PERCEPTIONS OF APPROPRIATE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:
A STUDY COMPARING THE DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES OF
FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS
OF FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS, AND FACULTY

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Damiana Carol Hammer

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Parents have been encouraged to be an active, involved participant in their child’s education. While parental involvement at the elementary and secondary level is encouraged and thought to be beneficial for students, there is much discussion about “over involved parents” at the college level. Emerging trends in the research seem to suggest that the hovering and over involvement by parents results in graduates’ inability to demonstrate independent living skills and decision-making skills. The purpose of this study was to take a small step towards gaining a better understanding of what the appropriate level of parental involvement ought to be in a college students’ educational experience. A total of 357 participants comprised the sample group for this study. The
total participant population was divided into three separate cohorts: students, parents, and faculty. Participants were asked to express direct opinions to hypothetical scenarios on a quantitative survey. Each had an opportunity to provide input on what they believe to be appropriate level of parental involvement in an attempt to measure the amount of agreement or divergence between the three groups. The research revealed that all three cohorts do not agree as to what the most important outcome is to be achieved from a college education. In addition, the research implied that while independence may be a desirable goal to be achieved in life, it is not necessarily an outcome that need come from the college experience.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

It seems one cannot pick up a newspaper, magazine, or journal without seeing an article or reference to the term “helicopter” parents. However, what exactly does the term helicopter parent imply and is this a positive or a negative connotation? Furthermore, where does one draw the distinction between a helicopter parent who “hovers” too closely over their child and a parent who is simply concerned; fulfilling their parental obligation?

For many decades, parents have been encouraged to get involved and participate in their child’s education and schooling. Many public school teachers, principals, and PTAs have emphasized the benefits and importance of parental involvement. In 1997, National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs were created (National PTA, 2002). Often sign-up sheets are passed around during back to school nights, open houses, and PTA meetings persuading and offering parents’ ways to participate in their child’s educational experience.

Parent participation in the classroom is one of the most sought after ways for parents to be involved in their child’s elementary years. Parents are often asked to listen to a reading group, drill the students on their math facts, or help with an art project. As their child moves on to Jr. High or High School parental involvement is still encouraged. It may not take the form or shape it once did when volunteering in elementary school but
it is still sought after and appreciated. Helping build sets or scenery for a play, driving participants to a Math Olympiad or sporting event, chaperoning dances and prom, creating science experiments, or speaking in a classroom about an area of expertise are just some examples of how parents are involved in their “older” children’s schooling.

While parental involvement in the elementary, Jr. High, and High School years is generally looked at favorably and considered beneficial to students academically, emotionally, and socially, this is not the case beyond high school. Today, there is much discussion and concern about “over involved parents.” An essential question is posed by this researcher, are parents, students, and faculty in agreement as to how much parental/guardian involvement is appropriate at the college level?

Are faculty and university personnel sometimes too quick to apply the label “helicopter” parent? Are parents really too eager to jump in and “help” their child make decisions about their college education. The ramifications and repercussions from helicopter parenting are not fully known. However, the emerging trends in the research suggest that the hovering and over involvement by parents is resulting in less decision-making by students graduating from college. According to the research, these individuals are more dependent on their parents, often returning back at home after graduation from college. Mel Levine, author of *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes* stated, “Our graduates may well lack the practical skills, the habits, the behaviors, the real world insights, and the frames of mind pivotal for career startup. Their parents and teachers have unwittingly let them down” (Levine, 2005, p. 5).

Determining what the appropriate relationship for parents, their students, and the colleges are is a difficult task to address. Among the many factors that have fueled
this trend are changes in the legal landscape resulting from the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Acts, (FERPA), higher stakes, prior encouragement by school personnel for parental involvement and technology.

According to White’s article titled, “Students, Parent, Colleges: Drawing the Lines,” the shifting of our legal landscape is partly responsible for this new trend of hovering parents. In the past, courts of law had been asked to determine whether or not college students were considered children or adults. The answer to this question implied that whoever it was, was the bearer of legal liability and responsible for the students conduct. If students were considered children, then the colleges they were attending were responsible for their care and supervision.

During this time, courts considered colleges to be standing in *loco parentis*; “literally, in place of parents” and responsible for the supervision and protection of their students. The in *loco parentis* doctrine met its demise in the wake of the student-protest era in the 1960s, when courts concluded that colleges did not have the power or the ability to regulate students’ off-campus conduct. (White, 2005, p. B-16)

The courts declared that it was not the college’s responsibility to ensure the safety of its students if they were misbehaving or acting inappropriately. Due to the fact that students were considered adults, they were responsible for their own behavior and the colleges were in charge of students’ education.

The passing of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act in 1974 was another change to the legal landscape. This Act, known as FERPA limited then, and continues to limit, what administrators are allowed to discuss with parents about their student’s academic performance as well as their social conduct. Since students are considered adults, it is their business what they do, not their parents. As legal adults,
parents do not have automatic access to their students’ information. This is a difficult concept for many parents to understand and accept. Many parents still consider their children, children, and because they are paying for their students’ education, they feel they ought to be entitled to some rights too (White, 2005).

According to Bernstein (2008), new FERPA regulations are being implemented. Bernstein quoted compliance officer LeRoy Rooker, Director of the Department of Education’s Family Policy, as saying “What we are attempting to do is strike a balance on the privacy-safety issue and reassure schools that safety is paramount when it comes to educational institutions. FERPA should not be an impediment to keeping a student safe” (p. 1). This is good news for parents who are worried or concerned that their son or daughter may be at risk of being hurt or hurting others.

A changing social environment has heightened parent’s perceived need to control the direction of their children’s future. The stakes in the educational environment are higher than in previous generations. The income gap between college graduates and non-graduates is at a historical high and continues to grow. Parents recognize the value of a college education and are willing to invest large sums of money to ensure their children’s future. Kantrowitz and Tyre (2006) states, “Sending a child to college these days is a huge financial commitment, more than $40,000 a year at elite private schools. For a lot of parents, that means substantial sacrifices like taking out a second mortgage or cutting into retirement savings” (p. 51).

Many parents believe that this investment, coupled with the understanding and knowledge that it is a highly competitive world beyond the boundaries of college, entitles them to pick their “children’s” colleges, their classes, and their majors. Parents worry that
if they don’t hold the colleges accountable, and are advocates for their children, they may end up not being successful, having trouble finding a job, and living with them during what was suppose to be their retirement years.

Carrie Henn, Correspondent for the Iowa State Daily and author of the article: *Parents More Interested in College Students’ Lives*, states “When baby boomers started to have children, advice books began to flow and ‘baby on board’ stickers became commonplace. The urge for parents to be more involved in their children’s lives has carried through to the college years” (2006, p. 1). One reason for the heightened parental involvement according to Justin Pope, Education Writer for USA Today, is due to the tight bond that exists between baby boomer parents and their children (Pope, 2005). When boomer parents were growing up, they were rebelling against their parents. After they married and had children themselves, they vowed to have better communication with their own children. Consequently, many students today do have closer relationships with their parents and some even think of their mothers or fathers as their best friends. These friendships have led to parents playing a larger roll in their children’s life.

Advances in technology have also been a significant factor concerning parental involvement. Being able to keep in such close contact with their “friends” is a result of the technology era. Cell phones, e-mail, and instant messaging enable parents to keep in much closer communication with their students than ever before. Richard Mullendore, University of Georgia professor and former vice president of student affairs at the Universities of Georgia and Mississippi, refers to cell phones as “the world’s longest umbilical cord.” Students do not take the time to evaluate situations and figure out possible options. Instead, any time a student has a problem, Mullendore argues, they
just pick up their phone and call their parents and have them solve it (as cited in Shellenbarger, 2005).

One might wonder, what is wrong with this? Why shouldn’t parents be involved in their student’s life? After all, college is a transitional time and having support during these transitional periods is considered helpful, correct?

As a parent, there exits a fine line between caring and wanting to be supportive and being overly involved or hovering. This same line exists in determining what the appropriate relationship for parents, their students, and the colleges should be. Finding the agreed upon line is the purpose of this paper. It is important to remember the reasons for it—to help students become independent, critical thinkers in today’s competitive world. As Levine (2006) states, “The fact the stakes are higher is all the more reason to provide students with as many opportunities as possible to make their own decisions and learn from the consequences” (p. 4).

One area, in general, that most educators and parents can agree on is that parents are well meaning and genuinely doing what they feel is best for their “child.” While parents may be overstepping boundaries, understanding what professors and administrators believe are healthy boundaries will help communication and presumably benefit the students academically and developmentally.

An environment of mutual respect needs to exist between all three cohorts. Educators need to respect the parents’ point of view, especially since parents have been encouraged to be involved from the very beginning of their children’s education. Parents need to realize the importance of allowing their student to make decisions, whether good or bad, and then hold them accountable for the outcome rather than assisting their student
in escaping valuable lessons (often holding everyone but their own child accountable). A respect for the expertise of educators and a sense of trust that their actions are in the students’ best interest is necessary. If the goals of educators, parents, and students are aligned, a foundation for a conversation about the appropriate level of involvement and how to develop independent, decision-making young adults contributing to society, can begin.

Statement of Purpose

Past research in the area of parental involvement has occurred primarily in isolation. Various surveys have been conducted seeking student, parent, and faculty input. However, it is difficult to find surveys that assess all three groups’ opinion utilizing the same questionnaire. Students are encouraged to take surveys such as The National Student Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement, and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, to name just a few.

Parents, however, are not given the same survey. Instead, parents are requested to voice their opinion on National Survey of Parents: College Parents of America (CPA) surveys. A study requesting college-bound students and their parents’ opinions, perceptions, and behaviors about the preparation and college admissions process has been conducted by the College Board and Art & Science Group in (2009).

The search for Faculty assessments resulted in surveys that mostly compared the goals set by the professor against students’ opinion on whether or not they were attained such as the IDEA survey. While this type of survey can supply important
feedback to professors, it does not allow faculty to voice their opinions or concerns about student and parent involvement. Another survey called the Faculty Survey on Student Engagement (FSSE) which compliments NSSE (administered to students) seeks to understand if faculty believe students are spending as much time as they are required to on various course work and projects.

The purpose of this study was to take a small step towards gaining a better understanding of what the appropriate level of parental involvement ought to be in a college students’ educational experience. By surveying faculty, parents, and students alike, all three cohorts had an opportunity to provide input on what they believe is an appropriate level of involvement.

Seeing multiple sides of this issue will be beneficial for all parties concerned. Psychologist Madeline Levine (2006) stated it best when she said,

I want to be clear that children need a great deal of involvement from their parents. High levels of parental involvement are shown to be an important predictor of success for children in many areas. But appropriately involved parents know the importance of stepping back as soon as is practical, and respecting their child’s strivings toward independence. Overinvolvement is not simply ‘more’ healthy involvement; rather it is involvement that can get in the way of child development. (p. 9)

Once the perspective of each cohort is assimilated by the other two, conversations about how to attain a commonly defined goal can be ignited within a common context.

The research questions to be answered in this study were:

1. Do the three cohorts: students, parents, and faculty agree as to what the most important outcome is to be achieved from a college education?
2. Do the three cohorts: students, parents, and faculty agree what it means to be an independent adult?

3. Is the assumption the same for students, parents, and faculty concerning what students are looking for when seeking advice?

4. Are the three cohorts in agreement as to how much parental/guardian involvement is appropriate at the college level?

Limitations to the Study

While surveys provide a way to obtain and learn valuable information, there is a limit to the accuracy that occurs from “self-reporting.” The title of the survey, along with the explanation as to why it was being conducted may have inadvertently caused respondents to answer how they hoped to be perceived rather than how they actually are. Parents may have portrayed themselves as being more “hands-off” when it comes to helping their student with decisions, situations or scenarios in order to appear not overly involved. Students may have chosen answers to give off the impression of being more independent than they actually are in order to look more adult like or grown-up. In addition, educators may have wanted to portray themselves and the university as being tolerant and flexible of both students and parents in order to portray the feeling that a positive relationship exists between school and home.

This questionnaire limited participants’ ability to expand or explain their reasoning or thoughts behind their choices. Conducting individual interviews would allow for a better understanding of sentiments or points of view surrounding parental involvement. Holding focus groups that involved the parents, students, and educators in
addition to the surveys would have provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions between the cohorts to occur.

Another limitation to the study was the small sample size, particularly in respect to the number of faculty responses. This study was derived from lower-division, California State University, Chico students, their parents, and CSU Chico faculty. This restricted geographic distribution limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the data obtained. Increasing this survey to include other geographical areas would eliminate any geographic biases that may exist.

While a long-term longitudinal study would be ideal, the constraints of time and resources made this objective impractical. As a result, this study can only offer the beginnings of a common context, within which to have this larger discussion.

Expansion of this study to include high school or possibly even Jr. High School students might be beneficial to determine when the pattern of parental over involvement becomes problematic. However, it is hoped that the study will point to areas where additional research will be most beneficial.

**Definition of Terms**

**Autonomy Development**

According to Arthur Chickering, *autonomy development* refers to the “independence of maturity . . . it requires both emotional and instrumental independence, As competence develops, the individual disengages from parents and simultaneously; the student recognizes the importance of others” (Chickering, 1969, p. 12).
Baby Boomer

“A term used to describe a person who was born during the Post-World War II baby boom between 1946 and 1964” (Wikipedia, 2009).

Critical Thinking

The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflections, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. (Foundation for Critical Thinking, n.d.)

Emotionally Independent

“To be free of continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval. It begins with disengagement from parents” (Chickering, 1969, p. 12).

Generational Persona

A series of birth cohorts who embody attitudes about family life, gender roles, institutions, politics and culture. It “reflects their collective identity as well as a sense of having shared experiences” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 40).

Helicopter Parent

First coined by Jim Fay and Foster Cline, co-authors of Love and Logic. The term labels parents who “hover” over their children so much as to be involved in the minute details of their lives. For purposes of this paper helicopter parent is a person who pays extremely close attention to his or her child or children, particularly at educational institutions. They rush in to prevent any harm or failure from befalling them or letting them learn from their own mistakes, sometimes even contrary to the children’s wishes. (as cited by Wikipedia, 2009)

Identity Formation or Development

Refers to “the self or the person one feels oneself to be. . . . Clarification and stabilization of identity certainly involves the areas of competence, emotions, and
autonomy, along with interpersonal relationships, purpose, and integrity (Chickering, 1969, p. 14).

Intrusion

According to psychologist and author, Madeline Levine (2006), intrusion is about the needs of the parent, not the child.

Millennials

According to Howe and Strauss, millennials refer to people born in or after 1982—“Babies on Board” of the early Reagan years. . . . Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse. . . . they focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty and good conduct. (2000, p. 4)

Parent Involvement

Defined by the Connecticut PTA (2008) as “the participation of parents in every facet of children’s education and development from birth to adulthood, recognizing that parents are the primary influence in children’s lives.” The No Child Left Behind Act defines parental involvement as “the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (Public Education Network, 2008).

Vectors of Development

According to Arthur Chickering, vectors of development are “growth trends,” “developmental tasks,” “stages of development,” “needs and problem areas,” or “student typologies.” There are seven vectors: competence, emotions, autonomy, interpersonal relationships, purpose, identity, and integrity (Chickering, 1969, p. 8).
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Past research has shown the importance of parental involvement in school age children’s growth, development, achievements, and success. As a positive contributing factor to growth, this involvement is not questioned. According to the California State Board of Education,

A critical dimension of effective schooling is parent involvement. Research has shown conclusively that parent involvement at home in their children's education improves student achievement. Furthermore, when parents are involved at school, their children go farther in school, and they go to better schools. …the benefits of parent involvement are not limited to early childhood or the elementary level; there are continuing positive effects through high school. (1994)

However, there exists a great deal of concern surrounding too much parental involvement at the college level, and the effects it is having on students. As the study of the effects of over-involved or “helicopter” parents at the college level have grown, many scholars and writers have contributed to the pool of literature regarding the pros and cons of this participation. This thesis assumes that parents, students, and educators all have the same goal—to produce independent, autonomous individuals capable of making mature, reasoned, values-based decisions. That said a review of the literature brings this basic thesis, a commonality of purpose, into dispute. What is generally accepted is that there is a process of development that can be articulated and examined. There is no definitive
comprehensive study that is widely accepted due primarily to the inherent longitudinal nature of the subject matter. There are however, a multitude of theories from both within and outside of the academic community. This literature review will first focus on the psychosocial development of college students, an area within which there is wide agreement, and then subsequently examine the various writings and theories relating to over involved parents within this context.

In order to understand how the involvement or overinvolvement of parents might be affecting and/or hurting college age students, it is first important to understand the normal development patterns that college age students go through and why it is essential in their growth. Coburn and Treeger (2003), co-authors of the book *Letting Go*, contend that “Somewhere in the process of discovering who they are, they leave for college. Not all will have reached the same developmental point at the same time or with the same intensity” (p. 16).

While there are other theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Jean Piaget who have contributed greatly in the area of Psychosocial Development and explained the various stages humans go through in their development, Arthur W. Chickering (1969) has made a significant contribution in this field and is considered one of the leading experts in higher education because of his specific attention to the development of college students.

Chickering’s (1969) developmental theory indicating that student autonomy is established during the early college years is the most widely accepted theory by most administrators and educators in higher education. Deborah J. Taub (2008), an associate professor and the Coordinator of the Higher Education Program at the University of
North Carolina at Greensboro, draws heavily on an analysis of Chickering’s work. She points out that, “Chickering believed that the concept of identity was too abstract to provide guidance for practice to those who work with college students; he developed his model to provide greater specificity and concreteness” (p. 17).

A brief discussion of Chickering’s seven vectors is necessary to provide a context within which the various theories and writings relating to parental involvement can be examined. Given that there is wide acceptance of Chickering’s development model, this is an appropriate approach. Working from the premise that there has been a significant change in the amount of and impact of parental involvement at the college level, the underlying question in the second section then becomes, what has changed? What is different about today’s college students or their parents?

Psychosocial Development of College Students

Chickering (1969) described the components of student development and the change that occurs during college as having seven major areas or dimensions in common: achieving competence, managing emotions, becoming autonomous, developing mature interpersonal relationships, clarifying purpose, establishing identity, and developing integrity. These are referred to as the seven vectors of development (1969). These seven vectors provide a framework through which, we are able to gage students’ development emotionally, socially, physically and intellectually as they form their own identity during their college experience.

Chickering’s (1969) first vector of development, achieving competence, consists of three components: intellectual growth, physical and manual skill development,
and social and interpersonal maturation. On the surface, it would stand to reason that colleges and universities would be most concerned with the development of the intellect. After all, an essential objective of higher education is to help students develop the ability to think critically. Through role-playing, active listening and public speaking students develop competence. Physical and manual skills are developed through athletics as well as artistic and creative endeavors.

According to Chickering (1969), the last prong of competence, the development of social and interpersonal skills, must often be attained without the direct involvement of either parents or educators. “This kind of development is the one of greatest concern to the young adult and one where significant development frequently occurs without explicit support from family, employer, or college” (Chickering, 1969, p. 9). Learning to deal with what comes next by figuring out the best solution to a problem shows that one has developed the ability to think critically. Students develop self-esteem by accomplishing tasks. Developing self-esteem leads to a willingness to take risks (1969).

Chickering’s second developmental vector is managing emotions. He believed that the “management of emotions is primarily a problem of self-control” (p. 11). Emotions such as aggression, hostility, conflict, desire, and guilt can only be controlled after their existence is acknowledged. By learning to controls different types of emotions, students have an increased opportunity for developing and integrating passions (1969). The integrating of passions can be achieved through community service or volunteer work.
Becoming autonomous is Chickering’s (1969) third vector of development; it requires “independence of maturity.” “To be emotionally independent is to be free of continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval. It begins with disengagement from parents.” (p. 12). Learning to trust one’s own self and separate from parents, support groups, and peers, while developing one’s own morals while risking their approval, illustrates a movement towards emotional independence. This entails learning not to be intimidated when expressing one’s own thoughts, opinions, and feelings.

Identity formation or establishing one’s individual identity is the fourth developmental vector. According to Chickering (1969) the “development of identity depends in part upon the other vectors already mentioned: competence, emotions, and autonomy” (p. 13). However, it is more than just the culmination of the changes that have occurred in the previous vectors. During the quest for a sense of self, students begin to figure out their own physical needs as well as develop their own personal style in regard to their appearance. It is during identity formation that students often experiment with sexual orientation and behaviors (1969). Subsequent research by Coburn and Treeger (2003) corroborates this concept. “To separate psychologically is to know oneself.” (p. 15). They concur with Chickering (1969) that gaining self-knowledge is what makes moving through intimate relationships possible and that this is one of the major tasks faced by college students (Coburn & Treeger, 2003, p. 15).

Freeing interpersonal relationships is Chickering’s (1969) fifth vector. Developing tolerance and respect for people with different cultures, backgrounds, values, and appearance transpires during this phase. Deeper, more meaningful and intimate relationships are formed during this time. “Relationships shift toward greater trust,
independence, and individuality” (Chickering, 1969, p. 15). Even though there may be disagreements or differences occurring in relationships, the parties involved are able to work thru the miscommunications and move to an even more intimate relationship, one with respect (1969).

Student’s entering Chickering’s (1969) sixth developmental vector, clarifying purposes, are seeking answers to “not just ‘Who am I?’ but ‘Who am I going to be?’; not just ‘Where am I?’ but ‘Where am I going?’” (p. 16). During this vector, students are trying to figure out why they came to college and identify exactly they want from the experience. By investigating where their interests lie, students are learning what they value, the importance of these values, and how to strike a balance when setting priorities.

Coburn and Treeger (2003) believe that while students are wrestling with the question, “Who am I,” they will be “integrating what they’ve learned about themselves in earlier stages.” (p. 17). Students will begin to assert their own beliefs, identity, and sense of self. They will no longer be as concerned with social norms and parental expectations.

The last vector of development is the development of personal integrity. During this period, values, morals, and beliefs previously learned are called into question and reviewed. The realization that it is better to admit mistakes than to hide them begins to occur. Integrity is only developed by being consistent and honest (Chickering, 1969).

According to Chickering (1969), the components or vectors of development discussed above are necessary as well as essential if college aged students are going to achieve independence and become productive autonomous, decision-making adults. It is important to note that Chickering’s seven vectors of development does not take into account other cultures viewpoint or perspectives. Many other cultures believe decisions
are made collectively, with all members participating. Not considering an elders opinion, in many cultures, actually indicates a lack of respect.

Though widely accepted, not everyone is in agreement with Chickering’s developmental model; the specific time frame concerning student development is a subject of some dispute. Forbes (2001) was quoted as saying, “Newer research suggests that the separation from parents occurs closer to the end of the college years and also varies with a student’s gender, race, and cultures” (p. 14). She suggested that students, who remain in closer connection with their parents throughout their college career, may have greater benefits academically as well as socially as compared to students who did not. This contradicts Chickering’s (1969) viewpoint that becoming independent, mature, and autonomous can only occur once the ties are broken and detachment from parents begins.

This new research originated with developmental psychologist Jeffery Arnett. Arnett (2000) outlines what he describes “as a new conception of development for the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18-25” (p. 469). Referring to this period as, “Emerging Adulthood”, Arnett contends that

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

Chickering (1969) claimed that this exploration occurred fairly early on in college life during the identity formation vector. Arnett (200) argues that independent exploration is still a necessary stage in development; however, he concludes that it is now occurring much later in students’ lives than it previously had. What has changed? A
reasonable question arises as to whether there is something inherently different about
today’s college students or something different with their parents, or perhaps both.

Factors That Influence Student Development

There is no shortage of books, articles, and theories regarding the factors that
have affected student development. Much of this writing comes from the popular press in
a large part because it is fairly easy to claim some expertise on student development.
Virtually all adults have been a developing student themselves, the parent of a student or
both. This experience leads to a sense of intuitive understanding of the issues and causes,
with little or no long-term evidence to support or disprove any particular position.

McGrath (2007) presents a compelling case that the current generation of
parents have not done a good job of developing (or allowing) independence in their
children. It is not for lack of intent. McGrath offers the following attitude as common,
“It’s the most important job I’ll ever have,” and “Yes, I may be a world-class surgeon,
but my real life’s work is raising little Heather” (p. 3). Parental over-involvement is not,
according to McGrath (2007) a college age problem, but has its roots in children’s very
early pre-adolescent years. Parents have gone to great lengths to make their child/children
feel special and it is one of the factors affecting student development. He writes, “The
problem is that this over-scheduled, over-nurturing, overbearing style of parenting robs
kids of something crucial; the opportunity to be alone with other kids, the chance to
figure the world out on their own” (p. 4).
McGrath (2007) discusses the necessity for kids to be allowed to play, learn, and grow, without parental involvement. He quotes pediatrician and author of books on parenting, Ken Ginsburg, as saying,

Play is essential to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional well-being of children. It’s the way kids master their environment. It’s the way they overcome difficulty, figure things out, and work out new solutions. Unfortunately, we’ve taken that away, because we’ve redefined parenting. (p. 4)

According to McGrath (2007), this current generation of parents (primarily Boomers raising Millennials) is, despite the best of intentions, perhaps the worst ever.

Gibbs (2007) drawing largely on anecdotal stories provided by elementary and secondary level teachers, echoes many of McGrath’s (2007) themes. She argues that it is, “in the nature of parents to want to smooth out the bumps in the road, it’s in the nature of teachers to throw in a few more: sometimes kids have to fail in order to learn” (p. 3). In her article she presents examples of parent requests for a new teacher because of “bad chemistry”; parents who over burden their children with multiple honors classes, varsity sports, orchestra and school government; and parents spending two hours a day sitting through their child’s math class. The result of these interventions, according to Gibbs is that “they miss out on lessons in self-reliance” (p. 4). To illustrate the point she quotes Mara Sapon-Shevin, a professor of education at Syracuse University who claims that she “has had students tell her they were late to class because their mothers didn’t call to wake them up.” (p. 4). She concludes that at least one cause of the problem is the “growing pressures to succeed and arguments over how success should be defined” (p. 8).

Despite the lack of academic rigor, there does appear to be at least one relevant theme in the popular media that is rarely discussed in academic journals. This is
the idea that parents may have different goals and objectives than educators (let alone their children) and that they have been diligently working towards these goals from the very beginnings of their children’s lives. According to the popular media, the apparent goal of most parents does not necessarily center on raising an independent critical thinker. Instead, the anecdotal evidence seems to point more to a parental goal of achievement, societal success and status (Kantrowitz & Tyre, 2006).

At the very least these writings must be considered to the extent that they challenge the basic premise that is generally assumed in the educational community – that is that parents, students and educators all share the same goal. Beginning with a premise of shared goals, the majority of writings in academia looks for broader or for other environmental causes to the phenomenon of more parental involvement coupled with slower student development. Taub (2008) specifically states, “Parents and higher education professionals share the goals of student success and student growth and maturity” (p. 25).

Arnett (2000) challenged the timing of the phases (or vectors) in Chickering’s model and points to a “sweeping demographic shift” as the primary cause of the change in parental involvement and its affect on student development. “This demographic shift has resulted from later life marriages and changing childbirth patterns. Students are no longer transitioning to adult roles at as young an age as they previously did. Instead, students, or “emerging adults” are delaying these roles until after college -- until their late twenties” (2000, p. 470).

Twenge (2006) supports Arnett’s (2000) claim of the “emerging adult” stage of development. She claims that GenMe has a longer length of time to pursue dreams
because they are marrying later and having children later. This allows them the freedom to pursue their dream careers such as being an actor or professional athlete much longer than previous generations who felt a need to have a career job lined up upon graduation from college.

While Arnett (2000) contends that a changing demographic shift is the primary factor contributing to student development, Howe and Strauss (2000) assert that a generational shift or persona that has occurred is only partly responsible. A generation is approximately 20-22 years in length and will experience a common ideology or persona. A generational persona “embodies attitudes about family life, gender roles, institutions, politics, religion, culture, lifestyles and the future” (p. 40). Baby boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials are examples of generational personas (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Another example reflective of a generational shift during this time period was the demise in 1961 of the legal document, in loco parentis, which had been in existence for nearly a half century. Henning (2007) director of student affairs planning, evaluation, and research at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, stated that this doctrine originally “defined the relationship between colleges, students, and parents” (p. 539). It was protests by a generation referred to as baby boomers that led to the doctrines demise.

When this doctrine was originally established in 1837, it was a legal tool employed by college educators allowing them the right to discipline students. It was utilized to guide decisions involving student development programs and interactions with students. However, in 1960 it was determined that colleges were no longer legally responsible for students’ behavior. College students were considered adults, and as such,
responsible for their own behavior (Henning, 2007). As a result of *in loco parentis* demise, the legal role parents once played in their student’s college education changed as did the role between colleges and students. Today, college administrators and parents are required to follow guidelines established in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Even though parents may pay students’ tuition, they legally do not have the right to students’ information (e.g., grades, class schedules, etc.) because students are considered adults (Henning, 2007).

Howe and Strauss (2000) believe that this new generation referred to as “Millennials” is different from previous generations. In an interview with John Lowery (2006) in About Campus magazine, entitled Millennials Come to Campus, Strauss stated that the millennials are a “correction for Boomers—that is, many of the things Boomers were not, they are” (p. 6). Howe and Strauss (2000) list seven distinguishing characteristics associated with Millennials that differentiate them from generation X and correct the Boomers. There is significant evidence that the characteristics that distinguish the Millennials, is a direct result of the parenting practices adopted by the Boomers. These characteristics are responsible for the different perspective that this generation brings to its endeavors. These characteristics are: special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, achieving, pressured, and conventional. The characteristics that can be most problematic for student development in a college environment is the students own sense of specialness and the protective sheltering by parents (2000).

The boomers tendency to treat their children special stems from the way they were raised and their generational experiences during 1945-65. Boomers grew up following the great depression and World War II. As a result, they were raised by parents
that applied a relaxed style to their parenting. Greater emphasis was placed on “individualism and inner creativity and less on teamwork and external convention” (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Because of their parent’s emphasis on individuality, Boomers became a generation that challenged authority. They participated in the Free Speech movement, held sit-ins, and trashed college campuses. Boomers took part in love-ins while revolting against the Viet Nam War and the “establishment.” The end result—a “generation gap” between college age (Boomer) kids and their middle-aged (G.I.) parents (Howe and Strauss, 2000).

Howe and Strauss (2000) point out that many boomers avoided childbirth until their late twenties or early thirties because they didn’t want the same kind of relationships they had with their parents. As they aged, however, they came to the realization that they really wanted children and actually went to great efforts to produce them. Howe and Strauss (2000) claimed that this was because boomers were “into” the deeper meaning of creating families and, as a result, “the era of the wanted, protected, and worthy child began” (p. 31). Children were viewed by their boomer parents as the highest form of self-discovery. These “special” children that were so wanted by boomers are today’s millennial generation. Lowery cites Strauss as saying, “Kids come not just first, but aggressively, first” (Lowery, 2001, p. 8).

While Twenge (2006) agrees with Howe and Stowe (2000) about millennials being regarded as special, she does not view this as acceptable. Quite the contrary, In Generation Me she contends that today’s generation focuses on themselves to excess. That this is, in part, due to the fact “this generation has never known a world that put duty
before self” (Twenge, 2006, p. 2). She further asserts that “television, movies, and school programs have told us we were special from toddlerhood to high school” (p. 4).

Twenge (2006) disagrees with Howe and Stowe’s (2000) assessment that millennials focus on teamwork and are the Next Great Generation. Twenge (2006) asserts that it was the boomer generation that did everything together or en masse—that together the boomers protested against conformity and the establishment. Millennials rather have been taught to put themselves first, “to put their own needs first and to focus on feeling good about themselves” (p. 7).

While millennials were in grade school, many of their teachers believed that their most important job was to help the students feel good about themselves, to build their self-esteem. According to Twenge (2006), “creating a positive atmosphere was more important than correcting mistakes” (p. 61). She further expresses a frustration that all students who passed a spelling test were able to attend a pizza party rather than “earning” it by getting an A. She believes this sends the message that “we don’t expect children to learn anything – that as long as they feel good, that seems to be all that’s required” (p. 63).

So, what is wrong with this you wonder? All the emphasis placed on promoting self-esteem is backfiring. Psychologist Martin Seligman, in Twenge’s (2006) book argues, “That self-esteem based on nothing does not serve children well in the long run; it’s better for children to develop real skills and feel good about accomplishing something” (p. 66). In an attempt to build self-esteem, and make students feel special, students have taken away the misleading lesson that they are good at everything. One manifestation can be found in grade inflation. Twenge (2006) reports that grade inflation
is at an all time high and that, “In 2004, 48% of American college freshmen—almost half—reported earning an A average in high school, compared to only 18% in 1968, even though SAT scores decreased over this time period” (p. 63).

The sheltering of students by their parents is another factor cited by Howe and Stowe (2000) that has influenced student development. Karen Forbes (2001), director of counseling services at Lafayette College pointed out that parents of millennials attended college in the 1960s and 1970s and “they may vividly remember engaging in or witnessing behavior that they fear their children may repeat” (p. 12). It is because of this fear that today’s parents want to shelter their own children. Millennial parents do not want their children exploring, experimenting, and taking risks like they did. By attempting to limit the exploration and experimentation, normal development is not allowed to occur.

Levine (2006) agrees that sheltering and overprotecting children “as if they were a delicate crystal goblet” shields them from adversity (p. 5). This is problematic in that it produces fragile children who are unable to handle problems they encounter. Levine believes that if children are not left to handle their own problems then they may never develop effective problem solving skills.

Finally, Howe and Stowe (2000) point to two environmental factors that are external to the family, technology and the pace of life that have had an impact on student development. Everything is faster; expectations are greater, and multi-tasking occurs on a daily basis. According to Coburn and Treeger (2003), a lack in communication boundaries between parents and students is a direct result of the arrival of the cell phone. Technology, and in particular, cell phones are a common theme amongst experts in
higher education when discussing factors affecting student development. Lowery (2001) quotes Strauss as saying, “Technology is an issue; parents have bought cell phones for the express purpose of being able to be in touch with them (their child) constantly” (p. 9).

Tyler (2007) echoes this sentiment. She observes that this millennial generation is “the first generation to use e-mail, instant messaging (IM) and cell phones since childhood and adolescence.” She believes that “the constant “tethering” to technology has affected the way this generation communicates, makes decisions, and interacts” (2007).

Tyler (2007) further contends that the everyday use of computers and cell phones has changed students’ brain development as well as communication patterns with parents. She asserts that this generation is different from older generations in that they have not proclaimed their independence from parental guidance and influence as a result of technology (2007). Students in the past would have to go down the hall in their dorms to talk on a pay phone to their parents. It was expensive and inconvenient and tended to be a once a week occurrence. Today, as soon as students get out of class, they are calling their parents to let them know how successful they were on a test or what grade they received on a paper.

Tyler’s (2007) writings point to still another factor that affects student development. She quotes research conducted by Jordan Grafman, Chief of Cognitive Neuroscience at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, indicating a physiological factor. Scientists have discovered that “the pre-frontal lobes which are involved in planning and decision-making continue to develop into the late teens and
early twenties” (2007). According to Tyler, this is yet another reason Millennials have trouble making important life decisions on their own.

Coburn and Treeger (2003) follow a developmental model that is similar to Chickering’s, albeit somewhat simplified. They point to four phases (vectors) of development; the search for identity, intellectual development, independence and intimacy (pp. 12-30). Their research leads them to conclude that a number of factors have led to parental over–involvement to the detriment of student development.

Parents’ expectations of college life are often too large and blown out of proportion. Many parents feel that college is the opportunity of a lifetime and that they must do everything possible to ensure success for their child. Howe and Stowe (2000), point to changing family patterns. In particular, they cite the need for parents to justify the large financial investment in their children’s education. Parents want to protect their investment and guarantee a good return on it and as such rationalize their involvement in their students’ college life (Coburn & Treeger, 2003). However, like Taub (2008), they contend that parents have the same goals as their children. They want them happy, successful and most notably, independent. However, they are quick to note that, “Although independence is valued as a goal, actual steps towards independence are likely to make parents nervous” (p. 8).

Consequences of Parental Over involvement

According to the research, all of the factors above contribute to the over-involvement in their students’ development. This involvement by helicopter parents manifests itself in a variety of effects and consequences. Levine (2005) emphasizes that
young adults are struggling with career and life decisions and are not equipped with the necessary tools to accomplish them. He recommends that “parents balance their inclination to support their children with decisions that will offer them greater independence” (p. 201). Levine’s (2005) research suggests that giving children greater independence when they are younger allows them to develop the necessary skills needed later in life.

Dispute settlement should be a core part of the growing-up curriculum. When parents intervene, a golden educational opportunity has been squandered. Mothers and fathers need to stay on the sidelines, serving as sounding boards and perhaps offering sage advice, if asked. Settling differences for a kid is one way to put him on a pedestal possibly making him feel smugly invulnerable. Someday he’ll experience the shocking realization that some disputes won’t go away unless he actively negotiates settlements. (p. 41)

Coburn and Treeger (2003), also discuss the consequences of too much parental involvement. Their observations include the inability for many college students to find a good fit between their minds and their career directions. Levine (2005) contends that these students have become too accustomed to having activities spelled out and scheduled for them. As a result, they find it difficult to make their own decisions, discern what they like, and recognize what they are good at. states, “Parents and teachers have unwittingly let them down” (p. 5). In addition, students lack the ability to problem solve and negotiate resolutions.

Twenge (2006) used findings from the largest intergenerational research study ever conducted (and her own personal life experience as a member of GenMe) to support her statement that young people of today are more confident, assertive, entitled, and more miserable than ever before. According to Twenge, (2006), treating millennials as “special” has had consequences. She contends that “Our childhoods of constant praise,
self-esteem, boosting, and unrealistic expectations did not prepare us for an increasingly competitive workplace” (p. 7).

Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that students, parents, and faculty will neither agree as to what the most important outcomes are to be achieved from a college education nor will they accurately predict what the others will designate as the most important outcome. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that while the three constituencies will agree on a definition of what it means to be an independent adult, the data will reveal that students today rely to a great extent on their parents for advice and guidance in areas where an independent adult might otherwise be expected to make their own decisions. In addition, it is theorized that students, parents, and faculty will not be united in their perceptions concerning what students are hoping for when seeking advice. Lastly, it is hypothesized that the faculty and parents will not be in agreement regarding what is an appropriate level of involvement in college students’ lives.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to measure the amount of agreement or divergence between three specific groups of people; college students, parents of college students, and educators as to their opinions on the desired outcomes, expectations, and importance of a college education as well as the perceptions of appropriate parental involvement. The methodology of this study consisted of a quantitative study involving an opinion survey.

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 265 students attending California State University, Chico, 63 parents/guardians of freshman students attending CSU, Chico, and 29 California State University, Chico faculty. The total number of participants for this study was 357. Of the 265 students, 169 were freshman, 87 were sophomores, and 9 participants did not state their class level.

The student population was drawn from five lower-division general education courses (Child Development and four sections of Freshman Composition) and one Political Science course which are required of all students. The demographic breakdown of the student population was as follows: 110 male, 146 female, and 9 participants did not state their gender.
The parent population was derived from freshman parents attending California State University, Chico’s Summer Orientation Program prior to their students’ fall 2009 semester. Parents were asked to provide their e-mail address after being read an Oral Consent Form as seen in “Appendix A.” Providing an e-mail address indicated their willingness to participate in the survey. Every attempt was made to seek out any and all willing participants regardless of their sex or ethnicity. The gender breakdown of the parent respondents was as follows: 26 male and 37 female for a total of 63 parent participants. Fifty-two percent of the parent participants indicated they came from households with incomes under $100,000 annually and 42% came from households with incomes of $100,000 or less. In addition, 52% of the parent respondents stated they had a Bachelors Degree or higher.

The faculty population was obtained from the California State University, Chico’s Faculty Directory and the Fall 2009 Class Schedule. The class schedule indicates the name of the faculty member teaching each class. An attempt was made to seek out faculty members who taught for a variety of years. However, special effort was made to include professors who taught typical first-year general education courses such as English Composition, Logic and Critical Thinking, Political Science, Psychology, Nutrition, and Human Sexuality. Over 70 faculty members were requested to participate in the survey. Only 29 out of the 70 plus faculty members responded.

Instruments

The survey was conducted in two formats and subsequently amassed. One method utilized Zoomerang, an online Internet based survey tool. All Educators and all
but seven parents utilized the on-line survey. Through the use of Zoomerang, actual identities of respondents were confidential and anonymous to the researcher. Paper surveys were distributed to the student population for manual completion and no identifiable information was requested. Every attempt was made to keep the participants responses confidential and anonymous. Both formats collected basic demographic information (gender, level of education, household income) from the participants.

The quantitative survey consisted of 27 multiple-choice questions for students and parents and 28 questions for faculty. The faculty’s survey did not request the following demographic data: ethnicity, level of education, or household income. Sample questionnaires given to each cohort: student, parent, and faculty are included as “Appendices B, C, and D” respectively.

Procedure

Parents/guardians were sent an e-mail cover letter for the survey in the month of October reminding them about their willingness to participate in the survey. This e-mail, which is included as “Appendix E” thanked them in advance for their participation and reminded them what about the subject matter and details of the survey. The faculty was also sent an e-mail that is included as “Appendix F.” It introduced the researcher, stated the purpose of the survey, and presented a brief explanation as to its content. It indicated that the survey being conducted took between 10 and 15 minutes and was to be completed within a two week time period. A hyperlink to the survey was provided in the e-mail. Participants not wanting to participate could opt out at this point if so inclined.
Once parents and faculty clicked on the hyperlink, a Consent Form emerged. The parents and faculty consent forms can be viewed in “Appendices G and H” respectively. The consent form reminded the partaker that their participation was voluntary, there was no penalty for not participating, and that they could withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty or reprisal. The consent form explained that participants would be completing a questionnaire concerning their opinions on the desired outcomes, expectations, and importance of a college education. They were further instructed to express direct opinions to hypothetical scenarios, and then to predict the opinion of others. In order to take the survey, participants clicked on a “Start Survey” button.

Students in four Freshman Composition classes, one Child Development class, and one Political Science class were given paper surveys. An Oral Informed Consent letter was read to each class before any one was allowed to begin. The Student Oral Consent form and can be seen as “Appendix I.” The consent form emphasized that taking the survey was voluntary, there was no penalty for not participating, and they could opt out of the survey at any time without penalty or reprisal. The students were also informed that they must be 18 years of age or older to participate. The researcher then furnished a brief explanation about the contents and purpose of the survey and requested that they not put their name on the survey. Students were given 15 minutes to complete the survey. Originally only freshman were recruited to take the survey. Since a large number of sophomore students were in each class, the researcher decided to include the sophomore students in order to see if class played a significant factor in student responses.
Once surveys were collected from students, manual entry of the surveys’ paper forms were inputted into an excel spreadsheet. In addition, the surveys completed by parents and faculty that were taken on zoomerang were also inputted into the excel spreadsheet. Later the excel file was downloaded into a SPPS program titled PASW Statistics 17 in order to perform statistical analyses. The analyses used were descriptive statistics and chi-square tests in an attempt to determine whether or not a significant difference between the three cohorts: students, parents, and faculty existed.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will review the statistical results derived from the study as they relate to the four hypothesis statements. Included in this review will be a brief overview of the methodology presented in the previous chapter and general description of the survey group with a high-level demographic breakdown. General and specific analysis of the key data results will be presented and discussed.

This study examined a sample of CSUC students, parents of students and faculty members. Individuals within each of these groups were asked their opinions as they related to the level of parental involvement in a college student’s educational experience. Specifically, the study sought to determine whether the three cohorts would agree on: (a) the most important outcome to be achieved from a college education, (b) what it means to be an independent adult, (c) what students are looking for when seeking advice, and (d) how much parental/guardian involvement is appropriate at the college level.

To achieve this purpose, a survey was designed for each of the three groups. These surveys were created in both an electronic format and a hard paper copy and distributed to the participants in the format that was most easily accessed. Once the surveys were completed and return, the responses were entered in the SPSS statistical analysis program (PASW Statistics 17.0) for compilation and analysis.
Hypotheses

The research tested the following four hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis #1** predicted that students, parents, and faculty will neither agree as to what the most important outcomes are to be achieved from a college education nor will they accurately predict what the others will designate as the most important outcome.

- **Hypothesis #2** anticipated that while the three constituencies would agree as to the definition of what it means to be an independent adult, it was anticipated that the data would reveal that students today rely to a great extent on their parents for advice and guidance in areas where an independent adult might otherwise be expected to make their own decisions.

- **Hypothesis #3** theorized that students, parents, and faculty will not be united in their perceptions concerning what students are hoping for when seeking advice.

- **Hypothesis #4** hypothesized that the faculty and parents will not be in agreement regarding what is an appropriate level of involvement in college students’ lives.

Results

A total of 357 participants comprised the sample group for this study. The total participant population was divided into three separate cohorts: students, parents, and faculty. Two hundred sixty-five students participated in this study; 167 freshman, 87 sophomores and 9 students who did not state their class level. The total number of parent and faculty participants was 63 and 29 respectively. The small sample size of faculty participants in particular calls into question the reliability and validity of the study.
The limited diversity sample also suggests that any inference about these results relative to the general population is inappropriate and at the very least would require further research. However, it was not anticipated nor was it a significant intent of this research to determine whether or not any gender or ethnic differences would exist. Descriptive statistics portraying the frequency of ethnicity for the sample size is shown below in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Frequency of ethnicity of students and parents combined.](image)

In the total sample group, 42.3% were male, 55.2% were female, and 2.5% or nine students did not state their gender. There were no significant findings between male
and female answers to the survey questions. In addition, class level revealed no significant findings.

**Hypothesis #1 – Level of Agreement on Educational Outcomes**

Questions number 1, 2, and 3 were designed to test the first hypothesis that students, parents, and faculty would neither agree as to what the most important outcomes are to be achieved from a college education nor would they accurately predict what the others will designate as the most important outcome. The results of the study supported this hypothesis, providing little evidence that students, parents and educators agree on what is the most important outcome of a college education.

A chi-square analysis was computed comparing Group (Students, Parents, and Faculty) with responses on Question 1 (What is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education?). The analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 105.68$, $df = 10$, $p < .000$) and confirmed the researchers hypothesis that the three cohorts would not be in agreement.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the most common response for students (n = 262) was “a good, high paying job.” The pattern of responses for both parents and faculty was more evenly distributed across the response options. Note that the most common parent (n = 63) response was “a well rounded education” and the most common faculty (n = 29) response was “critical thinking skills.”

Students on the surface appear to be focused on reaping the financial benefit of a college education and finding a good, high-paying job rather than the less tangible outcomes of a well rounded education and/or critical thinking skills. To some extent this
attitude can be attributed to their erroneous perception that a “high-paying job” is the most desirable outcome from their parent’s perspective.

Parents and faculty are more aligned in their expectations as is illustrated in Figure 3. The chi-square analysis comparing parents (n = 63) and faculty (n = 29) with respect to their responses to Question 1 (What is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education?) revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 16.73$, $df = 4$, $p < .002$).

While parents and faculty differed on which was the most important outcome, the cohort’s listed “critical thinking skills” and “well rounded education” as their top two choices? Although parents ranked a “well rounded education” ahead of “critical thinking
Figure 3. Comparison of parent and faculty responses to question 1. (What is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education?)

skills,” it may be reasonable to assume that parents simply considered “critical thinking skills” to be a natural and necessary component of a “well rounded education.” There is some evidence in the results that lends credence to this assumption because parents ranked “critical thinking skills” as the second most important outcome. “A good, high paying job” was not designated as important by any faculty and “a degree” was a much more popular choice by parents.

Among students, on the other hand, there was a significant gap between a “well rounded education” and “critical thinking skills.” Nearly six times as many students
chose “well rounded education” as did those who chose “critical thinking skills.” This gap makes it difficult to infer that students believe that “critical thinking skills” are a natural and necessary component of a “well rounded education.”

Finally, a chi-square analysis was computed comparing freshman and sophomore (class level) responses to Question 1. The analysis revealed no significant finding ($X^2 = 5.14, df = 5, p > .05$) as can be seen in Figure 4. This analysis suggests both freshman and sophomores viewed “a good, high paying job” as the most important outcome to be obtained from of a college education.

*Figure 4. Comparison of class level (freshman and sophomore) responses to question 1. (What is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education?)*
All of the groups did poorly when asked to predict how the other groups would respond on this same issue; what is the most important outcome of a college education. A chi-square analysis was computed comparing Group (Student, Parent, and Faculty) with response to Question 3. The parent survey asked “What would your son/daughter say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education?” The student survey asked “What would your parents say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education?” and the faculty survey asked “What do you think parents would say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education?” As can be seen in Figure 5, the analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 30.86, df = 10, p < .001$).

Students thought that their parents would respond like them and select “a good, high paying job.” Note that parents accurately predicted that their son/daughter would designate “a good, high paying job” as the most important outcome to be achieved from a college education. While parents appear to understand the motivation of their children, they would prefer their student get “a well rounded education.” Parents did not accurately predict that students would rate “critical thinking skills” as highly as they did.

There was not a match in the faculty predictions of parents’ top two choices. Faculty predicted that parents would choose “a good, high paying job” and “a degree” and parents actually chose: “a well rounded education” and “critical thinking skills” as can be observed in Figure 5. This suggests that educators do not have a clear understanding of parental expectations. Therefore, this might be subject matter for further research.
Figure 5. Comparison of students, parents, and faculty responses to question 3. Perceptions of what the other cohorts designate as the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education.

Hypothesis #2 – Definition of an Independent Adult and Degree of Reliance on Parents

This study, as well as previous research, presumes that the college years are an important time for developing autonomy and independence. Questions 5 and 6 were designed to test whether students, parents, and faculty would agree on a definition of what it means to be an independent adult. Questions 10, 12 and 29 addressed the extent to which students today rely on their parents for advice and guidance in areas where an independent adult might otherwise be expected to make their own decisions.
The data reveals that a high level of agreement exists around the definition of what it means to be an independent adult. While the chi-square analysis does not fully support this claim, large majorities in all three cohorts agree on a common definition of what it means to be an independent adult. There was less agreement on whether or not students would achieve independence as a result of their college experience; faculty being less optimistic than the other two cohorts.

Question 5 asked, “In general, are you comfortable that when students graduate from college, they will have the ability to manage as an independent adult in society?” A chi-square analysis was computed comparing students \((n = 262)\), parents \((n = 63)\) and faculty \((n = 29)\) with respect to their responses to this question. The analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio \((X^2 = 34.94, df = 4, p < .000)\). Note that 77% of parents and students chose “Yes” as the most common response while 69% of faculty chose “Yes, within certain limits” as their most common response. Given the response received from faculty, further research may reveal why faculty are apparently less confident of students achieving independence as a likely outcome of the college experience.

As demonstrated in Figure 6, analysis was computed comparing Group (Student, Parent, and Faculty) with responses on Question 6 (Which of the following statements best describes your personal sentiment about what it means to be an independent adult?).

In an apparent contradiction to the hypothesis that the three constituencies would agree on a definition of what it means to be an independent adult, the chi-square analysis revealed significant findings \((X^2 = 22.6, df = 6, p < .001)\). The most common
Figure 6. Comparison of students, parents, and faculty responses to question 6. (Which of the following statements best describes your personal sentiment about what it means to be an independent adult?).

The response given by all three cohorts was “Someone who takes responsibility for their own choices and the consequences of those choices” (see Figure 6). However, nearly 27% of the students chose a different definition than the most common one. It is this significant minority (27%) opinion that is reflected in the chi-square analysis. So the hypothesis while somewhat confirmed is not proven and further research is required. Nevertheless it is significant that 73% of students hold the same opinion as their parents and the faculty members.
Whether or not students are likely to achieve independence “as a result of the college experience” is another matter. Faculty members are less confident of this occurring than are either parents or students. But interestingly, none of the three cohorts ranked this as a particularly important outcome of the college experience.

An opportunity exists for further research around this point. Perhaps parents feel that their sole responsibility is to assist their children in developing independence. If, by the time their children enter college, they are not fully independent, then this line of reasoning would suggest that some level of parental involvement might still be required. On the other hand, perhaps there is a presumption among educators that students entering college should already be independent adults and thus the university has no obligation to contribute further to the development of independence. Following this line of reasoning would seem to suggest that from the educators’ perspective, there ought to be a complete “hands-off” expectation of the parents. Many other interpretations are possible from this data. This is an area where a more qualitative approach, such as a focus group, might add clarity.

Two questions were designed to test the perceptions of students, parents, and faculty concerning where students would turn for advice in specific situations that were intended to replicate real life situations that presumably an independent adult would handle on their own. Questions 10 and 12 were designed to test opinions by comparing responses to specific scenarios. Descriptive statistics analyzing the frequency of responses on the two scenarios, was computed for students \((n = 265)\), parents \((n = 63)\), and faculty \((n = 29)\).
On Question 10 (How would you handle the following situation: You have been placed with a roommate that you neither like nor can tolerate. Their behavior is affecting your academic performance and health.). None of the cohorts chose “Call his/her parents for advice.” The most common response given by all three cohorts: students, parents, and faculty, was “Meet with a Resident Advisor or call the University Housing office.”

Question 12 asked, “Assume a student receives a grade they believe is unfair. They have already discussed it with their professor. If the student called home for advice what do you think parents would suggest?” A descriptive analysis on the frequency of responses on Question 12 was computed comparing Group (Student, Parent, and Faculty). The analysis revealed that all three constituents chose the identical answer. The most common reply was “Advise him/her to meet with an advisor.”

Question 29 asked faculty members with at least two years experience (students and parents were not asked), to simply indicate an opinion on the statement, “Choose a statement that best describes your sentiment about students’ today. Participants were given three choices. As can be seen in Figure 7, the most common answer by experienced faculty was “Students today seem much more dependent on their parents than previous generations.”

Further research is needed to determine if this sentiment shown if Figure 7 has any implications on student development and their ability to think critically. These responses can be interpreted in a number of ways. It is possible that parental over-involvement stems less from the parents than from students seeking their intervention. Parents appear to indicate that their preference would be for students to seek help from
Figure 7. Frequency responses to faculty Q29. (Choose a statement that best describes your sentiment about students’ today.)

professionals. Additional qualitative research might shed some light on why students are hesitant to seek help from their professors, a source that would logically be in the best position to provide the most relevant assistance.

Hypothesis #3 – Perceptions of Students’ Expectations When Seeking Advice

Question 23 sought to determine where students were likely to turn when needing advice about an academic issue such as which classes to take, what to major in, or frustrations with grades. Students were asked to indicate the first person they would generally rely on for help. Parents and faculty were asked who they thought students
SHOULD rely on first. A chi-square analysis was computed comparing Group (Student, Parent, and Faculty) with responses on Question 23. The analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 82.96, df = 8, p < .000$). Nearly 69% of the Parents and Faculty’s most common response was “Academic Advisors.” Students most common response was “Parent/Guardian” as can be seen in Figure 8. Note that student response was very close between “Parent/Guardian,” “Self,” “Academic Advisors,” and “Friends.”

![Figure 8. Comparison of group (students, parents, and faculty) responses to question 23. (Students: When needing or seeking advice about academics such as which classes to take, what to major in, frustrations with grades, etc., who is the first person you generally rely on for help. Parents and Faculty: When needing or seeking advice . . . who SHOULD students rely on first?)](image)
Where students choose to turn for help is instructive. Both parents and faculty agreed that students should seek advice from academic advisors and their answers were generally consistent across the board. What is worth noting is that parents did not, in large part, see themselves as a particularly important resource. Their responses indicate that students should first consult a professional or look for the answer themselves. There is little in their response to this question to suggest that they feel they should play an important part in helping their student through these types of issues. By contrast, students listed their parents as the number one source of assistance. What is interesting though is that there was a fairly even split among student responses. A significant majority of responses were spread amongst a reliance on parents, reliance on themselves, and reliance on their peers and on academic advisors. Where they were least likely to turn was to their professors (2.0%).

Students valued their own opinion to a much greater extent than parents thought they should as reflected in Figure 8. A possible inference that can be made is that students have more confidence in their decision making than parents do and that parents and faculty appear to have a high degree of confidence in the academic advising function.

Another interesting question arises when considering the participants’ responses to questions pertaining to what each of the cohorts believes students are looking for when seeking advice. Question 24 specifically addressed this issue (When seeking help while trying to solve a problem, either personal or academic, what do you think students want most?). The top response from faculty (perhaps somewhat cynically) was “the answer,” indicating an opinion that the students wanted someone else to do their thinking for them. To be fair, as illustrated in Figure 9, the faculty responses were fairly
Figure 9. Comparison of group (students, parents, and faculty) responses to question 24. (When seeking help while trying to solve a problem, either personal or academic, what do you think students want most?)

evenly spread and students themselves chose “the answer” as the second most common answer, although more than twice as many students chose “help in critically analyzing the situation.” Parents also chose “critically analyze” as their top response.

A chi-square analysis was computed comparing Group (Student, Parent, and Faculty) with responses on Question 24. The analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 22.79, df = 8, p < .004$). This analysis partially supports the researchers hypothesis that the three cohorts will not be united in their perceptions about what students are looking for when seeking advice.
What makes this particularly interesting is that neither students nor parents chose “critical thinking skills” as their top expected outcome of a college education. The inference can be made that parents understand what students want when seeking advice. Their responses to Question 24 to some degree indicate that there is value placed on critical thinking skills. Parents did rate critical thinking skills highly as an educational outcome, and as stated before, may simply have assumed that critical thinking skills are a natural part of a well-rounded education. Students however did not rate critical thinking skills highly, perhaps in part due to an inability to link the value of critical thinking to a “high paying job.” The answer chosen least by faculty was “Someone who will help them critically analyze the situation.”

This is another rich opportunity for further research. There are some interesting implications in this finding relevant to future curriculum development. Incorporating more problem solving methodologies and critical analysis into broader curriculums may improve student performance, fulfill an unrealized educational objective and better equip students for success in life with the critical thinking skills necessary outside of academia. Educators, and parents to a lesser degree, already appreciate the value of critical thinking skills. Perhaps the students’ responses indicate an issue of maturity. But it is also possible that the necessity and relevance of critical thinking can be better incorporated into general curriculums.

Hypothesis #4 – Appropriate Level of Parental Involvement

The question that still remains is the issue of how much, if any, intervention is appropriate when parents do get involved. The last hypothesis predicted that the faculty
and parents would not be in agreement regarding what is an appropriate level of involvement in college students’ lives. To attempt to determine the validity of this hypothesis a number of questions were asked. The questions were grouped into two broad categories. Questions 14, 16, 17, and 18 attempted to determine how much information parents should be entitled to, or how much parents felt that they should be entitled to. A second group of questions (11, 20, 25, and 27) were designed to determine either how much parents currently are involved or how much each of the different cohorts believed that they should be involved.

Question 14 asked, “As a general practice, do you feel parents should be entitled to review their son or daughter’s grades?” A chi-square analysis was computed comparing Group (Students, Parents, and Faculty) with respect to their responses to this question. The analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 32.89, df = 4, p < .000$). Only parents chose “Yes” as the most common response.

It should be noted though that parents were almost equally divided in their most common responses of “Yes” and “Yes, within certain limits” as can be seen in Figure 10. In contrast to their parents, students chose “Yes, within certain limits” as their number one response followed by “No.” Faculty chose “No” as the most common response. Statistical analysis indicates that 30.9% of students and 58.6% of faculty chose “No” while only 9.5% of parents did, a significant divergence of opinion.

Question 17 was similar in nature, but addressed a non-academic issue. A chi-square analysis was computed comparing Group (Students, Parents, and Faculty) with respect to their responses to Question 17 (If a student were to commit a non-academic offense (i.e., minor in possession of alcohol) do you think it would be appropriate for
Figure 10. Comparison of students, parents, and faculty responses to question 14. (As a general practice, do you feel parents should be entitled to review their son or daughters grades?)

parents/guardians to be notified by the authorities?). The analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 65.87, df = 4, p < .000$). Students ($n = 261$) and faculty ($n = 29$) were in agreement with “No” as the most common response and “Yes, within certain limits” as the second most common response. The most common response for parents was “Yes.” Parents and students were in direct disagreement with 58% of parents articulating “Yes” they should be notified and 57% of students stating “No” parents should not be notified (see Figure 11).

In an effort to further determine student independence and parent involvement, a follow-up question to Question 17 was posed. Students were asked (Q18)
Figure 11. Comparison of group (students, parents, and faculty) responses to question 17. (If a student committed a non-academic offense, i.e., minor in possession of alcohol, do you think it would be appropriate for parents/guardians to be notified?)

if they would notify their parents or call them for assistance if disciplined for a non-academic offense. Parents were asked if they thought their son or daughter would call for assistance if disciplined. A chi-square analysis was computed to compare students ($n = 261$) and parents ($n = 61$) with responses to Question 18. The analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 20.05$, $df = 2$, $p < .000$).

As shown in Figure 12, students chose “Yes, within certain limits” as the most common response and parents chose “Yes” as the most common response. This implies that students may not tell their parents as much as parents think they would.
Figure 12. Comparison of student and parent responses to question 18. (If you were disciplined for a non-academic offense (i.e., minor in possession of alcohol) would you notify your parents/guardians and/or ask for assistance? If your son/daughter was disciplined for . . . call you and/or ask for your assistance?)

In an effort to determine student, parent, and faculty sentiment concerning parents’ right to access student information, and students’ desire for independence, the cohorts were asked if they felt that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) restricted their access to their students grades too much (Q16). Almost 65% of the total cohorts responded “Not sure” with the largest “Not sure” stemming from students. This researcher assumed the cohorts did not understand the specific restrictions of the FERPA act and wondered if explained, how the responses would differ. That said,
nearly 51.7% of the faculty chose “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” while 46.1% of the parents chose either “Strongly agree” or “Agree.” This is in total contrast and points to another area for possible future research.

The issue of access to information indicates an area of significant disagreement between the parent cohort and the faculty. Over 90% of parents felt that they were entitled to at least some access to their student’s grades. By contrast nearly 60% of educators disagreed. Opinions pertaining to information that is not directly related to academics were very similar. A significant majority of parents (87%) felt they were entitled to at least some notification if their son or daughter were to commit a non-academic offense. Once again nearly 60% of educators disagreed. These results indicate a significant difference of opinion between the parent and faculty cohorts. This divergence can possibly be linked to the vested interests of each group. Parents have invested heavily in their children from both an emotional and financial standpoint; and with some justification feel entitled to updates on the progress of their investment. Statutory limitations such as FERPA prohibit educators from sharing information regardless of the degree of insistence from parents or any other interested party except the student themselves. While some educators may find this constraining, it has the benefit of helping them to steer clear of conflicts between students and their parents, and to some extent forces families to deal with conflict, in their own arena and outside of the educational environment.

That said, by definition a lack of information will lead to surprises. When parents learn of academic or non-academic problems after the fact, they are often caught off guard. As young adults reach maturity and experience a greater degree of freedom,
significant changes can take place. It is not unusual for a once model high school student to become distracted from their studies or succumb to one of the many temptations available on college campuses. Such surprises for parents are understandably discomforting and like any group of individuals, some parents deal with it better than others. Not surprisingly some parents become upset and attempt to divert blame and responsibility somewhere other than with their son or daughter or even themselves and the university becomes a tempting target.

Another set of questions endeavored to determine how much parents currently are involved or how much each of the different cohorts believed that they should be involved in their son’s/daughter’s university education. One such question (Q20) simply asked students, “To your knowledge, has your parent/guardian intervened on your behalf with a faculty member, administrator, or school personnel?” Parents were asked, “Have you intervened?,” and faculty were asked, “Have any of your student’s parents intervened.” A chi-square analysis was computed comparing Group (Student, Parent, and Faculty) with responses on Question 20. The analysis revealed a significant divergence in opinions with (likelihood ratio $X^2 = 32.10, df = 2, p < .000$). The most common student and parent answer was “No” and the most common faculty answer was “Yes.” An inference can be made that parents have intervened but are not willing to admit to it or the parents who responded to the survey have not intervened.

Question 11 asked parents how they would respond if their son/daughter called and informed them that they were struggling on a research paper. A frequency analysis was computed comparing Group (Student, Parent, and Faculty) with responses on Question 11 (Assume that you have been assigned a research paper and are struggling
to get on track. What would parents’ advise their son or daughter do?). On this particular question, each respondent was allowed to choose two possibilities. The most common response by all three cohorts was the same “Advise your son/daughter to meet with an advisor or their professor.” The three groups also chose the same second most common answer “Offer suggestions to help your son/daughter get started on the project.” The fact that all three cohorts chose the same top two answers implies that the groups were in agreement on how involved parents should be regarding helping students on matters of homework.

Question 25 asked each of the cohorts to describe what they believed was the appropriate relationship between the university and the parents and students jointly. The chi-square analysis computed comparing Group (Students, Parents, and Faculty) with responses on Q25 (Students and Parents: What statement best describes your expectations regarding the relationship between you and the university personnel?) (Faculty: What statement best describes STUDENTS expectations regarding the relationship between them and the university personnel?) revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 39.56, df = 4, p < .000$). Students and parents most common response was “I am in partnership with the university personnel.” Note that students’ second most common response was “The university personnel are the experts.” Faculty’s opinion of students’ perceived relationship with the university was not accurate. In fact, it was the least common answer chosen by students. Faculty’s most common response was “I am the consumer, the university personnel work for me.” There are multiple inferences that can be drawn from these responses but until further research is completed any comment about them would just be conjecture (see Figure 13).
Finally, all three groups were asked to define the level of parental involvement compared to their involvement at earlier stages of their education. Students, parents, and faculty were asked how involved parents should be in helping college age students make decisions relative to their involvement during elementary and secondary school. Each cohort was asked to describe the statement that they most agreed with; “Should parents be as involved in helping make decisions as they were previously?,”
“Should parents be less involved?,” or “Should parents be minimally involved; college aged students should be able to make most decisions without parental guidance?” A chi-square analysis was computed comparing Group (Student, Parent, and Faculty) with responses on this question (Q27). The analysis revealed a significant likelihood ratio ($X^2 = 15.75, df = 4, p < .003$). Students’ most common response was “Minimally Involved” which indicated that they should be able to make most of their decisions without much parental assistance. The most common response from both parents and faculty was “Less involved.” Almost 13% of the students chose “As Involved” as the most common response while less than 2% of the parents, and less than 4% of the faculty did (see Figure 14).

This study does indicate that there is some level of agreement about the level of parental involvement. Students, parents, and faculty agree that it is inappropriate for parents to provide answers or directly work with their students to complete assignments. While they may provide some guidance, there is a line that all of the cohorts agree ought not to be crossed.

With the exception of what is an appropriate level of access to information, this study indicates that parents and faculty are more closely aligned on the questions relating to an appropriate level of involvement than parents are with their own children. Additional research to identify the root causes of perceived parental over-involvement might show that poor communication between parents and students is a significant contributing factor.
Figure 14. Comparison of group (students, parents, and faculty) responses to question 27. (In general, what statement do you agree with MOST? Refers to Parent/guardian involvement in helping college age students make decisions.)
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Parents have been encouraged to be an active, involved participant in their child’s education. While parental involvement at the elementary and secondary level is encouraged and thought to be beneficial to students, there is much discussion about “over involved parents” at the college level. Emerging trends in the research seem to suggest that the hovering and over involvement by parents result in a diminished ability among graduates to demonstrate independent living skills and decision-making skills. Much of this research revolves around an assumption that these objectives, independence and decision-making skills, are desired outcomes of a college education. But is that really the case?

This study attempted to answer four key research questions:

1. Do the three cohorts: students, parents, and faculty agree as to what the most important outcome is to be achieved from a college education?

2. Do the three cohorts: students, parents, and faculty agree what it means to be an independent adult?

3. Is the assumption the same for students, parents, and faculty concerning what students are looking for when seeking advice?

4. Are the three cohorts in agreement as to how much parental/guardian involvement is appropriate at the college level?
The results of this study provided scant evidence that students, parents and educators agree on the most important outcome of a college education. Additionally, the groups did poorly when asked to predict how the other groups would respond to this same question. The implication of this significant lack of agreement on purpose is that the three cohorts are evaluating the quality of the educational experience from different perspectives. If the three groups are aiming at different targets, discussions revolving around the best way to achieve a desired outcome become problematic. This lack of a common context appears to contribute to a lack of understanding between groups.

Perhaps the most interesting result revealed by this study is that there is a high level of agreement around the second key research question; what it means to be an independent adult. Developing independence is an objective that is discussed at great length in the literature as well as the popular media. What this study implies is that while independence may be a desirable goal to be achieved in life, it is not necessarily an outcome that need come from the college experience. That is, paths other than higher education can lead to independence.

With the exception of the issue of access to information, parents and faculty were, in general more closely aligned in their responses than were parents with their own children. A parent’s desire to track the progress of their investment (whether emotional, financial or both) is understandable. Ironically this information should be readily available directly from their student. Additional research to identify the root causes of what is perceived as parental over-involvement might show that it is poor communication or a complete lack of meaningful communication between parents and students, rather than too much communication that is the contributing factor.
The study indicates that there is general agreement about the level of parental involvement between all three cohorts. Parents seem to recognize that their role is different at the college level than the role they were asked to play when their children were in elementary and secondary schools. Students, parents and faculty agree that it is inappropriate for parents to provide answers or directly work with their students to complete assignments. While they may provide some guidance, there is a line that all of the cohorts agree ought not to be crossed.

Limitations of the Study

When this survey was developed, certain assumptions were made. It was assumed that surveys should be less than 30 questions in length and that it should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. This assumption restricted the amount of information that could have been obtained.

In addition, the small sample size particularly in respect to the number of faculty responses limited the learning opportunities that may have resulted from this study. The same sample size also calls in to question the validity and reliability of the study. Greater participation by faculty would have contributed to a richer pool of data.

Another overall problem with the survey was that when certain answers were chosen, implications on the part of participants as well as the research were made that may not have been accurate. The survey did not allow for participants to express comments, concerns or clarification about particular responses. This left the door open for possible erroneous conjectures to occur.
The title of the survey, along with the explanation as to why it was being conducted may have inadvertently caused respondents to answer how they hoped to be perceived rather than how they actually are. Parents may have portrayed themselves as being more “hands-off” when it comes to helping their student with decisions, situations or scenarios in order to appear not overly involved. Students may have represented themselves as more independent than is generally the case.

Lastly, the present survey which was given to each cohort did not contain identical questions which were originally intended. As a result, this reduced the amount of pertinent information that could be acquired. While this study represented a beginning and hopefully a common context, within which a larger discussion can begin, a more refined survey may render more qualitative findings.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to obtain the perspectives from each cohort: student, parent, and faculty, about what they felt was the most important outcome of a college education, what the appropriate level of parental involvement ought to be at the college level and the relationship that exists between them and the university personnel. This study made clear that the perceptions of the three groups do differ. What is important about perceptions, though, is that they can be instructive. The findings have implications that can be helpful for future researchers as well as university personnel.

To develop more actionable recommendations, future researchers will need to uncover some of the subtle thinking behind responses made to questions set forth in this survey, specifically those that pertained to expected outcomes of a college education and
the appropriate level of parental involvement. This would require further research. Development of a more refined, extensive survey that contains identical questions for each of the three cohorts is recommended. In addition, a larger sample size will enhance the validity of the study.

It is further suggested that well-designed and well-facilitated focus groups be held in order to further flesh out some of the subtleties discovered from this survey. In addition to a survey, focus groups that involve students, parents, and educators would provide an opportunity for in-depth discussions between the cohorts. Holding focus groups would also provide an arena for more “honest” answers to occur. While this particular survey never mentioned the word “helicopter” parent, it may have been inferred by participants. This may have had the affect of influencing initial responses in order to appear less involved for fear of being perceived as an over-involved “helicopter” parent. Once parents realize that the intention is to build a better relationship between them and the university personnel an atmosphere of trust can begin.

Faculty in particular should be interviewed in order to obtain a better understanding about their perceptions of parents and students perceived relationship in regard to university personnel. It is important for all three cohorts to define what it means to be in partnership with university personnel. This can only be determined through interactive communication. Faculty could then use the information to help improve their relationship with both parents and students.

To ultimately define an optimal level of parental involvement, a long-term longitudinal study is recommended. A long-term comprehensive study that enlists Jr. High age students and their parents that extends beyond the college years and into
adulthood and the workforce is suggested. This study could measure the positive or negative long-term impact on students’ ability to demonstrate independent living skills and decision-making skills as a result of different levels of parental involvement.

Results from this study can be immediately useful for University Personnel. Given that a lack of access to information was shown to be a major source of frustration for parents and an area of significant disagreement between the parent cohort and the faculty, a session during orientation devoted to communication strategies for parents might be appropriate as well as beneficial. These strategies should include how parents can access information they need and want from the appropriate source, the students themselves.

In addition, parents need to be informed and made to understand the limits and restrictions imposed by FERPA laws. Holding breakout sessions during orientation that explain what university personnel can and cannot reveal may help improve the relationship for all cohorts. Publications should be sent to parents on an annual or semi-annual basis explaining FERPA and the limitations it imposes on the university’s ability to disclose information. It is further recommended that parents be sent notices as to when students will be given grades. This puts the responsibility on to the students to provide the information to parents and eliminates the perception that the university is trying to exclude parents.

Lastly, faculty at each university should devise a list of what they deem to be appropriate involvement for parents at the college level. It is equally important that the list include what is not appropriate involvement. Once such a list is generated, it could be made available to parents as an ongoing resource.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Dear Parent/Guardian,

As part of my Master’s program in Social Science with an emphasis in Career Planning at California State University, Chico, I am conducting a 10 - 15 minute survey of Fall 2009 first year adult college students, parents/guardians of first year adult college students, and educators of first year college students at California State University, Chico.

Your participation in this study involves completing a questionnaire concerning your opinions on the desired outcomes, expectations and importance of a college education. The purpose of this survey is to measure the amount of agreement or divergence between the three groups (students, parents and educators) on these questions. Participants will be asked to express direct opinions and will be asked to choose the most appropriate response to hypothetical scenarios.

Your responses will be confidential and I assure you that your names will not be attached in any way to the survey responses. The results of my survey will be included in my Master’s thesis, to be completed December 2009.

Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. There is no anticipated risk or benefit if you choose to participate. Providing me with your e-mail address indicates your willingness to participate in the survey. The survey and specific instructions for completion will be e-mailed to you in September 2009. You may, however withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty or reprisal. I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to complete my survey!

Sincerely,

Dami Hammer

Note: The oral consent was used when soliciting parents e-mail addresses during Chico State’s Summer Orientation Program. Providing their e-mail address indicated a willingness to participate in the survey.
STUDENT SURVEY

Please circle only one answer for each question unless stated. Select the answer that best reflects your opinion.

1. What is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

2. What is the NEXT most important outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

3. What would your PARENT/GUARDIAN say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts
4. What do you think the FACULTY and STAFF at this university would say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

5. Are you comfortable that when you graduate from college, you will have the ability to manage as an independent adult in society?
   A. Yes  B. Yes, within certain limits  C. No

6. Which of the following statements best describes your personal sentiment about what it means to be an independent adult?
   A. An adult is someone who is 18 years old
   B. An adult is someone who takes responsibility for their own choices and the consequences of those choices.
   C. An adult is someone who is financially independent
   D. An adult is someone who can handle day-to-day situations on their own without assistance from parent/guardians.

7. What was your high school GPA?
   A. Over 4.0
   B. 3.5 to 4.0
   C. 3.0 to 3.5
   D. 2.5 to 3.0
   E. Under 2.5

8. Which statement best describes your personal situation:
   A. I came to college knowing the major I wanted (I picked it myself)
   B. My parent/guardian helped me pick my major
   C. I am undecided about my major
   D. I am exploring possible majors
   E. I have decided on a major, but my parent/guardian wants me to major in something different
9. How would you handle the following situation: You have just received notification that your academic performance has put you on academic probation and on the verge of disqualification?
   A. Tough it out  
   B. Ask a friend for advice  
   C. Call my parent/guardian for advice  
   D. Consult the college catalog for information  
   E. Meet with an academic advisor

10. How would you handle the following situation: You have been placed with a roommate that you neither like nor can tolerate. Their behavior is affecting your academic performance and health.
    A. Tough it out  
    B. Ask a friend for advice  
    C. Call my parent/guardian for advice  
    D. Meet with your Resident Advisor or call the University Housing Office  
    E. Ask my parent/guardian to call the Resident Advisor or University Housing Office

11. Assume that you have been assigned a research paper and are struggling to get on track. If you were to call your parent/guardian, what would their response be? (select no more than 2)
    A. Advise me to reread the syllabus or instructions  
    B. Advise me to collaborate with a friend or a classmate  
    C. Advise me to meet with your professor or an advisor  
    D. Offer suggestions to help me get started on the project  
    E. Work with me to complete the project  
    F. Just listen and let me figure out the most appropriate way to proceed

12. Assume that you have received a grade with which you disagree. You have already discussed the grade with your professor and have been unsuccessful in getting it changed. What would you do next?
    A. Nothing  
    B. Call my parent/guardians for advice  
    C. Ask my parent/guardian to talk to the professor  
    D. Meet with an advisor  
    E. Take the complaint to judicial affairs
13. How often do you communicate (phone, e-mail or text) with your parent/guardian?
   A. About every other week
   B. Once or twice a week
   C. Three to five times a week
   D. Every day
   E. Two or three times a day
   F. More than 3 times a day

14. As a general practice, do you feel your parent/guardian should be entitled to review your grades?
   A. Yes                B. Yes, within certain limits                C. No

15. Does your parent/guardian require you to share your grades with them?
   A. Yes                B. No

16. Do you feel FERPA restricts your parents’/guardians’ access to your student information too much?
   A. Strongly agree
   B. Agree
   C. Not sure
   D. Disagree
   E. Strongly Disagree

17. If you were to commit a non-academic offense (i.e. minor in possession of alcohol) do you think it would be appropriate for your parent/guardian to be notified by the authorities?
   A. Yes                B. Yes, within certain limits                C. No

18. If you were disciplined for a non-academic offense (i.e. minor in possession of alcohol) would you notify your parent/guardian and/or ask for their assistance?
   A. Yes                B. Yes, within certain limits                C. No

19. If you called your parent/guardian for assistance with the above type situation, what advice do you think they would recommend?
   A. Suggest I accept the consequences
   B. Suggest I try to work out a compromise with the proper authorities
   C. My parents would contact the proper authorities for me to try and work out a compromise
20. To your knowledge, has your parent/guardian ever intervened on your behalf with a faculty member, administrator, or school personnel?
   A. Yes   B. No

21. What is YOUR expectation upon graduation?
   A. I plan to move home while I begin looking for a job
   B. I plan to live at home while working in order to save money
   C. I expect to have a career job or job in my field lined up before I graduate
   D. I plan to take time off and travel
   E. I plan to live by myself or with roommates and figure it out after graduation

22. What do you think your PARENT/GUARDIAN expects will happen upon your graduation?
   A. I will move home while looking for a job
   B. I will live at home while working in order to save money
   C. I will have a career job or job in my field lined up
   D. I will take time off to travel
   E. I will live on my own or with roommates and figure it out after graduation

23. When needing or seeking advice about academics such as which classes to take, what to major in, frustration with grades, etc., who is the first person you generally rely on for help?
   A. Self
   B. Parent/guardian
   C. Friends
   D. Professors
   E. Academic Advisors

24. When seeking help while trying to solve a problem, (either personal or academic) what are you MOST looking for?
   A. The answer
   B. Someone who will just listen
   C. Someone who will ask pointed questions
   D. Someone who will help me critically analyze the situation
   E. Approval for what I have already decided to do
25. What statement best describes YOUR expectations regarding the relationship between you and the university personnel?
   A. I am the consumer, the university personnel work for me
   B. I am in partnership with the university personnel
   C. The university personnel are the experts and I need to listen to them

26. What statement do you think best describes your PARENT’S expectations regarding the relationship between you and the university personnel?
   A. My son/daughter is the consumer, the university personnel work for him/her
   B. My son/daughter is in partnership with the university personnel
   C. The University Personnel are the experts and my son/daughter needs to listen to them
   D. My parent/guardian believes he/she is the consumer and the university personnel work for him/her

27. In general, what statement do you agree with MOST? (Select only one)
   A. Parents/guardians of college age students should be as involved helping their son/daughter make decisions as they were during their earlier education
   B. Parents/guardians of college age students should be less involved with helping their son/daughter make decisions
   C. College age students should be able to make most decisions without parental/guardian assistance
Demographic Information:  

Gender:  Male       Female

A. Non-resident alien
B. Black/non-Hispanic
C. American-Indian/Alaskan Native
D. Asian or Pacific Islander
E. Hispanic
F. White, non-Hispanic
G. Race/ethnicity unknown

What is the highest level of education that either of your parents/guardians completed?  
11th Grade or less      High School Graduate      Some College – no degree
Associate Degree
Bachelors Degree      Masters Degree      Professional or Doctorate Degree
Decline to state

What is your approximate household income?  
Under $25,000      $25,000 to $49,000      $50,000 to $74,000      $75,000 to $99,000
$100,000 to $125,000      Over $125,000      Decline to state
PARENT SURVEY

Please select only one answer for each question. Select the answer that best reflects your opinion.

1. What is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

2. What is the NEXT most important outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

3. What would your son/daughter say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts
4. What do you think the FACULTY and STAFF at this university would say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

5. Are you comfortable that when your son/daughter graduates from college, he/she will have the ability to manage as an independent adult in society?
   A. Yes
   B. Yes, within certain limits
   C. No

6. Which of the following statements best describes your personal sentiment about what it means to be an independent adult?
   A. An adult is someone who is 18 years old
   B. An adult is someone who takes responsibility for their own choices and the consequences of those choices.
   C. An adult is someone who is financially independent
   D. An adult is someone who can handle day to day situations on their own without assistance from parents.

7. What was your son’s/daughter’s high school GPA?
   A. Over 4.0
   B. 3.5 to 4.0
   C. 3.0 to 3.5
   D. 2.5 to 3.0
   E. Under 2.5

8. Which of the following statements best describe your son’s/daughter’s personal situation:
   A. He/She went to college knowing what he/she wanted to major in (he/she decided on their own)
   B. I helped my son/daughter pick his/her major
   C. My son/daughter has no idea what to major in
   D. My son/daughter is exploring possible majors
   E. My son/daughter has decided on a major but I think he/she should major in something different
9. How would you handle the following situation: Your son/daughter just received notification that his/her academic performance has put him/her on academic probation and on the verge of disqualification?
   A. Suggest your son/daughter ask a friend for advice
   B. Call an academic advisor yourself and get information so you can give your son/daughter advice
   C. Listen and then ask him/her what he/she plans to do
   D. Suggest your son/daughter consult the college catalog for alternatives
   E. Suggest your son/daughter meet with an advisor

10. How would you handle the following situation: Your son/daughter has been placed with a roommate that he/she neither likes nor can tolerate. Their behavior is affecting your sons/daughters academic performance and health.
   A. Tell your son/daughter to tough it out
   B. Suggest your son/daughter ask a friend for advice
   C. You would call the Resident Advisor or Housing office yourself and handle the problem
   D. Listen and then ask him/her what he/she plans to do
   E. Suggest your son/daughter meet with the Resident Advisor or call the university housing office

11. Your son/daughter has been assigned a research paper and is struggling to get on track. If your son/daughter were to call you, what would your response be? (Circle no more than 2)
   A. You would advise your son/daughter to reread the syllabus or instructions
   B. Advise your son/daughter to collaborate with a friend or a classmate
   C. Advise your son/daughter to meet with their professor or an advisor
   D. Offer suggestions to help your son/daughter get started on the project
   E. Work with your son/daughter to complete the project
   F. Just listen and let your son/daughter figure out the most appropriate way to proceed

12. Parents: Assume your son or daughter receives a grade that he/she believes is unfair. He/she has already discussed it with their professor. What would you advise your son/daughter to do next?
   A. Nothing
   B. Talk to the professor again
   C. Advise him/her to meet with an advisor
   D. Advise him/her to take the complaint to judicial affairs
   E. Tell your son/daughter that you’ll talk to the professor for him/her
13. How often do you communicate (phone, e-mail or text) with your child?
   A. Once or twice a week
   B. Three to five times a week
   C. Every day
   D. Two or three times a day
   E. More than 3 times a day

14. As a general practice, do you feel you should be entitled to review your son’s/daughter’s grades?
   A. Yes                  B. Yes, within certain limits                  C. No

15. Do you expect that your son/daughter will share his/her grades with you without being asked?
   A. Yes                  B. No

16. Do you feel FERPA restricts your access to your son’s/daughter’s information too much?
   A. Strongly agree
   B. Agree
   C. Not sure
   D. Disagree
   E. Strongly Disagree

17. If your son/daughter committed a non-academic offense (i.e. minor in possession of alcohol) do you think you should be notified by the authorities?
   A. Yes                  B. Yes, within certain limits                  C. No

18. If your son/daughter was disciplined for a non-academic offense (i.e. minor in possession of alcohol) do you think he/she would call you and/or ask for your assistance?
   A. Yes                  B. Yes, within certain limits                  C. No

19. If your son/daughter called for assistance with the above type situation, what advice would you give?
   A. Suggest he/she accepts the consequences
   B. Suggest he/she try to work out a compromise with the proper authorities
   C. Contact the authorities yourself and see if you can fix it
20. Have you every intervened on your son’s/daughter’s behalf with a faculty member, administrator, or school personnel?
   A. Yes       B. No

21. What is your expectation upon your son’s/daughter’s graduation? (Select only one)
   A. He/she will move home while beginning to look for a job
   B. He/she will live at home while working in order to save money
   C. He/she will have a career job or job in his/her field with a start date
   D. He/she will take time off and travel
   E. He/she will either live alone or with roommates and figure it out after graduation

22. What do you think your son/daughter expects will happen upon graduation?
   A. He/she expects to move home while looking for a job
   B. He/she expects to live at home while working in order to save money
   C. He/she expects to have a career job or job in his/her field with a start date
   D. He/she plans to take time off to travel
   E. He/she expects to either live alone or with roommates and figure it out after graduation

23. When needing or seeking advice about academics such as which classes to take, what to major in, frustration with grades, etc., who do you think your son/daughter should FIRST rely on for help?
   A. Self
   B. Parent/guardian
   C. Friends
   D. Professors
   E. Academic Advisors

24. What do you think your son/daughter is looking for most when trying to solve a problem, (either personal or academic)? (Select only one)
   A. The answer
   B. Someone who will just listen
   C. Someone who will ask pointed questions
   D. Someone who will help critically analyze the situation
   E. Approval for what he/she has already decided to do
25. What statement best describes your expectations regarding the relationship between you and the University Personnel?
   A. I am the consumer, the University Personnel work for me
   B. I am in partnership with the University Personnel
   C. The University Personnel are the experts and I need to listen to them

26. In general, what statement do you agree with MOST?
   A. As a parent/guardian of a college student, I feel I should be as involved in helping my son/daughter make decisions as I was during their earlier education
   B. As a parent/guardian of a college student, I feel I should be less involved with helping my son/daughter make decisions
   C. As a parent/guardian of a college student, I feel my son/daughter should be able to make most decisions without my assistance
Demographic Information:

27. **Gender:**  Male       Female

28. **Ethnicity:**
   . A. Alien
   . B. Black/non-Hispanic
   . C. American-Indian/Alaskan Native
   . D. Asian or Pacific Islander
   . E. Hispanic
   . F. White, non-Hispanic
   . G. Race/ethnicity unknown

29. **What is the highest level of education that you completed?**
   11th Grade or less      High School Graduate      Some College – no degree
   Associate Degree
   Bachelors Degree      Masters Degree      Professional or Doctorate Degree
   Decline to state

30. **What is your approximate household income?**
   Under $25,000      $25,000 to $49,000      $50,000 to $74,000      $75,000 to $99,000
   $100,000 to $125,000      Over $125,000      Decline to state
FACULTY SURVEY

Please choose (circle) only one answer for each question. Select the answer that best reflects your opinion.

1. What is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

2. What is the NEXT most important outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

3. What do you think PARENTS will say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts
4. What do you think students would say is the MOST IMPORTANT outcome to be achieved from a college education? (select only one)
   A. A good, high paying job
   B. A well rounded education
   C. Critical thinking skills
   D. A degree
   E. Development of independence
   F. A good network of social contacts

5. In general, are you comfortable that when students graduate from college, they will have the ability to manage as an independent adult in society?
   A. Yes  B. Yes, within certain limits  C. No

6. Which of the following statements best describes your personal sentiment about what it means to be an independent adult?
   A. An adult is someone who is 18 years old
   B. An adult is someone who takes responsibility for their own choices and the consequences of those choices.
   C. An adult is someone who is financially independent
   D. An adult is someone who can handle day to day situations on their own without assistance from parents.

7. Relative to first year students you’ve taught in the previous 5 years, how academically prepared do you feel these current students are in comparison, as they begin their college education?
   A. Extremely well prepared
   B. Fairly well prepared
   C. Adequately prepared
   D. Not at all prepared

8. Which of the following statements best describes the majority of first year students’ personal situation:
   A. Most students come to college with a major
   B. A students’ parent/guardian pick their major
   C. Most students have no idea what they want to major in
   D. Most students come to college wanting to explore various majors
   E. Students know what they want them to major in, but their parent/guardian wants them to major in something different
9. What do you think is the appropriate way for a student to handle the following situation: The student just received notification that their academic performance has put him/her on academic probation and on the verge of disqualification?
   A. Tough it out
   B. The student should ask a friend for advice
   C. The student should call his/her parent/guardian for advice
   D. The student should meet with his/her Resident Advisor or call the University Housing Office

10. What do you think is the appropriate way for a student to handle the following situation: A student has been placed with a roommate that he/she neither likes nor can tolerate. Their roommates’ behavior is affecting his/her academic performance and health.
   A. Tough it out
   B. Ask a friend for advice
   C. The student should call his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) for advice
   D. Meet with his/her Resident Advisor
   E. Call the university housing office

11. Assume that you have assigned a research paper and a student is struggling to get on track. If a student were to call his/her parent/guardian about this dilemma, how do you think most parents would respond?
   A. Advise their son/daughter to reread the syllabus or instructions
   B. Advise their son/daughter to collaborate with a friend or a classmate
   C. Advise their son/daughter to meet with their professor (you) or an advisor
   D. Offer suggestions to help him/her get started on the project
   E. Work with the student to complete the project
   F. Just listen and let their son/daughter figure out the most appropriate way to proceed

12. What do you think is the appropriate way for a student to handle the following situation: Assume that a student received a grade with which he/she disagrees. The student has already discussed the grade with his/her professor and has been unsuccessful in getting it changed. What should the student do next?
   A. Nothing
   B. Call his/her parents for advice
   C. The student should have his parents call to talk to the professor
   D. Meet with an advisor
   E. Take the complaint to judicial affairs
13. How often do you think most students communicate (phone, e-mail or text) with their parent(s)/guardian(s)?
   A. About every other week
   B. Once or twice a week
   C. Three to five times a week
   D. Every day
   E. Two or three times a day
   F. More than three times a day

14. As a general practice, do you feel parents should be entitled to review their son or daughters grades?
   A. Yes  B. Yes, within certain limits  C. No

15. Do you think most parents/guardians require their son/daughter to share their grades with them?
   A. Yes  B. No

16. Do you feel FERPA restricts parents/guardians access to their student’s information too much?
   A. Strongly agree
   B. Agree
   C. Not sure
   D. Disagree
   E. Strongly Disagree

17. If a student were to commit a non-academic offense (i.e. minor in possession of alcohol) do you think it would be appropriate for their parents to be notified by the authorities?
   A. Yes  B. Yes, within certain limits  C. No

18. From your experience, when students face the possibility of disciplinary action, for a non-academic offense (i.e. minor in possession of alcohol) how often do you think their parents become involved?
   A. Almost always
   B. Less than ½ the time
   C. More than ½ the time
   D. Never
   E. Don’t know
19. If a student called home for assistance with the above type situation, what advice do you think a parent/guardian SHOULD give?
   A. Suggest their son/daughter accepts the consequences
   B. Suggest their son/daughter try to work out a compromise with the proper authorities
   C. The parent/guardian should contact the authorities to see if they can work out a compromise for their son/daughter

20. To your knowledge, have any of your student’s parent(s)/guardian(s) intervened on their behalf with you, another faculty member, administrator, or school personnel?
   A. Yes  B. No

21. What do you think is a reasonable expectation for students upon graduation: (Choose only one)
   A. Move home and begin to look for a job
   B. Live at home while working in order to save money
   C. Have a career job or job in their field already lined up
   D. Take time off and travel
   E. Live alone or with roommates and figure it out after graduation

22. What do you think parents expect will happen upon their son/daughter’s graduation: (Choose only one)
   A. Their son/daughter will move home while looking for a job
   B. Their son/daughter will live at home while working in order to save money
   C. Their son/daughter will have a career job or job in their field upon graduation
   D. Their son/daughter will take time off to travel
   E. Their son/daughter will either live alone or with roommates and figure it out after graduation

23. When needing or seeking advice about academics such as which classes to take, what to major in, frustration with grades, etc., who do you think students SHOULD first rely on for help?
   A. Self
   B. Parent(s)/guardian(s)
   C. Friends
   D. Professors
   E. Academic Advisors
24. When seeking help while trying to solve a problem, (either personal or academic) what do you think students want most?
   A. The answer
   B. Someone who will just listen
   C. Someone who will ask pointed questions
   D. Someone who will help critically analyze the situation
   E. Approval for what they’ve already decided to do

25. What statement best describes STUDENTS expectations regarding the relationship between them and the University Personnel?
   A. I am the consumer, the University Personnel work for me
   B. I am in partnership with the University Personnel
   C. The University Personnel are the experts and I need to listen to them

26. What statement do you think best describes PARENTS/GUARDIANS expectations regarding the relationship between them and the University Personnel?
   A. I am the consumer, the University Personnel work for me
   B. I am in partnership with the University Personnel
   C. The University Personnel are the experts and I need to listen to them

27. In general, what statement do you agree with MOST?
   A. Parents/guardians of college age students should be as involved helping their son/daughter make decisions as they were during their earlier education
   B. Parents/guardians of college age students should be less involved with helping their son/daughter make decisions
   C. College age students should be able to make most decisions without parental/guardian assistance

28. How long have you been teaching?
   A. This is my first year of teaching
   B. I have been teaching 2-5 years
   C. I have been teaching between 5-10 years
   D. I have been teaching more than 10 years

29. If you answered anything other than this is my first year of teaching, please choose one of the following statement that best describes your sentiment:
   A. Students are no different today than yesterday
   B. Students today seem much more dependent on their parents than previous generations
   C. Students today seem to be much more independent from their parents than previous generations.
Demographic Information:
Gender: Male       Female
Earlier this summer while attending Chico State’s Summer Orientation, you indicated your willingness to participate in my thesis survey questionnaire by providing me with your e-mail address. Once again, thank you for agreeing to participate.

Below is the link to the survey along with the official consent form. It only requires between 10-15 minutes of your time. If you could complete the survey by Friday, October 9, 2009 it would be greatly appreciated. Your willingness to complete this survey over the coming ten days will help me stay on my time-line for completion. The data obtained will be used to evaluate the agreement and/or divergence of the three constituencies (parents/guardians, students, and faculty) opinions pertaining to the desired outcomes, expectations, and importance of a college education.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please feel free to contact me. Thank you in advance for your participation.

http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB229PBCTHDR7

Dami Hammer, Academic Advisor
California State University, Chico
Academic Advising Programs
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dhammer1@csuchico.edu

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do. ~Edward Everett Hale~
APPENDIX F
Hi. My name is Dami Hammer and I am an Academic Advisor on campus as well as a graduate student. I would like to take this opportunity to ask for your assistance. As a graduate student, I am currently working on my thesis. Dr. Charles Zartman and Dr. Eddie Vela serve as members of my graduate committee. My research topic is a direct result of my work here on campus with students in Academic Advising.

Past research has shown the importance of parental involvement in children’s growth, development, achievements, and success. However, at the college level, the question remains - is too much involvement or over-involvement by parents positively or negatively affecting their students’ development? The effect of over-involvement by parents is being researched and discussed in the current professional literature. But what exactly is over-involvement and how might it be hurting student development?

Most of us assume that parents/guardians, students, and educators all have the same desired outcomes, goals, and expectations for college age students. However, I have discovered through research, data, and advising appointments with students, that this assumption might be flawed. In an attempt to gather data and find answers to the above questions, I have designed - with detailed input provided by Dr. Vela and Dr. Zartman - a survey to be given to three constituencies: first year students, parents/guardians of first year college students, and educators. By conducting this survey, I would like to measure the amount of agreement or divergence between these three groups.

Below is the link to the survey along with the official consent form. It will only require between 10-15 minutes of your time. If you could complete the survey by Friday, October 9, 2009 it would be greatly appreciated. Your willingness to complete this survey over the coming ten days will help me stay on my time-line for completion.

Since I work on campus, should you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please feel free to contact me and I would be happy to meet with you to discuss it. Thank you in advance for your participation!

http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB229PEJJKBUL

P.S. If you need any help from Academic Advising, please contact me. I will be happy to help!

Dami Hammer, Academic Advisor
California State University, Chico, Academic Advising Programs
Phone: (530) 898-3569    Fax:   (530) 898-4790
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INFORMED CONSENT PARENTS ON ZOOMERANG

PERCEPTIONS OF APPROPRIATE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: A STUDY COMPARING THE DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES OF FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS, PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS, AND FACULTY

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent

As part of my Master’s program in Social Science with an emphasis in Career Planning at California State University, Chico, I am conducting a 10-15 minute survey of Fall 2009 first year adult college students, parents/guardians of first year adult college students, and educators of first year college students at California State University, Chico.

Your participation in this study involves completing a questionnaire concerning your opinions on the desired outcomes, expectations and importance of a college education. The purpose of this survey is to measure the amount of agreement or divergence between the three groups (students, parents and educators) on these questions. Participants will be asked to express direct opinions and will be asked to choose the most appropriate response to hypothetical scenarios.

Your responses will be confidential and I assure you that your names will not be attached in any way to the survey responses. The results of my survey will be included in my Master’s thesis, to be completed December 2009.

Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. There is no anticipated risk or benefit if you choose to participate. You may withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty or reprisal. I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to complete my survey!

Dami Hammer
APPENDIX H
INFORMED CONSENT FOR FACULTY

FOR ZOOMERANG

PERCEPTIONS OF APPROPRIATE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: A STUDY COMPARING THE DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES OF FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS, PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS, AND FACULTY

Informed Consent for Faculty

As part of my Master’s program in Social Science with an emphasis in Career Planning at California State University, Chico, I am conducting a 10-15 minute survey of Fall 2009 first year adult college students, parents/guardians of first year adult college students, and educators of first year college students at California State University, Chico.

Your participation in this study involves completing a questionnaire concerning your opinions on the desired outcomes, expectations and importance of a college education. The purpose of this survey is to measure the amount of agreement or divergence between the three groups (students, parents and educators) on these questions. Participants will be asked to express direct opinions and will be asked to choose the most appropriate response to hypothetical scenarios.

Your responses will be confidential and I assure you that your names will not be attached in any way to the survey responses. The results of my survey will be included in my Master’s thesis, to be completed December 2009.

Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. There is no anticipated risk or benefit if you choose to participate. You may withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty or reprisal. I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to complete my survey!

Dami Hammer

START SURVEY!
APPENDIX I
STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT

(ORAL SCRIPT)

Dear Student,

As part of my Master’s program in Social Science with an emphasis in Career Planning at California State University, Chico, I am conducting a 10-15 minute survey of fall 2009 first year adult college students, parents/guardians of first year adult college students, and educators of first year college students at California State University, Chico. If you are not 18 years of age or older, you may not participate in this survey.

Your participation in this study involves completing a questionnaire concerning your opinions on the desired outcomes, expectations and importance of a college education. The purpose of this survey is to measure the amount of agreement or divergence between the three groups (students, parents and educators) on these questions. Participants will be asked to express direct opinions and will be asked to choose the most appropriate response to hypothetical scenarios.

Your responses will be confidential and I assure you that your names will not be attached in any way to the survey responses. The results of my survey will be included in my Master’s thesis, to be completed December 2009.

Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. There is no anticipated risk or benefit if you choose to participate. You may withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty or reprisal. I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to complete my survey!

Sincerely,

Dami Hammer