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# The Impact of Parental Housing Structure on the Autonomy Development of Sophomore College Students at Four-Year Public Institutions

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The Impact of Parental Housing Structure on the Autonomy Development  
of Sophomore College Students at Four-Year Public Institutions

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

By

Colton G. Metzger  
B.S., Wright State University, 2014

2016

Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

April 26, 2016

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Colton G. Metzger ENTITLED The Impact of Parental Housing Structure on the Autonomy Development of Sophomore College Students at Four-Year Public Institutions BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Arts.

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## Abstract

Metzger, Colton, G., M.A. Department of Leadership Studies in Education and Organizations, Wright State University, 2016. The Impact of Parental Housing Structure on the Autonomy Development of Sophomore College Students at Four-Year Public Institutions

Sophomore college student retention rates are steadily decreasing across the United States. Sophomore students often experience a phenomenon entitled the sophomore slump where the lack of support they receive from their institutions impact their overall mental health, GPA, and retention. This study is a quantitative analysis investigating the impact of parental housing structure on the emotional independence and physical independence of college sophomore students at four-year public institutions. A fifteen question survey was used to measure parental housing structure, physical independence, and emotional independence. Participants were traditional sophomore college students who had completed between 30 and 59 credit hours, had been enrolled at same higher education institution for more than three semesters, but no longer than seven semesters, and were between the ages of 18 and 20. A total of 211 college sophomore students successfully completed the survey establishing a 19.11 percent response rate for the survey. Results indicated a statistically significant difference in physical independence based on parental housing structure ( $t(209) = -3.65, p < .01$ ) and a significantly, large positive correlation between physical independence and emotional independence ( $r(209) = .43, n = 211, p = .00$ ). There was not a statistically significant difference for emotional independence based on parental housing structure ( $t(209) = -1.70, p > .05$ ). Limitations of this study, suggestions for future research, and implications for institutions of higher education were also discussed.

*Keywords:* Sophomore, autonomy, physical independence, emotional independence, parental housing structure

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“By the end of the first year, students should know why they are here and what they are aiming for” (Schaller, 2005, p. 17). The higher education system both academically and administratively indicate that the statement and its implications listed above is not a feasible reality for most sophomore students. Academically, sophomore students have often been considered significantly behind in their curriculum and major if their majors are not solidified by the end of their sophomore year (Gahagan & Hunter 2006). According to Schaller (2005), sophomore students have consistently been pressured to solidify their educational decision more quickly than in the past, and are negatively affected academically, financially, psychologically, and socially if they have not solidified their decision with confidence by the beginning of their sophomore year. The reality is sophomore students are expected to know the direction of their future and be confident of their career choice before they begin the curriculum of their second year. This is a consistent theme in all areas of the country and continues to be a trend to this day.

Sophomore students have often times been left lacking the support that they needed, especially after being enrolled in a first year seminar program from which they received a increased level of support. The second year no longer has specific programs or events oriented toward them; there were no initiatives, until recently, to promote a healthy sophomore year experience. Many sophomore students experience a sophomore slump; meaning they are stuck between the excitement of beginning college, and the joy of graduation. They often realize that they have a long journey ahead and may begin to lose



interest or motivation in their degree and/or education. Many students are enrolled in more difficult classes their sophomore year and often face academic or identity crises regarding their lack of performance. This has been shown to lead to burn out and decreased first to second year retention rates. Sophomore students need career and academic self-efficacy which is defined as a sense of motivation that promotes responsibility and confidence (Brandt, 2015). With this, sophomores have been shown to express increased levels of motivation and can become more confident and committed to themselves and their goals. This contributes to a higher level of satisfaction for sophomore students and ultimately a higher retention rate for sophomore students (Zlatos, 1995).

The field of higher education has been increasing efforts to accommodate sophomore students through faculty/staff interaction, academic advising, and peer connection, institutional involvement, and community building (Hunter, 2010; Tobolowsky, 2008). Additionally, work has been done with the sophomore population by many professionals who have developed models, methods, and programs specific to the sophomore year experience pertaining to the major issue of how sophomores view themselves their independence, and their academic experiences and decisions.

Additionally, many college students, particularly sophomores have found that aspects of their life such as their personal identity, independence, and academic experiences are impacted by a variety of psychosocial factors; one psychosocial factor that has been proven to impact an individual's personal experience is their family dynamic. Moral judgement has been shown in previous work to have a high, positive correlation with parental divorce and thus parental housing structure has been shown to impact

individual's moral judgement (Collin, 2014). Students from non-intact households have higher levels of adaptability and a higher need for dependence than individuals from intact households (Carrigan, 2015). Parental divorce, or any form of household dynamic that does not include what is termed an intact household, defined as two biological parents living under the same roof, has had significant correlational impacts on various components of college student development including, vocational choice, confidence in career decision, self-efficacy, autonomy development, and development of purpose (Carrigan, 2015). Additionally, individuals from non-intact households have been linked to lower socioeconomic households and a study by Graunke and Woosley (2005) indicates that socioeconomic status has been linked to factors of academic success, including academic self-efficacy, vocational confidence, and personal decision making preferences. All of the factors create a chain reaction that has the potential to create a large number of challenges for college students, particularly during the sophomore year when an individual's identity development becomes a central component of the individual's life. Aspects such as autonomy and academic self-efficacy have been directly linked to the primary caregiver care, and parental relationship, both of which are significantly correlated with non-intact households (Collin, 2014).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent years, institutions of higher education have transitioned from funding models based upon enrollment, to funding models based upon performance, i.e. performance-based funding models (Miao, 2012). This modular transition initiated an institutional push towards student success and retention initiatives to increase student GPA, increase retention, increase student satisfaction and success, persistence to

graduation, and ultimately increase institutional funding. Due to this modular transition, many institutions have progressed towards, and financially support, First Year Experience (FYE) programs including learning communities, living-learning communities, first year seminars, orientation sessions, supplemental instruction, and free campus-wide tutoring services (Tobolowsky, 2008). All of the initiatives enacted by FYE's have proven to increase first-year retention and GPA, and increase students' overall institutional satisfaction, which has also been positively correlated with increased retention rates (Pruett, 2011).

While FYE's are an important model for first-year GPA increases, collegiate retention, student success, and institutional funding, traditional sophomore students are often left with little to no support throughout their second year of college (Schaller, 2005). In fact, many sophomore students who participated in FYE programs reported lower levels of institutionalized support in their second year than individuals who did not participate in FYE programs (Pruett, 2011). Currently, there is little research being conducted on the sophomore year experience of students in their second year of college. Research regarding FYE programs continues to increase, while research on sophomore students remains stagnant. The purposes of this study were to examine the unique challenges being faced by the traditional sophomore student population, increase awareness of the needs of this population, examine the autonomy development of sophomores, and determine if the parental household structure within which sophomore students were raised contribute to differences in autonomy development within their second-year of college.

Sophomore students often experience what has been termed the “sophomore slump.” This slump is defined as the phenomenon in which a second effort fails to live up to the quality of a first effort (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). College students in their sophomore year often experience a decline in their academia along with a wide variety of personal factors. Additional support is needed for this population, yet many institutions fail to supply support structures specific to the sophomore student population. Without additional support structures, the National Survey of Sophomore Initiatives in 2002 (as cited in Tobolowsky, 2008) indicates that the average sophomore will change their major three times, seventeen percent of sophomore students will exhibit mental health concerns, and six percent will not return for their third year; the largest drop in retention rates after first year students who have been experiencing increased retention rates due to FYE’s.

### **Definition of Terms**

Autonomy: Emotional and physical independence from others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Career/Major Decision: Refers to the decision on an academic major that, upon graduation, qualifies an individual for a certain career or career path.

Emotional Independence: Freedom from continuous needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others. For college students, this begins with separation from parents and/or family and proceeds through peers, non-parental adults, and occupational or institutional groups. This study defines emotional independence as a lack of need for reassurance in their decisions; encompassed by questions five, seven, ten, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen of The Sophomore Experience Survey (Appendix B)

Familial Influence: Any external influence from an individual's definition of family that directly effects decisions the individual makes.

First-Year Experience Programs: Refer to institutionalized support for students who are transitioning into college for the first time, often times directly from high school. FYE Programs aim to increase first year to second year retention, first year GPA, and confidence in academic self-efficacy. FYE programs include, but are not limited to learning communities, living-learning communities, first year seminars, orientation sessions, supplemental instruction, and free campus-wide tutoring services.

Intact Households: A household with two biological parents living under the same roof.

Non-intact Households: A household or environment without two biological parents due to divorce, same-sex parenthood, adoption, separation, single parenthood, or death (Carrigan, 2015). For purposes of this study, Non-intact households are defined as any household outside of the definition of an intact household.

Parental Housing Structure: The type of household in which the student was raised. This includes both intact and non-intact households. Additionally, this includes households with biological parents or legal guardians. Participants will self-identify their parental housing structure with the answers to questions one through four in the Sophomore Experience Survey (Appendix B).

Parental Support: Refers to any external support provided by an individual's parents regarding decisions the individual makes

Physical Independence: The ability to organize activities and/or to solve problems without external influence; i.e. developing the ability to think critically in order to translate ideas into a focused action. This also relates to learning to get from one place to

another, physically or mentally, without being taken by hand or given detailed directions, and independently finding information or resources needed to fulfill personal needs and/or desires (Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005). For purposes of this study, physical independence will be defined as freedom from the influence of material goods provided by primary caregivers. This includes lack of influence from primary caregivers based on finances, lodging, transportation or any other material goods. This is encompassed by questions six, eight, nine, and twelve of The Sophomore Experience Survey (Appendix B)

Sophomore Slump: Refers to the phenomenon in which a second effort fails to live up to the quality of a first effort (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). For college students, their sophomore year is often the second year of college and this experience fails to live up to that of the first. This contributes to a decline in their academia along with a wide variety of personal factors such as decreased motivation to attend and complete courses, tensions in their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, and lower college satisfaction (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007).

Sophomore Student: an individual who has been enrolled in a higher education institution for more than one academic year or has completed at least 30 credit hours of coursework, and has not exceeded the completion of 59 credit hours (Schaller, 2005).

- A. Traditional Sophomores Students: Adhere to the definition of a sophomore student, however, traditional college sophomores are between the ages of 18 and 20.

- B. Non-Traditional Sophomore Students: Students who comply with the definition of a sophomore student, but lie outside of the 18-20 year age range

### **Research Questions**

- 1) What is the impact of parental housing structure on the emotional independence development of sophomore college students?
- 2) What is the impact of parental housing structure on the physical independence development of sophomore college students?
- 3) What is the correlation between physical independence and emotional independence?

### **Assumptions**

The researcher assumed that participants of the study have self-reported academic information regarding their sophomore year experience with honesty and integrity. This included, but is not limited to credit hour completion, institutional transfer, Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) courses/prior learning credit, and the accurate portray of their sophomore year experience. The researcher also assumes that any information provided by the Office of Institutional Research was accurately conveyed and survey distribution to the sophomore demographic is accurate.

### **Scope**

This research study was limited to traditional sophomore college students at a mid-sized, public, urban, research institution in the Midwest who had completed between 30 and 59 credit hours, had been enrolled at the same higher education institution for more than three semesters, but no longer than seven semesters, and were between the ages of 18 and 20. The research pool included students who enrolled beginning in the 2014-2015

academic year. International students, transfer students, and students with veteran/military status were not included in the research due to the unique qualities associated with each demographic of students. The experience of each of these demographics could vary from that of traditional college sophomore students and could skew the results of the present study.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study was to increase awareness and institutional knowledge of the traditional college sophomore student population at a four-year, public institution in the Midwest. College sophomores have the lowest retention rates of any other level of undergraduate education with the exception of first year students (Tobolowsky, 2008). However, first to second year retention has been slightly increasing in recent years due to the prevalence of First-year experience programs and initiatives on college campuses (Pruett, 2011). With attrition rates for college sophomores slowly increasing, there is an increased demand for sophomore student success initiatives at colleges and universities. This study aimed to increase awareness of the experiences of college sophomores by examining the autonomy development of sophomore college students. This study also aimed to explore the impacts of parental housing structure on college sophomore students' autonomy development and examine the implications of this structure. Additionally, this study also aimed to educate institutions on the unique experiences of sophomore students, and shed light on the institutional initiatives currently available to college sophomores as well those that are necessary to increase the positive experiences of sophomore college students that contribute to increased GPA, second to third year retention, and graduation rates.



Additionally, little research had been conducted on the sophomore student population. The current study focuses on this population in an effort begin filling the gaps in current research and add to the existing body of literature. With many college sophomores facing factors such as the sophomore slump, additional research is necessary to adequately create student success initiatives targeted towards college sophomores. While minimal research exists on the sophomore student population, there was not nearly an appropriate amount of significant findings in the literature to support the necessity of sophomore student support initiatives. With further research, colleges and universities will have the resources to conduct their own, independent assessments of college sophomore student experiences and develop programs and initiatives unique to their institutions oriented towards increasing their sophomore student's GPA, retention, and graduation rates.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In 2005, Molly Schaller created a model for the holistic development of sophomore college student development. This model, referred to as the Model of Sophomore Student Development, categorizes traditional college sophomore students into four developmental stages within three aspects of their life. The three aspects of their lives include experiences and attitudes toward their academia, themselves, and their relationships with others. These four stages include random exploration, focused exploration, tentative choices, and commitment (Schaller, 2005). The Model of Sophomore Student Development and a description of each stage is located in Appendix A.

The first stage of this model is random exploration. Students in this stage of the model are aware of the choices pending in their lives, but have made, or are continuing to make, choices that allow them to delay these decisions. The second stage of this model is focused exploration. Students in this stage have increased awareness of their choices and their world, and begin to express frustration with their current relationships, themselves, and/or with their academic experience. Most sophomores tend to be in this stage at the beginning of their sophomore year. The third stage of this model is tentative choices. Students in this stage of the model begin to make choices that will set the direction for the remainder of their collegiate career, and is considered a new level of responsibility. Many sophomores fluctuate between stage two and stage three until the transition into the final stage of this model entitled commitment. Students in the commitment stage are already planning for their future, are confident about what they want and unwavering in their sense of responsibility about their future. Sophomore students can initially be at any stage in the model; however, many students fluctuate through the stages of the model in the period of one academic year.

College sophomores face many challenges throughout their collegiate career. Challenges such as coursework, motivation, interpersonal, and intrapersonal exist in multiple areas of a sophomore student's life; particularly the three areas exhibited within the study conducted by Schaller (2005). The Model of Sophomore Student Development seeks to examine these struggles. The four developmental stages were constructed from qualitative research on college sophomore students to encompass these challenges as generalized constructs that college sophomore students can associate with. According to Schaller (2005) sophomore students' holistic experience increased when progressing to

higher stages of the Model of Sophomore Student Development. For example, students in the tentative choices stage had higher levels of satisfaction in the three aspects of their lives examined in this study than students in the random exploration stage.

The Model of Sophomore Student Development explores the experience of sophomore students at these four differing stages of their college experience as well as the effect of each of these four stages on the three aspects of their lives. Due to the current research focusing primarily on the sophomore year experience of students within the realms of autonomy (experiences and attitudes toward their relationships), identity (experiences and attitudes toward themselves), and academic self-efficacy (experiences and attitudes toward their academia), the Model of Sophomore Student Development is a quintessential component of examining the holistic experience of sophomore college students. For purposes of this study, autonomy was the only area of a student's life that was examined.

Unfortunately, there has been little research conducted on the validity and reliability of the Model of Sophomore Student Development. Although this appears to be a holistic model of development progression throughout the sophomore year of college, there has been little research to support the reliability or validity of this model as it compares to the current demographic of college sophomores. College sophomore students are a unique demographic of students who need additional support to progress through sophomore year successfully. Institutions of higher education are not currently providing the resources necessary for sophomore college students to be successful (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). With further research, the applicability of the Model of Sophomore Student to the current demographic of sophomore students may increase the

internal and external validity of this model and encourage institutionalized change towards supporting college sophomore students.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Sophomore Students**

Sophomore college students were defined as individuals who had been enrolled in a higher education institution for more than one academic year and had completed at least 30 credit hours of coursework yet had not exceeded the completion of 59 credit hours (Schaller, 2005). Cohorts of sophomore students are diverse in both experience and background. For purposes of this study, traditional age college sophomores were between 18-20 years of age; students outside of this age range did not comply with the definition of a traditional sophomore student. Students who complied with the definition of a college sophomore but lie outside of the 18-20 year age range are considered to be non-traditional sophomore students (Sanchez-Leguinel, 2008). Research has indicated that there are no significant differences in traditional and non-traditional college sophomores for the concepts of career and academic self-efficacy, however, there have been significant differences between traditional and non-traditional college students on the aspects of GPA and vocational decision (Griffiths, 2008).

Traditional college sophomores at large public institutions often have large support systems for their first year of college usually known as First-Year Experience Programs (FYE's). FYE's frequently provide support for students who are transitioning into college for the first time, often times from high school (Pruett, 2011). Support structures offered from FYE programs consist of many program initiatives including learning communities, living-learning communities, first-year seminars, cohort programs and many other initiatives to assist first-year, first-time college students adjust to the college atmosphere (Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). FYE initiatives have been proven in

multiple forms of research and assessment to increase student retention, GPA, and institutional satisfaction. A study by Pruett (2011) examined the differences in academic self-efficiency, commitment to academic major and a self-reported meaning of life of students who participated in FYE's and students who did not participate in FYE's at the beginning of their second year. Results indicate that even though no significant differences were found between the individuals who participated in FYE's and those who did not in any of the categories listed above, individuals who participated in FYE's who reported higher levels of commitment to academic major also had higher levels of academic self-efficiency than individuals who participated in FYE's that had lower levels of commitment to academic major. FYE's have been linked to sophomore year retention and institution satisfaction, particularly at residential universities where institutional involvement is a large component of the first-year experience (Schaller, 2000). Sophomore students involved on campus who have a connection with either the people at an institution or the institution itself have been correlated with higher retention rates, and FYE's provide an initial transition into the institution holistically (O'Neal, Wright, Constance, Perorazio, & Purkiss, 2007).

Students with higher levels of institutional commitment feel more confident in the institution and will utilize resources available to them (Foubert & Grainger, 2006). Campus resources begin to become highly utilized during the sophomore year due to the unique experiences associated with this cohort of students. Sophomore students will often experience what has been termed the "sophomore slump." This slump is defined as the phenomenon in which a second effort fails to live up to the quality of a first effort (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). College students in their sophomore year often experience a

decline in their academia along with a wide variety of personal factors. Sophomore students experience a wide variety of psychosocial changes which are unique to their cohort which are outlined in Molly Schaller's Model of Sophomore Student Development (Appendix A). Molly Schaller's Model of Sophomore Student Development was developed after a qualitative study conducted by Schaller in 2005. The study was comprised of 19 traditional-aged college sophomores at a midsized, private, Catholic university in the Midwest. After speaking with each of the students about their sophomore year experience, Schaller developed her Model of Sophomore Student Development which categorized the experiences of the students into four over-arching stages based upon the student responses. According to Schaller (2005), sophomore students exist in or move through four stages in three aspects of their lives. The four stages include random exploration, focused exploration, tentative choices, and commitment. These stages occurred in three areas of the sophomore student's lives which included how the students viewed themselves, their relationships with others, and their academic experiences and decisions. Random exploration is the first stage of the model. Students in this stage of the model are aware of the choices pending in their lives, especially in regards to their major and career choice. These students have made, or are continuing to make choices that allow them to delay decisions. The next stage of the model is entitled focused exploration. Students in this stage of Molly Schaller's Model of Sophomore Student Development have increased awareness of their choices and their world; they begin to express a level of frustration with their current relationships, with themselves, or with their academic experience. Most sophomores tend to be in this stage at the beginning of their sophomore year. The third stage of the model is entitled tentative

choices. Students in this stage of the model begin to make choices that will set the direction for the remainder of their collegiate career; students describe this stage as a new level of responsibility with seeing their future more clearly. Many sophomores fluctuate between focused exploration and tentative choices until the transition into the final stage of the model entitled commitment. Students in the commitment stage are already planning for their future, clear about what they want and unwavering in their sense of responsibility about their future. Sophomore students can initially be at any stage in the model; however, many students fluctuate through the stages of the model in the period of one academic year. The four stages of this model occur in three areas of sophomore student's life. These areas include how sophomores view themselves (identity establishment), their relationships, and their academic experiences and decisions (career and academic self-efficacy) (Schaller, 2005). Although the sophomore year is traditionally only one academic year, many students go through multiple transitions that are unique to the sophomore cohort.

### **Autonomy**

Autonomy was defined as emotional and physical independence from others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Sophomore students are often thrust into their second year with little or no support, particularly after participation in FYE's. Some of the crucial aspects of autonomy development for sophomores are learning to function with self-sufficiency with minimal support without initiative, taking responsibility for pursuing personal goals and career/major interests, and being less bound by other individuals opinions.

Autonomy, or rather the process of moving through autonomy development toward interdependence, is a component of Chickering and Riessier's Theory of Identity



Development. The theory itself is composed of seven vectors, each vector representing a component of the college student developmental process. The vectors include: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Moving through autonomy towards interdependence is the third vector of this theory and requires both emotional and physical independence, which then transition into recognition, and eventually acceptance of interdependence (Rhodes, 1999).

Emotional independence is defined as freedom from continuous needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others (Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005). For college students, this begins with separation from parents and/or family and proceeds through peers, non-parental adults, and occupational or institutional groups. Emotional independence then proceeds into diminishing needs for such support systems and associated with an increased willingness to risk the loss of friends or status in order to pursue a strong personal interest or stance (Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005). One study conducted by Lapsley & Edgerton (2002) found that college student adjustment and autonomy development are significantly related with secure adult attachment. Meaning an individual with a more stable i.e. secure attachment to their parent or legal guardian expressed a significantly more positive adjustment to college than individuals without secure adult attachment.

Physical independence on the other hand has two major components (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The first component of physical independence is the ability to organize

activities and/or to solve problems without external influence. The second component and most relevant to this study was the materialistic independence from others, particularly parents and legal guardians. The materialistic independence includes independence factors such as financial independence and residential independence. Multiple studies have shown the positive and negative impacts a parent or legal guardian can have on a college student's financial stability. For example, one study indicated that an individual living with parents or legal guardians who argue about finances were significantly more likely to have more than \$500 in debt and own two or more credit cards (Hancock, Jorgensen, & Swanson, 2013). This study also concluded that parents and legal guardians acting as positive role models significantly impacted the positive use of credit cards. Another study found that parental roles had a significantly greater impact on financial socialization than work and high school financial education combined. This study explains that an individual's relationship with their parents can significantly impact both their financial learning and their financial behavior (Shim, Barber, Card, Xiao, & Serido, 2010). Another study conducted by Norvilitis & MacLean (2010) concluded that hands-on parent or legal guardian mentoring regarding financial skills was significantly linked to lower credit card debt.

Additionally, a study by Chen & Katz (2009) concluded that mobile devices are a "must" for most college students, stating that mobile phones are used to share experiences pertaining to both physical and emotional support. This study also states that mobile phones were considered by some to be umbilical cords, creating a relationship in which an college student becomes more emotionally dependent on their parents or legal guardians due to the convenience of communication. These studies have also shown a

significant relationship between technology and dependence upon parents or legal guardians (Hancock, Jorgensen, & Swanson, 2013; Norvilitis & MacLean, 2010; Shim, Barber, Card, Xiao, & Serido, 2010).

For college sophomores, developing autonomy enables healthier forms of independence. Relationships with parents and family are revised and reconstructed, new relationships begin to form based upon equality, similar interests, and reciprocity which often replace older, less consciously chosen peer bonds formulated before the sophomore year (Roberts & Styron, 2010). Interpersonal context often broadens to include their community, their society, and the world. The need for independence and the longing for inclusion become better balanced in the form of respecting the autonomy of others and looking for ways to give and take with an ever-expanding circle of friends (Roberts & Styron, 2010).

Sophomore students who are attempting to move through autonomy towards interdependence are often establishing who they are as a person and their place in the world. These students are often in various stages of Molly Schaller's Model of Sophomore Development and are often exploring not only their academic and career/major potential, but also their personal potential. Additionally, college students indicating higher levels of involvement report greater development in moving through autonomy toward interdependence whereas uninvolved students had consistently lowered developmental scores (Roberts & Styron, 2010). For example, students who joined or led organizations reported more development than those who just attended a meeting. (Foubert & Grainger, 2006)

### **Parental Housing Structure**

Parental divorce, death of a parent, adoption, and the discovery that not all household dynamics are equivalent are considered periods of transition within an individual's life. The effects of these transitions, which are dependent upon the unique qualities that surround both the familial dynamic and the individual being discussed, have been shown in multiple studies to be linked to identity development in college students (Carrigan, 2015; Guerra & Braungart, 2009; Johnson, Buboltz, & Nichols, 2011). Additionally, identity development has been linked to other areas of a student's life including academic confidence in major, academic and career self-efficacy, autonomy development, GPA, and retention (O'Neal, Wright, Constance, Perorazio, & Purkiss, 2007).

College students who were raised in an environment of transition were raised in what is termed a non-intact household. A non-intact household is a household or environment without two biological parents due to divorce, same-sex parenthood, adoption, separation, single parenthood, or death (Carrigan, 2015). Studies have examined the difference between individuals from intact and non-intact household on various levels including autonomy, adaptability, development of long-term relationships, and developing purpose. One study by Carrigan (2015) examined the autonomy of first and second year college students who grew up in intact households compared to first and second year college students who grew up in non-intact households. Although there has been minimal research regarding the influence of the amount of time an individual has lived within a specific housing structure, students who lived in intact households during childhood or adolescence had significantly higher levels of autonomy and higher socioeconomic status when compared to students growing up in non-intact households;

with no differences in the level of autonomy based on living with a same-sex or opposite sex parent. Though there is little research regarding the impact of non-intact households before college on the development of college students, there have been fewer young adults who live in intact households before college (Carrigan, 2015). In the United States, there are several factors contributing to the increasing number of non-intact households including single parent households, decreased marriage rates, an increase in non-traditional families such as individuals with same-sex parents or individuals being raised by an individual who is not their biological parent such as a sibling or grandparents. Additionally, according to the Fifth Annual Index of Family Belonging & Rejection (2015), only 46 percent of children between the ages of 15 and 17 are being raised in intact households which is a decrease of 17 percent of intact households since the year 1980 (Fagan & Hadford, 2015).

Familial influence has been found to be an important component in identity development. Students' identity development and their prospective of parental acceptance and encouragement of independence have been investigated in multiple studies in order to determine the influence of parental influence of career/major choice for students from both intact and non-intact households. A study by Guerra & Braungart (2009) investigated both parental acceptance and parental encouragement of autonomy as predictors of career indecision. The results of this study indicated that career indecision was predicted by a greater degree of identity moratorium and diffusion, in compliance with Marcia's theory of identity status, less maternal acceptance and fewer years in college. Exploration and freedom to discover and reflect upon their identity development is crucial to college student throughout their first two years of college. Exploration and

freedom may be crucial to identity development; however, if done incorrectly, individuals could make choices or decisions that negatively affect the rest of their lives. A study by Collin (2014) examined the moral judgement of first and second year students and their navigation through the first year of college. Moral judgement has been shown in previous research to have large, positive correlation with parental divorce, particularly if parental divorce occurred after the age of 13. Results indicated that first-year college students with divorced parents had lower scores of moral judgment development than first-year college students with married parents, whereas sophomore students with divorced parents had higher moral judgment development scores than sophomores with married parents. Additionally, first-year students who experienced changes in households before college negatively correlated with moral judgement development growth, while second-year students who experienced changes in households before college positively correlated with moral judgment development growth. The implication of this article presumes that adaptability and association with change may have the ability to enhance moral judgment development growth in the first two years of college (Collin, 2014).

Career choice is a common form of identity confusion for college sophomores, particularly if collegiate career/major choice was associated with familial influence. Research has found that the quality of relationships with an individual's family is associated with career development of college students. Disharmonious relationships within a familial structure have been associated with various difficulties related to young adult development. For example, parental divorce has been shown to predict difficulty for young adults when achieving developmental tasks such as gaining autonomy from their familial structure and forming lasting, intimate relationships with significant peers.

Several researchers have assessed the relationship between career/major choice and family functioning which has focused on specific variables such as parental attachment and conflict rather than on parental divorce. Thus, the relationship between individuals from non-intact households and their career/major decision needs to be explored.

Career/major decision has been linked to aspects of the sophomore year including the sophomore slump, career and academic self-efficacy, identity development, and autonomy.

### **Summary**

The sophomore year experience is a unique time in a student's collegiate experience. This is the year that traditional sophomore students tend to begin a period of self-reflection that is oriented in the past and the future, and the correlation of both. This period of self-reflection resembles a significant life event. A significant life event, such as events contributing to a student being raised in a non-intact household, can affect multiple areas of an individual's life, and as the number of significant life events increases, the ramifications of these events may increase, resulting in a wide variety of consequences. These ramifications could include influences to personal identity, independence, critical thinking abilities, and forming relationships with others. If an individual has experienced a significant life event that affects these areas of their lives, they may have trouble adjusting to another significant life event that could trigger any of the consequences associated with the first significant life event. For most individuals, a significant life event requires self-reflection. With this experience, individuals may think and process their lives differently than individuals who have not experienced this form of significant life event. Parental housing structure has also been linked directly and

indirectly to academic self-efficacy, autonomy, and identity establishment. The link between these aspects has the potential to impact the collegiate experience of these individuals. Thus, further research into the sophomore year experience, may discover that individuals who are from non-intact households will have lower levels of academic self-efficacy, autonomy, and identity establishment than individuals from intact households. If a student begins to suffer from the sophomore slump, they will begin to suffer immensely in all areas of their lives. Sophomores are a unique group of students who begin to discover themselves and become aware of their future and the implications of their actions. Sophomore students have finished an entire year of curriculum and are now beginning to realize that their curriculum is directly tied to the rest of their lives. Not only are sophomore students exploring their future, they may also be exploring who they are as a person, and self-reflecting upon their past experiences, and how they relate to their future. Self-reflection is a crucial component of any life milestone, and the sophomore year is just that, a life milestone. The sophomore year for most traditional college sophomores is only ten months in length. According to the National Survey of Sophomore Initiatives, within this ten month span the average sophomore will change their major three times, seventeen percent of sophomore students will exhibit mental health concerns, and six percent will not return for their third year; the largest drop in retention rates after first year students (Tobolowsky, 2008).

Recent initiatives in FYE's have increased the retention rates of first year students to a national all time-high. However, retention for sophomore students remains stagnant, and is predicted to continue to increase. FYE programs offer a large amount of support to first year students to assist with the student's integration into the collegiate system. The



support offered to students has been demonstrated in multiple studies to increase GPA, institutional commitment, and ultimately increase the retention rates of first year students. The research conducted on FYE programs has been substantial; however, literature lacks the long term implications of FYE's. The second year of college requires students to be confident in their career/major decision, in their curriculum, and in their future. Parental housing structure has also been linked directly and indirectly to autonomy development. The link between these aspects has the potential to impact the collegiate experience of these individuals. Thus, further research into the sophomore year experience, may discover that individuals who are from non-intact households will have lower levels autonomy development than individuals from intact households. Without the support offered during the first year, students may struggle with the development of autonomy to navigate the collegiate system and may fall into the sophomore slump.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **Participants**

A list of 1,104 sophomore students adhering to the research criteria of this study was compiled by the Office of Institutional Research at a four-year, public institution in the Midwest. The research criteria for this study included participants who were traditional sophomore college students who had completed between 30 and 59 credit hours, had been enrolled at same higher education institution for more than three semesters, but no longer than seven semesters, and were between the ages of 18 and 20. The research pool only included students who enrolled in college beginning in the 2014-2015 academic year. International students, transfer students, and students with veteran/military status were not included in the research due to the unique qualities associated with each demographic of students. The study was conducted at a mid-sized, public, urban, research institution in the Midwest. For purposes of this study, cognitive relationships with parents or legal guardians and the amount of time spent in a non-intact parental housing structure were not observed. The research only examined the parental housing structure of sophomore students from their first year of college until the spring semester of their second year of college. No additional demographic information was collected from sophomore students who participated in the study with the exception of demographic information pertaining to the research criteria.

#### **Measures**

This research initiative focused on the experience of traditional sophomore students currently attending a four-year, public institution in the Midwestern region of the United States. The research being conducted primarily focused on the autonomy

development of sophomore year students. Autonomy development will be split into two dependent variables for this study. The first dependent variable is emotional independence and the second dependent variable will be physical independence. The dependent variables were examined alongside the independent variable for this study which was the parental housing structure in which the sophomore students were raised indicated by intact and non-intact household structures.

The Sophomore Year Experience Survey was developed and utilized through the software program Qualtrics (Appendix B) and was distributed by the author of the research study. The Sophomore Year Experience Survey was constructed utilizing an autonomy scale already in existence. The autonomy scale utilized in this study was Mageau, Ranger, Joussemet, Koestner, & Forest's (2015) Perception of Parental Autonomy Support Scale (P-PASS). This autonomy scale has been shown in multiple studies to have strong reliability and validity ( $.71 < \alpha < .89$ ) (Bureau & Mageau, 2014; Joussemet, Mageau, & Koestner, in press; Mageau, Ranger, Joussemet, Koestner, & Forest, 2015). This survey collected data on sophomore students' levels of physical independence, emotional independence, and parental housing structure and compared the means of each dependent variable to the participants' parental housing structure. The survey was fifteen questions in length. Parental housing structure was measured utilizing questions one through four of the survey, emotional independence was measured utilizing questions five, seven, ten, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen, and physical independence was measured utilizing questions six, eight, nine, and twelve.

This survey asks students to answer a series of questions regarding their autonomy development and parental housing structure. The survey only measured

quantitative data; questions were formulated to quantitatively measure the components of this study based upon the operational definition of each term. Each variable in this study was strategically structured prior to survey distribution. The survey questions measuring parental housing structure were dichotomous multiple choice questions to which the responses could be “yes” or “no”. In order for an individual to be from an intact parental housing structure, the individual must have answered question one “no”, and questions two, three, and four “yes” (Appendix E). Participants who answered differently than the order listed above were considered to be from a non-intact household and automatically directed to begin question five (Appendix B). Only then could an individual be considered part of an intact parental housing structure. The survey questions measuring physical independence and emotional independence were based on a 4-point Likert scale reading “strongly disagree” (1), “disagree” (2), “agree” (3), and “strongly agree” (4) (Appendix F). This Likert scale measured both physical independence and emotional independence from parents or legal guardians. Questions five through fifteen on the Sophomore Year Experience Survey measured the amount of dependence of each individual based on emotional and physical factors. For example, an individual who answered a question “strongly disagree” would be more independent from their parents or legal guardians than an individual who answered “strongly agree”. Frequency distributions for each question can be seen in Appendix G. Additionally, this Likert scale aligned with the four stages of Molly Schaller’s Model of Sophomore Student Development. Individuals responding “strongly disagree” were considered to be in the commitment stage of this model while individuals who responded “strongly agree” were considered to be in the random exploration stage of this model. The mean for emotional

independence and physical independence were also applied to this model. The results of this survey were then analyzed utilizing an independent samples *t*-test; comparing physical and emotional independence against the parental housing structure of the participants.

### **Procedure**

IRB approval was obtained for this research study. Prior to distribution, the survey was piloted on three students, and reviewed by a professional staff member with expertise in the area of interest. The Sophomore Year Experience Survey (Appendix B) was distributed to 1,104 sophomore students matching the research criteria for this study. The survey was returned by 230 participants, a 20.83% response rate. After reviewing the results of all individual responses only 211 responses were used in the data analysis. The additional 19 responses were deleted from the data pool due to lack of completion of the entire survey. Initially, each participant was sent an individualized email constructed through the mail merge option in Microsoft word (Appendix D). Participants were sent individualized emails to increase the response rate of the survey. Individualization occurred on the basis of the diffusion of responsibility principle which states an individual is less likely to take responsibility for action or inaction if other individuals are present (Zenko & Mulej, 2011). Before beginning the survey, each participant was asked to read and consent to their rights as participants (Appendix C). By reading and confirming their rights as participants, each individual who completed the survey consented to being part of the study and having their results analyzed for research. Surveys were distributed to students meeting the defined research protocol by the author of this study via survey link to their student email addresses. No personal information

beyond parental housing structure, emotional independence and physical independence was collected from the participants. All data collected for use in this research was kept confidential. Information is protected utilizing password protected computers and computer files. All information related to personal identification was destroyed and deleted upon completion of the research study.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

The results of this study sought to explore the impact an individual's parental housing structure in which they were raised had on the formation of their emotional and physical independence during their sophomore year of college. Three variables are assessed in this study, one independent variable and two dependent variables. The independent variable for this study was parental housing structure and the two dependent variables for this study included emotional independence and physical independence. The research questions for this study were as followed:

- 1) What is the impact of parental housing structure on the emotional independence development of sophomore college students?
- 2) What is the impact of parental housing structure on the physical independence development of sophomore college students?
- 3) What is the correlation between physical independence and emotional independence?

This chapter includes a summary of the data collection process, details and descriptive statistics of each variable, results of an independent samples *t*-test comparing the variables, and a summary of the results.

#### **Data Collection**

**Parental housing structure.** For purposes of this study, parental housing structure was coded into two types of parental housing structures. These structures included non-intact housing structures ( $n = 88$ ) which were coded as zero and intact parental housing structures ( $n = 123$ ) which were coded as one. The variable of parental

housing structure was formed by examining the results of questions one through four on the Sophomore Year Experience Survey (Appendix B). Participants who responded “no” to question one and “yes” to questions two through four on the survey were coded as having intact parental households. Individuals who responded “no” to question four or did not adhere to the answer sequence listed above were coded as having a non-intact household. As the independent variable in this study parental housing structure was designated as the grouping variable against the two dependent variables.

**Emotional independence.** Emotional independence ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = .42$ ) was measured by the participants answers to questions five, seven, ten, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen. Questions five, seven, ten, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen were all measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The structure of the questions indicated that if a participant were to answer strongly agree, they would be considered more emotionally dependent upon their parent/legal guardian than an individual who answered strongly disagree. All 211 participants responded to all questions designed to measure emotional independence. Frequency distributions for emotional independence can be seen in Appendix G.

**Physical independence.** Physical independence ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) was measured by the participants answers to questions six, eight, nine, and twelve. Questions six, eight, nine, and twelve were all measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The structure of the questions indicated that if a participant were to answer strongly agree, they would be considered more physically dependent upon their parent/legal guardian than an individual who answered strongly disagree. All 211 participants responded to all questions designed to measure physical



independence. Frequency distributions for physical independence can be seen in Appendix H.

### Statistical Analysis

Both emotional independence and physical independence were compared to the parental housing structure of all participants via an independent samples *t*-test. By conducting an independent samples *t*-test, results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in physical independence based on parental housing structure ( $t(209) = -3.65, p < .01$ ). However, there was not a statistically significant difference in emotional independence based on parental housing structure ( $t(209) = -1.70, p > .05$ ) (See Table 1 below).

**Table 1**

*Comparison of Independence Based on Parental Housing Structure*

Area of Independence	Non-Intact		Intact		<i>t</i> (209)	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Emotional Independence	2.26	.45	2.36	.39	-1.70	.09
Physical Independence	2.13	.67	2.46	.63	-3.65	.00**

*Note.* The comparison both emotional independence and physical independence split by the grouping (independent) variable of parental housing structure. Lower *M* values indicate higher levels of independence. There is a statistically significant difference between physical independence and parental housing structure.

\*\* $p < .001$

After a comparison of the means of physical independence based on parental housing structure, results indicated individuals from intact households are in fact more physically dependent upon their parents/legal guardians than individuals from non-intact households seeing as higher scores indicate an individual's level of dependence upon their parents/legal guardians. Additionally, after examining a correlational analysis

between emotional independence and physical independence, results indicated there was a significantly large, positive correlation between the two variables ( $r(209) = .43, n = 211, p = .00$ ).

Results indicated a statistically significant difference between physical independence and parental housing structure. The statistically significant difference between the means of physical independence split by parental housing structure indicate that sophomore college students from non-intact households are significantly more physically independent than sophomore college students from intact households. Additionally, the correlational analysis between emotional independence and physical independence indicated a statistically significantly positive correlation between physical independence and emotional independence.

## **Chapter V**

### **DISCUSSION**

Emotional independence, i.e. independence from the need for reassurance and emotional support, and physical independence, i.e. the independence from materialistic items, are both forms of independence that sophomore college students experience. Both forms of independence constitute the autonomy development of college students. Sophomore college students in particularly experience challenges with both forms of independence, and according to Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development (1993), developing autonomy is the first step in progressing to interdependence. This chapter summarizes the study and analyzes the relationship of these results to the current literature on sophomore student autonomy development, the contextual framework of this study, and the implications of this study on both future research and higher education

#### **Conclusions**

The results of this study indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the physical independence of sophomore students and the parental housing structure in which they were raised. Additionally, the results of this study indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between emotional independence of sophomore college students and the parental housing structure in which they were raised. Physical and emotional independence exhibited a strong positive correlation with one another. Unfortunately, gaps exist in the literature pertaining directly to this study's definition of physical independence, especially when examining college sophomore students. Additionally, research pertaining to emotional autonomy of

sophomore college students did not indicate a difference based upon simple housing structure, but rather the cognitive connection and emotional relationship of each individual to their parents or legal guardians (Collin, 2014; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). However, the literature did reflect a strong relationship between physical and emotional independence which was consistent with the results of the correlational analysis between physical independence and emotional independence.

According to Molly Schaller's Model of Sophomore Student Development, many sophomore students are in one of four exploratory stages in three areas of their lives. One of the three areas in a sophomore student's life include their personal relationships. A majority of the sophomores in this study best met the qualities of focused exploration or the tentative choices stage of the model. This was determined based on the means of the responses to the emotional independence and physical independence questions for participants in both intact and non-intact households on the Sophomore Year Experience Survey. Since the mean scores fell between two and three, the sophomore students on average fell between these two stages of Molly Schaller's Model of Sophomore Student Development in the area of personal relationships. However, this category of personal relationships only pertains to relationships between parents or legal guardians and does not account for any other form of personal relationship.

Although the literature confirms the correlational results between emotional independence and physical independence, the literature did not directly address physical independence or emotional independence on the basis of the housing structure. A majority of previous literature addressed the cognitive relationship with the parents or legal guardians. Though this study did not address the cognitive relationship between the

sophomore college students and their parents or legal guardians, it does address the autonomy development within their sophomore year of college. According to the third vector of Chickering and Riesser's Theory of Identity Development, students must find both their emotional independence and physical independence. The results indicated that individuals develop emotional independence from their parents and legal guardians at approximately the same rate with no significant differences in emotional independence. Results also indicated that students from non-intact households develop their physical independence at a significantly higher rate than individuals from intact households. Physical independence could also have been significantly higher for college sophomores from non-intact households based on a variety of factors not measured in this study, which are included as limitations to this study

### **Limitations**

In this study there were multiple limitations in place. The first and most prevalent limitation to this study was the lack of consideration of any form of relationship to parents or legal guardians. The only component measured within this study was the physical structure in which a college sophomore was raised. In order to fully comprehend the true differences in physical independence and emotional independence, additional research would need to be done which takes into account the cognitive relationship and emotional connection to the parents or legal guardians. Many of the studies utilized in this research were based on the emotional relationship or cognitive relationship with the parents rather than the parental housing structure (Bureau & Mageau, 2014; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Norvilitis & MacLean, 2010). Another limitation to this study is not only the cognitive connection or emotional relationship to parents or legal guardians, but also

how this connection or relationship can vary depending on the connection to one individual. For example, if an individual is from an intact parental housing structure, but only has a positive connection or relationship to one parent, their autonomy development could differ from an individual from the same housing structure who have either a positive or negative relationship with both parents or legal guardians. Additionally, this study did not examine the length of time an individual has been part of a specific housing structure. For example, an individual who has been part of a non-intact parental housing structure since birth may develop autonomy their sophomore year of college differently than an individual who became part of a non-intact parental housing structure their last year of high school. Furthermore, the implications of how an individual became part of a non-intact household could impact autonomy development. For example, an individual who has been part of non-intact parental housing structure since birth may develop autonomy differently than an individual who became part of a non-intact parental housing structure due to a traumatic event such as death of a parent or guardian.

Another major limitation to this study could be demographical differences between participants. This study did not study demographical information and thus there was no way to indicate if any external factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, racial differences, ethnic differences, or LGBTQA+ status had an impact on autonomy development of the participants. For example, the development of autonomy in college was significantly different between male and female college students (Chen & Katz, 2009). Additionally, this study did not have a qualitative component in order to analyze these differences or to provide the opportunity for students to describe reasons for their survey responses. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in the literature pertaining to

parental housing structure and physical independence. The gaps in the literature became a limitation, particularly when examining the results of the study. Lastly, the external validity of this study is a limitation. The current study was only conducted at one, four-year, public institution in the Midwest and thus may not have reliable or valid transferability to other institutions of higher education or students in other areas of the world.

### **Recommendations**

There are multiple recommendations for both future research on the autonomy development of sophomore students and the implications of this study to higher education. This study found that there was a statistically significant difference in physical independence between individuals based on their parental housing structure. The primary recommendation for this study would be to examine the cognitive connection and emotional relationship between the participants of this study and their parents or legal guardians. This has been shown to be a key component to autonomy development, and without this component of research, the results of this study create ambiguous results that did not account for any external factors beyond the parental housing structure. An additional recommendation for future research would include the implementation of a qualitative component to gauge why the participants responded how they did. The qualitative component could also be utilized to gauge student's opinions on current trends in the literature. Additionally, a recommendation for this study would be to collect demographical information from the participants. The demographical information could be utilized to collect more specific data on the differences between parental housing structure as well as emotional independence and physical independence. For example, the

researcher could study the impact of socioeconomic status on parental housing structure or the impact of gender differences on autonomy development. The demographic data would elaborate upon which demographical factors could impact both parental housing structure and sophomore student autonomy.

**Higher education.** In terms of recommendations pertaining to higher education, there are multiple recommendations. The first recommendation for institutions of higher education would be to examine not only the experiences of sophomore students, but also the type of institution attended. This is relevant to the current research which examines the impact the type of institution can play in the autonomy development of sophomore college students. For example, a student pursuing their degree on a residential campus may develop autonomy differently than an individual pursuing their degree at a community college or technical school. Furthermore, students pursuing a degree at a private, religiously affiliated institution may develop autonomy differently than students pursuing a degree at a four year, public institution.

The larger implications of this study for institutions of higher education include the acknowledgement that sophomore college students have a unique set of challenges and responsibilities than other groups of students have. Institutions should be more proactive in engaging sophomore students to ensure that they do not fall into the sophomore slump. Proactivity could also include support services or safe spaces where sophomore students can discuss their issues pertaining to their autonomy and personal identity development. Seeing as the results of this study indicate a significant difference in physical autonomy, institutions could create education programs and workshops to develop skills pertaining to physical independence such as financial management workshops, information booths



regarding housing options and terminology, and campus events pertaining to technological independence.

## **Summary**

Overall, the findings of this study were partially consistent with the literature. The relationship between emotional independence and physical independence was consistent with the literature pertaining to the significantly positive relationship between the variables. Parental housing structure was shown to have a statistically significant impact on physical independence which is consistent with literature stating that individuals with positive mentorship established greater levels of financial socialization and exhibited lower levels of debt. Although the study did not examine demographic factors, the results indicated that there was a significant difference in autonomy development of sophomore college students based on parental housing structure. Institutions of higher education as well as their faculty, staff, and administrators are becoming more aware that sophomore students have a unique set of challenges that may constitute a need for additional, proactive support. Additionally many sophomore students, including the ones in this study, exist in either the focused exploration or tentative choices stages within Molly Schaller's Model of Sophomore Student Development (Schaller, 2005). This means that without the necessary support to develop autonomy in their students, institutions of higher education could see a decrease in sophomore year retention, particularly if the students are still dependent on their parents or legal guardians rather than on themselves. The results of this study further illustrated the unique needs of sophomore college students and highlight the impact an individual's environment can play on their autonomy development.

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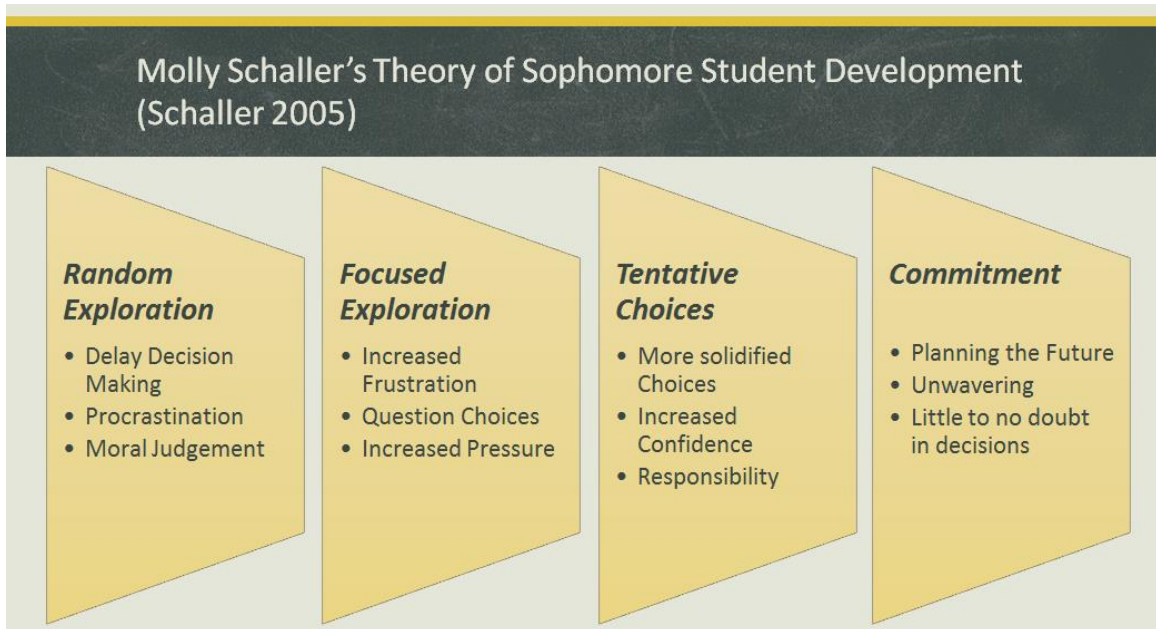
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## APPENDIX A

### *Molly Schaller's Model of Sophomore Student Development*



*Note.* Schaller, M. (2005). Wandering and wondering: Traversing the uneven terrain of the second college year. *About Campus*, 10(3), 17-25.

## APPENDIX B

### The Sophomore Year Experience

Q1 Are you a member of a single parent/legal guardian household due to death, separation, or other circumstance?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If Yes Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Block

Q2 Were you raised by your two biological parents?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Block

Q3 Are your biological parents married?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Block

Q4 Do your biological parents live in the same household?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q5 My parent/s or legal guardian/s heavily influence the choices I make

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q6 My parent/s or legal guardian/s is/are controlling of me financially

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q7 My parent/s or legal guardian/s is/are influencing my choice of major in college

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q8 I am currently living with my parent/s or legal guardian/s

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q9 I lived with my parent/s or legal guardian/s during the first year of college

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q10 I often feel the need for reassurance from my parent/s or legal guardian/s when making life decisions

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q11 My parent/s or legal guardian/s insist upon my doing things their way

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q12 I cannot take action without the influence of parent/s or legal guardian/s

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q13 My parent/s or legal guardian/s discourage me from making my own decisions

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)



Q14 My parent/s or legal guardian/s try to tell me how to run my life

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q15 When I have a serious problem or important decision to make I look to my parent/s or legal guardian/s for guidance

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

## APPENDIX C

### Informed Consent/Cover Letter

**Introduction:** This document confirms your participation in a graduate research project study that seeks to examine the experience of sophomore students and the contributing factors of these experiences. By returning this survey, you are providing your consent to participate in this research study in the manner outlined below. This research aims to impact current policy regarding sophomore students and will lead to the completion of a graduate thesis in April 2016. Research for this initiative will be collected between January and March of 2016.

**Purpose of the Study:** To increase awareness and institutional knowledge of the traditional college sophomore student population by examining factors impacting the experience of sophomore students. According to the National Survey of Sophomore Initiatives, the average sophomore will change their major three times, seventeen percent of all college sophomore students will exhibit mental health concerns, and six percent will not return for their third year. By examining the unique factors of the sophomore population, this research will increase institutional and national knowledge of the conditions impacting the sophomore year experience, and make necessary advancements in educational policy.

**Methods of Use:** Data will be collected via the questionnaire link provided. The survey consists of multiple choice, and Likert scaled questions and should take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

**Participant Rights:** Submission of the questionnaire provided indicates your consent to participate in the graduate research study. Participation in the research study is voluntary. No risks will result from participation, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or risk factors. Participants will be eligible to win one of two \$20 Visa gift cards!

**Collected Data:** All data collected for use in this research will be kept confidential. Information will be protected utilizing password protected computers and computer files. All information related to personal identification will be destroyed or deleted upon completion of the research study and thesis. Termination of participation may occur at any time without prejudice or penalty.

**Contact Information:** If you have any additional questions regarding this research study, please contact the principal investigator, Colton Metzger (419-852-7832, metzger.44@wright.edu), or Carol Patitu, Ph.D., Committee Chair and Advisor (937-775-4148, carol.patitu@wright.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Wright State University Institutional Review Board at 937-775-4462.

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this research study,  
Colton Metzger

## APPENDIX D

### Introduction to the Sophomore Year Experience Survey

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Colton Metzger, a graduate student at Wright State University. I am currently researching the experiences of sophomore students and the development of their independence. I am reaching out to you today to see if you would be willing to answer some questions about your college experience.

This survey should take no more than **2-3 minutes** to complete and you will be eligible to **win one of two \$20 Visa gift cards!** The results of this survey will contribute towards increasing the satisfaction of sophomore students on campus and add to the increasing body of literature regarding college sophomore students.

[Click here to take the survey](#)

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this research study,

-Colton

## APPENDIX E

*Frequency distributions for questions 1-4 of the Sophomore Year Experience Survey*

Question Number	Dichotomous Answer	
	1 (Yes)	2 (No)
1	53	158
2	134	24
3	124	9
4	123	2

*Note.* A display of the number of responses for each answer option for questions one through four of the Sophomore Year Experience Survey. Students who answered “no” to question one and “yes” to questions two through four are considered to be individuals from an intact parental housing structure. Student answering outside of this sequence were automatically directed to question five.

## APPENDIX F

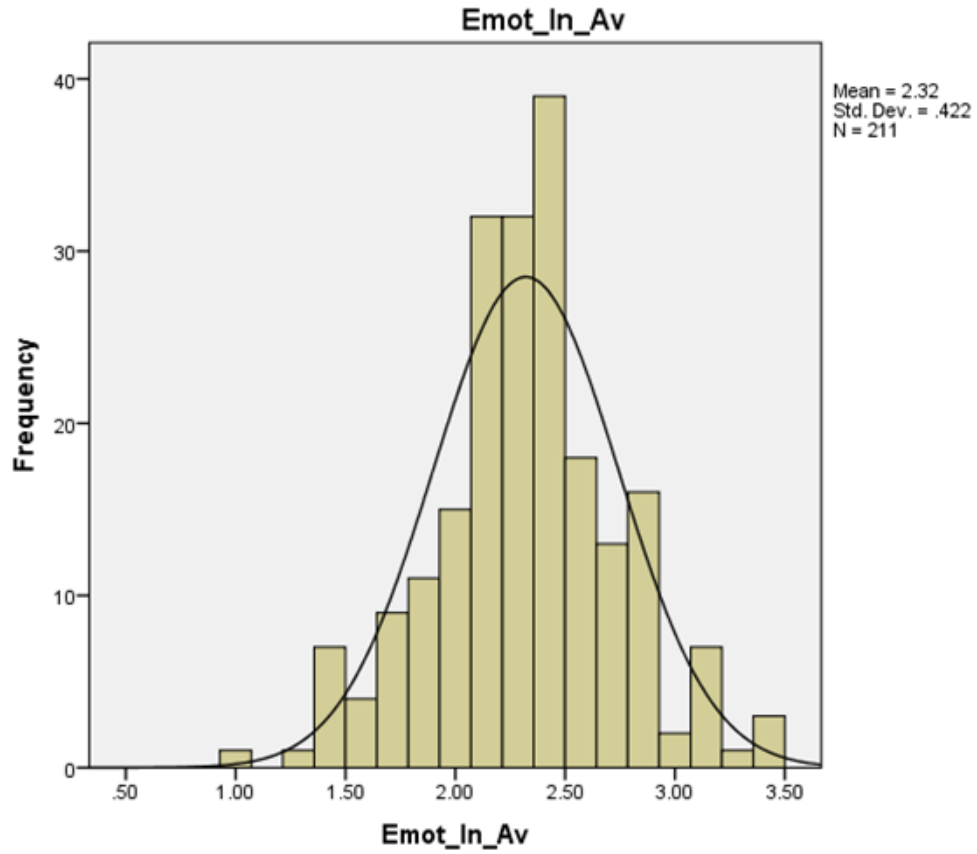
*Frequency distributions of questions 5-15 of the Sophomore Year Experience Survey*

Question number	Likert Scale Response			
	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (A)	4 (SA)
5	9	30	117	55
6	40	76	65	30
7	64	107	35	5
8	57	58	43	53
9	58	54	38	61
10	18	49	111	33
11	41	109	49	12
12	46	134	27	4
13	121	79	8	3
14	92	84	28	7
15	7	21	118	65

*Note.* A display of the number of responses for each answer option for questions five through fifteen of the Sophomore Year Experience Survey. SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

## APPENDIX G

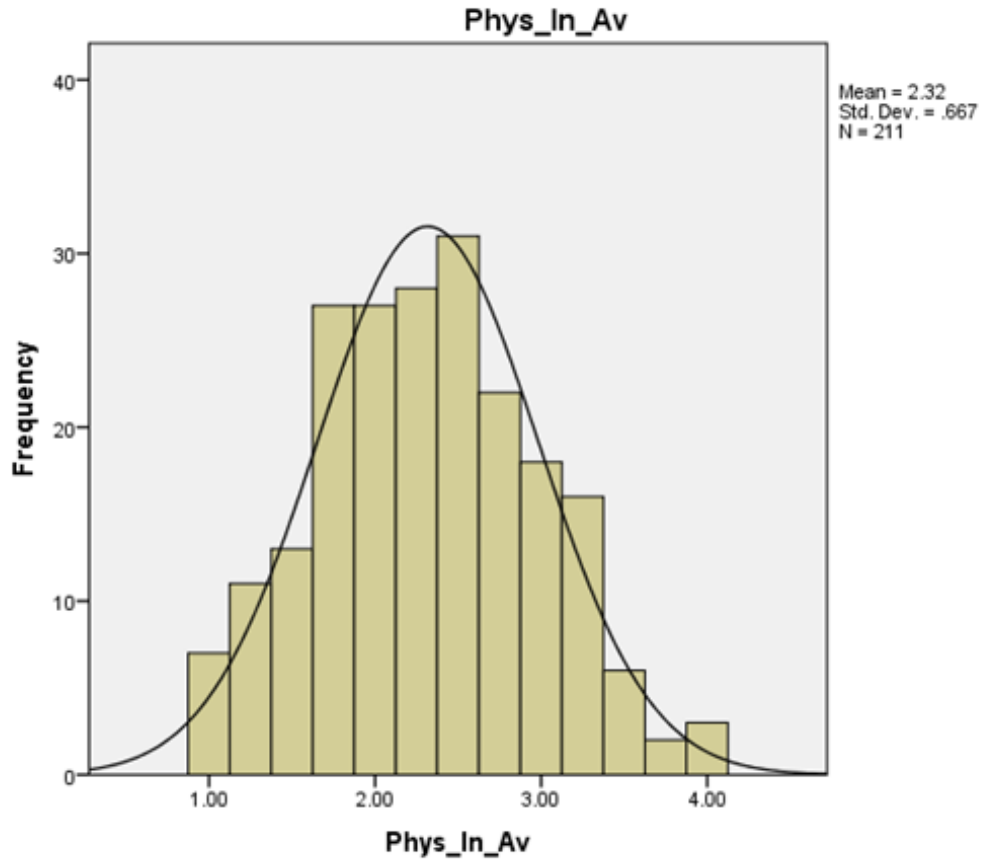
*Participant's mean levels of emotional independence*



*Note.* Emot\_In\_Av = Emotional Independence Average

## APPENDIX H

*Participant's mean levels of physical independence*



*Note.* Phys\_In\_Av = Physical Independence Average