li, 2011; Magnuson & Berger, 2009). One-parent families with more resources will have comparatively good educational outcomes for their children, and this could be owing to lower financial stress for such a parent (Sun & Li, 2011; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007). Households with lower economic resources negatively impact on the quality of environment which is created for children since such parents have added stress from the financial burden placed upon them, and this stress is displayed in the home environment (Magnuson & Berger, 2009).

When a family undergoes change, it compromises a child's sense of security and disrupts their emotions (Sun & Li, 2011). It is in such instances where the presence of grandparents may be a supportive factor to the family. Grandparents not only add support to the parenting role of the single mother, but also increase the family's economic resources (Deleire & Kalil, 2002). Financial difficulty and stress have been associated with punitive and less involved

parenting, as this creates pressure in parents (Grolnick et al., 2007; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007; Mezulis et al., 2004). This pressure experienced by parents leads to them feeling pressed for time, in which case they will solve problems for their children, instead of patiently training the children to become independent (Grolnick et al., 2007). In addition to this, the support and environmental characteristics of the community where one lives has an impact on children's developmental outcomes (Deleire & Kalil, 2002).

A family environment with low conflict, especially where parents avoid arguing in front of their children, has been associated with better psychological well-being and adjustment (Gasper, Stolberg, Macie, & Williams, 2008). Whether or not parents get along well with each other is a crucial factor for the positive development of children (Lamb, 2012; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007; Musick & Meier, 2010). In a rural African American parenting context, the quality of mother–child relationship which comprised of sufficient support, good communication and less arguing, was found to serve as beneficial to adolescents' psychological functioning (Kim & Brody, 2005). Perrin, Ehrenberg and Hunter (2013, p. 778) state that "the specific experience of being drawn into adult conflicts between their parents is a potent predictor of negative psychological adjustment beyond the already well documented negative influences of emotional parentification". Parentification refers to role reversal between parent and child, in which the child neglects their own needs and takes on some parental roles to help the parent cope better with their lives (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009). This is common wherever the boundaries between parent and child are inappropriate and unclear, which then affects the child's development negatively (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009; Perrin et al., 2013).

2.5.2 Effects of one- and two-parent families

Studies have shown that adolescents who perceive that they have considerable support from family and friends, have better adjustment in more areas than merely the academic level (Sharma, 2012; Lee & Yoo, 2015; Oliva, Jiménez & Parra, 2009). The importance of non-disruptions within a family is supported in the findings of Nixon et al. (2015) that children who are born into one-parent households and never live with another parental figure, display similar outcomes to children who live in two-parent non-disrupted households. The more changes in a family, the more negative effects they have on a child, while children who experienced less family disruption showed better performance in Mathematics compared to children from families with more than one disruption in the family form (Sun & Li, 2011).

2.6   PARENTING

Parenting refers to the socialisation process by which a child is reared and equipped with the skills to successfully adapt to the child's family and cultural environment (Spera, 2005). Parents therefore act as agents of socialisation, and universally ,they are assumed to be the primary caregivers (Grolnick, 2009).

2.6.1   Importance of parenting

Parenting styles play an important role in the lives of university students as much as they do in the lives of younger children (Turner, Chandler, & Heffer, 2009). Researchers interested in parenting have been concerned with how to measure parenting. Their search has highlighted that there are differences between parenting practices, dimensions, and styles (Power, 2013). The three primary parenting dimensions are warmth, control, and structure (Power, 2013). Furthermore, Power (2013) discusses how Baumrind (1966) originally identified how parents differ in these three respects, and she then termed three parenting styles as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. There are different outcomes for each of the three parenting

styles. Authoritative parenting is more positive, displays warmth, encouragement, involvement, and reasoning, which also supports children's autonomy (Turner et al., 2009; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009) and overall yields positive outcomes such as "emotional stability, adaptive patterns of coping, and life satisfaction" (Power, 2013, p. 17). Permissive parenting is characterised by parents who allow their children too much freedom, who have very low to no control over the children, and who do not endorse punishment for their children (Turner et al., 2009) and it has been related to issues with "self-control, self-esteem and aggression" (Power, 2013, p. 17). Authoritarian parenting brings about academic challenges and depression in children, and such parents have too much control over their children, are rigid with their rules, high in rejection and do not encourage autonomy in children (Turner et al., 2009; Power, 2013).

It is important to note that parenting styles are different to parenting practices, since the latter focusses more on the activities which parents engage in to develop successful children, rather than the emotive parenting response to the child (Spera, 2005). An extension of the initial parenting styles has been developed, as many non-Western scholars struggled to adapt Baumrind's theory on parenting to their own contexts. This has brought about a focus on specific parenting behaviours, since they are a universal occurrence across cultures in which parenting takes place (Selin, 2014). Parenting behaviours involve parents' attitude and the emotional climate in which they socialise their children, From an SDT perspective, these behaviours may either satisfy or frustrate children's basic psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005, Ryan & Deci, 2000; Deci, La Guardia, Moller, Scheiner, & Ryan, 2006). In order to satisfy these needs, successful parenting requires three vital components, namely autonomy-support for the child, involvement, and providing structure (Joussemet, Landry, & Koestner, 2008).

2.6.2 Autonomy-supportive parenting

In terms of parenting behaviours, the distinction is made between supportive and controlling behaviours. Supportive parenting specifically encourages the sense of autonomy in children, while controlling parenting involves behavioural as well as psychological control (Joussemet et al., 2008). Psychological control refers to parents' manipulation of the child by denying or discouraging the development of autonomy (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Marbell & Grolnick, 2012). This affects children negatively especially in terms of promoting anti-social behaviour and depression (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009; Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, & Soenens, 2005). Parental support on the other hand is characterised by "involvement, autonomy support, and warmth" which are positively associated with well-being and autonomy in children and adolescents (Kocayoruk et al., 2015, p. 1825).

Supportive parenting helps children's social and emotional well-being in addition to improving their behaviour (Schiffrin et al., 2014; Deci et al., 2006). Children also appreciate it when parents allow them to express and value their individual emotions and thoughts, as this validates their sense of psychological autonomy (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). Schaefer (1965) as cited by Soenens, Vansteenkiste, and Sierens (2009) distinguishes between psychological autonomy and psychological control. In his view, psychological control and autonomy-support are two complete opposites with psychological autonomy defined as the promotion of independence (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Sierens, 2009). Important to note is that the SDT view of autonomy-supportive parenting brings about a difference which moves away from conceptualising psychological control and autonomy-support as two opposites on one continuum (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Sierens, 2009), but although they are not two complete opposites they are highly incompatible (Soenens et al., 2007). When autonomy-support promotes their independence, children operate independently

but are largely influenced by parents, whereas with the promotion of volitional functioning, children know why they do what they do and it is from their own choice and reasoning that they engage in behaviours, which are characteristic of autonomy-supportive parenting (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Sierens, 2009). In doing this, parents develop their child's inner qualities (Kocayoruk et al., 2015) which may enhance the child's internal motivation. This type of inner strength has been proven to sustain a person's motivation over a longer period of time (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When parents motivate their child to take initiative and do things because it is what the child wholeheartedly believes in, they encourage autonomy (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009).

2.6.3   Effects of parenting on adjustment

The South African public education system has several challenges, such as poor training of educators, large learner-to-teacher ratios, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, as well as low learner support at home. Too often, parents do not realise how they can supplement the lack in teaching through their parenting (Modisaotsile, 2012). A basic act which parents could engage in with their school-going children is to develop a sincere interest in every aspect of the child's academic activities (Modisaotsile, 2012). Involvement is one of the components of positive parenting (Joussemet, Landry, & Koestner, 2008). The type of involvement is particularly important during the childhood to adolescence phase of children's lives, and inappropriate involvement has been linked to behavioural problems at school (Schiffrin et al., 2014). Parents who displayed high levels of support have been found to have adolescent children with better well-being and a greater display of autonomous behaviour (Kocayoruk et al., 2015; Oliva et al., 2009). If parents create a supportive environment for their children, the learners are more likely to complete high school and have motivation to further their education because of the parents' belief in the child's academic competence. Parents who are autonomy-supportive are more tuned in to their children's development than

to their role of power over the child, and they encourage children to adopt behaviours based on their own inner convictions (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, et al., 2007). Although it may be difficult for parents to validate the child's autonomous self in moments of disagreement, while at university, the extent of such disagreements may even be heightened. But the overall benefits on children's psychological well-being outweighs this unease of parents (Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009).

2.7   UNIVERSITY ADJUSTMENT, PERSPECTIVES OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND PARENTING

Advancing to university can present many opportunities to improve one's life; if students deal with the challenges effectively, this also brings about holistic development (Sharma, 2012) which will benefit them during their transition into the world of work. Because there is a labour market in South Africa which still has its own discrimination issues, such as historically selectively excluding black graduates, the importance of students' morale being high is obvious. This is why parents who are autonomy-supportive can help the child determine their own motives for studying and thus be buffered against discriminatory injustices in the workplace (Letseka & Maile, 2008). Through the parent–child relationship, adolescents learn how to react to difficult situations, and whether to own their emotion or suppress it. Since university students are still to a large extent under parental guidance, the influence of this relationship will reflect in such students' coping mechanisms when trying to adjust (Larose & Bernier, 2001). It has generally been agreed that parental involvement is highly important to support the academic success of children of any age, although there is not a direct causal relationship between the two (Fan, 2001).

Generally, students are raised in homes where the parents give instruction and the child cannot function without that instruction, so at university when they are left on their own and

having to become their own parental voice of instruction, it is often very difficult (Boyuwoye, 2002). Parents therefore need to prepare their child to function independently because when deficient boundaries are set in the parent–child relationship, it results in problems for the child when they move away from home (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009). Furthermore, being away from home is a big adjustment for students and when they are homesick, they may become more absent-minded in university (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Thurber & Walton, 2012).

2.8   CONCLUSION

From the literature presented in this chapter, it can be concluded that adjusting to university is a very important aspect to be considered when trying to understand the difficulty which students experience in their journey towards academic success. Since the primary goal of any university student is to pass and obtain a degree, the role which parents hold is equally important since the child does not function in isolation from their family and community. Parents who are more autonomy-supportive create an environment for their children which will allow them to express their challenges and feelings as they are settling into university. The availability of parents (despite this sometimes being only one parental figure) may serve as a stability zone for the student, which will act as a buffer when they struggle to adjust to the university environment. The research methodology for this study is discussed in the following chapter, Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the current chapter, an overview of the methods followed will be examined in addressing the overall aim of the study. This chapter contains information on the type of approach used, (which is quantitative) and elaborates on the specific research design used. Furthermore the chapter describes the population and sample group for the study as well as how the pilot and main study were conducted. The validity and reliability of the instruments used is discussed as well as how the results were analysed. It concludes with the ethical considerations which were observed in this study.

3.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.2.1 Aims

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of family structure and perceived parental autonomy-support on the adjustment of first year students to university.

3.2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- Determine the family structure of first year university students.

- Assess first year students' perception of parental autonomy-support.

- Assess first year students' adjustment to university.

- Compare the perception of parental autonomy-support and university adjustment of first year students raised in one- and two-parent families.

- Determine the effects of family structure and perceptions of parental autonomy-support on university adjustment of first year students.

3.3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A research approach or paradigm refers to the school of thought from which the research question originated, and it guides the overall plans of the overall research to be conducted (Creswell, 2014). There are three research paradigms: (1) Positivist, (2) Interpretivist, and (3) Constuctivist (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004). Because a positivist approach aims to describe how social constructs interact, this study was grounded within a positivist paradigm to describe how family structure, autonomy-supportive parenting, and university adjustment interact. Furthermore, positivist paradigms are characterised by quantitative research methods (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004; Mouton, 1996). In this study a quantitative research methodology was employed as it seeks to describe the relationship between variables (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004). Quantitative measures are used when the question is concerned with a quantifiable aspect of the phenomena (Green & Browne, 2008) and when numerical data is recorded. This study not only quantifies the variables of family structure, autonomy-supportive parenting, and university adjustment, but also tests the relationship between these variables by testing the following hypotheses: (1) university adjustment is significantly different for students from one- and two-parent families; (2) students who perceive their parents as autonomy-supportive will have improved adjustment to university; and (3) family structure and perceived parental autonomy-support affect the adjustment of first year students.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Within a quantitative research approach, there are different types of enquiries which are employed. This refers to the specific design of a quantitative approach which also determines the steps to follow to conduct the specific research (Creswell, 2014). The various quantitative methods include experiments and surveys (Creswell, 2014). For this study, a survey design was used, as it provides a numerical description of opinions of the sample of the population group being studied (Creswell, 2014). There are two general types of survey designs, cross-sectional and longitudinal (Creswell, 2003). The research design of this study was a cross-sectional correlational comparative design which suited the research questions best as this research is focussed on testing the relationship between family structure, autonomy-supportive parenting, and university adjustment, at one single point in time.

A cross-sectional design is used when the purpose of the study is to determine prevalence of certain phenomena, and it is carried out at one specific time (Levin, 2006). When the relationship between two or more variables is studied, a correlation is determined, and to compare one variable to another, a comparative design should be used (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004). A correlational study does not give information about the causes of the findings; it merely validates whether a relationship exists or not, and causation cannot be interpreted from this since a different methodological approach would be needed (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004).

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Sampling refers to the process of selecting participants for a particular study and it is a very important aspect of the research project since it affects the extent to which the results can be used (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004). There are two sampling designs, known as probability sampling and non-probability sampling. With probability sampling, each participant has a fair

and equal chance of being selected, whereas participants selected by non-probability sampling methods have less chance of randomness (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004; Singh & Masuku, 2014). Due to the survey being online, the risk of student response apathy was high and therefore a non-probability sampling method was used to allow an increased number of responses (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004). The non-probability sampling technique which was used for this study was convenient sampling, and this is typically used when access to a large sample is limited (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013).

By employing a convenient sampling method for this study, the total cohort of the full-time first year population was sampled. During the 2014 academic year, the total first year population was estimated at approximately 4000 students (University of the Western Cape [UWC] Annual Report, 2014) and this figure has remained similar during the 2016 academic year. Therefore, the total sample for the current study was approximately 4000 students. Although it was initially considered to only use a few specific faculties, which is characteristic of stratified random sampling, the online questionnaire design posed a low-response rate threat and the researcher thus employed convenient sampling which would increase the response rates (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Because the study is interested in students between the ages of 18 and 25 years, all the respondents who were either younger or older than the specified age group was disregarded as the study was only interested in the emerging adulthood age group (Amato, 2000), which then resulted in a total number of 556 respondents for this survey.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The data was collected by means of an online survey. Surveys obtain data from individuals and are useful when the population group is too large to conduct direct observational research, since surveys allows one to collect original data from a representative few within a

33

group (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). The survey method in this study was a computerised self-administered questionnaire (Rubin & Babbie, 2001) which is also commonly referred to as an online questionnaire, and this allowed the respondents to receive a link to the questionnaire via email and submit the completed questionnaire electronically.

A self-report questionnaire **(Appendix I)** was used to collect the required data. The questionnaire was only available in English, since this is the language of instruction at the institution. It consists of three sections, namely (i) demographic details questionnaire, (ii) perceived parental autonomy-support scale and (iii) college adaptation questionnaire. Family structure was identified in the items of the demographic details questionnaire.

3.6.1. Demographics

Participants were asked to record their age, sex, home language, study course registered for, current accommodation (whether resident or commuting student), whether it is their first university registration or not, parents' level of education, and also to indicate whether they are from one- or two-parent families in order to obtain information on family structure.

3.6.2 Perceived parental autonomy-support

The perceived parental autonomy-support scale (P-PASS) is a scale developed by Mageau et al. (2011) to assess the extent to which the parent displayed a particular behaviour while the child was growing up. It consists of 24 items related to both maternal and paternal parenting and has Cronbach alphas ranging between 0.76 and 0.94 (Moreau & Mageau, 2012). It is rated on a seven-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*). For this study, the rating scale was modified to a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 5 (*strongly agree)* since the questionnaire is lengthy and a five-point scale is more reliable as it limits respondents' random choice than when

using a seven-point scale with more options which could appear to have the same meaning (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). In this study, Cronbach alpha scores were $\alpha = .87$ for the mother autonomy-support and $\alpha = .98$ for father autonomy-support, mother psychological control was $\alpha = .86$ and $\alpha = .95$ for father psychological control, the CAQ was $\alpha = .76$ for the good adjustment subscale and $\alpha = .62$ for the poor adjustment subscale.

3.6.3 University adjustment

The college adaptation questionnaire is a self-report instrument and was developed by Crombag in 1968. It consists of 18 statements to assess how well students have adjusted to university (Van Rooijen, 1986; Baker, 2004). Eight statements reflect good adjustment and ten statements indicate poor adjustment. It has a Cronbach alpha of 0.83 (Baker, 2004; Gadona, Stogiannidou, & Kalantzi-Azizi, 2005). Respondents indicate their answers on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not applicable*) to 7 (*very applicable*). In this study the rating scale was modified to a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 *(strongly disagree) to* 5 *(strongly agree) as* a means to eliminate respondents' confusion with more options that are very similar (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). The Cronbach alpha scores obtained in this study were $\alpha = .76$ for the good adjustment subscale and $\alpha = .62$ for the poor adjustment subscale.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

The research proposal was submitted to the UWC's Senate Higher Degrees and Senate Research Committees for approval, and once permission was granted, a pilot study using only one group of students (approximately 100 students) from the Faculty of Natural Sciences' extended curriculum programme (ECP) stream was conducted to test the reliability of the survey. Permission to conduct the pilot study was requested from the University's Registrar. The respective ECP programme coordinator in the Faculty of Natural Sciences was

approached to request permission to conduct the pilot, and he was thoroughly informed about the study in order to remind students to view their email communications, since the questionnaire was emailed. The researcher also obtained access to the student email database from the coordinator, who arranged with the Computer Literacy facilitator to supply the email addresses of the particular sample group of students for the pilot study. Once the list of email addresses was obtained, an email was sent to participants to request their participation in the study, together with a link which directed them to the questionnaire. This list of email addresses was kept safe on the researcher's password-protected computer, and only the researcher had access to this information.

All documentation, such as consent forms and information sheets, was attached in the email sent to participants and it was set up on a convenient electronic Google Forms platform for participants to enter data and submit it instantly upon completion thereof. Participants were informed via an information sheet (**Appendix II**) which explained the research topic and once their informed consent was obtained (**Appendix III**), they completed a pilot study of the electronic survey by accessing the survey link in response to the email. Because many first year students would not take the time to read all the information provided, the researcher was present in the computer lab venue to answer any questions which students had regarding the study, and also to ensure that students understood that the study was voluntary and not to feel coerced into completion because it was done during the computer literacy lecture. The approximate time for completion of the survey was 15 minutes, slightly longer for students who were not very familiar with computer usage. This was an observation explained by the lecturer, as the researcher was concerned about possible challenges which could exist when the questionnaire took longer to complete than anticipated. The total duration of the pilot study was one week, during specific computer literacy periods. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was computed to test reliability of the survey. Participants were provided with the

researcher's contact details to give feedback on challenges experienced upon completion of the survey, and although the content of the survey was not sensitive, they could indicate their need for debriefing. As a result of the convenience of the Google platform, students were not restricted to only completing the survey by using a computer, but they were also able to complete it via their mobile devices since their emails are transferred to their mobile phones, and this possibly allowed for an increased response rate. The researcher addressed low response rates by sending two follow-up emails reminding participants of the survey (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) and also requested further permission from the Computer Literacy lecturers to attend the class. The purpose was to extend a friendly reminder of the survey to students who were still interested in completing the survey, but did not yet have the time to do so.

3.8 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED DURING PILOT STUDY AND CHANGES IMPLEMENTED FOR MAIN STUDY

First, the participants needed to be made aware of the concept of research in general, since many first year students do not have an understanding of this. Because the pilot was conducted within the Faculty of Natural Sciences, students had to detach from their academic orientation and for a brief moment shift their attention to engage in a reflective rather than academic manner, to understand the context of the questionnaire. Students generally move mindlessly from one lecture to another, so when the researcher requested their time to complete the survey, they needed more time than anticipated to become mindful and complete the survey, as they assumed that the study would be subject-related.

The information sheet and instructions were too comprehensive and lengthy, which did not appeal to students and they lost interest in reading further and in completing the survey. Because it was an online survey, the design of the standard information sheets had to be replaced to complement the online design. The researcher modified this for the main study,

by extracting only the most important information and ensuring that instructions for the survey were clear and specific. The vocabulary used was less scientific to avoid participants losing interest.

The questionnaire's response options setting had to be modified for the section on parenting, since the pilot survey required all questions to be answered before being able to submit the form. Therefore, participants who did not have either a mother or father were therefore unable to complete and submit their responses. This was rectified for the main study, by modifying the survey response settings.

The timing of the pilot study was during the middle of the first term of the academic year, and this was also the time when students were inundated with academic-related tasks which became their main focus. Receiving emails which were unrelated to their study programme would most probably have been ignored and deleted, and this resulted in a lower response rate. For the main study, the researcher scheduled the survey to be mailed during the first two weeks of the second term, before the pressure of the examination period commenced. Because students would pay more attention to their emails at the beginning of a new term, this served as a better option.

The Google Forms format in which the survey was initially set up, was somewhat limiting for participants who used an internet browser other than Google, and this resulted in the display of the questionnaire being distorted and in some cases, participants were unable to complete it. For the main study, the correct browser settings were stipulated clearly with the instructions to the questionnaire.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The main study followed a similar process to the pilot study, and the suggested changes from the pilot study were implemented for the main study. The data collection for the main study required additional strategies to attract participants, and the researcher revised the initial plan. Simply emailing invitations to the study with two follow-up reminders had not delivered the required participant rates. There had also been a slow turnover rate of survey completion. For the main study, the researcher therefore approached lecturers in different faculties and obtained permission to address the first year students during lecture times, explaining the study by indicating the specific survey title which was sent to their email account. This also allowed for any questions related to the study to be answered in person by the researcher, and this was in addition to the online process of providing further information concerning the study. Some lecturers could not allow the researcher to address the participants in person, owing to limited lecturing time. In such instances, the lecturers were requested to simply announce the study and encourage participants to view their email accounts and to voluntarily complete the survey. In addition to this, to increase the response rates to the survey, the researcher walked about the university campus during the general lunch break when the majority of students would be in a central space and approached random students to enquire whether they are first year students. Once this was positively established, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and invited the students to participate in the study by viewing their email accounts and completing the survey.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Because this was a quantitative study, the data analysis involved statistical procedures to be followed. This required the application of mathematical techniques which would allow the researcher to make scientifically sound conclusions based on the results obtained

(Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004). The data collected from the study was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 for both descriptive and inferential statistics. Prior to this, the data had to be prepared for statistical input into the computer. This preparation phase involved three steps to be adhered to, which were coding, entering, and cleaning the data. Descriptive statistics aim to describe phenomena, and the three most important factors of this description are the mean, variance, and standard deviation, which are computed (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 2004). Inferential statistics allow the interpretation of data, and enable one to draw conclusions about the population under study (Terreblanche & Durheim, 2004). The inferential statistics used in this study include the Pearson correlation for the relationship between variables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the differences between one- and two-parent families, and regression analysis for predicting the effects of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 2004). The Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated to determine the internal consistency of each variable.
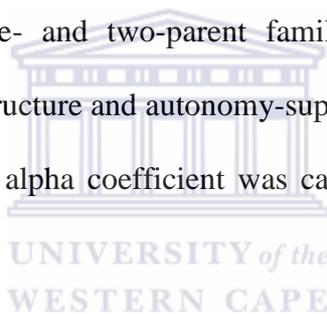
3.11 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

For this study the Cronbach alpha was calculated to indicate the reliability of the instrument (Mouton, 1996). The pilot study assisted in measuring the reliability of the instrument since a test-retest method was used before the main study was conducted.

3.11.1 Perceived parental autonomy-support scale (P-PASS)

In its original form, this scale has a reliability coefficient of between 0.76 and 0.94 (Moreau & Mageau, 2012). In a study by Bureau and Mageau (2014) in which they assessed the relationship between autonomy-support and honesty among adolescents, the instrument has proven to be reliable with internal consistency ranging between 0.76 and 0.88 for the mother and father subscales. A study validating the psychometric properties of the P-PASS with two

different study groups has proven internal consistency for both the mother and father subscales of between 0.89 to 0.94 in study group 1, and 0.89 to 0.92 in study group 2 (Mageau et al., 2015).

3.11.2 College adaptation questionnaire

This questionnaire has an internal reliability coefficient of 0.83 and has successfully been used in various studies in the Netherlands and Britain (Van Rooijen, 1986; Halamandaris & Power, 1999; Baker, 2004). In a study by Gadona, Stogiannidou, and Kalantzi-Azizi (2005) to validate the reliability of the questionnaire for use in the Greek context, in which they assessed concurrent validity with an alternative university adjustment questionnaire, they found that the college adaptation questionnaire was valid and reliable.

3.12 ETHICS STATEMENT

The ethical considerations as set out by UWC were adhered to. *Permission* was granted from the Higher Degrees Committee, and the ethical considerations of *privacy and confidentiality* were established, as the researcher will not disclose any information of any participant to any other party. Because the online survey required participants to access the link via their student Gmail accounts, the security settings which are administered by the university's Information Technology department were maintained as the department functions as domain administrator for all student electronic mail accounts. Furthermore, the researcher disabled the "cookies" settings on the survey, and this ensured participants' privacy. Participants were guaranteed *anonymity* as their responses were not recorded with any identifiable details, since the survey response tool in Google Forms captured the responses with only a date stamp. Anonymity was further ensured by disabling the collection of IP addresses. *Informed consent* **(Appendix III)** was obtained and the participation of respondents in this research was confirmed as voluntary. Participants received an information sheet containing basic

information of the study and the aims and objectives were made clear to them. The information sheet also contained details regarding the possible *risks of participation*, such as *emotional discomfort* when completing questions related to their perception of parents, for instance, if a participant's parents had recently passed away. Referral to the therapeutic department of the Centre for Student Support Services on campus was made available to participants. The researcher also distributed her contact details should any additional information be needed by the participants. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any reason needing to be provided. The findings of the study are available for participants to view.

3.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a thorough description of the methodological approach used in this study. It gave a detailed account of the quantitative methods used to achieve the aims and objectives, together with the data collection procedure followed, elaborating on the study population and how the sample was selected. The questionnaire used and the process followed to administer it alongside the analysis of collected data was also explained. The chapter ends with the ethical considerations for this study, and in the next chapter a journal article based on this study will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND JOURNAL ARTICLE

The effects of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting on the adjustment of first year university students

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Abstract

Background. The first year of university is the most critical to establish a solid foundation for students' subsequent years of study. Adjusting well to the new university environment is critical for students' optimal functioning and to ensure good throughput rates. In addition to the general adjustment challenges of the first year at university, many South African students remain at home or in university residences and therefore the family continues to play a contributory role in their adjustment to university, even though they are adults. The nature of this contribution to university adjustment is not very clear.

Aims. This study therefore aimed to establish the relationships between university adjustment, family structure and parenting.

Sample. A sample of 556 full-time first year students at a South African university participated in the study.

Methods. A cross-sectional correlation design was used to measure family structure, parenting, and university adjustment.

Results. The results indicate that students from two-parent families are better adjusted than students from one-parent families. In terms of parenting, autonomy-supportive parenting predicts positive adjustment for the total sample, but only the mother's autonomy-supportive parenting predicted good adjustment for students in two-parent families. The gender of the

parent is therefore important in understanding the contribution of family and parenting. Recommendations are provided.

Keywords

There has been an increase in the demand for university graduates in the workforce, since universities develop students as knowledge producers who may contribute towards the global economy (Soudien & Corneilse, 2000). This has resulted in widened university access being granted and more students from historically disadvantaged communities are now entering the South African higher education system (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Beckmann, 2008). Owing to the vast difference between secondary and tertiary education, most first year students find the new university environment extremely challenging and this affects their time to completion (Letseka, Breier, & Visser, 2010). Although universities have systems in place, such as extensive orientation programmes to support the first year students' transitioning, the challenges associated with adjusting to university life are often some of the main reasons for students dropping out during their first year (Mudhovodzi, 2011; Beckmann, 2008). Research suggests that the student experience during the first year of university is often the determining factor for continuation or termination of studies in subsequent years and the very first experience of the student's university adjustment sets the tone for their subsequent state of mental health and academic performance (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Bojuwoye, 2002). This experience is largely influenced by students' ability to adapt to the new university environment, and successful adjustment would result in a more positive university experience. In addition to this, the South African higher education context is characterised by inequalities in the basic education system which results in students not being afforded the same quality of education, and this affects their functioning at university (Hill, Baxen, Craig & Namakula, 2012). Many students lack the necessary skills to assist their adjustment to university and their vital personal system of support, such as family and friends, is either non-existent or is willing but unable to support these first years (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007).

The South African family context is very diverse as a result of its rich historical and societal background, and very often children will be raised in a household with only one parent present (Gould & Ward, 2015). In addition to this, the number of extended family members who co-reside within a household is large (Amoateng, Heaton, & Kalule-Sabiti, 2007). Owing to the high unemployment rates in such households, there are various pressures experienced which ultimately affect the home environment which is created (Amoateng, Heaton, & Kalule-Sabiti, 2007). Research on family structure indicates that two-parent households have an advantage over one-parent households due to the increased available resources (Magnuson & Berger, 2009), but more importantly, the quality of the parent–child relationship is more influential than the number of parents involved (Sun & Li, 2011).

In the view of self-determination theory, the parent–child relationship will be most beneficial to children's adjustment when it is characterised by autonomy-supportive parenting (Joussemet, Landry & Koestner, 2008). Warmth, support, and structure are the key elements of positive parenting as defined by self-determination theory, and the parenting behaviour which encourages this is autonomy-supportive parenting (Joussemet et al., 2008). This

parenting behaviour creates a climate which satisfies children's need for autonomy, which is one of three basic psychological needs to be met for positive well-being (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005; Soenens, Vansteenkiste & Sierens, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). In contrast to this, parenting environments which frustrate the need for autonomy are high in psychologically controlling behaviours, and this affects children's adjustment negatively (Joussemet et al., 2008). Because university life is a new experience for many first year students, they will have to interact and call on the help of others (Katz & Somers, 2015). The confidence of help-seeking behaviour is developed through the parent–child relationship, particularly when it is characterised by high levels of warmth and support displayed to the child (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). Parents who are autonomy-supportive develop their child's sense of self-awareness (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005) and when they enter university, such students are able to recognise when they need help to cope better (Sommer & Dumont, 2011). Because they make their own choices, and their personal intentions for studying are established by themselves, such students may endure the challenges of university better and this could allow them to adjust in a shorter period of time (Sharma, 2012). Autonomy-supportive parenting results in overall well-being and high internal motivation, which allows students to function better and adjust well at university (Grolnick, 2003; Marbell & Grolnick, 2012). Students who feel a greater sense of connectedness will adjust better to university and parental autonomy-support results in a more positive sense of relatedness (Soenens et al. 2007).

The current study

Students who function well will have improved adjustment to university, and this is crucial during the first year of studies, since the first year student experience sets the tone for subsequent years (Dyson & Renk, 2006). In South Africa, the first year university drop-out rates are averaged at 50%, with most students coming from poor socio-economic backgrounds (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). The high cost of university studies often requires sacrifice from the students' broader family. For this reason, students need to adjust well in the new tertiary environment to ensure that they utilise their opportunities for success optimally and in so doing enter the job market sooner to improve their life circumstances (Lourens & Smit, 2003; Bojuwoye, 2002). This is very challenging for the majority of students, since the increased access into university has not been accompanied by sufficient support to equip them with the required skills for adjusting to the new environment (Beckmann, 2008) and the families from which they come are often unable to assist in their university transition (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). The family contexts in South Africa are varied, and most children are raised in one-parent households which are usually headed by mothers (Roman, 2011). Both South African and international research shows a difference between students who are raised in one-parent families and those from two-parent families, mainly because of the pressured role of a single parent (Magnuson & Berger, 2009; Deleire & Kalil, 2002). This affects the dynamics of the parent–child relationship. A parenting behaviour which serves as a positive influence on adjustment is autonomy-supportive parenting (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Grolnick, 2003). Dyson and Renk (2006) have indicated that the role of the parents and the family remains an overlooked factor in facilitating students' adjustment to university, which

means that the contributory role of family is not clear. Therefore this study determined the effect of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting on first year students' adjustment to university.

Method

Participants

A cross-sectional design was used to establish whether family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting affects university adjustment of first year students. Only first year full-time students from a university in the Western Cape province of South Africa were sampled from the larger undergraduate study population. It is one of four universities in Cape Town, South Africa. Because it has a lower fee structure than other universities, it typically attracts more students from disadvantaged communities. The total first year university population of 4000 students as listed on the university's central database were sampled by employing a convenient sampling technique. The final sample was made up of 556 first year students who responded and who fitted the 18 to 25 years of age criterion for the study.

Instrument

The data was collected by means of a computerised self-administered questionnaire (Rubin & Babbie, 2001) which allowed the respondents to receive the questionnaire in a link format via email and submit the completed questionnaire electronically. The questionnaire was only available in English and it consisted of three sections, namely, (i) demographics, (ii) perceived parental autonomy support scale (P-PASS) (Mageau et al., 2011) and (iii) college adaptation questionnaire (CAQ) (Crombag, 1968). The P-PASS assessed the extent to which a parent displayed a particular behaviour while the child was growing up, and it was categorised into subscales of autonomy support and psychological control, which were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The CAQ assessed students' overall adjustment to university and consisted of two subscales indicating good and poor adjustment levels. Cronbach's alpha scores in this study were as follows: the P-PASS subscales were $\alpha = .87$ for the mother autonomy-support and $\alpha = .98$ for father autonomy-support; mother psychological control was $\alpha = .86$ and $\alpha = .95$ for father psychological control, the CAQ was $\alpha = .76$ for the good adjustment subscale and $\alpha = .62$ for the poor adjustment subscale.

Procedure

Permission was sought from the university's senate higher degrees committee and senate research committee, and from the university's registrar. Participants' email addresses were obtained from the university's information technology department, and because the university email accounts are hosted on the Gmail server, the survey together with the consent form and concise information sheet was distributed electronically via a link on the Google Forms online platform. Furthermore, lecturers were contacted and informed of the study, and

permission to address students during a brief section of the lectures was obtained, during which the researcher informed the students about the study and let them know that they would receive an electronic invitation to partake in the study via their university email accounts. In addition to this, the researcher visited the typical first year gathering spaces on campus and randomly informed students about the study. Follow-up visits to the lectures allowed the researcher to respond to any questions from participants and they could also further engage electronically with the researcher if any matters arose from their participation in the study. The approximate time for completion of the survey was 15 minutes; this was slightly more for students who were not very familiar with computer usage.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the university's research ethics committee. Participants were provided with an information sheet which contained details of the possible risks of participation in the study, with the only identified risk being possible emotional discomfort, and details of debriefing services were made available to them. The ethical principles which guided this research study were (1) informed consent, (2) anonymity, (3) privacy and confidentiality, as well as (4) voluntary participation. Informed consent and voluntary participation was explained and included in a paragraph on the questionnaire, which allowed participants to select an option indicating consent. Participants were not required to provide any identifiable details such as names, and although their student numbers are included in their email addresses the researcher only had access to their anonymous responses which were extracted and stored in a central database. The university's Information Technology department members are the domain administrators of the student email accounts and they secure the privacy and security settings for all student Gmail accounts. The researcher therefore administered the survey via a secure and restricted link to the email addresses of participants and privacy and confidentiality was observed by disabling the "cookies" settings on the survey while IP addresses were not collected to uphold anonymity. Furthermore, the collected data was stored in a secure folder on the researcher's personal computer with password protection, and the survey and collected data were removed from the online platform to ensure no further access to information.

Data analysis

The data collected from the study was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 23. The inferential statistics used included Pearson correlation for the relationship between variables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the differences between one and two parents, and regression analysis for predicting the effects (TerreBlanche & Durrheim, 2004). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to determine the internal consistency of each variable.

Results

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants. The sample group had a mean age of 18.9 years ($SD = 1.13$), of whom 224 (40.3%) were male and 332 (59.7%) female. The most prevalent responses per faculty were from the Arts faculty ($n = 141$, 25.4%), Natural Science ($n = 111$, 20%) and Economic and Management Sciences ($n = 110$, 19.8%), while 194 (34.9%) were from other faculties. English was the most prevalent language of respondents ($n = 235$, 42.3%) followed by Isixhosa ($n = 179$, 32.2%) and 68 (12.4%) were grouped as other languages spoken. The majority of respondents were from areas in close proximity to the university and lived at home with their families ($n = 348$, 62.6%) while 208 (37.4%) respondents lived without family in either a campus or private residence. Most parents had a secondary school qualification ($n = 256$, 46%) and the least prevalent qualification of parents was a post-graduate degree ($n = 36$, 6.5%). The majority of respondents came from two-parent families ($n = 319$, 57.4%) and 237 (42.6%) respondents were from one-parent families.

Table 1:   **Demographic profile of participants**

Variables		Total Sample
Gender	Male	224 (40.3%)
	Female	332 (59.7%)
Age	Mean age	18.9
	SD	1.13
Faculty	ARTS	141 (25.4%)
	Natural Science	111 (20%)
	EMS	110 (19.8%)
	Other	194 (34.9%)
Language	English	235 (42.3%)
	Afrikaans	74 (13.3%)
	Isixhosa	179 (32.2%)
	Other	68 (12.4%)
Living arrangements	Campus residence	208 (37.4%)
	Off-campus / family home	348 (62.6%)
Parents' education	Primary	47 (8.5%)
	Secondary	256 (46%)
	Tertiary	217 (39%)
	Post-graduate	36 (6.5%)
Family structure	Two-parents	319 (57.4%)
	One-parent	237 (42.6%)

The results presented in Table 2 suggest that maternal ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 1.05$) and paternal ($M = 2.42$; $SD = 1.80$) autonomy-supportive parenting was more prevalent than psychologically controlling parenting for the total sample, and was similar for both one- and two-parent families. The results, however, suggest significant differences between one- and two-parent families for maternal $t(55) = 4.27$, $p \leq 0.05$ and paternal autonomy-supportive parenting $t(55) = 17.01$, $p \leq 0.05$ for the analysis of variance (ANOVA). Good adjustment ($M = 3.45$;

SD = 0.69) was more prevalent than poor adjustment (M = 2.73; SD = 0.78). When considering the total sample, this was similar for one- and two-parent families. However, a significant difference between one- and two-parent families was suggested for good adjustment t (512.62) = 2.28, $p \leq 0.05$ which indicates that students from two-parent families are better adjusted than those from one-parent families.

Table2:   **Group mean scores for university adjustment**

Variable	Total sample	Family structure		
		One-parent	Two-parent	*F*
Mother autonomy-support *	3.56 (1.05)	3.35 (1.28)	3.73 (0.80)	38.97**
Father autonomy-support*	2.42 (1.80)	1.19 (1.70)	3.33 (1.26)	78.42**
Good adjustment*	3.45 (0.69)	3.38 (0.68)	3.51 (0.69)	0.22**
Poor adjustment*	2.73 (0.78)	2.80 (0.78)	2.68 (0.78)	0.30

*Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale: 1= *strongly disagree* and 5= *strongly agree*

**p< 0.01

Table 3:   **Variable correlations**

Variables	Total sample		Two-parent families		One-parent families	
	Good adjustment	Poor adjustment	Good adjustment	Poor adjustment	Good adjustment	Poor adjustment
1 Mother autonomy-support	.15**	-.20**	.24**	-.27**	.07	-.13*
2 Father autonomy-support	.14**	-.14**	.18**	-.19**	.03	-.06

**p<0.01
 *p<0.05

When observing the total sample, the results in Table 3 suggest that good adjustment was positively correlated with both mother (r = .15; $p < .01$) and father autonomy-supportive parenting (r = .14; $p < .01$), and this was similar for two-parent families (r = .24; $p < .01$; r = .18; $p < .01$).

A significant negative correlation for poor adjustment and mother autonomy-support (r = -.20; $p < .01$), and father autonomy-support (r = -.14; $p < .01$) was established in the total sample as well as in two-parent families (r = -.27; $p < .01$; r = -.19; $p < .01$). In one-parent

families, poor adjustment was negatively correlated with mother autonomy-support ($r = -.13$; $p < .05$).

Table 4: **Multiple regression analyses for good adjustment and poor adjustment**

	b	SE b	β	t	Sig.	b	SE b	β	t	Sig.	b	SE b	β	t	Sig.
Good adjustment	Total sample					Two-parent families					One-parent families				
Step 1															
Constant	3.02					2.71					3.21				
Mother autonomy-support	.10	.03	.14	3.33	.00*	.17	.05	.20	3.24	.00*	.04	.04	.08	1.21	.23
Father autonomy-support	.05	.02	.12	2.84	.01*	.05	.03	.09	1.55	.12	.02	.03	.04	.67	.51
Step 2															
Constant	3.26					3.11					3.37				
Mother autonomy-support	.09	.03	.13	2.79	.01*	.14	.06	.17	2.42	.02*	.05	.04	.10	1.36	.18
Father autonomy-support	.07	.03	.20	2.33	.02*	.10	.05	.10	1.19	.24	.05	.06	.13	.86	.39
Mother psychological control	-.08	.04	-.10	-2.0	.05*	-.12	.08	-.12	-1.56	.12	-.08	.05	-.11	-1.44	.15
Father psychological control	-.06	.05	-.11	-1.40	.17	-.01	.07	-.02	-.27	.79	-.07	.09	-.13	-.86	.39
In step1: Good adjustment: Total sample $\Delta R^2 = .04$ Two-parents $\Delta R^2 = .06$ One-parent $\Delta R^2 = -.00$															
In step 2: Good adjustment: Total sample $\Delta R^2 = .05$ Two-parents $\Delta R^2 = .07$ One-parent $\Delta R^2 = -.01$															
* p < 0.05															
Poor adjustment	b	SE b	β	t	Sig.	b	SE b	β	t	Sig.	b	SE b	β	t	Sig.
						Two-parent families					One-parent families				
Step 1															
Constant	3.35					3.72					3.16				
Mother autonomy-support	-.14	.03	-.18	-4.39	.00*	-.23	.06	-.23	-3.86	.00*	-.09	.04	-.15	-2.28	.02*
Father autonomy-support	-.05	.02	-.12	-2.81	.01*	-.06	.04			.14	-.04	.03	-.09	-1.33	.18
Step 2															
Constant	3.09					3.09					3.11				
Mother autonomy-support	-.11	.04	-.14	-2.96	.00*	-.14	.07	-.14	-2.06	.04*	-.09	.05	-.15	-2.04	.04*
Father autonomy-support	-.13	.04	-.30	-3.64	.00*	-.13	.05	-.20	-2.43	.02*	-.06	.07	-.14	-.90	.37
Mother psychological control	.04	.05	.04	.85	.39	.07	.08	.06	.82	.42	.02	.06	.02	.26	.80
Father psychological control	.15	.05	.23	2.85	.01*	.16	.07	.19	2.17	.03*	.04	.10	.06	.40	.69
In step1: Poor adjustment: Total sample $\Delta R^2 = .05$ Two-parents $\Delta R^2 = .07$ One-parent $\Delta R^2 = .02$															
In step 2: Poor adjustment: Total sample $\Delta R^2 = .07$ Two-parents $\Delta R^2 = .11$ One-parent $\Delta R^2 = .01$															
* p < 0.05															

Good adjustment

Using multiple regression analysis, in step 1 for the total sample, mother ($\beta = .14$; $p = .001$) and father autonomy-supportive parenting ($\beta = .12$; $p = .01$) predicted good adjustment. In step 2, when adding mother and father psychologically controlling parenting, mother ($\beta =$

.13; *p* = .01) and father autonomy-supportive parenting (β = .20; *p* = .02) predicted a significant effect. The final model explained 5% of the variance. Furthermore, in step 1 for two-parent families, only mother autonomy-supportive parenting (β = .20; *p* = .001) significantly predicted good adjustment. In step 2, when adding mother and father psychologically controlling parenting, mother autonomy-support (β = .17; *p* = .02) still remained a significant predictor for good adjustment. The final model explained 7% of the variance presented for good adjustment in two-parent families. There were no significant predictors for good adjustment in one-parent families and the final model explained only 1% of the variance.

Poor adjustment
In step 1 for the total sample, both mother (β = -.18; *p* = .001) and father autonomy-supportive parenting (β = -.12; *p* = .01) significantly predicted poor adjustment. In step 2, when adding mother and father psychologically controlling parenting, again mother (β = -.14; *p* = .001) and father autonomy-supportive parenting (β = -.30; *p* = .001) significantly predicted poor adjustment. A variance of 7% was established in the final model.
In step 1 for two-parent families, only mother autonomy-supportive parenting (β = -.23; *p* = .001) negatively predicted poor adjustment. In step 2, when adding mother and father psychologically controlling parenting, both mother (β = -.14; *p* = .04) and father autonomy-supportive parenting (β = -.20; *p* = .02) negatively predicted poor adjustment. The final model explained 11% of the variance for poor adjustment in two-parent families. In step 1 for one-parent families, mother autonomy-supportive parenting (β = -.15; *p* = .02) negatively predicted poor adjustment. In step 2, when adding mother and father psychologically controlling parenting, mother autonomy-supportive parenting still remained as a (β = -2.04; *p* = .04) significantly negative predictor for poor adjustment in one-parent families. The final model explained 1% of the variance for poor adjustment in one-parent families.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine the effects of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting on the adjustment of first year students to university. In this study, the majority of students were well adjusted to university. Previous research on university adjustment suggests that students would adjust better to university if they have the right mental attitude, are highly motivated and have sufficient support from the environment in which their education takes place (Sharma, 2012). In the United States, about 7% of first year students are maladjusted and experience a deep level of homesickness which leads to anxiety and depression (Thurbor & Walton, 2012). A study by Boyuwoye (2002) reported that South African students in their first year placed higher importance on their need for funding and access to information, which highlights their resilience levels as they were willing to function without their basic needs being met and consider their educational needs as more important for completing their university goals. Although this resilience may serve as a positive factor for their adjustment, students need sufficient emotional support to maintain their motivation, especially during the challenging first year (Mudhovozi, 2011). Furthermore, students who perceive that they have more support from family and friends, have better adjustment in more

areas than merely in academics (Sharma, 2012). Students' experience within their family is important for their adjustment when they enter into a new environment such as the university (Mudhovozi, 2012). South African statistics on family structure indicate that approximately 35% of children are raised in two-parent households while the majority of children are raised in households headed by one parent only (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). In the current study, results suggest that most students were from two-parent families. These findings are similar to other studies which state that the increased resources in two-parent families allow children to access tertiary education more easily than those from one-parent families (Magnuson & Berger, 2009).

The current study results also indicate that family structure affects adjustment to university, and that students from two-parent families were better adjusted than those from one-parent families. This is similar to the findings of Lamb (2012) which state that based on the assumption of both parents being loving and warm towards the child, family structure becomes important because of the secure physical and emotional environment provided by such parents. Previous research findings are contradictory in terms of one- and two-parent findings, because on one hand it is suggested that the stability and additional support provided by two parents prepares the child better for university (Musick & Meier, 2010). But a study by Sun and Li (2011), it was reported that one-parent families with little or no disruption in the family functioning would have similar outcomes for children as in two-parent families if there is a good parent–child relationship and a supportive environment.

Parents who have healthy relationships with their partners and support each other by sharing the parenting responsibility, have lowered stress levels and this allow them to create a warm and supportive environment for their children (Lamb, 2012; Musick & Meier, 2010). In contrast to this, parents who raise their children on their own have to fulfil double roles and this exhausts the parent mentally, physically, and emotionally – which results in them being short of time to tune in to children's needs and to be autonomy-supportive (Deleire & Kalil, 2002, Magnuson & Berger, 2009; Grolnick et al., 2007). Furthermore, in this study, autonomy-supportive parenting was positively associated with good adjustment, and this is similar to previous research in which parents' autonomy-supportiveness develops positive well-being, which assists in better adjustment (Joussemet et al., 2008; Soenens et al., 2009; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013; Niemec et al., 2006; Grolnick, Kurowski, Dunlap & Hevey, 2000; Guay, Ratelle & Chanal, 2008). It is suggested that the warmth and understanding which autonomy-supportive parents display towards their child develops self-confidence and this puts the emerging adult at ease when facing challenging tasks such as university adjustment (Soenens, Vansteenkiste & Van Petegem, 2014; Katz & Somers, 2015). When parents are confident in their child's ability to manage developmental tasks on their own, they are autonomy-supportive and allow children the personal space to initiate their own solutions (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009). Even when such children fail at something, they are not judged by their parents, since autonomy-supportive parents acknowledge their child's perspective (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Inguglia et al., 2016). Children have better educational outcomes when they are raised in warm and supportive environments compared to those raised in controlling environments (Amato & Fowler, 2002;

Marbell & Grolnick, 2012; Baker, 2004; Inguglia et al., 2016, Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005) and children's psycho-social development is enhanced when parents are loving towards them (Lamb, 2012). University students should display an increase in self-reliance and make decisions without much parental influence (Alt, 2014), and because university students are faced with the new campus environment in which they establish a different identity, their perception of their own parenting precipitates their experience during their adjustment to university (McClelland & McKinney, 2016).

It is especially during the emerging adult phase that the need for autonomy increases and university staff have identified parents' inappropriate involvement in students' lives as a concern, as these students may find it difficult to manage stressful events on their own (Schiffrin et al., 2014). Mother and father autonomy-support predicted adjustment of students from two-parent families, and the results of this study indicate that there are other factors aside from parenting behaviours which may explain students' adjustment in one-parent families.

A limitation to this study was the online method of data collection, which resulted in lower response rates since students often delete emails from unknown senders due to the high frequency of spam. The timing of the data collection during the seventh week of the academic activity was another limitation, as this was peak time for students, having had a late start to the academic year owing to national protests in the South African higher education sector. It would therefore be recommended to administer the survey via hardcopy questionnaires to increase the response rates, and to schedule data collection during the latter part of the first semester when the academic pressure has decreased.

Implications for practitioners
University support services may incorporate the findings of this study to enhance their existing interventions for first year students, such as mentoring and coaching programmes. This study results could be utilised to support positive parenting interventions. Furthermore, secondary schools may implement an initiative between parents, learners, and teachers to prepare the prospective students for the university adjustment transition, in which aspects of career guidance are combined with parenting behaviours and in such a manner raise students' self-awareness. Additionally, this study contributed to the existing literature on university adjustment, by increasing knowledge of how family structure and parenting behaviour affect students' well-being and adjustment.

Conclusion
Several studies have indicated the impact of autonomy-supportive parenting on the well-being of children, and the family environment in which children are raised is emphasised as an important factor for the outcomes of children. The findings of this study support the existing research on parenting and family structure, and now it has been extended into university education whereas previously the focus was mainly on children in primary and secondary education only. Since this study's results indicated that parenting was not a significant predictor of adjustment for students from one-parent households, an opportunity

for further research exists to investigate what other factors influence university adjustment for students from one-parent households.

In the following chapter, a broad discussion of the results are presented, and recommendations from and limitations to this study are also discussed further.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to determine the effects of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting on the adjustment of first year university students. The findings of this quantitative study are discussed in this chapter, in relation to the SDT. This discussion is guided by the objectives of the study which were to:

- Determine the family structure of first year university students,

- Assess the prevalence of the perception of parental autonomy-support.

- Assess first year students' adjustment to university,

- Compare the perception of parental autonomy-support and university adjustment of first year students raised in one- and two-parent families.

- Determine the effects of family structure and perceptions of parental autonomy-support on university adjustment of first year students.

5.2 FAMILY STRUCTURE

The first objective of this study was to determine the family structure of university students, and based on the results, the majority of students were from two-parent families. Based on the existing literature on the outcomes for children of two-parent families, it is anticipated that such children have a higher likelihood of obtaining tertiary education compared to their one-parent counterparts (Deleire & Kalil, 2002; Nixon et al., 2015; Carlson, 2006). Two-parent families are often more involved in their children's lives, and this allows them to

monitor their children's well-being and identify where they need assistance, which increases the learners' academic performance and advancement to university studies (Lamb, 2012). However, the South African context of parenting and living arrangements is very diverse in comparison to Western countries. Although children may be raised by one parent, they could be living with extended family. Research establishes that even if they live with one parent but have grandparents helping in the household, their educational outcomes are better than those of children with only one parent (Deleire & Kalil, 2002). Furthermore, majority of South African students from one-parent families have less economic resources and are typically from non-urban areas, so when they advance to university they experience additional pressure on their academic functioning due to the socio-economic challenges within their family (Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010; Magnuson & Berger, 2009). The results on family structure in this study could also be understood by considering that students receive additional support from educators who often compensate for the psycho-social deficit which exists within the family home, and at university this is no longer maintained (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). Also, the findings of Zambianchi and Bitti (2014) illustrate the crucial mediating role which family relationships play in an emerging adult's life, because the discussions which exist when families have open communication with each other may be a supportive factor for first year students' university adjustment.

5.3 AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE PARENTING

The second objective of this study was to determine students' perceptions of their parents' autonomy-supportiveness toward them, and furthermore to establish whether this was different in one-parent and two-parent families. In the total sample, parents were perceived as highly autonomy-supportive towards their children. Also, students from two-parent families perceived their parents to be more autonomy-supportive than students from one-parent families. Both mothers and fathers were more autonomy-supportive in two-parent families

than in one-parent families, and this significant difference is supported by existing literature. Parents who have support from their partners and share the parenting responsibility have lowered stress levels, which allows them to create a warm and supportive environment for their children, whereas parents who raise their children on their own have to fulfil double roles. This exhausts the parent mentally, physically and emotionally which results in the parent being short of time to tune in to children's needs and be autonomy-supportive (Deleire & Kalil, 2002; Magnuson & Berger, 2009; Grolnick et al., 2007).

Because of the partnership in two-parent families, both parents may learn from their partners, especially if they have a healthy relationship, and this may bring about increased autonomy-supportiveness for both mothers and fathers in two-parent families, compared to one-parent families who are without an additional parent to reflect and provide feedback on the other's parenting behaviour (Musick & Meier, 2010). The parent–child relationship is important throughout different life stages, and although emerging adults are supposed to be self-supporting, they are not fully detached from their parents (Guarnieri, Smorti, & Tani, 2015). This needs to be managed appropriately by parents, and therefore autonomy-supportive parents have children who are better adjusted at university because they encourage the emerging adult's self-regulated functioning in a healthy manner (Schiffrin et al., 2014). In addition to the pressurised role of sole parents, they may experience several romantic partnership changes and this affects their ability to provide autonomy-supportive environments for their children (Osborne & McLanahan, 2007). Furthermore, autonomy-supportive parenting require more time and patience. As a result of the longer working hours and double roles which one parent must fulfil, single parents may resort to more psychologically controlling behaviours although their intentions are good (Joussemet et al., 2008). When people experience an enhanced sense of autonomy, they function well and have increased motivation to complete tasks successfully (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Ryan &

Deci, 2000). One such task may be adjusting to university, and because their parents display a strong sense of trust and belief in the child, these children develop the confidence to deal with the adjustment challenges in a healthy manner and consequently they experience university life more positively (Kocayoruk et al., 2015; Oliva et al., 2009).

5.4 UNIVERSITY ADJUSTMENT

Another objective of this study was to determine the level of adjustment among first year students. From the findings for the total sample, it was established that students were mostly well adjusted to university. Many previous studies have reported on the challenges in the South African education system, which negatively impact on university students' adjustment (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Beckmann, 2008; Letseka, Breier, & Visser, 2010), but the current findings suggest that some students do adjust well at university despite these challenges. It may be that the current context of student protests with the "FeesMustFall" campaign which started in 2015 across several higher education institutions, may have contributed to the swift adjustment of the incoming students of 2016 owing to the late start of the academic year. This increased pressure on the academic calendar may have resulted in students' change of attitude. While knowing that there was only limited time to settle into university, they may have had to ensure that they were fully functioning for their first tertiary year (Modisaotsile, 2012). The role of parents is therefore highlighted in this situation, since these incoming students' internal motivation had to be drawn upon more heavily. Autonomy-supportive parenting develops increased motivation and self-reliance within such children (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005; Marbell & Grolnick, 2012). Furthermore, parents may have been more available to support their children since they were aware of the national higher education dilemma, differing from the assumptions they made in previous years that students would manage university in a similar way to their management of secondary school experience (Lourens & Smit, 2003).

When comparing the adjustment of students from one-parent and two-parent families, the results indicated that students from two-parent families were better adjusted than those from one-parent families. This confirms Hypothesis 1 of the study which states that "university adjustment is significantly different for students from one- and two-parent families". Furthermore, because children in one-parent families have less parental observation, owing to a number of factors such as a parent working longer hours to stretch the income, such children are most likely seen to be more at risk than their two-parent family counterparts, especially in the case of single mothers being compared to married mothers (Magnuson & Berger, 2009). Despite this, it is the parent–child environment which serves as most important for developing children's ability to adapt well to new circumstances (Sun & Li, 2011). Because this study established that mothers and fathers in two-parent families were more autonomy-supportive than in one-parent families, the existing research on outcomes of autonomy-supportive parenting is endorsed, and this explains the improved adjustment of students from two-parent families. Hypothesis 2 of this study (students who perceive their parents as autonomy-supportive would have improved adjustment to university) is therefore confirmed.

5.5 EFFECTS OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE PARENTING ON FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY ADJUSTMENT

In the current study, autonomy-supportive parenting by both mother and father significantly predicted good adjustment for both the total sample as well as in two-parent families, and therefore Hypothesis 3 (family structure and perceived parental autonomy-support affect the adjustment of first year students) was found to be true. It was also established that in one-parent families, autonomy-supportive parenting was not a significant predictor of university adjustment and that there are other contributing factors which would explain first year adjustment better. Mothers' autonomy-supportiveness negatively predicted poor adjustment

for the total sample, for two-parent families as well as in one-parent families. This is similar to existing research which states that mothers are mostly responsible for the emotional care of children and that when the mother–child relationship is hostile, this results in negative outcomes for such children (Schwartz et al., 2009). Environments that are high in warmth and care will allow children to feel more secure despite resource deficits (Chen, Van Assche, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, & Beyers, 2015), and this may explain why decreased autonomy-supportiveness resulted in poor adjustment among first year students. Furthermore, a decrease in fathers' autonomy-supportiveness also resulted in poor adjustment for the total sample as well as in two-parent families. This confirms the findings of Schwartz et al. (2009) who state that a loving relationship with both parents is vital and serves as a protective measure for outcomes of emerging adults. It also confirms existing literature which suggests that overall, autonomy-supportive parenting yields positive outcomes for adjustment since autonomy-supportive environments result in improved well-being (Joussemet et al., 2008; Soenens et al., 2009; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013; Niemec et al., 2006; Grolnick, Kurowski, Dunlap & Hevey, 2000; Guay, Ratelle, & Chanal, 2008). It is the sense of trust which autonomy-supportive parents display towards their child which allows the university student to adjust well, since these students establish their own personal value for studying and are more responsible (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Kocayoruk et al., 2015). Because autonomy-supportive parents allow the child to make informed decisions, the supportive parenting environment minimises the sense of shame and guilt which children experience when they struggle to adjust (Inguglia et al., 2016). This reduced pressure from parents and allows the emerging adult to function better at university, which is known to be anxiety-provoking for the first year student (Dyson & Renk, 2006).

5.6 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

The most constraining limitation to this study was the low response rate due to the online design used, instead of a paper questionnaire. It was assumed that students were more electronically inclined, and that setting the survey up in an online platform would serve best to generate more responses. However, because students were inundated with electronic communications related to their academic programmes, it may be that they ignored the survey because it was not an academic task. Another limitation was the timing of the survey, since it was administered during the peak of the academic calendar and students prioritised their academic deadlines over completion of the survey. Although reminders were sent to encourage participation, the study may have seemed insignificant at that stage. In general first year students are less interested in research studies, and this could also be considered when observing the limited responses obtained.

The questionnaire was self-reporting and this poses the risk of participants possibly responding in a less truthful manner since they wish to present themselves more favourably, which influences the accuracy of inferences being drawn from these findings.

The correlational design of this study may also be considered as a limitation. Because it is measured at a single point in time, only and if the study was conducted with the same sample at a different time, the results may differ.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Research on family life and positive parenting is limited in the South African context, and more so during the emerging adulthood phase. More studies on university adjustment need to include the student holistically, by understanding that they function within family and parenting environments which influence their university adjustment experience. With the recent surge of student protests in the South African higher education landscape, new

information is needed to enhance the understanding of the contextual issues of university life to ensure that students adjust well and graduate successfully. Future research could therefore consider the role of parenting and family environments more broadly and relate it to the current direction of higher education and transformation. This would allow policymakers to gain information which may enhance the student experience of adjusting to their first university year, and to provide support that is relevant to the diverse needs of South African students.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A future opportunity for research exists to determine what other factors impact on first year students' adjustment, since the predictive effect of family structure and autonomy-supportive parenting was significant yet minimal in this study. Especially among students from one-parent families, more research needs to be conducted to investigate why parenting and family structure was not predictive of first year adjustment.

5.9 CONCLUSION

From the results presented in this study, it is evident that there is a significant difference between the university adjustment of students from one- and two-parent families. Also, the autonomy-supportive behaviour of parents towards their children has been indicated as an important factor which assists in students' university adjustment experiences. The findings of this study also highlight the need for further studies to improve higher education which includes the family and parenting contexts of students, especially in a country with such a diversity of family forms as South Africa. Students who have a greater sense of autonomy experience improved well-being; they generally function better in life, and their motivation to

adjust well to the new university environment is greater than that of students who have a decreased sense of autonomy. This study has also confirmed that parents continue to play a vital role in the emerging adult's life, and that positive parenting behaviours such as autonomy-supportiveness yield more beneficial than controlling behaviours.

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APPENDIX I

Questionnaire

Instructions: There are 3 parts to this questionnaire. Please complete all 3.

Section A:

This section requires you to complete some demographic questions about yourself.

Section B:

This section comprises of statements related to your adjustment at university. It has 18 statements, and you are required to indicate your response by ticking the selected box.

Section C:

This section has 24 statements regarding your perception of your parents' behaviour while you were growing up. All 24 statements apply to both your mother and father, and if you did not have any contact with one of your parents (for example, your father), but another parent of the same sex lived with you (for example, your stepfather), please answer the questions about this other adult. If you did not have any contact with one of your parents, and no other adult of the same sex lived with you, please leave the questions about this parent blank. BE CAREFUL, as the order of responses for your mother and father changes for each statement.

A) DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

How old are you?		
Sex:		
Faculty:		
Course registered for:		
Home Language:		
Are you a residence student (including private residence accommodation)?	yes	no
Is this your first time being a first year university	yes	no

student?			
For most of your life, were you raised by both parents or one parent only?	both	one only	
What is your parents' highest level of qualification?	primary level schooling	secondary level schooling	post-matric qualification	post-graduate qualification

B) COLLEGE ADAPTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions related to your experience of university life. Read each statement and tick the column which applies to you.

		5	4	3	2	1
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I am satisfied with the course of my studies.					
2	Sometimes I want to give it all up.					
3	I often ask myself what I am doing here.					
4	I would prefer to study somewhere else.					
5	I made many friends here.					
6	I do not feel very at home at the university.					
7	I never feel bored here.					
8	Sometimes I feel discouraged here.					
9	I find life as a student very pleasant.					
10	Sometimes I feel rather lonely.					
11	Sometimes I don't know what to do with my time.					
12	I find it hard to get used to life here.					
13	What I miss here is someone to talk to freely from time to time.					
14	I am very satisfied with my way of life.					
15	If I feel blue, my friends will help me to get out of it.					
16	I find it very difficult to adjust to student life.					

17	I am glad that I came to study here.						
18	I feel very much at home here.						

C) PERCEIVED PARENTAL AUTONOMY SUPPORT SCALE

Please answer the following questions about your mother and father while you were growing up. If you did not have any contact with one of your parents (for example, your father), but another parent of the same sex lived with you (for example, your stepfather), please answer the questions about this other adult.

*If you did not have any contact with one of your parents, and no other adult of the same sex lived with you, please leave the questions about this parent blank.

Using the scale provided, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the statements regarding your mother and father's behaviours. 5 = Strongly Agree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. BE CAREFUL, the order of responses for your mother and father changes for each item.

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP…

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
			1	2	3	4	5
1	My parents gave me many opportunities to make my own decisions about what I was doing.	Mother					
		Father					
2	When my parents asked me to do something, they explained why they wanted me to do it.	Father					
		Mother					
3	When I refused to do something, my parents threatened to take away certain privileges in order to make me do it.	Mother					
		Father					
4	My point of view was very important to my parents when they made important decisions concerning me.	Father					
		Mother					
5	My parents refused to accept that I could want simply to have fun without trying to be the best.	Mother					
		Father					

6	When my parents wanted me to do something differently, they made me feel guilty.	Father					
		Mother					
7	My parents encouraged me to be myself.	Mother					
		Father					
8	Within certain limits, my parents allowed me the freedom to choose my own activities.	Father					
		Mother					
9	When I was not allowed to do something, I usually knew why.	Mother					
		Father					
10	I always had to do what my parents want me to do, if not, they would threaten to take away privileges.	Father					
		Mother					
11	My parents believed that, in order to succeed, I always had to be the best at what I did.	Mother					
		Father					
12	My parents made me feel guilty for anything and everything.	Father					
		Mother					
13	My parents were able to put themselves in my shoes and understand my feelings.	Mother					
		Father					
14	My parents hoped that I would make choices that correspond to my interests and preferences regardless of what theirs were.	Father					
		Mother					
15	When my parents wanted me to do something, I had to obey or else I was punished.	Mother					
		Father					
16	My parents were open to my thoughts and feelings even when they were different from theirs.	Father					
		Mother					
17	In order for my parents to be proud of me, I had to be the best.	Mother					
		Father					
18	When my parents wanted me to act differently, they made me feel ashamed in order to make me change.	Father					
		Mother					
19	My parents made sure that I understood why they forbid certain things.	Mother					
		Father					
20	As soon as I didn't do exactly what my parents wanted, they threatened to punish me.	Father					
		Mother					
21	My parents used guilt to control me.	Mother					
		Father					

79

22	My parents insisted that I always be better than others.	Father					
		Mother					
23	When I asked why I had to do, or not do, something, my parents gave me good reasons.	Mother					
		Father					
24	My parents listened to my opinion and point of view when I disagreed with them.	Father					
		Mother					

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

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E-mail: nroman@uwc.ac.za (supervisor)

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: A study of the effects of family structure and autonomy supportive parenting on the adjustment of first year university students

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Verushka Daniels at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a first year university student. The purpose of this research project is to determine how family structure and parental autonomy support affects first year students' adjustment to university.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to complete an online questionnaire which will be mailed to your student e-mail account. This may be completed during your free time where you have e-mail access, or during your computer literacy lecture. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and comprises of three sections. The questions in these three sections involves your demographic information, questions related to your perception of the parenting style you experienced and questions assessing your experience of adjusting to university.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, your name will not be included on the survey and other collected data. Your student number will only be available to the researcher and used only to distribute the questionnaire to your student e-mail account, and it will not be captured in your response.

To ensure your confidentiality, the researcher will store the collected data in password-protected computer files.

If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

What are the risks of this research?

All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher learn more about the effects of family and parenting environments on the adjustment experience of first year students. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how specific parenting and family structure may affect young adults' wellbeing. University support services may also gain more insight from this study and this may allow for improved support interventions offered to first year students.
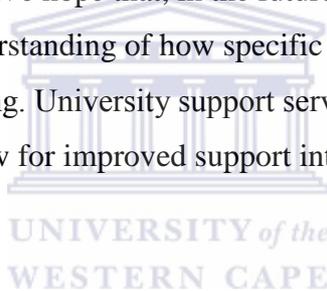
Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Verushka Daniels at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Verushka Daniels via e-mail to: 2441395@myuwc.ac.za . Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant please contact Professor N. Roman (Supervisor) at Department of Social Work, tel. 021 959 2277/2970, email: nroman@uwc.ac.za.

If you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof José Frantz

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

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This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee.

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

CONSENT FORM (questionnaire)

Title: A study on the effects of family structure and autonomy supportive parenting on the adjustment of first year university students

The letter serves to grant my consent to complete and participate in the study. It is a self-reported questionnaire regarding my perception of my parents and my current experience of adjusting to university. The objective of the study is to inform parenting interventions to assist in students' overall preparation for embarking on their university studies, and to provide Student Affairs services with more insight on the dynamics of students' first year adjustment with the information I will provide. I am aware that I may withdraw from the study at any time should I not feel comfortable engaging on the topic. I understand that the information is private and will be managed by the researcher, confidentially and anonymously.

I understand that I give consent that the information gathered during the study will anonymously be presented in research reports and publication articles.

Participant's name and surname	
Date	

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

Study Coordinator's Name: Professor N Roman

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