FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A doctoral thesis presented

by

Terri Chedester Garrett

to

The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

In the field of
Higher Education Administration

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
November 2015
Abstract

Parents familiar with collaborating with K-12 educators may expect the same level of access and involvement with higher education faculty members (Wartman & Savage, 2008). This study reflects an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the complexity of parental involvement in higher education from the perspective of ten faculty members at a mid-size, private, religiously-affiliated, high research activity institution in the Southwest. Findings indicate that faculty members experience parental involvement in ways that suggest that parents view faculty members as collaborators in their children’s education. Faculty encountered parents through formal events, such as Parent and Family Weekend, as well as unexpected contacts in which parents sought to exert influence or communicate information about their student. This study confirms that faculty participants experienced parental involvement in student academic progress and provides insights into their responses, including substantial use of FERPA, while still attempting to assist parents in their efforts to ensure the academic success of their student. These findings underscore the need for colleges and universities to help parents and families understand the change from K-12 in regards to teacher collaboration between parents and instructors through educational efforts during Orientation and other venues. Faculty also expressed need for more instruction related to responding to parent inquiries.

Keywords: Parental Involvement; Colleges and Universities; Higher Education; Helicopter Parents; Faculty; FERPA; Parent and Family Services
Acknowledgements

Attaining my doctorate degree was a journey I will never forget. This experience enlightened me intellectually and spiritually, and for that, I give Him all praise and glory. This doctoral research study would have not been possible without the support and encouragement from my family, friends, and colleagues. Special gratitude to my husband, Russ, who always supported the time I needed to take to complete my coursework and dissertation, and my parents, John and Rena, who provided the encouragement to persist to completion. It was Dr. Frank Shushok, Jr. who always believed in my ability to obtain this degree, even when I didn’t think I wanted it or could achieve it. I am also extremely grateful to Dr. Joseph W. McNabb for his guidance and forthright feedback. He is a wonderful educator who positively influenced my experience in this excellent scholar-practitioner program. I would also like to thank Dr. Kimberly Nolan, my second reader, and Dr. Wesley Null, my external reader, for their thoughtful feedback and encouragement. I am also indebted to my supervisors, colleagues, and academic partners for the support and encouragement they so generously offered as it enabled me to obtain this degree while working full-time. Last, but certainly not least, grateful thanks to my faculty participants for interviewing with me and for sharing their experiences and thoughts on parental involvement in higher education.
Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study and Theoretical Framework .................................................................6
  Context and Background .............................................................................................................................6
  Rationale and Significance ..........................................................................................................................8
  Research Problem and Research Question ...............................................................................................9
  Theoretical Framework ..............................................................................................................................11

Chapter 2: Literature Review ..........................................................................................................................18
  The Evolution of Parental Involvement in Higher Education ...................................................................19
    In Loco Parentis ...................................................................................................................................19
    Societal and Legal Changes .................................................................................................................21
  Current Context for Parental Involvement in Higher Education ..............................................................23
    Parental Involvement Defined ...............................................................................................................24
    Means and Frequency of Involvement ....................................................................................................26
    Factors that Contribute to Increased Parental Involvement ................................................................28
  Impact of Parental Involvement on Students ...........................................................................................32
    Student Development ............................................................................................................................33
    Emerging Adulthood ...............................................................................................................................34
    First-Generation Students ......................................................................................................................35
  Institutional Response to Parental Involvement ......................................................................................37
    Institutional Philosophy .........................................................................................................................38
    Communication .....................................................................................................................................40
    Parents as Partners .................................................................................................................................42
    Parent and Family Services Offices ......................................................................................................43

Chapter 3: Research Design ............................................................................................................................46
  Research Questions ......................................................................................................................................46
  Methodology ...............................................................................................................................................47
  Research Tradition .....................................................................................................................................48
  Research Site .............................................................................................................................................50
  Participants ................................................................................................................................................51
  Participant Profiles .....................................................................................................................................53
  Data Collection ..........................................................................................................................................54
  Data Storage ...............................................................................................................................................55
  Data Analysis .............................................................................................................................................56
  Validity and Credibility ...............................................................................................................................58
  Limitations ..................................................................................................................................................60
  Protection of Human Subjects ...................................................................................................................62

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis ....................................................................................................................64
  Encountering Parents ...............................................................................................................................65
  University Events .......................................................................................................................................65
  Exerting Influence ......................................................................................................................................68
  Conclusions ...............................................................................................................................................73
  Responding to Parents ...............................................................................................................................74
# Table of Contents

- Frequency of Interactions ................................................................. 75
- Enacting FERPA ................................................................................. 76
- Educating about Resources ............................................................... 80
- Conclusions ...................................................................................... 81
- Sense-making .................................................................................. 82
- Cultural Context ................................................................................ 83
- Concern for Student Development .................................................. 86
- Identifying with Parents ................................................................... 88
- Conclusions ...................................................................................... 90
- Summary .......................................................................................... 91

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications for Practice ........................ 94
- Encountering Parents ....................................................................... 94
- Responding to Parents ...................................................................... 98
- Sense-making .................................................................................. 100
- Recommendations for Practice ....................................................... 102
- Recommendations for Future Research ......................................... 107
- Conclusion ....................................................................................... 108

Appendix A – IRB Approval from Northeastern University .......... 110
Appendix B – IRB Approval from Baylor University ..................... 111
Appendix C – Semi-Structured Interview Guide ......................... 113
Appendix D – Consent to Participate in a Research Study .............. 115
References ......................................................................................... 117
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study and Theoretical Framework

Parent involvement is a prevailing topic in higher education. Parents are becoming increasingly more involved in their students’ higher education experiences, especially academics. The purpose of this research was to better define the phenomenon of parental involvement in higher education through an investigation of the experiences and perceptions faculty have related to parental involvement in student academic progress. This chapter presents the research purpose and questions, as well as the theoretical framework that guided this research effort.

Context and Background

Parents of traditional-age college students are more involved and implicated in their students’ collegiate experience than ever before (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006; Henning, 2007; Keppler, Mullendore, & Carey, 2005; Lum, 2006; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Wartman & Savage, 2008). At some time or another, most college and university administrators and faculty have dealt with a parent intervening on their student’s behalf. For example, a mother who calls a faculty member and petitions a better grade for her student because her daughter “worked really hard on it,” or the father who demands the residence hall director move his son’s roommate because his guests are distracting his son who has ADHD. While parental concern and involvement are not new phenomena in higher education, the magnitude of the association has been gaining momentum over the past several decades (Daniel & Scott, 2001; Jackson & Murphy, 2005; Merriman, 2007).

Generally, parents of today’s traditional undergraduate student (18-24 years) are emotionally close with their child and therefore, active participants in their student’s collegiate experience (Coburn, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2007). This trend of increased parent involvement is changing the dynamic of the traditional student-university relationship (Bickel & Lake, 1999; Henning, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008) and an emergent tripartite relationship (university-
student-parent) has proven challenging given the variance between parental role perception and the legal definitions of the student-university affiliation (Zick, 2010). As such, institutions of higher education now face structural and cultural challenges as to how to accommodate parent expectations within the context of student privacy laws and the university’s mission to educate and facilitate student development (Melear, 2003).

This type of expected inclusion on behalf of parents in the collegiate setting is now being termed “parent involvement,” a term previously utilized in the K-12 educational sector (Wartman & Savage, 2008). A typical parent of today’s traditional college student has worked closely with teachers and administrators from preschool through high school to ensure their child’s success for learning and advancement and fully expect to continue in this vein throughout their post-secondary education as well (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006). K-12 education experts, administrators, and teachers expend a great deal of energy and resources encouraging parental involvement because it positively impacts a child’s academic success (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson, 2005). In higher education, however, parental involvement connotes less positive images than K-12 education. Commonly defined as “helicopter parenting,” it generally assumes over-involvement by a parent on behalf of their student (Coburn, 2006; Shoup, Gonyea, & Kuh, 2009; Wartman & Savage, 2008). “Helicopter parents” are criticized for their frequent, and sometimes even aggressive, efforts to intervene on behalf of their student and solve problems for them (e.g. maintenance issues in residence hall room, roommate problem, or concern with an exam grade) (Lum, 2006). Due to extensive media coverage of helicopter parenting, this image is generally considered the definition of all parental involvement in higher education, when in actuality it only resembles a small sect of parents who aggressively interfere (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Lum, 2006).
Rationale and Significance

Generally, parental involvement constitutes any number of behaviors in which parents interact with the university concerning their student’s experience, but no clear-cut definition of parental involvement in higher education has been identified in the literature (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Parental involvement actions generally include requests for information about university resources, processes, or to express concerns on behalf of their student or themselves (Keppler et al., 2005). But some collegiate issues, such as roommate conflicts or academic progress, are often brought forth by parents with full expectation that their call or email will result in an immediate resolution of the issue at hand (Merriman, 2007). As a result, parent interactions with university staff and faculty have risen significantly over the last several decades (Daniel & Scott, 2001; Mullendore, Banahan, & Ramsey, 2005). A national study of student affairs professionals in 2006 found that 93 percent of respondents indicated that within the last five years their interactions with parents had increased almost 50 percent and that the nature of parent calls was to resolve problems on behalf of their students (Merriman, 2007, p. 15).

Carney-Hall (2008) describes parents as “co-investors” in their child’s post-secondary education which frequently leads to increased parental involvement because the financial and emotional investment in a college degree is so significant for most families. Inconsistent guidelines or practices can perpetuate dissatisfaction and frustration for both parents and university faculty/staff (Kennedy, 2009). Given the financial problems that universities face today, many cannot afford to alienate parents because of the significant contributions they make to their students’ tuition. Furthermore, retention concerns affect university ratings, so it behooves the institution to engage parents in support of student academic success (Shoup et al., 2009). Current literature indicates that parent involvement will continue to increase and as such,
institutions should seek to implement policies and services that engage parents appropriately in
the education of their children (Cullaty, 2011; Hirsch & Goldberger, 2010).

**Research Problem and Research Question**

One of the biggest barriers to parent involvement that universities must address with
parents and students is the restriction of communication contained within the Family Educational
Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the Buckley Amendment. FERPA
regulates the disclosure of a student’s educational records and provides students with certain
rights that include access, consent, challenge, notification, and confidentiality of financial
information (Cutright, 2008; Weeks, 2001). The importance of FERPA is evident because any
institution that receives federal funding, including federal student loans, must comply with
FERPA or risk losing all federal funds (Lowery, 2005). As the primary source of financial
assistance, parents become easily frustrated by the stipulations associated with FERPA
requirements when they are unable to access information (Coburn, 2006). In response to parent’s
questions, college and university faculty and staff may find it easier to invoke FERPA privacy
laws when parents inquire or intervene on their student’s behalf, but this hard-lined response
usually only serves to frustrate parents because higher education’s cost has increased a
consumerist mentality in higher education (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Others may acquiesce to
demands in the name of “customer service” or to avoid other political implications, such as a
parent advancing the problem to the president’s office (Lum, 2006). Either approach is
frustrating and inadequate for both parents and the faculty or staff.

In order to maneuver the emerging student-parent-university relationship, universities will
need to assist faculty and staff with training and resources as they seek to embrace parents as
partners with the ultimate goal of increasing student success. Current literature demonstrates this
awareness is occurring for student affairs professionals (Wartman & Savage, 2008), but lacking in information relevant to the experiences faculty have with parents (McDonald, 2011; Wilson, 2004). Therefore, an exploration of faculty exchanges with parents should be conducted to understand the nature and extent of faculty-parent interaction in order to assist faculty as universities attempt to manage parent expectations and involvement. An understanding of parental involvement in higher education is vital for university administrators and faculty given the substantial time and energy required when responding to parents and the support they offer their child (Keppler et al., 2005). Current literature suggests that parent involvement will continue to increase and as such, institutions should seek to develop goals and implement services that engage parents appropriately in the education of their student (Bridges, Heiman, Hyer, Wright, & Heiselt, 2011; Cullaty, 2011; Sax & Wartman, 2010).

The goal of this research study is to explore the complexity of parent involvement in higher education by understanding the views and the perspectives of one key constituency within the student-university-parent tripartite: the faculty member. Given the lack of empirical literature regarding faculty members' experience with parent involvement, this research has potential to glean understanding and insights into the experiences faculty members have with parents who attempt to intervene on their students’ academic behalf.

The purpose of this research is to better define the phenomenon of parental involvement in higher education through an investigation of the experiences and perceptions college faculty have related to parental involvement in student academic progress. Specifically, this study asks: “How do certain faculty members explain and make sense of parental involvement regarding traditional-aged undergraduate students’ academic progress at a private, religiously-affiliated, high research activity institution?” This research is specific to Baylor University in Waco,
Texas enrolling approximately 14,000 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students. The Carnegie Foundation classifies Baylor as a doctorate granting university with “high research activity.”

**Theoretical Framework**

When exploring parental involvement in higher education, the concept of social family capital (Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1990) provides an important context for understanding the phenomenon. This study specifically draws upon the use of family capital theory by Swartz (2008) and Gofen (2009) to provide context as to why parents are increasingly more involved in their child’s collegiate experience. Family capital as a theoretical framework helps to recognize and highlight the ways families continue to directly influence their child’s future beyond K-12 education and into college, and may help explain why there is an anecdotal increase of parents contacting their student’s faculty with academic concerns. As Rossi and Rossi (1990) note, parents enact helping patterns throughout their children’s growth and development and well into adulthood. As such, this pattern of provision and support is unlikely to cease when their children advance on to college, particularly given the financial costs are more significant. Detailed within this section is the background of the family capital theory and its application to higher education.

**Social Capital**

Pierre Bourdieu (1985) provided the first conceptual definition of social capital as related to the acquisition of power and resources. Specifically, the definition he offered is: “The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248). Portes (1988) further clarifies Bourdieu’s definition by stating that it is the social relationship between individuals that provides the means by which both the quality and quantity of resources
are acquired or shared, through the intentional investment of both economic and cultural resources.

Coleman’s (1990) concept of social capital further clarifies the relational aspect, particularly as it relates to the influence of family in the provision of resources. As such, this theory has long captivated the attention of researchers and leaders because of its potential to address ongoing problems within education (Dika & Singh, 2002; Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Coleman (1990) states:

Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structure and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. (p. 302)

For the purposes of this study, it is noteworthy that Coleman identifies the family as a key means by which social capital is formed and transmitted. More specifically, social capital is developed and shared through “the relations between children and parents” (p. 110), and reflects the time, effort, and resources that parents invest in their children. Specifically, Coleman states that “unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons” (p. 302). He further references three mechanisms through which parents or families transmit social capital to their children: (1) the investment of time with, and effort toward, children; (2) the development and acquisition of strong family relations; and (3) the establishment of well-defined guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (p.590-597).
According to Portes (1988), commonalities within the literature as to the definition of social capital include: (1) the significance of both personal and potential resources; (2) the acquisition and utilization of resources, as influenced by one’s ability or inability to incur said resources; and (3) the structure and quality of social relationships. These commonalities shed great light into the concept of parent involvement and help to explain the nature of parent-student relations in college, as well as the high investments made, both financially and personally, for a higher education degree. Resultantly, social capital theory frequently provides the framework cited within K-12 research as to the correlation between high parent involvement and student success (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Furthermore, it provides necessary context into the specific use of family capital as the theoretical framework for this study.

Soria and Stebleton (2012) describe the importance of acknowledging social capital’s influence on higher education because it can provide helpful context for anticipating and understanding the decisions that families will make related to college attainment and academic matriculation. Walpole (2003) states: “Parental expectations and definitions of success vary with social status and mediate student aspirations” (p. 23). In other words, the social capital one possesses will influence the awareness and knowledge aspects of needed resources related to academic preparation in high school, college choice and application processes, financial resources, as well as how to further maneuver and advance all of these aspects while actually enrolled in college. In Perna and Titus’s (2005) research on the impact of parent involvement on college attainment and enrollment, they conceptualized “parent involvement” as a form of social capital that consists of knowledge and resources that parents provide their children in order to facilitate college enrollment. It is this notion of parent involvement as an aspect of social capital
that has provided a launching pad for the specific use and application of family capital theory within higher education to help further clarify the trend of increased parent involvement in higher education today (Swartz, 2008).

**Family Capital**

Family capital is typically referred to in the literature as an extension of social capital and defined within the social capital context as the ability of children to secure benefits by virtue of parental social networks or supports (Portes, 1998). As such, the term “family capital” represents the norms, experiences, resources, and overall support parents provide their children that are valuable for their development and advancement (Coleman, 1990). Within the educational context, family capital emphasizes the values and priorities parents and family members place on education in general and higher education specifically (Gofen, 2009; Swartz, 2008). With respect to higher education and parent involvement, Swartz (2008) asserts that family capital provides a helpful context for recognizing and highlighting the ways families continue to directly influence their children’s life well into adulthood, particularly with respect to helping students to be successful in higher education. Therefore, Swartz defines family capital as the “aggregate of family resources” (investments and efforts) that can be mobilized to advance attainment and class achievement of one’s children (p. 15).

Swartz maintains that the contemporary transition to adulthood in the United States has become increasingly complex and prolonged (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Settersten, Furstenberg & Rumbaut, 2005). Until the start of the 21st century, adulthood was generally assumed to occur after high school ended and students moved out of the family home to begin living a more independent life that included work, marriage, parenthood, or extended education (Arnett, 2000, 2004). However, with increased need for higher education to achieve
career goals, and increased parental responsibility for financing their child’s higher education (Hamilton, 2013; Johnstone, 2005), families have absorbed the increasing costs of the prolonged transition, thus delaying adulthood beyond college. As such, family capital becomes increasingly more important, valuable, and applicable to higher education.

**Family Capital and First-Generation Students**

Research has demonstrated a strong link between the educational level of parents and the achieved educational level of their offspring, signifying to a large extent that children inherit their parents’ educational level (Crosnoe, Mistry, & Elder, 2002; Solon, 2002). Gofen (2009) examined the experiences of individuals who attained higher education, whereas both parents had not, therein breaking the cycle of “intergenerational inheritance of educational level” (p. 104). Traditionally known as “first-generation” students, they are the source of a growing trend and concern within higher education (Ishitani, 2006; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004). The majority of the early literature on first-generation students was comparative to non-first-generation students providing significant understanding into the educational, financial, familial differences (Horn & Nuñez, 2000; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999), but as Gofen noted, little is known about the process by which those students become first in their family to attend college.

Gofen (2009) therefore examined the experience of 50 first-generation students through the lens of family capital. Using qualitative research methodology, Gofen discovered a consistent theme in that the students attributed their academic progress and success to their families’ encouragement and involvement. Further, Gofen concluded that the key to breaking the cycle of intergenerational inheritance of educational achievement involves a way of conducting family life that consistently prioritizes education through both material and
nonmaterial resources. It was the messaging that parents provided, coupled with structured activities (doing homework, saving for college) that fed the desire and way for college attainment, but while the student was in college, it was the day-to-day parental support (material as well as emotional) that fueled the student’s desire to continue to completion. In this research light, Gofen defined family capital as, “the ensemble of means, strategies, and resources embodied in the family’s way of life that influences the future of their children. Family capital is implicitly and explicitly reflected through behavior, emotional processes, and core values” (p. 107). Gofen further implied that educational policies and institutions should target both the individual student, as well as their families, in order to improve college attainment and retention.

**Conclusion**

The concept of family capital captures the various ways in which parents affect the future of their children, through both the material and non-material social resources they provide students while in college. Use of family capital theory is an appropriate strategy for this research given K-12 parenting practices are extending into higher education and will provide a solid context in which to understand how college faculty experience parent involvement in academic coursework. The family capital theory relates to this doctoral study in that it can both help inform and explain the nature of parent involvement today within the higher education classroom and how institutions can best prepare faculty, parents, and students regarding each constituent’s expectations, roles, and responsibilities.

In sum, the aspiration of this study was to add to the parental involvement in higher education literature by exploring the experiences and perceptions of faculty members who experience parental involvement in student academic progress at a comprehensive institution in the southwest. The organization of the remaining chapters is as follows: Chapter 2: Literature
Review; Chapter 3: Research Design; Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis; and Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications for Practice.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this research is to better define the phenomenon of parental involvement in higher education through an investigation of the experiences and perceptions faculty have related to parental involvement in student academic progress. Specifically, this study asks: “How do certain faculty members explain and make sense of parental involvement regarding traditional-aged undergraduate students’ academic progress in a private, religiously-affiliated, high research activity university?” Therefore, to fully understand the impact of parental involvement on college faculty, this chapter will provide an overview of the existing literature relevant to the changing nature of parental involvement in higher education and analyze the philosophical and practical implications.

Research keywords considered within this literature review included: parental involvement; in loco parentis, FERPA, colleges and universities; higher education; helicopter parents; Parent and Family Services. Questions of the literature that guided this review included: What is parental involvement in higher education? How has parental involvement in higher education changed over time? What factors contribute to parental involvement? What is the nature and extent of parental involvement? How does parental involvement impact student development? What are the philosophical and practical considerations for all constituents? What are institutions doing in response to parental involvement?

This literature review is divided into four major sections: (1) the historical and legal environment that has informed the relationship between the university, student, and parent; (2) current context for parental involvement, including factors that influence parental involvement; (3) impact of parental involvement on students; and (4) institutional response to parental involvement.
The Evolution of Parental Involvement in Higher Education

Parental involvement on college and university campuses has been evolving in important and challenging ways. Parents of today’s traditionally-aged college students have systematically inserted themselves into the traditional student-university relationship over the past several decades. This emergent tripartite relationship has proven challenging given the variance between parental role perception and the legal definitions of the student-university affiliation (Zick, 2010). Legally, the student-university relationship is contractual in nature with the student acknowledged as a legal adult and the university defined as the provider of services (Stamatakos, 1990). Within this context, a distinct divide exists between the participant role parents’ claim for themselves and the legal realities of the defined student-university relationship. In short, parents have greater expectations with respect to influence and participation than the courts or universities have acknowledged. Furthermore, the contractual relationship between students and universities has perpetuated an increase in consumerist expectation, especially in light of dramatically rising costs of higher education and greater accountability for degree attainment (Melear, 2003). A historical review of the role parents have played in higher education will provide important perspective for the current context.

In Loco Parentis

Beginning with the colonial colleges, the Latin phrase, *in loco parentis*, which translates as “in the place of a parent,” provided the legal doctrine that gave the university the ability to stand “in the place of parents to the students entrusted to their care” (Jackson, 1991, p. 1136). This doctrine dominated legal courts and granted faculty and administrators with substantial parental authoritative latitude with respect to student expectations (Stamatakos, 1990). It was formally recognized as a judicial declaration in 1913 with the Kentucky Supreme Court’s
decision in *Gott v. Berea College*. This landmark decision reinforced the philosophy that colleges and universities had the same authority over students as parents by ruling that Berea College could prohibit students from patronizing local restaurants because the college stood *in loco parentis* and could enforce supervisory rights as they deemed appropriate.

Of important notation and clarification for the influence of *in loco parentis* on the institution-student-parent relationship is the fact that the doctrine provided insularity from judicial interference with a university’s ability to enforce its own set of expectations and disciplinary actions (Henning, 2007; Lake, 2001; Peters, 2007). Just as a parent is not expected to provide a child with due process or rationale for expectations or discipline, the same latitude was provided to colleges and universities. The courts in this era of *in loco parentis* were reticent to interfere with matters between the student and the university and as such, universities were afforded extensive sovereignty in the development and enforcement of regulations for students. Interestingly, the institution’s responsibilities related to duties owed, such as safety and graduation, were not doctrinal constructs generally applied within *in loco parentis* (Henning, 2007; Melear, 2003). In sum, parents entrusted their child into the care of the university, abdicating parental rights in lieu of the potential future gains for their child. Lake (1999) notes, “A parent sent a “child” off to college – entering into an agreement with the institution – and delegated certain supervisory and disciplinary powers in the process” (p. 4).

The 1960s ushered in the decline of *in loco parentis* as the doctrine that guided the relationship between the university, student, and parent (Henning, 2007; Jackson, 1991). Edwards (1994) cites five reasons for this fall: 1) increased number of older students; 2) age of majority was lowered to 18 years of age; 3) a liberal shift in societal and student thinking; 4) a rise in the civil rights movement; and 5) a general rise in rebellion against authority. Bickel and
Lake (1999) added a sixth factor related to economic rights and concerns of students and parents. With these societal issues, the role of the parent within the university context became even further diminished, as students became known as “adults” with legal rights within the university setting and a contractual relationship developed between the institution and student, each with rights and responsibilities.

**Societal and Legal Changes**

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the student-university relationship was radically redefined to emphasize the student as an “adult” with associated privileges and responsibilities, and the *in loco parentis* doctrine that had dominated and isolated higher education from judicial courts was essentially defunct (Lake, 2001). *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* (1961) is the legal case most often cited as marking the shift away from *in loco parentis* in higher education. *Dixon* was a landmark case because it set forth new doctrine regarding the privileges between colleges and students by uprooting deeply entrenched legal immunities surrounding judicial decision-making (Peters, 2007). Thus, the *Dixon* decision essentially debilitated the doctrine of *in loco parentis* because “due process” is not a lawful aspect of parental obligations (Melear, 2003).

Furthermore, the civil rights movement of the 1960s inspired student protests on campus and demands for freedom intensified. Students demanded “less paternalism and increased accountability for services rendered” (Melear, 2003, p. 125) and in 1971, the 26th Amendment lowered the right to vote to citizens from 21 to 18 years of age. This formally established the student as an independent “adult” and in this transition, transformed colleges and universities into a provider of services, and students (and/or parents) the consumer (Melear, 2003). The student as a consumer paradigm was further instituted within the framework of higher education.
with the establishment of Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) (Henning, 2007). FERPA regulates the disclosure of a student’s educational records and provides parents and students alike with certain rights that include access, consent, challenge, notification, and confidentiality of financial information (Cutright, 2008; Weeks, 2001). However, these rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends post-secondary education. The importance of FERPA is evident because any institution that receives federal funding, including federal student loans, must comply with FERPA or risk losing all federal funds (Lowery, 2005).

As a result of the changes in governmental regulation and societal changes, increased legal responsibility was a significant theme throughout the 1980s and 1990s as students and parents demanded more accountability for services rendered. For the first time ever, the courts began intervening on behalf of the student when the university’s regulations and procedures became unlawful or conflicted with public policy.

In particular, colleges and universities struggled with an implied expectation of “duty to care” around safety and protection. Increased litigation challenged the courts to rethink the roles and expectations of students and their universities, resulting in “constitutional and contract law” as the replacement to in loco parentis doctrine in higher education (Stamatakos, 1990). These increased judicial rulings surrounding tort liability meant universities had to develop and implement increased policies and procedures to protect themselves, as well as their students (Bowden, 2007). This shift toward student consumerism, coupled with substantial growth in college attendance numbers, is still reflected today “in the intense marketplace competition among institutions and a recognition that students have economic and property interests which deserve legal protection” (Beckham, 1984, p. 30).
Current Context for Parental Involvement in Higher Education

In 1985, Cohen published a book entitled *Working with the Parents of College Students*. Considered a “progressive and timely publication” (Daniel & Scott, 2001, p. 1), it aided college and university administrators in understanding the role that parents now played in this consumer-based setting. In light of a steady increase in parental involvement in higher education, Daniel and Scott offered a second publication in 2001 named *Consumers, Adversaries, and Partners: Working with the Families of Undergraduates*. This publication specifically aimed to “help college personnel create productive learning experiences for the students” (p. 1) by providing much-needed context and information about the increase in parental involvement, their influence on students, and strategies for managing parental needs and expectations. Within the next ten years, “parental involvement” began to dominate the professional conversations at higher education association conferences and more publications about parental involvement were advanced (Carney-Hall, 2008; Keppler et al., 2005; Sax & Wartman, 2010) in an effort to deal with this new phenomenon on college campuses. By the beginning of the 21st century, a new reality had dawned for college and university leaders, administrators, and faculty in which most parents of undergraduates were active participants in their student’s college experience. In particular, a highly relational parent-student association was challenging the dynamic of the traditional university-student relationship and represented the need for universities to adjust to this new cultural norm (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Lum (2006) writes:

Once upon a time, parents would help their children move into dorm rooms and apartments, then wave goodbye for the semester. Not anymore…baby boomers see no
reason why that hands-on approach should change just because their children have moved out of the house and onto campus. (p. 40)

Carney-Hall (2008) describes parents as “co-investors” in their child’s post-secondary education, in large part due to the hands-on approach applied throughout their child’s life (Coburn, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Lum, 2006; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Parental Involvement Defined

Self-imposed or provided, inclusion of parents in the collegiate setting is now labeled “parental involvement,” a term previously utilized in the K-12 educational sector (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Federal and state guidelines and funding emphasize and mandate the importance of parents in the educational process for children. A typical parent of today’s traditional college student has worked closely with teachers and administrators from preschool through high school to ensure their child’s success for learning and advancement, and fully expects to continue in this vein throughout post-secondary education as well, especially given the substantial financial commitment expected of families (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006). Simultaneously, cultural changes in highly-relational parenting styles have also intensified the parent-child relationship, and created a backdrop for higher education in which students also demand their parents’ involvement throughout their higher education.

For higher education settings, however, what does parental involvement mean or require? For colleges and universities seeking to work collaboratively with parents, Wartman and Savage (2008) offer the following definition of parental involvement:

Parents showing interest in the lives of their students in college, gaining more information about college, knowing when and how to appropriately provide
encouragement and guidance to their student connecting with the institution, and potentially retaining that institutional connection beyond the college years. (p. 5)

This definition demonstrates the university’s recognition of parents as important and necessary for student success, while also establishing boundaries for their involvement. A less positive definition that seems to prevail is that of “helicopter parenting.” This concept infers parents “hovering” or becoming overly involved in the lives of their children and demonstrating extreme intervention behaviors on behalf of their student (Cline & Fay, 1990; Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, Bauer, & Taylor-Murphy, 2012; Somers & Settle, 2010). Due to extensive media coverage of “helicopter parenting,” this image is largely considered the norm for parental involvement in higher education, when in actuality it only resembles parents who aggressively interfere (Coburn & Treeger, 2009; Lum, 2006).

A more formal definition provided within recent literature includes: “What is colloquially referred to as ‘helicopter parenting’ is a form of over-parenting in which parents apply overly involved and developmentally inappropriate tactics to their children who are otherwise able to assume adult responsibilities and autonomy” (Segrin et al., 2012). Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) propose that “helicopter parenting” is a unique pattern of the traditional parenting dimensions. They describe this pattern as high on parental warmth/support, high on control, and low on granting autonomy. Despite much anecdotal evidence, little is known about its existence and consequences from an empirical perspective. To that end, LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011) examined the phenomenon of helicopter parenting from an empirical perspective in order to assess its existence and consequences. The results of their study suggest helicopter parenting is negatively related to psychological well-being and conclude that the “concerns that college and university administrators have about the negative
consequences of overprinting may be warranted” (p. 412). They also conclude that helicopter parenting should be examined in the larger context of today’s parenting styles as parents are generally more involved with the children than former generations.

**Means and Frequency of Involvement**

Parental involvement constitutes any number of behaviors in which parents interact with their child and/or the university concerning the collegiate experience. These actions can include requests for information about university resources, processes, or to express concern on behalf of their student or themselves (Keppler et al., 2005). Student issues, such as roommate conflicts or academic progress, are frequently brought forth by parents with full expectation that their call or email will result in an immediate resolution of the issue at hand (Merriman, 2007). As a result, parent interactions with university staff and faculty have risen significantly over the last several decades (Daniel & Scott, 2001; Mullendore et al., 2005). A national study of student affairs professionals in 2006 found that 93 percent of respondents indicated that within the last five years, their interactions with parents had increased almost 50 percent and the nature of parent calls was to resolve problems on behalf of their student (Merriman, 2007, p. 15).

The topic of conversation between students and their parents is generally focused on the students’ concern with issues related to academics, finances, or relationships (Wartman & Savage, 2008). But it is the daily stresses of college, coupled with the ability to communicate instantly, that frequently impels parents to intervene on behalf of their student. Coined “dump phone call,” by Kastner and Wyatt (2002), is a student’s emotional and seemingly disastrous cry for help to their parent as a result of a situation in which the student feels helpless or out of control. The “dump phone call” is essentially a “distillation of the worst parts of their experience” (p. 151). This type of call often precedes the parent making a call or sending an
email to a person of authority. Regrettably, these situations can be exasperating for everyone except the individual with the initial problem – the student. Parents can be left feeling frustrated because their child is feeling hurt or discouraged, especially if they were unable to resolve the situation to their satisfaction (Merriman, 2007). Meanwhile, the university official is irritated with the student’s lack of independence and initiative to resolve the concern on their own.

Frequent communication with parents has both benefits and drawbacks. Interesting, students whose parents often intervened on their behalves reported higher levels of engagement, increased gains related to desired college outcomes, and greater satisfaction with the college experience (NSSE, 2007). However, these students also had lower grades, suggesting that some parents may have intervened because their children were having academic difficulties as opposed to personal or social (Shoup et al., 2009). Collectively, the literature surrounding parental involvement factors conclude that parents have invested a great deal of time, energy, and financial resources in their student, and therefore will continue to be acutely involved and retain significant expectations of the university (Carney-Hall, 2008, Coburn, 2006; Keppler et al., 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

One of the biggest barriers to parental involvement that universities must address with parents and students is the restriction of communication contained within FERPA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act of 1974). FERPA frequently challenges the relationship between parents and the university because it establishes barriers for parents who attempt to gain information related to their child, such as how their child is performing academically (Weeks, 2001). Often as the primary source of financial assistance and significant contributor, parents become easily frustrated by the stipulations associated with FERPA requirements when they are unable to access information they feel entitled to since they are paying the college bills (Coburn,
FERPA requirements do allow universities to disclose some information to parents about dependent students and to disclose health and safety information, but FERPA’s regulations can be misunderstood as some communication aspects can vary by institutional philosophy (Lowery, 2005). In 1998, FERPA’s parental notification policy was updated as a result of parents arguing successfully for changes in FERPA so that they would be notified of some student conduct issues (Wilson, 2004). Under Parental Notification, higher education institutions can disclose to a parent or legal guardian information regarding violation of any law or institutional rule or policy related to alcohol or drugs. This amendment applies to any student under the age of 21 and an institution is given the right to determine if the student is in violation of the rules of the institution (Barr, 2004). This change in FERPA, initiated by parents, helps to shed some light on the changing ways in which parental involvement is impacting college and universities.

Factors that Contribute to Increased Parental Involvement

Throughout the literature, a number of factors, or reasons, have been offered for the increase in parental involvement in higher education (Arnett, 2000; 2004; Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006; Daniel & Scott, 2001; Hofer & Moore, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Keppler et al., 2005; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Wartman & Savage, 2008). These factors include: (1) parenting style changes; (2) K-12 parent involvement; (3) the rising cost of tuition and ensuing consumerism, and; (4) advances in technology that increase communication between parents and students.

Parenting Styles. Stearns (2004) notes that the 20th century was coined “the century of the child” because of unprecedented focus societal on child health and welfare. In the last half century, parenting styles changed dramatically, particularly related to parent-child relationships
and the role that parents assume related to orchestrating their child’s education (Coburn, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2007). This hands-on approach involved exposing children to a multiplicity of activities and opportunities, along with high expectations related to academic success as preparation for a college education (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Parents today are interested in what their children are doing and learning, and acknowledge that they are much more involved in their child’s life than their parents were when they were children (Wartman & Savage, 2008). They gain a sense of personal pride in their child’s accomplishments and the time and resources parents devote to their children exemplifies the immense responsibility parents feel for their child’s advancement in life (Carney-Hall, 2008).

The theme of protection has also been highly prevalent related to the change in parenting styles, with special emphasis on infant car seats, bicycle helmets, toy recalls, negative effects of excessive television, and amplified in light of horrific child abductions, school shootings, etc. (Carney-Hall, 2008). As such, parents have a judicious level of concern for the safety of their student while on campus. In the wake of campus tragedies (e.g. Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University), concern for student safety is a primary reason associated with increased parental involvement in higher education (Lowery, 2005; Merriman, 2008).

**K-12 Parent Involvement.** A main antecedent for the increased parental involvement in higher education over the past twenty years can be attributed to the connections developed between schools and parents within the K-12 schooling system (Carney-Hall, 2008; Daniel & Scott, 2001; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Legislation regarding the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) contributed significantly to the culture of increased parental involvement. This act “set forth very specific expectations regarding school-family communication and engagement” (Kochhar-Bryant & Bassett, 2002, p.
Parents are generally accustomed to schools that overtly solicit their participation and seek their input and opinions.

K-12 educators have long since discovered that parent–school partnerships can be harnessed as a tool to improve student achievement and prevent behavioral problems in school (Epstein, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). More specifically, higher levels of parental involvement have been found to predict improved homework skills among students (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), greater educational aspirations (Hong & Ho, 2005), and increased academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). As such, awareness of K-12 parental expectations and roles provides helpful context, information, and insight for higher education faculty and staff as to the patterns of behavior and expectations parents bring into higher education. It also sheds light as to why some parents are surprised or frustrated with higher education’s attempts to keep parents at bay through the use of FERPA (Savage, 2008).

Cost of Higher Education and Consumerism. Parents have emerged as significant partners in the financial aid process in large part due to decreased state funding for public colleges and the reuse of tuition dollars into merit scholarships at private institutions (Johnstone, 2005). “Higher education in the United States has long been sponsored by parents’ funds. Over time, however, the burden on parents has grown heavier and more substantial” (Hamilton, 2013, p. 70). As college tuition has risen, parents’ personal financial investment in their child’s education also increased and at a rate that significantly outpaced inflation. Kennedy (2009) calculated that between 1995 and 2004, the cost of attending a public university has increased 71 percent and the cost of attending a private university 98 percent, whereas the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that inflation only rose 24 percent during that same time period (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007).
Given the increasing "sticker price" of a college education, it comes as no surprise that institutions of higher education face increasing pressure from students, parents, and state legislators alike to ensure that students are getting the most out of their college experience. Despite upward tuition costs, this investment is viewed as compulsory and necessitous because of the widespread reality that college graduates earn twice as much as individuals with a high school diploma (Wartman & Savage, 2008), further amplifying the consumeristic aspect of higher education. Because parents view higher education as something they purchase for their child, the collegiate experience as a whole is considered a product or service rather than an educational experience (Coburn & Treger, 2009; Falkner & Savage, 2007). This consumerist mentality brings forth expectations of excellent customer service and student success in college. Mullendore et al. (2005) describe the educational consumer experience as “money has been exchanged and satisfaction should be guaranteed” (p. 3). Therefore, parents have a heightened interest in how their student interacts with the university as a whole (e.g. academics, safety, social, etc.) and if the university education or experience is not meeting expectation, parents frequently believe they are entitled to express their discontent, make requests, and demand how the problem should be resolved (Ingram, 2003; Falkner & Savage, 2007). In many ways, the significant financial investment in their child’s future has perpetuated for parents an amplified interest in all aspects of institution and a perceived need to manage their child’s collegiate experience.

**Technology.** Recent Pew Internet and American Life surveys indicate that technology is an integral part of the lives of undergraduate students (Smith, Rainie, & Zickuhr, 2011). Cell phones, text messaging, Skype® or FaceTime®, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and email all provide students and parents with the ability to instantly communicate with each other,
regardless of physical distance. This constant contact increases the amount of daily information that is shared between parents and students. The 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2007) found that seven in 10 students communicated “very often” with at least one parent or guardian during the academic year. A survey of more than 10,000 undergraduates found that more than half of the students kept in frequent contact with their parents by telephone several times a week and nearly 64 percent e-mailed parents at least weekly (Wolf, Sax, & Harper, 2009). Parents also initiate communication as demonstrated in a survey by College Parents of America (2006) which found that 34 percent of parents communicated with their child at least once a day and 74 percent of parents communicated with their child at least two to three times per week (p. 2).

Hofer (2008) has labeled communication technology an “electronic tether” in which parents can use technology to closely monitor their college-student children despite the physical distance. Certainly, for today’s parents who are understandably concerned about maintaining relationships and about being assured of the safety, academic success, and well-being of their children, the instant connectivity provided by technology is extremely important. College students frequently report appreciating the ability to connect with their parents at a moment’s notice for advice or support, and are satisfied with the amount of contact they have with their parents (Hofer, 2008; Sorokou & Weissbrod, 2005). However, female college students do make more frequent calls to family than males (Wei & Lo, 2006; Wolf et al., 2009).

Impact of Parental Involvement on Students

Traditionally, the college experience has been seen as a time for growth and self-discovery, as well as developing independence and learning to navigate the academic and social challenges of college. It is often the first major, long-term, physical separation from parents that
children will experience (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Taub, 2008). But today’s rapidly evolving communication technology now challenges the notion in that it provides college students and their parents with the ability connect instantly at any time and about any matter, and therein, raising concerns about negative impact on a student’s ability to develop autonomy and independence. However, the literature about the impact of parental involvement on student development is varied and mixed (Sax & Wartman, 2010).

**Student Development**

After the demise of *in loco parentis*, many student development theories were advanced as a means for defining the new student-university relationship (Sax & Wartman, 2010; Taub, 2008). With students legally declared as adults, student development theories developed in the 1970s rarely addressed the role of parents, other than the process of students developing independence and identity apart from parents (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Taub, 2008).

In the collegiate setting, parents’ efforts to minimize or eliminate issues of concern for their child causes anxiety for university staff and faculty who believe that college is a time for students to develop autonomy (Cullaty, 2011). Independently grappling with issues and tasks is a means of developing maturity and self-efficacy (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). From a student development perspective, “helicopter parenting” can interfere with a student’s developmental processes by providing too much support and not enough challenge (Sanford, 1966). Taub (2008) clarifies:

> When parents tackle challenges instead of allowing students to do so, the students are deprived of the experiences by which they would develop intellectual, interpersonal, and physical and manual competence. It is only through struggling with challenges in these areas that the competencies can be developed. (p. 17)
However, recent literature purports that parental involvement is not overly detrimental to the development of students in college and, in fact, may be helpful in areas of academic success and retention of students. Shoup et al., (2009) used data from the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to evaluate the impact of highly involved parents on student engagement and learning. Their research revealed that students with highly involved parents were more engaged in campus activities, demonstrated higher gains in learning, and possessed increased satisfaction with their institution.

Parental involvement among college students has also been linked to higher levels of academic engagement, more likelihood of conversing with professors, greater overall satisfaction with college, greater perceived critical thinking, and a greater sense of freedom to make decisions (Indiana University, 2007; Pryor, Hurtado, Sharkness, Korn, DeAngelo, Romero, & Tran, 2008; Wolf et al., 2009).

**Emerging Adulthood**

Arnett (2000; 2004) classifies the phase between adolescence and adulthood as "emerging adulthood" and argues that it represents a new life stage, reflective in part due to societal changes in parenting. Increased schooling and delays in marriage and child-bearing are also reasons for this shift. Emerging adulthood includes five distinct elements that include: (1) *feeling in-between* (do not see themselves as either adolescents or adults); (2) *identity exploration* (including work, relationships, love, and world views); (3) *focus on the self* (lacking in obligations to others); (4) *instability* (frequently experience changes in residences, relationships, work or education); (5) and *a perception of countless possibilities* (optimism as to the direction of their life).
Arnett distinguishes emerging adulthood from adulthood because the latter infers self-reliance such as financial independence and independent decision making. Furthermore, 18-25 year old individuals in college do not consider themselves adults (Arnett, 2000, 2004; NSSE, 2007). Padilla-Walker, Nelson, and Carroll (2012) state: “Taken together, theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that emerging adulthood is not a period in which young people gain independence, but rather are striving to become independent individuals (i.e., self-reliant)” (p. 51).

Arnett’s theory of emerging adulthood is applicable to the parent-student relationship in that college students are in a phase of life in which they are making independent decisions and learning self-responsibility, but frequently still rely on their parents for emotional support and financial assistance. Furthermore, many parents today feel a sense of obligation or desire to continue caring for and guiding their children well past the beginning of their collegiate experience (Aquilino, 2006; Arnett, 2000).

**First-Generation Students**

First-generation college students figure prominently within higher education, both in percentage of undergraduates enrolling in colleges and universities, and also for the rates at which they depart prior to obtaining their desired outcome of a college degree. Students in postsecondary education whose parents did not attend college comprise one of the larger demographics in higher education today (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). This constituency is defined in the majority of literature and higher education enrollment management as “first-generation students,” because they are the first in their family to attend college (Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). First-generation students face a number of
challenges that significantly impact their academic success and retention; most notably, a lack of parental knowledge and prior experience with higher education (Choy, 2001).

Despite the unknown environment of higher education, growing numbers of first-generation students are entering colleges and universities with expectations of better pay and increased employment options in recognition that a bachelor’s degree is a necessity in this competitive economy (Wartman & Savage, 2008). The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2009 that nearly 71 percent of high school graduates were enrolled in a college or university (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Amidst this increase of students in higher education today, first-generation students frequently experience a difficult adjustment to the college setting and academic expectations (Tinto, 1993; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Sadly, a grim reality exists for first-generation students who are twice as likely to leave four-year institutions as compared to students whose parents graduated from college (Choy, 2001).

Increasingly, the literature validates the disadvantages first-generation students face as they enter postsecondary education. Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, and Nora (1996) specifically state that “the combined portrait of first-generation college students is one of students at academic risk” (p. 16). The differences are substantial and prominent between first-generation students and “continuing-generation,” who are students whose parents graduated from college (Pike & Kuh, 2005). These differences include race/ethnicity, lower socioeconomic status, academic achievement, college choice, and familial support (Terenzini et al., 1996). Parental involvement has long been associated with educational achievement in K-12, but also serves a strong predictor of post-secondary educational success (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). Furthermore, the literature also supports the importance of cultural and social capital that parents pass along to their children with respect to higher education (Gofen, 2009; Perna & Titus, 2005).
For the first-generation student, a lack of parental post-secondary cultural and social capital can affect the student’s potential for success (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). Parents of first-generation students who have not experienced college may be at a loss when attempting to support their children’s academic endeavors. Choy (2001) and Terenzini et al. (1996) note that first-generation college students perceive their parents to be less understanding or supportive of their academic challenges than do continuing-generation students. Wartman and Savage (2008) assert that both first-generation and continuing-generation parents are emotionally supportive, but “parents who have been to college themselves and know the system provide support in different ways from parents who have never been to college” (p. 92).

Institutional Response to Parental Involvement

As parents have inserted themselves into the student-university relationship, institutions have been caught off-guard with their expectations for involvement. Furthermore, almost every university office, faculty, and staff interact with parents today. An understanding of parental involvement in higher education is vital for university administrators and faculty given the substantial time and energy required when responding to parents (Keppler et al., 2005). As such, institutions should seek to develop goals and implement services that engage parents in a meaningful and mutually satisfying manner (Bridges et al., 2011; Cullaty, 2011).

In the last decade, several best practices have emerged as essential including an institutional philosophy to guide parental involvement, engaging parents as partners, and the establishment of a department that that leads parent and family services. In many ways, parent expectations are redefining the student affairs’ profession, especially as administrators interact with parents with increased frequency and intensity (Merriman, 2008). As such, higher education needs a more coherent and systematic approach for engaging parents as the university
often struggles with defining boundaries and establishing programs that address the growing involvement of parents, particularly with respect to student academic progress.

**Institutional Philosophy**

As universities adjust to the changing relationship, a philosophy that guides service, practice, and organizational structure has proven imperative for institutional success (Carney-Hall, 2008; Keppler et al., 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Parents have substantial influence over their students and they can be a valuable resource in partnering toward the institution’s goals for student development, retention, and graduation (Shoup et al., 2009). The literature regarding parental involvement consistently directs colleges and universities toward the development of a comprehensive and institutionally-specific philosophy that guides parent involvement (Merriman, 2007; Mullendore et al., 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008). As universities experience increased involvement from parents, higher education has experienced challenges balancing the differing philosophies of student development and parental consumer expectations (Savage, 2008). When multiple administrative and academic areas of the university interact with parents, inadvertent or incongruent messages may abound regarding the preferred level of parental involvement, especially if there are no defined outcomes for parental involvement or university expectations/guidelines for communicating with parents (Kennedy, 2009).

Savage (2008) describes the general existence of two models of parental involvement that exist within colleges and universities today: the “student development” model and the “financial development” model (p. 68). Programs within the student development model are founded in the desire for student success and engaging parents in that pursuit. Parental involvement is guided by the understanding of university processes and procedures, while also aiding parents to
understand the university’s goal of student development. With respect to student development, Coburn (2006) describes the need to educate parents about the process in which students develop while in college and the important role that parents and families can play in their student’s success. Educating parents on important key university resources aids with issues of transition, especially in the first year of college (Keppler et al., 2005). Furthermore, helping parents to understand student transitional issues and struggles, and the importance of students developing self-efficacy and autonomy, aids in the advancement of their child into adulthood after college (Taub, 2008).

Whereas with the financial development model, the university’s primary objective in working with parents is to encourage future financial donations through the parents or to ask for their assistance with contacts for other possible donors. Unfortunately, the placement of parent services in University Development may suggest that extra effort or accommodation can be provided to those who donate (Mullendore et al., 2005).

Wartman and Savage (2008) describe how many universities are now attempting to do both models, but out of separate offices, as both needs are vital to the university’s success. According to a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the Council for Aid to Education states that parents contributed over $500 million in 2011, up more than fifty percent from 2001 (Quizon, 2011). As a result of increased giving to colleges and universities, at least 500 institutions have started parent-giving programs within the last decade (Savage & Petree, 2009). The trend in increased giving by parents of college students is important because it signifies a high rate of satisfaction with the institution and is another example of how parents are increasingly active in the lives of their students while in college (Quizon, 2011). However, Wartman and Savage (2008) wisely caution institutions not to let family income or SES “dictate
institutional policy regarding the school’s definition of family-school relationship” (p. x).

Services should target all parents, not just those who have the ability to donate financially or positively influence the institution publicly.

**Communication**

The communication of consistent messages across the campus is vitally important as it can guard against parental frustration or instances of excessive demands or influence. In response to some parent’s questions or concerns, faculty and staff may find it easier to invoke FERPA privacy laws at first inquiry. This hard-lined response usually frustrates parents, especially those who pay the tuition costs. Other institutions may acquiesce to demands in the name of “customer service” or to avoid other political implications, such as a parent advancing it to the president’s office. Merriman (2007) cites that 42 percent of surveyed parents indicated that they would make a call to the university president’s office if they felt their first attempt at intervention was unsuccessful (p. 18). When parents do contact administrators with concerns, diverting the control of the problem from the parents to the student is one of the best means for diffusing dissatisfaction for all. Therefore, it is essential that all faculty and staff receive training regarding parent and student culture, and how to enact the university’s philosophy of working with parents more consistently (Merriman, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Coburn (2006) offered multiple considerations for deliberation when developing and communicating the university’s relationship with parents. These items include:

- Understand and assess the parents.
- Develop an institutional philosophy and goals/outcomes for parent involvement and clearly communicate these to all constituents.
• Educate parents about student development and appropriate/inappropriate involvement.

• Educate staff and faculty about today’s parents and best practices when offering assistance or intervention.

• Develop intentional programmatic priorities such as family orientation programs, family weekends, or regional gatherings.

• Create a point of contact for parents with questions or concerns (p. 15).

With respect to student development, Coburn (2006) describes the need to educate parents about the process for how students develop while in college and the important role they play in their student’s success. Educating parents on important key university resources aids with issues of transition, especially in the first year of college. As experts in student development, student affairs administrators are in a favorable position to help parents understand transitional issues and the importance of student self-efficacy and autonomy (Taub, 2008).

Conducting an assessment of parent needs and expectations is an important mechanism for the development of programs and services that will assist the university in serving this constituent. For example, the University of Minnesota distributes the National Survey of College and University Parent Services every other year since 2000 and collects parent data from 261 American and Canadian institutions (Savage & Petree, 2009). In the 2009 survey, the researchers compared the percentage of institutions that utilized seven specific initiatives for parents. These included parent/family weekends, parent orientation, newsletters, parents council, fundraising, welcome week/move in, and a parent handbook. Parent orientations were the most highly rated (97 percent), along with parent and family weekends (90 percent) (p. 14). The expressed popularity of these events on the behalf of parents illustrates how important and vital it
is for institutions to help parents feel welcome and involved by sharing in key university events with their student.

**Parents as Partners**

Many universities are developing a “parents as partners” model that may be helpful in facilitating a mutually satisfying student-university-parent relationship (Carney-Hall, 2008; Henning, 2007; Keppler et al., 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008). This model encourages universities to manage parental involvement in the following manner: “maximize their influence, minimize interference, and keep all energies focused on student success” (Carney-Hall, 2008, p. 2). Rather than feeling at odds with parents, colleges and universities should publicly acknowledge and capitalize on their shared desire for student success through the establishment of clear expectations. Developing outcomes for parents provides necessary context for the university’s values and federal privacy laws can be communicated upfront. Highlighting programs and services that assist parents in their child’s collegiate experience demonstrates the university’s care for the student and their commitment to parental involvement (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Creating university programs and services that includes parents in their child’s collegiate experience also communicates value to parents and acknowledges the importance of shared experiences and their close-knit familial relationships (Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Henning (2007) offers a model that specifies the need for partnering with parents. The *consortio cum parentibus* (in partnership with parents) model asserts that as “recent changes in higher education have reshaped the relationship between colleges, students and parents, so too have the rights and responsibilities of each group” (p. 547). In this model, parents are regarded as stakeholders in the student’s success at the university and become partners with the university in promoting and assisting with students’ collegiate success, both in and out of the classroom.
Faculty and staff are encouraged to discard the traditional bi-lateral two-way relationship between the university and students (excluding parents), and instead, embrace a tri-lateral relationship that involves university faculty and staff, students, and parents. While the primary relationship remains between the student and the university, the partnership model emphasizes parents as a valuable resource to both the student and the university. Furthermore, university staff and faculty would respond to parents and not hide behind student privacy laws, and work collaboratively with both students and parents to increase academic learning and student development.

**Parent and Family Services Offices**

Given parents’ increased level of involvement in the lives of college and university students, identifying a centralized office for parents validates their role and worth within the university. Savage (2008) denotes the need for parent service departments as universities attempt to manage parent expectations and involvement. Furthermore, it provides a consistent source for channeling parent questions and concerns that is both customer-service friendly and productive, while not taxing on other university personnel across campus (Merriman, 2007).

When considering the future of parent services on college campuses, one trend has already emerged. Many institutions with parent services offices are changing the name of the department to Parent and Family Services (Bridges et al., 2011). The purpose behind the name change is an intentional effort to be more inclusive through the formal acknowledgement of other family members within the student’s personal support system (Sax & Wartman, 2010).

**Summary**

College students and their parents approach higher education as a collaborative effort (Carney-Hall, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2007). With the rise of parental involvement in recent
years, it is increasingly apparent that the student-university relationship is now triangular in nature as parents have inserted themselves into the higher education equation. As a student enters college, their parents are both emotionally and financially invested in their child’s collegiate experience, and the expectations for student success and graduation are of vital importance (Carney-Hall, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2007). If the university can carefully guide that care and concern, parents can be excellent allies in student development and retention efforts (Shoup et al., 2009). In order to maneuver the emerging student-university-parent relationship, universities will need to embrace parents as partners with the ultimate goal of student success, while developing appropriate relationships based on clear understanding of expectations and outcomes that can only be achieved through an intentionally communicated philosophy that guides institutional structure and practice.

Wartman and Savage (2008) note that because many parents are familiar with engaging K-12 teachers in the education of their child, universities should anticipate parents will expect a similar level of access and communication to university faculty. Enigmatically, the target audience for the current literature on effective parental involvement in higher education is student affairs professionals (Carney-Hall, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Given the identified lack of literature regarding faculty members' experience with parent involvement (McDonald, 2011), this research will provide insights by understanding how faculty perceptions of parent involvement informs and affects their interactions with both parents and their students. Of particular interest to this research study is the following quote from Wilson (2004) in which she states:

As Baby Boomer parents have fought successfully for changes in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act to allow notification on some student conduct issues, might they
also work for greater sharing of academic information? Might more parents begin to
contact faculty to monitor student progress? (p. 66)

Therefore, an exploration of faculty interactions with parents should be conducted to understand
and generalize the nature and extent of faculty-parent interaction in order to assist faculty as
universities attempt to manage parent expectations and involvement, while also better
positioning the university as a whole to support student learning and development through
increased retention of all students.
Chapter Three: Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to better define the phenomenon of parental involvement in higher education through an investigation of the experiences and perceptions college faculty have related to parental involvement in student academic progress at a private, religiously-affiliated institution. This chapter explains the utilized research questions, the research design and tradition, and the methodology used for data collection and analysis. A description of the study site and participants will follow, along with noted study limitations and measures undertaken for validity and credibility and the protection of human subjects.

Research Questions

Utilizing qualitative research methodology that seeks to understand “the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43), this research project explored the academic nature of parental involvement for college faculty at a private, religiously-affiliated institution. The primary research question for this doctoral research study was: “How do certain faculty members explain and make sense of parental involvement regarding traditional-aged undergraduate students’ academic progress at a private, religiously-affiliated, high research activity institution?”

Despite widespread attention toward increasing levels of parental involvement in higher education, and enormous administrative and personnel resources being channeled toward parents and families of college students today, scholarly literature has paid little attention to the consequences of parental involvement for faculty (Sax & Wartman, 2010; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Therefore, the research question sought to contribute to the body of knowledge on parental involvement in higher education by examining parental involvement through the experience of college faculty and how it impacts their role as instructors. The use of five
secondary research questions provided further insights toward a rich description of the faculty experiences with parental involvement: (1) What are the primary reasons for the interaction?; (2) How do faculty view parents who intervene on behalf of their student?; (3) How do faculty perceive students of parents who intervene on their behalf?; (4) How do faculty respond to these interactions?; and (5) What type of support do faculty members want or need with respect to parental involvement? These secondary questions were critical to the understanding of the primary research question in that they aided in keeping the research focused on academic issues related to parental involvement and provided further clarity into the research subject.

Methodology

Research design involves analyzing “assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry” that informs the method used in research (Schwandt, 2001, p. 161). According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), qualitative inquiry is an expansive approach used to study social phenomena (such as parental involvement in higher education) and utilized by researchers who are interested in understanding or seeking to change a social phenomenon. Creswell (2013) states: “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). Merriam (2009) further clarifies that qualitative researchers are “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 13). Taking these qualitative research definitions into the context of the above stated research questions, a qualitative research approach was both applicable and appropriate for this research study as it provided insight into individual faculty members' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement relevant to their students’ academic progress.
Additionally, basic qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon with a goal of extending knowledge that may inform future practice (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Given the lack of academic literature regarding the lived experiences of faculty members and parental involvement in higher education, this research can be utilized to inform future practice and/or research.

Research Tradition

A phenomenological approach to qualitative inquiry is often used to explore the lived experiences of several individuals with a common phenomenon, focusing on what the participants have experienced individually and how meaning is ascribed (Creswell, 2013). Merriam (2009) coins this desired outcome as “the essence or basic structure of experience” (p. 25). As such, the primary means for data collection within qualitative inquiry is interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon through the use of broad, general questions (Creswell, 2013). This ultimately provides the means by which shared or common experiences can be distilled and identified. Based upon the nature of the research questions and lack of empirical research around faculty members’ experiences and perceptions with parent involvement, the intention of this basic research project was to use qualitative research design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the selected methodology.

Smith (2004) explains that IPA is a suitable research approach when attempting to understand how individuals perceive a particular situation and how they make sense of it within the greater context of their world. More specifically, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012) define IPA as “concerned with understanding personal lived experience and thus with exploring persons’ relatedness to, or involvement in, a particular event or process (phenomenon)” (p. 40). To this end, research participants must be individuals with relevant experiences and willing to
share and reflect upon the matter, which requires the researcher understand the issues relevant to the subject matter. As opposed to testing a predetermined hypothesis, the aim is to explore an issue in a manner that is flexible and interpersonal through the use of loosely guided interviews and systematic qualitative data analysis. Analytic interpretation, combined with verbatim participant statements, provide a narrative account that illuminates the research matter.

Smith et al. (2012) explain that IPA has three “theoretical underpinnings” in that of (1) phenomenology; (2) hermeneutics; and (3) idiography. Phenomenology is concerned with the way in which one perceives and interprets events; or, to examine one’s experiences. As applied, IPA methodology focuses on the lived experiences of individuals and “posits that experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 34). Hermeneutics is a branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation. IPA utilizes interpretation in the analysis of first-hand accounts of individuals’ reflection upon their lived experience. Finally, idiography involves the study or explanation of individual cases or events. IPA is idiographic in its approach to examining and analyzing single cases to inform general statements, while still valuing the individual’s statements.

In conclusion, as Smith et al. state: “IPA research is always concerned with the detailed examination of lived experience” (p. 47). While general phenomenological studies tend to focus on a common experience, such as love or being angry, IPA focuses on “personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 45). This focus on how participants make sense of their experiences makes IPA particularly suited to the research aims of this study. The data to be collected will provide essential information relevant to the legal and professional challenges faculty experience when parents seek their assistance regarding their students’ academic progress.
Research Site

With phenomenological studies, researchers should provide a rich detailed description of the environment in which the phenomenon under study takes place (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Within an IPA study, site and participants are selected intentionally allowing “one to find a defined group for whom the research problem has relevance and personal significance” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 10). Baylor University, a private, Christian university located in Waco, Texas, was chosen for this research study because it is a nationally ranked research institution with a reputation for educational excellence and faculty commitment to teaching and scholarship. Classified as "high research activity" by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Baylor’s institutional mission is “to educate men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community.” The 2015 fall semester enrollment was 16,787 total enrollment (14,189 undergraduate and 2,388 graduate/professional students) from all 50 states and 92 foreign countries. Racial or ethnic minority students comprised 34 percent of the freshman class. Forty two percent of entering freshmen were in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class with a mean SAT score of 1230 and mean ACT score of 27.7. The student to faculty ratio is 15 to 1 and the average undergraduate class size is 26. Eighty-eight percent of entering freshmen return to Baylor for their second year. Baylor offers degrees in 142 undergraduate programs, 75 master’s programs, 41 doctoral programs, and a juris doctorate. The average annual cost of tuition, housing and board, and general fees is $56,796, with approximately 90 percent of Baylor students receiving some form of financial assistance. Students with a Baptist religious affiliation comprise 28 percent of the group, while 14 percent are non-denominational Christian and 17 percent are Catholic (Baylor University, 2015).
**Participants**

The participants sought for this research were faculty members (lecturer, senior lecturer, tenured or tenure-track) from assorted disciplines who teach predominantly first-year students and have experienced parental involvement with regard to students’ academic progress on at least three occasions during their instructional tenure at the research site. Smith et al. (2012) state that participants are “selected on the basis that they can grant us access to a particular perspective on the phenomena under study” (p. 49) and are willing to openly share their perspective and insight through a semi-structured interview.

In keeping with sample selection methods for qualitative research (Merriam, 2009), purposeful sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was utilized to identify participants. Use of purposeful sampling provided this investigator with the ability to identify and select faculty from assorted academic departments across campus who indicated they had experienced parental involvement with respect to a students’ academic progress. Smith et al. (2012) describe this as “purposive homogeneous sampling” (p. 49) because the individuals under study embody a perspective as opposed to a population. Although the individuals in this research study are faculty, they are also faculty members who have experienced parental involvement in their work as instructors.

Purposeful sampling requires the researcher to determine the selection criteria that will provide for “information-rich” experiences to be gleaned from selected participants (Patton, 2002). The purposeful sample criteria intended for participants in this study included faculty members who: (1) teach predominantly first-year student courses; (2) have experienced contact (email, phone, in-person) with a parent of a student enrolled in their course at least once a semester for the last several years so that the faculty member can recall multiple situations in
which parents’ sought their assistance regarding concern for their student’s academic status or progress; and (3) are willing to participate in a research study in which they would be interviewed and asked to share their personal experience regarding encounters with parents. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and no incentives were provided.

Smith et al. (2012) recommend choosing a sample from referrals or using opportunities from one’s own contacts. Therefore, participants were identified using “snowball sampling” which Merriam (2009) defines as a sampling technique for identifying participants in which the researcher shares the participant criteria with an individual and asks for a recommendation in the form of name(s) and contact details of individuals who they believe may have experience with the subject matter. Recruitment began by sharing the desired participant criteria via email with approximately 40 faculty members with whom the researcher works with on a regular basis. When referrals are offered, an “interest inquiry/request to participate” email that outlined the purpose of the study and participation requirements was sent to the nominated individuals. An option to refer others was also included in this email. Once participants agreed to participate in the study, a phone contact will be made with them to converse in brief the study’s aim and discuss their eligibility to meet the identified purposeful sampling criteria. In total, 64 recruiting emails were sent over the course of three weeks, with ten faculty ultimately agreeing to participate and met purposeful sampling criteria. A face-to-face interview was then scheduled.

Sample size is generally referenced as a matter of quality as opposed to quantity (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Smith et al., 2012). IPA, in particular, stresses the need for a “concentrated focus on a small number of cases” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 51) in order attain a detailed account of the individual experience. The final participant sample included ten faculty from a variety of academic disciplines across campus.
Participant Profiles

Ten qualified faculty members were selected for participation in this study. For the purposes of this study, *qualified* was defined as current Baylor University faculty members (lecturer, senior lecturer, tenured or tenure-track) from assorted disciplines who teach predominantly first-year students and have experienced parental involvement with regard to students’ academic progress on at least three occasions during their instructional tenure. It was very important that participants could recall multiple occasions in which they had experienced parental involvement in order to ensure that participants had adequate opportunity to reflect upon their experiences.

The gender breakdown of the faculty members was seven men and three women. Years of instruction ranged from 13 to 47 with an average of 22.6. Table 2 provides an overview of participant demographics relevant to this study.

Table 2  
*Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Academic Discipline</th>
<th>Number of Years Teaching</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Hard Sciences</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>Hard Sciences</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Hard Sciences</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemony</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>Hard Sciences</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morty</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudgy</td>
<td>Hard Sciences</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharina</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ten participants provided a diverse group of educators with a variety of academic discipline backgrounds which contributed depth and dimension to the study. The wide range of
years teaching also provided for rich content related to participants reflecting through multiple years with respect to their experiences with parental involvement.

**Data Collection**

Prior to any contact with potential participants, Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted permission to conduct this study. IRB approval was also granted by Baylor University to conduct the doctoral research study on site. The approval documents are included and can be viewed in Appendix A and B. Semi-structured interviews provided the means by which a rich description and full understanding of the lived experience was attained. Smith et al. (2012) describe it as “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 57). As such, the “purpose” consisted of the research questions, while the “conversation” involved the participant’s sharing and reflection. Research questions were generated in a “sideways” (p. 58) manner consistent with IPA subject, meaning that questions were composed of relevant topics to the subject matter of parent involvement, so that in turn, the research question could be answered through the data analysis of transcripts. The aim was to “enter the participant’s lifeworld” (p. 58) through a semi-structured interview schedule that allows for a broad understanding of the experience, as well as the meaning the participant has applied to this experience. Additionally, the choice of a semi-structure interview as the sole source of data for the study is inherent to IPA methodology and demonstrates the immense value given to the participant’s experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon being studied.

The researcher was the only interviewer for this study and one interview was conducted with each of the ten participants. Interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes based on the extent of experience the faculty member had with parents as described through the interview questions (Smith et al., 2012). At the start of the interview, the participants were presented with a written
informed consent form (Appendix C) which documented details of the project, including the qualitative nature of research entailing direct quotes to demonstrate generated themes. The participants were given the opportunity to read the document and then prompted for any questions and signature approval.

The interviews were conducted using an interview guide that assisted with the structure and content of the meeting (Appendix D). In accordance with IPA, the structured questions within the interview guide sought to ascertain a deep and rich understanding of the individual’s experience that began generally and funneled downward to more specific inquiry and reflection (Smith et al., 2012). Each interview was audio recorded for transcription purposes and two password-protected recording devices were utilized to ensure no technical issues prevented the interview from begin adequately recorded. This enabled the researcher to listen and engage in the conversation as opposed to attempting to take extensive notes. Each audio recording was individually coded with the participant’s selected pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality. Following each interview, all of the interview audio recordings were uploaded to Rev.com transcription service which emailed verbatim transcripts of the interviews within 24-48 hours. Within one week, transcripts were reviewed by the researcher while listening to the audio recordings to correct transcriber mistakes or inaudible sections. This process aided significantly in data familiarity and analysis. Furthermore, memos capturing observations, impressions, speculations, and ideas regarding the interview were developed immediately following each interview (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data Storage

Data storage is an integral aspect of the research study’s integrity (Creswell, 2013). Transcript data was stored on the researcher’s personal password-protected laptop computer and
in a protected cloud-based service. Hard copy data such as emails, signed consent forms, interview protocol guides with hand-written notes taken during interviews, audio tapes, and transcripts have been stored in a file and locked cabinet in the researcher’s home. All electronic and hard-copy files and materials will be destroyed once the dissertation is completed and in accordance with Northeastern IRB and Baylor University standards and timeframes.

Data Analysis

As suggested for novice IPA researchers, and described in Smith et al. (2012), the researcher closely followed the recommended six steps for IPA analysis of the collected data. This multi-step process provided the means by which viable data, including superordinate and subthemes, were identified through an iterative and inductive lens (Smith, 2008) in attempt to understanding the participants’ lived experience as faculty members interacting with parents. This included:

1. Reading and re-reading: This is the researcher’s initial encounter with the verbatim transcripts while listening to the audio recordings. In doing so, the researcher was able to make any necessary correction to the verbatim transcript text. When repeated two more times, this provided an opportunity to listen and actively engage with the data. A single transcript was read and re-read before moving onto the next to allow for focus and familiarity.

2. Initial noting: This step involved a time consuming line-by-line process utilizing MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, to produce a comprehensive and detailed set of codes and comments. It required a detailed and thoughtful examination of the participant experiences, concerns, and perceptions through the
notation of descriptive (content-based), linguistic (process-based), and conceptual (interpretative) comments.

3. Developing emergent themes: In this step, codes and comments within MAXQDA were printed out and sorted by number, patterns, and connections that created a set of emergent themes. These emergent theme designations were then attached to codes within the MAXQDA system.

4. Searching for connections across emergent themes: A chart was developed of all identified themes (and subsequent codes) in accordance with the research questions. Codes or themes that were not relevant to the research questions were removed. Themes that were similar or related were clustered and a superordinate theme was designated and recorded in MAXQDA.

5. Moving to the next case: In this step, the same first four steps were followed with the next participant’s transcripts. Careful attention was taken to examine subsequent interview transcripts through a bracketed or fresh perspective in order to allow for new themes and ideas to emerge.

6. Looking for patterns across cases: This step is the most creative in that it entails developing a table of superordinate and subthemes that are linked to textual examples from the participant interviews. Quotations within MAXQDA were then updated to reflect final designation of superordinate and subthemes titles.

In sum, IPA’s phenomenological component emphasizes and gives credence to participants’ concerns and cares. It further challenges the researcher to comprehend how the phenomenon has been understood by participants based on their first-hand experiences, and then interpret, what does this mean for this person in this context? Finally, the overall outcome
“should be a renewed insight into the ‘phenomenon at hand’ - informed by the participant’s own relatedness to, and engagement with, that phenomenon” (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006, p. 117).

Validity and Credibility

During the course of the research study, the researcher made concerted efforts to ensure the validity and credibility of the data collected. As recommended for use in IPA studies and described in Smith et al. (2012), Yardley (2000) offers four characteristics of good qualitative research which were used to guide and assess this study. Yardley’s criteria include: (1) sensitivity to context; (2) commitment and rigor; (3) transparency and coherence; and (4) impact and importance. Sensitivity to context highlights the multi-faceted aspects of qualitative research. Sensitivity to context is demonstrated initially through an extensive review of the applicable literature and placing the research question within an appropriate theoretical framework and research methodology (Smith et al., 2012). For this research study, an extensive literature review was completed that demonstrated its context within previous research and theory. Since IPA research relies on interviews as the data source, sensitivity to context was also achieved through purposive random sampling and interpersonal interviewing. Finally, sensitivity to context is demonstrated in the data analysis that entailed verbatim raw data and use of exact statements that aid in supporting and explaining the derived themes.

The second characteristic, commitment and rigor, can also be demonstrated throughout a research project in multiple ways. Yardley (2000) defines commitment as “prolonged engagement with the topic” (p. 221) which is a foundational aspect of IPA data analysis. Specifically, Smith et al. (2012) state that “to begin the process of entering the participant’s world it is important to enter a phase of active engagement with the data” (p. 82) through the use of repeated readings of the verbatim interview transcripts. Rigor is also reflective in the
researcher’s immersion into the data, but also speaks to the scope and entirety of the research study with respect to demonstrating a thoroughness of the participants’ experience through use of an informed interview guide and use of the six-step analytical and interpretation process. “Good IPA studies tell the reader something important about the particular individual participants, as well as something important about the themes they share” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 181).

Thirdly, Yardley (2000) speaks to the need for transparency and coherence. IPA research seeks to “enhance transparency by carefully describing how participants were selected, how the interview schedule was constructed and the interview conducted, and what steps were used in analysis” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 182). This characteristic speaks to the researcher’s ability to openly describe and summarize all aspects and steps of the research conducted and how summations were obtained. Coherence “describes the ‘fit’ between the research question and the philosophical perspective adopted, and the method of investigation and analysis undertaken” (Yardley, 2000, p. 222). This research is summarized with thoughtful and careful writing after extended engagement with the data and the analysis that ensued.

Finally, impact and importance refers the theoretical and practical contributions of the overall research study and is described as “the decisive criterion by which any piece of research must be judged” (Yardley, 2000, p. 223). This is ultimately determined by the intended audience or readers as opposed to the researcher. The intent of this research was to be useful, helpful, and enlightening in light of the increased presence and relevancy of parental involvement in higher education, coupled with lack of research relevant to the experiences and perceptions faculty have with regard to parents. Implications and recommendations of the findings are provided in effort to achieve this criterion.
Member checking served as a tool to ensure the accuracy of data and clarify potential bias (Creswell, 2013). Once the verbatim transcriptions were completed, the participants were provided a copy and asked to review their interview transcripts in order to confirm, edit, and/or clarify anything said. Only three of the ten responded to this offer. However, when themes and quotes were later provided to the participants, a higher response was achieved with seven of the 10 approving the themes and supporting quotes. Finally, Smith et al. (2012) discuss the merit and use of an “independent audit” as a powerful means of ensuring validity (p. 183). Conducting this research under doctoral supervision helped to ensure quality, but the researcher’s own efforts to demonstrate transparency and rigor aided in that endeavor as well.

**Limitations**

Willig (2001) states that the limitations involved in the use of IPA research methodology involve the role of language, suitability of accounts, and explanation versus description. Because interviews were the means by which information was collected, one of IPA’s criticisms is that “language does not constitute the means by which we can express something we think or feel; rather, language prescribes what we can think and feel” (Willig, 2001, p. 56). Language was the sole mechanism for the participants to describe their experiences and perceptions of parental involvement, so it is important to acknowledge that one’s verbatim interview transcript does not always describe the entire experience. The words a participant may use to answer an interview questions could be limited by any number of things, including any number of distractions or first-time reflections on subject, not to mention possible misinterpretation to some extent because of differing experiences. Conducting interviews in quiet areas, informing participants of nature of study and subject, purposive sampling, and member checking were all efforts extended to aid in improving these noted areas of limitation.
On a personal bias note, a limitation within this study also pertains to the professional differences between the researcher and the faculty members that participated in the research study. The primary researcher is a student affairs professional, not a faculty member. While this individual’s specific work in Residence Life has certainly provided extensive parental involvement in day-to-day work, the fact remains that the researcher has not personally encountered the topic under study; that being what faculty members experience with regard to parental involvement or concern for their students’ academic progress. Furthermore, as a parent of children within the K-12 education system, the researcher has personally experienced the positive benefits of teacher-parent communication and involvement. As children leave high school and enter college, it is relatively easy to understand the challenges FERPA presents with respect to that parent-teacher communication that positively impacts academic success.

Additionally, given that the “lived experience” under study is highly contextualized, it is difficult to evaluate the transferability of the findings of this study to other institutions or to university and college faculty as a whole (Smith et al., 2012; Willig, 2001). Given this research was conducted with faculty who teach at a private, religiously-affiliated, high research activity institution, the findings from this study will be limited and may only be transferable to private or religiously-affiliated institutions. The experiences of faculty may be radically different at other institutions that are less expensive, have lower academic requirements for incoming student admission, less residentially-based, less traditional aged students, and less research intense as Baylor University.

Finally, this research study only focused on faculty members’ experiences with parents. Because students and parents were not included in this study, it is limited in that only faculty perceptions will be shared as to why parents intervene on their students’ behalf, as opposed to
parents providing actual reasons or motivations. Including parents in this study could have yielded additional insight into the problem of practice.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Interviewing human subjects involves ethical considerations and procedures (Creswell, 2013). As such, this study required the researcher to balance potentially negative consequences for participants with expected beneficial outcomes of the study. This study entailed minimal risk to faculty participants as it only involves reflecting upon their own experiences and perceptions of working with parents, and the faculty member’s specific academic department would not be provided; rather, generalist terms were utilized to describe their academic discipline.

Furthermore, the context of the study did not include vulnerable persons or confrontational or professionally controversial interview questions. As such, the process itself did not cause any real disruption or disturbance for the participants. Finally, no information was sought or shared that could identify a student or his or her parent(s). The only personal identifiable data within the study is in the form of pseudonyms, so that the participants could remain as confidential as possible. If participants referred to students and/or parents, they refrained from describing students or parents by name and used general terms such as “male student,” or “a mother” to protect the anonymity of the student and/or parent referenced.

In accordance with ethical research, an informed consent form was provided to all participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009) (Appendix D). The participant’s signature indicated their agreement to participate in the study and an understanding of the protected rights provided to them as participants, including voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time, full disclosure upfront of the study’s purpose, and access to the information gathered in
the study or the final product (Creswell, 2013). For IPA research in particular, Smith et al. (2012) discuss the importance of also informing participants of “the likely outcomes of data analysis (and particularly, the inclusion of verbatim extracts in published reports)” (p. 53). As such, the informed consent also noted this aspect frequently utilized in qualitative research.

**Conclusion**

An exploration of college faculty interactions with parents was conducted to understand and generalize the nature and extent of faculty-parent interaction. This doctoral research study aimed to assist faculty and universities as they attempt to manage parent expectations and involvement, while also better positioning the university as a whole to support student learning and development through increased retention of all students. Through qualitative design, most specifically IPA, this research project examined the experiences and perceptions of faculty with respect to parental involvement in higher education, specifically related to student academic progress. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with broad questions provided the data necessary to analyze and answer the research question in a valid and reliable manner.
Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this research was to better define the phenomenon of parental involvement in higher education through an investigation of the experiences and perceptions faculty have related to parental involvement in student academic progress. Specifically, this study asked: “How do certain faculty members explain and make sense of parental involvement regarding traditional-aged undergraduate students’ academic progress at a private, religiously-affiliated, high research activity institution?” Identified superordinate and subthemes included: (1) Encountering parents (1.1 University Events, 1.2 Exerting Influence); (2) Responding to Parents (2.1 Frequency of Interaction, 2.2 Enacting FERPA, 2.3 Educating about Resources); and (3) Sense-making (3.1 Cultural Context, 3.2 Concern for Student Development, 3.3 Identifying with Parents). In this chapter, each superordinate theme is introduced, followed by a more detailed presentation of subordinate themes and verbatim interview excerpts. The extracts presented herein were carefully selected because they described the subtheme in a manner that was both articulate and compelling. Table 3 provides a listing of the superordinate themes and their corresponding sub themes that emerged through the analysis process.

Table 3
Identifying Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate Theme</th>
<th>Sub Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Encountering Parents (Situations in which faculty experience parental involvement)</td>
<td>1.1 Positive Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Exerting Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Responding to Parents (How they respond to those encounters)</td>
<td>2.1 Frequency of Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Enacting FERPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Educating about Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sense-making (The process by which faculty give meaning to their experiences)</td>
<td>3.1 Cultural Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Concern for Student Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Identifying with Parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Encountering Parents

The first superordinate theme that emerged in this study provides insights into the situations in which the faculty participants encountered parental involvement. This theme emerged from participants reflecting upon the situations in which they encountered parents attempting to intervene on their students’ academic behalf. Two specific areas of convergence among participants emerged related to the situations in which faculty interacted with parents. First, formal, structured university events provided the main means by which faculty encountered parental involvement. These coordinated campus events provided a legitimate forum for parents to engage faculty in conversations related to academics, but also proved difficult because they were occasionally asked very specifically about a students’ academic progress. Second, faculty also encountered parental involvement in unanticipated or unstructured situations in which parents attempted to gain or provide information or exert personal influence over a students’ academic issue. Thus, the two subthemes discussed here are: 1) University Events and 2) Exerting Influence.

University Events

When asked to openly reflect on what “parental involvement” meant to them as faculty, all participants unanimously referenced university events such as Orientation, Family Weekend, Homecoming, and Graduation. At these events, they were able to interact with parents in a positive, formal environment in which parents and faculty were expected to interact and converse. Jim noted, “My most immediate reaction is Move-In Day and Family Weekend. The times in which parents are supposed to be here on campus and involved.” Kate also affirmed these university events as the time in which she enjoyed interacting with parents when she stated, “Family weekend is a great experience because it’s a time when it feels allowed [to interact with
parents] because the space and setting is provided for us to do so.” Additionally, most participants specifically referenced a “Faculty-Parent Coffee/Tea” event that their academic department held for parents and students during Family Weekend. This event was described by faculty participants as a valuable experience because parents could meet their student’s instructor and get to know them. Morty said, “These conversations are very cordial. They just want to get a sense of what kind of person is teaching their child, and in general, very friendly.” Harvey further affirms these parent coffees as an opportunity for parents to assess for themselves the nature and character of the faculty member as opposed to the student’s depiction:

I really enjoy this event because they're not coming to you with problems. They're coming to support their student and to meet you. And part of it is the parent saying [to their student], I want to meet your professors and see what you're talking about. And see if the guy really does have horns growing out of his head or not [laughter]! You shake their hand and talk for 15 minutes or so about them, and hey, now they've met you and you're a real person.

However, these events are not without some amount of tension or unease around the legal need and expectation for faculty to uphold FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) or student academic privacy. Most participants attributed these parent coffees or teas as a point in which they occasionally encountered parents asking very specifically about their student’s academic progress in their class. Pudgy stated, “They [parents] always come to the Parent Coffee hour. That's where I engage them the most, and they will often want to know how their student is doing in my class.” Sharina echoed experiencing this line of inquiry stating, “I have had some parents that would literally walk up and say, what grade is my son (or daughter) making in your class?” Carol described it as “awkward” because while some parents
acknowledged that they knew they were not allowed to inquire specifically about their student’s grades, they still did so anyways out of anxiety or concern for their student’s academic progress.

Oh, my goodness. It seems that every conversation with the parent of a student who isn't your top “A” student starts with, ‘I know you’re not supposed to tell me his grades, but how is he doing in class? Does he show up all the time? Is he participating?’ Just very curious. Curious and anxious, maybe.

Morty further clarified the privacy dilemma that these social interaction events present for faculty when parents inquire about their student’s academic standing in their class. He states:

But I do think we end up in a tension with ourselves with events like Family Weekend and Faculty-Parent Teas. Sure, it’s a great PR thing, right? But, we’re also opening the door for parents to question us about their student academically, and potentially challenge us if they disagree, or worst case, try to manipulate or strong arm us. It’s like the university wants us to make parents happy and invite conversation, but the one area that they [parents] most want to know about – that being, their student’s academics – is off limits. I’m sure that’s difficult for parents who are used to knowing all those details from grade and high school, and are now paying all this money to Baylor, but not getting all the details they think they are entitled to know.

In response to this fairly common occurrence for faculty, several participants expressed that the university could do more to educate or remind parents about student privacy at events like this. Sharina suggested that “even a statement about FERPA and a couple examples of appropriate and inappropriate questions” could be helpful to avoid or reduce these scenarios. Kate noted a need for “balance” when discussing the issue related to events in which parents are specifically invited or encouraged to attend with their students.
A good university is going to try everything to make everybody feel like they are a necessary part of the team, but there has to be boundaries within that. When we program things specifically to bring everybody together like a big happy family, that's good, but we have to balance that. In reality, what we have here is a big happy family of adults. We have to maintain that, and all the boundaries that you can infer from that.

Overall, faculty participants expressed enjoyment of university events because they promoted positive faculty-parent interaction in general. These events offered the faculty participants an opportunity to positively influence parents in a welcoming and structured setting. With regard to Family Weekend events in which parents could meet and converse with their students’ faculty, participants enjoyed getting to know the students’ family and exhibiting care and concern for the student in these conversations, but also described a corollary for these events in that it often prompted parents to inquire very directly or specifically about their students’ academic progress.

**Exerting Influence**

Additional situations in which faculty encountered parental involvement with respect to student academic progress related to situations in which parents attempted to exert influence in the form of control or insight. As compared to the university-structured events, these situations were largely unanticipated, nor generally welcomed, as they fell outside the boundaries of FERPA because parents were attempting to discuss an academic issue relevant to their student. Several prompts led to these situations in which parents attempted to exert influence: concern for academic progress, students with learning accommodations, and to provide insight or information.
Poor academic progress was the most common situation in which faculty experienced parental involvement. Once grades were published, either mid-terms or final grades, faculty shared that they routinely expected to receive a phone call or email from one or more of their student’s parents expressing concern for the ramifications of the poor grade. Lemony shared,

The most common situation I encounter with parental involvement is when a student in my class receives a poor grade. The parents I hear from are very concerned that their student isn’t going to pass the class, so they want to make sure their student gets back on track. How they react in that moment is really a matter of personality, I think. Some get mad at the student, or me, but in general, most are frustrated about the consequences of that grade and want to fix it and make it go away.

Marion echoes this type of parental response when he states, “Most of the conversation tends to stem from the student coming home, probably at Fall or Spring Break, and the student confesses to the parent about the grade their getting and slants the story so much that I’ve got horns coming out of my head, I’m so ruthless.” Morty notes that his experiences with “high achieving, successful parents are of a whole different nature than parents who are just concerned and want to help their student. It’s like a sense of entitlement that they have because they’ve worked so hard to get their kid to college, or paid so much, so they’re not backing down.”

On a more positive note, much like the K-12 parent-teacher relationship, some faculty noted parents trying to engage them in some sort of shared effort to help improve their students’ academic situation. Jim indicated that frequently in these conversations, the parent wants him to know that he or she is concerned and want to know how they can help their student. “Without affirming their concern about grades because of FERPA, I just tell them that their student needs
to know this too, because that’s where they need to be offering their support or insight – not to me, but to their student.” Carol expressed a similar sentiment when she shared,

I think they believe that we’re in this together… to see that their child passes this class. I try hard to let them know I care, and that I will work to support their student, as they should too, but that we can’t do this ‘together’. It’s certainly because of FERPA, but it’s also because the student needs to learn how to take responsibility for his or her academic performance, not the parent.

One parent constituency that consistently attempted to engage the faculty participants in an effort to exert influence included parents with children with recognized disabilities and registered with the university’s Office of Access and Learning Accommodation (OALA). More often than not within the research interviews, faculty participants brought up students registered with OALA as one of the main sources of their parent involvement in student academic progress. These faculty recognized that parents of children with disabilities that impacted learning were highly engaged with both student and teacher in K-12 for the academic success of the student. Marion stated,

It doesn’t surprise me when parents of OALA students call because they are conditioned over 12 years of doing everything possible to ensure their student progresses and have worked hand-in-hand with the teacher and school system every step of the way. But now, it’s year 13 in college, and many of the rules are changed, especially with respect to talking to teachers.

Noting that he couldn’t recall a semester in which he did not have a registered student with OALA accommodations, Jim stated, “I have no problem helping students with these needs, but it seems that the parents have the hardest time adjusting to college, because they were so involved in K-12, working with teachers, and now do not have those same privileges.” He further noted
that it was those OALA-registered students who routinely signed off on the FERPA waiver so that he could speak with the parents, further leading him to wonder if the student really wanted to do so, or was mandated by the parent. Morty noted one situation in which a student enrolled in his course failed to provide him with his accommodation paperwork. Later on, when the student had failed the class, the mother appealed his course grade because the student was denied proper academic accommodations. Morty noted this as a situation in which “parents can do all the background work, but even so, if their student fails to deliver the paperwork, the parent cannot control the students’ actions in the classroom.” While sensitive to the situation of parents with students with disabilities, most faculty also noted that these parents were the ones most likely to continually intervene on their students’ academic behalf.

Another way by which parents exerted their influence with faculty revolved around situations in which parents wanted to provide insight on behalf of their student. Whether a health concern, or emotional issue, or just general information, faculty routinely encountered parents who would communicate information to them relevant to their son or daughter. In other words, the parent made contact with the faculty member in order to communicate something about their son or daughter. Jim shared his experiences with this type of parent involvement by stating,

Typically, I get an email that says, ‘I’m concerned about Johnny. He’s got a health concern, or a relationship problem.’ Sometimes it’s financial and they want to let me know he’s had to get a part-time job, or work at home on the weekends. Other times, they’ve told me they’re going through a divorce and concerned for their student’s emotional health.”
Carol noted similar instances of parents contacting her with information they feel she needed to know. “This semester I have two parents who are emailing me fairly consistently and giving me insights into what’s going on in their student’s life, such as ‘She’s not getting along with her roommate and having trouble making friends’ or ‘He’s in a new relationship with someone at a different school and we’re worried about the impact it will have on his grades.’” Other participants noted parents who would inquire about upcoming things. For example, Marion said, “I’ve gotten inquiries from parents about what can I do to help my student prepare for the final [exam], or how can I help my student improve their grades? Questions their student should be asking, not them.” Pudgy indicated that he’s received a few emails from parents in which they attempt to explain a poor grade the student received. “They indicated the student had mono this semester and is really struggling to keep up in class, or that the student is in the [school] band and the practices are making it difficult for him to get all his studying done.”

When asked “how do you respond to these situations,” several faculty indicated they appreciated knowing this information and that it didn’t influence how they graded the student, but they still recognized the attempt to garner pity. Jim stated,

There have been a couple of times when I have thought that what I was getting was what philosophers call it ad populum, the appeal to pity, sort of informal fallacy. They weren’t asking me to change anything and they certainly weren’t arguing with me. They did want to lay out the scenario where I might want to exercise some pity along these lines, but I’ve never let that happen.

Carol also noted a similar reaction when she stated, “I feel that these parents are people who know what they're doing because their comments are very carefully crafted to not ask me to do anything but clearly to give me information about why there might be absences or why there
might be lack of motivation.” Sharina also noted that sometimes it wasn’t about the student or academics, but rather, looking for personal assistance. “My daughter’s car broke down. Do you know a good mechanic or shop? Or, my son is sick. Where is the nearest pharmacy?”

When asked if they felt manipulated in these situations, Harvey noted, “It’s kind of an eye roll and an, ‘OK, thanks, I appreciate the information.’” Marion indicated that he responds with an encouragement to have their student come share this information with him and he’d be glad to offer support if so. In all, the general sentiment was that most seemed to appreciate the information more than they felt manipulated per se.

Conclusions

The above evidence represented the situations and circumstances in which faculty encountered parental involvement regarding student academic progress. The main ways in which faculty encountered parents was two-fold – either through formal, structured events such as Parent Teas during Family Weekend, or through parent-initiated contact outside of structured settings. In all, faculty overwhelmingly enjoyed the structured events because interaction between parents and faculty was expected and appropriate for this setting. Faculty were able to meet student’s family members, interact on positive and generally neutral terms, and share personally who they were as opposed to student’s shared perceptions. Whereas faculty recognized these events did include an awkward aspect if parents asked specifically about their students’ academic standing, in general, the conversations with parents that were face-to-face were more cordial and friendly.

Unexpected contact by email or phone was less positive because these contacts were initiated by a parent concerned for their students’ academic standing. Rarely were faculty surprised by parental inquiries, especially after grades were published, but faculty members
identified a definite annoyance to the encounters. The faculty participants knew that parents didn’t have all the information, and without documented FERPA permission from the student, they were bound legally and ethically to keep the student’s academic standing confidential. These are challenging and difficult situations given the one-sided nature frequently presented by parents and the faculty member was unable to defend themselves or correct any untruths or misperceptions. Equally so, it was disheartening to faculty when they experienced parents exerting more interest or influence over the students’ grades than the student themselves.

Most interesting, is the issue of parents contacting faculty in order to provide them with insights or information about the student. This could be a natural outcome of the K-12 parent-teacher relationship in which this is encouraged, but it also could be perceived as a manipulative plea for pity. Given that parents most often contacted these faculty after grades were issued and parents are generally inquiring as to how the grade can be improved, it seems logical to conclude this information is provided as a means of improving the students’ situation or overall final grade. All that noted, participants overwhelmingly appreciated knowing this information and concluded it helped them to better support their student and that it did not bias their grading or student perception in any manner.

**Responding to Parents**

The second superordinate theme that emerged in this study provides insights into the ways in which faculty participants responded to parents. This included reflections on the frequency by which they were contacted by parents, or how often they encountered parents attempting to intervene on their students’ academic behalf. In all of these contacts or conversations with parents, faculty participants described the need to reference FERPA because it provided the rationale and framework for why they as faculty instructors could not answer
parents’ specific questions about their students’ academic progress without the written consent of the student. Overwhelmingly, participants expressed their gratitude for FERPA as it provided an element of protection for both the faculty member and student alike. In spite of not discussing student details, they still expressed a desire to assist concerned parents, so participants frequently described how they would educate parents as to the university’s academic success resources as a means of serving and supporting parents. As such, the three subthemes that signify these specific areas of convergence across participants were: (1) Frequency of Interactions, (2) Enacting FERPA, and (3) Educating about Resources.

**Frequency of Interactions**

With respect to how often faculty participants encountered parents inquiring or intervening on their students’ academic behalf, all expressed that they didn’t feel like it was very often. Kate said, “It's a handful a semester. Maybe three or four.” Jim stated, “It’s less than once a semester,” whereas, Harvey said, “It's like maybe once every two or three semesters.” Harvey clarified that the semesters he taught first-year students was when he encountered more parent involvement. This sentiment was echoed by most of the faculty who felt that parental involvement generally occurred with students in their freshmen year as opposed to upper-division students.

Some noted a difference in parental involvement at Baylor, a private university, as opposed to their experience at a public university. Carol noted, “I was at a public institution before I came to Baylor and I don't remember any parental involvement, positive or negative. When I came to Baylor and experienced both [positive and negative interactions with parents], that was very different for me and certainly not my experience.” Sharina further clarified,
Having come from a state school, I just didn’t talk to parents. There was no expectation to do so, nor real opportunities, like those we have here at Baylor with Family Weekend and the events that the academic departments hold for parents. Even the situations in which parents want information, we always respond respectfully, but within expected limits. Totally different atmosphere here at Baylor.

Lemony noted, “We are a private university, and accordingly it costs more money, but we also acknowledge the Baylor experience as a family experience. We value families and the support they offer their student. I think it’s the general nature of any private university, but especially here at a private, Christian university.”

**Enacting FERPA**

All 10 faculty participants described using FERPA as a response to parent inquiries about student academic progress. Most described the prompts to their FERPA response were related to parents inquiring about students’ grades or scores or class attendance. When asked if parents understood what FERPA was when the faculty member referenced it, most agreed that parents knew what FERPA was due to its similarity to HIPAA, the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, of which one of its primary goals is to protect the confidentiality and security of healthcare information. Pudgy noted, “I’ve never had to explain FERPA to them. Nowadays they know that the medical personnel can’t do it so I’ve never been challenged on that. I just tell them that it’s because of the family rights and privacy of the student.” Lemony noted, "They understand it perfectly because it’s just like HIPAA, but it’s academic."

Despite understanding its existence, most faculty encountered parents expressing irritation with the policy. Kate described that once she mentioned FERPA, she experienced parents being “frustrated by it, because in their minds, it’s not the best thing for the specific
situation in which they are trying to intervene.” Several aspects to this parent frustration to FERPA emerged in the interviews. First, and most commonly referenced, related to their perceived entitlement to the information because they paid the tuition costs. Harvey states, “I always explain it [FERPA], but the parents almost always say, ‘Yes, but I’m the one paying all the money for my child to go to school, so I have a right to see what grades they are getting.’” Pudgy also described parental pushback due to paying tuition fees. “I’ve had some parents through the years who were insistent on getting to know student grades since they paid the tuition.” Morty also shed light into the K-12 difference when he said, “I’m sure it’s difficult for parents who are used to knowing all those academic details from grade and high school, and are now paying all this money, but now can’t know all the details they think they are entitled to have.”

Secondly, parents perceived right to student academic information even seemed to overshadow the legality of FERPA. As Jim noted,

If parents are taking out loans and paying lots of money for college expenses, they don’t want this hard-earned money flushed down the toilet. When you spend this kind of money, you want to know how your investment is going. That’s the dilemma in higher ed., because we rely on parents to pay for this, yet a 1970s law states they can’t have the information.

When parents push back against FERPA, several faculty noted having to emphasize the legality to help parents understand their limitations to the information they are wanting. Harvey said,

I have to respond, ‘Well, sir, you really don’t legally because your student is a legal adult and they have these legal rights over their information. Yes, I know you pay for it, but it
doesn’t entitle you to their information until your student gives me the permission to do
so in the form of a signed FERPA release.’
Similarly, Kate said,

Sometimes I really have to emphasize that it is against Federal Law for me to discuss this
with them. I’ll say, ‘Your child is a legal adult, and I really apologize, but you're going
to have to talk to them directly. Unless they give me permission to talk to you about this
requested information, then I can't without breaking the law. I can't, and won’t, do that.”
When referencing FERPA, faculty then redirected parents to inquire with their student for this
information. Sharina states, “I would tell them, please talk with your student. Your student
needs to inform you about these things.” Carol further emphasizes this need for parents to ask
this information of their students by stating,

I’ll say, ‘The best person to give you this information is your student, so I strongly
encourage you to talk to her. If she has a question, please encourage her to come talk
with me, because based on what you’re telling me, it's clear that we don't have full
understanding between the two of us. I would appreciate it if you would let her know
that I’m more than happy to speak with her.
Some faculty even inform the student that their parent has made an inquiry. Carol says that she
generally asks parents to put their request in an e-mail so that she can copy the student on her
response to the parent's request. She further stated that her response always encourages parents
to dialogue with the student about the concern, but also encourages the student to follow up with
her if concerned for their grade or progress in class. Sharina says, “I will tell them that if you are
concerned, ask them how they feel about the course and the grades they’re getting so far. If you
sense they are frustrated or struggling academically, then please encourage them to meet with me for help.”

Lemony noted,

I’ll e-mail the student to say your parent contacted me about your class project grade, or whatever the issue is, and inform them that I can’t talk with their parent until they’ve signed a FERPA release. That way the student is aware and decides if they want me to talk to their parent or not.

Marion indicates that in addition to redirecting the parent back to the student, he also tells them to ask their student about Blackboard, where he keeps all their grades posted. “If your student will let you see it, you can see all their attendance, every quiz grade, and even the class averages for each quiz, which will give you a better understanding of how they’re performing in the class.”

Finally, when parents continue to push their right or need to know, faculty inform parents of the FERPA release form. Under FERPA, institutions can choose to allow a student to provide written consent through a university FERPA release form that will allow a faculty member to disclose specified information (e.g. grades, attendance, etc.). Clinton described a situation in which a parent called and wanted to argue about a grade his son received. “I said, ‘Well, I’m sorry, but I can’t talk to you about your son’s grades without his permission.’ He says, ‘Fine, I’ll drive up from Houston.’ I said, ‘Okay, you can do that, but again, unless your son signs off on a FERPA release form, I can’t talk with you.’

Harvey describes how the FERPA release often inhibits further discussion.

When parents get involved and demanding, I love FERPA. Because I just say, ‘I'm happy to talk with you, but your student has to sign a waiver in the Registrar's office. As
soon as I get a copy of that, I can legally talk to you about want to know.’ Very rarely do I hear from them, because the students don’t fill out the form or it gets the parents talking to the student and not me. So, that's great. I love that.

Morty described FERPA as “protection,” as did several other faculty participants. Morty said, But with FERPA, and without the student signature [signed release consent form], we’re thankfully prevented from having that conversation and having to defend our efforts to people who weren’t in class all semester and weren’t the people responsible for doing the assigned work. There’s always going to be parents who say I’m doing something wrong as opposed to their child being to blame. So hey, the best way to ever keep from being in that situation is to not have the conversation. I think among faculty, most believe that convincing parents is fruitless, not worth our time, and certainly not our jobs. There are some of us that think that the best way to deal with this is have a more rigid system and FERPA provides us with that.

Carol also references this “protection” aspect to FERPA. "I think, it protects us [faculty] and that's a good thing because I don't like it when people ask me questions that I don't want to answer, or share that information. This allows me in a very non-confrontational way to not answer. That, I think, is really good.

Harvey noted FERPA’s protection for faculty as well when he stated, “In those situations in which parents get involved, I love FERPA. It is added protection against some parents who think that just because they’re paying, or the parent, that they’re entitled to everything.”

**Educating about Resources**

In addition to discussing the legal limitations in conversations with parents about their concerns for their students’ academic progress, faculty participants also shared that a common
response was to discuss academic support resources with parents. Without disclosing information about the students’ academic standing, faculty talked generally with parents about the academic support resources at the university. Marion described that he may get a call or two a semester in which a parent calls or emails inquiring ways to help their student be more successful. Carol also described parents expressing “concern about what’s coming up next for their student” after the semester ended and they moved on more advanced classes in that discipline. Kate said that around final exams, she has occasionally gotten calls from parents inquiring “What can I do on my side to help my student? He’s told us he’s not doing well, and we want to help him.”

In these situations, faculty responded by referencing the university academic support resources available to students. Harvey said, “Here are the resources I shared with students at the beginning of the semester. We have the Paul L. Foster Success Center that has Supplemental Instruction, tutoring, and counselors to advise students on their individual issues, such as test anxiety or how to prepare for finals.” Lemony, Clinton, and Marion also described referring parents to the Success Center’s resources as a good place to start if parents want to advise their student on how to improve their grades and support them.

Conclusions

The above evidence represents the frequency in which faculty experienced parental involvement and the manner in which faculty participants responded to parents who attempted to inquire or intervene on their students’ academic behalf. In general, faculty participants largely felt that the number of parents they encountered was fairly minimal; about one to three times per semester. While certainly an aspect of their work as instructors, no one felt that parents dominated their time outside the classroom. Rather, it was more of a minor inconvenience of
sorts; meaning something that went along with the territory for being a Baylor faculty member and neither negative or positive in general. Participants all noted having to discuss FERPA in every situation because of the nature of the conversations parents attempted to have with their students’ faculty instructor. Be it parents asking the faculty member for information on their students’ class attendance or grades, or inquiries about why students received the grade they did, FERPA served an important purpose for faculty as it guarded them from having to defend their student grading or course content. As such, FERPA was highly appreciated and, in their minds, served an invaluable role for keeping the faculty-student relationship intact and preeminent. In response, faculty participants shared that because they knew parents were ultimately endeavoring to be helpful to their student, they always attempted to generally assist and demonstrate support by educating parents to the multitude of academic support resources available to students at the university.

**Sense-making**

All of the participants in this study have had multiple encounters through their years of teaching in which parents attempted to intervene on their students’ academic behalf despite legal boundaries that prohibited them from discussing student academic records without student permission. The researcher identified three specific areas of convergence among participant perceptions, or sense-making, as to cultural aspects that contributed to today’s parental involvement in higher education including generational changes in parenting styles and technology. Further sense-making involved how they felt parent involvement in student academic progress impacted students, especially from a student development or responsibility perspective. Finally, a third aspect to sense-making involved the fact that all of them were parents themselves, and to some extent, personally identified with these parents with respect to
personal investment and the transition from parenting a child to a young adult. The three subthemes that signify these specific areas of convergence across participants were: (1) Cultural Context, (2) Concern for Student Development, and (3) Identifying with Parents.

**Cultural Context**

Generational changes were certainly a shared perspective among faculty participants as to why parents intervened on their students’ academic behalf. All participants noted the changes in parenting styles through the years as a chief reason for increased parental involvement in higher education. Participant opinions on this aspect were, in general, either neutral or negative, meaning some described high parenting involvement in a matter of fact manner, as opposed to some who expressed their perceived negative views on the generational changes in parenting styles. On the generally neutral viewpoint, Jim described high parent involvement as a cultural way of life when he stated,

> I think parents are more involved in general. It’s quite clear that some parents aren’t involved at all and then there are some that are super involved. Somehow or another, it’s like our politics, parenting today pushes people to the extreme. They’re either *laissez-faire* and they let them do everything by themselves, or they want to do everything for them or with them. I think it’s a cultural way of life for some parents to share life with their child and to be overly involved. They’ve just always done that and don’t know any different.

Carol reflected that most parents and students today in general have a close-knit relationship today and that it carries over into college. “These parents are very interested in what's going on in their classes and in their social lives, because that’s the relationship they had when they were children living at home. I think that's part of this generation of parents.”
Interestingly, it was the participants who had taught the longest that had the least favorable of opinions and insights into generational changes in parenting styles. Pudgy noted, “There’s just a whole more control over children’s activities now than when I was growing up. Parents are way more involved in a child’s life, and have much more knowledge about what they’re children are doing than ever before. Same thing applies to college.” Clinton further clarified when he said that he believed that both children and college students were “less independent in actions and thought compared to students of yesteryear.” Sharina reflected on the difference in teaching as well.

I have noticed differences in the way that parents are involved with teachers. I actually started teaching high school in the 60s. In the 60s, parents would come up, and they would say, ‘If my kid does something wrong, you let me know about it, and whatever you do at school, I'm going to do it at home. Just do whatever you need to do to keep them in line, so just keep me informed.’ It was you and the parent against the child type thing. Now, I've seen that change to ‘my child and I against you, the teacher. I'm going to stand in front of my child and protect my child against you’ type of thing. That culture carries over into higher education too.

Harvey noted similar sentiments of this cultural shift in teaching. “There’s this sense that there’s nothing wrong with my kid, so it has to be the instructor. That’s why parents are so much more involved in academics today because someone has to blame and it’s not their kid’s fault.”

Technology advances were noted by all participants as one of the main reasons that parents intervened on students’ behalf. Morty said, “Technology today allows them to have very close contact with their parents. They talk with them daily and tell them about things that I wouldn't have even thought to share with my parents when I was in college.” Pudgy said, “I hear
them talking all the time to their parents or texting. I’m amazed at how much time they spend doing all that instead of studying! It’s like that is their full-time job as opposed to school work and classes.”

Lemony noted that technology in K-12 can contribute to some of the issues in higher education because K-12 schools provide parents with very detailed information that they now want in higher education. “As a parent, I can go online, see their attendance, see their grades and upcoming assignments, and even see what they ate for lunch!” He noted that parents often want and expect that same type of online access in college too, so it can be a “hard transition.”

Interesting, Marion actually encourages parents to ask for their students Blackboard access if they really want to know how their student is doing academically.

When they contact me and ask me about their students’ grades, I say I can’t legally discuss their grades with you, but I can tell you that all their grades are on Blackboard, and your son or daughter has a password to that account, and you can see all their attendance, every quiz, and even the class averages for those, so you can have a better understanding of how they’re performing in the class. Blackboard is like a lethal weapon for a professor because you can put all your stuff there and the parents don’t have to bother you, they can look and follow that student along, and if you keep your records up and you stick to a detailed syllabus, then a lot of the questions go away because they fully understand what the student should be doing.

Like Marion, Harvey is also an instructor in the hard sciences and he also concurred that “if parents really want to know, it’s all in Blackboard for them to see. Yes, they [parents] may still criticize my teaching style, but facts are facts, and those grading scores are facts, plain and simple.”
Kate described how parents often get involved because “instant communication lets students unload all their minute-to-minute problems onto their parents who are more than willing and ready to listen.” She clarified how this instantaneous nature of communication today impacts the issue of parent involvement in higher education.

Email is a synchronous communication. That means when I'm wide awake at night worrying about it at 2:00 a.m., I can send you an email; one that I probably shouldn't write, because I'm probably not thinking clearly because I'm emotionally involved and my child is upset. It [Email] prevents us from having time to think about our responses. What's a good response, what's a helpful response? What's going to contribute to a good resolution instead of things that are incendiary? Because that happens all the time and definitely something I’ve experienced with parents.

**Concern for Student Development**

Most of the faculty participants discussed concern for the student whose parents intervened too often or too aggressively. Most of the concern centered on the students’ development of autonomy and self-advocacy skills, but also for a perceived indifference on behalf of students to let their parents resolve issues as opposed to them personally. The issue of parents not giving up control was a frequently addressed matter within this subtheme. Jim stated,

I think some parents are just scared to let their child fail. I don’t want to say it’s their fault, but they spent so much time being Border Collies [a herding dog breed] to their children. They have not helped their children acquire the kinds of skills and personal virtues necessary to drive the car, so to speak, on their own, and accept that they’re going to make mistakes, while also learning along the way. When you spend all your life
circling up the sheep and keeping them safe, it’s very hard when you’re not around them all the time to keep that same level of control.

Clinton also described this aspect of control when he said, “They try to edge them in a direction they think they should go instead of letting the students make up their minds.” Kate also reflected on the issue of control when she states, “On the good side, there is a healthy, helpful role they play in which they want to help their child be successful, but on the opposite end, I think it’s about control and not quite being able to let go.” Pudgy further stated, “I think some parents nowadays want to meddle too much and they don’t want their kids to grow up. They want to maintain control and will insist their kids get good grades, even if they didn’t really earn them, just because they think that is important for them to advance.” Morty indicated a similar attitude when describing a situation that a parent advanced to the President’s office because the parent wanted him to allow his child to retake an exam. He said, “Again, just shows the extent that some parents will go to in order to see their kid be successful in college.”

When speaking about a specific student, Carol expressed concern for the student saying, “In some ways I feel a sorry for him because I fear they aren’t trusting him to do this on his own. I trust him though, so that’s another reason why I will sometimes encourage students to not waive their FERPA rights.” Marion also expressed this same heartfelt concern for students whose parents are overly involved.

I really feel sorry for students in these situations because I think the parent is taking an opportunity away from the student to mature. They’re keeping that student in an immature state because they’re not giving them the responsibility to handle their own issues. They’re not trusting that their child can make the “right” decision or change a
situation or outcome for the better. These parents can really hurt their child in the long run.

The other aspect of concern for students whose parents intervene on their students’ academic behalf relates to the student who prefers their parent handle it. As noted in the literature, it is not uncommon for students to hand their phone to a faculty or staff member, and say, “My parent wants to talk to you.” Several faculty participants noted similar experiences. With respect to getting student FERPA consent to discuss academic records, Carol said, “Sometimes I can tell that they want their parent to be involved in these conversations because they will stick up for them.” When talking about the Family Weekend Parent events, Morty said he frequently experiences parents who come to the event without their student. “Yep, Susie or Johnny are sleeping back at the dorm. It certainly demonstrates to me that the student isn’t invested in their parents meeting me, but rather, the parents are the ones interested, or just nosey.” Jim described after hearing from a parent, he sometimes wonders whether the student knew they contacted him or not. “I think, are they either embarrassed or unwilling, so that then the parent says, either to their child, or to themselves, ‘I’ll do it then.’” Carol noted that she’s encountered a few parents who told her not to tell the student that they called, so she would try to follow-up with the student to inquire generally how they were doing and if they needed any assistance. This was done to help the student know that she cared and wanted them to let her know if they needed help or assistance.

**Identifying with Parents**

Despite wishing more parents would let their child develop autonomy and self-advocacy, as parents themselves, all participants discussed feeling some element of empathy or sympathy
for the parents as they attempted to intervene on their students’ academic behalf. Jim, reflecting on being a parent himself, described it as,

I can’t imagine that it doesn’t affect the way I perceive parents who come to me concerned about their child’s academic situation. While I may have some colleagues who might feel like this is vastly inappropriate for a parent to tell me these things, I don’t perceive it that way because maybe I’ve done that before, or may in the future.

Morty also noted the difficulty in wanting to help parents, but also operating within legal limitations. He said,

I can’t help but think of my own identity as a parent whose children went to college. To whatever extent I’ve been successful, I’ve wanted the same for my kids. I think it’s difficult for me as a parent not to have it that way and we want to do all that we can to make them as successful as possible. And when they’re not, for some of us, our reaction is to push at all sides possible and do the work necessary to solve it.

Kate also described extending grace in these situations when parents may become overly frustrated or angry when she said, “You can think back and say oh wow, I remember that time when I blew up on my kid’s 5th grade science teacher.” Marion noted, “I often tell myself in those moments when parents are overly agitated that they’re just concerned, and probably a little scared, so it’s natural for your defenses to go up. As caring and loving parents, you get emotional. I just can’t take it personal.”

Reflecting on a situation in which a student failed to pass his class, along with several others and ultimately not able to return, Morty noted,

I really felt for this parent. He seemed to be a very loving and invested parent. A parent who probably walked down some tough roads with the child trying to get them to this
point [to college]. I think that that parent very much would have loved to say, ‘Help me understand why my student made this failing grade? Where was he coming up short so that we don’t fail again, so that I can help him do better next time and not go down this road again?’ Because after failing out here [at Baylor], I’m sure they were thinking, ‘Where is he going to go to school now? Now what?’ These are the situations in which I really feel for parents.

Faculty participants also noted the vested interest parents have with students in college. Carol said, “Parents have a vested interest in making sure that their students are making the best of their college education and holding their child accountable.” The financial investment was definitely acknowledged by faculty participants as a major factor in their understanding of why parents intervened on their students’ academic behalf. Lemony stated, “We are a private university and, accordingly it costs more money. If we think of the monetary perspective, this is an investment the parents are making in their child. They want a return on that investment so it’s not surprising that they’re going to play a role there.” Harvey noted, “If parents are taking out loans and paying lots of money, they’re going to be involved. They don’t want this money flushed down the toilet. When you spend this kind of money, you want to know how your investment is going. I know I do!” Jim described how he currently had several children in private colleges and “we’re paying a lot of money, just like these parents, so I’m very sensitive to those kinds of things, so it doesn’t bother me at all when they call or email because I understand the financial sacrifice for the student's future.”

Conclusions

With respect to the sense faculty participants made of parental involvement in student academic progress, a dichotomy of sorts was revealed. On one hand, faculty clearly recognized
the potentially negative effects of parents intervening on their student’s academic behalf. Concerns for the student developing self-advocacy skills, learning how and when to ask for assistance, or how to negotiate situations that were difficult, were the main concerns expressed by faculty. In many cases, they were able to reflect on specific situations in which they described feeling personally sorry for the student, demonstrating a sense of care and commitment to their students beyond the classroom or graduation. Many recognized parents as depriving the student of learning experiences necessary for lifelong independence and maturity.

Conversely, they also acknowledged understanding the motivations behind parent’s actions in these situations. In large part, this empathy was acknowledged as stemming from their own experiences as parents. Overall, these faculty recognized the huge financial commitment involved in a private college education as a major motivator for parents to be involved and attempting to ensure the academic success of their student. A sense of grace was described for those situations that may have been heated, or confrontational, because that’s what parents do when they are scared or concerned for their children. Without using these words, it was almost like they acknowledged the wide gap between childhood and adulthood, and how financial dependence while in college contributed to parental involvement in higher education.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to better define the phenomenon of parental involvement in higher education through an investigation of the experiences and perceptions faculty have related to parental involvement in student academic progress using the qualitative interpretive phenomenological analysis. This chapter analyzed the findings from 10 semi-structured interviews with faculty members. A close analysis of the qualitative interview data yielded multiple insights that culminated in the identification of three superordinate themes and eight
sub-themes illustrating the situations in which faculty encountered, responded to, and made sense of their experiences with parents attempting to intervene on their students’ academic behalf. These superordinate and subthemes included: (1) Encountering parents (1.1 University Events, 1.2 Exerting Influence); (2) Responding to Parents (2.1 Frequency of Interaction, 2.2 Enacting FERPA, 2.3 Educating about Resources); and (3) Sense-making (3.1 Concern for Student, 3.2 Identifying with Parents, 3.3 Cultural Context).

The participants experienced parental involvement in two forms: (1) through formal, structured events such as Parent Teas during Family Weekend; or (2) through parent-initiated contact by phone, email, or in-person visits, in which parents attempted to intervene on their students’ academic behalf. The structured events were largely positive, although at times awkward, when a parent inquired too specifically about their students’ academic progress. Unexpected contact by email or phone was less positive because these contacts were generally initiated by parents out of frustration or concern for students’ academic standing. These conversations always led to the enactment of FERPA, meaning that faculty referenced the legal rules that protected the students’ academic records and prohibited faculty from sharing protected information. Overall, faculty valued the protection FERPA offered both them as faculty instructors, but also because it helped students to take responsibility for their own development with regard to self-advocacy and individual responsibility. It was important to not dismiss parent’s concerns, so faculty participants felt it was important to support parents by helping them to understand the various academic support resources that students could utilize if they needed more assistance.

With respect to the sense, or conclusions, that faculty participants made of parental involvement in higher education, changes in parenting styles as compared to previous
generations was certainly a major conclusion, noting today’s parents as much more involved in students’ day to day lives. Participants also acknowledged that today’s technology allowed parents to stay in close contact with each other, thus amplifying the contact they received from parents. Finally, all participants noted that because they were parents themselves, they expressed a personal identification with parents who attempted to intervene on their students’ behalf because they too understood the personal, emotional and financial costs involved in providing a higher education for their student.

In closing, the positive outlook that each participant shared was especially intriguing to the researcher as a great deal of the anecdotal experiences and research literature pertaining to parental involvement in higher education is generally negative. However, in this study, the overall positive tone in which faculty participants shared their parental involvement experiences and perceptions demonstrated their grace and understanding of parents’ personal investment and hope for a successful future career that a Baylor University degree would provide. The following chapter discusses the findings related to the theoretical framework and extant literature, future research, and implications for practice.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications for Practice

The purpose of this research study was to better define the phenomenon of parental involvement in higher education through an investigation of the experiences and perceptions faculty have related to parental involvement in student academic progress. In light of increased parental involvement in higher education, family capital theory (Gofen, 2009; Swartz, 2008) provided a lens through which to examine the faculty participants’ experiences. Family capital as a theoretical framework for this research study provided a helpful context for recognizing and highlighting the ways parents continue to help students to be academically successful in higher education. A qualitative approach of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012) provided the methodology by which the faculty participants’ experiences and sense-making regarding parental involvement in student academic progress were analyzed. Identified superordinate themes included: Encountering parents, Responding to Parents, and Sense-making.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings related to each superordinate theme and its position within current literature. The implications of these findings for higher education faculty and university personnel will be provided, along with suggestions for improving practice are provided and recommendations for future research.

Encountering Parents

The main ways in which faculty participants encountered parent involvement was two-fold; either through formal structured events, such as “Parent-Faculty Coffee/Teas” during Family Weekend, or through parent-initiated contact outside of structured settings. When considering the structured settings, a college or university’s strategic engagement with parents and families can assist in developing their overall support and pride of the institution (Coomes &
DeBard, 2004; Scott & Daniel, 2001). Many universities and colleges have responded to parents’ increased involvement and desire for affiliation by providing specific parent programming on their campuses. According to the 2013 National Survey of College and University Parent Programs survey (Savage & Petree, 2013, p. 16), a Parent’s Day or Family Weekend is the most common parent-specific programmatic initiative with 97 percent of institutions providing this event on their campus. While noted in the literature as an excellent opportunity for parents and family members to engage in their student’s environment and meet key faculty and staff, it also formalizes their presence on campus in a welcoming manner (Cohen, 1985; Daniel & Scott, 2001; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Faculty participants within this research study noted that they experienced the most parental involvement through the university coordinated event, Parent & Family Weekend, as their departments hosted a “Parent Tea” in which parents could meet and interact socially with their student’s instructors. Because the tone of these events was positive and engaging, faculty participants enjoyed these socials because they were able to meet the student’s family members, and the parents could assess for themselves what type of person was instructing their son or daughter. Furthermore, participants noted that interaction between faculty and parents was expected and thus, appropriate because of the setting. The literature on parent programming validates this finding as a means of proactive and positive engagement on behalf of the university (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1989; Carney-Hall, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008) as it “serves as an official invitation for them to return to campus” (Mullendore et al., 2005, p. 35).

Conversely, faculty participants noted that occasionally during these social events that parents would ask very specifically about a students’ academic progress. Faculty also experienced this line of academic inquiry by parents on behalf of their student throughout the
course of any given semester via email or phone. In these situations, parents would either inquire about their student’s academic progress, or express concern, insight, or information relevant to their son or daughter that they felt was necessary for the faculty instructor to possess. These situations were perceived by faculty participants as less favorable than the structured events because the parental involvement was unexpected, and if the parent requested protected information, it served as an infringement of FERPA standards and signified a lack of recognition of the student as an adult, in charge of his or her college education. As stated earlier, FERPA frequently challenges the relationship between parents and the university because it establishes barriers for parents who attempt to gain information related to their child, such as how their child is performing academically (Weeks, 2001).

The findings in this study related to parent-initiated contact with faculty regarding student academic progress confirm the anecdotal references to faculty experiencing increased parent inquiries into their student’s academics (Flanagan, 2006; Lum, 2006; Zick, 2010) and validate the need for empirical research (McDonald, 2011). Furthermore, it confirms the literature that most parents of today’s traditional-aged college student have worked closely with teachers and administrators from preschool through high school to ensure their child’s success for learning and advancement and fully expect to continue in this vein throughout the post-secondary education as well (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006). Wartman and Savage (2008) warned that because many parents are familiar with engaging K-12 teachers in the education of their child, universities should anticipate parents will expect a similar level of access and communication to university faculty. Kiyama, Harper, Ramos, Aguayo, Page, and Riester (2015) note:

One major change is that now the responsibility of taking advantage of said resources is left almost entirely up to the individual student. The team concept from the K–12 years is
gone, and there may be little to no communication between parents, family members, and campus faculty and staff. (p. 51)

Parents are eager to continue aiding in their students’ academic success while in college just as they have done throughout their child’s life. In K-12, they have collaborated with teachers for the child’s academic progress and because this has been successful, may wish to continue in this vein. However, collaboration is not welcomed by university administrators, faculty, and staff, nor even allowable given FERPA standards unless the student gives specific permission (Howe & Strauss 2007; Melear, 2003).

These research findings also support the research of Arnett (2004) which noted that parents increased involvement may also be driven by “emerging adulthood,” an extended post-adolescent period during which individuals in their late teens through mid-twenties experience significant instability, defined in part by changes in one’s residential status, work status, education environment, and relationships. Parental involvement and influence is generally significant throughout the emerging adulthood phase and gives credence to parental involvement in higher education (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Swartz, 2008). About one third of young adults begin this developmental period with the transition to college (Arnett, 2004); generally living away from parents and family, but highly dependent, both financially and emotionally. Furthermore, these findings affirm the family capital theory by Swartz (2008) and Gofen (2009) as to why parents are increasingly more involved in their child’s collegiate experience, thereby providing a solid context for understanding the parental involvement the faculty participants experienced with respect to parents intervening on their students’ academic behalf. Faculty participants described parent’s efforts to communicate information or insights about their student as something the parent felt the instructor needed to know about their child. Even though the
parent knew the faculty member could not share information with them due to FERPA regulations, the parent still felt compelled to share information with their child’s instructor for their academic benefit as likely occurred throughout K-12. Family capital theory provides the context need to explain why parents and families continue to directly influence their child’s academics in college and why they initiate contact with instructors.

Responding to Parents

Attitudes and stances about parental involvement in higher education are evolving. This is due in large part to literature and research that has sought to redefine “helicopter parenting” as an output of over-parenting and, in large part, a stereotype propagated through anecdotes as the actual numbers of helicopter parents are greatly exaggerated (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Sax & Wartman, 2008; Shoup et al., 2009; Somers & Settle, 2010). This is generally supported by this research finding related to the frequency by which faculty participants within this study encountered parents attempting to intervene on their students’ academic behalf. The majority of faculty participants indicated they experienced very little parental involvement; generally described as one to three times a semester. Given the lack of research with respect to actual faculty involvement with parents, this finding cannot be substantiated within the literature. However, it seems consistent with anecdotal references of parents contacting faculty to argue a grade (Flanagan, 2006; Lum, 2006; Zick, 2010) and in line with Wilson (2004) and Wartman and Savage’s (2008) references to parents increased desire to interact with professors for their student’s academic success.

The manner by which faculty participants responded to parents who attempted to inquire or intervene on their students’ academic behalf is supported in the literature with respect to the need to ensure all college and university staff and faculty have a solid understanding of the
implementation of FERPA (Cutright, 2008; Kiyama et al., 2015; Weeks, 2001). All faculty participants noted having to discuss FERPA in every situation because the nature of the conversations parents attempted to have with their students’ faculty instructor was inadmissible under FERPA standards and regulations without a signed waiver by the student (Weeks, 2001). Be it parents asking the faculty member for information on their students’ class attendance or grades, or inquiries about why students received the grade they did, FERPA served an important purpose for faculty as it guarded them from having to defend their grading or instruction/course content. Furthermore, the legality of FERPA provided them with a formal ability to withhold this information from parents and not acquiesce to parental intimidations related to high cost of tuition or grades. Hirt (2007) noted that parents of students who attend private colleges often foster a high level of “entitlement” with respect to involvement and level of access that will be provided to them about their students. Notably, this sense of protection the faculty participants expressed around the protection of grade information is somewhat contrary to Student Affairs professionals who frequently experience university official pressure to acquiesce on customer service-related issues, such as problems with roommates, etc. (Carney-Hall, 2008; Lum, 2006).

While parental involvement with student academic progress was generally perceived by faculty participants as annoying, the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement provided empirical evidence highlighting that some level of parental involvement can aid in a students’ development in college (Shoup et al., 2009). Parents continue to be a major source of support and guidance to students, while also still employing individual efforts to aid their child’s experience in college. Taub (2008) notes that if this support and guidance is leveled in a coaching manner, it assists with positive transition in college because students feel supported while living away from home. Faculty participants expressed a general understanding or
awareness that parents were ultimately endeavoring to be helpful to their student. In light of this, most faculty participants described their efforts to assist parents and demonstrate support as taking time to educate parents to the multitude of academic support resources available to their student at the university. This allowed parents to provide their student with this information and encourage them to utilize the resources. This willingness to assist parents is reflective of faculty participants wanting their students to ultimately be successful academically, while also acknowledging the supportive role that parents can play in student academic success. Again, the experiences and findings of faculty participants with respect to parent involvement within this study supports the literature that states that students who have highly involved parents are more engaged in effective educational aspects of their students’ college experience (NSSE, 2007).

These findings substantiate the family capital theory in which parental norms, experiences, resources, and overall support can assist children in their development and advancement and provides a helpful context for recognizing and highlighting the ways parents continue to directly influence their children’s life well into adulthood, particularly with respect to helping students to be successful in higher education (Swartz, 2008). The situations in which parents contacted faculty in this study demonstrates a parent’s desire and willingness to assert themselves into a setting that generally discourages parental involvement because of FERPA and the recognition of students as adults. Consumerism, entitlement, and concern for student predicated the parental contacts with faculty, demonstrating their willingness and/or perceived need to influence faculty for the benefit or advancement of their son or daughter.

**Sense-making**

Faculty perceptions as to why parents were highly involved in higher education and student academic progress aligned with the literature surrounding cultural aspects of society
today including changes in parenting styles and technology (Hofer, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Participants noted changes in parenting styles as compared to previous generations as a major factor, noting today’s parents as much more involved in students’ day to day lives. Prior to the advent of email, cell phones, text message, and other technological communication advances, when students left home for college, communication with parents was significantly reduced, paving the way for students to make more decisions without parental consultation and to learn to function as emerging adults (Arnett, 2004; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Participants recognized that for most parents and their children, staying in constant contact is a way of life that today’s technology affords as witnessed by either observing students in action (talking to them on their phones or emailing/texting) or in their direct communication with them (in office hours or over coffee or a meal). This is supported by the research of Hofer (2008) communicating with their parents on average twice daily and in essence, “electronically tethered to their parents” (p. 9).

Most faculty participants also acknowledged higher education consumerism as an aspect of the parent involvement they experienced. They noted parents as being concerned of the negative consequences of failing grades on their future, as well as frustrated that their student wasn’t performing well. Several specifically remarked upon the historical change regarding respect for educators when referencing that parents frequently jump to the conclusion that the instructor is at fault as opposed to the student. Whereas in years past, a student would be at fault for poor grades (teacher and parent in agreement), the new norm is that the teacher is a fault as parent sides with student (Segrin et al., 2012).

The conclusions as to why parents are involved led faculty participants to discuss concerns they had for student development. The potential negative impact on student
development of autonomy, identity, and independence as a result of highly involved parents is clearly documented in the literature (Cullaty, 2011; LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Kiyama et al., 2015; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Taub, 2008). Reflecting on parent’s fear for their child’s failure, cost of higher education and the need for a collegiate degree, and over-parenting styles, faculty participants had a solid grasp on the issues that lead parents to intervene. In turn, they also expressed concern for student well-being and regret for students whose parents were not allowing them to learn valuable self-advocacy skills or responsibility for one’s actions. Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) confirm that parents can inhibit student growth and development when they assert themselves on behalf of their student because they limit the opportunities for emerging adults to practice and develop important skills needed for becoming self-reliant adults. The research of Cullaty (2011) confirms that parents who maintain a supportive, yet coaching, relationship, instead of intervening, help their students to establish a higher sense of autonomy and independence. Findings like this, and those mentioned above, continue to substantiate the construct of family capital as a framework for understanding why parents attempt to intervene on their students’ behalf, but also highlight the potential negative effects on student development.

Recommendations for Practice

Scholarship and evidence-based practice are critical for effective student affairs practice (Kupo, 2014). One of the major outcomes of Swartz’s (2008) research on family capital was that educational policies and institutions should target both the individual student, as well as their families, in order to improve college attainment and retention. Given the nascent research on faculty members’ experiences with parental involvement in student academic progress, this research sought to inform and improve institutional practice with respect to faculty response to parental involvement based on their experiences and perceptions, as well as encourage further
research. As such, the following recommendations for practice are offered in response to the findings.

**Encountering and Responding to Parents**

The data revealed that participants within this qualitative study had indeed experienced multiple encounters with parents attempting to intervene on their student’s academic behalf. Whether through formal university events or unexpected contact, parents attempted to gain information about their students’ academic status or influence faculty decisions or treatment of their student. In light of this finding, each institution should individually assess the nature and extent to which faculty are contacted by parents and the nature of these interactions. A brief quantitative study of faculty and parental involvement would provide university leaders with essential data to the extent to which this may, or may not, be an actual issue on one’s campus and for their faculty. Potential aspects to explore within this quantitative study would include:

1) What are the various forums in which faculty experience parental involvement in academic issues (formal, university events like Parent and Family Weekend, or unexpected interaction, such as in-person, telephone, e-mail, regular mail, etc.)?

2) What is the frequency and timing of such interactions (after exams, after posting grades, etc.)?

3) What is the purpose of the interaction (to inquire about the student’s well-being, to advocate on behalf of the student, to seek information or advice, etc.)?

4) How does the faculty member respond in these situations (non-response, reference FERPA, refer back to student, refer to department chair, etc.)?

University data such as this would provide immediate insight into any necessary training faculty may need in order to respond consistently and thoroughly according to any institutional
guidelines and philosophy for parental involvement. For example, a session on parental involvement in academics could be provided to new faculty that outlines the reasons and rationale for parent involvement, as well as scenario discussions that help new faculty maneuver these situations and how to respond. Furthermore, this institutional-specific data would aid in creating an action plan for helping parents to understand the limitations to student data, such as specific sessions during new student orientation and newsletter messaging during the academic semester.

This particular study further affirmed that faculty enjoyed engaging parents in conversation during times in which it is expected. Interactions at university recruiting events and formal events such as Parent and Family Weekend, homecoming, or graduation, were enjoyable and rewarding to these faculty participants. Likewise, it serves an important purpose in that of making parents feel welcome and involved (Sax & Wartman, 2010). Events in which faculty and parents can interact socially are valuable to faculty because it provides a legitimate forum for social interaction and express care of their students to their family members. However, it also opened the door for inquiry into a student’s specific academic standing (against FERPA regulations) or further contact later on in the semester when academic problems arose. Therefore, it is imperative for institutions who undertake this programmatic tactic to implement a comprehensive action plan to ensure parents understand the purpose of this social event and the boundaries therein. For example, a specific brochure about supporting your students’ academic success that contains information about FERPA and the differences between faculty and K-12 teachers would be very helpful and set the stage for further discussion and reference. This brochure could also include academic support resources and how parents can support their student during academic struggles. These informative resources will help parents to understand
the boundaries, while still allowing both the parents and faculty members to interact and express their shared goal of student success.

This study demonstrated that more education is needed in K-12 to help parents and families understand the differences in K-12 teacher-parent collaboration and that of post-secondary education. In high school, admission counselors and faculty could introduce this concept during admission recruiting events. Once admitted, web/internet, print/newsletters, and events such as summer send-off parties, Orientation, Welcome Week, and Parents Weekend all provide unique opportunities to educate parents as to FERPA limitations with respect to academic progress and grades. Furthermore, since faculty largely responded to parent inquiries by providing them with academic support resources, then ensuring all parents receive this information at every opportunity can aid in their ability to share these resources with their student earlier on. This can possibly aid in minimizing situations in which parents may be inclined to exert influence by becoming overly frustrated when not able to obtain specific information, or the perceived need to share information or insights with professors as the participants within this study routinely experienced.

When asked specifically about a student’s grades or attendance, many of the faculty participants responded with a redirection in that of Blackboard. They informed parents that as the student’s course instructor, they utilized Blackboard as the source of all coursework expectations and attendance and grade records. The faculty shared that while they legally could not share this information with them, the student could if he or she chose to do so. One interesting development undertaken at an institution whose goal is to intentionally guide parents in ways that help increase freshman retention rates included the use of an online Parent Portal that contains academic resources and information about their child's college performance
(Cartmell, 2015). Students must first elect (under FERPA guidelines) to provide their parent with access to the Parent Portal, and second, the parent would then make a request of the university to provide access. Upon fulfillment, parents would have access to their student's schedule, midterm grades, final grades, and any alerts that are submitted by faculty. Information about available resources is provided on the portal to assist parents in knowing where to guide their students to receive academic help when needed. Initial data demonstrated that a moderate use of the parent portal correlated with higher retention and GPA. Based on institutional goals and philosophy around first-year student retention, this could be a viable tool for decreasing for alleviating parent contact with faculty.

**Sense-making and Faculty Education**

The faculty within this research study had a solid understanding of why parental involvement in higher education is so prevalent. As described before, it would be prudent for an institution to assess their faculty member’s experiences with parents in order to aid in sense-making and its relevance to their work as faculty who work with traditional-age first-time students. This is important for institutional philosophy and practice with respect to parent involvement. As described earlier, the literature regarding parental involvement consistently directs colleges and universities toward the development of a comprehensive and institutionally-specific philosophy that guides parent involvement (Merriman, 2007; Mullendore et al., 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008). In light of increased involvement from parents, higher education has experienced challenges balancing the differing philosophies of student development and parental consumer expectations (Savage, 2008). As such, each institution should be guided by a mission statement that reflects the institutional and departmental philosophy and vision for working with
parents. The development and implementation of programs and services would then evolve from the specified goals for working with parents.

The data from this study also noted that outside of a brief statement about FERPA that largely was summarized as “Don’t talk with parents about student grades,” the faculty participants in this study indicated they had received minimal training or development with respect to parent involvement in the course of their work as professors of first-time freshmen. Training faculty and staff about FERPA in the context of parental involvement and student development is important and valuable because it helps to understand the use and rationale for FERPA when working in today’s higher education setting. A new faculty and staff training session could consist of information relevant to: (1) recognition of parents as stakeholders and co-investors in their child’s post-secondary education; (2) FERPA and responding to parent inquiries; (3) helping parents with student concerns and academic success resources/referrals; (4) needs and concerns of non-majority students, such as students of color and first-generation; (5) handling disgruntled parents; and, (6) an overview of emerging adulthood and impact on student/parent relationships.

Finally, given this research study was institutional-specific, the findings and implications for improved practice should be shared with the host institution’s key academic leaders and parent services staff for further dialogue and development of improvement strategies.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

With recent research showing the important role of parents on academic success and retention, further study is needed to provide guidance for educational practice with respect to educating parents about the differences from K-12 teacher-parent collaboration and appropriate ways to support their emerging adult’s college education and experience. A study of parent
expectations of faculty, or a specific study of parents who have contacted faculty, would aid in learning their reasons for contacting and expectations for information or collaboration. Data from this research can further aid in the development of appropriate messages and training for both faculty and parents or students.

Furthermore, in additional to institutional-specific assessment of extent and nature of parent interactions with faculty, another constituency on campus to consider for additional research is the experience and perceptions of Associate Deans or Undergraduate Program Directors within academic Schools or Colleges and departments. These roles typically coordinate student academic concerns as reported by faculty, students or parents. Often also charged with recruitment, retention, and graduation initiatives, these faculty or staff may encounter a higher level of extremely disgruntled parent concerns about their students’ academic progress and a faculty member’s non-compliance to engage with the parent due to FERPA.

It would also be important to investigate parents’ role in their student’s academic schoolwork. To what extent are parents engaging in their student’s day-to-day coursework? Even in this study, anecdotal references were made to parents following syllabi and reminding students of quizzes or mid-terms, or even editing final papers.

**Conclusion**

This qualitative study was guided by the research question, “How do certain faculty members explain and make sense of parental involvement regarding traditional-aged undergraduate students’ academic progress in a private research university?” The purpose of this research was to better define the phenomenon of parental involvement in higher education through an investigation of the experiences and perceptions college faculty have related to parental involvement in student academic progress. The researcher applied a qualitative
interpretative analysis (IPA) research design which interpreted the participants’ various experiences and perceptions faculty held with regard to parent involvement in student academic progress.

Despite the existing research and literature on parental involvement in higher education examining the experiences of students, parents, and student affairs administrators, no formal research had been conducted to date regarding the experiences and impact on faculty. As such, this particular study not only contributes to the literature on parental involvement and the use of family capital theory in higher education, but also opens the door to further empirical research at other institutions regarding the impact on faculty. This study produced data that confirms that faculty participants experienced parental involvement in student academic progress and provided insights into their responses to those inquiries with respect to substantial use of FERPA, while still attempting to assist them in their efforts to ensure the academic success of their student. These findings underscore the need for colleges and universities to help parents and families understand the change from “parental involvement” in K-12 in regards to teacher collaboration between parents and instructors and its impact on the transition issues involved in emerging adulthood and post-secondary education.

In closing, the academic transition from high school to college is a short timeframe and requires significant adjustments by both parents and student. Institutions committed to student retention and graduation must prepare parents and students for this transition by educating them to the major differences and expectations. Open communication and a positive partnership between parents and university faculty and staff may just be the necessary integrated support system that facilitates college student success and improves retention and graduation rates for all.
Appendix A – Northeastern University IRB Approval

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: September 16, 2014   IRB #: CPS14-08-08

Principal Investigator(s): Joseph McNabb
                        Terri Garrett

Department: Doctor of Education Program
           College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere
         Northeastern University

Title of Project: Faculty Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Higher Education

Participating Sites: N/A

DH/HS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7
Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form
Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2015

Investigator’s Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Appendix B – Baylor University IRB Approval

DATE: 09/26/2014

TO: Tem Garrett

FROM: Office of the Vice Provost for Research, Research Compliance
       Baylor University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: Faculty Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Higher Education

IRB REFERENCE #: 651346

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: 09/26/2014

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

Thank you for your research study submission. Your research has been determined to be
EXEMPT from IRB review according to federal regulation 45 CFR 46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude,
achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior,
unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be
identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of
the human subjects’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at
risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing,
employability, or reputation.
This exemption determination is based on the protocol and/or materials submitted. If the research is modified, you must contact this office to determine whether your research is still eligible for exemption prior to implementing the modifications.

If you have any questions, please contact Deborah Holland at (254) 710-1438 or Deborah_L_Holland@baylor.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Holland, JD, MPH
Assistant Vice Provost for Research
Director of Compliance
Appendix C - Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Research Question: “How do certain faculty members explain and make sense of parental involvement regarding traditional-aged undergraduate students’ academic progress at a private, religiously-affiliated, high research activity institution?”

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. What do you think of when I say the words “parental involvement?”

3. Provide some scenarios or situations in which you experience parent involvement.

4. Tell me about a situation in which a parent contacted you on behalf of their student enrolled in one of your courses.

5. What are the issues that parents contact you with? (to seek/provide advice on coursework or expectations, to inquire about the student’s status within the course, to advocate on behalf of the student, to seek information or advice, etc.)?

6. How do you respond to their questions? What about those in which the parent expects information about the student’s academic record?

7. How often do parents engage you or ask for your assistance? What is the format in which this contact occurs? (email, phone, other)

8. Do you feel like parents understand FERPA? How do you explain FERPA to parents?

9. How has parental involvement in higher education changed over time in your experience or opinion?

10. In your opinion, what factors contribute to parental involvement in higher education?

11. How do you view parents who intervene on behalf of their student?

12. How do you feel about the students of parents who intervene on their behalf? Did you see any difference in the work ethic or intellectual ability between students whose parents intervened and those students whose parents did not?

13. How do you think other faculty respond to parent involvement or intervention on behalf of the student?

14. What type of support does your academic chair or unit provide you to help with parent involvement?
15. What type of support do you think would be helpful to you regarding working with parents?

16. Do you have any recommendations for additional faculty to participate in this study?
Appendix D - CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
Northeastern University

TITLE OF STUDY: Faculty Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Higher Education

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Joseph W. McNabb, College of Professional Studies, Northeastern University, j.mcnabb@neu.edu.

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Terri Garrett, College of Professional Studies, Northeastern University, Doctoral Student, garrett.t@husky.neu.edu, (254) 709-9846.

Introduction
The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this qualitative research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent. You have been asked to participate in a qualitative research project studying faculty experiences and perceptions of parental involvement in higher education. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are a faculty member at Baylor University that has experience working with parents of students enrolled in current or past classes. This study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for the completion of a doctoral research project.

What will I be asked to do?
You will be asked to share your experiences working with parents as they seek your assistance with respect to their student’s academic progress. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview that will last 45 to 90 minutes. Follow-up interviews may be necessary to check the accuracy of the findings or to ask further questions. In order to ensure accuracy of the information collected the interview will be audio recorded and hand-written notes will be taken. Follow-up interviews may be necessary to check the accuracy of the findings or to ask further questions.

What are the risks involved in this study?
By participating in this survey there are no known risks. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

What are the possible benefits of this study?
There are no known benefits from participating in this study; however, the information gained in this study has the potential to assist college and university faculty and administrators in their work with parents.

Do I have to participate?
Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any question(s) throughout the course of the interview.
Who will know about my participation in this research study?
This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private to the extent allowed by the law. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report. However, it is important to note that outcomes of data analysis, such as the inclusion of verbatim extracts customary in qualitative research, will be included in the dissertation publication. These verbatim statements will be associated to a self-selected pseudonym (i.e. John Doe). Research records will be stored securely in an on-campus office locked file cabinet and only Terri Garrett will have access to the records. The final report will be published in the form of a dissertation. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely in an on-campus office locked file cabinet and only Terri Garrett will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for three years and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Joseph W. McNabb at Northeastern University, or Terri Garrett.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?
For questions please contact the researcher, Terri Garrett at (254) 710-6650 or by email at garrett.t@husky.neu.edu. You may contact Dr. Joseph W. McNabb, the Principal Investigator at j.mcnabb@neu.edu. This consent form was approved by both the Northeastern University and Baylor University Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on September 16, 2014 (Northeastern) and September 26, 2014 (Baylor).

Signature
Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Printed Name: ____________________________________________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: ______________________ Date: ____________

Printed Name: ____________________________________________________________
References


*Gott v. Berea College*, 156 Ky. 376, 161 S.W. 204 (1913).


Understanding the relationship among students, parents, and the institution. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 33*(6), 1-125.


