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SELECTED FACULTY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIVES OF STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE, BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION

A Dissertation

Presented to the

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Alana R. Davis

March 2024

SELECTED FACULTY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIVES OF STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE, BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION

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Approved March 25, 2024 by

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Dedication

To Granny, who brought light and joy to everyone she met. To Trevor, who always knew I could and would do this. To Ollie and Jenson, whom I love for everything they are and everything they will become.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the support of so many throughout my academic journey. A dissertation is, by nature, a solitary endeavor, but it is by no means a solitary experience. I would not be here were it not for a community of people who believed, encouraged, prodded, and supported me along the way.

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enjoyed the last few months nearly so much without you, and I do not believe I would be here now without your dedication to your work. Thank you especially to Sallie for setting the perfect stage and supporting my transition to it. And to Kim, for whom I am eternally grateful. Thank you for believing I could crush it. I hope this makes you proud.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and beliefs of selected faculty members about parental involvement during students' academic experiences at a private, baccalaureate college. The study asked a single research question, *How do faculty members experience and understand parental involvement in their students' academic lives?* Scant research exists on the perceptions of faculty members on parental involvement in students' collegiate experiences, yet we know that emerging adults are poised for developmental gains and parental involvement can both positively and negatively influence that development. Exploring this research question provides essential context for supporting college student development. This qualitative, phenomenological study interpreted data generated via surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews through an interpretivist paradigm and a theoretical framework grounded in Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development theory, with a particular focus on moving through autonomy towards interdependence. Participants shared a wide range of experiences and perceptions, sharing both their positive and negative experiences of direct and indirect parental involvement. The data showed that participants perceive parental support as positively related to student development and parental intervention as negatively related. This study provides a rich context for understanding parental involvement and its relationship to student development.

SELECTED FACULTY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIVES OF STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE, BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A meeting in my role as an academic affairs administrator began with a parent saying, "I know this is your job, but…" and continued with the parent questioning the course schedule her daughter and I had just developed for the daughter's first semester of college. The parent had a laser-eyed focus on her daughter's (or perhaps her own?) ultimate goal of medical school and clear expectations for her daughter's courses. She did not trust our advising session, despite my longtime expertise in navigating our college's curriculum and her own daughter's excitement for the courses she had selected. This interaction was less contentious than some other interactions with students' parents. It ended positively, with the daughter being permitted to remain enrolled in her selected courses, but it is nonetheless representative of the way some parents will try to manage their children's educational experiences, at times supplanting the students' voices in the process.

As will be demonstrated in this chapter and in Chapter 2, I am not alone in my experiences interacting as a higher education professional with the parents of college students. Such interactions have inspired a body of research on the relationships of parents to students' academic experience, and I am building on this research. In this study, I examined the perceptions and beliefs of selected faculty members about parental involvement in the academic lives of students at a private, baccalaureate institution. This chapter provides a brief background on the perceptions of parenting in popular media and the relationships of parents to the collegiate experience. Additionally, this chapter introduces the purpose of the study, including: (a) the

theoretical framework, (b) the research question, (c) the study's significance, and (d) operational terms.

Background

In recent decades, the development of independence and autonomy in college-aged students has been complicated by an increase in parental involvement during both adolescence and the transition from high school to college (Carney-Hall, 2008; Daniel et al., 2001; Hunt, 2008; Kiyama et al., 2015). Considerable research has been conducted about the relationships between parental involvement and student autonomy and success, examining both traditional populations (e.g., Azmitia et al., 2013; Dreher et al., 2014; Harper et al., 2012; Shoup et al., 2009; Taub, 2008; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000; Wolf et al., 2009); subgroups within college students (e.g., Brown et al., 2013; Dennis et al., 2005; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Museus, 2013; Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017); and how student affairs professionals can best partner with parents (e.g., Coburn, 2006; Savage, 2008; Ward-Roof et al., 2008).

As will be demonstrated in the literature review, research about parenting and student development is voluminous; however, limited research has been conducted about the perspectives of faculty members about the relationship of parenting to students' academic experiences. Faculty members engage frequently with students, both observing and contributing to their academic and developmental gains (Komarraju et al., 2010; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Better understanding the lived experiences of faculty members as they observe, participate in, and understand parental involvement could enhance our general understanding of relationships between parents and student development and success. Before exploring the scholarly research, however, it is necessary to examine how parenting is portrayed by the media,

as these perceptions help to shape our general understanding and assumptions about the roles parents play in their students' lives.

Parenting in the Media

The 2019 admissions bribery scandal involving parents allegedly buying their children's admissions to elite institutions such as the University of Southern California through bribery and the gaming of standardized testing (Thomason, 2019) brought with it a surge of coverage on the roles parents play in their children's admissions to college. With coverage ranging from the *Hollywood Reporter* (Parker & Gardner, 2019) to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Thomason, 2019), and from *Fox News* (Powell & Argue, 2019) to *The New York Times* (Miller & Bromwich, 2019), there was no shortage of commentary on how involved parents are and should be in the lives of their college-aged children. As can be expected when exploring the intersections between alleged bribery and elite institutions, coverage has portrayed the parents involved negatively, as exemplified in a piece for *The Atlantic* in which Flanagan (2019) detailed her own experiences as a private school college counselor, writing,

> The changed admissions landscape at the elite colleges is the aspect of American life that doesn't feel right to them; it's the lost thing, the arcadia that disappeared so slowly they didn't even realize it was happening until it was gone. They can't believe it – they truly can't believe it – when they realize that even the colleges they had assumed would be their child's back-up, emergency plan probably won't accept them. They pay thousands and thousands of dollars for extended-time testing and private counselors; they scour lists of board members at colleges, looking for any possible connections; they pay for enhancing summer programs that only underscore their children's privilege. (p. 15)

Although coverage of the college admissions scandal surged in 2019, commentary on parental involvement in college education is not new and it is not specific only to college admissions. In 2015, Julie Lythcott-Haims published *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*. Although geared toward the parents of elementary and secondary school-aged children, the book was inspired by Lythcott-Haims's experiences as Stanford University's Dean of Freshmen. Over her decade-long tenure, Lythcott-Haims witnessed an increase in parental involvement on behalf of students and a decrease in coping skills, problem-solving, and independence in the students with whom she worked. Although the book focuses primarily on advice for parents, it is rife with examples that illustrate the roles parents play in their children's post-secondary education.

Lythcott-Haims (2015) never directly addresses relationships between parents and faculty, though she mentions it in passing:

> Stanford and colleges in every rankings tier around the country have seen parents show up to do the actual schoolwork of being a college student; they select the courses they feel will lead to their kids' success, chose their kid's majors, edit their kid's papers, call faculty to question grades, and bring lawyers to defend behavioral accusations. (p. 69)

Similarly, college parenting guides such as *Letting Go: A Parents' Guide to Understanding the College Years* (Coburn & Treeger, 2016) or *The Naked Roommate: For Parents Only: Calling, Not Calling, Roommates, Relationships, Friends, Finances, and Everything Else That Really Matters when Your Child Goes to College* (Cohen, 2010) offer direct instruction to parents that they should not directly contact faculty members, but instead encourage their children to do so. College parenting websites such as *CollegiateParent.com* (Shaffer, 2017) offer similar advice.

Allusions to the relationships between parents and college faculty are not limited to published parenting guides. The parenting blog *Grown&Flown.com* offers both a parent's perspective via "Don't worry, You are NOT a Helicopter Parent: 5 Ways to Know" (2016) and the direct experiences of a college professor via the post "College Professor Warns: How Not to Be a Lawn Mower Parent" (Fancher, 2017) while online message threads such as *Quora's* "Can parents speak to college professors about grades?" (2017) and *Reddit's* "College professors of Reddit, what is the worst case of helicopter parenting you have ever seen?" (2016) offer additional perspectives. In fact, an internet search of the term "Parents contacting college professors" offers up a wide range of headlines from a wider range of sources—some more reputable than others—including items from tabloids like the *NY Post* with "Crazy parents are calling up colleges, pretending to be their kids" (Fleming, 2017); regional newspapers like the *Boston Globe* with "Snowplow parents overly involved in college students' lives" (English, 2013); magazines like *The Atlantic* with "The Ethos of the Overinvolved Parent" (McKenna, 2017); newspapers of record like *The Washington Post* with "Helicopter parents don't stay at home when the kids go to college—they keep hovering" (Selingo, 2018); college-focused news like *U.S. News & World Report* with "10 Reasons Parents Should Never Contact College Professors" (Hyman & Jacobs, 2010); and teaching blogs like *Bored Teachers* with "How Helicopter Parents Are Taking Over & Harming Education" (Morris, 2017).

None of these sources is an example of scholarly research, and they certainly range in credibility. To ignore them, however, would be a mistake, as they surely help shape the narrative about parental involvement in children's collegiate experiences. Reading through each of these leaves a reader—or at least me—with the distinct impression that parents are regularly calling faculty members and that faculty members do not welcome these contacts. This assumption

likely influences the perceived relationships between parents and faculty and may inform their communication when parents and faculty are in contact with each other. This study sheds light on the lived experiences of faculty members as they connect with parents at a single institution and provides context for these assumptions.

Parenting Styles

Although popular media discussing parental involvement ranges in credibility and is based upon limited, if any, foundational research, scholarship on parenting and college students is grounded in Baumrind's (1966) definitions of three distinctive parenting styles—authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. These styles have become the standard terms used to examine parenting approaches in studies about college student development and transition.

The first of these styles, *authoritarian parenting*, is a parenting style in which parents exert control over their children's behaviors and actions (Baumrind, 1966). Authoritarian parents place strict expectations and restrictions on their children but offer little support to their children in meeting those expectations. Authoritarian parents are often emotionally distant from their children, and familial relationships may be characterized as lacking warmth. Where authoritarian parents place strict expectations, *permissive parenting* is a style in which parents provide little to no expectation and restriction. Permissive parents instead allow children's impulses and desires to dictate behavior. This parenting style encourages self-regulation but does not impose external standards for control (Baumrind, 1966, p. 889). *Authoritative parenting* balances the expectations of authoritarian parenting with the freedom of permissive parenting. This style is a scaffolded approach to parenting in which the parent "affirms the child's present qualities, but also sets standards for future conduct" (p. 891). This approach allows children to develop

problem-solving and decision-making skills in an environment that provides both emotional and functional support.

Over the last few decades, *helicopter parenting* has developed as a pejorative term used to describe “overly involved and protective parents who constantly communicate with their children, intervene in their children’s affairs…and remove obstacles their children encounter” (Odenwell et al., 2014, p. 408). Although the term is both casual and negative, helicopter parenting is a frequently used concept in both the popular press and in scholarly works. *Overparenting* has emerged more recently as a term used to describe excessive parental involvement (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013), perhaps intending to soften the negative connotation of helicopter parenting.

Parenting and College Students

Strage and Brandt (1999) found that the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting constructs, which have historically been found to be significant predictors of development and success for children and adolescents, remain significant predictors for college students. Additionally, Carney-Hall (2008) determined that not all parental involvement is detrimental to development, while Coburn (2006) suggested that parental support may be more important now than for previous generations, as college students are managing more choices—in everything from housing options and food to cocurricular activities and academic majors—which increases stress.

Extant research reveals an authoritative parenting style to be positively associated with student development and academic success. Authoritative parenting encourages academic self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, which has in turn predicted higher academic success (Turner et al., 2009). Parental support is positively associated with college GPA and academic gains

(Cutrona et al., 1994; Kiyama et al., 2015; Lopez Turley et al., 2010; Melendez & Melendez, 2010), and encourages emotional well-being and positive adjustment to college (Cutrona et al., 1994; Fass & Tubman, 2002; Holahan et al., 1995; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Lopez Turley et al., 2010; Shoup et al., 2009; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). Additionally, students well-supported by parents find more satisfaction in the collegiate experience (Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Shoup et al., 2009). Harper et al. (2012) found that parental involvement had the most positive effects on first-year students.

Although characteristics of authoritative parenting promote gains in college student adjustment and success, helicopter parenting or overinvolved parenting is negatively associated with college student adjustment and success. Dreher et al. (2014) found that overparenting is related to a student's lower internal and higher external locus of control, which in turn may lead to higher emotional immaturity. Overinvolvement of parents can negatively affect college students' general well-being (Kiyama et al., 2015; LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011); self-esteem (Nelson et al., 2015); self-efficacy (van Ingen et al., 2015); and adjustment (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015). Students with overly involved parents are hindered in development of problem-solving and decision-making skills (Hunt, 2008; Taub, 2008). Additionally, first-year students with highly involved parents self-report lower grades than those with lesser involved parents (Shoup et al., 2009).

Parents and Faculty

Shannon et al. (2016) wrote:

> As emerging-adult college students begin mastering the management of emotions, identities, and mature relationships, their internalized regulatory mechanism facilitates behavior that delays gratifications for goal-oriented actions. Parental quality and

supportive involvement in the goings-on of their students' lives may offer the support and encouragement necessary to exercise positive behavioral student engagement. (p. 41)

This bolsters prior findings that appropriate, supportive, non-intrusive parental involvement can encourage student adjustment and academic success. As will be discussed more comprehensively in Chapter 2, extant literature also shows that faculty members can positively affect college student engagement, development, and academic success (e.g., Komarraju et al., 2010; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Yet, the limited research that has been conducted about faculty and parents suggests that, while faculty members are empathetic towards parents' desires to be involved, they do not feel comfortable or adequately prepared for parent-faculty engagement and they are skeptical of any positive effects of those interactions on students (Garrett, 2016).

While research about parental involvement and college student development has used empirical data to explore causal relationships and effects on students (e.g. LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Mattanah et al., 2004; Nelson et al., 2015; Shannon et al., 2016; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000) or to examine the experiences of college administrators as they learn how to best work with parents and families (e.g. Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006; Daniel et al., 2001; Taub, 2008), little research has been conducted in the area of faculty perceptions of parental involvement. Faculty members are uniquely situated to observe their students' development over the course of a semester or year. Additionally, faculty members' experiences with parents range from direct interactions to indirect experiences filtered through their students, and these experiences are often unique to the faculty role. Setting this study in private, residential, baccalaureate institution with a low student-to-faculty ratio ensured ample opportunity for student-faculty relationships and opportunities for both formal and informal interactions, as well as accessibility of faculty members to parents. The experiences and perspectives shared by

participants in this study provide context to understand more deeply parents' relationships to student development and success.

Theoretical Framework

Traditional-aged college students enter universities poised for developmental gains—cognitively, socially, and personally. Arnett (2000) labeled this period between ages 18 to the mid-20s, where individuals are not still adolescents under their parents' supervision but also not quite adults, *emerging adulthood*. Arnett (2000) described emerging adulthood as

> a time of life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course. (p. 469)

Identity exploration is a key component of emerging adulthood, as emerging adults are no longer beholden to the views of their parents and not yet beholden to the commitments of adulthood (Arnett, 2006a, p. 8). Similarly and simultaneously, the collegiate experience can be a time of independent exploration and identity development, as students are navigating new environments, evolving demands on their time and capacity, and decisions about their futures.

Arthur Chickering's theory of identity development was developed based on research surveying traditional-aged college students and established seven vectors that are integral to identity development: (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering understood these vectors as having direction and magnitude, but not as linear, finite steps needing to be completed before moving on to the next (Chickering, 1969, p. 8.).

Thus, students move among the vectors in different sequences and ways throughout their educational experience.

Figure 1

Seven Vector Model of Development

Note. Adapted from *Education and Identity* (2nd ed.), by A. W. Chickering and L. Reisser, 1993, Jossey-Bass.

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector, *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence*, is particularly applicable to emerging adulthood and the liminal spaces between parental supervision and adult responsibilities. This vector involves the development of three types of independence: emotional independence, instrumental independence, and

interdependence. Emotional independence begins with a separation from parental control and an increased reliance on peers, institutional supports, and self as one begins to develop confidence in their judgement and actions (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117). As individuals gain emotional independence, they also begin to develop instrumental independence in the form of self-sufficiency, again separating from parental control and taking responsibility for their own work, time management, and decision-making (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 133). As individuals develop interdependence, they demonstrate an ability to manage their own self-sufficiency in concert with interactions with others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This study is situated within Chickering and Reisser's framework's third vector. With its focus on separation from parental control, development of self-sufficiency, and a refocused interdependence with others, this vector is an appropriate lens for examining faculty members' perceptions of how continued parental involvement in the lives of college students is related to student development and academic success.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and beliefs of selected faculty members about parental involvement during students' academic experiences at a private, baccalaureate college. Through surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews, the experiences of faculty members as they observe parental involvement in their students' academic lives and as they interact with the parents of their students, as well as their experiences as they observe and facilitate the development of their students, were documented.

Most of the extant writing on faculty and parent interactions is in the popular press and gives the impression that faculty and parents have contentious relationships. With limited research to support these assumptions, this study explored how faculty members perceive

parental involvement in the lives of their students. This topic inspires a host of questions: Do faculty members perceive parents as helping or hurting their students' development and academic success? Do they observe their students managing parental expectations, influences, or supports? Do they engage with parents regularly? Do they welcome these engagements or resist them? Do their own experiences as parents change how they perceive student-parent interactions? To allow for an opportunity to explore these and any other questions about faculty and parent interactions that may arise throughout the study, this exploratory study was centered around a single, broad research question: *How do faculty members experience and understand parental involvement in their students' academic lives?*

Significance of the Study

Scant research exists on the perceptions of faculty members on parental involvement in students' collegiate experiences. It is important to address this gap because, while we know that emerging adults are poised for developmental gains (e.g., Arnett, 2000, 2006a) and parental involvement can both positively and negatively influence that development (e.g., Azmitia et al., 2013; Dreher et al., 2014; Harper et al., 2012; Shoup et al., 2009; Taub, 2008; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000; Wolf et al., 2009), we can benefit from understanding that development from multiple perspectives. Faculty members can provide unique vantage points and enhance the understanding we currently have about the roles of parents in student development.

Garrett (2016) found that faculty members often do not feel adequately prepared for parent interactions. Such interactions may occur at formal university events, such as family weekends, or may occur as information outreach from parents. Faculty reported being hesitant to deliver student and course specific information to parents—both because of privacy regulations and because of a general resistance to parental influence—yet feeling compelled to respond to

parents, particularly at institution-sanctioned events. A better understanding of the perspectives of faculty members could bolster support offered by institutions to faculty members as they continue to engage with parents. Understanding more about the benefits and challenges to faculty members regarding direct parent interactions could improve the experience for faculty, parents, and students.

Additionally, faculty members offer unique perspectives into the development of their students and can play influential roles in student development. A greater understanding of what faculty members experience when engaging with parents and how they perceive parental involvement relating to students' academic lives can enhance our understanding of college student development more generally, thus providing opportunities for colleges and universities to better facilitate student development and academic success. Furthermore, better understanding these perspectives may inform how colleges and universities support faculty, as faculty in turn support students.

Finally, as parental involvement on college campuses has increased, so too has institutional programming dedicated to parents, with particular emphasis on the relationships of parents to the financial development initiatives of institutions (Coburn, 2006; Golden, 2001; Savage, 2008; Ward-Roof et al., 2008). There is considerable opportunity for parents to engage in partnerships with colleges and universities and to appropriately and effectively engage in the collegiate lives of their children, from learning how best to interact with faculty members to knowing when such interaction is appropriate to understanding how involvement in their students' academic lives may be either beneficial or harmful. By understanding more about parental involvement from the faculty perspective, this study may help inform how such partnerships develop.

Operational Terms

Faculty member refers, for the purpose of this study, to any individual engaged in traditional academic instruction in the collegiate setting. This includes, but is not limited to, faculty classifications such as tenure-track, adjunct, part-time, instructor, lecturer, or contingent. For this study, faculty member does not refer to professional librarians, administrators, or other professional faculty positions.

Indirect parental involvement refers to parental involvement in students' experiences that may be observed by faculty members but are not direct contact between parents and faculty. Indirect parental involvement may include, but is not limited to, influencing a student's coursework or understanding of material, frequent dispensing of both solicited and unsolicited advice, pressure on students to make particular choices or meet high demands, and using the student as a conduit for communication with faculty.

Direct parental involvement refers to direct contact with parents. Contact comes in a variety of formats, including in-person, phone, text, or email. In the context of faculty, direct parental involvement refers to direct contact between parents and faculty.

Parental involvement refers to the role parents play in the lives of their students and has neither a positive nor negative connotation. Parental involvement may include but is not limited to: frequent communication, decision-making, intervening on behalf of a student, listening to student concerns, and providing advice.

Parents refers to biological parents, guardians, or primary caregivers.

Conclusion

As demonstrated, extant research shows that parental involvement relates to student development as students navigate their academic experiences (e.g., Azmitia et al., 2013; Dreher

et al., 2014; Harper et al., 2012; Shoup et al., 2009; Taub, 2008; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000; Wolf et al., 2009) and reveals that institutions have developed programming for parents as parental involvement in the college experience has increased (e.g., Coburn, 2006; Savage, 2008; Ward-Roof et al., 2008). This study explored a gap in the literature with regard to the relationships between parents and faculty members by examining the perceptions and beliefs of faculty members about parental involvement during students' academic experiences at a private college. The next chapter will explore the extant literature in more depth, providing greater context for this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of the literature about college student development, parental involvement in education, and colleges' relationships to students' parents. Specifically, major areas reviewed include: (a) college student development, (b) parenting types, (c) parents' expectations of involvement in college, (d) the relationships between parental involvement and college student development, (e) the relationships between parents and colleges, (f) the role of faculty in college student development, and (g) the relationships between parents and faculty.

College Student Development

The early foundation of college student development theory was established in the 1930s with Lewin's equation, $B = f(P \times E)$, illustrating that behavior (*B*) is a function (*f*) of a person (*P*) and their environment (*E*; Reason & Broido, 2017) and the 1937 release of the American Council on Education's *Student Personnel Point of View* (Patton et al., 2016; Reason & Broido, 2017). College student development theory emerged as a full-fledged research area in the 1960s, a time of changing demographics, missions, and campus climates in higher education, as researchers and practitioners sought to understand and support their student populations (Patton et al., 2016). Arising out of early research in the discipline, three foundational theories arose to serve as the basis of student development theory over the next several decades: Chickering's theory of identity development, Perry's theory of cognitive development, and Kohlberg's theory of moral development (Patton et al., 2016). From this foundation, additional theories were developed to address varying populations, critical perspectives, and changing environments. Patton et al.

(2016) concluded, “development of the whole student is more complex than one theory or even a cluster of theories can explain” (p. 16). No single theory of development is sufficient for examining the full student experience; there are multiple dimensions to identity development, and college student development should be considered from a variety of angles and constructs (Abes et al., 2007; Patton et al., 2016; Torres et al., 2009). Drawn from the range of college student development theories, I focused on three theoretical perspectives: (a) emerging adulthood as a means for understanding the foundational developmental stage of most traditional aged college students (Arnett, 2000, 2006a, 2006b); (b) self-authorship as a means for exploring the roles of faculty and parents throughout college student development (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2008, 2009a, 2009b); and (c) Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) seven vectors of identity development as my foundation for understanding the development of autonomy and interdependence in college students. First, I will begin with an explanation of emerging adulthood.

Emerging Adulthood Theory

Arnett (2000) proposed the concept of emerging adulthood in 2000 to address the developmental period from ages 18-25, where individuals are no longer adolescents but not quite adults. Changing demographics in industrialized societies—including a steep rise in age for first marriage and first child, a sharp increase in college enrollments, and a high rate of residential changes — have led to a shift from an individual’s early twenties as the age for commitment to adulthood to the early twenties as a time of freedom and self-exploration (Arnett, 2000, 2006a, 2006b). Arnett (2000) believed this period to be one of open possibilities and life directions, writing:

> Emerging adulthood is time of life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period in the life course. (p. 469)

Emerging adults are more inclined to take risks; to explore their identity in terms of love, work, and worldview; and to evaluate their perceptions of their own adulthood in ambiguous terms (Arnett, 2000). In essence, emerging adults are actively shaping the people they will become.

Arnett (2006a) recognized the heterogeneity of circumstances, understanding that the early twenties do not bring the same opportunities, challenges, and experiences for all. To address the varying experiences of emerging adults, Arnett (2006a) developed five ages of emerging adulthood: Identity Exploration, Instability, Self-Focus, Feeling In-Between, and Possibilities. These ages, explained in Table 1, are not discrete stages, but are meant to provide a framework for understanding emerging adults through a variety of experiences.

Table 1

Five Features of Emerging Adulthood

Age	Description
Age of Identity Explorations	Emerging adults are no longer beholden to the views of their parents and are not yet beholden to the commitments of adult lives. In deciding if and on a life partner, they must first understand who they are. In deciding what to study or their occupation, they must first understand what they enjoy and what they are good at. In forming views on values, religion, and other beliefs, they must first address how their worldview aligns or differentiates from their parents.'
Age of Instability	Emerging adults move from their parents' homes, then typically several more times in a short period. Emerging adults may have the experiences of cohabitating for the first time, returning home for a period, or moving great distances.
Self-Focused Age	Emerging adults are not self-centered, often displaying more empathy and consideration of other viewpoints than adolescents, but, because they have more time alone than most other age groups and have little duty or commitment to others, they are able to focus on themselves and develop self-sufficiency.
Age of Feeling In-Between	Reaching adulthood is rarely perceived as reaching milestones, such as graduation or marriage, but as reaching competencies such as responsibility, decision-making, and financial independence. Emerging adults often perceive themselves as beyond adolescence but not yet having reached these competencies.
Age of Possibilities	Emerging adults have high hopes for the future that have not yet been tested against reality. They often believe their lives will be better than their parents,' and they have opportunity to break from family and develop self-direction.

Note. Adapted from "Emerging Adulthood: Understanding the New Way of Coming of Age," by J. J. Arnett, 2006, *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century,* (pp. 3-19). American Psychological Association.

Emerging adulthood is not a theory specific to college student development, but instead addresses this developmental period across the 18-25-year-old demographic. I believe, however, that it is particularly relevant to understanding the developmental foundation for traditional-aged

college students. At the most basic level, traditional-aged students fall squarely within this demographic. Beyond that, the college experience offers opportunity for a variety of residential changes, encourages self-sufficiency, and promotes possibility for the future. Both curricular and co-curricular experiences contribute to identity exploration—an entire branch of college student development theory that will be explored later via Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development—and allow for challenge to and development of a student's worldview.

I find the roles of parents in the lives of emerging adults to be of particular interest. These students are just beginning to break from the supervision of parents and embark on the transition of the period of emerging adulthood. Arnett (2006b) posited that the transition to emerging adulthood allows for a parent-child relationship that is "less hierarchical and more like a friendship, more of a relationship of near equals" (p. 314). As levels of parental involvement vary with college students, are all students positioned for this evolving parent-child relationship? Furthermore, if the parent-child relationship does not evolve, do students move freely among the five ages of emerging adulthood? While this study is not designed to answer these questions explicitly, considering such questions helps to understand the context of the traditional-aged college student.

Self-Authorship Theory

Baxter-Magolda's (2001, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) conceptualization of self-authorship aligns well with Arnett's (2000, 2006a, 2006b) ages of emerging adulthood theory. Both theories include a removal from direct supervision or external control and allow for moments of instability and vacillation, questioning of beliefs and perspectives, and a focus on self-determination. Ultimately, self-authorship provides the path for emerging adults to navigate the Age of Feeling In-Between from adolescence to adulthood.

Baxter Magolda (2001) defined self-authorship as “using your internal voice and core personal values to guide your life” (p. 2). Baxter Magolda’s (2001, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) research on the theory of self-authorship centers on the role of higher education on development and is particularly applicable to emerging adults. The theory of self-authorship describes a journey across three stages, and the key features of Baxter Magolda’s conceptualization of self-authorship are defined in Table 2. These theorized stages are not fully discrete, and individuals may travel back and forth between them as they reach their final destination. (Baxter Magolda 2001, 2008, 2009a, 2009b).

Table 2

Key Concepts of Self-Authorship

Concept	Description
External Formulas	Individuals make decisions based on external expectations instead of internal criteria.
Crossroads	Individuals have experienced dissatisfaction with following only external formulas and begin to recognize the need for their own voices.
Listening to Internal Voice	Substage of the Crossroads. Individuals begin to explore ways to listen to their internal voice, examining their beliefs and what makes them happy.
Cultivating Internal Voice	Substage of the Crossroads. Individuals begin to set priorities and develop values based on their internal voice.
Self-Authorship	Individuals trust their internal voices and establish personal values and beliefs.
Trusting the Internal Voice	Substage of Self-Authorship. Individuals begin to recognize they control their reactions to reality and develop their own responses to obstacles.
Building an Internal Foundation	Substage of Self-Authorship. Individuals develop a personal philosophy to guide their reactions to reality.
Securing Internal Commitments	Substage of Self-Authorship. Personal philosophies become second nature to individuals and are intuitively part of individuals' experiences in the world.
Dimensions of Development	Three areas across which development occurs.
Cognitive Dimension	Individuals understand and acquire knowledge.
Interpersonal Dimension	Individuals understand who they are and how they view themselves.
Intrapersonal Dimension	Individuals build and understand relationships with others.
Good Company	Learning partners that help individuals on the path to self-authorship. Effective partners respect individuals' thoughts and feelings, help individuals understand their experiences, and help individuals solve their own problems.

Note. Adapted from *Authoring Your Life: Developing an Internal Voice To Navigate Life's Challenges* by M.B. Baxter Magolda, 2009, Stylus.

At the crux of self-authorship are the three dimensions of development: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The theory of self-authorship recognizes that individuals do not develop in in each of these areas discretely but takes a holistic perspective of development maintaining that individuals are developing in all dimensions fluidly and in concert with each other. As individuals reach self-authorship, the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions form a unified foundation from which all meaning-making occurs. Individuals no longer understand and live their experiences as defined discretely by their knowledge, their understanding of themselves, or their relationships to others; instead, they experience and understand their lives holistically.

Although Baxter Magolda (2001) recognized that interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of development were not in the explicit purview of the college experience, it is nevertheless beneficial to consider these lenses when evaluating the relationships of both parents and faculty members to college student development. How both parties interact with students can affect their development, particularly across the interpersonal dimension. As students begin to listen to and cultivate their internal voices, they will necessarily need to retract from the external formulas of their parents and professors. Recent scholarship examining the roles of parents in the journey towards self-authorship reveals the parent-child relationships influence each of these domains and the overall development of the individuals (Winters, 2016).

Another key point to consider is that parents and faculty members may be well-positioned to act as good company in the development of their students. The level of parent interaction or intervention has the potential for considerable impact on the developmental experience. A parent who is engaged and supportive may be an effective learning partner, listening to students' concerns, understanding their perspectives, and helping them to become

independent problem solvers. A parent who is overly involved and intervening on behalf of their student may be limiting that student's arrival at and navigation through The Crossroads. Likewise, faculty members may have the opportunity to encourage self-authorship as students break from parental oversight and begin to develop their internal voices, particularly when encountering overly involved and interventive parents.

Perez (2019) recently examined self-authorship through the lens of multiple paradigms – constructivism, social constructionism, critical, and critical constructivism – to better understand how self-authorship accounts for factors such as racism, power, privilege, and oppression in college student development. Recognizing that Baxter Magolda's foundational, longitudinal study examined a majority White participant group (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2009b), subsequent research has incorporated more diverse populations and offered critique of self-authorship's applicability (Perez, 2019). Perez concluded that though various paradigms offer context for self-authorship across populations by incorporating multiple voices and applying a critical eye, only a critical constructivism paradigm could fully account for systems of privilege and oppression. It is essential to recognize that student development is affected by myriad influences and no single development theory can account for all aspects of development and growth. For the purposes of this study, self-authorship, however, remains a useful lens for considering the roles of parents.

Identity Development Theory

At the intersection of emerging adulthood and self-authorship is autonomy and interdependence. Throughout emerging adulthood and along the path of self-authorship, individuals are gaining self-determination, shaping philosophies, and developing the ability to make decisions and solve problems. Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of identity development provide an overarching framework for understanding this intersection. Originally

developed by Chickering in the 1960s—when the college-going population was largely White and male—and revised by Chickering and Reisser in the 1990s to address changing demographics and multiple populations, the seven vectors of identity theory focus specifically on development during the college years.

The seven vectors are intentionally identified as vectors, instead of stages or steps, to signify their multidirectionality (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Just as Arnett (2000, 2006a, 2006b) emphasized the fluidity of the five ages of emerging adulthood and as Baxter Magolda (2001, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) advised that the journey to self-authorship is not a direct path, Chickering and Reisser (1993) recognized that college student development is not linear. Students may jump from one vector to another several steps away, return to a previous vector, or operate in multiple vectors simultaneously. The characteristics of each vector are briefly outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

Seven Vectors of Identity Development

Vector	Description
1: Developing Competence	Gaining intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence. Developing confidence
2: Managing Emotions	Gaining an increased awareness of emotions, increased control and expression of emotions, and ability to integrate emotions with actions.
3: Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence	Establishing emotional independence. Establishing instrumental independence. Develop interdependence.
4: Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships	Gaining an understanding and appreciation of differences among individuals. Establishing capacity for healthy, enduring, and nurturing relationships.
5: Establishing Identity	Understanding and acceptance of self in all forms, including physical, gender, sexual orientation, social, historical, and cultural. Establishing a sense of self in relation to others and a sense of personal stability.
6: Developing Purpose	Establishing strong commitments to interpersonal relationships, vocational goals, and personal interests.
7: Developing Integrity	Establishing a sense of personal values and beliefs. Acting in a manner authentic to one's established values and beliefs.

Note. Adapted from *Education and Identity* (2nd ed.), by A. W. Chickering and L. Reisser, (1993), Jossey-Bass.

For the purposes of this study, I am especially interested in Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector, Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence. Chickering and Reisser defined autonomy as "mastery of oneself and one's powers" (p. 118) and identified three key concepts within this vector: emotional independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence. Emotional independence involves the development of critical thinking and personal choice and a movement away from the need for reassurances and approval of others. Those who achieve instrumental independence become self-directed problem-solvers and develop the confidence to begin pursuing their own goals. Interdependence is found when a

student understands their place in the community. Students are able to understand their relationships as a give and take while maintaining their sense of self, as interdependence is characterized as “the need to be independent and the longing for inclusion become better balanced, as does the sense of when to ask for help or go it alone” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 140).

This vector is particularly applicable to understanding the roles of both parents and faculty in the development of student autonomy and interdependence. Students must necessarily break free from parental oversight and influence as they begin to establish emotional independence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). They must develop their own abilities to make decisions and act on those decisions, and continued parental involvement may inhibit this development. As students reach interdependence, ideally they will have gained a better understanding of how to incorporate the advice and perspectives of their parents into their own worldviews and effective parental engagement may promote this development. Faculty members have their own roles to play in the development of students; however, they are also uniquely positioned to view students’ development of autonomy and the many factors which may contribute to it. Ultimately, this vector provides an effective lens for interpreting these perspectives.

Emerging adulthood theory establishes the foundational understanding for the current developmental stage of most traditional-aged college students and Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) seven vectors frame this study. Emerging adulthood and Chickering and Reisser’s third vector of Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence establish the theoretical framework for interpreting this study’s findings, while self-authorship theory serves as a

connecting thread and a means for understanding the journey emerging adults towards interdependence.

Parenting Types

Just as it is essential to understand the characteristics of student development relevant to this study before examining how faculty perceive the role of parental involvement on college student development, it is also necessary to review the characteristics of parenting which may surface in the study.

Baumrind's Parenting Styles

Baumrind (1966) produced the seminal work on parenting styles and related definitions in the early 1960s, and those definitions remain the primary conceptualizations of parenting in current literature. These styles—authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative—are consistent throughout studies of parental involvement in both the K-12 and higher education environments (e.g., Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Strage & Brandt, 1999; Turner et al., 2009; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

The first of Baumrind's (1966) parenting styles, authoritarian parenting, is characterized by parents' attempts to "shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct" (p. 890). An authoritarian parent restricts a child's autonomy and expects obedience. Often an authoritarian parent will use strict regulations and punitive measures to enforce conformity. According to Baumrind, an authoritarian parenting style may limit development of autonomy because children have little opportunity for self-regulation and dissent.

Baumrind's (1966) second parenting style, permissive parenting, is a parenting style in which parents provide little expectation and restriction, instead allowing children's impulses and

desires to dictate behavior. Unlike in authoritarian parenting, the permissive parent does not expect obedience and conformity to external controls, and the permissive parent avoids using their power over a child to guide behavioral outcomes. Children have free reign over their choices and encounter few consequences.

Although permissive and authoritarian parenting styles are on opposite ends of the parenting spectrum, they yield similar results in the development of autonomy. According to Baumrind (1966), for a child to learn dissent "the child may need a strongly held position from which to diverge and then be allowed under some circumstances to pay the price for nonconformity by being punished" (p. 904). With authoritarian parenting, there is little opportunity to diverge from expectation, and with permissive parenting there is little opportunity to pay the price for nonconformity. By setting low expectations and providing little consequence for diverging from those expectations, permissive parents limit opportunities to develop competence, interdependence, and autonomy.

Authoritative parenting bridges the gap between authoritarian and permissive parenting, allowing for both external expectations and self-regulation (Baumrind, 1966). Baumrind described authoritative parenting as a style in which a parent "exerts firm control at points of parent-child divergence, but does not hem the child in with restrictions" (p. 891). This parenting style is a scaffolded approach where children are encouraged, within a framework of parental expectations, to make decisions and develop their own set of beliefs about appropriate behavior. This parenting style may promote development of autonomy as children develop competence, healthy relationships, and an understanding of their actions in relation to others.

Helicopter Parenting

While Baumrind's three parenting styles have been the standard conceptualizations of parenting since the 1960s, a new, more pejorative, term came into use in the early 2000s. *Helicopter parenting* refers to parents who hover over their children, ready to swoop down and intervene on their behalf (Taub, 2008). Helicopter parents maintain constant communication with their children, including once they transition to college, and maintain high levels of involvement in day-to-day tasks such as "reading and proofing their child's papers, making to-do lists for them, driving two hours each way to the dorm every two weeks to clean, do dishes and do the laundry, or calling to wake the children up for classes" (Hunt, 2008, p. 9). The overinvolvement of helicopter parents leads to the perception that their children, particularly once in college, are limited in the decision-making skills and autonomy necessary to function in the world (Hunt, 2008). Despite the casual, negative tone of the term *helicopter parent*, this parenting type persists in scholarly literature (e.g., LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Nelson et al., 2015; van Ingen et al., 2015). These four parenting styles—authoritarian, permissive, authoritative, and helicopter—will be referenced throughout the remaining review of the literature. I will use them as I explore how parents relate to college student development and how parents interact with colleges and universities.

Parents' Expectations of Involvement in College

Before examining the intersection of parents and college student development, it is useful to understand parents' expectations for involvement in the college students' lives. Although individual expectations will most certainly vary for a wide range of reasons, shifts in parenting culture prime parents to expect high levels of involvement in their children's higher education experience.

First, extant literature supports the involvement of parents in the K-12 experience. Working with various colleagues, Wendy Grolnick (Grolnick, 2009; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989;) and Eva Pomerantz (Pomerantz & Eaton, 2000; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2001; Pomerantz et al., 2007) have extensively examined the relationships between parental involvement and child development and are heavily cited throughout extant literature about the relationships between parental involvement and both childhood and college student development. Their studies have established a foundational understanding of the importance of parental involvement to children's development of autonomy and self-determination.

Parent participation in school activities, monitoring of homework, and praising academic performance have positive effects on students across the K-12 environment (Day & Dotterer, 2018; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Grolnick, 2009; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2000). An authoritative parenting style throughout the K-12 experience can lead to a stronger internal locus of control and the development of strategies for self-managing school, thus leading to greater academic achievement (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). Additionally, both home-based involvement, such as homework assistance and academic discussions, and school-based involvement were positively associated with children's development, leading to increases in both skill development and motivational development (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

As a result of the positive relationships between parental involvement and K-12 academic growth, parental involvement is highly encouraged as students move through elementary and secondary school. At the same time, parents have access to children's daily grades and assignments at their fingertips. Software programs such as PowerSchool provide regularly updated access to their students' attendance, class performance, homework submissions, and cumulative grades, providing parents with opportunities to engage with their students, and

sometimes their students' teachers (J. Hoffman, 2008). Often this access begins in elementary school and continues throughout secondary school, conditioning parents to expect the same access once their children transition to college.

As parents are being encouraged to participate in the K-12 experience and being advised that their involvement has positive effects on the children, families have also shifted to a more consumerist perspective of higher education (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006; Daniel et al., 2001). The cost of higher education continues to rise, and parents have become increasingly concerned about balancing the cost of education with the value of the educational experiences (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006; Daniel et al., 2001). This expectation has led to increased involvement from parents, as they work to ensure their investment is being effectively managed.

Additionally, as colleges see an increase in students with disabilities or mental and emotional health concerns, they also see an increase in parents with a history of advocating for their children in academic settings (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006). Some parents are heavily involved in the disability support process during elementary and secondary school. As their children transition to college, parents often expect to continue their advocacy in the higher education environment.

As parents' expectations for involvement in college shift and colleges see higher levels of involvement from parents in the lives of their students, it is important to understand how this involvement relates to student development and success. The following section will differentiate between types of parental involvement and examine both the positive and negative relationships of parental involvement and student development.

Relationships Between Parental Involvement and College Student Development

Existing scholarship examines the relationships between parental involvement and college student development. In this section, I will review the following themes: (a) contact between parents and students, (b) positive relationships between involvement and development, (c) negative relationships between parental involvement and development, (d) differences among subpopulations, and (e) balancing engagement and overinvolvement.

Contact Between Parents and Students

Parental contact and parental involvement take on a variety of forms in the lives of college students. Shoup et al. (2009) found that most college students report regular contact with their parents, most frequently between students and their mothers, although Mattanah et al. (2004) found women reported higher levels of communication with their mothers than did men. Types of contact varied, and included phone, email, and text (Cutright, 2008; Shoup et al., 2009; Wolf et al., 2009).

Cutright (2008) described the frequency and depth of communication between parents and students as:

> Five phone calls home a day to parents or siblings in a distant city is on the higher end of staying-in-touch patterns, but not particularly unusual. Some students do not own alarm clocks or use their cell phones as substitute alarms, but instead get the same daily rousing by telephone from their parents that they got back in high school. Dad and Mom still help with homework, but while daughter or son is walking with friends to the coffee shop. (p. 41)

Findings from several studies using survey data to examine type and frequency of parental communication suggest that students differentiate between parental contact, as illustrated by

Cutright's parent alarm clocks, and parental engagement as illustrated by homework helpers (Kolkhorst et al., 2010; Shoup et al., 2009; Wolf et al., 2009), with parental contact occurring more frequently than parental engagement (Kolkhorst et al., 2010). Academic and personal well-being were frequent topics of engagement, with parents and children discussing academic progress, performance, and outside-of-class experiences (Shoup et al., 2009; Wolf et al., 2009). Despite this parental engagement in academic conversations, Wolf et al. (2009) found that parental involvement in academic decision-making was infrequent. Parents and students are discussing academics, but students remain the primary decision-makers about academic matters.

Positive Relationships Between Parental Involvement and Development

The negative perceptions of helicopter parenting and frequent parental contact may encourage assumptions that result in surprise that parent involvement in academic decision-making is infrequent. In fact, despite the negative perceptions of parental involvement in post-secondary education that come with the use of terminology such as helicopter parents, study after study has found positive associations between parental involvement and students' development (e.g., Holahan et al., 1995; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kiyama et al., 2015; Mattanah et al., 2004; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Museus, 2013; Shannon et al., 2016; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). This general finding is true even within subgroups of the college-going populations, such as Museus's (2013) study with Southeast Asian-American participants, which found that despite cultural constructs, such as Tiger Mom parenting—a term popularized by Amy Chua's (2011) *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* and characterized as a parenting style typified by Chinese families, focusing on high academic achievement, tightly controlled social experiences, and high expectations for success—and literature suggesting otherwise, most students did not regard parental pressures as excessive or damaging.

Overall, adjustment to college is positively related to parental engagement with their children. Shannon et al. (2016) described this well, writing:

> As emerging-adult college students begin mastering the management of emotions, identities, and mature relationships, their internalized regulatory mechanism facilitates behavior that delays gratification for goal-oriented actions. Parental quality and supportive involvement in the goings-on of their students' lives may offer the support and encouragement necessary to exercise positive behavioral student engagement. (p. 41)

In sum, it can be stated that college students with high levels of parental support, secure family attachment, parental availability, and healthy separation-individuation have been found to be better adjusted college than those with lower levels of involvement (Holahan, et al., 1995; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Kiyama et al., 2015; Mattanah et al., 2004; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

Individuation. Of particular note in the relationship of parental involvement to higher levels of adjustment is the area of individuation. Despite what may be a natural assumption that those with high levels of attachment may not succeed in individuation, Mattanah et al. (2004) found that secure maternal attachment relationships are closely associated with developing autonomy and coping skill, thus fostering separation-individuation. Their findings support prior research (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991) concluding that secure and enduring connections to others facilitates the process of individuation.

Emotional Health. Higher levels of parental involvement have also been found to be positively related to personal, emotional, and mental health, which in turn can result in positive adjustment and development in college. Taub (2008) asserted that social and interpersonal competence, which directly tie into Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity

development, were positively related to parental involvement. Taub’s assertions were derived from anecdotal experiences and not the findings of a study, but these assertions are supported throughout extant literature.

In a large, multi-ethnic, cross-country study, Shannon et al. (2016) found parental involvement to positively relate to the development of self-regulation. Fass and Tubman (2002) found that parental attachment was significantly positively correlated to self-esteem, locus of control, and optimism for college students. Several quantitative studies found that parental attachment resulted in less psychological distress overall (Azmitia et al., 2013; Holahan et al., 1995; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003). Melendez and Melendez (2010) provided some additional context through a qualitative analysis of student interviews, learning that female students who perceive parental understanding were more successful with managing psychological distress.

Low Stress and High Self-Esteem. Students experiencing decreased stress and higher levels of self-esteem also show higher levels of academic adjustment (Friedlander et al., 2007). This supports Fass and Tubman’s (2002) findings that healthy parent-child relationships are related to positive academic experiences. An examination of extant literature reveals that the relationship of parental involvement to positive academic outcomes extends beyond higher self-esteem and lower stress, beginning with students’ initial decisions to enroll.

Motivation. The positive relationships between parental involvement and college development are not limited to well-being; parent involvement may also affect motivation. Perna and Titus (2005) analyzed longitudinal data from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Educational Longitudinal Study and found that for Black and Hispanic students, students attending high schools with high levels of parent academic contacts were more likely to enroll in 4-year colleges, and those odds increased as parents and students discussed school-related topics.

Similarly, Herndon and Hirt (2004) found via interviews with students and students' family members that with African American students, family was highly influential on motivation to enroll in and persist through higher education, and Museus (2013) found that parental emphasis on the value of higher education and parental sacrifice to support higher education was a motivator for Southeast Asian American students to enroll and persist in college. Through their qualitative analyses, both Herndon and Hirt (2004) and Museus (2013) provide critical context for the patterns which arise from extant quantitative analyses.

Academic Success. Beyond initial enrollment, Kiyama et al. (2015) reported, "strong bonds with parents have been shown to contribute to higher academic outcomes in college students" (p. 39). Across three quantitative studies, Cutrona et al. (1994) found that parental social support was a significant predictor of college GPA—more so than support from friends or romantic partners, who were often in more regular and present contact with students. Cutrona et al. (1994) attributed the findings to the development of adaptive coping and positive adjustment as a result of parental interaction during times of stress. Shoup et al. (2009) analyzed the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement data, which included questions about support received from family and friends and found that children of involved parents self-reported greater gains in both personal competence and general education. Additionally, parental involvement is positively related to both satisfaction with the college experience (Shoup et al., 2009) and college persistence (Kiyama et al., 2015). Both Cutrona et al. (1994) and Shoup et al. (2009) were limited by their instruments and did not have information about the nature of parental support and intervention. It cannot be clear if support and interventions were general in nature or related specifically to academics, thus it is unclear from these studies if there is a particular type of intervention that is more beneficial over others.

Authoritative Parenting. Strage and Brandt (1999) found the parenting constructs found to be significant for children and adolescents remain valid for college students, and references to Baumrind's (1966) parenting styles surface throughout the literature. Turner et al. (2009), Strage and Brandt (1999), and Wintre and Yaffe (2000) all explicitly identified an authoritative parenting style as positively associated with college student development. Students with perceptions of authoritative parents, as exemplified through more autonomy, demandingness, and supportiveness, were more inclined towards mastery of academic work (Strage & Brandt, 1999). Students with authoritative parents who encouraged their development of communication skills and autonomy within set boundaries were predicted to have higher levels of academic success (Turner et al., 2009, p. 344). Wintre and Yaffe (2000) explicitly identified authoritative parenting as positively associated with negative perceived stress and positive self-esteem and psychological well-being, while identifying a lack of maternal authoritarianism and lack of maternal permissiveness as a predictor for self-reliance. Even when not explicit, characteristics of parental involvement can be indirectly associated with authoritative parenting, such as Kolkhorst et al.'s (2010) findings of parent trust in student decision making and the allocation of money without supervision.

Negative Relationships Between Parental Involvement and Development

Extant literature shows that parental involvement can be positively associated with college student development. It is when parental involvement tips the balance into overinvolvement that researchers begin to discover negative relationships between parental involvement and students' development. Often these studies explicitly use the terms *helicopter parent* (as noted earlier in the chapter; e.g., LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Nelson et al., 2015;

van Ingen et al., 2015); *overinvolved* (e.g., Kiyama et al., 2015); or similar terms to describe the parenting relationships of their participants.

Overinvolvement from parents has been shown to have a negative relationship to the well-being of college students. LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011) developed a scale for students' identification of their parents as helicopter parents and found that for college students "the greater the perception of parents as helicopter parents, the lower the total well-being" (p. 409). Additionally, perceptions of helicopter parenting were found to be associated with students feeling more negatively about themselves and higher likelihood of prescriptions for anxiety or depression and higher likelihood of recreational use of pain medication (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Dreher et al. (2014) developed the *Controlling Parents Survey* to study intrusive parenting and found that intrusive parenting is significantly correlated with a lower internal locus of control and lower emotional maturity. Findings from van Ingen et al. (2015), who employed the long-established *Parental Bonding Instrument*, support prior findings, indicating that perceptions of helicopter parenting were found to be associated with poor peer attachment and low self-efficacy.

Some findings suggest that negative associations of parental involvement to college student development are directly related to maternal relationships rather than the collective parenting relationship. Nelson et al. (2015) found that when higher levels of maternal warmth were reported alongside helicopter parenting, lower levels of risk behavior were found, yet lower levels of self-worth and higher levels of risk behavior were found when helicopter parenting was paired with low levels of maternal warmth. These findings suggest that when maternal involvement is more authoritarian and less supportive, college students' well-being may be negatively affected. Additionally, overparenting from mothers was found be related to lower

levels of psychological control for all participants and less interpersonal sensitivity in male students (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015), while perceptions of an overbearing mother were associated with difficulty trusting one's peers and lower general self-efficacy (van Ingen et al., 2015).

Negative associations of parental involvement to college student development are not limited to maternal relationships, as researchers also found paternal relationships negatively related to college student development. As with overbearing mothers, overbearing fathers were associated with difficulty trusting peers and lower general self-efficacy, but overbearing fathers were also significantly associated with poor peer communication (van Ingen et al., 2015). Overparenting in fathers was found to have a significant relationship to distress and interpersonal sensitivity, higher levels of attachment anxiety, and lower levels of adjustment in young adults (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015).

As previously discussed, strong familial connections may be positively associated with decisions to enroll and persist in college, but these same strong familial connections have been found to be negatively associated as well. Herndon and Hirt (2004) found that African American college students feel an obligation to their families and a need to repay them for the support they receive. Additionally, positive parent relationships may have an indirect effect on college enrollment through the student's desire to stay at home (Lopez Turley et al., 2010).

Student independence and autonomy may be hindered as parents become overinvolved. LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011) bluntly stated this concern as a motivation for their study, writing,

> Children do not achieve independence when helicopter parents try to solve their problems during task-oriented challenges, because they are not allowing their children to engage in

> age-appropriate tasks, primarily as it applies to their education and preparation for the job market. (p. 402)

Taub (2008) expressed similar concern, suggesting that students are limited in their abilities to navigate Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector when parents provide excessive emotional support. Students must have opportunities to problem-solve independently and are not able to experience the necessary break from parents when parents continue to solve problems for them (Taub, 2008).

Much of the extant literature examining the negative relationships between parental involvement and college student development is quantitative (e.g., LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Lopez Turley et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2015; Rousseau & Scharf, 2015; van Ingen et al., 2015). While instructive to our understanding of the role parental involvement can play in college student development, there is a lack of *how* and *why* provided to contextualize the negative effects. Additional examination of types of parental involvement, student and parent perceptions of those experiences, and the observations of others—such as faculty members—would enhance our knowledge.

Differences Among Subpopulations

Although there is some differentiation across groups, many of the aforementioned studies' findings are consistent across subpopulations of college-going students. For example, studies focusing on Southeast Asian-American students, Black students, and Hispanic students yielded similar positive results for parental involvement as those studies with predominantly White participants (e.g. Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Museus, 2013; Perna & Titus, 2005).

Gender Differences. While the positive relationships of parental involvement to college adjustment and emotional well-being were found across the student populations, several studies found the importance of parental relationships to be more pronounced for women than men. Kenny and Donaldson (1991) found that women were more likely than men to describe themselves as attached to their parents and to describe those attachments positively, and later studies supported these findings (Palladino Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994; Samuolis et al., 2001; Shannon et al., 2016). Palladino Schultheiss and Bluestein (1994) discovered that it is important for women to share both emotional closeness and similar beliefs and attitudes with their parents, and Samuolis et al. (2001) found that women showed higher levels of identity exploration and commitment, even with higher levels of parental attachment.

First-Generation College Students. Palbusa and Gauvain (2017) examined the differences in parental involvement for first generation and non-first-generation college students and found no meaningful differences in frequency of communication or perceived emotional support from parents between the two groups. Non-first-generation students, however, did find the communication with their parents to be more helpful, particularly when going to their parents with college concerns. Ultimately, Palbusa and Gauvain (2017) found "non-first-generation college students were more likely to view their parents as instrumental, rather than emotional resources about college" (p. 111), which is perhaps unsurprising given their parents' prior experiences as college students. However, they also concluded that while non-first-generation college students were receiving practical college guidance from their parents, first-generation college students benefitted from their parents' emotional support as they prepared for college (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017, p. 11). Although they benefit differently, both first-generation and non-first-generation college students benefit from parental involvement.

Balancing Engagement and Overinvolvement

It is clear from reviewing prior studies that parents are neither a force of complete good nor a force of complete harm in the development of college students. Cutright (2008) characterized this well by describing parents as

> neither overbearing second-guessers who will not let their children grow and mature, nor a purely benevolent but naïve set of bystanders, waiting to be called on before they make any interventions and leaving it to the professionals. Parents are rational and emotional, informed and misinformed, deeply interested and deeply distant, seeking solutions to and being part of various problems. (p. 40)

Because the positive influences of parents are often overshadowed by negative characterizations, it is important to differentiate between engagement and involvement (Kiyama et al., 2015). Kolkhurst et al. (2010) found that students reporting secure relationships with their parents also reported a parental balance between involvement and separation (p. 58). After reviewing the extant literature previously cited in this review, I would argue that a similar balance is ideal when considering the positive and negative associations of parental involvement.

Relationships Between Parents and Colleges

The previous section examined the relationships between parental involvement and student development, and those studies focused on interactions between parents and their children. It is important to acknowledge, however, that parental involvement in higher education is not limited to parent-child interactions, but also includes parent-institution interactions. To that end, I will now provide an overview of how colleges engage with parents.

The historical relationship between colleges and parents can best be understood through *in loco parentis*. The legal doctrine *in loco parentis* protected colleges who were establishing

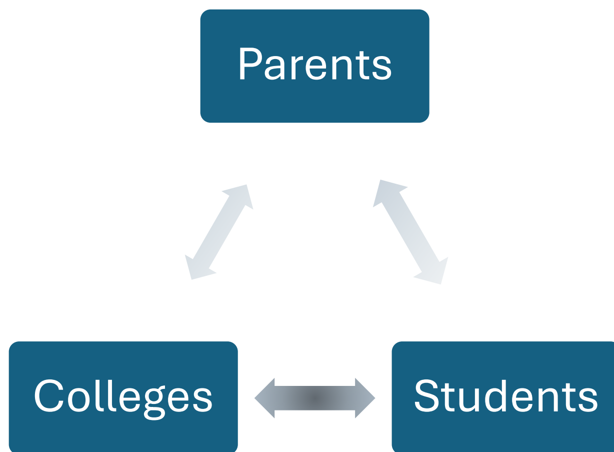
authority over their students and disciplining them accordingly, and it developed into a legal duty of care where colleges were also responsible for the safety and well-being of their students (Henning, 2007; Kaplin & Lee, 2013; Lake, 2011). Essentially, via *in loco parentis*, institutions had the parental freedom of authority over their students and the parental responsibility of taking care of those students. As the changing culture of the early 1960s began to recognize students as autonomous individuals with rights and responsibilities—evidenced in part by the aforementioned rise of college student development theory as an area of scholarly research (Patton et al., 2016)—the legal environment shifted and institutions were no longer permitted to rule as parents nor were they bound by the parental duty of care (Henning, 2007; Kaplin & Lee, 2013; Lake, 2011). I find it useful to consider the legal evolution of *in loco parentis* as an analogy for understanding the relationship of parents to higher education. When parental authoritarianism was at the forefront, *in loco parentis* was the guiding philosophy. As students began to be seen as autonomous and parents began stepping away from an authoritarian role (Henning, 2007), *in loco parentis* was no longer the guiding doctrine.

Recent scholarship suggests the rise in parental involvement in the college experience is bringing about a new era of *in loco parentis*. Carlisle (2017) used the term *in loco parentis plus* to describe "the growing expectation…that colleges and universities should act like a parent would act and can or should do more than parents" (p. 51) in response to safety concerns, mental health risks, and consumerist attitudes towards higher education. Carlisle also acknowledged that parents often contribute to their students' mental health risks and other challenges as a result of high levels of parental involvement and high parental expectations. Henning (2007) described the new era of *in loco parentis* through his model *in consortio parentibus*—in partnership with parents. Instead of legal doctrine, Henning considers *in loco parentis* as the foundation for a

model for understanding the relationship between parents, students, and colleges. Henning's model assumes that students are connected to their parents and that their parents can hold significant influence on their student's behavior and requires that parents and colleges share the burden of both care for students and the development of decision-making and accountability.

Figure 2

In corsotio cum loco parentibus



Note. From "Is *in corsotio cum loco parentibus* the new *in loco parentis*" by G. Henning, 2007, *NASPA Journal, 44*, pp. 538-560.

As illustrated throughout this literature review and as demonstrated in Henning's (2007) model, parental involvement in the college experience can be positively associated with college development (Carney-Hall, 2008), but it is necessary for colleges to engage with parents in an intentional and consistent manner. If college offices each respond differently to parent interactions, parents learn to contact multiple offices until their desired outcome is reached (Daniel et al., 2001). Carney-Hall (2008) contended that if parent interactions with college offices yield more responses than student interactions with the same office, then students will

perceive parents as being the ones who can get results. This outcome, thus, limits the development of problem-solving skills and decision-making in students. Additionally, regular contact with parents as a first step in students' problem-solving can ultimately hinder college officials' responses to on-campus situations (Ward-Roof et al., 2008).

It is more appropriate, instead, to engage parents as partners in the development of their students, recognizing the roles parents play and supporting them in transitioning out of an *action-taker* approach and into more of a *sounding-board* approach (Coburn, 2006; Cutright, 2008; Taub, 2008). Effective college programming should introduce parents to the concept of college student development (Coburn, 2006) and inform parents of where to direct students for resources and on-campus support (Coburn, 2006; Cutright, 2008). Colleges should share with parents their expectations for academic and co-curricular success, so parents may reinforce and support these expectations with their students (Cutright, 2008; Savage, 2008).

Having discussed the relationships of parents to the full institution, I am specifically interested in the relationships between parents and faculty as a subset of the institution as a whole. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to establish faculty as a body worthy of investigation. In the next section, I will examine the roles faculty members play in college student development, then will return to the relationships between parents and faculty.

Relationships of Faculty to College Student Development

Student-faculty relationships are not the focus of this study but are nonetheless relevant to better understand why studying faculty members' perspectives on parental involvement is a valuable contribution to the study of college student development. The faculty-student relationship has long been studied within college student development and proved central to

early theories, such as Perry's (1999) theory of intellectual development and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development theory.

Pascarella (1980) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1979) produced the foundational works on student-faculty relationships at the start of the 1980s. Pascarella (1980) completed a comprehensive review of extant literature, determining that

> positive associations exist between the amount of student informal, non-class contact with faculty and such educational outcomes as satisfaction with college, educational aspirations, intellectual and personal development, academic achievement, and freshman to sophomore year persistence in college. (p. 564)

As a result of his findings, Pascarella developed a conceptual model to better understand the influence of informal student-faculty relationships on academic success and persistence. Pascarella and Terenzini (1979) expanded on this literature review by designing a quantitative study to test the student-faculty relationship, determining that faculty-student interactions which focused on intellectual and academic matters were significantly correlated with students' academic and social engagement in college. A review of more recent literature examining the student-faculty relationship and its effects on college student development reveals not only that Pascarella's and Pascarella and Terenzini's early works remain important to understanding college student development (e.g. Kim & Lundberg, 2015; Komarraju et al., 2010; Trolian et al., 2016), but that student-faculty relationships remain central to college student development (e.g. Kim & Lundberg, 2015; Komarraju et al., 2010; Trolian et al., 2016; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

It is evident from extant literature that faculty have an effect on college student development and success, and each of the following representative studies highlights the

relevance of the faculty-student relationship. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) examined data from the 2003 National Survey of Student Engagement, and found that faculty behaviors, such as course-related interactions and academically challenging students, were positively related to student engagement. Additionally, Komarraju et al. (2010) found in a study at a single institution that students' intrinsic motivation was positively associated with such faculty behaviors as approachability, respect, and accessibility. Micari and Pazos (2012) examined the impact of student-faculty relationships on student performance in a single course. Although the sample size was small and focused—only 113 students across six sections of organic chemistry at a single institution, Micari and Pazos found that students' final grades in the course were positively correlated with a positive relationship to the professor. This effect on academic achievement, though statistically significant, was minimal, but positive relationships with the professor produced a much stronger effect on gains in student confidence. This finding suggests that positive student-faculty relationships promote college student development. Kim and Lundberg (2015) found similar effects between positive student-faculty interactions and academic success in a much larger study of over 5000 students across University of California system, supporting the findings of Micari and Pazos (2012).

In a review of extant literature on student-faculty relationships, E. M. Hoffman (2014) wrote, "The preponderance of the literature on student-faculty interactions shows that frequent, positive exchanges with faculty are clearly beneficial for a number of different student outcomes including student motivation and academic success, college persistence, and development of career building skills" (p. 17). Indeed, it is evident from my own review of current literature that the type and quality of student-faculty interaction is important to the overall effect on student development. For example, Kim and Lundberg (2015) found that contact outside of the

classroom, such as discussing course material outside of class, communicating via email, or working on a non-class activity together facilitated academic achievement, and Trolian et al. (2016) discovered that the quality of student-faculty interactions was the biggest predictor students' academic motivation. According to Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), campuses fostering co-curricular experiences between faculty and students were more likely to have engaged students, and Komarraju et al. (2010) found that students who could speak informally with faculty seemed more likely to enjoy learning.

Beyond the clear connection between student-faculty relationships and student development and success, faculty play a central role in student development for two of the three theories grounding this study. As previously discussed, the cognitive and interpersonal domains are central to self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2009b), and each of the aforementioned studies of student-faculty relationships focuses on the intersection of the cognitive and interpersonal domains. Perhaps more importantly, faculty are essential to understanding the concept of good company. Good company describes those who guide college students through the path of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2009b), and each of the discussed studies illustrates faculty guiding students along the path. Chickering and Reisser (1993) also found faculty to be central to college student development. They found that faculty have an opportunity to engage with students both inside and outside of the classroom, and those interactions can be academic, focus on real-world problems, or involve mentoring. According to Chickering and Reisser, such interactions could influence students' self-perceptions of competence, help them develop purpose, and promote student autonomy.

This section of the literature review highlights the influence faculty members can have on college student development. Although not directly related to parent interaction, these topics

remain relevant to understanding why the perspectives of faculty may be important. If both faculty and parents have a place in college student development, then understanding the interplay between the two could improve our understanding of student development generally. Additionally, because of the types of interactions many faculty members are having with students as demonstrated by the previously mentioned studies—informal, respectful, academic, and positive—faculty may be uniquely positioned to see and understand the effects parents may be having on their students. The next section will more directly explore the connection between faculty and parents.

Relationships Between Parents and Faculty

Colleges cultivate partnerships with parents via orientation programming, parent relations offices on campus, clear and consistent communications with parents, and training for administrative offices (Coburn, 2006; Cutright, 2008; Kiyama et al., 2015; Savage, 2008; Ward-Roof et al., 2008); however, such programming and training—and the research examining those partnerships—often focuses on the relationships between parents and administrators. Research about the relationships between parents and college faculty is limited, despite the recognition that faculty members are important facilitators of college student development (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2001; Chickering & Reisser, 1993, Kim & Lundberg, 2015; Komarraju et al., 2010; Trolian et al., 2016; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). In fact, a comprehensive search of multiple databases, including EBSCOHost, Education Research Complete, ERIC, Google Scholar, and PsycNet, using multiple search terms, including but not limited to *parents and faculty*, *parents and college*, *parents and professor*, and *parents and university* yielded few results beyond those already discussed throughout this literature review. Even a review of the references for a published dissertation on the subject of parents and faculty members (Garrett, 2016) yielded few

relevant sources not previously identified. The remainder of this section discusses the limited literature surfaced.

Descriptions of faculty members' perspectives of parents often illustrate a disgruntled view, such as the following characterization by Coburn (2006):

> So it was with a bit of a shock that I opened and read a strongly worded, disapproving letter from a professor of political science at a large midwestern university who had seen the recent column in *The New York Times.* He was appalled that I—or anyone else—would plan such an extensive program for parents of new students. As he put it, "Do these helicopter parents really have that kind of time and is this time really needed?" (p. 10)

These descriptions, however, are generally single anecdotes and not components of a larger study. The limited research on faculty members' perspectives suggests that faculty are actually empathetic towards parents yet feel underequipped to manage direct parent interactions (Garrett, 2016).

Garrett (2016) discovered that faculty members do report concerns about the effects of parental involvement on student development, yet little additional context can be found for this faculty concern. It is this gap in the research that I hope to address with my study. Understanding that college students are positioned for developmental gains that can be facilitated by appropriate parental support and hindered by parental overinvolvement, I hope to learn more about how faculty members interact with parents, how they make meaning of those interactions, and how they perceive the effects of parent involvement on the development of their students.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the extant literature relating to college student development, parental involvement in education, and the relationships of parents to colleges. Prior research shows the importance of understanding the roles of parental involvement in the development of college students, while illustrating the relationships of parents to the college student experience. Evident in this section is the need for a better understanding of how faculty members interact with parents, how they make meaning of those interactions, and how they perceive the effects of parent involvement on the development of their students. The next chapter will explain the design for my study, in which I aim to address this gap in the literature.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

In this chapter, I describe the research design for this study and include the research approach, research paradigm, sampling method, data types, sources and generation, and methods of analysis. Additionally, I address issues of delimitations, assumptions, and ethical considerations. I will also elaborate on trustworthiness and authenticity for the study design. As noted in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and beliefs of selected faculty members about parental involvement during students' academic experiences at a private, baccalaureate college. This study was conducted as an interpretivist, phenomenological study using surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews to understand these perceptions and beliefs. The guiding research question for this study was: How do faculty members experience and understand parental involvement in their students' academic lives?

Research Approach

In this study, I engaged in qualitative inquiry. According to Erickson (2018), "Qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and to describe narratively what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them" (p. 36). Qualitative inquiry seeks to understand and interpret activities, individuals, and phenomena by observing and studying them in their natural states (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Essential to qualitative inquiry is the acknowledgment of assumptions and the use of theoretical frameworks to inform the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research question guiding this study focused on the experiences of faculty members at a private, baccalaureate college and how they understand those experiences. The emphasis on

individuals' experiences and the meanings they make out of those experiences suggests qualitative data generation and analysis were most appropriate to the research question.

One approach to qualitative inquiry that lends itself to exploring a broad concept such as the one central to my study is phenomenology. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon…The basic purpose is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence" (p. 75). Phenomenological research focuses on a single concept—in this case, parental involvement during students' academic lives—as experienced by a particular group of individuals—here, it is selected faculty members at a private, baccalaureate institution (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vagle, 2018); thus, I used a phenomenological approach to examine the perceptions and beliefs of faculty members about parental involvement in students' academic lives.

Vagle (2018) explained phenomena as both manifesting and appearing in the world. Manifestation and appearance of a phenomenon means that the phenomenon exists outside of the mind and is a part of the world. At the same time, phenomena occur naturally; they are not thrust upon us by outside forces (Vagle, 2018, p. 20). Phenomena occur naturally in the world as a function of our daily experiences. According to Vagle (2018), "when we study something phenomenologically, we are not trying to get inside other people's minds. Rather we are trying to contemplate the various ways things manifest and appear in and through our being in the world" (p. 23). Parental involvement is identifiable as a phenomenon that has both manifested and appeared naturally in the world of faculty members. In this study I asked college faculty members to describe their experiences, observations, and perceptions about parental involvement

in the lives of their students, but I did not ask participants to interpret or analyze their own experiences.

Within phenomenology more broadly are a variety of more specific philosophies which undergird this method of inquiry. For purposes of this study, I used hermeneutical phenomenology as my research method. Hermeneutical phenomenology requires the researcher to interpret the studied phenomenon, instead of merely describing it (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vagle, 2018). Hermeneutical phenomenology begins with personal descriptions of lived experiences. Here those personal descriptions came from the faculty members who participated in the study. A description of lived experience, however, is not a description of the phenomenon itself; it is merely the foundation on which the phenomenological study is built (van Manen, 2016). From the descriptions of the lived experiences, the researcher must then engage in phenomenological reflection, which van Manen explained as the process of "reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience" (p. 77). In essence, the researcher, through phenomenological reflection, is surfacing themes across the personal descriptions provided by the study's participants.

When engaging in phenomenological research, it is generally recognized as necessary for researchers to bracket their own experiences and assumptions, so as not to unduly influence the outcomes of a study; however, in a hermeneutical approach, these assumptions and experiences may be essential to interpretation of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vagle, 2018). Where bracketing asks researchers to set aside their experiences and assumptions in order to ensure they do not influence data generation and analysis, the process of bridling recognizes that these prior experiences and assumptions exist but encourages reflexivity to prevent the researcher from settling on assumptions about the data too quickly (Vagle, 2018). Instead of bracketing my own

experiences and assumptions out of the data generation and analysis, I acknowledged my assumptions and experiences in the interpretation of data and employed bridling to ensure I avoided applying my assumptions too quickly. To that end, I began this study design by acknowledging my own experiences, perspectives, and assumptions (see Appendix A) and I engaged in reflective commentary throughout the process by maintaining a detailed research log.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the research log as a reflexive journal in which the researcher records information about herself, including beliefs, assumptions, experiences, and concerns, as well as the methods for the study. I maintained a dedicated research log during the study, allowing me to recognize and address the assumptions and consider how best to engage them in interpretation. Such reflective commentary throughout study design, data generation, and analysis helped to ensure trustworthiness in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004), which will be addressed more fully in the *Trustworthiness and Authenticity* section of Chapter 3. This research log also functioned as a detailed audit trail, which recorded decisions made and actions taken and served to bolster the study's trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004).

Research Paradigm

I used an interpretivist paradigm for this study. One of the philosophical assumptions of qualitative inquiry is that researchers acknowledge and welcome the idea of multiple realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20), and interpretivism serves as an appropriate paradigm through which to view these multiple realities. Schwandt (1994) described the interpretivist researcher, writing,

> The constructivist or interpretivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it…To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these

> meanings; it is to offer the inquirer's construction of the constructions of the actors one studies. (p. 118)

The hermeneutical phenomenology approach in which this study was grounded asks the researcher to engage in precisely this form of inquiry and analysis.

As previously mentioned, hermeneutical phenomenology begins with participants' descriptions of a phenomenon, then continues with reflective interpretation of the phenomenon by the researcher. According to Ponterotto (2005), an interpretivist-paradigm reflection on these descriptions is stimulated by interactions between the researcher and participants. Although, in accordance with the tenets of hermeneutical phenomenology, I did not ask participants to interpret their experiences of the phenomenon of parental interaction, the individual interviews and focus group interviews served as a catalyst for my own meaning-making. Now that I have explicated the theoretical underpinnings for the approach and paradigm of this study, I will next discuss the study design, including my methods for generating and analyzing data.

Context and Participants

The context for this study was a private, baccalaureate institution in a mid-Atlantic state which, for the purposes of this study, will be known as Baccalaureate College. Baccalaureate College has approximately 1500 students and 120 faculty members and was selected because its classification as a baccalaureate institution with a low student-to-faculty ratio suggested considerable opportunity for student-faculty contact and relationships. Additionally, as a residential college, Baccalaureate College students and faculty have many opportunities for in-class, co-curricular, and informal interactions, which is a privilege not always shared at community colleges or colleges with large commuter populations. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) found that residential liberal arts colleges were the most suited to fostering environments

for positive and engaging student-faculty interactions. Baccalaureate College is such an institution and fosters student-faculty relationships through research and coursework opportunities, mentorship and advising, and a campus culture that both encourages and exhibits faculty availability and openness with students. I had a pre-existing familiarity with this institution and selected it both because of the personal relationships I developed with the faculty members, which allowed for rich, descriptive responses from the participants, and because I had personal knowledge that the phenomenon of parent-faculty interaction exists at this institution.

In a phenomenological study, it is necessary to select participants who have experienced the phenomenon; thus, I used a purposeful sampling method to select individual faculty members as participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe purposeful sampling as a method in which participants are selected "because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 158). I requested from Baccalaureate College a list of all faculty members, as previously defined for this study. I sent an initial email requesting volunteers to each faculty member and asked that volunteers verify that they have had at least one interaction with a student's parent to ensure an experience with the central phenomenon of parental involvement (see Appendix B). Twenty-three potential participants responded to the initial email.

Once a faculty member responded with initial interest, I sent a follow-up email (Appendix C) providing greater detail about the requirements of the study and additional information about participation. In this email, I asked each volunteer to complete a brief demographic survey, found in Appendix D. The Demographic Survey was administered via Qualtrics and requested demographic data, including self-identified gender, race and ethnicity, academic area, and how long the faculty member has been teaching. I used the data generated in

this survey to select seven faculty members within each of the three areas of humanities, social sciences, and natural/mathematical sciences, for a total of 21 participants.

Maximum variation sampling is an approach within purposive sampling that includes selection of criteria to maximize the potential for differences in experiences and perspectives among the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and the data generated via the Demographic Survey allowed me to identify differences and select participants within each of the three areas. Although the purpose of phenomenological research is not to generalize findings, having as heterogeneous a sample as possible, relative to this study's focus, will offer an opportunity for variation and richness in the data. Although only 23 potential participants responded to the initial inquiry and only 21 submitted the demographic survey, the demographic data revealed a range of genders, ages, parental status, and teaching experience across each of the three academic areas. All volunteers were informed that they might not be selected for the study and that selections would be made with consideration of the demographic information collected (see Appendix C), though that was ultimately an unnecessary step. All volunteers who completed the Demographic Survey were selected as participants and notified via email (Appendix E).

Although there is not a set sample size criterion for phenomenological research, as the researcher needs to engage with sufficient data for the phenomenon to surface (Vagle, 2018), 21 participants exceeds a recommended standard of approximately 10 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Generating data across 21 participants offered depth to the study and provided rich data for interpretation.

Data Generation

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research operates with the epistemological assumption that data are subjective and based on individual perceptions and

experiences. It is, therefore, essential for qualitative researchers to engage with the participants and rely on the subjective data they generate. In order to engage directly with participants and learn from their experiences, data for this study were generated through a brief survey, semi-structured interviews with each participant, and follow-up focus group interviews.

Survey

To encourage each participant to begin reflecting upon their experiences interacting with students' parents, each selected participant was asked to answer a second survey. This survey, found in Appendix F, was administered via Qualtrics. The Participant Survey contained three open-ended questions, asking:

1. Would you please describe the one or two most memorable experiences you have had with parents of your students?
2. Would you please describe what about this experience made it memorable for you?
3. Would you please describe what, if anything, this experience suggests about your perceptions of parental involvement in the academic lives of your students?

The Participant Survey aimed to encourage initial reflection prior to the interviews, to generate data on specific faculty experiences, and to provide opportunities to triangulate data with what would be generated via individual and focus group interviews. Triangulation of data, which is the use of multiple data sources and types to corroborate the generated data, is an essential component of trustworthiness in a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004)

Individual Faculty Interviews

Interviews were conducted following the completion of the Participant Survey (Appendix F), and occurred between November 15, 2019, and April 4, 2020. Most interviews took place in participants' offices on the Baccalaureate College campus, with one participant interview

conducted via Zoom. Interviews ranged in length from 24 minutes to 1 hour 15 minutes, with an average length of 51 minutes. All interviews were conducted one-on-one, and audio was recorded. Interviews were transcribed via Temi (http://www.temi.com/), an artificial intelligence transcribing service. Participants were asked open-ended questions focusing on the phenomenon of parental involvement in students' academic lives. Such questions are appropriate to a phenomenological approach, as researchers seek to understand participants' experiences of a phenomenon and how those experiences have been shaped (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

When engaging a semi-structured interview, the researcher should develop a detailed list of questions that covers all areas they wish to discuss, but they must also remain open to shifting their questions and developing new questions in response to the participants' answers (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Interview questions in this study related to the guiding research question, and the individual interviews began with follow-up questions about the parent-faculty interactions described in each participant's survey response. Additional questions developed from the topics outlined in the specifications provided in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Specifications: Interview Topics

Description of interactions with students' parents.
Comfort level interacting with students' parents.
Involvement of different types of parents observed as faculty interact with students.
Parental involvement observed in their students' academic lives.
Relationship of parental involvement to student decision-making, self-efficacy, and confidence.
Relationship of parental involvement to student academic success.

I developed the interview questions with consideration of the theoretical framework and extant research. I then field tested the questions with a faculty member who was not a study participant. Questions were revised based on the types of responses, depth of information, and flow of conversation in the field test. The complete interview guide is available in Appendix G. Although questions were developed in the context of the theoretical framework, I refrained from explicitly asking about student development. Instead, I asked about decision-making, self-efficacy, and self-confidence and allowed iterative questioning to lead to discussions of students' interpersonal relationships. These topics stood as a proxy for topics related to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector, and allowed for discussions of interpersonal independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence without requiring participants to be aware of these terms. In responses to the listed topics, I guided the discussion to further understand the individual's beliefs, perceptions, and understanding of parental involvement in their students' academic lives. A semi-structured interview requires active listening from the researcher and a responsiveness to the direction of the participants' answers (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; Vagle,

2018). As participants described their experiences, I asked follow-up questions to encourage reflection and depth of data. Throughout each interview I also engaged in iterative questioning, which is a strategy for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research through a return to previous responses by a participant via rephrased questions (Shenton, 2004).

Vagle (2018) warned against extensive notetaking during interviews, instead advising that the researcher should listen carefully as participants share their experiences of the studied phenomenon. Instead of extensive notetaking, which may inhibit a researcher's openness to the data, Vagle recommends jotting down key words and returning to them throughout conversation (p. 88). I alerted each participant at the start of each interview that I would not be note taking but would instead jot down references to return to throughout questioning. This ensured that participants were aware I would not be actively transcribing their words, allowing them to converse freely without pauses or waiting for me to catch up. It also ensured they would be prepared when I returned to previous references throughout our conversations. This practice aided the iterative questioning intended for trustworthiness.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by Temi. I then listened to each original interview recording twice to verify and correct the transcriptions. This process of listening and correcting the interview transcriptions allowed me to immerse myself fully in the data and engage in initial analysis as the data were being generated. I then created a detailed summary of each interview, which required me to further immerse myself in in the data.

Member checking is a strategy in which the researcher periodically checks in with the participant to ensure that the researcher is correctly understanding the meanings and intentions behind the participant's response (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Additionally, Shenton (2004) suggested that researchers use member checking to verify "emerging theories and

inferences” as they develop from the data (p. 68). Each interview summary was provided to the respective participant for their review and correction. I asked participants to review the summary for accuracy of both their descriptions and my interpretation of their comments. All 21 participants responded to the request for review and correction. Most participants responded that the summaries appeared correct, and four participants offered minor clerical corrections or clarifications.

Audio recordings and transcriptions generated by the participants were accessible only by me and will be deleted at the conclusion of the study. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant, and names and other identifiers are known only to me to ensure the participants’ confidentiality in the research data and subsequent publications.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus groups were a suitable data type for my guiding research question, as focus groups provide participants with opportunities to hear each other’s responses and engage in conversation (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). My aim was that these group conversations would spark additional memories and allow for conversation about shared experiences, which did occur in each of the three focus group interviews. Additionally, these focus groups offered additional opportunities for triangulation of data, as responses here were compared to both the initial survey responses and the contents of the individual interviews.

Once each individual interview was completed, transcribed, and reviewed by the participant, I engaged in initial data analysis to develop questions for the focus groups. The questions for the focus groups were developed out of the responses received from the semi-structured interviews and were intended to generate more depth of response and additional

reflection and description (see Focus Group Guide in Appendix H. Focus groups were arranged by academic area—humanities, social sciences, and natural/mathematical sciences.

All participants in the initial interviews were invited to participate in the focus group interviews, and 11 participants elected to join. Each focus group interview had a minimum of three participants, with three for the social sciences area, four for the natural and mathematical sciences area, and four for the humanities area. The three focus group interviews ranged in length from 1 hour 27 minutes to 1 hour 46 minutes. As with the individual interviews, the focus group interviews were audio recorded, then transcribed verbatim by Temi. I listened to each original focus group recording at least once to verify and correct the transcriptions. I created a summary of each group's conversation, which was provided to each group's participants to review and suggest corrections. Once again, all participants responded, and only minor clarifications were offered.

Due to complications related to the COVID-19 global pandemic, focus group interviews were conducted roughly 1 year following the individual interviews, occurring on December 14 and December 15, 2020. Although this timing created more of a longitudinal study than originally intended, it did allow for focus group participants to reflect on and share any new interactions and experiences that occurred in the intervening time. Additionally, focus group participants were asked for their perceptions of changes or new experiences with parental involvement as students shifted from campus life to home for remote coursework.

For those study participants who did not engage in the focus group interviews, I provided a subset of the focus group questions via email for optional response (Appendix I). This allowed all participants an opportunity to reflect on new experiences and the global pandemic, as well as an opportunity for me to clarify perceptions about assumptions that had developed from my

initial review of the data. Six out of participants provided responses to the supplemental questions.

Data Analysis

In hermeneutical phenomenology, researchers engage in an interpretative process in which they interpret the meanings of the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 77-78). Instead of applying a priori codes, a holistic approach to analysis is a method for identifying and interpreting the themes arising from the data. The survey responses and interview transcripts were analyzed through holistic memoing to identify and interpreting the themes related to parental involvement and student development. Vagle (2018) outlined a multi-step process for analyzing data in a phenomenological study, the first step of which is a holistic reading of the full text. As I reviewed each survey and transcription when reviewing for accuracy and creating the summaries, initial themes related to faculty roles, faculty comfort levels, positive interactions, institutional environment, and student development began to arise. Once each transcription, for both the interviews and the focus groups, was reviewed for accuracy, I read through it again in order to immerse myself in the data. I did the same with the survey responses, recording the emerging themes in my research log.

I then read each data type three additional times, and these readings included careful line-by-line reading of each transcription or survey response. These line-by-line readings began with notetaking, with memos identifying initial meanings and themes, often related to the emergent themes from the initial readings. Additional themes also surfaced related to the phenomenon such as types of parent-faculty interactions, participant responses to those interactions, and challenges faced by faculty members when working with parents. As I continued data analysis, I began connecting the themes to the extant literature and included such information as

participants’ observations of emerging adulthood or examples of interdependence. These findings were continuously articulated and refined to include analytic details which related back to my theoretical framework (Vagle, 2018), consistently being connected back to Arnett’s (2000) theory of emerging adulthood and Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) third vector, moving through autonomy towards interdependence.

I began the note-taking process via third-party analysis software, NVIVO. Following a decision to change from NVIVO to Microsoft for continued analysis, I transferred all initial notes manually from one system to the other. This allowed for an in-depth review of initial notes in all individual interviews and resulted in the refinement of the larger themes. Following the review of the transcriptions and surveys as individual data types, I then read the transcriptions and survey responses as a body of data and continued to refine themes arising across the participants. Cho and Lee (2014) described qualitative content analysis as a method by which the researcher selects the unit of analysis, creates categories, and surfaces themes across those categories. In an inductive qualitative content analysis, the categories are not selected a priori but instead rise from the data. The memos generated in my initial readings served as the foundation for identifying analytical categories, and the themes developed as I compared across the data types. Additional categories were designated throughout the analysis. I continued to refine those themes, identifying first patterns then results. I returned to Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) third vector as the framework used for understanding and grouping the findings. Because the guiding research question was broad, the findings were interpreted and organized in relation to major subject themes.

As the major themes were identified, I created a grid to visually track the generated data by participant in relation to the established themes. This allowed me to refine the data and

categorize the findings across the major areas of format and frequency of direct parental involvement, institutional environment, overall experience of direct parental involvement, overall experience of indirect parental involvement, parental involvement and student development, and parental involvement and academic success. Subcategories then developed within each of these areas.

When employing Vagle's (2018) method of holistic phenomenological analysis, supported by inductive content analysis (Cho & Lee, 2013), it is essential that the themes develop organically from the data and are not developed a priori. Thus, it useful to note that my data memos and research log record my regular and consistent surprise by the themes surfaced through my analysis, both when the themes challenged my assumptions and when they aligned directly with extant research.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

It is necessary when engaging in qualitative research to maintain standards of rigor. This section details the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity which ensure rigorous standards of research design.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness criteria are used to establish and ensure rigor in a qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Shenton, 2004). For this study, I used Shenton's (2004) interpretation of the four trustworthiness constructs—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—as indicators of methodological rigor.

Credibility. Credibility is the mechanism by which qualitative researchers ensure they have "accurately recorded the phenomena under scrutiny" (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). One of the key components of credibility is triangulation of data, which is the use of multiple data sources and

types to corroborate the generated data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). As previously mentioned, I used three data types—survey, individual interviews, and focus group interviews—to provide a broad range of data. Additionally, I engaged in iterative questioning and member checking, as previously outlined in the study design, to further support credibility.

In addition to triangulation, iterative questioning, and member checking during data generation, I employed additional methods to ensure credibility of the study's results throughout data analysis. Shenton (2004) advised that researchers should regularly debrief with their research director or other superior as a mechanism for developing ideas or considering new approaches (p. 67), and I engaged with my committee chair to discuss data throughout my analyses. Additionally, a peer debriefer can question interpretations and offer feedback as a means of validation and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). I engaged a peer who is familiar with the topic of parental involvement with college students, as well as with phenomenological research, to act as a peer debriefer throughout my analysis. This debriefer reviewed my analyses of one third of the survey responses and interview transcripts. Using my study design, the peer debriefer reviewed these data and engaged in an initial holistic analysis, then compared our analyses to ensure I was analyzing consistently and to challenge my assumptions.

Using the data to generate thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon is another mechanism for ensuring credibility in a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). According to Shenton (2004), such description "helps convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them" (p. 69). Generating thick, rich descriptions of the experiences and perceptions of faculty members working with students and parents contextualizes these experiences for readers. A brief summary of each

participant and their experiences is included within the results section to provide readers with this context, and participants' descriptions are shared throughout the results to provide depth.

Transferability. Transferability of findings is another criterion for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). According to Shenton (2004), while the findings of a qualitative study are too sample- and circumstance-specific to be generalizable to the larger population, transferability allows readers to understand how a study's results might be understood in other contexts. The thick, rich description used to support credibility is also used to support transferability of a study's findings by allowing readers to identify components of the results which may be applicable to other situations or populations. As mentioned, I use thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon studied, which will bolster transferability of findings.

Dependability. Dependability is a criterion of trustworthiness used to ensure rigor in the study's design and implementation (Shenton, 2004). According to Shenton (2004), the final research report for a study should include a description of the study design and implementation, the details of data generation, and a reflective appraisal of the process upon completion of the study. As this chapter demonstrates, I have taken great care to detail the study's design, implementation, and data generation. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, I maintained a research log throughout the study, a component of which will be detailed descriptions of my study, decisions made, and actions taken. This allowed me to effectively detail and reflect on the process upon completion.

Confirmability. The final criterion for trustworthiness in a qualitative study is confirmability, which Shenton described as "[steps taken] to help ensure as far as possible that the works' findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (p. 72). I engaged in an initial examination of

my experiences, beliefs, and assumptions via the Researcher as Instrument statement found in Appendix A. By continuously reflecting on my role as a research instrument through the research log, I ensured confirmability of the study's results. Additionally, the aforementioned methods of member checking, peer debriefing, and regular consultation with my dissertation advisor bolster confirmability.

Authenticity

The criteria for trustworthiness to establish rigor in qualitative inquiry were developed in parallel to the criteria for validity and reliability in positivistic research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Authenticity criteria were developed in response to the need for rooting rigor directly in qualitative study and were designed to foreground the participant role in post-positivistic research (Guba, 2004). This study was designed to align with the five authenticity criteria—fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity—as outlined by Guba (2004).

Fairness. Fairness addresses the extent to which competing constructions of participants' realities have been examined, considered, applied, and questioned throughout the research study (Guba, 2004). The criteria for trustworthiness align with this criterion for authenticity. As such, reflexive journaling, member checking, peer debriefing, and thick description were employed to ensure fairness in the study.

Ontological. Guba (2004) described ontological authenticity as "the extent to which individual respondents'…early constructions [of reality] are improved, matured, expanded, and elaborated" (p. 4) and represents knowledge gained about the self throughout the study by participants. I generated multiple data types with each participant, with each new type building on the previous; the survey informed the individual interview, which in turn informed the focus

group interviews or supplemental questions. This seemed to allow for continued reflection by the participants and a richer set of data to analyze.

As participants reviewed their individual interview summaries via the member-checking process or provided responses to supplemental questions, they had an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and view them through my interpretive lens. Participants participating in focus group interviews had the additional opportunity to broaden their perspective and understand their experiences through others' interpretations as they engaged in conversation. As the researcher, I witnessed this in real time as focus group participants challenged each other, built on each other's responses, or encouraged additional examples from each other. This process allowed participants to learn more about their own perspectives and experiences, enhancing their own experiences by participating in the study.

Educative. Educative authenticity shifts the focus from the self to others and describes the extent to which participants will gain an understanding of others (Guba, 2004). This study was designed to provide such an opportunity to enhance faculty members' understandings of others—namely parents and students—via the interview and member checking process. The focus group conversations were particularly applicable to educative authenticity, as participants learned more about the experiences of their fellow faculty members as they relate to students' parents. This opportunity promoted questioning of long-held beliefs about parenting and more nuanced understanding of students' and parents' experiences, as evidenced by participants' reflections on their empathy for parents which will be more thoroughly covered in Chapter 4. Additionally, if study participants choose to read the completed study, their understanding of parents, parents' potential motivations, their students' development, and the experiences of their colleagues may be further enhanced.

Catalytic/Tactical. Catalytic authenticity refers to the desire by study participants to act following their ontological and educative experiences throughout the study, and tactical authenticity refers to the empowerment and active steps towards action as so inspired (Guba, 2004). It is my hope that by participating in this study, the participants were inspired to reflect on how they engage with students and parents, how they support their students and their fellow faculty members, and how they can encourage interdependence in students. Furthermore, it is my hope that when reading the findings of the study, the participants will take action at their institution by encouraging effective and intentional institutional support for parents and for faculty as they engage with parents.

Delimitations and Assumptions

I focused only on a single small, baccalaureate institution. Experiences of the phenomenon of parental involvement may be different for faculty members at larger schools, community colleges, research universities, online institutions, or one of the many other varieties of colleges and universities. Additionally, I focused solely on the experiences of faculty members and does not include administrators or other staff at the institution. Even though these delimitations might hinder transferability of results, it is important to note that the results of qualitative research are not intended to be generalizable across the greater population (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These delimitations, instead, suggest areas for future exploration. The primary assumption of this study was that participating faculty members had sufficient experience with the phenomenon of parental involvement in their students' lives. Additionally, I assumed the survey, individual interviews, and focus group interviews would provide sufficient data for analysis.

It is important to recognize the role of the researcher in qualitative research and acknowledge any biases that may affect the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Admission of the researcher's beliefs and assumptions bolsters credibility and confirmability of a study's results (Shenton, 2004). I have examined my own beliefs and assumptions at the outset of this study via a Researcher as Instrument statement, which can be found in Appendix A. Throughout the study, I continuously questioned and examined my assumptions and biases via the research log. As previously mentioned, I also engaged a peer debriefer to encourage additional examination of these beliefs. By recognizing my role as a research instrument, by continuously examining my reactions to the study through a detailed research log, and by engaging a peer debriefer, I am confident that I remained open-minded throughout the study and let the themes arise organically from the data.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative researchers must consider a variety of ethical issues before and during the research study. Before the start of data generation, I obtained the approval of William and Mary's EDIRC, which is the institutional review board for research with human participants in the School of Education. Additionally, I obtained the approval of the institutional review board for Baccalaureate College, which did not require additional review once I obtained EDIRC approval. I adhered to the ethical standards of both boards throughout my research. I renewed EDIRC approval annually over the course of the study.

Of primary importance to the research experience is informed consent of all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prior to any communication beyond the initial outreach, each participant was informed about the topic and context for the study and was provided with a copy of the consent form (Appendix J). The demographic information was collected prior to

participant selection (Appendix D), and ultimately all volunteers who provided demographic information were selected for the study. Then selected participants were required to submit the signed consent form prior to the onset of data generation, beginning with the Participant Survey (Appendix F). The consent form was approved by the EDIRC prior to use. Additionally, participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

The data generated in the study were protected. Audio recordings and transcriptions generated by the participants were accessible only by me and were stored via a protected drive. A secure shared drive was used for the peer debriefer to access data analyses, and data were removed from this server once the debriefing process occurred. Names and other identifiers were known only to me to ensure the participants' confidentiality in the research data and subsequent publications. All data will be deleted following the successful completion of my doctoral dissertation defense.

Conclusion

Again, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and beliefs of faculty members about parental involvement during students' first year of college. As a means of addressing the guiding research question, I explored this phenomenon through analysis of data generated via surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews and analyzed via a holistic approach to identifying themes. Throughout the study, efforts were made to ensure rigor through trustworthiness and authenticity and to ensure an adherence to high ethical standards.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of selected faculty members about parental involvement during students' academic lives. Through surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews, I explored with 21 study participants their observations and experiences of parental involvement and their perceptions of its relationship to the development of their students. To allow for as complete and rich an exploration as possible, the study is centered around the single research question: *How do faculty members experience and understand parental involvement in their students' academic lives?*

Understandably, this topic inspires a host of questions and discussions, from descriptions of individual interactions to observations of students and their growth and everything in between. Thus, necessarily, the results of this study cover a range of topics and include rich descriptions of the participants' perceptions and experiences. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the results, this chapter begins with a brief description of the participants, highlighting the experiences of each individual. Following the participant descriptions, I review the themes which surfaced across the data from the participants as a whole.

Participants

To understand the lived experiences of the study participants, it is first necessary to have foundational context for the participants themselves. For this study, I interviewed 21 participants across three broad academic areas—the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural/mathematical sciences. Participants were distributed evenly across the areas and

represented a range of age, teaching experience, and parenting experience. Thirty-eight percent of participants identified as male and 62% identified as female. Nearly all participants identified as White. Table 4 illustrates the demographics across the group, while Table 5 provides a snapshot of each individual participant.

Table 4

Demographics by Academic Area

Demographic Trait	Humanities		Natural/Math Sciences		Social Sciences		All Participants	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender[a]								
Female	4	57	4	57	5	71	13	62
Male	3	43	3	43	2	29	8	38
Race/Ethnicity								
Asian Pakistani American	0	0	0	0	1	14	1	5
Black	1	14	0	0	0	0	1	5
White	5	71	7	100	6	86	18	86
White; Hispanic	1	14	0	0	0	0	1	5
Age								
20-29	0	0	1	14	0	0	1	5
30-39	1	14	0	0	1	14	2	10
40-49	3	43	4	57	2	29	9	43
50-59	2	29	2	29	2	29	6	29
60-69	1	14	0	0	2	29	3	14
Years Teaching Higher Ed								
0-4	0	0	1	14	0	0	1	5
5-9	0	0	1	14	2	29	3	14
10-14	0	0	1	14	1	14	2	10
15-19	3	43	3	43	0	0	6	29
20-29	3	43	1	14	2	29	6	29
30-39	0	0	0	0	2	29	2	10
40+	1	14	0	0	0	0	1	5
Parent to College Student								
No	6	86	6	86	4	57	16	76
Yes	1	14	1	14	3	43	5	24

Note. $N = 21$ ($n = 7$ in each academic area)
[a]Participants were given a blank field to self-identify gender, and all provided responses are included here.

Table 5

Demographics by Participant

Participant	Gender[a]	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Academic Area	Years in Higher Ed	Parent	Parent of Current or Former College Student
Al	Male	White	65	SS	37	Yes	Yes*
Amy	Female	White	44	NMS	18	Yes	No
Anne	Female	White	29	NMS	1	No	No
Austin	Male	White	55	NMS	18	No	No
Axel	Male	White	57	H	15	No	No
Clifford	Male	Black American	68	H	42	No	No
Cristina	Female	White; Hispanic	47	H	20	Yes	No
Cynthia	Female	White	60	SS	30	Yes	Yes*
David	Male	White	57	SS	24	Yes	Yes*
Heather	Female	White	45	NMS	14	Yes	No
Jamie	Female	White	42	SS	8.5	Yes	No
Jeffrey	Male	White	59	NMS	24	Yes	Yes
Jennifer	Female	White	39	H	17	No	No
Lisa	Female	White	45	NMS	15	Yes	No
Melissa	Female	White	40	H	19	Yes	Yes*
Michael	Male	White	40	NMS	8.5	Yes	No
Nina	Female	Asian Pakistani American	40	SS	13	Yes	No
Rachel	Female	White	32	SS	5	Yes	No
Richard	Male	White	52	H	21	No	No
Sophia	Female	White	43	H	20	No	No
Tammy	Female	White	50	SS	29	Yes	No

Note: H = Humanities, NMS = Natural/Mathematical Sciences, SS = Social Sciences
[a]Participants were given a blank field to self-identify gender, and all provided responses are included here.
*Student(s) enrolled in at least one course at Baccalaureate College.

Participant Descriptions

To best illustrate the contexts for participants' perceptions and their lived experiences, this section provides a brief narrative summary of each participant. Additionally, an excerpt from each participants' individual interview is included to share each participants' voice.

Al. Al is a 65-year-old, White male teaching in the social sciences. He has been teaching for 37 years, and he has had three children attend post-secondary institutions—one at Baccalaureate College. Al has engaged with parents as a program director, instructor, and academic advisor. Al's initial reflections on parental involvement in the academic lives of his students suggested a softer and more accepting perception than that of public perspectives or of some colleagues, and this perception continued over the course of his interview.

Al perceived that he has had minimal interaction with parents, other than positive social interactions at events like graduations and homecomings, over the course of his teaching experience. Through follow up questions, Al shared multiple examples of parental outreach, though it remains clear that Al does not perceive these as problematic or overly interventive. For example, Al described a situation where a parent reached out about a medical condition a student was managing and even connected Al to the student's physician. Instead of perceiving that as problematic, Al described the communication as helpful to better understanding the student.

Al shared his perceptions of indirect parental involvement, noting it most clearly in the area of students' decisions about majors and minors. He perceived that parental pressure about the future leads students to overextending themselves academically. Al also shared his perceptions of institutional policy, interpreting that Baccalaureate College did not encourage direct faculty-parent communication. Al has a practice, which he perceived as the institutional

standard, of referring parents to administrative offices, such as the Provost's Office or the Registrar's Office, on the occasions where they do reach out.

Al perceived that some colleagues seem to welcome parent interactions, which develops a pattern of consistent outreach. He described this phenomenon by commenting,

> I have a suspicion that we may have some faculty who enable parents to complain or to be vocal about what goes on. I don't, it's not my goal to shut them down. It's my goal to make sure they're talking to the right people. And if, if I encourage them to talk to me, then there can be a contagion effect, which suggests that others will be in touch to complain to me or to talk to me or whatever might happen to be. And I don't think that's my role. I think some believe that it is their role and I think they create a circumstance that brings a firestorm around them from time to time. That may not be fair. That's just a presumption on my part.

Al appears to believe that his resistance to engaging with parents has limited their outreach to him.

Amy. Amy is a 44-year-old, White female teaching in the natural and mathematical sciences. She has been teaching for 18 years and has three children, none of whom are yet college aged. In addition to teaching, Amy directs a specialized program at Baccalaureate College. Amy interacts with parents through a variety of her roles, including instructor, advisor, program director, and committee chair. Overall, Amy seems to perceive overinvolvement by parents as a limitation to student development and academic success.

Amy had among the strongest negative reactions of all study participants to overinvolvement by parents. When asked about her comfort level interacting with parents, Amy responded simply with "hate it," then explained further that she rarely found it constructive or

necessary. Amy seems to differentiate between parental support and parental involvement, sharing,

> I think parents should support their kids. I think they should be there to listen. They have problems or struggles, but I don't think parents should be problem solvers for children after the children are able to solve their problems themselves.

She shared her perception that parents who problem solve for their children limit their children's abilities to develop their own skills and autonomy.

Amy was one of the few study participants who recalled parental interaction with regard to academic content, describing parental concerns of indoctrination following assigned readings in the specialized programs she directs that were related to race and inclusivity. She has also experienced parental involvement related to academic advising, academic dishonesty, appeals to academic regulations, and academic performance/grades. Amy perceived indirect parental involvement as a stressor on students, particularly as related to major selection and high achievement expectations.

Anne. Anne is 29-year-old, White female teaching in the natural and mathematical sciences. She has been teaching for 1 year, the shortest duration of all participants. Anne graduated from Baccalaureate College herself within the last 10 years, and she does not have any children. Overall, Anne's experiences with parental involvement appear to be more anticipatory than actual; she expected and feared parental interactions but experienced little.

Anne seemed to have more experiences of indirect parental involvement to draw from than direct, and, thus, seemed to offer more robust observations of those experiences. She observed similar indirect involvement to that of other participants, particularly in the areas of course and major selection or high achievement expectations. She also noted her perception that

family responsibilities and family turmoil—particularly highlighting a student serving as witness in a parent's court hearing—can directly affect a student's academic experiences, development, and success.

Austin. Austin is a 55-year-old, White male teaching in the natural and mathematical sciences. He has been teaching at the collegiate level for 18 years and had experience teaching in secondary education prior to post-secondary teaching. Austin does not have children. Austin seems to have regular interactions with parents but seemed to perceive them with empathy and patience. His overall perception of parental involvement seems to be that it is well intentioned, even when it is excessive, and that it ultimately provides supportive scaffolding for student development.

Austin was the only participant to acknowledge disregarding privacy regulations despite understanding them. He described his willingness to speak with parents without the student present or without the student's authorization. Austin described parents as approaching him with sufficient details about their students that he did not perceive himself as disclosing anything they were unaware of; thus, he was comfortable continuing those conversations without the student. Austin described parental involvement with empathy and patience. He considered parental involvement to be a result of the economy and as a reflection of care for a child. He does not seem to perceive parents as dictating or directing decision making, but as gathering information, sharing perspectives, and providing functional support, as exemplified by his comment,

> the one [student] we talked about at the very beginning whose mom called me…it was a really positive thing cause mom was just worried about her daughter. And I think that's why I felt like the daughter didn't know because mom was trying to help the daughter, but not trying to dictate to the daughter or get in her way or embarrass her in any way. So

yeah, I know most of the parents are really, they care about their children. They want them to be successful.

Here Austin described a perception that regularly surfaced throughout his interview – that parents are coming from a place of love and support and that they are trying to propel students, not hinder them.

Axel. Axel is a 57-year-old, White male teaching in the humanities. Axel has been teaching for 15 years and has interacted with parents through a variety of roles including instructor, advisor, academic dishonesty board, and department chair. He does not have children. Axel's overall perception of parental involvement is that it happens frequently, both directly and indirectly, and that it has a negative effect on student development.

Of the study participants, Axel was among the most resistant to interacting with parents. While many participants expressed dislike or discomfort with parent interactions, Axel described active refusal to engage. For example, he described his practice of responding to parent emails by replying directly and only to the student, including in cases where the student was not originally included. He described having more than one case where the response was cyclical; he would receive a parent email, respond directly to the student, and the parent would respond to him. He perceived the students as disengaged and the parents as overly engaged.

Throughout his interview, Axel described perceptions of student comfort or willingness to have their parents involved. He described his perceptions of indirect involvement through parental influence on decision-making and parental participation in academic work by editing papers. Axel perceived few, if any, students as resistant to or embarrassed by parental involvement. He perceived many students as indifferent or unaware of parental involvement and some as embracing it. In his interview, Axel offered one of the most egregious examples of

overinvolvement experienced by study participants when describing an academic dishonesty case as follows:

> So, yeah, I was a council member, so it wasn't my student, but part of the student's argument in front of the council was, “well, I didn't commit plagiarism. My mother added this part to my paper. Yes. My mother added this part...of my paper. And I just turned it in assuming it was correct. So, my mother plagiarized, not me.” It didn't fly with the council.

Via this example, Axel shared not only was the parent overly involved in the student’s academic experience, but that the student was so willing to have the parent’s involvement he did not perceive the inherent problems with it.

Clifford. Clifford is a 68-year-old, Black male teaching in the humanities. Clifford has been teaching for 42 years, the last 14 of which have been at Baccalaureate College. Clifford does not have children. Overall, Clifford does not seem to perceive parental involvement as unpleasant or uncomfortable, but he does see continued parental involvement as limiting to student development.

Although nearly all participants commented that their involvement of their students’ parents differs greatly from their own experiences as college students, Clifford’s experiences seemed to reflect the starkest contrast. He reflected on his perceptions that parents seem to encourage students’ ongoing close attachment to home and that today’s parents are more interested in a friendship with their children than a parent-child relationship. Clifford was among several participants who noted that despite the close relationship between students and parents, communication between the two groups is poor. He commented,

> I had very different parents when I was in college. I was in Chicago; they were in Baltimore. They were not educated. So, I don't even think they looked at my grade report or even cared. But parents just assume that they are the parents. They have the right to know everything about their child at all times. And we tried to explain to them that that is not true. And they are these laws, and you have to cultivate that relationship. And I say very gently, but you need to cultivate that relationship with your child so that you know what's going on and the child will share with you freely what he or she wants to.

This reflection from Clifford is illustrative of the contrast between his parents' involvement in his collegiate experience and that of his students, as well as of the reliance of parents on direct involvement as a result of insufficient parent-child communication.

Cristina. Cristina is a 47-year-old, White Hispanic female teaching in the humanities. Cristina has been teaching for 20 years. Cristina is a parent, but her child is not yet college aged. Cristina has experience interacting with parents in a variety of faculty roles, including as instructor, advisor, department chair, and academic appeals committee chair. Overall, Cristina perceived parents as motivated by concern for their children, but also perceived parental interactions as both unpleasant and as a hindrance to student development.

Throughout her individual interview and the focus group interview, Cristina articulated her belief that parents need to step back so that students can develop into adulthood, and she shared many examples of situations where she perceived parental involvement as limiting to student development. She simultaneously reflected throughout both interviews on the motivations of parents for maintaining high levels of involvement. She perceived parents as motivated by financial investment and concern for their children, and she readily acknowledged

how challenging it must be for parents to separate concern for their children from intervening for their children.

For example, when sharing her perceptions of one parent's motivation for outreach and involvement, Cristina said, "I think [they engaged heavily] out of true concern based on my interactions with the kid. If I was to put myself in those parents' shoes, I think I would feel a little bit the same way." Later when discussing parent motivation as a whole, Cristina commented

> And, I think it's a journey for both children, their parents to be able to find their space and to understand that this space that is going between, that doesn't mean that you don't love them anymore or that you don't care for them anymore. It's just the natural progression of life. It is very hard to understand. It's very hard to assimilate that, but that eventually they have to be on their own.

She followed that comment by reflecting, "I hope not to do that to my kid, but we'll see." Here, and at other points throughout her interview, Cristina shares her perceptions that parents should allow their children to develop independently of them and without intervention while acknowledging the difficulties in doing so.

Cynthia. Cynthia is a 60-year-old, White female teaching in the social sciences. She has been teaching for 30 years. She has two children who have attended college, one at Baccalaureate College. Cynthia has interacted with parents almost exclusively in her role as academic advisor to largely junior- and senior-level students. She perceived that heavy parental involvement impedes student development.

Of all participants, Cynthia experienced some of the most persistent and invasive instances of parental outreach and involvement. She shared several examples of parents who

reached out multiple times consistently over the course of their students' academic careers, including one parent who called her cell phone, which Cynthia would share with students via her course syllabus, on two occasions. Cynthia perceived these parents as motivated by ensuring their students' success but also by a belief that their students cannot navigate without them. For example, she described one parent's motivation as, "I do think she really wanted to make sure he was going to graduate on time, but I also think she did not think he could do it, you know, that he was not making good choices of what his classes should be."

Despite this persistent and consistent outreach and her perception that overinvolvement by parents could negatively affect student development, Cynthia also described herself as comfortable with parent interactions and seemed to accept them matter-of-factly. She explained developing a plan for parent interactions, which includes requiring the student be present for conversations and directing parents back to students.

David. David is a 57-year-old, White male teaching in the social sciences. He has been teaching for 24 years. David has three children who have attended college, one of whom attended Baccalaureate College. David has interacted with parents in his roles as instructor, program director, advisor, and academic administrator. David perceived parental involvement, whether direct or indirect, as often detrimental to student development.

As David reflected on his interactions with parents, he shared that he perceived his experiences may differ from those of other colleagues due to his positional power. He described several scenarios where he was working with capable, engaged students who would ask him to communicate with their parents. In these scenarios, the students were requesting his support as they asserted themselves in their relationships with overinvolved parents. Students believed that

parents would see him as an authority supporting their position, and David elected to support the students in these situations. David recognized his positional authority, commenting,

> I think that being older, being tenured, and being male and coming from a business environment works to my advantage in, in those communications…I mean that I'm often seen as someone who, because of my race, gender, age, et cetera, is assumed to be an authority figure.

David qualified these comments by noting that this is authority comes at the perception of others, but he acknowledges it, and he seems comfortable using this perceived authority to support his students.

Heather. Heather is a 45-year-old, White female teaching in the natural and mathematical sciences. She has been teaching for 14 years and has children that are not yet college aged. Heather reported interacting with parents in her role as instructor and as advisor. Heather perceived parental involvement as unnecessary, and she indicated her preference for interacting directly with students; yet, unlike most other study participants, she felt that she could not evaluate the relationship between parental involvement and student development.

Heather shared that though her own interactions with parents are infrequent, her department has recently had more than one discussion about the increase in parental involvement at the institution, commenting,

> we often have conversations among faculty about how we are having more interactions with parents…I mean if I tried to count up interactions I've had, there wouldn't be a lot of numbers there, but when we talk about it as a department, it seems like there's more.

Heather perceived that most of her colleagues are also having infrequent interactions with families—that none of her departmental colleagues are experiencing regular or frequent parental

contacts. Nevertheless, she reported an overall sense that parents are reaching out regularly and with increasing frequency.

Jamie. Jamie is a 42-year-old, White female teaching in the social sciences. She has been teaching for 8.5 years and has children who are not yet college aged. She has interacted with parents via a variety of campus roles, including instructor, advisor, program director, and committee member. Jamie perceived parental involvement as uncomfortable to experience and as a hindrance to student development.

It was evident in our conversations that Jamie thought about parental involvement regularly. She did not have to be prompted through questions to think about topics such as parents' motivations, effects on development, or her comfort level. As an example, a question about the frequency of parental outreach elicited a response that touched on each of these topics and more.

> I really don't like answering my phone in the other office. Because I worry it's a parent on the other end and I have been lucky. I think I've only answered the phone once that it's been a parent. Most of the time it's somebody on campus, but I still worry about it. And I think I worry about it because you don't know how the conversation's going to go, and you don't know if they're going to be friendly or mad about something that happened in a classroom. And the topics that I teach are controversial, can be seen as controversial. I think some conservative parents believe that I'm indoctrinating their children. I think some parents think in my research methods class that I'm too hard, that I'm too picky, that they should be able to do kind of whatever they want. And I think that my generous assessment of parents is that they think they're doing what's best for their students, for their children. But it in many ways has the opposite effect. Right. Where I wouldn't say

> that I'm less critical of students after their parents engage with or try to engage, but I'm certainly more aware of; I'm more deliberate about the feedback that I offer; more cautious about the feedback that I offer.

While Jamie went into further detail on each of these topics later in our conversations, this response provides an ideal snapshot of her overall perceptions of parental interactions. Notably, she acknowledged that parents are motivated by trying to help their students but perceived the effects of their outreach as negatively associated with student development.

Jeffrey. Jeffrey is a 59-year-old, White male teaching in the natural and mathematical sciences. He has been teaching for 24 years. Jeffrey has two children who have attended college. Jeffery has interacted with parents via a variety of faculty roles, including instructor, advisor, department chair, and committee member. Jeffrey perceived parental involvement much more favorably than most participants. He acknowledged that parents who are overinvolved in their students' lives may be hindering their day-to-day development but perceived parent outreach as ultimately useful in his support of students.

Jeffrey perceived parents as his partners in encouraging students through development. He does not deny that their overinvolvement may inhibit students from making their own decisions or directing their own actions, but he values the perspectives of parents as he helps structure and support student learning and development. He commented multiple times throughout our conversation that outreach from parents helps him to learn his students better. For example, Jeffrey reflected,

> I truly, I'm always hungry for information. Like, "you know your kids so much better than me. Tell me how to get to them. Not just tell me pedagogically how do they learn,

> but just help me understand them better." Cause then I can do a better job on all the details that you have to fill in day to day.

The more he knows about a student and the better he understands their context, the better he can engage with them.

Jennifer. Jennifer is a 39-year-old, White female teaching in the humanities. She has been teaching for 17 years and has no children. Like many participants, Jennifer prefers not to interact with parents. Jennifer described her relationship to her own parents as very close, including during college, but commented that they were not directly involved in her academic experience.

One perception shared by Jennifer that no other study participants shared in their reflections was her sense that parents do not understand the role of a faculty member. She perceived that parents often believe faculty members have more institutional power than they do, so they reach out – especially through the faculty advising role – with concerns or expectations in areas over which faculty members have no control, or even involvement. Jennifer shared,

> But having a parent interact with a college professor never seems to result in anything. Very often the professor doesn't have any power on the things that the parent is looking for help with. Or, either doesn't have any knowledge or doesn't have any power and often both. And like I said, it's not like a parent has ever called me and said, "please change a grade." Which theoretically I have control over.

Jennifer has heard from parents about financial aid, residence life, student organization involvement, athletic eligibility, administrative appeals, and various other areas in which she has no authority or involvement. She perceived that parents latch on to faculty outreach out of a fundamental misunderstanding of institutional operations.

Lisa. Lisa is a 45-year-old, White female teaching in the natural and mathematical sciences. She has been teaching for 14 years. Lisa is a parent, but her child is not yet college aged. She has engaged with parents through her roles as instructor and advisor. Although interactions with parents are not frequent, they are consistent. Among the study participants, Lisa shared some of starkest examples of parents reaching out to eliminate consequences for their students.

Lisa reflected that most often outreach from parents comes when she has not heard directly from the student. Lisa did not believe that the students blamed her or her colleagues for their challenges. She perceived parents as making the assumption that students are misinformed, poorly taught, or mistreated, but not that students are saying that to parents directly. She also noted that she often hears from the parents of her quietest or most disengaged students. For example, Lisa shared,

> Most of the time that I have interactions with parents, the student themselves is usually pretty unengaged or shy, quiet. They're never the ones to say anything to me, and so often that the interaction with the parent is kind of surprising because I can say, "well, your child has never come to me for help. You know, I can look and see what they're doing and she's not doing the homework and she's not organized, you know?" And oftentimes I can say, "well here are all the things that your child could be doing to take advantage, to help themselves that they're not doing." And often that frequently will shut it down.

Lisa perceived parents' default positions to be that their student cannot be responsible for their challenges, so it must be the fault of others. Throughout our conversations, Lisa seemed to connect this tendency of parents to swoop in to fix without understanding either context or the

students' own roles in their circumstances as related to students' development of problem-solving skills and autonomy.

Melissa. Melissa is 40-year-old, White female teaching in the humanities. She has been teaching for 19 years and has prior teaching experience in secondary education. Although she advises students, Melissa recalls parent interactions only through her role as instructor. Melissa is the only participant with a child currently attending college. Melissa's child attends Baccalaureate College. She shared that having a child attend college has changed her perspective on the motivations for parental involvement, though she also perceived that overinvolvement is limiting to student development.

While Melissa recalled receiving direct parent outreach at a rate of once or twice a year—a frequency which she perceived as comparable to her colleagues—she shared many examples of perceived indirect involvement by parents in her students' academic lives. Several of these examples included parents tracking students, most typically via their phones, and contacting the student when their location or behavior did not match the parents' expectations. One of the most extreme of these examples—described as excessive by both Melissa and by later focus group participants when this was shared as an example—included a parent using campus construction cameras to track a student's attendance. Melissa shared,

> So, I had a student once—this makes me laugh. They were building the [Campus Building], and there were cameras. There might still be cameras. I don't know, like there were like construction cameras. And her mom would watch her every time she walked across campus. So, her mom knew where her classes were. [The student] would walk to [Campus Building] and then to [Campus Building], and her mom would be able to find her on the camera…And so, she would make fun of her mother with me. To me. I wasn't

> making fun of her mother, but I did commiserate that I thought this is kind of excessive. "I'm sorry that your mother does that"…[The mom's motivation was] to make sure her student was going to class. "So, where are you? Class starts in 8 minutes, and you haven't walked across the quad yet." Just a very helicopter parent. And I have recounted this story, without the name of the student. And I have found that there are other parents who have similar things. Now that one's probably the most extreme.

Melissa reflected on this example and others, noting that she understands parents' desires to ensure their children are safe and successful, but also sharing her perception that parents often suffocate and alienate their students when the monitoring is extreme. She commented,

> I wonder if there are a lot of parents who are in the know about what their kids are doing and keep it to themselves, right. So, you wake up at 3:00 AM. You see your kid is at a frat house and maybe you say, "oh, I hope he's safe." And you close your eyes, and you go back to bed versus the parent who's going to say, "what the hell are you doing at the frat house?" You know, causing their child to either turn off their phone or their location services, or pushback to try to get the independence that they're trying to get here on a college campus, separate from their parents.

Melissa seems to understand the desire to know, but clearly differentiated between knowing and controlling.

Michael. Michael is a 40-year-old, White male teaching in the natural and mathematical sciences. He has been teaching for 8.5 years. Michael does have children, but they are not yet college aged. Michael's interactions with parents come through a variety of faculty roles, including advisor, instructor, and committee chair. Michael described a range of experiences ranging from surprise meetings with a mother trying to engage in the advising process to angry

communications from a father unhappy with committee decisions to positive engagements with parents at research symposia. Overall, Michael's perception of parental involvement is that every situation is different; some students benefit from parental engagement and learn to develop as a result of it, while others are inhibited in their development because of excessive parental involvement. Michael seemed to perceive that what we – as faculty members, administrators, observers, etc. – may assume is acceptable depending on the context of the student and how they participate in the process, while at other times our assumptions may be correct.

Michael thoughtfully reflected on his perceptions of parental engagement in students' learning and the effects that could have on a students' knowledge development. He described multiple occurrences of students telling him about describing a genetics project to their families. He reflected,

> And so, I've had multiple students tell me that they were talking about this project that they do with me in the class, that they don't quite understand what they're doing, but they think it's cool and that's what they're telling their parents. So, I kind of look at it as a positive comment. Like they're enjoying what they're doing even if they don't really quite understand what they're doing…But from those few instances where I've had students tell me that they've talked about this project with their parents, I think they do it because it's in the public realm, this idea of gene editing and CRISPR and things like that…And I think when the parents ask them later, "what exactly are you doing?" They're not quite capable of relaying difficult scientific concepts; that's a challenge that all of us have is putting it in the language…The few times I've heard them talk about it, they seem genuinely interested. Like, "Oh, that's kinda neat. You're doing that sort of thing. I'm glad to hear you doing that."

Here, Michael perceived that students being excited about their coursework, even when they do not fully understand it, and having someone to explain it to is reinforcing the students' engagement with the material and understanding of it overall. Additionally, he seems to recognize that the parents are interested and excited to hear about what their children are doing.

Michael expressed discomfort with parental interactions outside of social or research activities, though he was able to recognize that there could be positive outcomes depending on the context. He readily, however, expressed excitement for students and parents discussing learning, ideas, and knowledge development.

Nina. Nina is a 40-year-old, Asian Pakistani American female teaching in the social sciences. She has been teaching for 8.5 years and is a parent of a child not yet college aged. Although Nina has interacted with parents in the roles of instructor, advisor, and department chair, she noted that those interactions were at her prior institution. Nina reported not hearing directly from any parents since her arrival at Baccalaureate College, 1 year prior to the study's onset. She did share, however, colleagues' interactions, as well as her own from the previous institution. Both her experiences at her prior institution and her observations of her current colleagues have shaped Nina's overall perceptions of parental involvement in students' academic experiences.

Nina shared her overall perception that parents should not interact directly with faculty members or the academic institution on behalf of their students, describing her belief that it affects students developmentally and that it is profoundly uncomfortable. She balanced that perception, however, with the acknowledgement that she has found it helpful to better understand her students in some cases of parent outreach, commenting,

> I think that having an interaction with a parent does [affect Nina's perception of the student]. It shouldn't. This is why they intervene because they want special treatment for their child. I think it does. I think it does heighten your awareness of the student in the classroom, and it does shift your attention to them. I don't think it changes the way that I grade their work. I would hope that it doesn't. Or I would like to believe that it doesn't, but I think that it does make a difference, which is what they're hoping for. They're hoping that in having this interaction, my child's not necessarily getting special treatment, but that you'll have some sort of understanding or context for their behavior.

She continued by reflecting on the conflict between believing that parents should not contact the school and perceiving it as overstepping yet recognizing that she found the context useful when engaging with a student. She noted that she did not perceive most involved parents as helicopter parents, hovering to make sure everything is smooth, but still felt that they should not be engaging. These seemingly split perspectives on parental involvement were not unique to Nina among study participants, with most participants sharing similar conflicting perspectives throughout their interviews.

Rachel. Rachel is a 32-year-old, White female teaching in the social sciences. Rachel has been teaching in a post-secondary environment for five years, with secondary school teaching experience before that. Rachel is the only participant who has also served as a varsity athletic coach and has experience interacting with parents in that role, as well as in the instructor and advisor roles. Rachel is a parent, but her children are not yet college aged. Overall, Rachel seemed very matter of fact in her perceptions of parental involvement, acknowledging a changing culture where parents stay connected to their children for longer than they did even 10

years ago and recognizing that she manages how she interacts with parents and supports students.

As with most study participants who had experience teaching in a K-12 environment prior to shifting to an institution of higher education, Rachel noted that she had experience with parental outreach and that it is much easier to manage in a higher education environment. She also shared that her experiences with coaching enhanced her comfort managing parent outreach. Additionally, as she shared her experiences during her interview, she acknowledged that her academic discipline is one that is often part of a family culture; she works with students learning to be teachers, and teachers often come from families of teachers. Because of this, she anticipates that parents may have perspectives about pedagogical approaches, classroom assignments, and other educational experiences that parents are less familiar with in other disciplines. Rachel perceived one of the ways she supports students is by helping them navigate through outside perspectives as they develop their own.

Noting her comfort level interacting with parents, which seems much higher than most other participants, Rachel shared two things beyond her K-12 and coaching experiences that helped her develop her comfort. First, Rachel noted that she is confident in her work and in her field, thus she is confident in sharing that with parents. Furthermore, she shared,

> You know, I think that to be prepared to talk to the student is pretty similar to being prepared to talk to the parent because the student is an adult too. And I wouldn't necessarily say anything different to the parent than I would say to the student, if I ever were asked to have a meeting, a face-to-face meeting, I would ask that the student be there as well. …I could see how faculty might have the perception that parents should

> never talk to me. I don't have that. I'm like, "oh, I'm glad it's less than it was before [in K-12]."

In this reflection, Rachel is sharing her perspective that interacting with parents and interacting with students should be fundamentally similar because in both cases the interaction is with adults. She also seems to be sharing her comfort with receiving information however it comes to her and responding to it in the way she perceived is best in the moment.

Richard. Richard is a 52-year-old, White male teaching in the humanities. Richard has been teaching for 21 years and has no children. Richard's interactions with parents occur via a variety of faculty roles, including instructor, advisor, department chair, and academic dishonesty. As with many of the study's participants, Richard shared that his comfort and perspectives on parental involvement have developed over time. Earlier in his career, he was resistant to and surprised by parental involvement in students' academic lives, especially as his parents were far removed from his own academic experience. However, he reflected that though parent outreach is neither especially frequent nor always positive, he has developed his comfort and empathy about parental involvement. Richard shared his overall perception that parents often seem to be motivated by protectiveness, defensiveness, and unwillingness to either perceive their students as being able to make mistakes or to allow them to make mistakes. Like nearly every study participant, Richard noted that college was a time for making mistakes and learning from them, and parents who prevent that are impeding their students' growth.

Unlike most other study participants, however, Richard shared multiple examples where a parent started from a place of anger, blame, and intervention, then he seemed to witness the parent shift in understanding as Richard shared context. In these examples, Richard shared that

he could see the moment when these parents realized that their students needed to be held accountable. He described one such example as follows,

> I think it was the mother that basically said, “I'd like to come in and talk to you about this”…I was happy to talk to the mom about it, but I said “your son should be there too, so he can also provide some feedback and I can answer any questions about things because I haven't heard from him either.” And then we had the meeting. He came in and was sitting right here, and he didn't say anything the whole time. She was asking these questions, and then I just went through the grades. I had the printouts of what he had gotten and the percentages that they're worth and how it all adds up to the grade that he got. And, it was clear that he hadn't shared any of that…it was [clear] he hadn't shared that he had failed several exams and all that. And so, she realized that, and it became a more uncomfortable meeting. I felt terrible for her because she was being embarrassed by the situation. And, I'm sure he got a talking-to when they left…You know, it wasn't a contentious meeting. She didn't fight back or anything like that… I think her motivation was to try to understand how it happened. And she was defending her son…Then she was piping mad at her son.

Richard shared multiple examples like this, where the parent commences the interaction with one perspective and shifts during the interaction, through a variety of the roles he held on campus, including teaching, advising, and academic dishonesty.

Sophia. Sophia is a 43-year-old, White female teaching in the humanities. She has been teaching for 20 years and has no children. Sophia has interacted with parents through her roles as advisor and instructor, though she perceived most interactions via her advisor role. Sophia expressed multiple times throughout both her individual interview and the focus group interview,

her profound discomfort with and distaste for parent interactions. She believed strongly in her relationship with and responsibility to her students, and she perceived parents as impeding those relationships and her students' growth.

Sophia seemed to carry a strongly developed negativity towards parental involvement that leads to the assumption that she is regularly interacting with parents or observing negative indirect parental involvement with her students. However, Sophia shared that she has very few interactions with parents. She perceived, however, what she believes are the negative effects frequently enough that it has shaped her overall perspective, sharing,

> My experience, especially this year, is the students have been super sweet and super excited and just really taking ownership. But the few that decide that it didn't work out the way that they wanted it to or they know they know that they didn't do what they were supposed to do and now they want somebody to pay for it rather than just saying, "look, I didn't do what I was supposed to do and I'm going to take responsibility for it and fix it."

Here, Sophia appears to be sharing her perspective that while most students are developing accountability and ownership for their actions and decisions, a small group of students believes that their parents will fix their situations on their behalf.

Tammy. Tammy is a 50-year-old, White female teaching in the social sciences. She has been teaching for 29 years, with continuous and overlapping experiences at both the secondary and post-secondary level. Tammy has a child that is not yet college aged. Tammy is an adjunct instructor with a long-standing relationship with the institution. She teaches only one course a semester and has no advising role, yet she has opportunity for close relationships with students and has experience interacting with multiple parents. While Tammy did not appear to be especially bothered by nor surprised by parental interactions, she did to appear to have an overall

perception that parents become involved even when their students are capable of – and even have a history of – self-advocacy and independent action.

Tammy shared one example that seemed to encapsulate much over her overall experiences and perceptions of parental interaction. When describing a parent who reached out about her student's grade for an assignment and in the course overall, Tammy provided a detailed account of the initial occurrence, the parent's interpretation, and where the parent's perception and the actual situation did not align. Tammy shared that the parent concluded the conversation by noting she needed to revisit the situation with her student because she clearly did not have complete information. When reflecting on this, Tammy did not place blame on the student for misrepresenting the situation or asking her parent for assistance. Instead, she commented,

> Apparently the daughter … had called home and said all this "blah, blah blah" to mom. And I don't know if the daughter asked the mom to call or if the mom just took it upon herself to call. I don't know. That wasn't clear. But it was very interesting that by the time we got off the phone the mother was like, "I think I need to have another conversation with my daughter". …the daughter, she never mentioned it. Never brought it up. I almost wonder if it was almost as if she didn't know that was going on behind the scenes. I think she may not have been aware that mom had called. And I certainly never said anything to her about it because I didn't want to put her in that position if she didn't know. Like, "oh my God, my mother," you know, if she had just been calling home to vent.

In her response, Tammy seemed to perceive that the student may have been calling home to share and to vent and the parent took it upon herself to intervene. She shared several examples like this throughout her interview, seeming to lead to the perception that students may call

parents to vent and that their venting may naturally contain incomplete information, and that parents do not need to intervene in response to that venting.

When reviewing the study findings, it is essential to center the rich voices and experiences of the study participants. Having foregrounded the participants in this section, I will continue by sharing the study findings.

Format and Frequency of Direct Parental Involvement

As defined in Chapter 1, direct parental involvement refers to direct contact between parents and faculty members, including in-person, phone, text, or email. Participants in this student experienced direct parental involvement via a variety of formats, contexts, roles, and frequencies. With the understanding that public perception seemingly shapes a perception that angry parents are calling faculty members regularly and that word-of-mouth storytelling across college campuses often reinforces this perception, it is important to describe the overall experiences of direct parental involvement as the participants described them. In this section I will discuss the following themes: (a) social interactions with parents and direct parent outreach, (b) types of direct parental involvement, (c) student awareness of direct parental involvement, and (d) frequency of direct parental involvement.

Social Interactions with Parents and Direct Parent Outreach

Each participant in this study described both intentional direct parental involvement where the parent directly contacting the faculty member and social experiences that naturally led to direct parental involvement.

Participants frequently noted commencement, athletic events, awards ceremonies, student performances, and research symposia as opportunities where they interacted directly with parents. Participants described these encounters positively, as they gave opportunities for parents

to reflect on their student’s academic experiences and share with faculty members. Participants shared that they often learn of their impact on their students through these parent interactions and seemed to perceive them as indicators that students were sharing academic experiences with their parents. For example, Jamie shared,

> I often get parents at graduation who will say, “you really helped change my kid's life.” I can remember one, a student who graduated last spring, but at family weekend a year ago, her mom was there and was like, “Oh, she sent me all of her books. And then I started a reading club with my friends,” and it was a very positive, you know, “we have a better, healthier understanding about race in the United States than we did before.”

Additionally, multiple study participants shared that by interacting with parents in positive, social environments they had better relationships with parents and more positive interactions when the context was challenging. Richard shared,

> You get this nice opportunity to meet parents in a setting different than when you get to meet parents…They’re not coming there to beef. They're coming to thank you or say something really nice. And I have lots of that. Students that give a senior recital, they'll have a special moment where they'll thank their parents, and we get to meet them. We have a photograph together. A lot of parents come to multiple things.

Richard continued by sharing a few instances where when parents he had met in these contexts later reached out for other reasons, he had greater empathy for the parents and a better understanding of the roles these parents played in their students’ lives – he had experienced them as engaged but not interventive, so he was more accepting of the outreach when it came. Multiple study participants shared similar perspectives, whether they were meeting parents

through admissions events, performances, family weekends, athletic events, or any of the other opportunities they had to engage with parents.

Despite the positive experiences faculty members had when engaging with parents in social environments, each noted that intentional outreach was inherently less positive. All participants noted that parents do not intentionally reach out when things are going well for their student. For example, Austin shared, “if they're calling, they're really nervous or worried or something is going on. Right. They don't just call to say hi.” Even when the interactions themselves are ultimately positive or helpful, participants all perceived direct parent outreach as resulting from concern, complaint, control, or some other negative place.

Types of Direct Parental Involvement

Participants in this student described a range of formats through parents engage in direct involvement. Email and phone calls were the most commonly cited forms of parent outreach, with all participants having experienced one or both. In these cases, participants were hearing directly from parents on their campus phone or email. Additionally, some participants experienced additional forms of phone or email contact. Three participants described students handing them their own phones so they could communicate directly with the parents. One participant received calls from a parent on her personal cell phone after sharing the number with students via her syllabus. Four participants shared that it was evident parents were reading their students’ email, with Axel sharing the example, “I think it was a case where the parent was not trying to pass herself off as a student, but used a student's account and signed her own name.” Participants in this study also described in-person meetings with parents. Although most direct parental involvement occurred via phone or email, approximately half of the participants

described in-person meetings. Meetings were sometimes scheduled via the parent first phoning or emailing, sometimes scheduled by the student, and sometimes a surprise drop-in.

Of the 12 participants who described in-person meetings, six of them described surprise office visits. Michael shared one example,

> The student and parent showed up at my office door and the parent brought [the student] over to me and said, "you [the student] need to apologize to him [Michael] now in person"… I was definitely nervous because I'm trapped in my office and here are these two people and I thought it was going to go a completely different direction.

Heather shared one that was less intense but equally surprising, "A first-year advisee's parents showed up at my office unannounced with the advisee. They were convinced he wasn't working hard, was about to flunk out, and were planning to withdraw him from the school."

Student Awareness of Direct Parental Involvement

Participants described a range of perceptions of students' awareness of and desire for direct parental involvement, and there does not appear to be a single experience that rises as most frequent. Participants described some students as unaware that their parents were reaching out. They described other students as being aware – the student set up the meeting, the student was copied on the email conversation, or some other indicator showed the student was aware of the contact. Even when it was clear to participants that the students were aware, it was unclear to the participants if students requested or were bothered by the outreach. Often, participants seemed to perceive the students as matter of fact about their parents' direct involvement; they seemed to simply be used to it. This range of perceptions occurred across the participants and also within each participants' reflections. No participant held a singular perception of student awareness and acceptance of direct parental involvement.

Frequency of Direct Parental Involvement

Participants in this study described infrequent direct parental involvement outside of social situations like commencement and athletic events. Two participants described outreach as frequently as once or twice a semester, while all other participants described outreach coming far more infrequently. The most common frequency was once or twice every 1 to 2 years. Participants shared that most parents reached out only once, with only eight participants describing multiple direct involvement from the same parent multiple times. Two participants reflected that some of their colleagues receive more outreach from parents than they do, while one participant reflected that their experiences seem comparable to their colleagues.' No other participants compared frequency of outreach across the institution. Additionally, all study participants described regular experiences with indirect parental involvement, which refers to parental involvement observed but not directly experienced by faculty members. While only two participants explicitly named indirect parental involvement as a frequent occurrence, the descriptions of indirect parental involvement experienced by participants seem to suggest that all of them experience it with relative frequency.

Faculty Roles

Learning that study participants are experiencing a wide range of format and frequency of direct parental involvement leads to an examination of the roles in which they experienced both direct and indirect parental involvement. Of the study's 21 participants, 20 served as an academic advisor; of those, 17 perceived most of their direct parental involvement via their advising role. All 20 participants who serve as an academic advisor have observed indirect parental involvement via their advising role.

Eighteen of the study participants explicitly described direct parental involvement via their instructor role. Those experiences typically related to students' grades or to provide context to the participant for a student's performance in a course. One participant described a parent's request for an alternative assignment because she felt the content was inappropriate, while three participants—all in the social sciences—described accusations of indoctrination via course content from parents. Study participants also experienced indirect parental involvement via their instructor roles, with multiple study participants reflecting on students sharing their classroom experiences with their parents and sharing their parents' perspectives back to them. In nearly all cases, participants positively perceived this form of indirect involvement. Lisa shared the following example,

> We spent some time talking about the biochemical basis of the keto diet. And, how that sort of worked out. And the student shared that with her mom, who apparently is a big proponent of the keto diet. And the mom was apparently very excited about the material and really happy…The student came back the next day and said, "oh, I shared this with my mom, and she was so excited that I was learning about it."

Multiple participants shared similar stories of students sharing with family what they are learning in the classroom because the students are interested in sharing and the parents are interested in receiving.

Indirect parental involvement via the teaching role also came via participants' observations of parents involved in their students' academic work. Multiple participants shared their perceptions that parents are reviewing students' writing before it is submitted. While most participants seem to perceive parental involvement in academic work as limited to review and editing, two participants shared experiences where parents were found to have participated in

producing student work. Axel shared his perception that it happens more frequently than may actually be discovered, commenting,

> I've suspected that [parents are contributing to coursework] with some other students where they really can't speak to basic things about the paper. I'm asking them how come you came up with this? I don't know. That's just where I went and it wasn't a conversation where I'm accusing them of plagiarism and it's just going over their paper explaining what was wrong or what they could have done better and asking, "okay, so [you] went this direction with this?" And they really can't speak to their paper... [Other people may be assisting them], but, I've heard it enough that "yeah, I'm going to go home and write this over the break and that way my mother can help me edit it."

Although all participants in the study carry the instructor role and all but one carry the advisor role, participants hold a range of additional roles across the institution, including department chair, program director, appeals committee chair, and academic dishonesty or conduct committee member. Participants with experience in these roles regularly shared examples of direct parental involvement resulting from these roles. Four participants shared perceptions of parental involvement via academic dishonesty or conduct committee work. Three participants shared examples from chairing an appeals committee, and six shared examples from department chair or program director responsibilities.

The generated data from this study revealed that study participants are experiencing direct and indirect parental involvement through multiple faculty roles and with varying type and frequency. As each of the study participants described their engagement with parents, they did so with considerable variability; yet all participants are instructors at the same institution. In the

following section, I will share findings related to the institutional environment as related to parental contact.

Institutional Environment

No two participants in this study seemed to share the same overall perceptions of institutional policy or institutional expectations related to direct parental involvement. The varying perceptions of the institutional perspective were sufficiently evident in the individual interviews that I asked additional questions about this topic in the subsequent focus group interviews. This section reviews faculty members' varying perceptions of institutional policies and training about parent interactions and their perceptions of the institution's expectations for parental involvement.

Policies and Training for Parental Interactions

Of the study's 21 participants, 17 explicitly commented on having an unclear understanding of any institutional policy related to parent engagement. Nearly all participants referenced the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and shared an understanding of privacy regulations, though they also acknowledged that students were often either present for direct parent involvement or the involvement was happening at the request of and with the permission of the student. Participants also acknowledged that privacy regulations did not prevent them from speaking generally with parents. One participant shared that he does not frequently worry about privacy regulations because the parents are reaching out already aware of the academic details; he does not perceive himself as disclosing added information.

Eight participants perceived the only training received by faculty members on how and when to engage with parents to be FERPA training, which includes a brief presentation at new faculty orientation in a faculty member's first year and yearly refresher training if a faculty

member serves as a first-year advisor. Two participants shared that the only training received on campus was through advising, and additional participants referenced advising training as one resource for engaging with parents. Two participants explicitly stated that a toolkit or training for parental interactions would be useful to faculty members, while one participant felt it would be impossible to develop a one size fits all policy or training because each faculty member's preference is different.

Expectations for Parental Interactions

With a lack of understanding of institutional policies related to parental outreach, participants developed their own perceptions of how the institution expected they would interact with parents. Eight participants shared their perceptions that they had the freedom to determine if and when they wished to engage with parents. Nine participants shared that they felt protected by institutional administration with regard to parent interactions. Eight participants, however, shared a perception that they are expected to engage with and please parents when they reach out. One participant shared several examples of being asked by academic administration to engage with a parent, including:

> His mother was with him in the meeting with [an academic affairs administrator]. And so knowing that [what they were discussing] sounded suspicious, [the administrator] called me on the phone and said, "this mother and son are in my office right now. Here are some things they are saying, would you be willing to meet with them right now?" And I said "yes" because I was in my office. (Amy)

Participant perceptions of institutional expectations for parental engagement seemed varied, that even individual participants conveyed seemingly conflicting responses. For example, one participant highlighted having the autonomy to determine how and when to respond to

parents and their understanding that across the institution direct parental involvement may be invited by faculty members. Another participant reflected on the institution's decision to market its low student-to-faculty ratio and its supportive student-faculty relationships, which he perceived as encouraging direct parental outreach to faculty members even while he felt supported by the administration if he chose not to engage. Similarly, David reflected,

> I think from the offices of academic affairs, it's a very consistent response [that you are not required to engage with parents]. I think from the offices of the registrar, it's a very consistent response, and it's consistent with everyone else in academic affairs. I think that's consistent certainly in my department…I have no reason to believe it's not consistent across other departments. I have felt occasional pressure from one area of the college where it might be connected to donors that would be nice to communicate with families in a positive way. It would be nice to make an exception if an exception could be made. It would be nice to get someone into a class or make sure that they got an extra level of support or something. Those are the sorts of things that have been informally asked or implied.

Here, David shared the perception that while academic affairs administrators support faculty members autonomy when choosing if and how to engage with parents, other divisions of the institution send a conflicting message that faculty members should communicate with parents.

Overall, it became clear over the course of the study that there is no consistent perception across the participants about how they should engage with parents, what policies guide those interactions, and how they may be supported when they do or do not engage.

Overall Experience of Direct Parental Involvement

Participants' perceptions of their institutional environment identified no singular overarching perception. Similarly, participants experienced direct parental involvement through a wide range, both across the participants and in many cases even for individual participants, of motivations, tones, and desired outcomes. Participants identified the singular nature of parent interactions, by describing both positive and negative experiences, highlighting the many motivations parents have for involvement, and describing their empathy towards parents even when expressing their desire for parents to not reach out. In this section, I will explicate these findings. Note that participants described multiple encounters with parents; thus, participants will be included multiple times in the following results.

Ten of the study participants described at least one interaction with a parent as hostile or aggressive, four described at least one parent as controlling, six described at least one parent as defensive during their interaction, and two characterized at least one parent interaction as intense. Four participants described at least one parent as worried or concerned, while an additional four described at least one parent as upset. Four participants shared that parents became frustrated with them when they did not engage in their requested interaction. Two participants explicitly labeled at least one parent with whom they interacted as helicopter parents, while an additional 13 described at least one parent with whom they interacted as overly involved in their students' lives.

Alternatively, 10 participants labeled at least one interaction with a parent as helpful or supportive. Eleven participants expressed empathy towards parents, even when they might also have characterized their interactions negatively. For example, Jennifer commented throughout her individual interview and in the focus group interview that she wished parents would not

reach out and that she perceived overinvolvement as a hindrance to student development. At the same time, she expressed empathy for parents, sharing,

> I would say sending a kid to college is scary. Because for most families it is vastly different than whatever was happening prior to college. It's scary even if your kid is a commuter, right? It's a different experience than when they were just going back and forth to high school every day. So, I think it can be for a lot of parents a stressful time… The second thing I would say is that I empathize with the anxiety about student success. This is a scary time in the world. It was not that long ago where we had a terrible economic crisis…I empathize with the anxiety, even though I wish people weren't so fixated on the things that they're fixated on, I get it. I understand it. And I guess the third thing I would say where I feel a lot of empathy is that I think that college students, we know from all the research that there are various mental health crises happening with college students… So, I guess I have a lot of empathy for the way young people are struggling, and how difficult it must be to see your kids struggle that way and want to try to help them through it. If your kid is suffering from depression and falling apart in the college classroom, I'm sure that sometimes the thing that it feels like you can do is to try and deal with the academic crisis in front of you because the other one is so nebulous and confusing and difficult and maybe you don't have healthcare that can pay for treatment, all these things. It's so hard. I feel a lot of empathy.

Although this is only one example it is representative of the perceptions that the 11 participants who explicitly commented on their empathy towards parents shared throughout their interviews. Participants also shared empathy for the financial investment parents are making in their students' educations and seemed to understand the desire to be involved for that reason. Among

the 10 participants who did not explicitly describe empathy towards parents, all expressed understanding of the various motivations that parents have for reaching out.

Motivation

When asked what they perceived as parents' motivations for direct involvement, participants described such a wide and overlapping range of reasons it is difficult to draw any overarching conclusions. Table 6 illustrates the motivations identified by participants for becoming involved and the number of participants across the study who identified that motivation.

Table 6

Motivation for Direct Parent Involvement as Perceived by Participants

Perceived Motivation	No. of Participants
Asking for advice	1
Blaming others for their student's actions/consequences	9
Communicating absence or circumstances on behalf of the student	3
Concern about future success/employment	4
Concern about their student's wellbeing	4
Cultural pressure for student success	5
Difficulty letting go	7
Disability support – often a carryover from advocating in K-12	8
Disability/mental health – not seeking support, but using as a reason why student cannot do things themselves	5
Discussing grades or assignments	11
Engaging because their student is apathetic	5
Express gratitude for support	3
Feel entitled because of the small school environment	3
Feeling entitled as affluent families	3
Financial Investment	5
Ineffective parent/child communication	4
Overall academic performance	9
Overprotection	7
Parent knows best and does not recognize professional value	5
Perceived faculty member as having more authority than the student	2
Personal feeling of guilt for being disengaged in student's earlier years	1
Schedule/Advising	12
Seeking a particular outcome, like a grade change or change in status	13
Venting or complaining about a situation or policy	3
Was successful with outreach to other faculty members or offices	1

Although no unifying perception of parents' motivations for parental involvement surfaces when analyzing these results, reviewing them provides context for the complexity of participants' experiences and perceptions of parental outreach. Participants described both positive and negative experiences with parental outreach, and they recognized that direct parental contact could range from hostile to supportive. As noted throughout the results, participants expressed empathy towards parents, even when simultaneously expressing their discomfort with it. Recognizing the wide-ranging perceptions of parental motivations provides context for these varying perceptions.

Participant Demographics and Experiences of Direct Parental Involvement

The findings of this study show that participants experienced variation in frequency, format, and experience of direct parental, thus prompting examination of these findings by demographic details. Inclusion of demographic details in the review revealed no noticeable connection between participant age, parental status, or race/ethnicity and experiences of direct parental involvement. The findings do reveal, however, two noticeable connections between demographics and experiences. The first is between academic area and parental outreach related to course content. The second is between gender and perceived motivation for outreach.

When asked about direct parental involvement related to course content, participants in the humanities and the natural/mathematical sciences described little to no outreach related to course content. Several participants described anticipating outreach, such as when teaching evolutionary biology or poetry with sexual content, but they had not experienced any outreach. Two humanities instructors had received requests through the students to have alternative assignments related to content but did not receive outreach directly from the parents.

Two participants teaching in the social sciences described experiences with parents contacting them with accusations of indoctrination or complaints about course content related to diversity and inclusion. In one example, Jamie shared the following experience,

> [The parent emailed] that liberal professors were indoctrinating students in that she thought that we were trying to indoctrinate the [program] students with this book into our liberal way of thinking. And the [program] series was titled equity and inclusion. So, she provided the definition of justice and social, [arguing] that when you attach an adjective to a word like social onto justice, it changes the word justice so that justice now is like communism or something. And that our goal here was not to engage in discussion or debate, but to brainwash her child.

Another participant teaching the natural/mathematical sciences but with a role affiliated with the aforementioned program shared a similar experience with the same parent.

Additionally, two social science participants teach in education, a field into which some students follow in their parents. In both cases, the participants described hearing from parents about their students' experiences. For example, Rachel shared an example of a parent for whom it was clear that her own teaching experiences led to her questions.

> [The student] came from a family of teachers. I think he had really high expectations for himself…And when he wasn't [an expert right away] it was really difficult for him to deal with…[The parent] had just had questions that a concerned parent would have. But also, from a perspective of she's a teacher and she had some questions that… she asked some things about "it sounds like maybe this teacher isn't the best to have paired with one of your students. What is your vetting process for that? How do you decide that you allow one of these teachers to work with our student teachers?"

Direct parent outreach related to academic content was related only to the social sciences area, and it seemed to have minimal impact on the participants overall.

This study's findings revealed no noticeable connection between gender and frequency, format, comfort with, empathy for, or overall experiences of direct parental involvement. Participant gender did, however, have a connection to perceived parental motivation and positional power. Only self-identified male participants shared examples of parental outreach motivated by the perception of the participant as an authority figure. Five of the eight male participants perceived parents reaching out for advice or to verify a students' perspective. David recognized this positional power, noting it explicitly in the previously shared example from his participant description. In another example, Clifford shared that a parent contacted him for advice about her student who was experiencing academic difficulty describing, "She called me and she said, 'what should I do? Please tell me.'…She said, 'but he always talks about how wonderful a teacher you are. He really likes you. He respects you. Help me decide what I should do."

Noticeably, only male participants offered such examples. Male and female participants both shared examples of parents not trusting their perspectives or of not perceiving them to have expertise, but only male participants shared examples of perceived authority.

Overall Experience of Indirect Parental Involvement

In addition to experiencing direct parental involvement, study participants were well positioned to observe indirect parental involvement with their students. Indirect parental involvement refers to parental involvement in students' experiences that may be observed by faculty members but are not direct contact between parents and faculty, such as influencing a student's coursework or understanding of material, frequent dispensing of both solicited and

unsolicited advice, pressure on students to make particular choices or meet high demands, and using the student as a conduit for communication with faculty. All participants observed some form of indirect parental involvement, with some forms surfacing across multiple participants. Participants perceived indirect parental involvement both positively and negatively, and it was through their discussions of indirect parental involvement that study participants began to differentiate between intervention and engagement.

Indirect Parental Involvement as Intervention

Seventeen of the study participants identified parents as influencing the academic pathways of students. Study participants offered many examples of students selecting a major because of family expectation, using parents as a primary resource when deciding which classes to take, or determining future career paths. Participants shared their observations that students are often pursuing programs where they may not be happy or adding second major in addition to the expected major, as illustrated through the following example from Michael.

> [The student] wanted to be a bio major but not necessarily like the pre-health type where there's this concept that you can go off to be a doctor and make lots and lots of money. So, she had no intention of [pursuing medical school]. The student also had a brother, I think it was a brother, who had a computer science degree and was doing quite well. And so my advisee wanted to do both the bio major because of personal interest and the computer science major because of potential pressure from parents.

Michael shared that this parent was adamant that the student complete the computer science major and could supplement with the biology major only if it did not extend the student's time to degree. Other participants shared similar stories, as well as their perceptions that this familial pressure to pursue specific majors while areas of interest were added as secondary programs

could negatively affect students. Al, for example, shared the following observation when discussing students adding secondary programs to pursue interests alongside meeting parent expectations.

> And you know, I think personally, just as an academic advisor, I think they're potentially sacrificing the quality of their education and their GPA by trying to do too many things that if they could focus more specifically on what they're working on, I think they could probably do better.

Seven study participants shared their perceptions that student actions are directed by their parents, citing students coming to advising appointments with course lists planned by their parents, student participation in programming in which they are disinterested due to parental direction, and students raising grade disputes or other challenges to policy at the direction of their parents. Each of these participants noted that the students did not seem to question or dispute the family influence but accepted it as the natural order. Four participants shared their perceptions that their students' relationships to their parents were affecting their academic experiences.

Multiple participants shared their perceptions that indirect parental involvement limited the opportunities their students were able engage with. Three participants shared their perceptions that parents' fears prevented some of their students pursuing study abroad or research experiences. One participant, Anne, shared her perception that family obligations limited students' opportunities, offering the following example.

> This is awful, but currently this semester they've needed to go to court for their parents. And they've had to miss class or that their parents did something awful over break and

> they needed to deal with that. Unfortunately, that's been three of my students this semester.

Additionally, as previously shared, Melissa observed that parents are tracking students' locations via their phones and contacting their students when they are not where expected. While the individual types of indirect parental involvement that lead to limitations on students may be perceived by one or few participants, they illustrate the greater phenomenon that faculty members perceive parental intervention as limiting to students.

Five participants experienced indirect parental involvement as the perceived pressure on students to be academically successful. For example, Amy shared,

> Some of that anxiety from what I hear from students is due to pressure from their parents to succeed. So, I have had several students tell me over the last few years "my mom or dad says if I get X grade, I am going to have to drop out of [Baccalaureate College]." And the grade is not like always an F. Sometimes it's "if I get a C in a course, I'm going to have to drop out of [Baccalaureate College]." Or "if my GPA falls below 3.5, they're going to make me drop out of [Baccalaureate College]." So, I hear that a lot.

Two additional participants discussed family pressure to begin working immediately, and their students were not supported in their academic pursuits. Amy continued her example,

> I just had a student this week miss class. She sent me an email and she said, "I'm really sorry that I missed class. Right before class, I got a phone call from my dad, and he was yelling at me because he doesn't want me to go to graduate school. And we got into a big fight, and I was crying, and I couldn't come." So, I talked to that student yesterday and I said, "what's up?" And she said, "my dad says that I should get a job, but just with my [Bachelor of Science] degree and that if I need to go to graduate school post undergrad

> that I'm wasting my money and that he wants me to be gainfully employed and that any job that I'm going to do for my life, I should be able to do with a BS degree. And so, and he doesn't want me to get a PhD. He thinks a PhD is ridiculous."

Although participants are experiencing this parental involvement indirectly, they actively perceive the effects on their students.

Indirect Parental Involvement as Engagement

Although many observations of indirect parental involvement were perceived as invasive, directive, or interventive by study participants, many were perceived as positive signs of engagement. For example, helping a student prepare for an advising meeting was perceived as interventive when the student expressed hesitation to deviate from parental advice or participants perceived students as prohibited from making their own decisions. However, five participants shared examples of students who prepared for initial advising meetings with the support of their parents, but managed the meetings themselves and had the autonomy to deviate from the parents' influences. These participants seemed to perceive that the parents were modeling approaches to engaging with the participants, and the students learned from their experiences.

Nearly all participants shared their observations that students text parents immediately after an exam or after receiving feedback on an assignment. While some participants perceived that negatively, nearly all participants perceived this as a sign that students were excited about their accomplishments and celebrating with their parents. For example, Austin shared,

> She made an 84 on the second test and she was so happy and at some point a little bit later we were talking about it because I was really proud of her. And she said, "I was excited. I called my mom." I assume she'd told her mom about the first test. But she was so excited and happy. She wanted to share some good news with her parent…So it's not

> like the parent was calling and checking on the child with me, but clearly mom was involved in some way.

Similarly, Jennifer shared the following observation,

> But I also think a student walking to class and telling their parent about something exciting that's going on and that sounds fine. Right? That's a way for a parent to be supportive and engaged in their kid's life. And I think you can do that without calling the professor and being like, "why wasn't it an A- instead of a B" or whatever. But I think that parental involvement can be really an asset to students too.

These participants are sharing what they perceive as parental support, which they in turn perceive as a benefit to students.

Additionally, seven participants explicitly shared their perceptions that students discussing academic content and experiences with their parents is a form of positive engagement. Participants typically experience this as indirect parental involvement, when their students tell them about their conversations with parents. As the previously shared examples from Michael (discussing gene editing) and Lisa (discussing Keto) illustrate, students are excited by what they are learning and reinforcing that learning by sharing it with others.

Parental Involvement and Student Development

During the individual interviews and focus group interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their perceptions of students' decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, self-efficacy, and confidence, with a particular focus on how those skills developed with involved parents. These qualities served as a proxy for the larger concept of student development for the purposes of this study. Additionally, the participants overwhelmingly discussed aspects of development, including these qualities among others such as interpersonal relationships and even

interdependence, without being prompted. The perceptions of the study participants largely align with extant literature, suggesting that they perceive overly involved parents as hindering student development, and they perceive engaged parents as promoting development.

Positive Perceptions of Parental Engagement

Eighteen of the 21 participants in this study commented directly on the importance of parental engagement in students' development of confidence, problem solving skills, and other qualities that suggest development into adulthood. For example, David reflected,

> When my kid has a problem, I'm perfectly happy to say, or when he had a problem in college, I have to say, "have you tried this? What's the policy? Have you read the syllabus? You know, what is the policy? Who's the professor? Have you gone to see the professor? Have you talked to them?" Those sorts of things without me contacting them you know, just sort of say, have you done this? You know, just that supportive questioning of have you done the thing that you need to be doing to solve your problem? I see that as support. And I see that as the different kind of support from you're okay, everything's going to be fine. Kind of just sympathy support. I don't think that is particularly helpful. All as the only form of support. I think that students do need the emotional support and that sort of thing, but they also need a little bit of just questioning, "have you done what needs to be done?"

Here David observed that emotional support is helpful but constructive support that models effective problem solving and encourages independence is important to student development.

Nearly all participants commented on the increased opportunities for connection between students and parents due to technology, and many observed that students and parents are developing these habits of close connection at a young age. Those who participated in focus

group interviews, which occurred in the fall of 2020 when students were largely still remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic, also observed that students commented on their close families, expressed comfort with being at home, and even witnessed close family relationships via Zoom. Multiple focus group participants shared observations of students having virtual advising appointments in the living room with family around, not directly participating in the appointment, but just being together in the household. One participant noted that a parent would come in and sit in the student's room during class so she could observe the lecture, not to intervene or participate for the student but because she was interested in the material her daughter had explained to her.

For most participants, these close connections were perceived positively. For example, Jennifer was careful to acknowledge throughout her individual and focus group interviews that close connections with parents should not be assumed to be overly close. Jennifer commented,

> And I think for me, I try to be careful not to conflate closeness with one's parents with lack of independence. I don't think those two things always go together. I think students can be very close with their parents to the point where they are interacting with them multiple times a day or spending lots of time with them at home and still be really functional and independent young people. I think that parents can be involved in their college students' decision making without making those decisions for them. So, I think that students learn to be more independent. They learn self-efficacy when they have parents who ask them what they're thinking about doing. Like what are you thinking about taking, and, they have meaningful conversations about the options that are available to students. I think that when parents are involved like that it can be so healthy for students. College is the only time in life where you're sort of independent, but you're

> still very protected. It's a very good testing ground for trying things out. And I think parents who are supportive of their kids trying things out and engaging with their college students as adults, I think that can be really productive and wonderful.

While a few participants thought that students spoke to their families far too frequently and viewed the constant communication as a tether, the vast majority of participants perceived close connections as supportive and constructive.

Nina, a participant who asserted explicitly in her individual interview that she believed overinvolved parents inhibited student development and that she believed parents should allow students to make mistakes also commented “I don't think there's anything problematic about them being supportive or saying you're getting your homework done right. And I think that's probably a good thing, but I think there's a limitation where it's too much.” Here, Nina articulated the balance needed between support and overinvolvement.

Negative Perceptions of Overinvolvement

As noted in the previous comment, Nina reflected that while parental support was positive, involvement should be limited. Overwhelmingly, the study participants agreed with this observation. Twenty of the 21 study participants shared observations related to the perception that overinvolvement by parents was negatively related to development. Participants described college as an opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them, and seemed to perceive that parents who do not allow their children to experience failure are limiting their development. Participants shared their perceptions of students unable to make decisions, unable to manage their time, unable to organize their actions, and unable to solve their own problems. Additionally, they shared perceptions of students’ challenges developing interpersonal relationships and of limited self-confidence.

Participants expressed their perceptions explicitly and directly. The following four interview excerpts illustrate their perceptions.

> Yes. I think, yes. I think my opinion is the more parents solve problems for their children as they get older, the less they're able to advocate and solve problems for themselves. I think that the students that I have seen that have had high parental involvement also tend to have poor problem-solving skills, bad self-efficacy, inability to handle adversity, move through adversity. And I think those are all negative. (Amy)

> So, I think that not giving students a safe place to make those mistakes, which is really what I think is our environment, it's supposed to be our environment in college. It's a safe place to do some errors both in the classroom and outside. We can't make it perfectly safe, but we're safer than a lot of other places. And when parents helicopter or God forbid snowplow there's no room for mistakes. There's no opportunity. The path is too clear. (David)

> And so from that angle, self-confidence, self-advocacy and all of that, I think when you have parents that do not teach you or allow their children to make mistakes, to learn from those mistakes, even make wrong decisions there's definitely something not good in there, because you're not preparing these young adults to face the hardships of life. I always tell the students life sucks. I mean, there are really good moments, but there are some moments that get you by surprise. And then depending on your upbringing and other factors, you react differently to those moments…I think that depending on that, on your dynamics, family dynamics, I think it impacts how that kid is going to react in

> facing difficult moments. I mean, some students are not able to handle that at all. It just crumbles and falls apart. (Cristina)

> [The relationship between parental involvement and student development is], inverse. And very negative. The more interaction there is. It's bad enough with the school systems, the standardized testing being taught to the test for 12 years, lack of independent thinking. And then that's reinforced by parents making decisions for them, getting rid of any obstacles that might pop up in their way. And it creates a lot of helplessness. And at the same time, I've seen more so in recent years, students literally just shut down when they encounter something that they don't know how to deal with. They lack the tools to how to respond to these things because they haven't had to before…And the parents are perhaps too eager to fix the problem for them rather than helping the student figure out the tools for themselves. (Axel)

These four excerpts are representative of the perceptions shared across participants, and many similar additional excerpts could have been included.

Participants clearly believed that parental interventions limit student autonomy and growth. When parents limit decision-making opportunities by controlling students’ majors or course loads, participants perceived that students’ abilities to make decisions were diminished. Participants observed that parents who monitor their students’ experiences or intervene on their children’s behalf limit the development of interpersonal relationships with the participants themselves and with others. Participants shared observations that students of parents who regularly intervene often have limited self-confidence, as the students learn to believe that they are unable to function without intervention. Students’ self-efficacy does not develop because

they lack confidence in their abilities to execute decisions, conversations, and daily tasks without parental guidance.

As evidenced by the excerpts above and across individual and focus group interviews, participants perceived college as a time when students should be given space to fail – in coursework, decision-making, relationships, and life. They perceived college as a relatively safe space for these failures with support in place to facilitate learning from and rebound from failures. When parents intervene and limit opportunities for failure or try to eliminate the consequences of failure, they remove opportunities for growth.

Parental Involvement and Academic Success

Although the participants shared clear perceptions of the relationship between parental involvement and student development, they did not seem to have similarly clear perceptions of the relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement; 11 explicitly shared that the relationship was unclear. Several participants shared that there is often overlap between parents who have had direct involvement and students who struggle academically. For example, Amy shared, “the students that I've experienced this significant parental involvement had poor academic performance. I don't know that I remember a student who had a parent really micromanage them, who is really academically successful as well.” However, participants were reluctant to elaborate on a causal relationship. It was unclear to participants if students were unsuccessful because their parents were involved, or if their parents were involved because they were unsuccessful.

As with student development, participants perceived parental support and engagement as positively related to academic achievement. Across the interviews, participants shared their perceptions of positive interactions with parents at academic events like research symposia,

performances, and commencement. Not only did the participants highlight these experiences as pleasant encounters, but they also shared their perceptions that these engagements and indirect involvement in academics positively affected student achievement. For example, Michael shared,

> I think those interactions are actually quite positive. And for a student too. I think it's really important for me in terms of what I do…is to be able to take the information that you're learning or that you are perceived to be an expert on and disseminate it so that everybody can understand it. And I think that's true for our students. If they really understand what they're learning about, they should be able to tell somebody like their parent, who's not in the classroom with them every day, and so that's a good way to show that they're learning and for them to feel more confidence in what they're learning.

Across the interviews, the study participants shared perceptions similar to Michael's. Parent engagement in students' learning is positive.

Summary of Findings

As previously shared, this study sought to understand the lived experiences of faculty members as related to parental involvement through the research question *How do faculty members experience and understand parental involvement in their students' academic lives?* The findings illustrate the variety and complexity of faculty members' experiences of this phenomenon.

Participants experienced parental involvement both directly and indirectly. Direct parental involvement was experienced at various rates of frequency, in various contexts and formats, and with students both aware and unaware. Participants shared a wide range of perceptions of direct parental involvement, with some perceiving both the parents' motivations for outreach and the overall experiences positively, some perceiving them negatively, and some

perceiving a combination of both. In nearly all cases, participants expressed empathy towards parents, even when they did not have positive perceptions of direct involvement. Indirect parental involvement was perceived by participants as both interventive and supportive, and participants experienced parental involvement via a variety of roles, though most prominently in their advising role.

There was no overarching perception of Baccalaureate College's overall expectations for faculty interactions with parents. Some participants felt they had autonomy in determining when and how to interact with parents, while others felt an expectation to please parents and interact with parents when they reach out. Overall, participants could not point to an institutional policy on parental involvement or communication, though they did perceive there was limited training on privacy regulations.

Nearly all participants perceived that overinvolvement by parents, both direct and indirect, was negatively related to student development in the areas of self-efficacy, self-confidence, problem-solving, and decision-making. They perceived college as a time where students should be able to safely explore ideas and experiences and to make mistakes, and they perceived that parents who remove barriers, limit opportunities for decision making, solve students' problems for them, and dictate pathways are limiting these opportunities for students to develop. Even those participants who had positive experiences with direct parental involvement noted these limitations on development. Similarly, participants perceived supportive and engaged parents as encouraging student development, even when they had overall negative experiences with direct parental involvement.

Conversely, participants did not perceive a clear relationship between parental involvement and academic success. Participants perceived parental engagement as positively

related to academic success, and they perceived that they received more parental outreach from students who were less academically successful. However, participants did not believe they could determine if poor academic performance led to parental outreach or if parental involvement led to poor academic performance.

Although these findings provide context for the lived experiences of the study participants as they experience parental involvement in their students' lives, it is important to situate them within the existing research. In the following chapter, I will interpret these findings through the lens of my theoretical framework and connect them to existing research. Then, I will identify implications for practice and identify areas of future study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand selected faculty members' perceptions of parental involvement in students' academic experiences. The participants' reflections highlight the diversity of their experiences, yet also consistency across their overall perspectives. Although types and frequency of interactions, comfort-level with interactions, and overall impressions of parental involvement varied, participants shared consistent perceptions, both positively and negatively, of parental involvement in the academic lives of students. In this chapter, I discuss these findings within the context of the literature, then share implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, I discuss the findings of my study within the context of existing literature. Assumptions about parental involvement are often shaped by media coverage of the phenomenon, so I will begin by examining those assumptions against the context of participants' lived experience. Following that, I will situate the findings within my theoretical framework and extant literature. The study participants engaged daily with emerging adults (Arnett, 2000), and were well positioned to provide perspectives on the growth and development of this population. Framing the study within Chickering and Reisser's (1993), third vector of identity development, moving through autonomy to interdependence, provides an ideal lens for examining how parental involvement relates to emotional independence, instrumental independence, and

interdependence. I will continue this section by interpreting the study's findings about academic experiences and student development through this lens and in connection with previous studies.

Assumptions and Lived Experiences

Although scholarly literature provides the context for understanding the relationship between parental involvement and student development or academic success, it is important to first situate the findings of this study within the context of popular media and public perceptions of parental involvement. As explicated in Chapter 1, media coverage and the general public tone shape the perception that parents contact faculty members regularly and that those interactions are inherently negative.

In fact, when responding to the initial interview prompts, the study participants overwhelming began with the assumption that they should share negative interactions, not positive ones. Although the initial request for interest and initial surveys referenced parental involvement generally, all respondents began from the premise of negative experiences. Initial interview responses followed suit, and nearly all participants required clarification that perceptions of both positive and negative experiences were appropriate to the study. My following statement from my individual interview with David illustrates this clarification, "I'm not interested in only negative. I mean I am interested in those positive communications as well."

The findings made clear, however, that when given an opportunity to discuss parental involvement, the participants' experiences are not overwhelmingly negative. Although there were certainly negative interactions, such as Cynthia's experiences with a parent calling her cell phone, or the following interaction, which Melissa described as aggressive and intimidating.

> And immediately after his father barged into the office and he was a, a large enough figure and standing like blocking the door in a way that made me feel really

uncomfortable I felt like his demeanor and his like, just the way he was standing in my door really, really freaked me out…And I know that I asked him to leave my office, and he didn't immediately leave my office. So, I sat there for a minute thinking about calling campus safety or what I should do as I was sort of just sitting here feeling like, there's no way out of my office except through the door that this man is standing at. So, I remember thinking like, gosh, that could have gone really badly.

Participants do not necessarily wish to interact with parents or perceive it to be in the best interest of the students, but the interactions themselves seem to be positive in most situations. Cristina captured this sentiment well, sharing,

> So overall my experience has been good. I mean, conflicts very few. And I remember when I had the conversation with the student's grandmother. I was on the phone, I was a little nervous. I'm like, this can go really bad. But as I was explaining what happened with the academic integrity issue and what the kid had told her and what the instructor has shared with me about the violation, she was willing to reconcile both perspectives and come up with an understanding of her own of what the situation was. And I appreciated that she was able to get to that point with us providing the facts in all the information that she didn't have through her grandson. So, I would give that as a good example of a very constructive conversation that started a little bit rocky because she was a little bit like what's going on with my grandchild. And as she learned more of the facts, she was able to put the pieces together and come up with an opinion of her own.

Cristina did not wish to interact with this parent (for this study, grandparents serving in a parental role are described as parents; see *Operational Terms* in Chapter 1) but ultimately found the experience productive and positive.

The findings of the study revealed that overwhelmingly, like Cristina's example above, the direct parent interactions between the study participants and students' parents were positive. Participants largely described parents as motivated by concern, interested in supporting their children, conditioned towards advocacy for their student, and eager for information. Most interactions occurred at social events, such as commencement, athletic events, and research symposia, with direct parental outreach occurring with limited frequency. Although there were exceptions, the tone of interactions between parents and participants was typically described as more pleasant and productive than combative and aggressive.

Overall, it appears that the assumptions shaped by media coverage of parental involvement do not align with the lived experiences. Participants themselves acknowledged that their few negative interactions are more memorable than the positive, are more likely to be shared among colleagues, or have lasting impacts on the student/faculty relationships. Participants' assumptions are shaped by the public discourse and also their own experiences, yet they also freely admitted that those assumptions do not always align with their lived experiences. While it may seem from the media that parents run rampant across college campuses, demanding exceptions and perceiving their children as blameless, the lived experiences of the study participants suggest that few parents reached out, even fewer were demanding, and overall parents were stepping aside as appropriate to support their emerging adults.

Academic Experience

As illustrated in Chapter 4, participants perceived parental engagement as positively associated with student academic success, but they did not have clear perceptions of the relationship between overinvolvement or intervention by parents and academic success. These perceptions align with the extant literature related to parental involvement and student success.

Parental support was shown to be significantly related to academic success in college students (Cutrona et al., 1994; Kiyama et al., 2015; Shoup et al., 2009). Lived experiences of this study's participants supported these findings. As shared in Chapter 4, participants perceived that students who had supportive, engaged parents were more successful academically. Although prior studies did not have clear outcomes about what types of parental interventions and supports promoted academic achievement (e.g., Cutrona et al., 1994; Shoup et al., 2009), the experiences of the study participants help to shed additional light on the relationship between parental support and academic success for students.

The study participants perceived parental engagement as a model for professional academic behavior. When talking with their students about academic plans and encouraging conversations with advisors, parents were supporting their students' engagement in their academic experiences. When asking questions about their students' courses, parents are providing opportunities for students to reinforce their learning. When celebrating academic successes, parents are facilitating student confidence and helping shape their sense of pride in their accomplishments. Participants perceived these factors as promoters of student success. As will be discussed later in Chapter 5, these factors also promoted student development, which in turn supports academic success.

Neither the extant literature nor this study, however, provide a clear understanding of how parental involvement might negatively affect student academic achievement. Study participants clearly observed that parents with whom they had direct involvement were frequently the parents of students struggling academically. It was unclear to the study participants, however, if the parents were involved because of the students' challenges or if the parents' involvement contributed to the students' challenges. Participants were reluctant to

comment on any causal relationship in either direction. This lack of causal relationship aligns with prior research, which also did not seem to clearly attribute academic challenges to parental involvement (e.g., Holahan et al., 1995; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kiyama et al., 2015; Mattanah et al., 2004; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Museus, 2013; Shannon et al., 2016; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

Student Development

The most clear and prevalent conclusion to draw from examining the lived experiences of this study's participants is how well aligned their perceptions of the relationship between parental involvement and student development were with scholarship. Even when starting from a negative position when considering parental involvement, participants were able to differentiate between parental engagement and parental intervention. Participants recognized parental engagement as supportive and encouraging but still leaving room for the students to direct their own academic lives, they recognized parental intervention as direct parental contact with the institution on behalf of the student or as directing student students' academic experience. Parental engagement was positively associated with student development, although even those participants who welcomed parental involvement recognized that parental intervention negatively affected student development.

Time after time, participants shared observations that seemed as though they could have been lifted from scholarship, such as when Sophia shared,

> These kids, if they know they have something to fall back on, failure to launch. They're not going to [become self-sufficient]. If my parents were that involved, I would have a very difficult time making decisions for myself. I don't think I would have the confidence. I don't think I would be able to [make decisions]…I think it affects your

> relationships. I think it's far more than just whether or not you're going to do well in a class. I think it filters into your romantic life, into your professional life. It goes far beyond undergraduate.

Sophia’s observations align with Baxter Magolda’s (2001) observations of interpersonal relationships within the path to self-authorship, as well as illustrating how parental involvement can affect the development of emotional independence as explained in Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) third vector of development; students unable to break free of parental control are not developing emotional independence. Similarly, Austin shared an observation that differently illustrates Chickering and Reisser’s third vector, highlighting the role parental involvement can play in helping to develop instrumental independence,

> [The parent believed] “I need to be there a lot at the beginning because she doesn't know what to do. But once she's got the system down, I'm going to back off and let her make decisions, and she'll have enough good grades that she'll have sort of a backstop.”

Austin’s perception, as interpreted through my theoretical framework, illustrates this in-between stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) of students not yet being fully separate from their parents—“I need to be there a lot at the beginning”—yet developing ownership over their experiences—“I’m going to back off.” Additionally, this example illustrates that as parents back away and students use their experiences to understand their environment and make decisions, they are developing instrumental independence.

Observations like these occurred throughout the study. As participants acknowledged the importance of parental support, they reinforced the findings of studies like Taub’s (2008), which found that high levels of parental support led to high levels of emotional health and, thus, promoted student development, or Fass and Tubman’s (2002), which found that parental support

promoted self-confidence and academic optimism. Overall, participants' observations repeatedly illustrated the abundance of studies showing the positive role that parental support plays in student development (e.g., Holahan et. al, 1995; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kiyama et al., 2015; Mattanah et al., 2004; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Museus, 2013; Shannon et al., 2016; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

Just as prior studies distinguish between positive parental involvement and overinvolvement, Chapter 4 illustrates that participants' perceptions make similar distinctions. Over and over, participants' comments illustrate the negative effects that overinvolved and controlling parents can have on student development (e.g., LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Lopez Turley et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2015; Rousseau & Scharf, 2015; van Ingen et al., 2015). For example, Rachel observed,

> I think it takes failing at some point along the line to learn what works and what doesn't work. So you're talking about self-efficacy. You have to have the mastery experiences, but to know what a mastery experience is, you also have to know what a failure experience is. And I think shielding them from failure experiences or not even failure, but just disappointing experiences, that someone tells you "No, it's okay that you didn't have your stuff together and that you missed a deadline and that you got a late grade on that, because then you won't do it next time." I think it's hard to learn lessons from our decisions if we're constantly given a redo button. And I think the parent often tries to act as the redo button…And that's not giving them confidence to be able to complete things on their own, know what the consequences are and move forward. It's enabling their self-handicapping…I think giving students confidence to make decisions requires telling them that you have confidence in them making the decision, not making it for them.

Here, Rachel illustrated how parental intervention can shield students from the experiences needed to develop self-efficacy, reinforcing the extant literature and further illustrating that students who direct their own experiences are more likely to develop instrumental independence.

An observation from Lisa best highlights the alignment of perceptions of participants with the scholarship on this topic, beginning with the importance of parental support in early education (e.g., Grolnick, 2009; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2000; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2001; Pomerantz et al., 2007), and continuing to the importance of parental support (e.g. Holahan et. al, 1995; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kiyama et al., 2015; Mattanah et al., 2004; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Museus, 2013; Shannon et al., 2016; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000) and the negative effects of overinvolvement (e.g., LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Lopez Turley et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2015; Rousseau & Scharf, 2015; van Ingen et al., 2015).

> Well, I think it's like a curve, right? So, if you think about pre-our students. Early childhood development. I think parental involvement early on in education and stuff makes a big difference, right? Like when the parents are involved and interested in their kid's education, but then there gets to be a point where you get diminishing returns from increased parental involvement. Because then they don't learn how to make those decisions for themselves and things like that. Overall, I still think that parental involvement is probably a positive factor in the child's development, just in terms of showing interest and stuff like that. But, but it definitely, when it goes to helicopter parent territory becomes negative on their ability to be able to make decisions and things on their own.

An additional observation from Lisa highlights how parents can act as good company (Baxter Magolda, 2001) and help students develop interdependence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

> I think most of the time they're using the parents as sort of additional sounding boards. I mean, I think like a lot of times it'll be like, "okay, well, I want to see what you have to say about it. I want to see what my coach has to say about it. I want to see what my parents have to say about it." And I don't think I've ever had ones where the parents like "you have to do this."

When given the opportunity to pull away from their parents, students develop emotional independence, and when able to direct their experiences and make mistakes, students develop instrumental independence. Students are then well positioned to move towards interdependence, taking outside perspectives and incorporating them into their own. The observations and descriptions of the study participants provide a rich and complex context for understanding and reinforcing studies of student development.

Implications for Policy and Practice

As explained in Chapter 4, the study participants did not share a common perception of the Baccalaureate College's policy or expectation for communicating with parents. Some participants, such as Jamie and David, felt that the institution expected them to cater to and please families. Some participants, such as Amy, were directly asked by the institution to meet with parents. Some participants, such as Sophia and Tammy, referred to departmental policies for engaging with parents but did not know the institutional policy. Some participants, like Michael and Nina, relied on experiences at prior institutions to guide their communications with parents. Some participants, like Richard and Cynthia, felt empowered by the institution to determine their own level of engagement with parents and supported when they referred parents

to administrative offices like the provost's or registrar's offices. Many participants felt a combination of pressure and support from differing areas of campus, acknowledging an expectation to please families to support enrollment and fundraising efforts while also perceiving support for declining parent outreach from academic affairs. Overall, there was no single perspective and no formal institutional policy.

Establishing Institutional Guidance

Although no institutional policy was cited nor was one found following a search of Baccalaureate College's website, nearly all participants referred to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974) (FERPA) as a guide for parent interaction. Participants shared their understanding that FERPA prohibits them from discussing a student's grades or other personal information with any third party, including parents, without the student's permission, and they shared their tendency to lean of FERPA as a mechanism for avoiding discussing academic information with parents.

Relying solely on FERPA, however, is not a sufficient approach to managing parent outreach. FERPA allows for students to provide consent for engagement with a third party (Rooker & Falkner, 2012). Often, outreach from parents comes through students, whether via email or in person, and includes the student's consent to communicate. Additionally, FERPA provides an option for the parents of tax-dependent students to communicate with an institution (Rooker & Falkner, 2012). Considering the typical Baccalaureate College student is traditional college-aged, it is likely that many are also tax dependent. This would open the door for direct parent-college contact. While FERPA does not compel faculty members to communicate information to parents upon request (Rooker & Falkner, 2012), it does remove a layer of protection that study participants have leaned on when responding to parent contacts.

To better support its faculty members and to provide reasonable expectations for parents who wish to communicate on behalf of the student, institutions, especially those like Baccalaureate College at which parents can easily access faculty members, should provide direct guidance to students, families, and college employees about parent-faculty communication. A policy detailing exactly what is and is not permitted may be the appropriate approach. Several study participants shared they appreciated the freedom to decide for themselves when to engage. For example, Austin and Jeffrey found it useful to engage with parents, as it helped them to better support their students, but also wanted the support of the administration if needed. Others, like Axel, wanted to maintain the option to simply not communicate with parents at all.

Instead of policies directing the parameters of engagement, institutions should develop guidance explaining how best to engage—for both parents and faculty members. Such guidance could include options for when faculty members wish to refer parents to other areas of campus and clear expectations about whether faculty members are required to respond to parental outreach. This would provide all involved parties with a clear framework for parent-faculty communication. As shared in Chapter 2, prior research provides recommendations for how to shape resources for parent-institution communication, and these recommendations could be applied here. Such recommendations include transitioning parents from an action-taker role to a sounding-board role, explaining the concepts of college student development, providing direction for prompting students to request help and resources, and collaboratively setting and communicating expectations for academic and co-curricular success to mutually support students' efforts (Coburn, 2006; Cutright, 2008; Savage, 2008; Taub, 2008).

Providing Training to Faculty and Parents

Additionally, institutions should consider expanding opportunities for training. Several study participants shared that conflict resolution training would increase their comfort level and help them to better navigate direct parental contact. Multiple study participants shared the perspective that parents should have more training during orientation about student development, allowing students to fail, and not reaching out on behalf of their students. Cristina explicitly suggested that parents should hear from junior and senior-level students about why parents should let students navigate their academic experiences with support but autonomy. Nearly all participants cited limited, if any, training about communicating with parents. Institutions would be well-served to provide such opportunities.

Through the lens of the theoretical framework that addresses emerging adults (Arnett, 2000) and encourages interpersonal independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), and considering both existing literature and the findings of this study, providing a framework for faculty-parent communication can only serve to support student development. Providing reasonable opportunities for parental engagement and support, alongside room to self-direct, make mistakes, and grow would provide an ideal environment for encouraging student growth. Providing guidance for all parties to understand their role in students' academic lives only serves to bolster that opportunity for development.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data generated via surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews led to findings directly related to the study research question but also led to ideas which inspire further exploration. Additionally, this study's findings are inherently limited in scope as they are

applicable to the lived experiences of selected participants at a single site. The following section reviews these ideas and limitations and explores areas of further research.

Faculty Members' Roles as Parents

Nearly all participants commented on their own parenting role when participating in their individual interviews. Interestingly, while it was an explicit question on the initial demographic survey, nearly all participants raised their own parenting role naturally in the interview, without prompting. Participants who do not have children shared that their perspectives may be different if they were parents themselves. Parents with children who had or were attending college shared how their perspectives on parental involvement were shaped by their own experiences parenting college students and how their perspectives on direct involvement with their children's institutions were shaped by interactions with their students' parents. Parents of young children shared how they envisioned supporting their children's autonomy and development as a result of what they learned from observing their students and how their parents helped or hurt their development.

When reviewing extant literature, I found no studies examining the relationship between a faculty member's role as parent (or not) and a faculty member's roles as educator. Because the issue arose so naturally across the participants in this study and seemed to help shape the perspectives of each study participant, this seems to be an area ready for further exploration. A future study examining the roles of faculty members as parents and how those roles relate to their perceptions of students' parental involvement could provide further context for the phenomenon of parental involvement in students' academic lives.

Parental Involvement and Academic Success

As noted earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 2, there does not appear to be a clear connection between parental involvement and poor academic performance. Although it seems clear both in this study and in the extant literature that parental support is positively associated with academic success, it is unclear if parental involvement, particularly overinvolvement, is negatively associated with academic success. Exploring this more fully, either through additional qualitative research or by examining quantitative measures of student achievement in relation to inventories of parental involvement could help to shed additional light on this question.

Expanded Contexts

This study examined the lived experiences of selected faculty members at a private, baccalaureate institution. The study site was selected because of the close relationships between students and faculty and the ready access parents have to the campus community. Additionally, the student population of largely traditional-aged undergraduate students aligns with the age of emerging adulthood. A similar study could produce very different results at another site.

For example, extant literature shows us that parental involvement and its effects vary across subpopulations. Thus, expanding the study to historically Black colleges and universities or Hispanic-serving universities could produce very different results than those at this predominately White institution. Alternatively, the access parents have to faculty at a large research university could be significantly less than this study site, just as the relationship between faculty and students at a large research university could lead to less fully shaped perceptions of indirect parental involvement.

The context for situating parental involvement in student experiences, as well as the relationship between assumptions and actual experiences would be better understood by

replicating this study in a variety of institutional contexts. Ultimately, this would provide a richer understanding of the phenomenon of parental involvement in students' academic lives and fuller understanding of faculty members' lived experiences of that phenomenon.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to better understand the perceptions of faculty members on parental involvement in students' academic experiences and the relationship between parental involvement in student development and academic achievement through the single, broad research question *How do faculty members experience and understand parental involvement in their students' academic lives?* Asking study participants to reflect on their experiences of direct and indirect parental involvement and their observations of student development and academic success as related to parental involvement generated a rich set of data. Interpreting these data through the framework of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) was appropriate for the student population of Baccalaureate College. Further interpretation through the lens of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development theory, with particular focus on the third vector highlighting interpersonal independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence, provided the structure for which to understand how participants' lived experiences applied to student development.

The findings showed experienced parental involvement both directly and indirectly and at various rates of frequency, in various contexts and formats, and various levels of student awareness. Participants perceived parents' motivations for outreach and the overall experiences across a wide spectrum, including positively, negatively, and a combination of both. Participants expressed empathy towards parents, and they did not have a unified sense of Baccalaureate College's expectations for their contact with parents.

Supporting existing studies (e.g., LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Lopez Turley et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2015; Rousseau & Scharf, 2015; van Ingen et al., 2015) and providing context for that prior research, nearly all participants perceived that overinvolvement by parents, both direct and indirect, was negatively related to student development. They perceived college as a time where students should be able to safely explore ideas and experiences and to make mistakes, which supports Baxter Magolda's (2001) concept of The Crossroads, a time when students begin listening to their own voice instead of external voices. Additionally, participants perceived supportive and engaged parents—parents who encourage but do not intervene—acting as Good Company in the journey through self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

With the understanding that participants shared a wide range of experiences related to parental involvement yet did not have a unified understanding of Baccalaureate College's expectations for parent-faculty contact, a recommendation developed from this study is for institutions to establish guiding principles for parent-faculty engagement and to provide training to both populations. These steps would help to level expectations across all parties, while encouraging the development appropriate for emerging adults.

Considering the generated data within the context of the research question, theoretical framework, and existing research allowed for this rich interpretation and a better understanding of the phenomenon of parental involvement in students' academic lives, yet it also leads to recommendations for future research. The relationship of participants' roles as (or not as) parents and their perceptions of parental involvement arose naturally throughout data generation. Although, it was not the focus of this study, this phenomenon seems ripe for further exploration. Additionally, while the findings supported extant research which suggests that parental support, not intervention, encourages academic success (Cutrona et al., 1994; Kiyama et al., 2015; Shoup

et al., 2009), additional research is needed exploring the connection between parental involvement and poor academic performance. Finally, because this study was limited in scope, expanding the research across institution-types would lead to a richer understanding of the phenomenon.

This study helps to provide context for a phenomenon that both the general media and scholarly research tell us exists and provides direction for both parents and institutions to consider how best to support students. By learning the experiences of these selected faculty members, researchers and practitioners gain a better understanding of parents' roles in student development as perceived by individuals who regularly engage with students and recognize their role in supporting student growth. Overall, this study contributes to the existing scholarship on parental involvement in students' academic lives.

APPENDIX A

Researcher as Instrument

(completed May 2019)

The purpose of this study is to understand how selected faculty members experience and understand parental involvement in their students' academic lives. As addressed in Chapter 3, it is important to recognize the role of the researcher in qualitative research and acknowledge any biases that may affect the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This type of reflection is an essential step in ensuring trustworthiness, and thus rigor, in this study's design and implementation (Shenton, 2004). Thus, it is critical that I state my own experiences with the research topic, and acknowledge my beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and hopes about the research topic and study.

Five key experiences have and will continue to play a role in how I approach this study and how I make meaning of the phenomenon of parental involvement. First, I am familiar with the institution at which this study will be conducted. Second, as an academic administrator I have had many interactions with the parents of my students. Additionally, I am a parent of two school-aged children, and I have experiences being parented. Lastly, I have prior research experience on the topic of parental involvement with college students. I will examine each of these experiences as related to this study, then will address my beliefs, expectations, and hopes.

Personal Experiences

In this section I will detail how my personal experiences relate to the research study. I will review my familiarity with the study site, as well as my roles as academic administrator, parent, and child. Finally, I will review my prior experiences and familiarity with the study topic.

Institutional Familiarity

I wish to acknowledge from the outset that I am familiar with the institution at which my study will take place, and I will likely know personally each of the faculty members who will serve as participants in this study. While I believe that this will allow for more frank and revelatory interview conversations, it is important to consider that the personal relationships may influence the findings. I will need to recognize how my personal understanding of each participant may influence my interpretation of the data and will need to trust my debriefer as my analysis is examined.

It will be essential to frame myself as researcher in each interaction with the participants. I will begin each interaction with a reminder of my role in our interaction and will refrain from employing assumed knowledge or insider-information. This may require asking participants to elaborate on situations or information about which they will assume I am already aware. It is my hope that reinforcement of my role as researcher will also mitigate any perceived power differential and ensure that I and my participants are on equal footing.

Role As Administrator

My work as a higher education professional allows me to regularly engage with both parents and students. Some of those interactions are positive and some are negative, and it will be incumbent upon me to be mindful of the preconceptions I may have developed. Throughout the study, I should remain open to new or surprising findings, and my own experiences should not color the experiences of the faculty participants.

Because of my role as an academic affairs administrator, I have experiences with parents intervening on behalf of their students, students relying on parental intervention, and the opportunities students have to advocate for themselves. In a recent example, a parent reached out

to me to schedule an appointment to discuss his son's academic status. He sought to learn more about academic sanctions that may be applied if his son earned poor grades during the semester, and he wanted the conversation to be between me, him, and his wife. He was concerned that the information would create unnecessary anxiety for his son and wanted to exclude him from the conversation. I encouraged the son's participation, and the son did join our meeting. Ultimately, the son was the primary participant in our meeting, asking questions, providing information, and demonstrating a solid understanding of his circumstances. This meeting represents an example of a parent choosing to intervene on behalf of a student, the student being willing to have the parent do so, and the student ultimately being capable of self-advocacy. I have many such interactions, and I will be mindful of not assuming that faculty members are having the same interactions or understanding those interactions the same way I do.

In my role as an academic affairs administrator, I have primary responsibility for interpreting and enforcing privacy regulations, such as FERPA. As such, I am intimately familiar with the regulations and have a well-developed understanding of how parents may engage with their students' institution. I provide training across campus related to privacy regulations, and I am regularly consulted as a resource when faculty and staff receive direct contact from parents.

My experiences as an academic affairs administrator have also offered me exposure to the types of interactions faculty members have had with parents. One faculty member has relayed stories about a parent who found the faculty member's cell phone number on her son's syllabus and proceeded to call the faculty member periodically – including once on New Year's Eve – attempting to discuss her son's performance in the course. Yet, other faculty members have reached out to verify that a student has granted authorization to discuss information with a parent because the faculty member believes that working with the parent to reach the student is

the best way to facilitate student success. Through my conversations with faculty members, I have learned that no two instructors have the same experiences and attitudes when it comes to parental involvement. Again, it will be incumbent upon me as a researcher to be open to all types of responses, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants.

Role As Parent

In addition to my professional experiences, I am a parent. My husband and I are raising two sons, who are currently ages eight and 12. As they progress through the school system, I am learning all of the ways that parents and students are encouraged to participate and are conditioned for involvement. Information about my children is readily available. My third-grader's teacher uses Class Dojo, which is an app that allows teachers to assign points for daily class behavior and to remove points when students do not stay on task. As parents, my husband and I have the ability to log in and view the daily point totals. Additionally, the teacher can use Class Dojo to share photographs of class activities. This teacher updates the point totals daily and posts photos only during special events, such as field trips.

Our school district provides parent portal access to each of my children's academic records through PowerSchool. While the third-grader's record is updated sporadically, the information for my sixth-grader is updated daily. I have constant access to missing assignments and daily grades. The urge to check the portal daily is strong, even as my professional and research experiences suggest that moderation is a better approach. Additionally, the middle school uses the learning management system, Schoology, for students to track information, notes, and assignments for each class. Parents have access to Schoology, where they can view all course materials, pending assignments, and missing work.

My husband and I have to make choices about how frequently to check the information and what to do with the information once we know. For now, I am the parent who accesses Class Dojo, PowerSchool, and Schoology. We did not believe it would be useful for us to both regularly access this information. I rarely check Class Dojo, typically logging on only when I receive an alert that a photo has been posted, and I almost never log onto Schoology. I do, however, check PowerSchool much more frequently. As an individual who likes being in the know, I find it difficult to resist the temptation of information. At the same time, I do little with the information I learn. I do not bring up my sons' grades with them, and I only discuss what I have seen on PowerSchool if they initiate the discussion about their performance. While my husband and I do ask our children about what they are learning, what they find challenging, and how they feel about their schoolwork, we prefer to let them drive the conversation about performance and accountability. We also rarely contact the school or teachers on behalf of our children and do so only when a safety or behavioral issue is of concern. We encourage our children to manage all communication with their teachers about assignments, expectations, and grades.

Knowing that there are parents in my sons' classes that will check all information sources daily, that will regularly email the teacher, and that help their children with their homework until it is correct causes me to question whether or not I am supporting my children as effectively as I could. I am grappling with these questions of appropriate support as the parent of a third-grader and a sixth-grader. The parents and students of college students have been grappling with these questions for much longer. I will need to be mindful of my own anxieties about the choices I make for my children and the sensitivity I am developing for the conditioning these students and parents.

Role As Child

Of course, I have experience as a child who was parented as well. My parents fostered a sense of independence in my sister and I, and they encouraged us to take care of many things on our own. My parents also divorced when I was 10, and my mother, with whom we lived, worked full-time while attending school. Although she was a tremendous role model and available to us when we needed her, she was simply not available enough to intervene on our behalf. We saw my father frequently, but he was removed enough from our daily lives that he also encouraged our independence. I know that my own parenting choices and my perceptions of appropriate parenting are greatly influenced by their example.

Particularly relevant to the phenomenon of parental involvement as experienced and understood by faculty members, I attended college at the institution at which my mother was employed. My mother had the opportunity to engage in my academic experience – at times I even had classes in the building across the sidewalk from where she worked. My mother, however, chose to let me drive my educational experience and resisted the temptation to engage with the college directly.

Familiarity With Research Topic

In spring 2016, I completed an independent study in which I developed an interview protocol to learn how students and parents describe their relationships and the role of parents in academic decision-making. Under my advisor's direction, I tested the questions on three parent/child pairs and evaluated how successful I was at gathering the information I sought. I had no intention of using the data, and it has since been destroyed. The exercise was intended as a structured attempt to develop effective interview questions. The parents in the three parent/child pairs were all colleagues in higher education. Their attitudes towards parenting as experienced

higher education professionals (both faculty and administrative) served as the initial spark for my interest in exploring faculty perceptions of parental involvement.

My experiences in the interview process and the perspectives I learned from the three parent/child pairs helped to shape my interests moving forward in other ways as well. That experience led me to study parent/child pairs more deeply. In a course on qualitative research design during the 2016-2017 academic year, my research partner and I studied the perceptions of both parents and students through the transition into college. We individually interviewed sets of parents and students, asked each participant to maintain a parent-child communication log for two weeks, and interviewed parents and students as parent-child pairs. We learned from the study that student participants whose parents exhibited highly involved and interventive parenting exhibited fewer signs of autonomy and interdependence than those student participants whose parents exhibited a more supportive, authoritative parenting style.

Each of these experiences shapes who I am as a researcher and how I make meaning of the data generated in this study. They will most certainly influence my interpretation of the data, as is appropriate in hermeneutical phenomenology, but acknowledging from the outset helps to ensure that I am not simply transferring my own experiences onto the experiences of my participants.

Beliefs, Expectations, and Hopes

Because of my prior experiences both personally and professionally, I have developed strong feelings about parent interactions. I believe that parents who limit their children's opportunities to learn through failure and challenge are limiting the opportunities for those children to grow into adulthood. I understand, as both an educator and a parent, the desire to prevent pain in our children. I also understand that it is the desire of every generation to provide

more for their children than was provided for them. However, I watch every year as students enter my institution having limited dealings with failure, and they collapse once they are faced with challenges. When faced with a challenge, they do not always mind following the steps to overcome it, but they expect those steps to be laid out before them.

Because I hold these beliefs so strongly, it is my natural assumption that others, including faculty members, hold these beliefs as well. However, prior experiences with faculty members suggest that this assumption may be unfounded. I will need to actively question my assumptions throughout data generation and analysis. I anticipate evaluating data that will reveal both positive and negative perceptions by faculty members about parent interactions and parent involvement in their students' lives. Similarly, I expect faculty members to describe parent interactions that I may interpret differently than the faculty member may interpret them. For example, through the course of interviews, I may learn of an interaction that I would classify as overinvolved, but the faculty member may perceive as completely appropriate or welcome.

I hope that I will remain open to questioning my beliefs and assumptions through the course of this study. I believe that by outlining my experiences, acknowledging my assumptions, and engaging in such practices as member checking and peer debriefing I am setting the foundation to remain open to anything and everything I can learn from my participants. I am passionate about the work that I do with college students, and I hope that this study will inform how I support both students and faculty members with the ultimate goal of improving the student experience. Additionally, I cannot help but think that my findings could also influence the relationship I have with my children and to their educational experiences. My greatest hope, as with any researcher, is to add to the body of knowledge in a field I care deeply about.

APPENDIX B

Initial Email Seeking Participants

Subject Line: Seeking Participants for Dissertation Research

Dear [Participant],

I am seeking faculty members who have had at least one interaction with the parent of a student (in person, via email, via phone, etc.) to participate in a study to better understand the perceptions of faculty members about parental involvement in students' academic experiences. This study is my dissertation research in service to the completion of my doctoral work in the William and Mary School of Education.

Prior to selecting participants, I will ask volunteers to complete a brief demographic survey. I am looking to find a wide variety of participants who are as representative of the faculty as possible. Submitting your interest does not guarantee that you will be selected to participate in this study.

If selected for the study, participants will be asked to complete a short survey of three open-ended questions, participate in one interview lasting between one and one- and one-half hours, and participate in one approximately hour-long focus group meeting with fellow participants.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond to this email expressing possible interest. Recall that each participant must have had at least one interaction with the parent of a student (in person, via email, via phone, etc.), so when responding please verify that you have had such an interaction. Once you have expressed possible interest in participating, I will follow up with additional information about the study and the survey of demographic information.

Sincerely,

Alana R. Davis

APPENDIX C

Follow-Up Email to Volunteers

Subject Line: Participating in Dissertation Research

Dear [Participant],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study. I will ask you to complete a brief demographic survey. I am looking to find a wide variety of participants who are as representative of the faculty as possible, and I will use the demographic data collected through this survey to select participants. In the case that I receive more responses than needed for the study, you may not be selected to participate in this study.

If selected, you will be asked to complete a survey containing three open-ended, short-response questions. You will then be asked to participate in an interview of between one and one- and one-half hours in length. Once all participants have been interviewed, I will that you participate in a focus group conversation of approximately one hour in length with fellow participants.

I have attached here an explanation of my study, my expectations of you as participant, and a copy of the consent form. You will be asked to complete and submit the consent form if selected as a participant. At all stages of the study your information will remain confidential, and I will communicate with you throughout to verify my interpretations of your responses. I also wish to remind you that this research is in service to the completion of my doctoral work and is unaffiliated with my relationship to the college.

The survey can be found here [insert Qualtrics link]. Please complete the survey by [date to be determined once study is approved by EDIRC].

Thank you,

Alana R. Davis

APPENDIX D

Text for Demographic Survey

-- QUESTION 1 --
What is your name?

-- QUESTION 2 --
What is your gender?

-- QUESTION 3 --
What is your race/ethnicity?

-- QUESTION 4 --
What is your age?

-- QUESTION 5 --
In which department do you teach?

-- QUESTION 6 --
In which area is your academic discipline? (Select one)

- Humanities
- Social Sciences
- Natural and Mathematical Sciences

-- QUESTION 7 --
How many years have you been teaching?

-- QUESTION 8 --
How many years have you been teaching at your current institution?

-- QUESTION 9 --
Are you, or have you been, the parent of a college-going child?

APPENDIX E

Email to Participants

Subject Line: Selected as Participant for Dissertation Research

Dear [Participant],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study. You have been selected as a participant. As a reminder, you will be asked to complete a survey containing three open-ended, short-response questions. You will then be asked to participate in an interview of between one and one- and one-half hours in length. Once all participants have been interviewed, I will request that you participate in a focus group conversation of approximately one hour in length with fellow participants.

I would like to schedule your initial interview between [two-week time period to be determined upon approval by EDIRC and ability to begin data generation], if possible. Please respond with your availability for the initial interview.

I request that you complete and submit the survey at least 24 hours prior to our scheduled interview. The survey can be found here [insert Qualtrics link]. The first page will be the study consent form, which you will need to complete before continuing with the study, then the survey will commence.

Thank you,

Alana

APPENDIX F

Text for Participant Survey

-- QUESTION 1 --
Would you please describe the one or two most memorable experiences you have had with the parents of your students?

-- QUESTION 2 --
Would you please describe what about this experience made it memorable for you?

-- QUESTION 3 –
Would you please describe what, if anything, this experience suggests about your perceptions of parental involvement in the academic lives of your students? This response may be brief. A bulleted list of initial ideas is sufficient.

APPENDIX G

Interview Guide

1) Ask the participant follow-up questions pertaining to the experience described in the initial survey.
2) Would you please describe your general experiences interacting with the parents of your students?
    a. How did the parent contact you?
    b. Were there multiple interactions with the parent(s)?
3) Would you please describe your feelings of preparation for these interactions?
    a. How, if at all, were these feelings informed by prior parental interactions?
    b. How, if at all, did these feelings change over time?
4) Would you please describe your comfort level interacting with students' parents?
5) Would you please describe how you believe your experience(s) with parental involvement relate to your role as a faculty member?
6) Would you please describe the ways in which your students talk about their parents with regard to their academic experiences?
7) Would you please describe your general perceptions of the types of parents or parent-child relationships that inform parental involvement?
8) Would you please describe what you believe motivates parents to be involved?
9) Would you please describe how you believe parental involvement relates to your students' decision-making, self-efficacy, and confidence?
10) Would you please describe how you believe parental involvement relates to academic performance and outcomes?

11) Ask if relevant based on demographic survey response.

    a. Would you please describe how, if at all, you interacted with faculty members as the parent of a college-going child?

    b. Would you please describe how, if at all, has your role as a parent influenced how you perceive parental involvement in your role as a faculty member?

APPENDIX H

Focus Group Guide

Introduction

- Study explanation
- Purpose of the focus group
    - Update responses
    - Revisit some questions
    - Explore themes that have surfaced
- Reminder that I am not administrator. No right or wrong answer.

Questions

1. It has been approximately a year since the individual interviews took place. In the intervening year, have there been any new parent interactions or examples of parental involvement that you would like to share?

2. As all students shifted home last spring and many stayed there through the fall, how, if at all, have you perceived changes in the roles parents or families have played in students' academic experiences?

3. Please explain your understanding of FERPA.

4. Please explain your understanding of Baccalaureate College's policy and approach to faculty-parent engagement.

5. When reviewing the initial interviews, it became clear that some disciplines receive parent outreach about academic content, while others do not. For example, a couple of participants recalled accusations of indoctrination coming from parents. Another had

parental opposition to course content, which they found offensive. Other participants anticipated feedback – for example while teaching evolutionary biology or poetry with sexual content – but had not received any pushback from parents. With this in mind will you please think back through your experiences with students and/or parents and share how, if at all, you have received parental feedback (positive or negative) about the content of your courses.

6. Throughout the individual interviews, participants discussed indirect experiences with parental involvement, largely through pressure on students to declare particular majors or follow particular career paths. One participant described learning from students that their parents will check campus construction cameras or use tracking apps to track their children's locations or determine if they were attending classes. With this in mind will you please think back to the conversations you have with students and describe for me how, if at all, you believe your students may be experiencing parental involvement in their academic experiences, even if those experiences do not involve direct contact with faculty.

7. Throughout the individual interviews, a theme has arisen of faculty anticipating that all parent interactions will be negative. Can you discuss as a group your general feelings towards parent interactions.

8. I would like to revisit one of the original questions from the individual interviews. Can you please discuss as a group how, if at all, you believe parental involvement relates to students' development, particularly in the areas of decision-making, self-efficacy, and confidence? (reminder about what parental involvement can mean)

9. On a similar note, can you please discuss as a group how, if at all, you believe parental involvement relates to academic performance and outcomes?

10. How, if at all, do you believe parental involvements relates to how you do your jobs as faculty members?

11. Everyone I've interviewed for this study has experienced parental interactions which have stood out to them. These interactions have allowed faculty participants to develop defined views about parental involvement – both positive and negative.

a. The media and general chatter when parents come up on a campus fives the impression that faculty hear from parents frequently. Can you describe how frequently you hear from parents?

b. Please describe how, if at all, your perceptions of the relationship of parental involvement to student development and academic success are shaped by your experiences.

c. Please describe how, if at all, your perceptions of the relationship of parental involvement to student development and academic success are shaped by your assumptions.

APPENDIX I

Text of Email to Volunteers Not Participating in Focus Groups Providing Opportunity for Additional Response

The following text was included verbatim as a component of communications to non-focus group participants. In some cases, this was the primary content of the email. In others, it was included as a part of an existing email exchange related to member checking individual interview summaries.

I have included here a few of the questions from the focus group interviews I conducted in December 2020. Though you were not a focus group participant, I wanted to give all participants a chance to share additional information if interested. I invite you to consider these questions as a follow-up to our initial conversation. If you have time to respond and feel so inclined, you can send me responses via email or voice memo. If you aren't able to respond or aren't interested, it's also ok.

1. It has been over a year since the individual interviews took place. In the intervening time, have there been any new parent interactions or examples of parental involvement that you would like to share?
2. As all students shifted home in spring 2020 and many stayed there through the next academic year, how, if at all, have you perceived changes in the roles parents or families have played in students' academic experiences?
3. Everyone I've interviewed for this study has experienced parental interactions which have stood out to them. These interactions have allowed faculty participants to develop defined views about parental involvement – both positive and negative.
    - The media and general chatter when parents come up on a campus gives the impression that faculty hear from parents frequently. Can you describe how frequently you hear from parents?
    - Please describe how, if at all, your perceptions of the relationship of parental involvement to student development and academic success are shaped by your experiences.
    - Please describe how, if at all, your perceptions of the relationship of parental involvement to student development and academic success are shaped by your assumptions.

I remain grateful for your participation, and I look forward to hearing from you.

APPENDIX J

Research Participation Consent Form

WHAT DO I HOPE TO LEARN FROM YOU?

This investigation, entitled "**Selected Faculty Members' Perceptions of Parental Involvement in the Lives of Students at a Private, Baccalaureate Institution**," is designed to explore how you, as a faculty member, perceive the nature of parental involvement in students' college experiences.

WHY IS YOUR PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT?

Through this study, I hope to discern more about the experiences of faculty members as they observe parental involvement in their students' academic lives and as they interact with the parents of their students, as well as their experiences as they observe and facilitate the development of their students. Understanding your perceptions and experiences will help me as a researcher and as a higher education practitioner to better serve students and address the needs of faculty members. This study is being conducted for my dissertation as part of the researcher's doctoral program in the William and Mary School of Education.

TIMELINE

Data generation will occur between November 2019 and January 2020. During this time, you will be asked to complete a brief survey, participate in one individual interview lasting up to one- and one-half hours in length, and participate in one focus group meeting of approximately one hour in length. After each interview and throughout the study, I will reach out to check and correct the accuracy of my interpretations of your responses. Such outreach will be conducted via email. A summary of my findings will be provided to you at the completion of my study.

WHAT WILL I REQUEST FROM YOU?

- I will ask you to complete an initial survey. The survey will ask you to address three open-ended questions about a memorable experience you have had interacting with the parent of one of your students.

- I will ask you to participate in an individual interview, between one hour to one- and one-half hours in length, in which you will be asked questions about 1) your experiences interacting with the parents of your students, 2) your perceptions of the parents of your students, and 3) your perceptions of the role parental involvement plays in your students' development and academic success. The interview will be recorded, then transcribed by a third-party transcriber.

- I will then request that you participate in a focus group interview with fellow faculty members participating in this study. Focus groups will be comprised of approximately seven participants and conversations will be approximately one hour in length. Topics for the focus group discussion will be developed in response to the contents of the initial

interviews. The focus group discussion will be recorded, then transcribed by a third-party transcriber.

- At various times throughout the study, I will communicate with you via email to ensure that I have correctly understood and interpreted your responses. You will be encouraged to correct my interpretations as needed.

.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please know that:

- The confidentiality of your personally identifying information will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.
- Your name and other identifying information will be known only to the researcher. Neither your name nor any other personally identifying information will be used in any presentation or published work.
- The audio recordings of the individual interview and focus group interview described above will be erased after the study has been completed.
- You may refuse to answer any questions during the interviews if you so choose. You may also terminate your participation in the study at any time. (To do so, simply inform the researcher of your intention.) Neither of these actions will incur a penalty of any type.
- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.
- A summary of the results of the study will be sent to you electronically once they are complete.

HOW CAN YOU CONTACT ME?

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher, Alana Davis (ardavis01@email.wm.edu or 804-267-9496), at William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia or my supervising professor: Dr. James P. Barber (jpbarber@wm.edu or 757-221-6208).

This project was found to comply with appropriate ethical standards and was exempted from the need for formal review by the College of William and Mary Protection of Human Subjects Committee (phone 757-221-3966) on 2019-07-01 and expires on 2020-07-01.

By checking the “I agree to participate” response below, then submitting this form via Qualtrics, you will indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this study and confirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

□ I agree to participate.

□ I don’t agree to participate.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

SIGNATURES:

Participant: Date:

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