

College Students' Adjustment: The Role of Parent–College Student Expectation Discrepancies and Communication Reciprocity

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Received: 1 May 2007 / Accepted: 13 June 2007 / Published online: 6 July 2007
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Abstract Parents' influence on college students' adjustment is underestimated frequently. As college students often set goals based on their perceptions of their parents' expectations, discrepancies between college students' and their parents' expectations may be related to their adjustment. The purpose of this study was to examine parent–college student expectation discrepancies and communication reciprocity as predictors of college students' adjustment in a diverse sample of 69 male and 105 female freshmen and sophomores from a large southeastern university. A subsample of their mothers and fathers also participated in this study. Correlational results revealed that college students report experiencing lower levels of self-worth and adjustment when higher expectation discrepancies are present between themselves and their parents. Regression results also indicated that expectation discrepancies and college students' perceptions of communication reciprocity are important predictors of college students' self-worth and adjustment. Such findings suggested that teaching assertive communication skills to college students and their parents may serve as a means of promoting positive outcomes for college students.

Keywords College Students · Parents · Expectations · Communication · Adjustment

This manuscript is based in part on the dissertation of the first author, who was supervised by the second author.

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Introduction

Although college students are in the process of transitioning to a more independent way of living, their parents remain a strong influence in their lives but are often discounted as such. To emphasize the unique developmental tasks of those transitioning to adulthood, Arnett (2000) labeled individuals in this stage as *emerging adults*. This term is meant to describe individuals in this transitional period who range in age from 18 to 25 years and who are developing a new identity separate from that of their parents. Even as college students are seeking a new and separate identity, Youniss and Smollar (1985) stated that college students still view their parents as authority figures who have the right to set rules and expectations for their behavior. Thus, although college students are beginning to individuate from their parents, they still have a strong attachment to their parents, respect them, work for their approval, try to meet their expectations, and feel obligations as part of their family (Youniss and Smollar 1989). Although parents are influential in the lives of college students, few studies have examined the relationship between college students' perceptions of their parents' expectations and their adjustment to college life. As a result, this study examines the relationships among college students' own expectations, those of their parents, and their adjustment to college.

Although not examined recently, past literature includes the role of parents' influence in the context of college students' adjustment. For example, Weidman's (1989) undergraduate socialization model recognized and incorporated the impact of parents' socialization in students' adjustment to college. This model suggested that late adolescents' relationships with their parents are related to how they cope with normative pressures as well as their

career choices, values, and lifestyle preferences. In turn, these decisions are related to college students' social and academic success (Weidman 1989). More recent research supports such a hypothesis. For example, Silva et al. (in press) suggested that the earlier parenting that college students received from their mothers and fathers is related to their grade point averages in their college curriculum. Further, Dyson and Renk (2006) suggested that family stress is related to increased symptoms of depression in new college students, with avoidant coping possibly serving a partially mediating role. In other words, it may be the case that the stress experienced by college students is related to increased levels of avoidant coping, which, in turn, is related to increased symptoms of depression. Thus, as Weidman's (1989) model suggested, parents continue to be important in the lives of their college students.

For some late adolescents who are leaving home for the first time to attend college, parents may inadvertently instill unrealistic perceptions of their expectations by stressing the importance of education, success, and responsible social behavior to the detriment of the late adolescents' overall adjustment. Additionally, late adolescents' own issues may contribute to a skewed perspective of what they believe is expected of them, or they may be biased negatively when evaluating themselves (Rubel et al. 1994). Given such biases, the social desirability of late adolescents' responses regarding their parents' expectations should be included in any study of college students' perceptions of their parents' expectations and their own adjustment.

Regardless of how these unrealistic expectations are developed and perceived by college students, parents' expectations are of great concern to college students, with a significant number of college students reporting that parental expectations are a major personal stressor in their adjustment to college (Anderson and Yuenger 1987; Archer and Lamnin 1985). In fact, Archer and Lamnin (1985) reported that college students rate parental expectations and conflicts as their second most stressful problem, preceded only by intimate relationships. Duncan and Anderson (1986) also demonstrated that parental pressure is reported by 48% of college students receiving counseling at a university-based center. Further, Anderson and Yuenger (1987) reported that, of 425 cases at a university counseling clinic, 24% discuss problems with parents, particularly the process of becoming more independent. Similarly, Kagan and Squires (1984) reported that 10% of college students are worried about pleasing their parents very often and 5% are worried always.

Although college students indicate that parental expectations are worrisome to them, it may not be the expectations themselves that are most problematic. More recently, Wang and Heppner (2002) suggested that, although high

parental expectations may be linked to emotional distress, the discrepancy between college students' perceived self-performance and their perceptions of their parents' expectations would be a better predictor of college students' psychological adjustment. In fact, Wang and Heppner's (2002) study of 99 Taiwanese undergraduates suggested that how well college students feel they are living up to their parents' expectations correlates strongly with their psychological distress, whereas parent's actual expectations are not related to college students' emotional distress. Although there are likely to be cultural differences between Taiwanese college students and those attending college in the United States, these findings support interesting hypotheses regarding the role of parents' expectations for college students' adjustment. As these relationships have yet to be examined in American college students, it is important to examine the relationship between parent–college student expectation discrepancies and college students' adjustment.

Discrepancies and Potential Outcomes

Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987) offered one potential explanation for why discrepancies between parents' expectations and college students' perceptions of their parents' expectations might cause such emotional turmoil. This cognitive theory was developed with the notion that conflicting beliefs between the ideal self (i.e., attributes that individuals wish that they could possess), actual self (i.e., the attributes that individuals believe that they possess currently), and ought self (i.e., attributes that individuals believe they should or are obligated to possess) result in negative emotions. Although the connection between such discrepancies and negative emotions has been established (Higgins 1987), there has been a long-standing debate about the relationship between such discrepancies and adjustment. Although many early researchers believed that the discrepancy between the actual and ideal self has a theoretical link to self-esteem (Coopersmith 1967; Rosenberg 1979), little research has attempted to demonstrate this association.

One study could be located that addresses this association. Moretti and Higgins (1990) had 277 undergraduate students list their actual, ideal, and ought attributes and look for synonymous matching attributes between their own listed attributes and those that they believed others would list for them. The findings of this study suggested that college students' own ratings of their actual attributes correlate with their self-esteem. Hierarchical regression results from this study also showed that positive synonymous matches between college students' actual and ideal selves are predictive of high self-esteem, whereas mismatches are predictive of low self-esteem (Moretti and

Higgins 1990). Some studies also have extended such findings to parents' expectations. For example, Robinson (1992) reported that parental approval (i.e., a perceived meeting of parents' expectations) is linked to self-esteem. Research also suggested that models that employ approval as a predicted cause of self-esteem or self-worth fit well (Harter et al. 1992).

Given findings such as these, expectation discrepancies may be particularly relevant to the performance of college students. When college students' self-performance (i.e., their actual self) does not appear to match their parents' expectations (i.e., parents' views of their college students' ideal or ought selves), a discrepancy exists that may be activated consistently by academic and social cues. Such constant priming of negative thoughts may result in a number of maladaptive states. For example, Beck's (1967) seminal cognitive theory suggested that the activation of schemas may lead to biased information processing and promote adjustment difficulties. Consistently, the inability of college students to meet their expectations results in a number of intense, unpleasant emotions (Higgins 1987). In attempts to relieve this distress, college students can create a dangerous pattern of using others' expectations as a measure of their own success. Ultimately, they may define themselves by how close they are to their parents' expectations rather than to their own standards and achievements over time (Higgins et al. 1986).

In relation to self-discrepancy theory and past studies regarding parents' influence on college students' adjustment, it seems that expectations may be a valuable link in understanding why some students adjust well during the transition to college and others experience more problematic outcomes. Yet, there has been little recent research on the discrepancies between college students' perceptions of their self-performance, their perceptions of their parents' expectations, and their parents' actual expectations. Further, there has been little research on the role that these expectations may play in college students' adjustment, with the exception of Wang and Heppner's (2002) study of Taiwanese college students. As a result, these discrepancies and their relationship to college students' adjustment deserve further study.

The Role of Communication

To fully understand the relationship between parents' expectations and college students' adjustment, mechanisms that potentially could explain this relationship also should be identified and examined. One possible way that parents may remain informed about their late adolescents' development and share their expectations with them (and that is examined in this study) is through the communication reciprocity that occurs between parents and their late

adolescents (Youniss and Smollar 1985). In particular, communication may foster an attachment between parents and their late adolescents. These variables, in turn, may serve as predictors of lower negative affect (Laible et al. 2000) and better adjustment to college. For example, communication between parents and their late adolescents is linked more directly to late adolescents' self-esteem, academic success, and mental health (Hartos and Power 2000). Such relationships further suggested that communication reciprocity should be examined in the relationship between expectations and college students' adjustment.

Research also suggested that one way to prevent a decrement in college students' self-worth and adjustment would be to work directly on their communication skills (Spitzberg and Hurt 1987). Communication between parents and their college students about what is truly expected may promote a more accurate foundation for goals and for the judgment of current performance. Such communication also may foster the beginnings of a more open relationship that would provide support and assistance during times of stress. This alternative may not only diminish perceived expectation discrepancies related to college students' adjustment but may be important for other significant life events as well. Studies are just beginning to examine the importance of communication in conveying expectations. There are various aspects of communication that may be studied (e.g., frequency, assertiveness, expressiveness, empathy, supportiveness; Rubin and Martin 1994). The primary focus of the current study will be on college students' perceptions of communication reciprocity between their parents and themselves (Wintre et al. 1995).

To support this line of research, Cutrona et al. (1994) reported that late adolescents whose parents communicate their interests and concerns experience more academic success. Pancer et al. (1995) also suggested that college students whose parents discuss issues openly have better university adjustment. Finally, Wintre and Yaffe (2000) demonstrated that mutual reciprocity is a significant predictor of college adjustment for males, whereas discussing university life is a predictor of adjustment for females. Both factors act as mediators between the effects of parenting style and college adjustment (Wintre and Yaffe 2000). Thus, communication may be a potentially important component of the parent–college student relationship, particularly during difficult times of adjustment.

The Current Study

Although it is apparent that parents' influence plays a major role throughout childhood and adolescence, it often is discounted when examining the college students. College students have reached the chronological age required by society to handle adult responsibilities, make adult

decisions, and live independently without parental assistance. For these reasons, there is a gap in the literature in the examination of parents' influence and the parent–college student relationship (Wang and Heppner 2002; Weidman 1989). The absence of this literature is unfortunate, particularly as such research may help identify factors that facilitate college adjustment.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the role of expectation discrepancies and communication reciprocity as predictors of college students' self-worth and adjustment to college. Due to the potential bias in college students' reports (Rubel et al. 1994), social desirability will be entered first into all regression analyses as a control variable. Previous studies have established the negative impact of parents' expectations on college students (Anderson and Yuenger 1987; Archer and Lammin 1985; Duncan and Anderson 1986; Wang and Heppner 2002). Based on this literature, it was hypothesized that discrepancies between college students' perceptions of their parents' expectations and college students' self-performance and between parents' actual expectations and their ratings of their college student's performance would be significant predictors of lower self-worth and more adjustment difficulties in first and second year college students. Finally, higher rates of communication reciprocity between parents and their college students have been linked to academic success and better college adjustment (Cutrona et al. 1994; Pancer et al. 1995; Wintre and Yaffe 2000). Due to these findings, it was expected that communication reciprocity would serve as an important predictor of college students' self-worth and adjustment to college.

Method

Participants

The sample for the current study included 69 male and 105 female freshmen and sophomores from large southeastern university. Power analyses suggested that 85 participants would be needed for regression analyses with four variables (the most complex analysis used in this study), a medium effect size, and an alpha of .05 (Cohen 1992). Thus, the number of participants should be sufficient to test the hypotheses proposed here regarding the measures completed by college students. All participants were solicited from undergraduate psychology classes and offered extra credit for their participation. The mean age for male participants was 18.49 years ($SD = .93$) and for female participants was 18.47 years ($SD = .71$). Ethnicity for the entire sample was reported as follows: 68.1% Caucasian, 15.4% Hispanic, 7.1% African American, 4.9% Asian American, 0.5% Native American, and 3.8% described their

ethnicity as "Other." Students' living situations varied, with 42.3% living in off-campus apartments or houses, 40.1% living in on-campus dorms or apartments, and 17.6% living with family. College students reported that 42.4% of their parents pay for all of their expenses, 26.7% of their parents pay for more than half of their expenses, 16.9% of the students pay for more than half of their own expenses, and 14.0% of students pay for all of their own expenses.

Wang and Heppner (2002) suggested that future studies in this area might benefit from gathering information regarding actual parents' expectations to investigate further discrepancies. Therefore, college students' parents were enlisted as participants as well. After receiving permission from the students who participated in the study, their mothers and fathers were contacted by mail and asked to participate. Of those parents who completed and returned the packets, 138 were mothers, and 92 were fathers. In total, there were 90 mothers and fathers from the same family who completed and returned packets about their college students; the remaining 48 mothers and 2 fathers were not linked in any way. An additional 10 parents were alternative figures (e.g., grandparents) and were omitted from the current study.

As data from mothers and fathers were used independently in the majority of the analyses, the demographic information reported here includes that reported by all 138 mothers and 92 fathers. Eighty-seven percent of these parents reported that they still live in the same household with one another. The mean age for mothers was 46.07 years ($SD = 4.81$) and for fathers was 49.77 years ($SD = 4.92$).

Ethnicity for mothers was reported as follows: 72.3% Caucasian, 12.3% Hispanic, 6.9% African American, 3.8% Asian American, 0.8% Native American, and 3.8% some "Other" ethnicity. Mothers varied in their marital status, with 79.2% reporting that they were married, 15.4% were divorced, 3.1% were separated, 1.5% were widowed, and 0.8% were single. Their level of education also varied (i.e., 14.6% high school diploma or less, 10.0% vocational training, 34.6% some college, 25.4% bachelor's degree, 13.8% master's degree, and 1.5% doctoral degree). Yearly household income for mothers was variable (i.e., 15.6% made less than \$40,000, 22.4% made between \$40,000 and 70,000, 21.7% made between \$70,000 and \$100,000, 10.4% made over \$100,000, and 29.9% indicated their household income was unknown).

Ethnicity for fathers was reported as follows: 80.0% Caucasian, 9.4% Hispanic, 4.7% African American, 2.4% Asian American, and 3.5% some "Other" ethnicity. Fathers varied in their marital status, with 92.9% reporting that they were married, 3.6% were divorced, and 3.6% were single. Their level of education also varied (i.e., 14.5% high school diploma or less, 2.4% vocational

training, 31.3% some college, 27.7% bachelor's degree, 14.5% master's degree, and 9.6% doctoral degree). Yearly household income for fathers was variable (i.e., 6.6% made less than \$40,000, 18.7% made between \$40,000 and 70,000, 25.3% made between \$70,000 and \$100,000, 12.1% made over \$100,000, and 37.3% indicated that their household income was unknown).

Measures

Living up to Parental Expectations Inventory (LPEI; Wang and Heppner 2002). This measure consists of two 32-item lists used to assess undergraduate college students' Perceived Parental Expectations (PPE) and their Perceived Self-Performance (PSP). The discrepancy between these two lists results in the Living up to Parental Expectation Score (LPE). There are three subscales: Personal Maturity (e.g., "I am modest and polite"), Academic Achievement (e.g., "My academic performance makes my parents proud"), and Dating Concerns (e.g., "I do not seriously date anyone that my parents do not like"). College student participants rated how likely it was that they would comply with or achieve particular behaviors on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all expected) to 6 (very strongly expected). Total scores range from 32 to 192, with higher scores indicating higher expectations or better performance. Adequate internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and discriminant and construct validity (e.g., the various subscales of the LPEI correlated meaningfully with scales of depression, anxiety, and trait anger scores) have been demonstrated previously in a sample of 392 Taiwanese undergraduate college students (Wang and Heppner 2002). As this measure has not been used previously with American college students, there were no psychometric properties available for such a sample. When administered to American college students, the current study found that the internal consistency of their scores was acceptable (i.e., PPE = .91, PSP = .90, and LPE = .92).

In addition, similar 32-item lists using items identical to those used on the LPEI were made appropriate to elicit parents' actual expectations of their college student (e.g., I expect my child to...) and parents' evaluation of their college students' current performance (e.g., My child currently...). The addition of these parent measures provided the parents' actual expectations and the parents' current performance ratings of their college students. The current study found that the internal consistency for the mothers' scores were adequate and were as follows: mothers' Parent Perceived Performance (M-PPP) = .89, mothers' Parent Actual Expectations (M-PAE) = .93, and mothers' Living Up to Parental Expectations (M-LPE) = .93. The internal consistency for the fathers' scores were adequate and were as follows: fathers' Parent Perceived Performance

(F-PPP) = .91, fathers' Parent Actual Expectations (F-PAE) = .93, and fathers' Living up to Parental Expectations (F-LPE) = .94.

The Perception of Parental Reciprocity Scale (POPRS; Wintre et al. 1995). This measure was designed to investigate adolescents/young adults' perceptions of communication reciprocity between themselves and their parents. The measure consists of 43 items (e.g., "I seldom consider discussing my problems with my mother/father"), which ask college student participants to respond to questions on a 6-point Likert scale of agreeability. Total scores range from 43 to 258, with higher scores indicating higher communication reciprocity. For college students in a previous study, the internal consistency and the test-retest reliability of their scores were reported to be .94 and .95, respectively. Substantial discriminant, convergent, criterion, and construct validity were demonstrated in a previous study (Wintre et al. 1995). In the current study, internal consistency for college students' scores was good (.94).

In addition, this measure was used to elicit parents' perceptions of the communication reciprocity between themselves and their college students. Adding these parent measures allowed for a comparison of communication reciprocity based on both the perceptions of college students and their parents. In the current study, the internal consistency for mothers' and fathers' scores was good (.92 and .92, respectively).

Self-Perception Profile for College Students (SPPCS; Neemann and Harter 1986). The SPPCS is comprised of thirteen subscales used to assess competencies and self-worth. For this study, only the 6-item Global Self-Worth (GSW) subscale was utilized. The GSW subscale has been correlated significantly with social acceptance, appearance, job competence, parent relationships, and romantic relationships (Neemann and Harter 1986). Each item (e.g., "Some students like the kind of person that they are BUT Other students wish they were different") is scored from 1 to 4. Thus, the GSW subscale score range is from 6 to 24, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-worth. In a previous study of college students, the internal consistency for the GSW was .82. In the current study, the internal consistency of college students' scores was adequate (.88).

Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker and Siryk 1989). This 67-item measure (e.g., "I know why I'm in college and what I want out of it") was used to assess college students' adaptation to college life. College student participants were asked to rate each statement on a Likert scale from 1 (applies very closely to me) to 9 (does not apply to me at all). Total scores range from 67 to 603, with higher scores indicating better adjustment to college life. In a previous study, the mean for 188 freshmen from a large midwestern public college was

425.9 (Kaczmarek et al. 1990). The measure is comprised of four subscales, including academic, social, personal-emotional, and goal commitment-institutional attachment scales, but only the general scale was utilized for this study. This measure was shown to have high internal reliability and substantial convergent validity in a population of freshman college students (Baker and Siryk 1989). In the current study, the internal consistency for the general scale score was good (.95).

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-C SDS; Crowne and Marlowe 1960). The M-C SDS was used to assess college student participants' levels of social desirability. The scale consists of 33 items (e.g., "I never go out of my way to help someone"), asking college student participants to respond "True" or "False" to each statement. Total scores range from 0 to 33, with higher scores indicating higher levels of social desirability. Based on a college student sample in a previous study, the internal consistency was reported at .88. Construct validity has been established, with significant correlations between M-C SDS scores, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, and the Edwards Social Desirability Scale (Crowne and Marlowe 1960). In the current study, the internal consistency for the M-C SDS scores was sufficient (.71). Although this internal consistency value was lower than those on the other measures used in this study, it was deemed acceptable as this measure asks students to indicate if they would engage in a variety of different behaviors.

Procedure

After receiving approval from the Internal Review Board at the university where the study was conducted, college students were solicited to participate in data collection sessions. College students were asked to read and sign a consent form. They then were provided a packet of questionnaires to complete independently, including a demographics questionnaire, the discrepancy measure, the POPRS, the SPPCS, the SACQ, and the M-C SDS, as well as other measures not examined here. Due to the sensitive and potential priming effects of the discrepancies, the adjustment measures were given prior to the discrepancy measure (Higgins 1987; Strauman and Higgins 1987). Upon completion of the measures, college students were debriefed on the purpose of the study and given contact information for further questions or concerns regarding college adjustment. In order to obtain parents' actual expectations, college student participants were asked to provide permission for their parents to be contacted so that they could complete a parent packet. When college students provided permission for their parents to be contacted, their parents were sent a consent form, POPRS, LPEI, and

debriefing form by mail. They were asked to return the packet via a pre-paid envelope.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

To provide a measure of participants' relative standing on each of the measures, means and standard deviations were calculated. The results of these analyses are provided in Table 1. Based on these means, college students exhibited nonclinical levels of self-worth, college adjustment, and social desirability. These findings indicated that the participants recruited for this study were well adjusted relative to the normative samples for each of these measures. With regard to communication reciprocity, college students perceived a high level between themselves and their parents. Mothers and fathers also endorsed high perceptions of communication reciprocity between themselves and their college students.

Table 1 Means and standard deviations for college student and parent variables

Variable	M	SD
<i>College students' functioning</i>		
Self-worth (GSW from SPPCS)	18.81	3.98
College Adjustment (SACQ)	396.14	71.26
Social Desirability (M-C SDS)	17.05	4.79
<i>College students' perceptions</i>		
Perceived Communication with Parents (POPRS)	183.16	33.71
Perceived Parental Expectations (PPE)	143.66	19.37
Perceived Self-Performance (PSP)	126.93	20.86
Living up to Parental Expectations (LPE)	-16.77	23.18
<i>Mothers' perceptions & expectations</i>		
Perceived Communication with Student (M-POPRS)	196.43	25.49
Parent Actual Expectations (PAE)	138.06	21.59
Parent Perceived (Student) Performance (PPP)	141.72	18.70
Living up to Parental Expectations (M-LPE)	1.44	21.63
<i>Fathers' perceptions & expectations</i>		
Perceived Communication with Student (F-POPRS)	193.48	23.91
Parent Actual Expectations (PAE)	138.29	21.52
Parent Perceived (Student) Performance (PPP)	137.91	19.72
Living up to parental expectations (F-LPE)	.07	21.89

College students' means for their perceptions of their parents' expectations and their own perceived self-performance on the LPEI were both substantially above the midpoint, but the discrepancy between these two measures suggested that college students did not believe that they were performing up to their parents' expectations. Mothers' mean scores on the LPEI indicated that they had high expectations of their college students and believed that they were performing above their expectations, resulting in a positive mean for mothers' perceptions that their college students were living up to their expectations. Fathers reported particularly high expectations of their college students. On average, fathers felt that their college students exceeded these expectations by a small margin, resulting in a positive mean on the LPEI for fathers' perceptions that their college students were living up to their expectations.

T-Tests

Paired sample *t*-test analyses were used to examine whether there were significant differences in the mean scores between college students' and their parents' perceived level of communication (POPRS), expectations (students = PPE, mothers = M-PAE, fathers = F-PAE), performance (students = PSP, mothers = M-PPP, fathers = F-PPP), and how well college students were living up to their parents'

Table 2 Differences between students' and parents' POPRS and LPEI ratings

Variable 1	Variable 2	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>Communication</i>			
Student POPRS	Mother POPRS	108	-.72
Student POPRS	Father POPRS	67	1.07
Mother POPRS	Father POPRS	60	1.37
<i>Expectations</i>			
Student PPE	Mother PAE	111	2.17*
Student PPE	Father PAE	71	2.81**
Mother PAE	Father PAE	69	.18
<i>Performance</i>			
Student PSP	Mother PPP	94	-6.68***
Student PPE	Father PPP	61	-3.83***
Mother PPP	Father PPP	54	1.61
<i>Expectation discrepancies</i>			
Student LPE	Mother LPE	88	-6.13***
Student LPE	Father LPE	58	-6.93***
Mother LPE	Father LPE	50	.00

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001

POPRS = Perceived Communication Reciprocity; PPE = Perceived Parental Expectations; PAE = Parent Actual Expectations; PSP = Perceived Self-Performance; PPP = Parent Perceived Performance of Students; LPE = Living up to Parental Expectations

expectations (students = LPE, mothers = M-LPE, fathers = F-LPE). Results for these analyses are provided in Table 2. Results revealed no significant differences in communication ratings among college students, their mothers, and their fathers, signifying a concurrence between college students and their parents in communication reciprocity. All three subscales of the LPEI for mother–student dyads and father–student dyads yielded significant differences between their mean scores. These results indicated that college students did not agree with their mothers or fathers in their expectations, current performance, or how well they were living up to their parents' expectations. In contrast, there were no significant differences on the LPEI subscales when comparing mothers' and fathers' mean scores, revealing an agreement among parents in their expectations and their perceptions of their college students' performance.

Overview of Correlational and Regression Analyses

Correlations and regression analyses were used to investigate the relationships among the variables examined in this study. Correlational analyses between college students' and their parents' scores are provided in Table 3. Results of the regression analyses are provided in Table 4 for college students' LPE scores, in Tables 5 and 6 for the discrepancies between M-PAE and F-PAE and students' PSP, respectively, and in Tables 7 and 8 for M-LPE and F-LPE scores, respectively.

Hierarchical regressions using each of the discrepancies noted above were conducted separately for self-worth and adjustment. College students' social desirability score was entered in Block 1 so that this variable could be controlled in the analyses. Block 2 consisted of the respective expectation discrepancy scores. Block 3 consisted of the communication reciprocity variables, including both college students' and either mothers' or fathers' perceptions, depending on the analysis. Due to missing data for some analyses, some of the results should be interpreted with caution due to low power.

Students' Perceptions of Living up to Parental Expectations

Self-Worth

When examined for college students and mothers, a hierarchical regression analysis examining college students' self-worth showed that social desirability contributed significantly to the prediction of college students' self-worth in Block 1. In particular, greater social desirability was related to higher levels of self-worth. In Block 2, the

Table 3 Correlations of college students and parental ratings

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
<i>Student ratings of own functioning</i>									
1. Communication with parents	–								
2. Self-worth	.48**	–							
3. College Adaptation	.29**	.60**	–						
4. Social desirability	.25**	.31**	.41**	–					
<i>Students' ratings of perceived parental expectations and self-performance</i>									
5. Perceived self-performance	.48**	.52**	.52**	.36**	–				
6. Perceived Parental Expectations	–.01	–.02	–.00	.00	.34**	–			
7. Living up to Parental Expectations	.51**	.49**	.47**	.34**	.61**	–.54**	–		
<i>Mothers' ratings of communication, actual expectations, and perceived student performance</i>									
8. Mothers' communication with student	.49**	.30**	.17	.01	.44**	.14	.26*	–	
9. Mothers' perceived performance	.24*	.21*	.35*	.11	.49**	.13	.31*	.53**	
10. Mother's actual expectations	–.05	–.02	–.02	–.10	.14	.22**	–.06	.26*	
11. Mothers' living up to parent expectations	.19	.14	.32*	.16	.26*	–.16	.38**	.22	
12. Discrepancy between mothers' actual expectations and students' self-performance	–.41**	–.36**	–.51**	–.31**	–.64**	–.08	–.53**	–.13	
<i>Fathers' ratings of communication, actual expectations, and perceived student performance</i>									
13. Fathers' communication with student	.36**	.21	.10	.05	.16	.02	.14	.41**	
14. Fathers' perceived performance	.19	.18	.21	.14	.48**	.28*	.21	.49**	
15. Fathers' actual expectations	.03	.09	–.08	–.08	.23*	.40**	–.17	.25	
16. Fathers' living up to parent expectations	.15	.12	.27	.22	.29*	–.18	.47**	.18	
17. Discrepancy between fathers' actual expectations and students' self-performance	–.47**	–.47**	–.64**	–.38**	–.66**	.03	–.63**	–.23	
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<i>Student ratings of own functioning</i>									
1. Communication with parents									
2. Self-worth									
3. College Adaptation									
4. Social desirability									
<i>Students' ratings of perceived parental expectations and self-performance</i>									
5. Perceived self-performance									
6. Perceived parental expectations									
7. Living up to Parental Expectations									
<i>Mothers' ratings of communication, actual expectations, and perceived student performance</i>									
8. Mothers' communication with student									
9. Mothers' perceived performance	–								
10. Mothers' actual expectations	.43**	–							
11. Mothers' living up to parent expectations	.44**	–.62**	–						
12. Discrepancy between mothers' actual expectations and students' self-performance	–.04	.67**	–.71**	–					

Table 3 continued

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Fathers' ratings of communication, actual expectations, and perceived student performance</i>								
13. Fathers' communication with student	.25	.22	.24	-.06	–			
14. Fathers' perceived performance	.65**	.15	.45**	-.29	.33*			
15. Fathers' actual expectations	.21	.38**	-.20	.15	.11	.43**	–	
16. Fathers' living up to parent expectations	.41**	-.24	.65**	-.49**	.29	.47**	.60**	–
17. Discrepancy between fathers' actual expectations and students' self-performance	-.21	.17	-.31*	.69**	.05	-.01	.58**	-.63

Note. * $p < .05$ (2-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed); n 's = 34–176 for these analyses, with correlations involving father variables having lower n 's and those involving college student variables having higher n 's

regression equation remained significant when college students' score for LPE was added, and college students' score for LPE became the only significant predictor. In Block 3 with the entry of college students' and mothers' communication reciprocity, the regression equation remained significant. With the addition of the communication reciprocity scores, college students' scores for LPE remained a significant predictor. College students' perceptions of their mothers' communication reciprocity also served as a significant predictor. As the beta weight related to college students' scores for LPE decreased in Block 3, communication reciprocity may be acting as a partial mediator.

When examined for college students and fathers, a hierarchical regression analysis examining college students' self-worth showed that social desirability predicted significantly college students' self-worth in Block 1. In particular, greater social desirability was related to higher levels of self-worth. In Block 2, the regression equation remained significant when college students' scores for LPE was added; college students' scores for LPE became the only significant predictor. In Block 3 with the entry of college students' and fathers' communication reciprocity, the regression equation remained significant, but only college students' score for LPE remained a significant predictor.

College Adjustment

When examined for college students and mothers, hierarchical regression analysis revealed that social desirability predicted significantly college students' adjustment in Block 1. In particular, greater social desirability was related to higher levels of adjustment. In Block 2, the regression equation remained significant. In this case, LPE became a significant predictor, with higher levels of this

discrepancy being related to higher levels of adjustment. In Block 3, the regression equation remained significant with the addition of the communication reciprocity variables. Only college students' LPE discrepancy served as a significant predictor.

When examined for college students and fathers, hierarchical regression analysis revealed that social desirability predicted significantly college students' adjustment in Block 1. In Block 2, the regression equation remained significant when college students' LPE discrepancy was added. In this Block, the LPE discrepancy served as a significant predictor. In Block 3, the regression equation remained significant with the addition of the communication reciprocity variables. Again, the discrepancy served as a significant predictor, and students' perception of their communication reciprocity with their fathers became significant. As the beta weight related to college students' scores for LPE decreased in Block 3, communication reciprocity may be acting as a partial mediator.

Discrepancy Between Parents' Actual Expectations and Students' Self-Performance

Self-Worth

For mother–college student dyads (Table 5), a hierarchical regression found in Block 1 that social desirability predicted significantly college students' self-worth. The regression equation remained significant in Block 2 when the discrepancy was added. In particular, only the discrepancy served as a significant predictor. The regression equation also remained significant in Block 3 when the communication reciprocity variables were added, with both the discrepancy and college students' perceptions of their mothers' communication reciprocity serving as significant predictors. As the beta weight related to college students'

Table 4 Hierarchical regressions for students' perceptions of living up to parental expectations

Variables	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
Self-worth			
<i>Mother Data</i>			
Block 1 [$F(1,101) = 6.69, p < .01$] $R^2 = .06, n = 102$			
Social desirability	.23	.25	2.59**
Block 2 [$F(2,100) = 17.66, p < .001$] $R^2 = .26, \Delta R^2 = .20$			
Social desirability	.12	.12	1.38
Living up to Parental Expectations	.00	.46	5.19***
Block 3 [$F(4,98) = 11.19, p < .001$] $R^2 = .31, \Delta R^2 = .05$			
Social desirability	.12	.13	1.49
LPE	.00	.35	3.68***
Students' Communication Reciprocity	.00	.26	2.51**
Mothers' Communication Reciprocity	-.00	-.01	-.14
<i>Father data</i>			
Block 1 [$F(1,45) = 4.32, p < .04$] $R^2 = .21, n = 46$			
Social desirability	5.11	.30	2.08*
Block 2 [$F(2,44) = 10.57, p < .001$] $R^2 = .22, \Delta R^2 = .01$			
Social desirability	3.36	.20	1.54
Living up to Parental Expectations	1.62	.50	3.93***
Block 3F [$F(4,42) = 5.07, p < .002$] $R^2 = .23, \Delta R^2 = .01$			
Social desirability	3.38	.20	1.50
Living up to Parental Expectations	1.66	.51	3.57***
Students' Communication Reciprocity	-.20	-.04	-.26
Fathers' Communication Reciprocity	.19	.03	.17
College Adjustment			
<i>Mother Data</i>			
Block 1 [$F(1,65) = 5.47, p < .02$] $R^2 = .09, n = 66$			
Social desirability	-.46	.20	-.28*
Block 2 [$F(2,64) = 10.53, p < .001$] $R^2 = .32, \Delta R^2 = .23$			
Social desirability	-.31	.18	-.18
Living up to Parental Expectations	-.13	.03	-.42***
Block 3 [$F(4,62) = 8.49, p < .001$] $R^2 = .33, \Delta R^2 = .01$			
Social desirability	-.32	.17	-.20
Living up to Parental Expectations	-.00	.04	-.23
Students' communication	-.10	.03	-.43**
Mothers' communication	.00	.04	.15
<i>Father data</i>			
Block 1 [$F(1,71) = 7.11, p < .01$] $R^2 = .09, n = 72$			
Social desirability	.28	.30	2.67*
Block 2 [$F(2,70) = 13.80, p < .001$] $R^2 = .28, \Delta R^2 = .19$			
Social desirability	.18	.19	1.83
Living up to Parental Expectations	.00	.45	4.33***
Block 3 [$F(4,68) = 9.21, p < .001$] $R^2 = .35, \Delta R^2 = .07$			
Social desirability	.14	.15	1.49
Living up to Parental Expectations	.00	.39	3.76***
Students' Communication Reciprocity	.00	.27	2.47*
Fathers' Communication Reciprocity	.00	.01	.07

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5 Hierarchical regressions for the discrepancy between mothers' actual expectations (PAE) and students' perceived self-performance (PSP)

Variables	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
<i>Self-Worth</i>			
Block 1 [<i>F</i> (1,96) = 7.54, <i>p</i> < .007] $R^2 = .07$, <i>n</i> = 97			
Social desirability	.25	.27	2.74**
Block 2 [<i>F</i> (2,95) = 9.53, <i>p</i> < .001] $R^2 = .17$, $\Delta R^2 = .10$			
Social desirability	.17	.18	1.89
Discrepancy between M-PAE & PSP	-.00	-.32	-3.28***
Block 3 [<i>F</i> (4,93) = 10.53, <i>p</i> < .001] $R^2 = .31$, $\Delta R^2 = .14$			
Social desirability	.14	.16	1.71
Discrepancy between M-PAE & PSP	-.00	-.19	-2.00*
Students' Communication Reciprocity	.11	.39	3.74***
Mothers' Communication Reciprocity	.00	.03	.32
<i>College Adjustment</i>			
Block 1 [<i>F</i> (1,43) = 3.93, <i>p</i> < .05] $R^2 = .08$, <i>n</i> = 44			
Social desirability	5.03	.29	1.98*
Block 2 [<i>F</i> (2,42) = 7.14, <i>p</i> < .002] $R^2 = .25$, $\Delta R^2 = .17$			
Social desirability	1.69	.10	.66
Discrepancy between M-PAE & PSP	-1.26	-.46	-3.09**
Block 3 [<i>F</i> (4,40) = 3.96, <i>p</i> < .008] $R^2 = .28$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$			
Social desirability	1.62	.09	.63
Discrepancy between M-PAE & PSP	-1.21	-.44	-2.87**
Students' Communication Reciprocity	.40	.08	.46
Mothers' Communication Reciprocity	.88	.12	.74

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Table 6 Hierarchical regressions for the discrepancy between fathers' actual expectations (PAE) and students' perceived self-performance (PSP)

Variables	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
<i>Self-Worth</i>			
Block 1 [<i>F</i> (1,65) = 10.31, <i>p</i> < .002] $R^2 = .14$, <i>n</i> = 66			
Social desirability	.34	.37	3.21**
Block 2 [<i>F</i> (2,64) = 9.15, <i>p</i> < .001] $R^2 = .22$, $\Delta R^2 = .08$			
Social desirability	.25	.28	2.38*
Discrepancy between M-PAE & PSP	-.00	-.31	-2.65**
Block 3 [<i>F</i> (4,62) = 7.02, <i>p</i> < .001] $R^2 = .31$, $\Delta R^2 = .09$			
Social desirability	.24	.26	2.26*
Discrepancy between M-PAE & PSP	-.00	-.21	-1.82
Students' Communication Reciprocity	.00	.27	2.16*
Fathers' Communication Reciprocity	.00	.09	.79
<i>College adjustment</i>			
Block 1 [<i>F</i> (1,33) = 8.41, <i>p</i> < .007] $R^2 = .20$, <i>n</i> = 34			
Social desirability	9.52	.45	2.90**
Block 2 [<i>F</i> (2,32) = 11.78, <i>p</i> < .001] $R^2 = .42$, $\Delta R^2 = .22$			
Social desirability	3.48	.17	1.05
Discrepancy between M-PAE & PSP	-1.84	-.55	-3.50***
Block 3 [<i>F</i> (4,30) = 6.44, <i>p</i> < .001] $R^2 = .46$, $\Delta R^2 = .04$			
Social desirability	3.40	.16	1.02
Discrepancy between M-PAE & PSP	-1.66	-.50	-3.08**
Students' Communication Reciprocity	1.28	.22	1.45
Fathers' Communication Reciprocity	-.66	-.09	-.61

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Table 7 Hierarchical regressions for mothers' living up to parental expectations scale (M-LPE)

Variables	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
<i>Self-Worth</i>			
Block 1 [$F(1,82) = 6.34, p < .01$] $R^2 = .07, n = 83$			
Social desirability	.28	.27	2.52**
Block 2 [$F(2,81) = 4.11, p < .02$] $R^2 = .09, \Delta R^2 = .02$			
Social desirability	.26	.25	2.30*
Discrepancy M-LPE	.00	.14	1.35
Block 3 [$F(4,79) = 7.75, p < .001$] $R^2 = .28, \Delta R^2 = .19$			
Social desirability	.16	.15	1.52
Discrepancy M-LPE	.00	.03	.32
Students' Communication Reciprocity	.13	.47	4.27***
Mothers' Communication Reciprocity	-.00	-.01	-.09
<i>College adjustment</i>			
Block 1 [$F(1,36) = .92, p < .35$] $R^2 = .03, n = 37$			
Social desirability	3.06	.16	.96
Block 2 [$F(2,35) = 1.59, p < .22$] $R^2 = .08, \Delta R^2 = .05$			
Social desirability	2.19	.11	.68
Discrepancy M-LPE	1.00	.25	1.50
Block 3 [$F(4,33) = 1.44, p < .24$] $R^2 = .15, \Delta R^2 = .07$			
Social desirability	2.01	.10	.63
Discrepancy M-LPE	1.00	.25	1.37
Students' Communication Reciprocity	1.71	.30	1.51
Mothers' Communication Reciprocity	-.80	-.09	-.44

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

scores for the discrepancy decreased in Block 3, communication reciprocity may be acting as a partial mediator.

For father–college student dyads (Table 6), a hierarchical regression analysis found in Block 1 that social desirability predicted significantly college students' self-worth. The regression equation remained significant in Block 2 when the discrepancy between fathers' actual expectations and college students' perceived self-performance was added. In this Block, both social desirability and the discrepancy served as significant predictors of college students' self-worth. The regression equation also remained significant in Block 3 when communication reciprocity was added to the equation. In this Block, social desirability and college students' perceptions of their fathers' communication reciprocity served as significant predictors. As the beta weight related to college students' scores for the discrepancy was no longer significant in Block 3, communication reciprocity may be acting as a mediator.

College Adjustment

A hierarchical regression analysis for mother variables (Table 5) found in Block 1 that social desirability predicted significantly college students' adjustment. In Block 2, the regression equation remained significant when the discrepancy was added. Only the discrepancy served as a

significant predictor. In Block 3, the regression equation remained significant when the communication reciprocity variables were added. Again, only the discrepancy served as a significant predictor.

With regard to fathers (Table 6), a hierarchical regression analysis found in Block 1 that social desirability predicted significantly college students' adjustment. In Block 2, the regression equation remained significant when the discrepancy was added. In this block, only the discrepancy was a significant predictor. In Block 3, the regression equation remained significant when the communication reciprocity variables were added. In this Block, only the discrepancy served as a significant predictor.

Parents' Living Up to Expectations

Self-Worth

For mother–college student dyads (Table 7), a hierarchical regression analysis found in Block 1 that social desirability predicted significantly college students' self-worth. In Block 2, the regression equation remained significant when the discrepancy was added; however, only social desirability served as a significant predictor. In Block 3, the regression remained significant with the addition of the communication reciprocity variables. In this Block, only

college students’ perceptions of their mothers’ communication reciprocity served as a significant predictor.

For father–college student dyads (Table 8), a hierarchical regression analysis found in Block 1 that social desirability predicted significantly college students’ self-worth. In Block 2, the regression remained significant when the discrepancy was added; however, only social desirability served as a significant predictor. In Block 3, the regression also was significant when communication reciprocity was added. Although social desirability remained a significant predictor, college students’ perceptions of their fathers’ communication reciprocity also became a significant predictor.

College Adjustment

For mother–college student dyads (Table 7), a hierarchical regression analysis found in Block 1 that social desirability did not predict significantly college students’ adjustment to college. In Block 2, the regression equation also was not significant when the discrepancy was added. Finally, in Block 3, the regression equation was not significant with the addition of the communication reciprocity variables.

For father–college student dyads (Table 8), a hierarchical regression analysis found in Block 1 that social desirability predicted significantly college students’ adjustment. In Block 2, the regression equation was not

significant when the discrepancy was added. In Block 3, the regression equation became significant with the addition of the communication reciprocity variables. In this case, college students’ perceptions of their fathers’ communication reciprocity was a significant predictor.

Discussion

Although parents’ expectations provide standards for college students’ performance, discrepancies between such expectations and college students’ actual performance also have been related to the experience of significant distress (Higgins 1987). Findings from the current study supported those from previous research, in that college students who participated in this study experienced lower levels of self-worth and college adjustment when there were higher expectation discrepancies between themselves and their parents. Thus, results of this study revealed that various expectation discrepancies act as strong predictors for self-worth and adjustment, even in light of college students’ endorsements of social desirability. These findings warrant further exploration. In addition to exploring the discrepancies already identified by this study, future studies may consider measuring college students’ expectations of themselves. Discovering whether college students are more likely to evaluate their own performance against their own

Table 8 Hierarchical regressions for fathers’ Living up to Parental Expectations Scale (F-LPE)

Variables	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
<i>Self-Worth</i>			
Block 1 [<i>F</i> (1,60) = 9.45, <i>p</i> < .003] <i>R</i> ² = .14, <i>n</i> = 61			
Social desirability	.35	.37	3.07**
Block 2 [<i>F</i> (2,59) = 4.66, <i>p</i> < .01] <i>R</i> ² = .14, ΔR^2 = .00			
Social desirability	.34	.37	3.03**
Discrepancy F-LPE	.00	.02	.18
Block 3 [<i>F</i> (4,57) = 4.74, <i>p</i> < .003] <i>R</i> ² = .24, ΔR^2 = .10			
Social desirability	.29	.31	2.51*
Discrepancy F-LPE	-.00	-.02	-.16
Students’ communication reciprocity	.00	.29	2.22*
Fathers’ communication reciprocity	.00	.07	.55
<i>College adjustment</i>			
Block 1 [<i>F</i> (1,30) = 5.53, <i>p</i> < .03] <i>R</i> ² = .16, <i>n</i> = 31			
Social desirability	8.22	.40	2.35*
Block 2 [<i>F</i> (2,29) = 2.76, <i>p</i> < .08] <i>R</i> ² = .16, ΔR^2 = .00			
Social desirability	7.42	.36	1.80
Discrepancy F-LPE	.28	.07	.38
Block 3 [<i>F</i> (4,27) = 3.30, <i>p</i> < .03] <i>R</i> ² = .33, ΔR^2 = .17			
Social desirability	4.19	.20	1.03
Discrepancy F-LPE	1.09	.29	1.40
Students’ communication reciprocity	2.82	.47	2.60*
Fathers’ communication reciprocity	-1.78	-.24	-1.31

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001

expectations, possibly creating a living up to college students' expectations discrepancy, or against that of their perceived parental expectations could alter any clinical interventions that may be recommended for college students who are in distress.

With regard to the particular expectation discrepancies examined in this study, the results regarding college students' LPE discrepancy suggested that, when social desirability is lower and the LPE discrepancy (i.e., the discrepancy between college students' perceptions of their parents' expectations and their own perceived self-performance) is higher, college students' self-worth and college adjustment is lower. Although social desirability exhibited a strong relationship with college students' self-worth and college adjustment, this relationship did not prevent the discrepancy from being a significant predictor. In fact, the discrepancy between college students' perceptions of their parents' expectations and their own perceived self-performance showed a strong positive relationship to college students' self-worth and college adjustment. These findings are similar to those of Wang and Heppner's (2002) study, confirming that expectation discrepancies are an important predictor of college students' adjustment.

Discrepancies between parents' actual expectations and college students' self-performance were related to lower self-worth and more adjustment difficulty as well. This pattern may signify that college students judge their current performance on how well they believe they are meeting an ideal, whether it is based on their own or their parents' expectations of them. Further, the discrepancies between mothers' actual expectations and their ratings of their college students' performance were related to college students' adjustment. Based on Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory, it may be reasonable to suggest that this discrepancy was unrelated to students' college adjustment because it is composed of only mothers' perceptions and, therefore, fails to capture college students' conflicting beliefs of themselves (Higgins 1987). Given these findings, however, expectation discrepancies deserve further study as predictors of college students' adjustment.

The present study is among the first to explore the role of communication reciprocity as a predictor of college students' adjustment. Results of this study suggested that communication reciprocity between college students and their parents is a complex predictor of college students' adjustment, with college student perceptions predicting more consistently than parents' perceived level of communication across the expectation discrepancies examined in this study. Thus, it may not be the actual level of communication reciprocity that is important to college students' adjustment, but rather college students' perceptions of the communication reciprocity that they have with their parents that is important. The findings of this study

also provide preliminary support for communication reciprocity as a partial mediator in the relationship between certain expectation discrepancies and college students' self-worth and adjustment. These results strengthen the literature previously identifying communication as an important variable for diminishing college students' distress levels (Cutrona et al. 1994; Winter and Yaffe 2000).

In particular, communication reciprocity between college students and their parents may provide relief from adjustment difficulties, as college students' perceptions of higher communication reciprocity with their parents was related to higher levels of self-worth and adjustment to college. Further, *t*-test results showed a significant difference in the college students' and parents' perceived level of communication. These findings further suggest the importance of college students' perception of the communication with their parents. In addition, these findings suggested that teaching assertive communication skills to college students and their parents may be beneficial in diminishing the deleterious effects of perceiving expectations inaccurately. Such communication interventions warrant further investigation in the context of college students' perceptions of their parents' expectations.

Perhaps working with college students directly on creating realistic goals and formulating plans to reach those goals would assist in the prevention of unnecessary distress. Working on the communication between college students and their parents remains a more thorough approach to diminishing expectation discrepancies, however. To diminish ambiguity in parent–college student expectations, it could be suggested that college students develop concrete goals for themselves and that parents create reasonable expectations for their college students. Then, conversations between the parents and college students could be encouraged. Such a process also could help college students and their parents to develop a supportive bond, with both parties working and supporting each other to meet their potential during a transitional period such as that which occurs at the start of a college education. The potential for impacting this area positively is great.

The results of this study should be viewed within the context of its limitations. Limitations of the current study include its specific concentration on college students attending a large state university. Such a specific sample makes it difficult to generalize the results to other college samples. For instance, an examination of college students attending a private school may yield different results. Future studies may consider looking at differences between private and public college institutions. Further, it is possible that families that pay more for their college students' education have higher expectations for their college students or that college students who take out larger loans for college expect more from themselves. Smaller class sizes

also may indicate more personalized attention, yielding higher expectations placed on college students by their professors. In addition, a comparison of those students who were living at home versus those who were not living at home during their college experience was not undertaken in this study due to the low number of students who reported living at home in this sample. Such a variable may be related strongly to the relationship between parents' expectations, college students' perceptions of these expectations, and college students' adjustment.

Further, this study does not account for the expectations placed on emerging adults who forgo college and immediately enter the work force or choose different paths for life. It would be interesting to expand the sample of a study such as this one and compare the results for various chosen lifestyles. Any of these factors could be included to form a more complete picture of who and why higher expectations are placed on certain emerging adults. Within the college population, academic year (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) also may be investigated as a factor. According to Weidman (1984), the impact of expectation discrepancies for senior college students should be less than that of freshmen, so future studies may want to include a wider range of college students to determine whether correlations between expectation discrepancies and distress factors decrease as they increase in age or academic year.

Additionally, this study had difficulty soliciting adequate participation by the college students' fathers. This lack of participation lead to a deficit in information, resulting in several questions remaining unanswered and a missed opportunity for more cross-gender analyses. Investigating the differences between male and female college students among mothers' and fathers' expectations could be quite telling. For example, such a study could potentially tease out whether parents' actual expectations are different among male or female college students, whether parents' expect more from a same-sex or opposite-sex child, and whether communication reciprocity is perceived to be greater between same-sex or opposite-sex parent–college student dyads.

Despite the limitations of this study, the findings reported here represent a positive contribution to the literature on the effects of expectation discrepancies, particularly for college students. This age group was virtually overlooked when examining parents' influences in the developmental literature. The purpose of this study was to examine parent–college student expectation discrepancies and communication reciprocity as predictors for college students' adjustment. Results suggested that college students reported experiencing lower levels of self-worth and college adjustment when higher expectation discrepancies were present between themselves and their

parents. Results also suggested that college students' perceptions of communication reciprocity with their parents were related to higher levels of self-worth and college adjustment. Such findings suggested that teaching assertive communication skills to college students and their parents may assist in diminishing the deleterious effects of perceiving expectations inaccurately.

Acknowledgments Special thanks to Valerie Sims, Ph.D., Jack McGuire, Ph.D., and Mike Robinson, Ed.D., for their comments on an earlier version of this manuscript.

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