Individuals with ASD may engage in camouflaging behaviors to mask their symptoms, but this may negatively impact college adjustment (Parish-Morris et al., 2017; Schuck et al., 2019; Tubo-Funckeiro et al., 2021). Camouflaging behaviors include mimicking others’ body language and monitoring their face and body (Parish-Morris et al., 2017). Individuals may modulate their behavior to the extent that they feel like they are playing a role (Schuck et al., 2019).

Camouflaging can also involve compensatory behaviors such as building a complex theoretical sense of empathy to make up for a perceived lack in emotional intelligence. These behaviors may contribute to the inability of individuals with ASD to adjust to college, including social and personal-emotional adjustment. This can include meeting the demands of higher education, a new environment, and social groups (Tubo-Funckeiro et al., 2021).

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Levels of adjustment to college were measured using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) a 67-item measure that assesses students’ adjustment on 4 dimensions: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment captures the degree of integration into the social milieu of college, whereas personal-emotional adjustment reflects students’ well-being. Lastly, institutional attachment captures how much a student identifies with their university. Institutional attachment scores were included in the total scores but were not examined separately (Baker & Siryk, 1999).

Results
Our results corroborate previous studies which show individuals with ASD symptomatology may engage in camouflaging behaviors more than individuals without ASD symptomatology, which have both been found to negatively impact college adjustment (Ferri et al., 2018; Parish-Morris et al., 2017; Zener 2019).

In addition, our results highlight that camouflaging can lead to difficulties in both social and personal-emotional adjustment to college.

Given these findings, creating environments where individuals with autism feel accepted might reduce the need to engage in camouflaging behaviors, and thus improve adjustment to college.

This finding indicates that while camouflaging likely impacts social adjustment to college in individuals with ASD, there are likely other factors, such as alexithymia and anxiety, that would warrant more research.

For example, anxiety may also strongly affect the presentation of camouflage, since previous studies have indicated that individuals with ASD may engage in camouflage to avoid social anxiety (Ferri et al., 2018; Hull et al., 2020). Therefore, future studies could further explore this connection between anxiety, camouflaging, and ASD.

Although we use person first language, we recognize and respect their who identify first language. When possible, we avoid the word ‘disorder’.

Conclusions and Future Directions

- Female students with ASD symptomatology display significantly more camouflaging than students without ASD symptomatology (i.e., CAT-Q scores) t(88) = 8.00, p < .001.
- ASD symptomatology is positively associated with camouflaging, r(89) = 0.76, p < .001, but negatively associated with social and personal-emotional adjustment, r(89) = -0.545, p < .001.
- Camouflaging is negatively associated with social and personal-emotional adjustment to college, r(89) = -0.443, -0.636, p < .001.
- For our regression analysis, the overall model was found to be significant, F(2, 87) = 42.62, p < .001, adjusted R² = 0.483. Specifically, ASD symptomatology (β = 0.461, p < .001) and camouflaging (β = 0.286, p = 0.016) were found to be significant predictors of personal emotional adjustment to college.
- In addition, ASD symptomatology (β = 0.486, p < .001) and camouflaging (β = 0.074, p = 0.016) were found to be significant predictors of social adjustment to college, F(2, 87) = 18.35, p < .001, adjusted R² = 0.281.

Table 1 Participants Characteristics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Overall (N = 102)</th>
<th>Without ASD Symptomology (N = 51)</th>
<th>With ASD Symptomology (N = 51)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>18.43</td>
<td>18.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t / p</td>
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<td>-1.05 / p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>df</td>
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<td>50</td>
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</table>

Table 2 Correlations Among Study Variables
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Symptomatology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camouflaging</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Emotional</td>
<td>-.680***</td>
<td>-.636***</td>
<td>-.506***</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Note. *** = p < .001

Figure 1: Mean Test Scores for Participants with and Without ASD Symptomology

- ASD Symptomology
- No ASD Symptomology

Figure 2: Predictive Abilities of Camouflaging and ASD Symptomatology on College Adjustment

- Camouflaging (β = 0.286, p = 0.016)
- ASD Symptomatology (β = 0.486, p < .001)

Table 3 Participant Characteristics

- Orientation to First Language: Although we use person first language, we recognize and respect their who identify first language. When possible, we avoid the word ‘disorder.’

References
Cameron Boone, Maddie Fitzpatrick, Lauren Ruesink, Gabriella Stec, Dakota Morales M.S., and Denise Davidson Ph.D.

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