Perceived Parental Involvement: Impact on Student Involvement in Higher Education

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PERCEIVED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: IMPACT ON STUDENT

INVOLVEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Abstract

Parental involvement in the college student experience has been perceived previously as

negative and debilitating to growth and the development of the student's autonomy and

involvement within the institution. While this is confirmed in certain cases, the

complexity of the parent/student relationship makes it difficult to generalize all parental

involvement as negative. Mattanah et al. (2004) summarized a growing body of evidence

proposing that both a secure attachment relationship to parents and a healthy level of

separation-individuation are foretelling of constructive academic, social, and personal-

emotional adjustment to college. This research looks to explore the correlation between a

student's perceived parental involvement and the level of engagement with the institution

academically and socially. Quantitative data was collected and correlated using the

Parental Involvement Survey and the NSSE 2.0 Pilot survey. Results indicated a zero to

slightly positive correlation between the two scales, suggesting healthy parental

involvement as a potential asset for an institution looking to promote student

involvement.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Parental Involvement in Higher Education

Parental involvement, a term previously reserved for elementary and secondary

school vocabulary, has migrated into the terminology of college administrators. A study

in the *ASHE Higher Education Report* by Wartman and Savage (2008) articulated, "Since

the late 1990's, colleges and universities have noted a cultural shift in the relationship

between most parents and their traditional-age college students" (p. 1). Although parental

participation is not a new phenomenon, the magnitude of their involvement and

expectations is changing (Carney-Hall, 2008). The media often portrays the parent of the

contemporary college student through examples of extreme behavior: frequently

contacting the institution, complaining about student roommate situations, or contesting

student grades (Coburn, 1997). This hyper-involvement has come to be known as the

"helicopter parent," a subpopulation of excessively involved mothers and fathers that

represents all parents of college students (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Growing debate

questions the impression of the helicopter parent as accurate representation of what is

occurring. Many colleges and universities have found that parental influence can be

beneficial and a healthy part of a student's development (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012;

Cutright, 2008; Van Brunt, Francis, Mayes, Clippert, & Walker, 2011; Ward-Roof,

Heaton, & Coburn, 2008). This finding implores the question: What, exactly, should the role of a parent be in a student's education?

The current trend has transformed the dynamic by which college administrators, students, and students' parents communicate within the higher education context. This cultural change remains enigmatic to college staff and administrators because of the different influential variables not reflected in the experience of their own college years. Profound parental influence alters the relationship of each respective party: students with parents and students with the institution itself (Wartman & Savage, 2008). In 2006, a national survey of student affairs professionals at 127 institutions found that 93% indicated interactions had increased in the last five years (Merriman, 2007). It becomes essential for higher education administrators to understand the thinking of parents, the influential constituency, so as to communicate more effectively and partner with them in their students' education. Healthy parental involvement is viewed as a positive element to the student college experience, emphasizing the importance for college administrators to comprehend the factors behind the cultural shift of increased parent participation.

K-12 to Higher Education

Based on current literature, a tension exists between parental involvement at a K-12 level as distinct from higher education. Research demonstrates that K-12 education promotes parental engagement while higher education supports individuation and a student's development of autonomy (Wartman & Savage, 2008). College is traditionally viewed as the crucial time in a student's life when students begin to separate from parents and family and venture into new challenges on their own (Taub, 2008). But recent legislation makes issues relating to the life-stage of young adulthood more confusing.

The objective of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 attempted to establish a framework for fostering overall student achievement by developing written policies concerning parent involvement in student and school achievement (Trolian & Fouts, 2011). As a result, parents and schools are encouraged to collaborate to ensure student success. Research on parental involvement throughout the K-12 years has been linked to positive outcomes such as higher grades, higher standardized test scores, higher self-esteem, more social competence, reduced substance use, aspirations for college, enrollment in college, and participation in out-of-school programs (Kreider, Caspse, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007).

The literature researching higher education, specifically student-parent relationships, articulates a different story than that of K-12. The prevailing theory about college student development dictates that developing autonomy and individuation are essential components of emotional adjustment to college (Taub, 2008). Students with a better sense of themselves as individuals are better able to achieve the new tasks required of them as college students such as waking up on time, attending classes, and managing a social world (Mattanah, Brand, & Hancock, 2004). Separation-individuation is described as a developmental process that begins with separation from parents to achieve self-definition and the ability to function autonomously (Mattanah et al., 2004). According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), a necessary developmental process for students is learning to function with emotional independence. Movement toward this state begins with separation from parents.

Attachment theory in the context of higher education emerged as a competing theory to separation-individuation in the 1990s (Taub, 2008). Attachment theory

challenged the traditional implications of separation-individuation by proposing that parental involvement in the life of the student provides a secure base and may actually support rather than threaten the development of student competence and autonomy (Wartman & Savage, 2008). The implications of this theory could affect how student development professionals in the higher education setting view the relationship between the parent and student.

Autonomy and Involvement

Research dealing with college student adjustment explores the impact of parental attachment and autonomy development. To gain clarity of the meaning of autonomy in the context of college student development requires understanding of its importance during adolescence and realizing its function in the transition to adulthood (Cullaty, 2011). Separating from parents is a key component of the development process for students (Viadero, 2009). Mattanah et al. (2004) summarized a growing body of evidence suggesting that both a secure attachment relationship to parents and a healthy level of separation-individuation were foretelling of constructive academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment to college. Mattanah et al. concluded by noting that "the challenge for college student counselors is to facilitate adolescent individuation while supporting students' ongoing need for emotional connection with others" (p. 223). Their study supports the claim in positive attachment to parents as facilitating the development of autonomy and social, academic, and personal-emotional adjustment (Carney-Hall, 2008).

Student participation in the college experience is fundamental for satisfaction, academic success, and persistence at an institution. Astin (1999) argued that student involvement was the essential piece of their education. Within Astin's involvement

theory (1999), involvement was defined as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). The energy described in his theory included activities such as studying, participating in student organizations and clubs, athletic and physical engagement, interacting with faculty members, and socializing with fellow students. Astin further postulated: "the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any education program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program" (p. 519).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the current study was to examine the role perceived parental involvement plays in the development and involvement of a college student in their institution. Tensions among various theories regarding the role a parent should play in a traditional-age college student's life exist and were explored. Until recently, college administrators viewed over-involved parents negatively. A current trend has seen higher education institutions begin to seek ways to become partners with parents as a valuable constituency. Research is emerging which shows that healthy separation-individuation and parent involvement can lead to positive outcomes for the student, highlighting parental involvement as a potential asset and benefit for both higher education institutions and their students. The present research sought to answer the question surrounding perceived parental involvement and its impact on college student level of involvement in their institution. The following research question was explored in the study: What is the impact of perceived parental involvement on their college student's level of involvement in their institution?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Parental Involvement Defined

There is concern in the higher education landscape that recent escalation in parent involvement may hinder epistemological and autonomy development in students. Pizzolato and Hicklen (2011) noted, "Despite these claims, there is little empirical evidence on the level or impact of parental involvement during the college years" (p. 671). To understand parental involvement and its influence, the term must be delineated. Wartman and Savage (2008) defined parental involvement as:

> Showing interest in the lives of their students in college, gaining more information about college, knowing when and how to appropriately provide encouragement and guidance to their students, connecting with the institution, and potentially retaining that institutional connection beyond the college years. (p. 91)

Research indicates that healthy parental involvement can be viewed as a positive element to students and their learning in the college experience (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Mattanah et al., 2004). It is important for college administrators to understand the factors behind the cultural shift of increased parent participation, as much can be gained by parents, students, and universities through developing an ethos of partnership with the family dynamics (Cutright, 2008; Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011; Van Brunt et al., 2011).

Technological impact. The progressive availability of technology generates opportunities for communication once thought unattainable (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Although parental involvement with traditional-age college students is not a new phenomenon, the magnitude of involvement and expectations are changing (Cullaty, 2011; Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011). The environment in which students and their parents find themselves as they enter college in the early twenty-first century remains remarkably different than even the late twentieth century (Cutright, 2008). Parents and students correspond with one another using multiple technologies an average of greater than 1.5 times per day (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). Previous generations did not have this luxury, and as a result, students were forced to line up for access to the public hallway phone, perhaps the only phone available in the entire residence hall (Coburn, 2006). Students on cell phones now contact parents for advice or help with problem solving anytime. The underlying question becomes: Why are parents more involved now than in the past? Although some families still maintain more traditional communication, such as snail mail or the occasional landline phone call, technology has become the primary method of communication for the contemporary family in all aspects of life (Wartman & Savage, 2008). The question extends beyond the aforementioned technological advances and availability to root causes that have shaped this profound cultural shift. Technology has changed education: how students learn, how professors instruct, and when information is available (Wartman & Savage, 2008). The change in dynamic affects how students relate to others, including their parents.

Intricately involved. Increased parental involvement stems from a more hands-on approach to involvement in their children's lives, particularly in the details of the

educational experience (Cullaty, 2011). Parents spend innumerable hours from elementary school to secondary school aligning schedules and taking their children to music lessons, sport practices, tutoring, and enrichment classes, endeavoring to lay the foundation for future accomplishment (Coburn, 2006). Consequently, when the child leaves home for college, parents desire assurance that the best advantages are offered to them. One source of the anxieties felt by parents is grounded in uncertainty of work in a post-industrial and global economy (Rutherford, 2011). The college admissions and financial aid processes are viewed as significant undertakings for prospective college students in today's progressively competitive market, and as a result, parents have become more incorporated from the beginning of the college experience (Cullaty, 2011). Parents are actively a part of the admissions process, accompanying their students to campus visits and reviewing all of the colleges' information (Coburn, 2006).

Not only are parents invested emotionally in the college choice process, Carney-Hall (2008) noted that "they are also significantly involved financially" (p. 4). Tuition rates for higher education in the United States are excessive and continue to rise disproportionately faster in the share held by parents and students as compared to the share held by the government and taxpayers (Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010). Applying for financial aid requires family tax and income information to calculate expected family contributions, assuming parents will assist with college expenses (Carney-Hall, 2006). Due to the significant financial commitment, parents expect a greater return on investment in forms of higher quality facilities and programs from which their students benefit. The concrete benefits include contemporary housing options, high levels of technology, and a clear path to a career after graduation (Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Parental pursuit of a positive return on investment, a development of increased consumer expenses, emerges as a result of emotional and financial influences.

Changing Government Legislations

Although increased parent participation in the college experience is a logical extension of the increased financial requirements of higher education, the federal government influences this dynamic throughout the students' K-12 experience (Trolian & Fouts, 2011). Federal, state, and local governments have accentuated the significance of parent collaboration in the entire educational experience, including mounting influence in higher education. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 established a framework for fostering overall student achievement by developing written policies concerning parent involvement in student and school achievement (Trolian & Fouts, 2011). Moreover, parents were given protracted options through standardized testing because of No Child Left Behind. Federal and state governments are now required to report the strengths and shortcomings of each school district, data parents find advantageous in determining where they enroll their child in school (Trolian & Fouts, 2011). Enabling parents with the ability to decide through increasing options and providing concrete educational assessments from the child's elementary school years through high school leads to a greater awareness once the student begins his or her college experience.

Shifting Environments

Mounting parental participation also reflects the changing cultural environment in which the parents and students now live. Family support structures are diverse, with many students originating from divorced, single parent, blended, or same-sex families (Carney-Hall, 2008). Changing family dynamics affect parents and students in a number

of ways including the financial impact as well as modes and frequency of parent-student communication. Family structures are relevant to the parents' roles as consumers, as divorced and single parents have lower incomes than married parents, yet are expected to financially support their child through college (Carney-Hall, 2008). Additionally, the dynamic of parent-child contact has increased. During the childhood years of today's college students, (1980s and 1990s) the idea of "postmodern parenthood" emerged—shuttling kids from activity to activity—as the dynamic of managing overscheduled kids became dominant (Stearns, 2004). The tremendous investment made by parents in their children from early adolescence remains important to note in relation to processing through the cultural change. As a result of extensive investment in the child, such an environment can cultivate an overprotective relationship (Carney-Hall, 2008).

Impact on Student Development Professionals

Research dealing with college student adjustment has explored the impact of parental attachment and autonomy development. Autonomy refers to the concept of self-regulation and the ability to make separate responsible decisions (Steinberg, 2008). Grasping autonomy in the context of college student development requires not only understanding its importance during adolescence but also realizing its function in the transition to adulthood (Cullaty, 2011). Separating from parents is a key component of the autonomy development process for students. Separation-individuation is defined primarily as the absence of negative feelings about the process of separation, including feelings of anxiety, guilt, or expecting rejection when separating (Mattanah et al., 2004). Separation-individuation is viewed as a developmental process beginning with separation from parents, peers, and other significant persons, extending to individuation and the

development of a coherent, autonomous self. Mattanah et al. (2004) summarized a growing body of evidence suggesting that both a secure attachment relationship to parents and a healthy level of separation-individuation are foretelling of constructive academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment to college. Mattanah et al. concluded by noting:

> The model tested in this study provides support for well-known, but rarely tested, theoretical claims that individuation in late adolescence occurs in the context of ongoing relationship security, and that adolescents who feel isolated or cut off from supportive others are likely to flounder emotionally and have difficulty adjusting during important developmental transitions, such as the entrance into college. Importantly, this individuation-within-relatedness model seems to capture the development of both female and male adolescents during this developmental time frame. The challenge for college student counselors is to facilitate adolescent individuation while supporting students' ongoing need for emotional connection with others. (p. 223)

The study supported the claim that positive attachment to parents facilitates autonomy development and social, academic, and personal-emotional adjustment (Carney-Hall, 2008). This has potential implications for both counseling individual students in distress and for psycho-educational programs aimed at facilitating student adjustment to college life (Mattanah et al., 2004)

Involvement and Engagement

Understanding parental involvement in the college experience is important when recognizing the implications of parental involvement on student development. Many of

the positive outcomes regarding quality attachment to parents are associated with an increase of students' involvement, including support and development of autonomy (Cullaty, 2011). Some students perceive parental involvement as healthy when responsibility is encouraged and excessive control is relinquished (Cullaty, 2011). The dynamics of the redefined relationship permit students to feel more independent and free to exercise autonomy.

What occurs within this newfound freedom impacts the development of the student (Astin, 1984). Research performed on college students indicates the time and energy students devote to educationally-purposeful activities are the single best predictors of personal development (Astin, 1993; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Different terminology has been used to describe this distinction, most frequently involvement and engagement (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2003). Although some researchers use these constructs interchangeably, Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie (2009) contended that there are distinct differences between these vocabularies. Astin's (1984) developmental theory of student involvement postulated that the more involved the student is, the more successful he or she will be in college. He defined involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 297). Involvement accounts for the time and energy that students spend in conjunction with the contribution of the environment, providing the theoretical link between practice and outcomes (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Thus, involvement dictates more than merely belonging to a group. An involved member of a group will put forth considerable time and energy (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Astin (1984) typically utilized involvement in research using the Input-Environment-Output (I-

E-O) model. In I-E-O, individual characteristics are controlled to isolate the influence of on-campus participation in diverse academic and social activities on various outcomes (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009).

Student Engagement

Astin (1984) described involvement by the amount of time studying and preparing for class, participating actively in student organizations and events, and interacting frequently with other members of the campus. Kuh (2003) defined engagement in a similar way: the amount of time students spent on educationally beneficial activities, both inside and outside the classroom. The theory of student engagement built upon Astin's theory of involvement. Engagement is a construct used to understand where and how students are being engaged in academically significant practices. The importance of the concept is supported throughout the literature; Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded, "it appears, individual effort or engagement is the critical determinant of the impact of college" (p. 602). The difference between the involvement and engagement centers on the students' motivations (Astin, 1985). Involvement focuses on the motivation to participate, whereas engagement emphasizes activity, growth, and changes that occur (Kuh, 2003). Engagement at institutions of higher education remains essential for the health of the institution. The more students are engaged signifies the more they are learning and the more likely they will become engaged in other parts of the university holistically (Porter, 2006; Terenzini, 1996).

The benefits of engagement are universally recognized in the academy. Institutions use student engagement as a measure of collegiate quality. Kuh (2003)

claimed that, as opposed to traditional markers (SAT scores, faculty degree attainment, etc.):

> A more meaningful approach to evaluating an institution is to determine how well it fosters student learning. Decades of studies show that college students learn more when they direct their efforts to a variety of educationally purposeful activities. To assess the quality of the undergraduate education at an institution, we need good information about student engagement. (p. 25)

Additional evidence of the nationwide consideration given to engagement is found in the prominence of NSSE. The NSSE is an instrument specifically designed to assess the extent to which students engage in educational, good practices from their college experience (Kuh, 2001; NSSE, 2000). The NSSE uses five educational benchmarks to report institutional results of effective educational practice: academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environments (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009).

Implications for Higher Education

A review of the literature indicated that parents can provide helpful support for their college-age student just as much as they can hinder the development of autonomy (Cheung & Pomerantz; Coburn, 2006; Cullaty, 2011; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Parents can provide "valuable information about a student's mental health history or intervening with the student on alcohol choices" (Carney-Hall, 2008, p. 9). Since the late 1990s, great attention in the media has documented a trend of college parents exerting their influence on higher education institutions (Cullaty, 2011). The close relationship of students and parents in the contemporary generation has been well documented, and, despite the

attention given to over involved parents, not all parents are highly involved or intrusive (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Given the trend for negative press regarding involved parents, it is feasible to conclude all parent phone calls and e-mails are intrusive. Parents are influential and students often welcomes their participation. The crucial point becomes finding techniques to effectively facilitate the evolving dynamic for the student and institutional virtue (Cutright, 2008; Savage, 2008).

In order to ensure effective communication, formal institutional philosophies should be clearly articulated (Savage, 2008). Given parents' financial investment, consumer mentality, and predisposition to be involved in the K-12 environment, they will not naturally alter parenting approach without clear expectations from the institution. Carney-Hall (2008) noted:

> Parents need to receive clear messages from each college or university: an overall institutional philosophy, clearly outlined paths to student success, the goals of the student development (particularly autonomy development and self-advocacy), and specifics about college structure and resources. (p. 10)

Parents may receive mixed messages in relation to the extent of the role they play in the college experience. Colleges are known to encourage contacts and requests from parents while others stress student self-responsibility for their own affairs (Coburn, 2006). Cullaty (2011) noted, "College administrators and parents need to understand both the purported benefits of parental involvement and the potential detriment of over-involvement" (p. 436). Institutional philosophies highlighting parental support by listening to the student, asking questions, respecting independent decisions, and offering

emotional encouragement should be promoted (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Informal institutional viewpoints about parents exist now, but internal uniformity is uncommon.

Existing programs and mechanisms to communicate with parents and educate them about approaches for autonomy development are effective approaches for college administrators (Cullaty, 2011). A recent institutional survey indicated audiences targeted through family programming were 95.56% parents (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Another parent survey indicated 95% of higher education institutions offered a parent orientation program, 95% provided a parent day weekend, 78% published a handbook for parents, and 54% sent out parent newsletters (Wartman & Savage, 2008). These services provide a platform for educating parents about their role in the developmental process, along with providing resources for success. Like alumni, parents can provide professional expertise on panels, networking opportunities, and can open their homes to prospective and current students in their area (Carney-Hall, 2008).

In the contemporary higher education environment, parents have become a "viable constituency that cannot be ignored" (Carney-Hall, 2008, p. 9). Parents demonstrate substantial investment in higher education institutions, and understanding the influence and expectations of parents allows administrators to be more effectively equipped to collaborate with them. Furthermore, students need to understand the influences and complexities of the transforming parent-student relationship. Students may value parent influence and contribution, to the point of unhealthy dependency (Cullaty, 2011). Student affairs staff can help parents develop healthy boundaries. The NSSE research shows that students who have parents who take active and healthy roles in their college lives are further engaged in their studies, take part in more educational

opportunities, and are more satisfied with their college experience (Van Brunt et al., 2011). Unfortunately, institutional philosophy occasionally facilitates the enablement of parents as authoritarian problem solvers. If students identify that parents will solve their problems for them on campus without the student's participation, the institution portrays the parent as a "customer…negating the commitment to the student as an adult problem solver" (Carney-Hall, 2008, p. 12). Although students are often told they are going to be treated as adults and must take responsibility for themselves, they may not fully comprehend what is expected of them and what that means with regard to the involvement of their parents. Student affairs professionals need to communicate an expectation of student responsibility: parents will not be asked to respond to campus concerns.

The recent trend of parental involvement is not viewed as inherently negative. Parental participation is supported in the sense of its facilitation of mutual understanding between the parent and the institution. It is essential for both parties to understand what parents are paying for, their role in student development and how to provide support for student involvement (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Positive and healthy student connections with parents facilitates autonomy development and social, academic, and personal-emotional adjustment (Carney-Hall, 2008; Mattanah et al., 2004). It is important to take an in-depth look at this dynamic and how it affects student involvement.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Problem Statement

The purpose of the current correlational study was to measure the relationship between parental involvement and the college student's level of involvement in his or her institution. There is a common deficiency of awareness on the topic of parental involvement as it relates to student involvement (Oliver, 2011). The present study examined whether the perceived notion that parental involvement is negative held true from the students' point of view. The hope was that more accurate information with regard to parental involvement could be attained through examination of the student perspective throughout the college perspective (Oliver, 2011). The study focused on the following question: What is the impact of parental involvement on college students' levels of involvement in their institution?

Research Context

The present study was conducted at a small, faith-based, liberal arts college in the Midwest, with an approximate undergraduate enrollment of 2,000. Only 1% of the undergraduate student population was part-time and not of the traditional college age (18-22). Furthermore, the institution was a residential campus by design, and thus, the majority of students no longer lived at home. Institutional policy required all single undergraduate students to live in university owned housing or with their parents or a legal

guardian through their junior year, at which point they could apply for off-campus housing. Only approximately 4% of first-time students lived off campus and commuted. The institutional handbook emphasized residence halls as intentional communities of shared experiences designed to enhance the educational experience and development of the student. Involvement in residence hall living, as well as academics and other on-campus programming, was a fundamental aspect of the institutional philosophy of a holistic, liberal arts education.

Participants

The study used a convenience sampling of returning, on-campus students. The researcher chose convenience sampling for ease of access to large groups of students in gathering areas such as the university dining commons and residence hall lobbies. The relative cost and time required to carry out a convenience sample were small in comparison to probability sampling techniques; this method enabled the gathering of the appropriate sample size in a relatively fast and inexpensive way (Marshall, 1996). First-year students were excluded due to the minimal time spent away from home. The sample size consisted of 48 non-freshman students.

Methods

Quantitative data for the research was utilized by correlating two separate data measurements: perceived parental involvement and students' involvement at their institution. The first instrument to be used in data analysis was the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE) 2.0 pilot, developed by Dr. George Kuh (2009) of Indiana University. The NSSE 2.0 Pilot 2012 was the second of two pilot administrations intended to finalize the recently released NSSE 2013 instrument. The survey had been

updated with four goals in mind: develop new measures related to effective teaching and learning, refine existing measures and scales, improve the clarity and applicability of survey language, and update terminology to reflect current educational contexts (NSSE Update, n.d.). The NSSE 2.0 consisted of five thoroughly tested Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice: academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, campus environment, and high-impact practices. Engagement indicators used for the study that fit within these benchmarks include Reflective and Integrative Learning, Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Supportive Environment. The NSSE had been found to be reliable and valid. The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, measured how well the instrument measures what it claims to measure. The closer to 1.0, the more reliable the instrument is; a score of 0.7 is acceptable, but a desirable score is that of 0.8 or above (Muijs, 2004). Coefficients analyzed for the activity items in the NSSE were 0.85 (Kuh, 2009). Institutionally archived NSSE 2.0 data from the 2012 survey was gathered and linked with the perceived parental involvement data via student ID numbers.

Perceived parental involvement was measured through the survey instrument *The Parental Involvement Survey (PIS)*, created by Bryan Oliver from the University of Alabama. Oliver (2011) broke down parental involvement into the following theoretically derived subscales: parental involvement in college choice, parental involvement in student social involvement, parental involvement in student academic involvement, student satisfaction with parental involvement, frequency of contact between students and parents, and frequency of visits with parents. The survey was designed with a 5-point Likert scale answering system. Answer choices included *strongly disagree, disagree,*

agree, strongly agree and *not applicable.* The questions were designed in conjunction

with the survey instrument to provide insight into the student perspective on parent

involvement as it related to satisfaction (Oliver, 2011). Cronbach Alpha coefficients were

calculated for each category of involvement utilizing the items assessing involvement

(Payne, 2010). A reliability analysis was run on the full sample and the following was

discovered: college choice $r = .599$, social involvement $r = .707$, academic involvement

$r = .590$, satisfaction $r = .795$, and all involvement items $r = .773$ (Payne, 2010). The

original survey was slightly altered to fit the institution's mission and residence life

policy.

Procedures

The *PIS* survey was administered to returning students (sophomores through

seniors) using convenience sampling in common areas such as the dining commons and

residence hall lobbies over a period of two weeks. Each non-freshman student was given

the option of participating and a consent form was given. Student identification numbers

were requested to correlate NSSE 2.0 pilot data and maintain confidentiality. The NSSE

2.0 survey was administered in 2012 to a select number of students. For the purpose of

the current study, data was correlated from the students who took both the NSSE 2.0 pilot

in 2012 in addition to the *PIS* survey in the fall of 2013. A total of 48 participants

qualified under these stipulations.

Data Analysis

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure was used to analyze the study's

research question: How does perceived parental involvement impact the college student's

engagement in their university? Data was analyzed using correlations between parental

involvement and the NSSE benchmarks of Reflective and Integrative Learning, Student Faculty Interaction, Supportive Campus Environment, and Collaborative Learning. Additionally, a t-test between gender and level of parental involvement was completed and analyzed. Correlation aided in establishing the existence of relationships between variables, but did not imply causation (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

Benefits to Higher Education

Possible benefits to conducting the current research were numerous. Any additional degree of insight into facilitating the process by which college administrators and parents can collaborate for the student's success would be valuable. Additionally, the research added to the important emerging body of literature concerning parental involvement in the higher education framework.

Further, levels and types of involvement within a population of students were explored. Since involvement is fundamental to the collegiate experience, the study's information proved useful in student development practices. Most prominently, the research provided insight into the relationship between parental involvement and how that impacts student involvement.

If a positive relationship was found, the implication for higher education would be to find ways to facilitate parental involvement appropriately, while a resulting negative influence would provide credibility for college administrators to fight against the emerging trend. The involvement and influence of parents on contemporary college campuses will only continue to grow and evolve as technology and other influential factors evolve as well.

Chapter 4

Results

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure was used to analyze the study's

research question: How does perceived parental involvement impact the college student's

engagement in their university? Data was analyzed using correlations between the

parental involvement scale (see Appendix A, Questions 1-8) and the NSSE benchmarks

of Reflective and Integrative Learning, Student Faculty Interaction, Supportive Campus

Environment, and Collaborative Learning (see Appendix C). Additionally, a t-test

between gender and level of parental involvement was completed and analyzed. No

statistically significant differences or means were found in the ANOVA.

A reliability analysis was completed on the 16-item *Parental Involvement Survey*

(Oliver, 2011) to establish validity in the parental involvement measure. Analysis of the

sixteen-item survey resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .836, above the acceptable range of

.800 (Muijs, 2004). In further evaluating the descriptive statistics, each *PIS* item was

removed independently and the overall *PIS* measure was analyzed to ensure a Cronbach's

alpha of above 0.800, thus solidifying the reliability of each item in the measure (see

Appendix B). The "Cronbach's if Item deleted" column estimated what the reliability

coefficient would be if a particular item were to be deleted. The items: Parents pressured

you to attend college (.839), Parents encouraged you to be on campus (.838), and Parents

ask what your grades are (.844), scored higher in the "Alpha if Item Deleted" column.

The Parents reminded me of application deadlines item (.836) scored the same as the overall reliability analysis.

Correlations

Data produced in the parental involvement survey (*PIS)* from each student was then correlated between perceived parental involvement and the NSSE benchmarks of Reflective and Integrative Learning, Student Faculty Interaction, Supportive Campus Environment, and Collaborative Learning (see Table 1). The correlations between each item were measured by a Pearson r value. The Pearson r measures linear correlation between two variables, producing a value between 1 and −1 inclusive, where 1 is total positive correlation, 0 is no correlation, and −1 is total negative correlation.

Table 1

Correlations between Parental Involvement and NSSE Benchmarks

Measure	Parental Involvement	2	3	4	5
1. Parental Involvement	-				
2. Supportive Environment	.20	-			
3. Collaborative Learning	-.01	.20	-		
4. Student Faculty Interaction	-.04	.40*	.36*	-	
5. Reflective Integrated Learning	.00	.451**	.41**	.35*	-

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The resulting correlations failed to prove statistical significance at the 0.05 levels.

A Pearson r of .20 was found in correlating parental involvement and the NSSE supportive environment benchmark, signifying a positive relationship between the variables. Other benchmarks, including Collaborative Learning = -0.01, Student Faculty Interaction = -0.04, and Reflective Integrated Learning = 0.00, resulted in minuscule correlations, signifying slight relationship between variables.

Data was then analyzed using a t-test between gender and parental involvement. The t-test was used to determine if gender and perceived parental involvement in the data set proved to be significantly different. Females (n=23) had a slightly higher parental involvement score (34.4 to 33.9) than males (n=15) at a p value of .817. A p value of .817 tested at 0.05 significance does not represent a statistically significant difference between the means, and the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

One-Way ANOVA

An ANOVA was then utilized between each individual NSSE benchmark and perceived parental involvement as measured by the *Parental Involvement Scale* (see Table 2). Perceived parental involvement was analyzed against each dependent benchmark variable.

In looking for a p value under .10, a Student Faculty Interaction score of .088 indicated the variation found in these benchmarks carried statistical weight, as it pertained to parent involvement, indicating slight significance. While the Supportive Environment score of .163 was just above the threshold, the variation may indicate significance more loosely.

Table 2

One-Way Analysis of Variance Summary Table for the Impact of Parental Involvement and Student Involvement Benchmarks

Variable and source		SS	df	MS	F	p
Supportive Environment	Between	72.61	2	36.31	1.92	.163
	Within	624.94	33	18.94		
Reflective Integrated Learning	Between	10.81	2	5.41	.37	.694
	Within	571.09	39	14.64		
Collaborative Learning	Between	.81	2	.40	.06	.946
	Within	275.14	38	7.24		
Student Faculty Interaction	Between	38.70	2	19.35	2.61	.088
	Within	259.19	35	7.41		

Parental involvement scores were divided into quartiles for categorical statistical comparison (see Table 3). Parental involvement was analyzed when divided into quartiles (1.00 signified bottom 25%, 2.00 indicated the middle two quartiles, 3.00 signified the highest 25%). The highest quartile signified greater parental involvement, while the lowest signified the lowest.

Table 3 shows a cross-tabulation of the mean scores of parental involvement quartiles and NSSE benchmarks. The Student Faculty Interaction benchmark in the lowest parental involvement quartile produced a SFI score of 9.18, the medium quartile produced a score of 7.00, and the highest Parental Involvement quartile produced a SFI score of 8.78. Participants in the lowest quartile of the Parental Involvement scale scored higher (9.18) than those in the highest quartile (8.78), and even higher than the medium

group quartile (7.00) at a p value of .088. There was little difference in quartile split

between the highest and lowest quartile.

Table 3

Means of Parental Involvement Quartiles Cross-Tabulated with NSSE Benchmarks

	Low Quartile (1.00)	Middle Quartiles (2.00)	High Quartile (3.00)
Supportive Environment Mean	26.33	25.94	29.33
Reflective Integrated Learning Mean	21.20	20.14	21.10
Collaborative Learning Mean	11.60	11.43	11.20
Student Faculty Interaction Mean	9.18	7.00	8.78

Outcomes from the correlational tests showed a weak positive relationship

between perceived parental involvement and Supportive Environment (not significant at

the .05 level). It was interesting to note that the other three benchmarks were close to

zero, indicating neither a positive nor a negative relationship. It was also interesting to

note no distinguishable difference in the results comparing male and female perceived

parental involvement and its impact on student involvement. Finally of note and contrary

to expectations, quartile cross-tabulation began to show the shape of an inverse

relationship between parental involvement and the student's level of interaction with

faculty. Students scoring in the lowest quartile, and even highest quartile, were more apt

to engage with faculty than students scoring in the medium two quartiles.

Chapter 5

Discussion

In spite of general negative notions of parental involvement in high level administration and media (Coburn, 1997; Wartman & Savage, 2008), the current study indicated that the relationship was not as strong or damaging as previously believed. Previous research denoted healthy parental involvement as a positive element to students and their learning in the college experience (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Mattanah et al., 2004). In the present study, the NSSE's Supportive Environment benchmark and perceived parental involvement were found to have a slight positive relationship. Students performed better and were more satisfied in higher education when institutions were committed to their success and cultivated positive working and social relations among different groups on campus (NSSE Update, n.d.). The NSSE Supportive Environment benchmark included student perception in the quality of interactions with various people on campus, as well as insight into different ways the institution supports their success and encouraged them to participate in beneficial activities (NSSE Update, n.d.). The research supplementing the present study indicated that higher education institutions should utilize parental involvement in order to aid students in acclimating to their new environment and improve the quality of their relationships (Coburn, 2006; Cullaty, 2011).

Noteworthy in the additional NSSE benchmarks of Student Faculty Interaction, Collaborative Learning, and Reflected Integrated Learning, was the overall lack of a positive or a negative relationship with perceived parental involvement. The close relationship of students and parents today has been well documented (Cheung & Pomerantz; Coburn, 2006; Cullaty, 2011; Wartman & Savage, 2008). However, the close relationship simply cannot be responsible for an absence of student involvement. The nature of parental involvement remains significant, as students ideally develop autonomy within this relationship during college (Steinberg, 2008). Autonomy is fostered by the ability for the student to self-regulate and independently process in making responsible decisions. Separating from parents remains the key component in the developmental process for students. Aforementioned, secure attachment relationship to parents and a healthy level of separation-individuation are foretelling of constructive academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment to college (Mattanah et al., 2004).

Based on results in the current study and in line with previous research (Cutright, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008), the amount of parental involvement had an impact on the student's interaction potential with faculty. Students categorized in the lower quartile by the parental involvement scale scored higher (mean = 9.18) in the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark than those students who were in the medium parental involvement group (mean = 7.0). Additionally, students categorized in the highest quartile of parental involvement scored higher (mean = 8.78) than students in the medium parental involvement quartiles. This could indicate several things, including students amidst low parental involvement felt a need to gain support and assistance from faculty currently not received from parents. Furthermore, students experiencing high parental involvement

may be encouraged by parents to interact with faculty, anticipating high levels of faculty interaction as leading to higher achievement.

Implications

Parental involvement that facilitates student development benefits college-age students just as profoundly as over-involvement can hinder the development of autonomy (Cheung & Pomerantz; Coburn, 2006; Cullaty, 2011; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Parents are influential entities and often maintain close relationships with their adolescents throughout the college experience. Implication for higher education professionals include focusing on finding techniques and best practices to effectively facilitate developmental parental involvement for both the student's and the institution's benefit (Cutright, 2008; Savage, 2008).

Effective institutional communication to parents and students includes clearly articulated and consistently implemented philosophies and guidelines (Savage, 2008). Given the parents' financial investment in the student, consumer mentalities, and predisposition to be involved from the K-12 experience (Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011; Trolian & Fouts, 2011), institutions should anticipate parents not innately altering their approach to parenting without clear expectations. Best practices in parent relationships with higher education institutions should include components for not only educating parents on what defines appropriate intervention, but also communicating reasons why students should handle their own responsibilities (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Research indicates the kind of parental involvement that ideally allows the student freedom to make responsible choices that promote autonomy, while maintaining the secure

attachment relationship to the parents, prepares both the student and parents to handle the transitional relationship successfully (Cullaty; 2011; Mattanah et al., 2004).

Limitations

The sample size used in the study presented a significant limitation. The sample size of 48 participants who participated in both surveys was unable to establish statistical significance within the data analyzing process. The utilization of convenience sampling carried inherent limitations, including a lack of a randomization and the risk of under-representing or over-representing the general population. The results of the students sampled in the study indicated a distillation even greater in order to match the qualifications of having taken both the *PIS* and the NSSE 2.0 pilot survey.

Additionally, the study considered only the amount of parent involvement as perceived by the student. Surveying and analyzing the parent view of involvement could have balanced the resulting data more completely. Results could be skewed by misperceptions of parental involvement if encompassed with previously positive or negative suppositions.

A further limitation of the study provided results from a narrow population—a small, faith-based institution. Approximately 90% of students lived in residential housing, differing greatly from institutions where students commute from home in greater numbers or live in off-campus housing.

Further Research

The growing level of parental involvement in higher education, as noted in the current generation of students, necessitates that the knowledge base continues to grow on this topic. Universities deal with complex levels of parental involvement through an

assortment of circumstances. Absent additional understanding, problems will occur between institutions and their stakeholders. Several studies cited in the literature provided beneficial data in the area of parental involvement. Each of these studies, along with the current study, attempted to bridge gaps in the literature concerning parental involvement. However, more research is needed.

Data derived from both public and private institutions would form a larger data set for greater comparisons and could provide additional needed information in the future. In order to broaden the literature focusing on parental involvement, numerous student populations should be surveyed. Certain characteristics of families and students contribute to the level of appropriate parental involvement (Daniel, Evans, & Scott, 2001). By conducting research at additional institutions, the diversity of the sample increases, providing a better understanding of how different races, genders, and grade classifications view parental involvement. Daniel et al. (2001) supported this by noting a student's socioeconomic background, ethnicity, and family dynamics can all play a role in parental involvement.

There is potential for further research conducted on parental involvement qualitatively. Focus groups could be utilized to gather data from students that would provide administrators with the chance to ascertain what type of involvement students desire from parents and on what level. Furthermore, questions could be developed asking how parents have been involved with their college experience. Discovering and analyzing parental involvement with college choice, social involvement, and academic involvement would supply beneficial feedback university administrators could use to create a more parent-friendly environment, subsequently fostering secure attachment and separation-

individuation. Qualitative data in these three areas could affect institutional decisions regarding admissions, campus programming, and individual student academics.

Conclusion

Broadly, parental involvement in the college student experience has been previously viewed hesitantly, as potentially negative and debilitating to student growth and the development of autonomy. The relationship between perceived parental involvement and the students' levels of involvement in their institution was found to be neither overly positive nor negative. This finding challenged the idea that perceived parental involvement inhibits students from being autonomous and involved on campus academically and socially. A review of the literature indicated that parental involvement was complex in nature, thus making it difficult to pinpoint the exact influence perceived parental involvement had on the students' levels of involvement in the institution outside of the classroom setting. Select students who perceive parental involvement as a critical element to academic success might collapse without support, while other students with comparable levels of parental involvement were hindered in their development due to enablement and never learning to act or think independently. Ideal parental involvement nurtures healthy attachment the student psychologically needs, while empowering the student to take personal responsibility.

The slight positive relationship between perceived parental involvement and the NSSE Supportive Environment benchmark reinforced the importance of establishing a supportive campus atmosphere for students. Parental involvement is beneficial in fostering this environment (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Additionally of note, the additional three NSSE benchmarks correlated with perceived parental involvement at a Pearson r

strength near zero, indicating neither a positive nor a negative relationship. Mindful of this evidence, knowing that NSSE research indicated students who have parents that take active and healthy roles in their college experience were further engaged in their studies, took part in more educational opportunities, and were more satisfied with their college experience (Van Brunt et al., 2011), lends credence to fostering healthy parent/student relationships.

The present study aided in further downplaying the notion that perceived parental involvement had a negative relationship with holistic student involvement on campus. Knowing this, higher education administrators should be mindful to incorporate parents in focused programs (such as orientations and parents weekends), understanding their empirical value to the parent, student, and institutional relationship (Cutright, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008). In the contemporary higher education environment, parents have become a "viable constituency that cannot be ignored" (Carney-Hall, 2008, p. 9). Parents bring substantial investment to higher education institutions, and understanding the influence and expectations of parents allows administrators to be more effectively equipped to collaborate with them. Motivation for parental involvement differs depending on the campus, cultural context, and expectation. Strategic educational and collaboration events allow parents to engage with the student's college environment and for administrators to provide educational opportunities for parents and students regarding how to effectively transition the relationship away from home (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Individual institutions handle varying levels of desire from parents for involvement. Therefore, institutions can anticipate and be culturally sensitive to the level of desire and discern how to structure beneficial philosophies and programs, accordingly.

Based on previous research reinforced by the current study, college students value balance between autonomy, support, and wisdom from parents in all areas of institutional involvement (Mattanah et al., 2004; Oliver, 2011). The parent and college student relationship remains qualitatively similar and does not differ considerably from what parents and students are accustomed to in the K-12 school experience, supporting the perception of extended adolescence through college (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Implications for student affairs professionals include new challenges of preparing students for transitioning into the workforce, where the expectation is to function as an autonomous adult. The researcher anticipated focused programs will be needed in delineating expectations for practical functioning in a professional setting.

Results from the present study confirmed the notion that higher education institutions should continue to search for ways that fittingly include parents in students' social and academic lives and foster healthy student perception of parental involvement. Technology should also be utilized to keep parents informed and connected to their students' college experience, as this has been a successful strategy in the K-12 school system (Oliver, 2011). Most importantly, parents must be educated in establishing appropriate boundaries, as boundaries foster a balance between independence and support.

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Appendix A

Parental Involvement Survey

(Oliver, 2011)

Student I.D. Number: @
Year in School: Sophomore   Junior   Senior

The following questions are to be answered on a 4 point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The choices will be Strongly Disagree-SD, Disagree-D, Agree-A, Strongly Agree-SA, and Not Applicable-NA. SD=1, D=2, A=3, SA=4.

College Choice	SD	D	A	SA	NA
1. Parents helped fill out applications	SD	D	A	SA	NA
2. Parents wrote college essays	SD	D	A	SA	NA
3. Parents helped in the college decision	SD	D	A	SA	NA
4. Parents reminded you of application deadlines	SD	D	A	SA	NA
5. Parents pressured you to attend same college as them	SD	D	A	SA	NA
6. Parents pressured you to attend college	SD	D	A	SA	NA
7. Parent involvement in college choice was positive	SD	D	A	SA	NA
8. Parents helped college choice process	SD	D	A	SA	NA

Social Involvement					
9. Parents encourage you to be involved in campus	SD	D	A	SA	NA
10. Parents spoke to you about drinking	SD	D	A	SA	NA
11. Parents spoke to you about drugs	SD	D	A	SA	NA
12. Parents spoke to you about social pressures	SD	D	A	SA	NA
13. Parents helped transition from high school activities to college	SD	D	A	SA	NA
14. Parent involvement in college social life helped transition	SD	D	A	SA	NA
15. Parent involvement in college social life hindered transition	SD	D	A	SA	
16. Parent involvement in college social life was positive	SD	D	A	SA	NA

Academic Involvement					
17. Parents involved in scheduling your classes	SD	D	A	SA	NA
18. Parents called to wake you up for class	SD	D	A	SA	NA
19. Parents called to remind you of assignments	SD	D	A	SA	NA
20. Parents know when tests are	SD	D	A	SA	NA
21. Parents attended freshman orientation	SD	D	A	SA	NA
22. Parents ask what your grades are	SD	D	A	SA	NA
23. Parents helped transition you from high school load to college	SD	D	A	SA	NA
24. Parent involvement in academics was a hindrance	SD	D	A	SA	NA

25. Parent involvement in academics was a positive   SD   D   A   SA   NA
26. Parent involvement in academics improved your GPA SD   D   A   SA   NA
27. I am satisfied with the overall level of my parents
involvement in my college life   SD   D   A   SA   NA
28. I am satisfied with the institution I attend   SD   D   A   SA   NA

How often do you communicate with your parent(s)?
Via email   _____ per week
Via phone   _____ per week
Via mail   _____ per week

How often do you see your parent(s) per semester?
You travel home   _____ per semester
Parents visit campus   _____ per semester
In other locations   _____ per semester

Appendix B

Parental Involvement Descriptive Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Parents helped fill out applications	31.93	53.60	.818
Parents wrote college essays	33.02	58.81	.827
Parents helped in the college decision	31.27	56.76	.823
Parents reminded you of application deadlines	31.82	56.85	.836
Parents pressured you to attend same college as them	32.91	58.50	.831
Parents pressured you to attend college	31.36	57.17	.839
Parents encourage you to be involved in campus	31.27	59.78	.838
Parents spoke to you about drinking	31.64	52.47	.813
Parents spoke to you about drugs	31.80	51.98	.813
Parents spoke to you about social pressures	31.68	51.90	.809
Parents involved in scheduling your classes	32.70	57.70	.828
Parents called to wake you up for class	33.16	58.97	.827
Parents called to remind you of assignments	33.16	59.07	.827
Parents know when tests are	32.59	57.41	.831
Parents attended freshman orientation	32.07	53.46	.824
Parents ask what your grades are	31.70	61.00	.844

Appendix C

NSSE 2.0 Items

Reflective and Integrative Learning

1 q2b Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments
2 q2a Connected your learning to societal problems or issues
3 q2c Included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments
4 q2d Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
5 q2e Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining his or her perspective
6 q2f Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
7 q2g Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge

Student Faculty Interaction

1 q3a Talked about career plans with a faculty member
2 q3b Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework
3 q3d Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class
4 q3f Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member

Supportive Campus Environment

1 q16a Inst. emphasizes… Providing support to help students succeed academically
2 q16c Inst. emphasizes… Using learning support services
3 q16d Inst. emphasizes… Encouraging contact among students from different background
4 q16e Inst. emphasizes… Providing opportunities to be involved socially
5 q16f Inst. emphasizes… Providing support for our overall well-being
6 q16g Inst. emphasizes… Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities
7 q16h Inst. emphasizes… Attending campus activities and events
8 q16i Inst. emphasizes… Attending events that address important social/econ./polit. issues

Collaborative Learning

1 q1f Asked another student to help you understand course material
2 q1g Explained course material to one or more students

3 q1h   Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material w/other students
4 q1i   Worked with other students on course projects or assignments