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The Effects of Parental Involvement on the College Student Transition: A Qualitative Study at a Large Midwestern University

Lauren Edelman

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lauren.edelman1@gmail.com

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by

Lauren Edelman

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Lauren Edelman, M.A.

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Adviser: Richard E. Hoover

This qualitative research studied the phenomenon of parental involvement in the college transition process and sought to understand if students perceived they were affected, relative to the development of independence and autonomy, by the amount of parental involvement they experienced during this transition. Six traditional college freshmen were interviewed and asked about their relationships with their parents, their parent's involvement during the college search, application, and transition process, and how they perceived this involvement affected their development of independence and autonomy.

This study explored the effects of parental involvement as students transitioned from high school to college. The study looked at levels and impacts of parental involvement during high school through the college application process through the students' freshman year of college. Specifically, this research explored how students perceived parental involvement influenced their abilities to transition into the college environment and develop independence and autonomy. The research added to literature in the field by investigating the impact of parental involvement on the college transition process and exploring how involvement may affect the "moving in" phase of this transition. By looking at student-parent relationships and parental involvement, student

affairs professionals can gain insight as to how to provide programs and services to support students and their parents as they transition through these developmental stages.

This study added to previous research on how students perceive parental involvement affects students' transition to college. Theories from Chickering and Reisser as well as Schlossberg were applied to help analyze the findings of the study related to how students experienced the transition from high school to college to better understand the development of independence and autonomy. Each of the six participants in this study expressed that they had parental support. Because of this support, these students were able to transition easier into college and were more comfortable taking risks, meeting new people, and experiencing a new environment.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"A new generation of overinvolved parents are flooding campus orientations,

meddling in registration and interfering with students' dealings with professors,

administrators and roommates" (Shellenbarger, 2005). This quote, from an article

published in *the Wall Street Journal*, only touches on the larger issue of parental

involvement in the college transition process. Colleges and universities have seen an

influx of parents being more involved in their student's education. Some argue that this

increased involvement is related to a cultural shift toward more involved parenting, but

soaring college tuition undoubtedly plays a role as well (Shellenbarger, 2005). With this

increase in parental involvement, student affairs professionals should be concerned with

addressing parental concerns while providing the tools and resources that students need to

navigate the transition to college successfully, and with a level of independence.

Transition into college presents students with a variety of novel challenges that

extend beyond academic demands, greater autonomy, and lower level of academic

structure that is central to life in a higher education environment. First-year students are

forced to navigate a new social setting, orient themselves to a new college environment,

attempt to become productive members of the university community, adapt to new roles

and responsibilities (e.g., managing own finances), manage the separation from friends

and family, and make career decisions. Adjusting to college has been marked as an

important step in the psychosocial development of individuals as they attempt to develop

a cohesive ego identity. Young adults are required to separate themselves from parents

and families and adjust to an environment where the direct support and influence of parents is no longer present (Crede & Niehorster, 2011).

This research project focused on the role that parents play throughout this transition process and how these students perceived that this involvement affected them. The study explored parental involvement during high school as students started the college selection and application process, attended new student orientation, registered for their first semester of classes, and started their first semester as college students. The goal of the study was to gauge the levels of parental involvement that today's college student population experience and to explore the impact that students perceive this can have on their ability to transition into college smoothly while developing independence and then autonomy.

Though existing research identified that parental involvement is more prevalent than ever in the college environment, the researcher has found very little information regarding the effect that this increased involvement had on the students themselves. The researcher was interested in the student perspective and sought to understand how these students were affected by their parents' actions, how they felt this helped or inhibited their transition to college, and whether or not a significant level of parental involvement allowed them to develop some sense of independence and then autonomy during their first semester of college. This study has the potential to fill a gap in existing research and provide student affairs professionals with useful information about the kinds of resources and programming needed to help students develop independence and autonomy.

Purpose Statement

This research studied the phenomenon of parental involvement in the college transition process and sought to understand if students perceived that they were affected, relative to the development of independence and autonomy, by the amount of parental involvement they experienced during this transition. Six traditional college freshmen were interviewed and asked about their relationships with their parents, their parents' involvement during the college search, application, and transition process, and how they perceived this involvement helped or hindered their ability to develop a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

Research Questions

The central research question for this qualitative study was: How did students perceive that parental involvement affected their ability to transition successfully into college?

> **Sub-questions.**
>
> 1. Did students perceive that parental involvement affected their college transition?
>
> 2. Did students perceive that parental involvement influenced the development of independence during their first semester of college?
>
> 3. What did developing independence mean to students in college?
>
> 4. How did a student's perceived level of independence relate to their ability to make autonomous decisions?

These research questions were addressed through a semi-structured interview protocol. Interview questions consisted of three categories, including questions about the student's relationship with his or her parents, questions encouraging a description of the parents' involvement in the student's transition from high school to college, and questions that explored ways that the student's parents supported the development of independence. In addition, students were asked what it meant to develop independence, and whether or not they felt they had become more independent since coming to college.

Qualitative Design

The researcher selected a qualitative collective case study approach for this research in order to study an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). In this study, all participants came from the bounded system of Midwestern University's College of Business Administration and were enrolled in a Learning Community. Yin (2008) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). According to Creswell (2013), a collective case study requires that one issue or concern is selected, but multiple cases are selected to help illustrate the issue. "Often the inquirer purposefully selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue" (p. 99).

The participants interviewed for this study were all within the bounded system of a large, public Midwestern University and were traditional undergraduate students enrolled in a Learning Community. In addition, all of the students were first-semester freshmen who had recently made the transition from high school into college. This study

sought to explore the relationships that these students had with their parents and the amount of parental involvement these students experienced as they made the transition. In addition, this research project explored the impact different levels of parental involvement may have had on a student's ability to develop independence and autonomy during this transition process.

The principal investigator chose to use a qualitative approach when conducting this research because she was interested in exploring the perception that students had about how their parent's involvement in the college transition process affected them once they were distanced from their parents and settled in the college environment. The researcher wanted to go beyond quantitative measures to see what was happening in terms of the current Midwestern University student and parent population, but also explore how the phenomenon of parental involvement in college was affecting students. In addition, the researcher wanted to explore "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). The researcher was interested specifically in learning how students viewed the involvement of their parents during the college transition process and the impact students felt this could have on them as individuals.

Definition of Terms

Transition—"Any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 33). Transitions only exist if defined as a transition by the person experiencing it, and changes

are not considered transitions if the individual does not attach significance to the change

occurring (Goodman et al., 2006).

Situation—The first of the 4 S's of the transition process, where trigger, timing,

control, role change, duration, previous experience with similar transitions, concurrent

stress, and assessment are considered important factors (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, &

Renn, 2010, pp. 216-217).

Self—Second of the 4 S's. "Factors considered important in relation to the self are

classified into two categories: personal and demographic characteristics and

psychological resources" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217).

Support—Third of the 4 S's. "Support is composed of three facets: types,

functions, and measurement" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217). This refers to social support,

including intimate relationships, family units, friend networks, and institutions and

communities.

Strategies—Last of the 4 S's. Coping responses fall into three categories: those

that modify the situation, control the meaning of the problem, or aid in managing the

stress in the aftermath. Individuals may also utilize coping modes, including information

seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, or intrapsychic behavior (Evans et al., 2010).

Independence—Independence is sometimes used synonymously with autonomy.

"Independence means that morally and intellectually students are not dependent on

authorities" (Holmberg, 1984, p. 3).

Autonomy—"Autonomy implies that students make their own decisions"

(Holmberg, 1984, p. 3). Developing autonomy and moving toward interdependence

results in "freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or

approval from others" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117).

First-generation student—*"*Students whose parents did not attend college"

(Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006, p. 5).

Traditional college freshman—Students who are "traditional-aged (18-19), first-

time college students" (Clark, 2005, p. 299).

Moving in—The first phase of transition as the individual explores the idea of

transition and prepares to move from preoccupation with the transition to integration of

the transition (Schlossberg, 1989)

Moving through—The phase of transition involving understanding the transition

and where one's roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions are altered (Schlossberg,

1989).

Moving out—The phase of transition where one copes with the transition, regains

a balance or equilibrium, develops action plans or strategies, reframes the interpretation

of the meaning of the situation, and reflects on the transition and begins to plan the next

steps (Evans et al., 2010; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995)

Significance

This study was designed to explore how parental involvement during the college

transition process affected students and their ability to develop a sense of independence

and autonomy during their first semester of college. As colleges and universities have

seen greater numbers of parents taking active roles in their students' college education,

this study aimed to identify the impacts that this increased involvement had on the

students experiencing the transition (Shellenbarger, 2005). While prior research explored

this phenomenon of increased parental involvement in higher education, little research

had been conducted to explore how this involvement helps or hinders the student's ability

to develop some level of independence and autonomy. A qualitative approach to this

topic allowed first-semester freshmen students to explain what they experienced during

the transition process and to explore how they have developed a sense of independence

and autonomy as a result of their transition experience and the support they received from

their parents. While colleges and universities are concerned about handling the influx of

parental involvement on college campuses, this study may offer insight on how this same

phenomenon can affect the college student population.

Assumptions

The researcher had multiple assumptions about the potential findings of this

collective case study. First, the researcher believed all six participants would indicate that

their parents were heavily involved in their college selection, application, and transition

processes. The researcher also believed that this high level of parental involvement would

inhibit students from developing independence and the ability to make autonomous

decisions. In addition, the researcher believed that she would see an inverse relationship

between the amount of parent-student communication and the level and understanding of

independence that the student demonstrated. For example, students who spoke to their

parents on the phone multiple times a week were less likely to act independently and

make decisions without the approval of authority. Finally, the researcher believed that

first-generation college students would demonstrate more independence and greater autonomy than students whose parents went to college.

Delimitations

Delimitations limit the parameters of a study based on demographic characteristics of participants (McMillan, 2008). Several delimitations were present in this study, as the research was conducted at only one large, public Midwestern University and featured only students associated with the College of Business Administration who were enrolled in a Learning Community. The institution was a predominantly white institution, with five of the six participants identifying as white students. In order to qualify to participate in this study, students had to be a traditional, undergraduate freshman who had recently transitioned from high school to college. There were no additional restrictions placed on participants for this study.

Limitations

"Because a case study focuses on a single unit, a single instance, the issue of generalizability looms larger here than with other types of qualitative research" (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). Though a case study approach was selected in order to study a phenomenon occurring with a specific population within a bounded system, certain limitations were presented by the research methodology. First, the author was the primary researcher for this study and conducted and transcribed the interviews in addition to analyzing the data. In addition, random purposeful and convenience sampling strategies were used to select individuals who had recently experienced the phenomenon in question and who were accessible to the researcher. The first five participants were

selected using these strategies by volunteering to a recruitment email sent by the primary investigator, though the final participant was recruited through the chain or snowball sampling approach, as only five students volunteered after the initial and follow-up email requests. Because these students volunteered to participate, the population studied may not be representative of the Learning Community or the greater University population.

Conclusion

As more and more parents become involved in the college transition process, this study explored how this involvement impacted students' ability to transition successfully into college and develop a sense of independence and autonomy. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature that explores the phenomenon of increased parental involvement in the higher education environment and explores different ways that colleges and universities are handling the influx of the parent population on their campuses. The literature review also provides a review of Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development, which were used to help analyze some of the research findings for this study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Purpose Statement

This research studied the phenomenon of parental involvement in the college transition process and sought to understand if students perceived that they were affected, relative to the development of independence and autonomy, by the amount of parental involvement they experienced during this transition. Six traditional college freshmen were interviewed and asked about their relationships with their parents, their parents' involvement during the college search, application, and transition process, and how they perceived this involvement helped or hindered their ability to develop a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

Introduction

Prior research has been conducted to explore the increasing phenomenon of parental involvement in the college experience. Increased levels of parental involvement in education has been attributed to a variety of factors, including:

> Rising college costs (resulting in a sense of entitlement among tuition-paying parents), increasing reliance on communication technologies (resulting in greater parent awareness of students' everyday lives), societal emphasis on parenting (resulting in a generation of parents accustomed to heavy involvement in their child's activities), and the growing number of students whose parents attended college. (Harper, Sax, & Wolf, 2012, p. 138)

These factors have helped to increase the role parents have in their children's education, encouraging them to have a more visible, active, and potentially intrusive role in their students' lives (Harper et al., 2012).

One of the most intrusive populations of parents include those who hover, otherwise known as helicopter parents. The concept of helicopter parents has been a growing concern for higher education administrators across the country. According to an article published in *The Chronicle for Higher Education* by Wendy White (2005), the term "helicopter parent" refers to a hovering parent who repeatedly attempts to intervene and manage his or her own child's life. White asserted that the influence and expectations of helicopter parents are likely to present more challenges in the social arena than in the academic one, as parents who become too involved in their student's college experience may be depriving the student of the opportunity to grow up and learn how to make decisions for themselves (White, 2005). Shellenbarger (2005) agreed that some of these hovering parents may be undermining their children's chances of success. Campus officials have indicated that they are seeing an increasing number of freshmen lacking basic skills that include negotiating for their own needs, getting along with others in a shared space, using common sense to stay safe, and problem solving skills (p. D1). In addition, "Helicopter parents are influencing the entire university from the prospecting stage before the application process, campus housing, relationships with academic advisors and faculty, and at the exit stage with career services and even on to graduate school, and beyond into employment" (Hunt, 2008, p. 10). Parental over-involvement is not just an issue that affects students, but is often a concern that overlaps into the greater university system.

In reality, this population of helicopter parents represents only a small population of college students' parents. Though this type of involvement can be damaging to

students' success in college, there is no doubt that some level of parental involvement is beneficial and even expected. The following literature addresses ways that parental involvement influences students' abilities to adjust to college, and discuss financial incentives and communication factors related to increased parental involvement. The literature will also review critical theories from Chickering and Reisser as well as Schlossberg that apply to the students' ability to develop independence and autonomy in college while navigating the transition from high school to college. Finally, the literature review will provide examples of programming institutions have put into place to handle this influx of parents on college campuses.

College Adjustment

"Parental involvement is the extent to which parents are interested in, knowledgeable about, and willing to take an active role in the day-to-day activities of their children" (Wong, 2008, p. 498). Parental autonomy support is the extent to which parents promote and facilitate independent problem solving, choice, and self-determination to their children (p. 498). The perception of increased parental involvement is affiliated with higher standardized achievement scores and better academic performance (p. 498). Similarly, the perception of greater parental autonomy support is related to higher grade point averages, active job-search behavior and career planning, and a strong vocational identity (p. 498).

Howe and Strauss (2007) asserted that today's young people and their parents experience a deeper, more involved relationship than any other youth generation in living memory. Throughout their childhood, these youth have been more inclined to trust their

parents and depend on their support and guidance than previous generations. Howe and

Strauss (2007) wrote:

> According to the Datatel 2006 College Parent Survey, parents of today's college students say they spend much more time with their kids than their own parents did with them. By a three-to-one margin, today's parents say they are more involved in helping their children succeed in college. (p. 2)

This Datatel survey clarified an important point for those working in the higher education

system: parents will remain highly involved in their children's lives, even in college and

beyond. With this level of involvement here to stay, colleges and universities should be

aware of the different ways that students can be affected by this involvement.

A quantitative meta-analysis comprised of 3,118 correlations from a total sample

size of 44,668 college students conducted by Crede and Niehorster (2011) found that

college students experience different levels of psychosocial separation from parents,

which can play a significant role in the multidimensional process of adjusting to college.

The primary goals of the meta-analysis were to summarize: (a) information on the

relationships among different types of college adjustment; (b) information on how the

different types of adjustment were related to hypothetical influences of college

adjustment; and (c) information about how different types of college adjustment were

related to grades and retention (p. 141). Adjustment to college has been identified as an

important outcome, and researchers have identified possible predictor correlates of

students' adjustment to college that include personality traits, coping styles, social

support, and student-parent relationships.

> Some researchers in this domain (e.g., Hickman and Andrews 2003; Lapsley et al. 1989; Schultheiss and Blustein 1994; Wintre and Sugar 2000) have used theories of parent–child attachment and parenting styles to identify factors that are thought

> to either hinder or promote a student's adjustment process via the development of secure and interdependent relationships between students and their parents. (Crede & Niehorster, 2011, p. 134)

According to Tinto (1993, as cited in Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011):

> Breaking from dependence on family members and authorities from the home community in determining what to do and how to be self-reliant leads to a shift from viewing the world through the context and culture of one's home community to taking on the ideas and views of the new community, the postsecondary institution. (p. 672)

The literature suggests that students adjust more to a new environment such as college after effective separation from and renegotiation of relationships with family and community, though this separation may be more difficult and less culturally appropriate for many students of color (p. 672). As a balance of home and school is critical to student success, the renegotiation of the parent-student relationship is necessary as students enter higher education (p. 672). Pizzolato and Hicklen (2011) investigated the parent-child relationship while the emerging adult was making important decisions in order to "provide some insight into the nature of the emerging adult's reliance on parents in sense-making and decision making" (p. 674). This analysis of the college student's decision-making process also sought to understand how students incorporated parents into the process and shed light on the relationship between child-initiated parental involvement and epistemological development. This study was part of a larger study investigating decision making and personal epistemologies of college students. Participants in the study completed a demographic questionnaire as well as the Experience Survey, which asked participants to describe a decision they had made that they considered to be important. Findings from the study indicated that while almost half of the students

studied involved their parents when making important decisions, the large amount of parental involvement came with two important caveats. First, despite how parental involvement has been portrayed as helicopter parenting, where parents hover over their children to protect them from loss or failure, most parental involvement in this study was initiated by the students. Second, although almost half of the students involved their parents in the decision-making process, only 15.1% involved their parents on multiple occasions. The researchers indicated that some involvement of parents, even for half of the participants, was unsurprising as "research suggests that when college students face new situations or highly emotional situations, they may revert to comfortable reasoning patterns they have successfully used in problem solving in the past" (Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011, p. 678). The researchers also asserted that because college students are still in the process of separating from parents and are also making decisions about relationships, academics, career choices, and choices about adopting the values with which they were raised, some parental involvement should be expected.

Mattanah, Lopez, and Govern (2011) reported findings from a meta-analysis of 156 studies conducted between 1987 and 2009 that examined the relationship between parental attachment and multiple adjustment outcomes and developmental advances that students experienced during college years. Mattanah et al. (2011) wrote that the pursuit of a college degree marks the beginning of a critical developmental period as students experience life away from home and increased legal and social freedoms along with diminished parental oversight and supervision. These developmental pressures during college can invite a variety of demands, distractions, temptations, and possibilities, all of

which may test college students' capacities for self-reflection, building relationships, cultural tolerance, and adaptive life planning and decision making. Each of these opportunities may also cause a student significant stress. However, if parental relationships remain a priority and are looked at as a valued resource, a student "would continue to seek them out in situations of stress and would view them as still available as a source of support when needed in a way that does not threaten but supports the development of autonomy" (Kenny, 1987, pp. 18–19, as cited in Mattanah et al., 2011, p. 568). Overall, authors found support for the idea that parental attachment was linked to a broad range of college adjustment outcomes. Specifically, the security of parental attachment in adolescence was predictive of better adjustment, both in relationships with others and in feelings about the self, which allowed for a decrease in stress levels and the likelihood that the individual will engage in high-risk or destructive behaviors (Mattanah et al., 2011). The authors also found that attachment security was more likely to encourage healthy adjustment among students who leave home during the college years as opposed to students who live at home during college (p. 568).

Shoup, Gonyea, and Kuh (2009) also found positive outcomes to parent-student relationships and parental involvement in education. Shoup et al. (2009) used data from the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement to assess the frequency and quality of students' interactions with their parents while in college. The sample for this study consisted of 4,532 first-year students and 4,652 seniors from 24 different institutions who participated in the NSSE in 2007. Despite the stigma that over-involved parents can diminish a student's ability to be successful in college, the study found that students with

highly involved parents often experienced higher levels of engagement, reported educational gains, and satisfaction among others. While the study did identify positive outcomes for students with involved parents, the authors also identified some critical questions that need to be expanded upon further in order to paint a clearer picture of how parental involvement can influence student success in college. These critical questions included: (a) What types of interventions are problematic; (b) Do students with intervening parents receive special treatment; and (c) Is there a tipping point where a level of familial involvement will negatively affect development and learning (Shoup et al., 2009).

From a student perspective, most college students are not overly concerned by the level of involvement they have with their parents (Wartman & Savage, 2008). According to data released by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, most college students perceive that their parents' involvement is just right. In addition, many of the conversations that students have with their parents are related to topics about which parents should possibly have some input, such as finances, health, and well-being. The topics of conversation often change as students progress through college. Parents of freshmen and sophomores report that their students are most frequently turning to them for advice and guidance on issues related to health, safety issues, and academics. Parents of college juniors get the most questions related to finances, while senior parents are asked most frequently questioned about career goals and planning (Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Financial Interest and Communication

The literature attributes several factors to the increase of parental involvement on college campuses over the last five years, primarily related to rising costs of higher education and increased communication between parents and students. The parents of today's college students grew up in a period of major social change, and the lifestyles they were once accustomed to have since evolved. This generation of parents has taken elements of their own parent's parenting styles, such as an emphasis on education, independence and discipline, and embraced more of a co-parenting strategy instead of the authoritarian approach that they experienced as children (Carroll, 2005, as cited in Hunt, 2008). Parents today see themselves responsible for coaching their children to make better choices. Parents also admit that they may attribute their own self-worth to the success that their child experiences (Hunt, 2008). In addition, many of these parents have a financial stake in the success and well-being of their students. Parents see the college or university as a product they are paying for, and they are consumers. They want to know their investment is protected and will be as involved as necessary to ensure their student is getting the resources, services, and treatment that they need to be successful (Shellenbarger, 2005).

Beyond financial interests, parents are more connected than ever to their students' college experience because of the technology available to them. Today's college students are in constant communication with their parents via cellphone, text messages, e-mail, and social networking (White, 2005). Communication is a driving force in our society and is showing no signs of slowing down (Hunt, 2008). Even from a distance, it is easy

for parents to hover over their children. A research study consisting of 211 students from

general psychology classes conducted by Gentzler, Oberhauser, Westerman, and Nadorff

(2011) required participants to complete an online survey that had student describe

communication patterns with best friends, romantic partners, and close family members.

Specifically, this study examined how college students' use of technology to

communicate with their parents is associated with the quality of their parental

relationships and attachment (p. 71). Prior research has indicated that adolescents who are

more anxiously attached to their parents have more contact with parents once away to

college than students who are less attached. Some findings have suggested that too much

attachment or closeness with parental units could signify problems with the student's

ability to develop autonomy and identity formation (p. 71).

The fact that today's college student population has never experienced life

without the perks of the latest technology could have an impact on how students are able

to adapt and handle the transition to college and the demands of higher education.

Stephen P. Seaward, director of career development for Saint Joseph College in West

Hartford, Conn. believes that this exposure to technology triggers a need for instant

gratification, which can foster "unrealistic expectations with respect to goal-setting and

planning" (Tyler, 2007, para. 8). This, in combination with extreme parental influence,

can inhibit students' abilities to solve problems and engage in the decision-making

process.

In addition, students who are communicating regularly with individuals whom

they consider to be close typically reveal lower levels of loneliness. Studies also indicated

that students who are communicating through less direct channels, such as email or social media, may experience greater feelings of loneliness than students who experience regular face-to-face or more direct forms of communication (Gentzler et al., 2011). This concept emphasizes the importance of some student-parent connection and regular communication. However, it is a fine line between regular communication and concern and crossing over into a realm where an overinvolved parent is no longer allowing the student to make his or her own decisions and experience real-life consequences.

Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development

Chickering and Reisser's revised Theory of Identity Development is related to this research study, as the researcher sought to explore how parental involvement influenced students' development of independence and autonomy through the transition from high school to college and during the first semester. Arthur Chickering (1969) developed a theory of psychosocial development that provided an overview of the developmental issues that college students face. "Chickering saw the establishment of identity as the core developmental issue with which students grapple during their college years" (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 65). The establishment of identity allows individuals to successfully navigate issues that may arise later on in the developmental process.

Chickering's theory is based on research conducted between 1959 and 1965 while he was employed at Goddard College (Thomas & Chickering, 1984, as cited in Evans et al., 2010). "Chickering (1969) proposed seven vectors of development that contribute to the formation of identity" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 66). These vectors represent movement

in a direction, though the direction may be expressed by spiral steps rather than a straight line, helping students journey toward a sense of individuation. Students may deal with issues from multiple vectors at one time and move through them at different rates. Though the vectors are not designed to be sequential, they do build on each other and take into account emotional, interpersonal, ethical, and intellectual aspects of development (Evans et al., 2010).

The first of the seven vectors involves developing competence, requiring the acquisition of knowledge and skills, development of intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic sophistication, and increased critical thinking and ability to reason (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The second vector, managing emotions, involves students developing the ability to recognize and accept emotions, as well as ways to appropriately express and control them (p. 83). The third of Chickering's vectors, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, is of particular relevance to this research study, as it explores an increase in emotional dependence, defined as "freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117).

Developing mature interpersonal relationships, the fourth vector, requires the development of intercultural and interpersonal tolerance, appreciation for differences, and the capacity to maintain healthy and lasting intimate relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The fifth vector, establishing identity, builds on previous vectors and includes developing comfort with body and appearance, sexual orientation and gender, cultural and social heritage and an overall comfort with one's roles and lifestyle (p. 173). The

sixth vector, developing purpose, involves making clear vocational goals, making

commitments, and subscribing to goal-setting and decision-making processes (p. 209).

Finally, the seventh vector involves three overlapping stages, including humanizing

values, personalizing values, and the development of congruence (p. 51).

Though all seven vectors are key in the developmental process and the formation

of identity for college students, the third vector, moving through autonomy toward

interdependence, is particularly applicable to this research project and was used to help

identify whether or not students were developing or moving through autonomy as they

transitioned into college.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Because this research study explored how parental involvement affects students'

transitions to college and their ability to develop independence and autonomy,

Schlossberg's transition theory is particularly relevant. This theory provides insights into

the factors related to the individual, the transition, and the environment that determine the

degree of impact a transition will have at a given time (Schlossberg, 2005). This theory is

psychosocial in nature and asserts that transitions provide opportunities for growth and

development, though one cannot assume a positive outcome will always occur.

According to Evans et al. (2010):

> Schlossberg asserted that adaptation was affected by the interaction of three sets of variables: the individual's perception of the transition, characteristics of the pretransition and posttransition environments, and characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition. The perceptions, environmental characteristics, and personal characteristics could each include some components that might be considered assets, liabilities, a mix of the two, or neutral in regard to influence on the ability to cope with a particular transition. (p. 213)

Schlossberg's transition theory includes exploring what a transition is, the different forms

of transitions, the process of transitioning, and factors that influence transitions

(Schlossberg, 2005). Goodman et al. (2006) defined transition as "any event, or

non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 33).

In order for a transition to be recognized as such, it must be perceived as a transition by

the individual experiencing it and awarded some significance (p. 33). Goodman et al.

(2006) also noted that type, context, and impact of a transition should all be considered in

order to properly understand the meaning that a transition may have for an individual.

Transitions may be precipitated by a single event or nonevent, but managing a

transition is a process that takes place over time (Schlossberg, 2005). While the transition

process may lead to growth, it is also possible for a decline or regression to occur.

Goodman et al. (2006) identified the concept of transitions as consisting of multiple

phases, including "moving in," "moving through," and "moving out."

Goodman et al. (2006) also identified four key factors that influence one's ability

to cope with a transition, including situation, self, support, and strategies. These factors

are known as the 4 S's. The 4 S's provide a framework for individuals to appraise how

they are coping with the transition and what resources are aiding them in this process.

Specifically, one's ability to adapt to a transition depends on the comparison of assets to

liabilities (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Assets and liabilities consist of the resources one has

available for each of the 4S's mentioned above. For this study, examples of assets related

to situation included the fact that the transition was anticipated, the transition was

considered "on time" and socially accepted, the transition was fairly structured in terms

of the process laid out by the university, and the role change required was likely viewed

as a gain rather than a loss. Liabilities for situation may have included the duration, as the

transition signified a permanent move toward independence, the fact that the student

likely had no prior experience with a similar transition, and the fact that multiple sources

of stress were present (Evans et al, 2010). "No matter where one is in the transition

process, no matter what the transition is, one deals with it differently depending on these

4 S's" (Schlossberg, 2005, p. 27).

Situation. Individuals perceive the situations surrounding their transitions

differently (Schlossberg, 2008). In examining one's situation, the following factors

should be considered: trigger, timing, control, role change, duration, previous experience

with similar transitions, concurrent stress, and assessment (see Table 1).

Self. Important factors in relation to the self include both personal and

demographic characteristics as well as psychological resources. Personal and

demographic characteristics affect how an individual views life. Psychological resources

are aids to coping and include ego development; outlook such as optimism or

self-efficacy; commitment and values; and spirituality and resiliency (Evans et al., 2010).

Support. Support in this model refers to social support and is composed of types,

functions, and measurement (Goodman et al., 2006). There are four types of support:

intimate relationships, family units, friend networks, and institutions and communities.

"Support systems help individuals mobilize their resources by sharing tasks, 'providing

extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills,' and giving guidance about way to

Table 1

The 4 S's: Situation

Factor	Description
Trigger	What caused the transition?
Timing	Is the transition "on time" or "off time?" Happening at a "good" or "bad" time?
Control	What does the individual perceive as being within his/her control? (i.e. the transition itself, his/her reaction?)
Role Change	Is a role change involved? Is it a gain or a loss?
Duration	Is the change permanent, temporary, or uncertain?
Previous Experience with Similar Transitions	How effectively did one cope? What are implications for the current transition?
Concurrent Stress	Are there multiple sources of stress?
Assessment	Who or what is responsible for the transition? How is the individual's behavior affected by this perception?

Source: Evans et al. (2010, pp. 216-217)

improve coping" (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 64). Functions of support include affect, affirmation, aid, and feedback. Support can be measured by identifying one's stable supports, supports that are somewhat role dependent, and supports that are likely to change (Evans et al., 2010).

Strategies. Three primary strategies used for coping with transition include modifying the situation, controlling the meaning of the problem, and aiding in managing the stress in the aftermath. Individuals may also employ four coping modes, including information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, and intrapsychic behavior.

Goodman et al. (2006) stressed that "individuals who cope effectively demonstrate flexibility and use multiple methods" (p. 217).

Schlossberg's transition theory describes the transition process and key factors that contribute to one's ability to cope with a transition. This model was used to help explore how parental involvement in the college transition process may affect first-semester college students' ability to develop independence and autonomy.

Educational Institutions Take Action

While most public school educators and administrators acknowledge that they want parents to be involved in their students' education, the same educators are also telling parents that they want their students to take responsibility and ownership of their education, academic performance, and the decisions they make. The underlying message to parents is that being involved means "being supportive of the consequences that schools assign for misbehavior or academic struggles" (Carter & Healey, 2012, p. 9). In an effort to change this perception, and with increased levels of parental involvement in all levels of education, many K-12 school districts have implemented programs specifically designed to include and educate parents on appropriate involvement and how parents can aid in their students' success (Carter & Healey, 2012). The authors host an orientation program every spring at one Colorado high school and one high school in Virginia. This orientation program is designed to teach parents how to support their students so they can achieve success in high school. As part of the program, the authors handed out a publication called "10 Simple Suggestions for a Successful Transition to High School" (Carter & Healey, 2012, p. 10). Parents are constantly grateful for the

hand-out, expressing profuse thanks and asking insightful questions. This reaction

indicates that educators often expect parents to act a certain way and get frustrated when

their behavior is not considered to be helpful. In reality, some level of professional

development is critical in offering parents advice for putting plans and protocols into

place at home in order to help set the stage for academic success prior to their students'

starting high school (Carter & Healey, 2012).

These professional development programs for parents emphasize six key steps to

put their children on track for academic success in high school and beyond. First,

educators express the importance of making a plan, visualizing where the student wants

to be after high school. The second step is to get organized and identify an appropriate

balance between academics, social, and co-curricular demands. Third, parents are

encouraged to form positive school relationships. Fourth, educators emphasize the

importance of student involvement and parent involvement, and how having both can

ensure that a student will not "get lost in the shuffle of high school life" (Carter &

Healey, 2012, p. 13). The fifth step stresses the importance of parental supervision.

Finally, educators encourage parents to monitor their students' progress related to

academics, attendance, and social progress while allowing the teenagers to take

ownership of their own academic progress (Carter & Healey, 2012).

With the obvious parental presence in all aspects of the educational environment,

many colleges and universities are also taking intentional steps to work more

collaboratively with parents to create a better understanding of the collegiate environment

and build connections that support student success (Cutright, 2008). An article by Marc

Cutright (2008) published in *New Directions for Higher Education* outlined five key

elements that institutions should work on to allow parents to be involved in the higher

education process in a way that does not hinder student success. First, Cutright

emphasized the importance of college and universities creating partnerships with parents

(p. 43). Fostering intentional relationships can offset the potential adversarial

relationships that can emerge without an effort to shape interactions and inform and

include parents. According to Cutright (2008):

> Family relationships involve deep emotional connections, rights to speak and be
> considered in decisions, an evolving maturity and focus based on time, and
> commitments to stick with one another through thick and thin. For most
> institutions, that kind of relationship with parents, although fairly "high
> maintenance," is more productive than the contractual, consumerist one that it
> displaces. (p. 43)

The second way for institutions to promote parental involvement was through

orientation programming. Many institutions now have orientation programming for

parents that parallels the sessions that students experience (Mullendore & Banahan,

2005). Content often included information on student expectations, an overview of the

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the college social environment,

and ways that parents can help support their students as they make the transition into

college (Cutright, 2008). Next, Cutright (2008) suggested supplying parents with

handbooks and other print materials that students receive in an effort to provide parents

with key information and important dates. Very detailed communication can be

effectively communicated through a handbook rather than in an uncontrolled

environment where there is the potential for parents to receive conflicting information

(p. 44).

The fourth element of collaboration that should be instituted by colleges and universities was to establish a clear chain of communication (Cutright, 2008). Many concerns that institutions expressed regarding helicopter parents was due to inappropriate communication, or going "straight to the top" rather than following the appropriate chain of command (p. 45). While lack of information was not always to blame for this problem, providing a list of appropriate resources and contact information may help circumvent unwanted or inappropriate communications from parents to institutional administrators (p. 45). The final element of collaboration was to provide parents with adequate information about FERPA policies and regulations up front. This can help clarify under which circumstances the institution will involve parents, as well as which circumstances they are legally restricted from sharing (p. 45).

Conclusion

There seems to be a broad consensus that the institution-parent relationship is changing. This research study explored the student-parent relationships of six traditional college freshmen in order to determine the types of relationships that exist at Midwestern University, as well as the impact that these different relationships may have on a student's ability to adjust to college and to develop some level of autonomy and independence. Chapter 3 will outline the data collection process and methodology used in this study designed to help answer the central research question and sub-questions.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose Statement

This research studied the phenomenon of parental involvement in the college

student transition process and sought to understand if students perceive that they are

affected, relative to the development of independence and autonomy, by the amount of

parental involvement they experience during this transition. Six traditional college

freshmen were interviewed and asked about their relationships with their parents, their

parents' involvement during the college search, application, and transition process, and

how they perceived this involvement helped or hindered their ability to develop a greater

sense of independence and autonomy.

Research Questions

The central research question for this qualitative study was: How did students

perceive that parental involvement affected their ability to transition successfully into

college?

Sub-questions.

1. Did students perceive that parental involvement affected their college

   transition?

2. Did students perceive that parental involvement influenced the development

   of independence during their first semester of college?

3. What did developing independence mean to students in college?

4. How did a student's perceived level of independence relate to their ability to make autonomous decisions?

Research Design

This research study was a collective case study, as the participants interviewed for this study were all within the bounded system of Midwestern University and were traditional undergraduate students enrolled in a Learning Community and affiliated with the College of Business Administration. In addition, all of the students were first-semester freshmen who had recently made the transition from high school into college. This project sought to explore the relationships that these students had with their parents and the amount of parental involvement these students experienced as they made the transition. In addition, this research project explored the impact that different levels of parental involvement during this transition process had on a student's ability to develop a sense of independence and autonomy.

The principal investigator chose to use a qualitative approach when conducting this research because she was interested in exploring the perception that students had about how their parents' involvement in the college transition process affected them once they were distanced from their parents and exposed to the college environment. The researcher wanted to go beyond quantitative measures to see what was happening in terms of the current Midwestern University student and parent population, but also to explore how the phenomenon of parental involvement in college is affecting students. In addition, the researcher wanted to explore "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). The researcher was

interested specifically in learning how students viewed the involvement of their parents during the college transition process and the impact students felt that this had on them as individuals.

The researcher selected a collective case study approach for this research in order to study an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). In this study, all participants came from the bounded system of the Midwestern University College of Business Administration and were enrolled in a Learning Community. Yin (2008) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). According to Creswell (2013), a collective case study requires that one issue or concern is selected, but multiple cases are selected to help illustrate the issue. This research studied the phenomenon of parental involvement in the college transition process and sought to understand if students were affected by the amount of parental involvement they experienced during this transition.

Institutional Review Board Approval

In order to earn approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to begin this research, certification from the Consortium for IRB Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protections (CITI) was required before any research could be conducted on human subjects. Once CITI approval was obtained, the initial proposal for IRB approval was submitted on September 19, 2012. Initial revisions were requested and submitted back to IRB on September 26, 2012. Because this study required participation of Midwestern University freshmen, some of whom are under the age of majority in the

state where the University was located, the IRB passed the proposal from the Exempt category to Expedited in order to grant approval for an informed consent waiver for minors. This waiver allowed participants who were under the age of 19 to participate in the research study by signing the consent form for themselves without requiring parent or guardian signatures as well. Additional revisions were required for the expedited approval process, and were submitted to IRB on October 17, 2012. Final approval for the project was granted on October 24, 2012.

The researcher had access to the contact information for students in the Learning Community and received permission from the Director of Freshman Programs and adviser to the Business Learning Community to conduct the research with this student population. Once IRB approval was granted, the investigator sent an email requesting volunteers for the study to all members of the Learning Community associated with the College of Business Administration. Initially, three students responded to the request. A follow-up email was sent to encourage more students to participate in the study. Two more students were acquired. Due to lack of email response, the final participant was recruited through snowball sampling and was encouraged to participate by one of the other participants in the study. Each participant signed an informed consent document and completed a demographic information form prior to the interview. All participant information was kept confidential, and each participant selected a pseudonym to be used for identification purposes.

Research Site

The study was conducted at a large, public Midwestern University. The University was a 4-year research institution with a fall 2012 enrollment of 24,207 students, 19,103 of which were undergraduate students (University of Nebraska, 2012, pp. 49-50). Participants were associated with the College of Business Administration, which had total enrollment of 3,172 undergraduate students, and were recruited from the 47 freshmen students in the Learning Community (University of Nebraska, 2012, p. 52).

All interviews were conducted on campus at Midwestern University. The six participants could choose between the student union and the library for the interview location. All six students chose to be interviewed in the student union, where they were comfortable and familiar with their surroundings. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the primary researcher.

Participants

For the purposes of this study, the researcher used purposeful and convenience sampling to select individuals who recently experienced the transition from high school to college and who were accessible to the researcher. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select individuals and sites because they can provide an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013). Convenience sampling allows the researcher to select participants that can be accessed and data can be easily collected (p. 157). Six students enrolled in the Learning Community associated with the College of Business Administration at the Midwestern University were selected to participate in the semi-structured interview process.

Participants were required to be traditional, undergraduate freshmen and consisted of two
males and four females. The study featured three participants from the home state of
Midwestern University and three from out-of-state in order to get a variety of
perspectives. Students were also asked to identify whether or not they were first-
generation college students. Students were recruited to participate via a recruitment email
sent from the researcher to the Learning Community listserv and the five students to reply
to the research investigator expressing interest in the study were selected for the
interview process. The final participant was recruited by one of the other student
participants via chain sampling. Table 2 provides a demographic breakdown of the
participants.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Date of Interview	Pseudonym	Gender	Racial Background	Age	In/Out of State	First Gen
11/28/12	Tiffany	Female	White	18	Out of State	No
11/28/12	Bill	Male	White	19	In State	No
12/5/12	Jack	Male	White	18	In Sate	Yes
12/6/12	Carrie	Female	White	18	In State	No
12/10/12	Amanda	Female	Hispanic	18	Out of State	Yes
12/13/12	Rachel	Female	White	19	Out of State	No

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted on campus at the Midwestern University in a study

room in a quiet location in the student union where the participants were comfortable and

familiar with their surroundings. The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes and

were audio-recorded. The investigator provided a consent form for participants to sign

prior to the interview. One copy of the form went to the investigator and each student

participant also received a copy. Each participant in the study selected a pseudonym to

conceal his or her identity and is only referred to by his or her pseudonym. All students

interested in participating volunteered to participate. Participants could decline to

participate at any time during the investigative process. Audio recordings of the

interviews were transcribed by the principal investigator. Data collection started the last

week of November 2012 and was completed by December 13, 2012.

The interview questions asked of the participants were grouped into three major

categories: (a) questions regarding the student's relationship with his or her parents;

(b) questions related to the student's parental involvement during the transition process;

and (c) questions regarding ways the student received support from his or her parents and

family. These categories provided background information to allow the researcher to

understand the student/parent relationship, and included questions stretching from the

student's high school experience up until the end of their first semester of college.

Students answered 16 total questions established by the researcher in addition to

follow-up questions. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed the researcher to

provide a list of key questions that would help answer the research questions while

allowing the flexibility for the researcher to ask follow-up questions or probing questions if additional information was needed.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The transcripts were then sent to each participant for member-checking to ensure accuracy. None of the participants responded with changes to the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis involved organizing data, conducting a preliminary read-through of transcripts, coding and organizing themes, figuring out how to best represent the data, and forming an interpretation of them (Creswell, 2013). Once the interviews for this study were conducted and audio-recorded, recordings were then transcribed by the principal investigator. Transcripts were read and reviewed before the coding process began. Merriam (2009) asserted that the purpose of the data analysis process is to identify key segments in the data that answers the research questions. For the coding process, the researcher reviewed the transcripts for key data that seemed meaningful and relevant to the research questions. Codes were awarded names by the researcher that best described the information. Codes can represent information that the researcher expected to find, information that surprised the researcher, and information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to the researcher and possibly participants and outside audiences (Creswell, 2013). These key data points were grouped into 24 different categories. Guba and Lincoln (1981) recommend four guidelines for developing categories in qualitative research. First, the number of people who mention something or the frequency with which a topic comes up indicates an important dimension. Second,

categories will vary by audience, as some will appear as more or less credible to different people. Third, categories that stand out for uniqueness should be retained. Finally, certain categories may include areas of inquiry not otherwise recognized in the study or identify a unique perspective to an otherwise common problem (as cited in Merriam, 2009). After identifying all of the categories represented in the transcripts, the categories were grouped into five main themes. These recurring themes or patterns were abstractions derived from the data presented in the transcripts and were used to write the research findings segment of the study (Merriam, 2009). A complete list of codes for each of the themes and subthemes is provided in Appendix G.

Once all transcripts were coded and organized into key categories, the researcher reviewed all of the transcripts and codes again in order to identify the five main themes. These themes will be presented as key findings from the research study in Chapter 4 and will be supported with direct quotes from the interview transcripts.

Researcher Reflexivity

Because the researcher was the one conducting the interviews for this study, it is important to understand the researcher's background in relation to the Business Learning Community and the research topic. The researcher was the summer graduate assistant for New Student Enrollment in 2012, which created the initial idea for studying parental involvement in the college transition process. After this assistantship expired, the researcher became a graduate assistant in the College of Business Administration Office for Undergraduate Programs. This position required the researcher to work exclusively with the Business Learning Community within the college and granted the researcher the

opportunity to teach half of these students in a Business Leadership Development course during the fall of 2012. The researcher had access to the contact information for students in the Learning Community and received permission from the Director of Freshman Programs and adviser to the Business Learning Community to conduct the research with this student population.

Working with both parents and freshmen during New Student Enrollment piqued an interest in parent-student relationships and the researcher noticed a large number of students who seemed to be dependent on their parents to take care of their college applications, write down valuable information revealed during orientation programming, and for financial support. In addition, working with the same freshmen population once they made the transition into college, the researcher discovered that many of these students seemed to lack basic communication and decision-making skills and displayed minimal signs of independence. The researcher is aware that these impressions may have shaped her own interpretations of the phenomenon of parental involvement in the college transition process.

Validity and Reliability

"Validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). In order to encourage reliability and validity of the research, the researcher utilized member-checking with the transcripts in order to ensure that the participants' perspectives and ideas are being accurately represented in the transcripts. Once all interviews were recorded and transcribed, the researcher emailed the

transcripts to the participants to ensure there were no errors. The investigator wanted to

ensure the research is accurate and trustworthy. "The quality of a research is related to

generalizability of the result and thereby to the testing and increasing the validity or

trustworthiness of the research" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 603). Participants were also asked

to review the five themes that had been identified to make sure that they agreed with the

findings that emerged from the raw data.

In addition, an external auditor reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. The auditor

reviewed the researcher's codes and themes in order to ensure that the themes found were

indeed present in the collected data.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology used for this research study. IRB

approval was sought prior to conducting any research. A semi-structured interview

protocol was used for six participants in order to address the central research question and

sub-questions. Member-checking and an external auditor were both used in order to

ensure accuracy within the research findings. Chapter 4 will provide a detailed

description of the themes that emerged following the data analysis process.

Chapter 4

Findings

Purpose Statement

This research studied the phenomenon of parental involvement in the college

transition process and sought to understand if students perceived that they were affected,

relative to the development of independence and autonomy, by the amount of parental

involvement they experienced during this transition. Six traditional college freshmen

were interviewed and asked about their relationships with their parents, their parents'

involvement during the college search, application, and transition process, and how they

perceived this involvement helped or hindered their ability to develop a greater sense of

independence and autonomy.

Description of Participants

Six students enrolled in the Learning Community associated with the College of

Business Administration at the Midwestern University volunteered and were selected to

participate in the semi-structured interview process. Participants were required to be

traditional, undergraduate freshmen and consisted of two males and four females. The

study featured three participants from the home state of Midwestern University and three

from out-of-state in order to get a variety of perspectives. Students were also asked to

identify whether or not they were first-generation college students. Students were

recruited to participate via a recruitment email sent from the researcher to the Learning

Community listserv and the five students who replied to the research investigator

expressing interest in the study were selected for the interview process. The final

participant was recruited by one of the other student participants via chain sampling or the snowball technique. As these students made the transition from high school to college, each of them had different relationships with their parents and perceived their parents' involvement in different ways. This chapter will examine the students' perceptions of their parents' involvement during the transition process and how they think they have been impacted by the parent-student relationship since going to college.

Each student selected a pseudonym to keep their identities confidential. Four females and two males participated in the study. All participants but one identified as White, with one student identifying as Hispanic. Two of the six participants were first-generation college students. The following is a detailed description of each participant along with important family background information.

Tiffany. Tiffany was an out-of-state student who was eager to go to an institution where nobody knew her and where she could have her own experience. Both of her parents graduated from college, though they came from an extremely poor background. Her parents joined the military to get scholarships for college and wanted Tiffany's college experience to be better. Tiffany had one younger sister, and was interested to see how her parents reacted when her only sibling goes off to college, leaving them with an empty nest.

Bill. Bill was an in-state student whose parents lived only a couple of hours away. Both of his parents also had college degrees. Bill was the oldest of three boys. He attributed his parents' healthy marriage to his success in selecting and transitioning into a four-year university rather than the community colleges that many of his friends with

divorced parents attended. He enjoyed a close relationship with his mom, as his father was absent several nights a week during his childhood because of work.

Jack. Jack was an in-state college student from the same town as Midwestern University. His parents got divorced when he was a young child, recalling that that's just "how it always was." His mother had since re-married, and his father had been re-married five times. He had six step-siblings and several half-siblings across the country that he has never met. His biological father had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and was experiencing a deterioration of his nervous system. Neither of his parents graduated from college, although his mother went to school to get a certificate to be an administrative assistant. Jack had always lived with his mother, though he would visit his biological father every other weekend.

Carrie. Carrie was an in-state student whose parents both graduated from college and became teachers. She had an older sister who attended college at an institution close to her hometown, and a twin brother who also attended Midwestern University. She shared a close relationship with her brother and her father.

Amanda, Amanda was the only participant to identify as Hispanic and was an out-of-state, first-generation college student. She was close with her extended family and had 30 first cousins. She acknowledged that hers was a large family, but they were still very close. She had an older sister and an older brother, but she was the first in her immediate family to attend a four-year university. She was very proud of the fact that she was attending a four-year institution and had plans to help support her parents after graduation.

Rachel. Rachel was an out-of-state student whose parents both graduated from college. Her father was her high school principal and she had one older sister who had previously attended Midwestern University. While her parents let her ultimately decide where to attend college, Midwestern University was the only college that Rachel applied to. She declared that her family was very close and had always been supportive.

Research Questions

The central research question for this qualitative study was: How did students perceive that parental involvement affected their ability to transition successfully into college?

Sub-questions.

1. Did students perceive that parental involvement affected their college transition?

2. Did students perceive that parental involvement influenced the development of independence during their first semester of college?

3. What did developing independence mean to students in college?

4. How did a student's perceived level of independence relate to their ability to make autonomous decisions?

Overview of Themes and Subthemes

This chapter outlines the themes and subthemes, organized by research sub-question, that emerged as participants reflected on how their parents' involvement in the college transition process influenced their transition as well as their ability to develop independence and autonomy in college. A total of 5 themes and 14 subthemes are listed

below in Table 3. The theme "Parent-Student Relationship" explored the types of

relationships students have with one or both of their parents as well as communication

patterns between parents and students. The theme was broken down into two additional

subthemes, (a) "My relationship with my parents is changing," and (b) "I talk to my

parents." The theme "My parents were supportive in my life" depicted ways that parents

showed their support during high school, through the transition process, and now that the

students are in the first year of college. Identified subthemes included: (a) "My parents

support me academically," (b) "My parents support me spiritually," (c) "I go to my

family for advice," (d) "I talk to my parents about the future," and (e) "My parents can be

too involved." The theme "Transitioning into college" explored how students perceived

the process of transitioning into college, including which parts were difficult and which

parts were easy. Subthemes identified included: (a) "My parents were involved in the

transition from high school to college," (b) "Parts of transitioning to college were hard,"

and (c) "Parts of transitioning to college were easy." The theme "I am independent"

explored ways that students self-identify as being independent and what independence

means to them. The one subtheme included: "My parents promoted independence." The

last theme, "I am developing autonomy," provided descriptions of ways that students are

making their own decisions without concern for needs of reassurance, affection, or

outside approval. Subthemes included: (a) "I have an awareness of others," and (b) "I am

proud of going to college."

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
1. Parent-Student Relationship	a. My relationship with my parents is changing
	b. I talk to my parents
2. My parents are supportive in my life	a. My parents support me academically
	b. My parents support me spiritually
	c. I go to my family for advice
	d. I talk to my parents about the future
	e. My parents can be too involved
3. Transitioning into college	a. My parents were involved in the transition from high school to college
	b. Parts of transitioning to college were hard
	c. Parts of transitioning to college were easy
4. I am independent	a. My parents promoted independence
5. I am developing autonomy	a. I have an awareness of others
	b. I am proud of going to college

Themes and Subthemes for Research Questions

The central research question for this qualitative study explored how students perceived that parental involvement affected their transition into college. The four sub-questions for this project are listed below along with the identified themes and subthemes that respond to the research sub-questions.

Research Question 1: Did students perceive that parental involvement affected their college transition?

Theme: Parent-student relationship. Students were asked to describe their families and the types of relationships they shared with one or both parents. While each

student indicated differing levels of closeness and support within the family unit, most of the students indicated that they shared a closer relationship with one parent over another. Tiffany said "My mom and I have like a . . . a friendship. I mean, I know she is my parent, and she is my parent before she's my friend, but I can tell her anything." Bill agreed and stated "I definitely have a closer relationship with my mom." Because Jack's parents divorced when he was a young child and he always lived with his mother, he asserted that he had always been closer with his mom. Though his relationship with his biological father was important to him, Jack said "It was a different relationship with my mom, I guess because I'd just see him every other weekend so he wasn't a huge part of my life." In contrast, Carrie said "I'm closer to my dad than I am with my mom." She also mentioned sharing a close relationship with her twin brother who also attended Midwestern University, and a more distant relationship with her older sister who attended a different college. Neither Amanda nor Rachel said they were closer with one parent, but that they shared equally close relationships with both parents. According to Amanda, "We're really close because, you know, we're family and we love each other." Rachel shared the sentiment and acknowledged that "we are a very close family."

Subtheme: *My relationship with my parents is changing.* While each participant admitted to having a close and loving relationship with one or both of their parents, participants were also asked to reflect on how their relationships with their parents were changing, or how the students envisioned them changing as they got older and moved through college to adulthood. Some participants imagined more drastic changes in the student-parent relationship, while other participants couldn't imagine that the relationship

would change very much at all. Tiffany said that this changing relationship was something that she had thought about a lot. She said:

> This is the last time my parents are how I see my parents. Because I'm with them every day, and then from now on, like, it'll never be like this again. Like, in the summer, maybe, but I think I might not come back summers after this one, so from now on, like, I'll never have them like that.

Tiffany also said she thought it would be weird to see how their relationship changed in the future, but understood that "It's just, like, a different transition you go through."

When thinking about how his relationship with his parents may change, Bill reflected that he was just starting to realize how much his parents have done for him. Bill said "I'm just gonna realize that more and more as I grow up, like, what they did for me and you know, how I can actually use that for my kids." Carrie also reflected on how much her parents have done for her and said she believed that her relationship with her parents would only grow stronger "because now I know why they did what they did." Jack stated that he would always be close with his mom and would also continue to have a relationship with his father, but he knew that as a student and an adult, he will continue to get busier. According to Jack, "As I get, like, a family, I can definitely see myself, you know, not spending a lot of time with my parents, just because I can survive very well without them." Amanda didn't really think her relationship with her parents would change much, stating "It'll still be somewhat the same." Rachel said she would probably get closer with her parents as she gets older because they share similar experiences. "They went through the stuff I did, so I can only learn from their mistakes" Rachel said.

Subtheme: I talk to my parents. In an effort to better understand the relationships that the six participants shared with their parents, they were asked to discuss how they

communicated with their parents and how often this communication occurred. Tiffany

replied that she spoke to her parents approximately once a week, either by phone or on

Skype. However, Tiffany was also connected with her parents through social media.

Tiffany stated "My mom loves the Facebook. She loves the Facebook. She comments on

everything. Like, I can't post something without a comment from Mom. So a lot of

Facebook interaction. . . ." In addition, Tiffany said that she texted her mother on a

regular basis, and texted her dad only occasionally. Bill talked to his parents one to two

times a week, with occasional text messaging with his mom. Because Jack's mother lived

locally, Jack usually saw or talked to his mother once a week, typically on the weekend.

He said he spoke to his father on the phone once every other week. Jack also admitted to

being Facebook friends with his mom, step-dad, and step-mom. He said he also texted his

mother on occasion, but typically for "business-related stuff." Carrie said she talked to

her parents a couple times a week. Carrie stated "I talk to my dad more, but that's

because he has more time on his hands it seems like, so he texts me more than my mom

does. She texts me occasionally." Amanda said she spoke to her parents about once a

week, while Rachel spoke to her parents at least two to three times a week and said she

texted her mom every day. Rachel also mentioned that she had regular interaction with

her mother on Facebook.

  Theme: My parents are supportive. Participants were asked several questions

related to the amount of support they received from their parents throughout high school,

while they were applying to college, and during the college transition process. All six

participants felt that they had extremely supportive parents. None of the participants

suggested that they ever felt that their parents did not support any of the students'

college-related decisions. Tiffany said her parents would do anything to help make her

college experience better than what they had experienced. Since they struggled so much

financially, Tiffany said that her parents wanted to help out as much as they could and

have taken on some of the financial responsibility. Most importantly, her parents always

cheered her on and encouraged her to do whatever she wanted to do. Tiffany said:

> My parents were like, super crazy supportive. My dad was like the cheerleading
> dad. My dad takes on whatever I do . . . so . . . my mom and dad always tried to
> limit me though, and they still do, because they know that I would try to do, like,
> 200 things. So they make sure that I only get involved in a few things. But then
> they, like, throw themselves into it as much as I do.

When the time came for Tiffany to start applying to college, her parents let her take the

lead on looking into programs both in-state and out-of-state, although they were

constantly reminding her that cost was important, and she would be the one carrying most

of the financial burden. Even when the deadline was quickly approaching and Tiffany

still hadn't chosen a college to attend, her parents encouraged her to keep looking, took

her on campus visits, and helped her narrow down her choices. Her parents were involved

and supportive throughout the entire process. Tiffany stated "it's not just because they

have to, they love to."

Bill's parents showed support in high school by always attending athletic and

extra-curricular activities. According to Bill, "they were always cheering me on, always

supporting me no matter what I was doing." Once Bill was in college, his parents helped

out with some college expenses, although Bill was responsible for paying for much of his

own education. Overall, Bill expressed that his parents seemed happy with his college

decisions, and they remained involved enough to ask questions about his classes and academic progress. He attributed his college success to his parent's support, stating "they gave me the base foundations to go up and then get here."

While Jack made most of his college decisions without much influence or help from his parents, he received a great deal of encouragement and support from his mother, primarily, although "both of them were supportive." Jack said that both of his parents wanted him to do whatever made him happy. His mother also showed support in other ways. "If I was struggling with like friends, or whatever that was, she was always there to talk to . . . always encouraging; always encouraging me in whatever I was doing." Though Jack did not see his father as frequently, he said that his father was also encouraging and always showed him unconditional love, no matter what.

Carrie's parents were active supporters of her in high school, always attending swim meets and other activities that she participated in. This support continued since she moved to college and helped motivate her to work hard and be successful in college. According to Carrie:

> They were always there if I needed to talk to them, and they made sure they were here to help me move in when I know some other people's parents didn't; they just kind of dropped them off and said 'here you go.' So they do care about where I'm going . . . which makes me want to do better I guess.

Carrie's parents also played a large role in supporting her through the college selection and application process. Her dad helped her with applications, and her mom simply encouraged her no matter where she wanted to go, although her mom would have preferred for her to attend an institution closer to home. Upon finishing her first semester, her parents remained accessible and regularly checked in to ask how she was doing.

As a first-generation college student, Amanda experienced a different kind of support from her parents as she pursued a higher education. Though her parents had very little knowledge of the college application and transition process, Amanda never felt unsupported. Amanda said "I feel like they support me more than my sister and brother because I haven't really screwed up and I'm the first to go to college . . . like to a university." When trying to decide where she wanted to go to school, Amanda said her parents were "happy either way because I was looking at a college and knowing that I wanted to go to a four-year school." This support started during her childhood, where her parents would encourage her to get involved in sports to stay active and fit and to never quit something she started and continued through her first semester of college. When she felt stressed or anxious, Amanda relied on her mother's words of wisdom and believed "it would all pay off towards the end."

Rachel also always knew that her parents believed in her. "It was like, no matter what I wanted to try they were always like 'yeah you can do that you know, you just gotta put work into it and you'll achieve it.'" While in high school, Rachel's parents stayed up with her if she was up late working on homework. They never missed an extra-curricular event or activity, and her dad was always accessible as her high school principal. When it came time to choose which college she wanted to attend, her parents were willing to let Rachel explore her options and make her own decisions. Rachel said "they were pretty much open to whatever I chose." Rachel relied on her parents for help and assistance when needed, and was comforted by the fact that they would always be there for her.

Subtheme: My parents support me academically. Within the realm of parental

support, most of the participants indicated that their parents take a special interest in their

academic performance. Tiffany said her parents ask her about how classes are going

during each weekly conversation. Bill also said that the topic came up regularly and that

his parents liked to keep informed about any academic struggles or successes he

experienced. Jack's parents, while encouraging, were not able to help him as much with

academics in the past, as neither of them went to college. However, he knew they

believed that he would be successful in whatever he choose to do. Carrie's parents

regularly asked her how she was performing academically, although they didn't always

talk about it in great detail. In contrast, Amanda said that she was constantly talking to

her parents about her academic struggles. According to Amanda:

> I talk to my dad about, you know, all my classes. Like how I feel confident, and
> how, like, I'm struggling in some of them. And he understands, you know, he's
> like 'I understand, it's your first year' and stuff.

Rachel's parents also understood that managing an academic course load could be

challenging. She often told her parents about upcoming exams and projects and they

followed up to see how she performed. Rachel said "If I said I didn't do too well they're

like 'Okay well next time just try a little bit harder.'"

Subtheme: My parents support me spiritually. In addition to providing academic

support, three of the six participants indicated that their parents often provided spiritual

support as well. Bill mentioned that he appreciated the occasional text from his mother

wishing him good luck on an exam, saying "praying for you." Jack stated "a big thing for

me is just having, like, spiritual support, and my mom was definitely always there to

encourage me . . . pray with me, you know, just be there for me." Jack said he continued to rely on that support since going to college, and was grateful that his mom "just trusts God that I'm gonna do what's best and, you know, what God's will is in my life." Amanda said her mother provided her reassurance to help her handle stress by reminding her to "slow down, just have faith," and telling her "you gotta have faith in everything."

Subtheme: I go to my family for advice. Another subtheme identified under the category of parental support involved the participants relying on their parents or family members for advice. Each of the six participants admitted that they sometimes sought advice from a parental or family figure. Tiffany recalled asking her mom for advice about relationships and boys while in college. Bill said he continued to ask his parents for advice, and that their advice helped him to prepare to transition into college. When in the car on the way to orientation, Bill said his parents offered advice on what to expect in college and how that would differ from high school. In addition, Bill relied on his parents' expertise and frequently asked them about their academic and college experiences. Bill said "any question that I've ever had, like if I knew they'd been in something similar, I'll always ask them, like, did this happen to you?" Even for topics unrelated to school, Bill said he would often "try to get a second opinion."

Jack also said he sought advice from his parents, though it was usually not related to academics. According to Jack:

> I bring up my problems to them and they give me advice whether I ask for it or not. And I definitely respect their advice they give me, but like academically . . . neither of them have really been through what I'm going through.

Unlike the previous participants, Carrie said she prefered not to seek advice from her parents, but would rather seek advice outside of her immediate family. Carrie said she often spoke to her uncle or a family friend if she needed advice; otherwise, she relied primarily on her circle of friends. Amanda shared this sentiment and stated that she didn't want to talk about personal things with her parents, and would rather "just like, keep everything inside." If she needed advice related to college, she said she preferred to talk to her friends about it instead of a family member. Finally, Rachel said that she often sought advice from her mom. However, "if it's something I don't want to talk to them about I'll usually go to my friends."

Subtheme: I talk to my parents about the future. The interviews showed that many of the participants had thoughts or conversations about the future. When reflecting on her experience transitioning from high school to college, Tiffany said "it will be really funny to see what my parents do differently when my sister goes to college," as she acknowledged that her parents may do things differently the second time around. Bill identified himself as a futuristic thinker and admitted to thinking quite a lot about the future. However, just because he thought a lot about his future career goals and aspirations, these were not conversations that he often had with his parents. He said "I mean, I am always thinking about that, and they know what they want me to do, but we really don't talk about it that much. And maybe we will once I start getting older. . . . " Bill said they did talk about goals that his parents had for his own future, including getting a good job in his field and being successful. Jack said he discussed future goals

often with his mom, and that he carefully weighed his decisions based on what was best for his future.

Carrie said she didn't discuss the future much with her parents, and attributed that to not really knowing what she wanted to do for a career yet, other than just wanting to get a job. Amanda said her conversations with her parents about the future typically consisted of her just telling them "this is what I want to do with my degree, and what I want to do." Rachel said more futuristic conversations were happening with her parents since attending college, and they encouraged her to try different things that would help her better understand what she was looking for.

Subtheme: My parents can be too involved. While all six participants in this study eagerly discussed that they had very supportive parents, a couple participants acknowledged that at times, their parents could become too-involved in their lives, even to the point where it became annoying. Tiffany expressed the most frustration with her mother's tendency to "hover." When discussing her parent's desires to throw themselves into any activity that she chose to participate in during high school, Tiffany said "it can sometimes be annoying because I want it to be like, my thing." She also said that she believed part of the reason she was so ready to go off to college was because her parents "have been helicopter parents." However, just because her parents were a little too involved at times, doesn't mean that they didn't have great intentions. While acknowledging that "My mom is like the queen of brown-nosing," Tiffany also used that to her advantage when filling out scholarship applications and used her mom's skills to portray herself in a positive light to scholarship committees. Finally, Tiffany stated "my

mom has to help me and my sister. So I feel like . . . I feel like she hovers, like helicopter mother, more than others, but not necessarily in like a bad way, just in a helpful way."

Carrie and Rachel both admitted to being frustrated occasionally by their parents' over-involvement with social media. Specifically, both participants said they were Facebook friends with at least one of their parents. Carrie said that because her dad missed her and her brother a lot, her father would "comment and like everything that we do which kind of gets really annoying." Rachel expressed a similar problem with her mother and stated "Sometimes she comments on way too much and I'm just like 'Mom, just calm down.'"

Theme: Transitioning into college. The six participants were asked about what their experiences were like as they made the transition from high school into college. Five of the six participants indicated that the biggest difference in college was that their parents weren't there to help with assignments, remind them of certain tasks that needed to be done, or tell them what to do. Tiffany noted that "it's been different because they're not here to help me and be my at-home personal tutors and editors of papers." However, Tiffany said that her parents helped to prepare her for the transition. She said "They really helped me with the transition knowing that they would always be like, 'I'm not gonna be here next year' . . . they made sure that I had everything that I needed for college." Overall, Tiffany didn't think the transition was all that difficult, but did find it challenging at times knowing that she was the sole person responsible for making sure all the details were taken care of.

The part that Bill noticed most about the transition into college was simply the fact that his parents weren't around. Carrie noticed this too, though it took her a bit longer to adjust to not having a curfew or not seeing her parents for months at a time. Rachel said that her parents helped her a lot with the transition, making sure to keep her informed and answering any questions she had along the way.

Amanda indicated that she struggled most with the college transition because it brought about a major change in the life-style she was used to. Amanda commented that she actually had to do her homework in college, and the academic course load was much more rigorous than she experienced in high school. At times, Amanda said she struggled to express to her parents the challenges that she faced in school because they did not understand, having never had a comparable experience. Amanda stated:

> I told them, like, it's really hard. Because I told my mom that it's hard, like, trying to do homework and stuff. I told her that I have to stay up late because I have to finish homework and she'll be like 'Oh, you have that much homework?' and I'll be like 'Yeah." Like I let her know. And my dad knows because . . . he can hear it by my voice and stuff like how tired I am. Like he'll call me and be like 'You sound really tired and sick' and I'm like 'Yeah, it's because of homework, it's overwhelming. I'm stressing. And so they know, and understand.

Subtheme: My parents were involved in the transition from high school to college. One subtheme that emerged within the transition from high school to college was the amount of parental involvement that students experienced during this process. Tiffany's parents were involved throughout her college selection, application, and move-in process. Though her parents allowed her to take the reins on choosing schools to attend, they sat down with her and helped her fill out her college applications. Tiffany explained her parent's involvement as follows:

> Because I had never filled out a college application and my mom's really good at writing, she would really help me with my college applications. And, with scholarships too; that was ridiculous . . . so we would just usually sit down and fill the applications out together, because there's some information, you know, that I didn't necessarily know on some stuff. I mean the basic applications I could fill out.

Tiffany said her mom helped her specifically with college essays, getting her input on what she should say and how she should say it. Tiffany's dad also came with her to orientation and offered some input regarding what classes she should select.

Jack's mom was also involved in the transition process, although his parents had little input or influence over which college he selected to attend. Primarily, Jack's mother kept on top of things like housing contracts and payments, but had no part in his application processes for admission or scholarships. She accompanied him to orientation and took "pages and pages of notes." Jack said after orientation, "she sat down with me and read through her notes with me . . . for a little debriefing; a solid, two-hour debriefing."

Carrie said her parents were involved in the research process prior to choosing a college, but that she completed all the paperwork and applications herself. Her parents did accompany her to orientation and helped her create her class schedule for the first semester. Though her parents moved her twin brother to campus just one week before, Carrie's parents returned again with her and helped her move in and get settled on campus. Amanda's parents had virtually no involvement in the college transition process other than attending orientation and helping her move-in.

Rachel's parents were actively involved in her college transition, and remained involved. Rachel chose to attend Midwestern University on her own, but had substantial

help from her parents while filling out the applications. Rachel said "My parents helped me a lot with that" and "it was kind of a teamwork type thing." She said her parents helped her on essay questions, helping her to remember what types of activities and service she did during high school and to organize her thoughts. Rachel even acknowledged that her parents continued to do that for her in college, helping her organize her thoughts for writing assignments or essays and taking the time to proof-read her papers.

Subtheme: Parts of transitioning to college were hard. As part of the interview protocol, students were asked to reflect on what they thought was the most difficult part of transitioning into college. For Tiffany, the most difficult part was the ambiguity associated with college life and not knowing what to expect. According to Tiffany:

> I was like I don't even know what to expect when I go to college. Like, I don't even know what these professors want me to say in this kind of thing. I don't know how smart, or if I should be creative, or if I should be straightforward . . . so that was really hard.

Though she was excited to experience something on her own, Tiffany remarked that she really struggled with not knowing what to expect, both socially and academically.

Bill shared a different perspective on the difficulty of transitioning into college and explained that his struggles related to the academic rigor of college. Bill stated "it hasn't been the transition, it hasn't been being away from the family and [stuff]; it's definitely been the classes." Jack experienced similar difficulty with meeting academic deadlines and learning how to keep academics a priority over the social demands of college. According to Jack, "time management would be the biggest thing. I never learned that in high school, necessarily. I just, I don't know. I always put the social

aspects first . . . if someone asks me to hang out, like, I'm gonna hang out. . . ." Jack said

that a lot of times, this social temptation came before homework. In addition, Jack

mentioned that he struggled "having to do everything and meet all my requirements for

everything" without his mom there to remind him of upcoming deadlines.

Carrie and Rachel explained that they had a hard time adjusting to not being

around their parents and families. Also, they both expressed that it was a struggle that

having more financial responsibility. Carrie said it was difficult "having to buy pretty

much everything – groceries, shampoo and conditioner, and like, doing laundry. That's a

hard thing to do." Similarly, Rachel said the hardest part about coming to college was:

> Being away from my parents. Like, under their supervision, it's kind of nice, you
> know? And then it kind of sucks paying for everything myself. It's just like,
> 'okay, well I want to go buy this . . . no, I need to save up my money.'

Amanda struggled most with simply being away from home. Because she was an

out-of-state student whose family was hours away, Amanda mentioned that it was

difficult knowing that she was so far away. According to Amanda, college was hard:

> Because I see people go home every weekend, and like, it sucks knowing that I'm
> away. Or if like, if I want to be around family or have a home-cooked meal, like I
> can't; I have to wait for the holidays. So that's just . . . I guess that's a major one,
> of adjusting, of coming here to college.

Amanda said she also recognized that she had to work a lot harder academically since

going to college and could not avoid doing her homework or putting off studying like she

sometimes did in high school, which was an adjustment.

Subtheme: Parts of transitioning to college were easy. Though all six participants

admitted that they struggled with some parts of the college transition process, all of the

participants appreciated that the easiest part about coming to college was making new

friends and meeting new people. Tiffany said meeting people had been "really, really easy. And fun. I really like that. I was excited . . . that was like my main reason I wanted to come out-of-state, was to meet new people." Bill said that venturing out of his small home town was great, and he really enjoyed making new friends. Even though Jack grew up locally, he also had a great experience with meeting new people. Jack mentioned that his love for being social could sometimes be a hindrance, but he really enjoyed it. "I love just building relationships and stuff too much with other people" Jack said. Finally, Carrie said that she loved meeting new people and changing their minds about different stereotypes. According to Carrie:

> I really like meeting new people. I thought it was a lot of fun and interesting to meet everyone. Everyone from like . . . the eastern part of the state thought I lived on a farm, and we don't have cities, we ride tractors to school, I should have worn cowboy boots, which I don't. There's a lot of stereotypes about the western end of the state I guess, which aren't true.

Carrie said she enjoyed meeting people from a variety of different backgrounds and educating them on where she came from.

Research Question 2: Did students perceive that parental involvement influenced the development of independence during their first semester of college?

Theme: I am independent. Four of the six total participants demonstrated more advanced development of independence than the other two participants. However, all six participants expressed that their parents promoted independence and gave them opportunities to develop independence prior to going to college.

Subtheme: My parents promoted independence. Tiffany asserted that she was conditioned to be an independent person because her entire family was that way. Tiffany

said this was because "my family, we're very spacious people. Like we have a three-story house so we all have our own floor, and we, we really like to be by ourselves." Throughout high school, Tiffany's parents constantly reminded her that things would change when she went to college, and that "hey, you're gonna be on your own next year." Tiffany felt that her parents were trying to prepare her for college, and though they reminded her to do things, they also made sure she did them herself. Tiffany also said "I don't really have anything that they're like go out, be an independent person, because I kind of, I am an independent person."

Bill said his parents "always wanted me to do things on my own." According to Bill, "they've always wanted me to have that independence so I can do things on my own without having to ask them." Bill said he was always encouraged by his parents to do things on his own, though he knew he could ask for advice or another opinion of he was struggling with a decision. Similarly, Amanda said that her parents also always encouraged her to do things on her own. Amanda stated "I guess like I've always kind of been independent and doing stuff for myself."

Carrie said her parents encouraged independence by not checking in on her as much once she was in college. "They don't text and call me as much as I thought they would, so I think that's really like, them showing me that I can be independent and like, they're not checking my bank account a whole lot." Rachel could not think of many ways that her parents promoted independence aside from telling her to be her "own person." Rachel said her parents were willing to let her make her own mistakes, which allowed her to learn and become more independent.

Jack's parents seemed to promote independence the most. Jack said that although his mom would have loved to have him home all the time, she realized that Jack was growing up and that she would not be able to play such an active role in his life. One way Jack's mother promoted independence was by making Jack responsible for his own finances starting in the seventh grade. Since his parents divorced when he was three years old, Jack's mom received monthly child support money from his father. Jack said "She would like, give me the child support money every month and I would have to divide that up between school lunches, and piano lessons, and everything else. So that's definitely helped." Jack attributed his family background to forcing him to grow up a little early and helping him to understand that he needed to be independent and make his own choices.

Research Question 3: What did developing independence mean to students in college?

Theme: I am independent. In order to explore how parental involvement affected a student's ability to develop independence in college, participants in this study were asked about what they thought it meant to be independent, and whether or not they felt they had become more independent since coming to college. According to the definition of independence used in Chapter 1, "Independence means that morally and intellectually students are not dependent on authorities" (Holmberg, 1984, p. 3). The students presented different definitions of independence, but all six agreed that they felt they had become more independent since coming to college.

Tiffany claimed she couldn't wait to come to college and be on her own. Tiffany said:

> I really like to experience things alone. Like, I feel totally comfortable going to big cities just alone, and doing things, like, completely by myself. I like that more. So, I was just ready to do something for myself . . . I'm starting to see what it is like to be a grown-up.

When deciding what college Tiffany wanted to attend, she said going out-of-state was appealing to her because she felt she needed to have her "own thing." Tiffany declared that she was independent for the following reasons:

> I'm good at, like, time management and things like that so I can plan things and make my own decisions. I don't have to have, like, my parents make my decisions for me . . . I don't have to tell them about little things, like what I'm doing. Like I make day-to-day decisions, so I feel I'm independent in that way.

Tiffany said her parents knew that she was an independent person, although she admitted that she still depended on her parents for help and guidance when it came to larger decisions.

Bill demonstrated independence by taking the lead on his college search and application process. Starting his senior year of high school, Bill stated that though he still lived with his parents, he did pretty much everything on his own. He did his own research about different colleges and universities, and though his parents offered suggestions, he formulated the decision to attend Midwestern University on his own. Prior to attending orientation, Bill selected all his classes himself with little input from his parents, stating "it was all my choice." To Bill, independence meant "I'm able to live on my own, you know, make a living for myself and also make the right choices." This definition of independence aligned closely with the original definition provided in Chapter 1, as Bill saw himself as independent because he functioned and made sound, ethical decisions without the influence of his parents.

Jack said that he had been functioning independently for some time, although he admitted that he didfeel more independent since coming to college. To Jack, being independent meant "being able to function on my own," which aligned almost exactly with the definition of independence provided in Chapter 1. While he appreciated being able to go to his parents for help or advice, Jack said independence also meant "just being able to live life without needing, needing my parents, I guess, every step of the way." Jack suggested that some of the ways he increased independence since coming to college included managing his time more productively and meeting all his requirements without reminders. According to Jack:

> My mom was always the one on top of me, like 'get this done and this done,' and not having that I guess is probably the biggest thing I've grown in, just like, having to do everything and meet all my requirements for everything and like, deadlines and stuff.

Carrie had a different definition of independence which suggested that she had not quite developed the understanding or depth of what it meant to be independent like some of the other participants in the study. To Carrie, being independent meant that "no one's checking up on you" and "I'm in charge of my own money." Carrie spoke less about wanting to or even being able to make her own decisions without parental guidance, but more about how her parents were less involved in what she did on a day-to-day basis and how they let her manage her own finances. When asked about how she felt she had developed more independence since coming to college, Carrie said:

> Just being able to go back to my room or do whatever, whenever I feel like doing it, like studying. I can study as late as I want and get up whenever I want. Because for high school I had to get up at like, 6:30, get ready to go, but now in college I can get up, like, 30 minutes before my class and roll out of bed and go. And being

able to not worry about them watching my bank account. I need to watch my bank account.

This interpretation of independence focused less on being morally and intellectually dependent on authorities, but rather demonstrated that her parents were being intentional about distancing themselves from Carrie's everyday decision-making process. Perhaps after her first semester in college Carrie had experienced less development in terms of independence than some of her peers.

Amanda's definition of independence embraced a more futuristic approach, as she justified making decisions for herself because "that's what I'm going to have to do in the real world by myself because I'm not going to have my parents by my side all the time." Amanda said that independence meant "not having to rely on a bunch of people." Though this was a simple definition, Amanda's definition aligned with the concepts of making her own moral and intellectual decisions and suggested that Amanda was further along in her development and understanding of independence than Carrie was.

Rachel was another example of a student who had not quite fully developed an understanding of what it meant to be independent. Like Carrie, Rachel viewed independence as being separated from her parent's direct control. According to Rachel, being independent meant "not being, like, under my parents' supervision. Like not having to listen to them . . . and then being away from my sister. Just being away from my family and like I'm my own person." Rachel said she did feel like she made her own decisions, though she often asked her parents for input. Rachel and Carrie showed many similarities in terms of how they viewed independence, and both demonstrated that they

may not have developed independence to quite the extent that the other four participants had.

Research Question 4: How did a student's perceived level of independence relate to their ability to make autonomous decisions?

Theme: I am developing autonomy. In addition to exploring how parental involvement influenced the development of independence, this study was also concerned with how parental involvement affected college students' abilities to develop autonomy. According to the definition in Chapter 1, "Autonomy implies that students make their own decisions" (Holmberg, 1984, p. 3). Developing autonomy and moving toward interdependence resulted in "freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117).

Tiffany portrayed a solid understanding of who she was as an individual and was comfortable doing her own thing. She didn't want to follow the crowd to college, but instead decided to go out-of-state so she had her own experience. She also demonstrated a solid understanding of her own abilities and accepted them for what they were. An example of this was when Tiffany discussed scholarship opportunities and said "I'm a completely middle-of-the-road student so there was not a lot I was offered anyway because we're middle class. And I have good grades but I don't have, like, awesome grades, and I'm white." This was an honest assessment of how she saw herself, and she took her identity in stride without needing approval or acceptance from anyone about who she was. Amanda also indicated that she was more comfortable than some making

her own decisions, no matter what other people thought. She revealed that she understood that doing what was best for her was what was most important.

In contrast, Bill did not demonstrate that confidence and acceptance for who he was and seemed to need some reassurance and approval from others. Bill stated "I know who I am, sort of, but you just never know about yourself because you always second-guess yourself. I mean I've always had a problem, like, knowing who really I am and what I'm doing." Neither Carrie nor Rachel ever mentioned anything related to making their own decisions without needing reassurance, affection, or approval from others, which suggested that they had barely started autonomy development.

Just as Jack portrayed a more progressive development of independence, he also displayed a growing sense of autonomy development. According to Jack:

> I've always known that, you know, like [my] maturity level has always just kind of been a step above. That's why . . . I don't feel bad I guess that I'm not always talking to my parents, or feel that I need to.

Jack said he did not need the approval or reassurance from his parents to function. While he appreciated the relationship he had with them, Jack mentioned on multiple occasions that he did not *need* them. He even went as far as to say that he could have made it through his entire first-semester of college without talking or seeing them at all. He clarified that this wasn't because he didn't love them, but because he could handle the transition to college on his own.

Subtheme: I have an awareness of others. Two of the six participants discussed how their experiences differed from other college students, which indicated they had an awareness of others, though their sense of autonomy allowed them to feel comfortable

about these differences. For example, Tiffany stated "I know a lot of kids whose parents call them like, more than like, once a day." Tiffany observed this from her peers, but did not feel the need to change her communication routine with her parents, which consisted of only one weekly phone call. Her autonomy allowed her to recognize that she did not need to communicate with her parents more often than she already did. Tiffany also noted that her transition to college was maybe more difficult that some other students experienced because her parents were so involved when she was in high-school, but her parents helped her through the transition process and she was comfortable with the role they played in her life.

Jack also mentioned differences between his own experience and the experiences of many of his peers, though he said he accepted the differences. Jack stated "I've accepted the fact that I've grown up faster than a lot of kids." When referring to the fact that he functioned and made decisions without his parents input, he recognized that this was not the case for a lot of college freshmen, and stated "I guess my situation's just a little bit different."

Subtheme: I am proud of going to college. Another subtheme related to developing autonomy was the concept of being proud of going to college. This mindset moved beyond not needing reassurance or validation, but fully embraced the fact that the student's experiences may be different. This was a big concept for Amanda, who emphasized how proud she was of herself for making it to college. As a first-generation college student whose parents were hours away in a different state, Amanda self-taught herself everything she needed to know about college and what she needed to do to get

there. She made her own decisions, filled out her own applications, and did not need reassurance that going to college was what she wanted to do. In fact, doubt from some family members that she would even be successful in college fueled Amanda's ambition to be successful. Amanda embraced the idea of equality, and that all students were entitled to pursue an education. She said "They're not the only ones who can go to college. I can go too."

Summary of Findings

The central research question for this qualitative study was: How did students perceive that parental involvement affected their ability to transition successfully into college? The following themes and subthemes answered the four sub-questions mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Research Question 1: Did students perceive that parental involvement affected their college transition?

Theme: Parent-student relationship. All six students who participated in this research study indicated that they had very close relationships with their parents, though four of the six participants said they shared a closer relationship with one parent over the other. While the students appreciated the closeness that they shared with their families, most of the students recognized that their relationships with their parents would change, and that they would continue to do so as they grew into adulthood, although Carrie and Amanda did not suggest that they believed their relationships with their parents would change significantly. Now that they are away at college, the participants said they shared more interaction with one or both parents through social media sites, like Facebook, and

through text messaging. All participants felt fairly well-connected with their parents, although the amount that the students communicated with their parents was likely to decrease some as they started to feel more comfortable in their surroundings and formed greater levels of independence.

Theme: My parents are supportive. The students recognized that their parents provided different types of support throughout high school and once they were in college. All participants experienced high levels of parental support during high school and regular attendance at extra-curricular activities and athletic events. After the transition into college, academic and spiritual support became important, as well as the ability to go to parents for advice about academics, personal issues, and future goals. However, the parents of Tiffany, Carrie, and Rachel, specifically, had the tendency to become too involved, especially related to social media interaction, which the students sometimes found to be frustrating and annoying.

Theme: Transitioning into college. The participants recognized that moving from high school to college was a significant transition that presented different types of challenges. Parents were involved in different levels in this transition process, with some students selecting and applying for college on their own, while other students' parents did significant research and helped complete college applications. Students recognized that the academic rigor of the college environment was significantly different than what they experienced in high school. On the other hand, students were pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to make new friends and meet new people in college.

Research Question 2: Did students perceive that parental involvement influenced the development of independence during their first semester of college?

Theme: I am independent. Students whose parents promoted independence at an earlier age and reinforced the idea that students were going to have to make their own choices once they got to college seemed to demonstrate a greater understanding of independence and were more willing to make their own choices. In contrast, students whose parents did not promote independence as much and did not require their students to make decisions for themselves demonstrated a lesser understanding of what it meant to be independent and indicated that they still depended on their parents for many things.

Research Question 3: What did developing independence mean to students in college?

Theme: I am independent. The students developed different levels of independence and had different definitions of what it meant to be independent. While some of the participants viewed independence as being able to make decisions on their own and being able to support themselves, other participants viewed independence as being able to do what they wanted, when they wanted, and being responsible for their own money. Students who were more independent did not feel the need to communicate as often with their parents, and students who were less independent spoke to their parents more frequently.

Research Question 4: How did a student's perceived level of independence relate to their ability to make autonomous decisions?

Theme: I am developing autonomy. Most of the students who demonstrated greater levels of independence also indicated that they were farther along in their autonomy development, though this was not the case for the two participants, Carrie and Amanda. Students who developed a sense of autonomy did not seek reassurance or support for their decisions and functioned independent of authority. Participants with greater autonomy development shared an awareness of others, but seemed comfortable with the decisions they made and with who they were as individuals. Four of the participants really embraced their own identity and the experience of going to college, and recognized that they made their own decisions and functioned on their own.

Chapter 5 will discuss the results of this phenomenological case study, provide implications from the results, and suggest recommendations for future research opportunities.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Purpose Statement

This research studied the phenomenon of parental involvement in the college transition process and sought to understand if students perceive that they were affected, relative to the development of independence and autonomy, by the amount of parental involvement they experienced during this transition. Six traditional college freshmen were interviewed and asked about their relationships with their parents, their parents' involvement during the college search, application, and transition process, and how they perceived this involvement helped or hindered their ability to develop a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

Research Questions

The central research question for this qualitative study was: How did students perceive that parental involvement affected their ability to transition successfully into college?

Sub-questions.

1. Did students perceive that parental involvement affected their college transition?

2. Did students perceive that parental involvement influenced the development of independence during their first semester of college?

3. What did developing independence mean to students in college?

4. How did a student's perceived level of independence relate to their ability to make autonomous decisions?

Summary of Findings

The findings of this research study showed that all six participants had parents who were fairly involved in the college transition process and played some role in the college selection and/or application process, attending orientation and move-in, or the financial commitments that comes with a higher education. The study indicated that the students experienced different levels of parental involvement throughout the transition process, though all participants felt very supported by their parents and continued to feel like their parents supported them in the college-related decisions they made. The participants said they all shared close relationship with one or both parents and often sought their parents' advice, although they understood that their relationships with their parents were changing and would continue to change as they move through college into adulthood. All of the participants shared many of the same challenges with transitioning into college, such as not knowing what to expect, harder academic course loads, and distance from their families. However, the participants also indicated that meeting new people and making friends was an easy part of the college transition, and a part that they really enjoyed.

Key findings for this research are listed below according to the four sub-questions:

1. Did students perceive that parental involvement affected their college transition?

- Students with involved parents seemed to transition easily into college

- Students whose parents helped prepare them for the transition into college seemed to transition easier than students whose parents did not help them prepare

2. Did students perceive that parental involvement influenced the development of independence during their first semester of college?

   - Students who communicated more frequently with their parents demonstrated a simpler understanding of independence;

   - Students with parents who were more involved in the college transition demonstrated greater dependence on their parents;

   - Students who communicated more frequently with their parents and had less independence also demonstrated less autonomy development;

3. What did developing independence mean to students in college?

   - Three students believed developing independence meant making their own decisions and functioning as individuals

   - Two students believed independence meant doing whatever they wanted and managing their own money

4. How did a student's perceived level of independence relate to their ability to make autonomous decisions?

   - Students whose parents promoted independence at an earlier age and through high school demonstrated greater levels of independence and greater autonomy development.

Overall, students who seemed to transition the most successfully into college and demonstrated the greatest independence and development of autonomy were the students whose parents were involved in the college transition process, but were allowed to facilitate much of the transition and make their own decisions about college.

Discussion

This study added to previous research on how students perceived parental involvement affected the students' transition to college. Theories from Chickering and Reisser as well as Schlossberg were applied to help analyze the findings of the study related to how students experienced the transition from high school to college to better understand the development of independence and autonomy.

Research Question 1: Did students perceive that parental involvement affected their college transition? Schlossberg (1981) described her theory of transition as a vehicle for "analyzing human adaptation to transition" (p. 2). As students transition from high school to college, four different factors influence a student's ability to cope with a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies (Goodman et al., 2006). According to Evans et al. (2010), "The individual's effectiveness in coping with transition depends on his or her resources in these four areas – in other words, his or her assets and liabilities – at that time" (p. 216). This study focused on the preparation and beginning of the transition, or the moving toward and moving through the transition during the students' first semester in college, but did not focus on the moving out of the transition.

Situation. Factors such as trigger, timing, control, role change, duration, previous experience, concurrent stress, and assessment are considered important within the first of the 4 S's (Evans et al., 2010). The six participants knew in advance that they were going to transition into college, so the transition was anticipated. The timing of the transition was socially acceptable and occurred at the same time for all participants. Some of the participants did struggle with the concept of control because they had no idea what college life would be like. For example, Tiffany said "I didn't even know what to expect." She acknowledged that this lack of control was a significant struggle that she faced during her transition to college. The students experienced a minor role change, as they went from being dependent on their parents to having to make more individual decisions. The duration of the transition was viewed as a major step, and something that would trigger a more permanent transition of moving away from their homes and families. None of the students had experienced a transition of this magnitude before that affected them socially, emotionally, and academically. There were multiple stressors involved in the transition, from not knowing what to expect, academic rigor and expectations, and an increase in financial responsibility. For Bill, a struggle and cause of stress was "definitely the classes." Rachel and Carrie both indicated that having to pay for small items such as shampoo, conditioner, and clothes was challenging, because they didn't have to think about making those purchases before coming to college. In terms of assessment, all six participants believed that they were the driving force behind the transition, and they were responsible for the transition, although participants who were less independent seemed to want to share that responsibility more with their parents.

Self. Personal and demographic characteristics as well as psychological resources are both important in relation to one's sense of self (Evans et al., 2010). The participants were fairly equal in how they portrayed themselves as they transitioned into college. Two of the six participants were first-generation college students, so they both came into college with a greater sense of independence and self-efficacy. Some students demonstrated a greater commitment to values and spirituality, using these as aids to cope with the transition. Jack, for example, was confident about his transition to college because he "felt like this is where God wanted me to be." Amanda, the only racially/ethnically diverse participant in the study, wanted to bring and share her culture with Midwestern University and maintain the close bonds she had with her family, both immediate and extended, but sometimes she felt isolated because she was so distanced from her family.

Support. Goodman et al. (2006) said that social support can be measured by identifying one's stable supports, supports that are role dependent, and supports that are likely to change or evolve. The students expressed that they experienced a great deal of social support during their transition into college. All participants indicated that meeting new people and making friends was one of the easiest parts about coming to college. In addition to finding support from friends and peers, each participant indicated that their parents remained supportive and accessible, although some of the more independent participants remarked that they did not need as much support from their parents and could really function without it. Amanda relied on support and encouragement from her parents. Speaking about her mother, Amanda said when she got stressed or overwhelmed,

"she just told me, like, you know, it will all pay off towards the end and stuff, and you gotta have faith in everything."

The participants also suggested that their parents showed them support throughout the transition process by being involved, helping to make sure they had everything they needed for the transition, attending orientation, and helping with move-in. Their parents continued to provide support on some level, even if it was only through a phone call or text message. While some of the participants no longer relied on the support provided by their parents to feel secure, all six participants indicated that they appreciated the support their parents provided.

Strategies. Goodman et al. (2006) asserted that there are three categories of strategies for coping with a transition: modify the situation, control the meaning, and manage stress in the aftermath. In addition, there are four primary modes of coping, including information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, and intrapsychic behavior (Evans et al., 2010). Goodman et al. (2006) emphasized that strategies that are most effective in coping with transitions demonstrate flexibility and utilize multiple methods. All six participants in this study did extensive research on Midwestern University before deciding to make the transition. They all went through an information seeking stage, and then took action to apply to the institution and moved toward the transition. Bill said "I really did all the research. I had to, like, ask them to take me on, you know, trips and visits to colleges. It was all me, really." Carrie said her father helped her a lot with the research and kept after her to take action to move forward. According to Carrie:

He did a lot of research on International Business which is what I'm in, and he printed it all off and gave it to me, so I didn't really have to do research about the programs myself. And then he would make sure I filled out all the applications I had to . . . he made sure that I did all of that.

Amanda wanted to ensure that her parents did their research as well to make sure they knew what kind of an environment she would be living in. Since she was a first-generation college student from out-of-state, she said "I wanted my parents to go so they know, like . . . what I'm getting into." Amanda also said bringing her parents to campus helped them all feel better about the transition: "When my parents came here they like, it's a lot like an eye-opener because they already know where I'm gonna live, and how it is, and so knowing the environment I'm going into made them feel more comfortable."

Situation, self, support, and strategies related directly to how the participants in this study navigated the transition from high school to college. The application of Goodman et al.'s (2006) 4 S's helped the researcher to better analyze the data in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how college students perceived this transition, as well as how they perceived they were influenced by the involvement of their parents during the process.

Research Question 2: Did students perceive that parental involvement influenced the development of independence during their first semester of college?
Throughout the interview process, students expressed that their parents were involved at different levels throughout their transition to college. Some parents were actively involved in helping with research and college selection process, assisting with admissions and scholarship applications, and even paying for college. When comparing this involvement to the amount of independence that each student had developed so far during

their college career, it appeared that students who took more ownership and responsibility for the college transition also demonstrated greater independence from their parents. For instance, Bill said he did all the research and completed all the necessary applications on his own. He made his college decisions independently and took the lead where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do. In addition, Bill said he was paying for most of college on his own. When asked if he felt like he had become more independent since coming to college, he responded "Yeah, definitely."

Parents were also involved in the development of independence in their college students when they promoted independence prior to the college transition. Students were asked about ways that their parents promoted independence, and all six participants admitted that they had been encouraged to act independently on some level while still living at home. For example, Jack took responsibility for all of his finances when he was in middle school. Bill said though he lived with his parents in high school, he did his own thing. Tiffany's parents helped to prepare her for the transition of living without them, reminding her that things were going to change. Because Amanda's parents didn't have any experience with college, she was left to make her own decisions and inform the rest of the family of what her plans were. Rachel and Carrie demonstrated the least amount of independence, and also had the least amount of independence promoted to them by their parents. Carrie and Rachel were both financially supported by their parents, who provided spending money and also monitored their bank accounts, until they went to college, where they became responsible for these expenses and managed their own bank accounts. They also both had curfews in high school, but no longer did. When they got to

college, Carrie and Rachel saw being able to spend money when they wanted and do what they wanted no matter what time it was as being independent.

   Research Question 3: What did developing independence mean to students in college? The six participants had different ideas and definitions of what it meant to be independent. Some participants demonstrated a greater understanding of independence, alluding to the fact that they functioned and made decisions without any input from their parents, while others shared simpler definitions which indicated that these students were still somewhat dependent on their parents to be involved in the decision-making process. Overall, the participants thought that being independent meant not having to rely on someone else and being able to make decisions without consulting their parents. Jack and Bill expanded on that definition, adding that being independent also meant making the right choices and being able to function on their own. On the other hand, Carrie and Rachel said that being independent meant that no one was checking up on you and required them to be responsible for handling their own money (although this was regarding smaller, day-to-day purchases, rather than the responsibility of paying for college). All participants said they felt they had developed more independence since going to college.

   Research Question 4: How did a student's perceived level of independence relate to their ability to make autonomous decisions? Chickering and Reisser's (1993) revised Theory of Identity Development is in part related to this research study, as the researcher sought to explore how parental involvement influenced students' abilities to develop independence and also autonomy through the transition from high school to

college. Though all seven of Chickering and Reisser's revised vectors are key in the

developmental process and the formation of identity for college students, the third vector,

moving through autonomy toward interdependence, was particularly applicable to this

research project and was used to help identify whether or not students were developing or

moving through autonomy as they transitioned into college. This vector of moving

through autonomy toward interdependence was relevant to this study because it explored

an increase in emotional independence, defined as "freedom from continual and pressing

needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993,

p. 117).

There were three key themes that this research study focused on. First, the study

focused on how students perceived their parents' involvement in the college transition

process affected the transition as a whole. In addition, the study focused on how students

perceived their parents' involvement influenced their development of independence.

Finally, the study explored whether or not this level of independence that a student had

developed was related their development of autonomy. As mentioned in Chapter 1,

"Independence means that morally and intellectually students are not dependent on

authorities" (Holmberg, 1984, p. 3). Though independence and autonomy are sometimes

used synonymously, for the purposes of this study "autonomy implies that students make

their own decisions" (Holmberg, 1984, p. 3). In addition, the development of autonomy

resulted in "freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or

approval from others" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117). This study measured the

development of independence and the development of autonomy separately, although findings did indicate that there was a link between the two.

Based on the participants' responses to interview questions, it appeared that the students who indicated that they had the highest development of independence were also further along in their development of autonomy. Students who did not have a solid development of independence expressed little to no indication that they were developing autonomy. While students needed varying levels of parental support, the amount of support they required seemed to be dependent on the level of independence and sense of autonomy that the student had established upon entering college. Students with increased levels of independence and a sense of autonomy and control over their decisions and their own lives required less parental support, while other students who had not established strong independence and autonomy needed constant reassurance that they were making good decisions.

Implications

The findings of this study indicated that there are a variety of factors related to parental involvement that can influence a student's transition from high school to college. Overall, the results supported prior research which indicated that some parental involvement can be beneficial to student success, while parental over-involvement can stifle the development of basic skills and hinder the student's ability to make decisions (Shellenbarger, 2005). White (2005) stated "parents who become too involved in their student's college experience may be depriving the student of the opportunity to grow up and learn how to make decisions for themselves" (p. B16).

One way that parents are able to stay so involved in their students' lives once they leave for college is through increased communication via phone calls, text messages, and social media (White, 2005). As mentioned in Chapter 2, existing research findings have suggested that too much attachment or closeness with parental units could signify problems with the students' ability to develop autonomy and identity formation (Gentzler et al., 2011). The students in this research study who communicated with their parents multiple times a week or even on a daily basis displayed less independence and autonomy development, as they remained dependent on their parents and needed affirmation and validation in order to feel good about the decisions they made. The students who felt like they didn't need to speak with their parents as often or constantly ask them for advice demonstrated a greater understanding of what it meant to be independent in addition to showing greater autonomy development.

Students whose parents communicated with them frequently through social media expressed annoyance at the interaction and claimed they felt they were being monitored by their parents. For instance, when discussing how Tiffany and her mother interact on Facebook, Tiffany said "She comments on everything. Like, I can't post something without a comment from Mom." Rachel said the same about her mother and stated "Sometimes she comments on way too much and I'm just like 'Mom, just calm down.'" Carrie expressed similar frustration with her father. Carrie said "He'll comment and like everything that we do which kind of gets really annoying." As much as some students enjoyed speaking regularly with their parents, there was a point where parents became

too involved and over-communicated with their students; especially when the communication involved social media.

Because this study, in addition to prior research, stressed that parental involvement was prevalent on college campuses, colleges and universities should be concerned with forming programming initiatives to use these parents as partners in their children's education rather than viewing parental involvement as a nuisance. Cutright (2008) emphasized that creating partnerships with parents, designing orientation programming that parallels the student experience, providing a list of key resources and important dates, and finally, providing contacts and a clear chain of communication can all help the institution to inform the involved parent population in an effort to help them enable their students to be independent and have a successful college experience.

Future Research

The results of this research study supported existing research claiming that today's parents are involved in their student's transition to college. In addition, the research supported that some level of parental involvement can help students to navigate the transition more successfully, especially if they feel supported and have a strategy for coping with the transition process. However, the results also indicated that too much parental involvement resulted in greater dependence on parents, reducing the amount of independence and autonomy development a student demonstrated during their first year of college.

Further qualitative studies should be conducted on the effects of parental involvement on college students, specifically in relation to the development of both

independence and autonomy. According to Creswell (2013), "We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored" (p. 47). While this study explored the concept of parental involvement on the student transition, additional qualitative studies could further explore how students experience the transition into college and how their independence and autonomy development is influenced by parental involvement. In addition, this study only featured six participants from a large public institution in the Midwest. Additional studies with larger sample sizes could provide greater insight on how students are influenced by parental involvement. Furthermore, additional studies should be conducted with more diverse student populations to include a cultural perspective. This research study consisted of only one student who identified as something other than White; a study with greater diversity could create additional research opportunities to explore how cultural differences and ethnic backgrounds may also contribute to the development of independence and autonomy in college students.

This study was also conducted using a population of students that was accessible to the researcher. Conducting a study with a larger student population with no connection or familiarity with the researcher may provide greater insight related to how students feel about their parents being involved in the transition process. Longitudinal studies studying a group of students over their four years in college could further explore how parental involvement in college continued to influence their development of independence and autonomy. Other studies exploring parental involvement and its influence on the development of independence and autonomy for sophomores, juniors, seniors, or first-

generation students could show how this involvement could affect students long after they had made the transition into college.

Finally, quantitative research studies should be conducted in order to gauge how much parental involvement today's college students are experiencing. Existing research supports that administrators have seen an influx in parental involvement on college campuses (Shellenbarger, 2005), but how much involvement are college students experiencing? How and why is this increase in involvement occurring? Further, what can colleges and universities do to help these parents be better partners in their students' educational pursuits? All of these questions should be explored further in order to provide higher education administrators with a better understanding of parental involvement on college campuses.

Conclusion

"Every day people face transitions in their lives that are as taxing psychologically as marathons are physically. And they do this with little or no training or preparation" (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 3). This research explored how parental involvement affected a student's ability to gain independence and develop autonomy during their first semester of college. This study, consisting of six participants at Midwestern University, found that some factors related to parental involvement, such as communication and promoting independence, influenced the transition to college as well as a student's ability to develop independence. Overall, students, whose parents promoted independence early in their K-12 schooling and required less day-to-day communication, demonstrated a stronger understanding of independence and further autonomy development.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

Nebraska
Lincoln

October 24, 2012

Lauren Edelman

Department of Educational Administration

Richard Hoover

Department of Educational Administration

119 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20121012942EP

Project ID: 12942

Project Title: The Effects of Parental Involvement on the Transition to College

Dear Lauren:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46). Your project was approved as an Expedited protocol, category 6 & 7.

Date of EP Review: 10/08/2012

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 10/24/2012. This approval is Valid Until: 10/23/2013.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;

* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;

* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;

* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or

* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Julia Torquati, Ph.D.

Chair for the IRB

Full
Accreditation

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

Informed Consent Document
The Effects of Parental Involvement on the Transition to College

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of parental involvement as students transition from high school to college. The study will look at levels and impacts of parental involvement during high school through the college application process up through the students' freshman year of college. The study will analyze how different levels of parental involvement influence the students' ability to transition into the college environment and develop autonomy. In order to participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age or older and be considered a traditional, full-time undergraduate freshman at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Participants must be in the Business Learning Community for the College of Business Administration and must be currently enrolled in BSAD 101.

Data will be collected through qualitative interviews. Each subject will be interviewed for approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed for data analysis. Interviews will take place on City Campus at UNL in Love Library or in a private conference room in the College of Business Administration Office of Undergraduate Programs. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

The research will add to literature in the field by investigating the impact of parental involvement in the college transition process and exploring how involvement can both help and hinder this transition process. Your responses to this survey will be kept anonymous. Audio recordings will be immediately uploaded to a password protected computer until May 4, 2013 and then will be destroyed. No one will have access to the recordings other than the investigators.

You may ask any questions concerning this research at any time by contacting Lauren Edelman at lauren.edelman@unl.edu or (785) 580-3765. If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at (402) 472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researcher or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

☐   I agree to be audio-taped during the qualitative interview.

_____   _____
Signature of Research Participant   Date

Principal Investigator: **Secondary Investigator:**
Lauren Edelman   Dr. Richard Hoover
Graduate Student   Senior Lecturer, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Educational Administration: Student Affairs   (402) 472-3058
(785) 580-3765   rhoover2@unl.edu
lauren.edelman@unl.edu

141 Teachers College Hall / P.O. Box 880360 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0360 / (402) 472-3726 / FAX (402) 472-4300

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

Dear [name]:

I am conducting a research study on the effects of parental involvement as students transition from high school to college. The study will look at levels and impacts of parental involvement during high school through the college application process up through the students' freshman year of college. The study will analyze how different levels of parental involvement influence the students' ability to transition into the college environment and develop autonomy.

Data will be collected through qualitative interviews. Each participant will be interviewed for approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Interviews will be taped and transcribed for data analysis. Interviews will take place on City Campus at UNL in Love Library or in a private conference room in the College of Business Administration Office of Undergraduate Programs. In order to be eligible for this study, participants must be members of the Business Learning Community in the College of Business Administration.

If you are interested in participating, please contact the Lauren Edelman at lauren.edelman@unl.edu or (785) 580-3765. There are no known risks involved in this research.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Principal Investigator:	**Secondary Investigator:**
Lauren Edelman	Dr. Richard Hoover
Graduate Student	Senior Lecturer, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Educational Administration: Student Affairs	(402) 472-3058
(785) 580-3765	rhoover2@unl.edu
lauren.edelman@unl.edu	

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Qualitative Interview Questions

The Effects of Parental Involvement on the Transition to College
Principle Investigator: Lauren Edelman

- **Describe your relationship with your parents.**

  o Tell me about your family. (i.e. divorced parents, blended family, siblings)

  o Would you say your parents were supportive of you in high school? In what ways?

  o Do you think your relationship with your parents has had an effect on how you have been able to transition to college so far? In what ways?

  o How do you anticipate that your relationship with your parents will change as you progress through college?

- **Describe your parent's involvement in your college transition.**

  o What role did your parents play in process of selecting a college to attend? (i.e. attend campus visits, online research)

  o Do you feel your parents influenced your decision of where to go to college? How?

  o What role did your parents play in the college application process?

  o Did you apply for scholarships or financial aid? Explain your parents' involvement in this process.

  o Did your parents attend New Student Enrollment? If so, explain your interaction with them during that experience.

  o What involvement did your parents have in the creation of your class schedule for this semester?

- **Describe ways that your family shows support.**

  o During the current school year, how often do you talk to your parents? (including by phone, text, social media, or in person)

  o How often do you talk to your parents about your academic performance? Seek advice? Discuss personal issues? Discuss career plans?

- o What has been the most difficult part about coming to college? What has been the easiest?

- o What does being independent mean to you?

- o In what ways do your parents encourage you to gain independence?

- o Do you feel you have become more independent since coming to college? Why or why not?

Appendix E

Participant Demographic Information Sheet

Participant Demographic Information

The Effects of Parental Involvement on the Transition to College

Principle Investigator: Lauren Edelman

Date:

Pseudonym:

Gender:

Racial Background:

Age:

Hometown:

First Generation: Yes   No

Appendix F

External Audit Attestation

External Audit Attestation
Wayne A. Babchuk, Ph.D.

<u>Audit Attestation</u>

Lauren Edelman requested that I complete a methodological audit of her qualitative case study titled "The Effects of Parental Involvement on the College Student Transition." The audit was conducted from December 2012-April 2013. The audit was part of the validation strategies employed in establishing the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research. External validity was achieved through the audit where I provided input on major aspects of the research design and implementation with special attention devoted to data collection and analysis procedures and findings.

I was initially given Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, interview questions, IRB proposal, a comprehensive listing of categories of codes as well as emerging themes and subthemes, and participant transcripts. Following my input and suggestions from her committee members, I received a revised version of the entire manuscript. Throughout this process I focused most of my attention on Chapter 3 (Methodology), Chapter 4 (Findings), and Chapter 5 (Discussion), and the codes, themes, subthemes, validation strategies, sampling, etc. The audit was based on these materials that Lauren provided to me in electronic format. These documents were used to continually track and provide input into the research process and to determine the extent to which the thesis findings were supported by the data. These materials included:

- First and final drafts of her thesis
- Purpose statement and central and sub-questions
- Participant interview transcripts
- Categories of codes worksheet
- Themes and subthemes matrix
- Participant quotes to support codes/themes
- Preliminary and final summary of the codes/themes

<u>Audit Procedure</u>
The audit procedure consisted of the following steps:

1. Initial meeting to invite me to serve as an auditor for her thesis research and discuss my role and our mutual responsibilities in this process
2. Ongoing discussions of the research design and formulation of the purpose statement and central and sub-questions
3. Review of transcriptions, participant quotes, and initial open coding procedures
4. Review of emerging codes and themes and subthemes and comparison with auditor review
5. Ongoing discussions of findings, analysis, and the writing of the manuscript
6. Read initial and subsequent drafts of thesis chapters and provided input as the project progressed with a particular focus on consistency in purpose and fit between purpose statement, research questions, sample selection, and data collection and analysis
7. Read final draft of the completed thesis
8. Submitted audit attestation draft for Lauren's review and input
9. Signed and submitted audit attestation to Lauren

Initial Meeting

Lauren was a student in *Qualitative Approaches to Educational Research 900K*, a course I taught in the Fall Semester 2012. In this course, Lauren further refined and articulated her research interests and ideas as part of the course research mini-project and class presentation requirements. This project served as a building block for some of the central aspects of her thesis. In other words, Lauren worked on the same topic and similar research design she used in this thesis, a practice common among students who take this course. Her paper titled "How Parental Involvement Affected Student Transition in College" was critiqued and evaluated by me throughout the semester. As part of this ongoing evaluation process I provided methodological suggestions and guidance as did other students in the class. Class projects are designed collaboratively in this course. Following EDPS 900K, Lauren asked me to serve as an external auditor for her thesis research for an MA in Educational Administration. I agreed and we began to correspond in late December of 2012 to discuss our roles and proceed with her research and this audit.

Research Design and Formulation of the Research Question and Sub-Questions

Beginning in the Fall Semester, 2012, and finalized in the Spring Semester 2013, Lauren and I corresponded via email regarding all aspects of her research design. We discussed her research goals, identification of a research problem, the literature review, formulation of the purpose statement, central questions, sub-questions, purposive sampling techniques, selection of research methodology and its appropriateness to answer the research question(s), strategies of data collection and analysis, findings, validation strategies, and the writing of the manuscript.

Data Collection and Analysis

Lauren provided me with components of her thesis research including the interview protocol, participant interview transcripts, participant quotes, coding documents, final table with themes and subthemes, and thesis chapters. I reviewed transcripts from six taped interviews with the participants that noted interactions between the researcher and the participants. I checked and cross-checked her codes and emerging themes and provided feedback and suggestions for all areas of data collection and analysis. Both independently and together we reviewed and discussed the emerging findings and codes and themes and checked and double-checked the consistency and accuracy of these themes with the data and the research questions.

Thesis Manuscript

I reviewed the initial and subsequent versions of the manuscript to ensure that Lauren remained consistent with the purpose statement and central and sub-questions of the thesis through data collection and analysis, and that her work was supported by participant statements and existing literature on this topic. The thesis was consistent throughout and appropriate documentation of this consistency was provided by her.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the material outlined in this audit, I submit the following conclusions:

The process of this study was consistent with its research design and the assumptions inherent in the practice of qualitative research. Lauren was fully transparent in describing all aspects of the research process and systematically developed and implemented a research plan that allowed her to effectively address her purpose statement and explore her central research question and sub-questions and extend the literature in this area.

Her emergent themes and analysis are consistent with the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm and address the essence of the phenomenon of her study. She provided limited demographic information of her participants and employed several validation strategies including member checking, researcher reflexivity, and peer review. Lauren's data collection and analysis was solid and her themes and subthemes were consistent with her research goals. Therefore, I feel she met her goals of the research and was consistent in terms of her research design and implementation. Both her research paper for the EDPS 900K course and this thesis were extremely well done and followed the central tenets of the qualitative paradigm.

Upon review of the final draft of this manuscript, I conclude that the goals of the researcher were met, the research design and its implementation was carefully constructed, consistent, and effective in addressing the purpose statement, and the trustworthiness of the study can be established. There is support from the participant data for the emerging themes and her conclusions are consistent with them and augment the literature in this area.

Attested to by Wayne A. Babchuk this 8th day of April, 2013.

Wayne A. Babchuk, Ph.D.
Quantitative, Qualitative, and Psychometric Methods (QQPM)
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Appendix G

List of Codes

Theme: Parent-Student Relationship – The type of relationship students have with one or both of their parents

Close relationship with my mom
My mom and I have like . . . a friendship
I know she is my parent
She is my parent before she's my friend
I can tell her anything
We have a pretty open relationship
I love them and they love me
Never really had any problems
Closer with my mom
Definitely have a stronger relationship with my mom
Lived with my mom predominately
Visit my dad
Always lived with my dad
Went to visitations
Always been closer with my mom
Different relationship with my mom
He wasn't a huge part of my life
Enjoy the time that I had
I wouldn't see him as much
I love them to death
We talk about everything
He's not able to really help too much
She's like any other mom
He doesn't connect as well
I see them as another relationship
An important one
I am closer to my dad than I am with my mom
Wasn't really close with my dad
We're family and we love each other

Sub-theme: My relationship with my parents is changing.

I'm gonna move away from my parents
I've actually thought about this a lot
This is the last time my parents are how I see my parents
It'll never be like this again
I'll never have them like that
Transition you go through
I've realized . . . how much they actually did for me
Gonna realize it more and more as I grow up
Always be super close to my mom

I'll get even busier
I wouldn't have time to call
Not spending a lot of time with my parents
I don't need my parents as much
She realizes that I'm moving on in life
We're not gonna be able to talk everyday
I've thought about this before
I think it's going to grow
I kind of realize why they did, curfews and everything
I know why they did what they did
I have some time apart from them
It'll be somewhat the same
It will also be a lift off their shoulders
It'll be somewhat a relief for them
I want to help them out and help my mom
I think we'll get closer
They went through the stuff I did
I can only learn from their mistakes

Subtheme: I talk to my parents.

Only talk to my parents once a week
My mom loves the Facebook
She comments on everything
I can't post something without a comment from mom
Talk on the phone, [on] average, once a week
Sometimes texting
Texting with my mom
Weekly big phone call
Once a week
Try to make it Skype
Talk to them once or twice a week
Just by phone
Been home three times this semester
Seen them five times total
Text my mom every once in awhile
Just talk on the phone with them
I don't really talk to my dad too much
I am Facebook friends with my mom
I talk to my mom
I see her like every weekend
I usually come home and do laundry
Only text her for business related stuff
Talk to him on the phone once every other week

Once a week
I talk to my mom about that stuff
We don't talk about that stuff
He wants to talk to me as much as possible
I'm not always talking to my parents
I talk to my parents just like I would anyone else
A few times a week
I talk to my dad more
He texts me more than my mom does
She texts me occasionally
I talk to them every week
I talked to my mom every single day
I still talk to them every week
I talk to my dad the same way
Phone calls
With my sister I do text messages
They'd always call
Talk to them at least two to three times a week
I talk to my mom through text message every day

Theme: My parents are supportive in my life.

My parents are helping me
They want it to be better for me
Gave me a lot of help
They wanted to help me
Super crazy supportive
My dad takes on whatever I do
Mom and dad always tried to limit me though
I would try to do, like, 200 things
They throw themselves into it as much as I do
My parents like to be that supportive mom and dad
Very supportive in high school
They love to be involved
It's not just because they have to, they love to
At-home personal tutors and editors
I've always had help from my parents
They never really pushed it
We better start looking
Helped me narrow it down
They took me to the places to go see them
They came with me
Didn't push me to choose a college
It's up to you where you want to go

Talk about price being important
Was able to give me help
It's so great here, everybody's so nice
Why would you take something easy?
Take something that challenges yourself
Mom would usually have a lot of things planned out
My mom has to help me and my sister
My parents were very supportive
They would pay half of an in-state college tuition
They were really supportive
Always cheering me on
Always supporting me
No matter what I was doing
I did have help
They're helping me out a bit
They were happy
A little concerned about . . . some of the classes
Gave me the base foundations
Whatever makes you happy
Mom was always there to encourage me
Just be there for me
She was always there to talk to
Always encouraging
Whatever I was doing
He was always encouraging
Showed me unconditional love
We'll make it work
We would have found a way
Both of them were supportive
Would have tried to find any way to help
My mom is very, very organized
Keep reminding me every day
She trusts my judgment
Oh good job
Really supportive in whatever I decided to do
They were always there if I needed to talk to them
They made sure they were here to help me
They do care about where I'm going
Makes me want to do better
He helped me do some of it
She was just really supportive of wherever I wanted to go
Both came down for New Student Enrollment
He was fine with wherever I chose to go
They were like you need to do this

We sat down and talked about that
Always ask me how I'm doing
They'll send me stuff if I ask
Very accessible
She made the effort to come to my games
My dad pushed me
Wanted me to be active and fit
She didn't want me to give up something I started
They would always support
They've always been supportive of me
I feel like they support me more
Always there for me if I needed them
They were there . . . to give me the money
Happy either way because I was looking at a college
They were supportive
They wanted me to go somewhere I wanted to go
My dad was just there to let me know
They know what's going on
They know, and understand
It will all pay off towards the end
You have to make sure you just do it
Hey you can do this
They were very supportive of me
No matter what I wanted to try
You just gotta put work into it and you'll achieve it
Sat up with me when I tried to do homework
It was always kind of nice to have that one person
They never missed one
We'll support you whatever school you go to
They were pretty much open to whatever
They'll help out however they can
They were very encouraging
They've been very involved and very supportive

Subtheme: My parents support me academically.

Ask me how classes are going
Situation comes up
How are classes going?
She wasn't able to help with homework
I talk to my dad about all my classes
How I feel confident
How I'm struggling in some of them
I understand, it's your first year

Make sure I was studying for it
Next time just try a little bit harder

Subtheme: My parents support me spiritually.

Praying for you
A big thing for me is just having, like, spiritual support
Pray with me
Felt like this was where God wanted me to be
She just trusts God that I'm gonna do what's best
What God's will is in my life
Spiritual side
You gotta have faith in everything
Slow down, just have faith

Subtheme: I go to my family for advice.

I've asked for like, boy advice
They were just telling me . . . what to expect in college
I reviewed with them
Any question that I've ever had
If I knew they'd been in something similar
Did this happen to you?
Try to get a second opinion
I bring up my problems to them
Give me advice whether I ask for it or not
Respect their advice
Neither of them have really been through what I'm going through
I go to my uncle a lot
I go to him or my friends
Family friend
I don't want to
I just like, keep everything inside
I also talk to my friends
I usually go to my mom for that one
If it's something I don't want to talk to them about I'll usually go to my friends
I still get their input

Subtheme: I talk to my parents about the future.

Funny to see what my parents do differently
How I can actually use that for my kids
I always think about that stuff
Futuristic was one of my top strengths

They know what they want me to do
Don't talk about it that much
They want me to get a good job in my field
A lot with my mom
Made sure that it's gonna help you
I just want to get a job
I don't know yet
This is what I want to do with my degree
Now that I've entered college
That's a good way to get into . . . what you're looking for

Subtheme: My parents can be too involved.

It can sometimes be annoying
I want it to be like, my thing
Have been helicopter parents
Mom is the queen of brown-nosing
I feel like she hovers
Helicopter mother, more than others
Can get really annoying
He'll comment and like everything that we do
Sometimes she comments way too much
Mom, just calm down

Theme: I am independent.

I was very ready . . . to be like, alone
I really like to experience things alone
I cannot go in-state
They know I'm independent
I am an independent person
Don't have to have . . . my parents make my decisions for me
I make day-to-day decisions
With bigger things I feel I am still dependent
We are independent people
I did everything on my own
I did all the research by myself
It was all me
I really want to come here
I selected all the classes by myself
All my choice
I'm able to live on my own
Have to make the choice all by myself
It was actually all me

Mostly me as well
I would have done them anyway
She didn't assist at all
I wrote them all on my own
She didn't even proof-read
It was up to me
Being able to function on my own
Being able to live without needing . . . my parents every step of the way
I did it all myself
Do whatever whenever I feel like doing it
Being able to not worry about them watching my bank account
I would just inform my parents of how the process went
What I wanted to take
Not having my parents to tell me
Not having to rely on a bunch of people
I know
Not having to listen to them
I don't have to tell them everything
I feel I make my own decisions
I still make the decision I want

Subtheme: My parents promoted independence.

We're very spacious people
Like to be by ourselves
It was completely up to me
Remind me to do stuff and then I'll have to do it myself
Always wanted me to do things on my own
Wanted me to have that independence
So I can do things on my own
Without having to ask them
Always forcing ideas of integrity
They've definitely showed independence
My mom started teaching me how to budget my own money
I took care of all my finances
She would give me the child support money
I would have to divide that up
Trying to teach me time management
Priorities
He encouraged independence
Still being able to go to my parents
When I needed help or I need advice
Don't text and call me as much as I thought they would
Not checking my bank account

Haven't been telling me that I need to quit spending money
No one's checking up on you
To do things I need to do for myself
They're still willing to let me make my own mistakes
Told me to be my own person
Always encouraging me to be my own person
They don't nag at me

Theme: I am developing autonomy.

Figuring out my own stuff
I was just ready to do something for myself
Starting to see what it is like to be a grown-up
Need to have my own thing
I'm a completely middle-of-the-road student
I have good grades but I don't have . . . awesome grades
I can plan things and make my own decisions
Make a living on my own
Also make the right choices
I can survive very well without them
I don't need them to function well
Haven't needed to call my parents
Could have gone this far without calling them or seeing them
I am able to function pretty well on my own
I'm gonna do what's best for me
I have a very large support group
Being able to manage my time
I've grown
Having to do everything and meet all my requirements
I've accepted that
That's what I'm going to have to do in the real world
Do things on your own without needing people
I am my own person

Subtheme: I have an awareness of others.

It's been harder than maybe some kids
A lot of kids whose parents call them . . . more than, like, once a day
I'm not as homesick I guess as a lot of kids
I don't need them to function . . . like a lot of kids do in college
My experience is a lot different than everyone else
Everyone else . . . they talk to their parents . . . every other day
Their parents play a large part
I guess my situation's just a little bit different

I've accepted the face that I've grown up faster
Maturity level has always been a step above

Subtheme: I am proud of going to college.

I always knew I wanted to go to college
Proud of me, because I did everything on my own
I was proud of myself too
It was a lot of work
I'm really impressed
It was just like, kind of shocking
You're not the only one who can do it
I can too
They're not the only ones who can go to college
I can go too

Theme: Transitioning into college

They're not here to help me
Really helped me with the transition
They made sure that I had everything I needed
Make sure I had everything set out and organized
They would still help me
Constantly remind me
It's gonna be very different
I didn't even know what to expect
I don't even know what I'm doing anymore
I like to plan
Had my lists of all the classes
Don't think it was that bad
Not having someone to make sure . . . all your t's were crossed and I's were dotted
Making sure all the final details were there
Struggle
They're not there
Getting used to not having a curfew
You go to not seeing them for months
Really strange to me at first
It hasn't really changed anything
I wanted my parents to go so . . . they know what I'm getting into
Knowing the environment . . . made them feel more comfortable
I actually have to do my homework now
It's really hard
I really wanted to go out of state
To experience something different

Have to stay up late because I have to finish homework
He can hear it in my voice
How tired I am
It's overwhelming
I'm stressing
My parents helped a lot with that
If I didn't understand something they'd help me out

Subtheme: My parents were involved in the transition from high school to college.

My parents were always involved
Definitely involved parents
I had never filled out a college application
My mom's really good at writing
She would really help me
We would just usually sit down and fill the applications out together
Some information . . . I didn't necessarily know
What are things I need to say?
She played a really important role in my scholarships
She kept on top of the housing
She took notes
Pages and pages of notes
She sat down with me
Read through her notes with me
Solid, two-hour debriefing
My parents didn't really know much about . . . the whole college process
Here's what you've done
This is how you've helped people
She actually still does that for me in college
They were a big help for that
I filled out what I could, and then they filled out the rest
Teamwork type thing
They asked me about a few of them

Subtheme: Parts of transitioning to college were hard.

I don't even know what to expect
I don't even know what these professors want me to say
That was really hard
Hasn't been the transition
Hasn't been being away from the family
Definitely been the classes
Time management
I never learned that in high school

I always put the social aspects first
I can't say no to something like that
A lot of times that will come before homework
It's what I'm struggling most to do
Being away from home
Having to buy pretty much everything
Adjusting to not being home
Being away
It sucks knowing that I'm away
If I want to be around family . . . I can't
Being away from my parents
Under their supervision, it's kind of nice
It sucks paying for everything myself
I need to save up my money

Subtheme: Parts of transitioning to college were easy.

Meeting people
Been really, really easy
Fun
I was excited
Making friends
Just been a lot of fun
It's been really easy just to meet new people
I love just building relationships
Making friends
It's been fun
I enjoy it
Meeting new people
Fun and interesting to meet everyone
A lot of stereotypes