UNDERSTANDING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT, ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION, AND RESOURCE AWARENESS THROUGH THE LENS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Although research has documented the value of parent and family involvement at the elementary and secondary levels, less is known about its impact on student performance at the postsecondary level. Even then, most of the research focuses on 4-year universities. Unfortunately, scholars know little about the impact of parent/family involvement and engagement at community colleges. Social and family capital theory supports the continued inclusion of parent/family engagement throughout a student's collegiate career, especially for first-generation and historically underserved students.

This quantitative, nonexperimental study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of parent/family involvement from the community college student perspective. The goal was to address how community colleges can empower families to support their student's academic journey through family involvement, resource awareness, communication, and engagement with the college. Through a questionnaire distributed to students enrolled at a large urban community college in the southern United States, the study focused on three variables: (1) level of parent/family involvement, (2) level of parent/family resource awareness, and (3) level of academic communication. The research explored the relationship between those variables and student demographics, grade point average, and the student's intent-to-persist. Secondary research questions explored student perceptions concerning satisfaction levels, communication modes, parent/family engagement strategies, and barriers. Lastly, responses to an open-ended

question provided a deeper understanding of what parent/family engagement means to students.

Significant findings included first-generation students (as defined in this study) reported less parent/family involvement, resource awareness, and levels of communication. Results indicated that student satisfaction with parent/family involvement tended to increase as the family member's level of involvement, resource awareness, and communication increased. Findings revealed the more aware a student's parent/family member was of the resources available on campus, the more they encouraged their student to use them. Results provide a potential blueprint for parent/family engagement offices on community college campuses.

KEY WORDS: parent/family involvement, engagement, satisfaction, resource awareness

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Mom and Dad, who were the first to teach me the value of family and what it means to be there for one another, no matter what. You are the epitome of what it means to share family capital. The work ethic Dad instilled in me enabled me to complete every assignment and project to the best of my ability. Mom's enthusiasm and willingness to talk about my dissertation every day as if it was the first time will always be appreciated.

I also dedicate this to my husband Jeff, who is my family partner for life and the foundation of our family. Your unending love and patience made this all possible.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Nelson (n.d.) equated student success to a three-legged stool. She explained, “Three legs: student, college, parents. Your student’s success relies on all three distinct parts” (“Why Does Appropriate Parent Engagement Matter?” section). If one leg is taken away or cut short, student success will falter. Although the pandemic continues to impact enrollment, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020) reported that public community colleges served over 7.7 million students in 2019. Community colleges continue to excel in scholarship and enhance student services yet are missing that third leg — parent and family engagement. This project aimed to identify opportunities for family and parent involvement at community colleges with the longitudinal goal of fostering dynamic relationships between families and the institution. Coburn (2006) observed, “The challenge for us in higher education is not whether to involve parents. The challenge is to figure out how to enlist these already involved parents in our mutual goal of helping students” (p. 11). The challenge is exacerbated at the community college level where parents and families have been excluded. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork for understanding this challenge at the community college level. It provides an overview and background of the topic, discusses the problem statement and significance of the study, while outlining the methodology used to study the research questions. Definitions of key terms, delimitations, and the role of the researcher are also discussed.

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Scholars do not question the value of parent and family involvement during the elementary and secondary years. The literature overflows with research documenting the value of family engagement, including a recent Carnegie report by Mapp and Bergman (2021) that exclaimed, “When families are empowered as true partners in their children’s education, students thrive, schools are stronger, and the whole community benefits” (p. 3). As a community college vice chancellor of student affairs, Dr. Shasta Buchanan (personal communication, 2021) explained that she considers family support key to a student’s success and does not believe that a student’s need for their family’s support stops just because they graduated high school.

The period following high school graduation can be a very emotional and stressful time for teens as they make decisions regarding their next steps in life. Institutions are aware that parents are a major factor in a student’s decision to attend college. Parents also expect to help their children decide which schools to apply to and to be heavily involved in their student’s selection of a college (King, 2007). For those choosing to continue their education, family involvement can ease the stress associated with the transition to college while contributing to student persistence (Kiyama et al., 2015). Friedlander et al. (2007) identified increased social support from family as a predictor of increases in overall adjustment of first-year college students. Furthermore, Carter et al. (2013) found that students of color who maintained family ties after high school graduation experienced a more successful transition process than those who did not (p. 97).

Once on campus, students and their families are often welcomed by the parent and family programming office. Parent programming offices are not new to postsecondary education, with some offices dating back to the 1920s (Kiyama & Harper, 2018). By 2006, over 70% of colleges and universities employed a "parent coordinator" or similar position (Sonn et al., 2017). Recently, approximately 90% of 4-year college campuses currently offer some form of parent programming (Kiyama & Harper, 2018). According to the 2019 Survey of College and University Parent/Family Programs, there was a 16% growth in the development of parent/family programs between 2016 and 2019 (Petree & Savage, 2019).

The popularity of parent/family programming is understandable, given the benefits students reap from familial support during their academic journey. The ASHE Higher Education Report (Kiyama et al., 2015) found a strong correlation between student bonds with parents and higher academic outcomes and continued student development, especially during the student's first 2 years of college. According to Hightower (2014), "Research has repeatedly shown appropriate levels of parental involvement correlate positively with numerous measures of academic success such as higher grades, lower dropout rates, higher levels of educational aspirations, and enrollment retention" (p. 24). Nelson (n.d.) shared that "students who say they get academic advice from their parents 'very often' indicate an average GPA that is 35% higher than those who do not" (para. 6). Further findings by Wells (2015) and O. Johnson (2019) supported the claim that family encouragement, support, and involvement are key components to productivity, persistence, and student success.

While family engagement has the potential to benefit all students, it especially has an immediate impact on first-generation students, marginalized students, students of color,

underprepared students, and women in STEM (Barbatis, 2010; O. Johnson, 2019). These students have the most to gain by having family engagement resources that can help build a bridge between their family support network and academic experiences. Frett (2018) reported the family to be one of five forces that positively influenced the college-to-career experiences of Black and Hispanic first-generation students. However, it is not uncommon for traditional family programming offices to ignore these populations. Kiyama and Harper (2018) cited research showing that traditional "parent orientations" failed to focus on, or even mention, efforts for low-income, first-generation, or families of color. This study has the potential to address those concerns by capturing the input of all students and elevating the voice of the underrepresented student population.

Grant (2020) found parents of first-generation students were not able to help their children access necessary resources due to a lack of knowledge. This is not an uncommon problem among college and university families. Research indicates that parents and students would benefit from college-provided resources supporting families in their desire to assist their student (Hightower, 2014; Kiyama et al., 2015; Thome, 2016). In Hightower's (2014) study, student participants identified the need and desire for institutional initiatives to support their parents and families. Students reported an expectation that, as adults, parents should have the necessary knowledge to assist with their academic pursuits.

The ASHE Higher Education Report (Kiyama et al., 2015) went one step further than just providing resources; it recognized the cultural differences among families. The report called for the resources to be individualized and culturally relevant to each family. Developing family support practices and providing resources may drastically improve student success and address

equity issues, while placing community colleges on the same level with other institutions already engaged in this work.

The community college student population is unique when compared to 4-year institutions. Much of the uniqueness is derived from the community college's primary mission of access and open-door admissions allowing students to pursue an education regardless of academic preparedness. Hart (2019) claimed that "community colleges have always been the institution of choice for working-class people, people whose parents had not attended college, people of color, adults, and veterans" (p. 3). Unfortunately, characteristics of the typical community college student often lead to less successful academic outcomes.

The Community College Research Center (CCRT, 2022) reported mid-pandemic that of the 4.8 million students enrolled in public 2-year colleges, 1.6 million were full-time students. Over double that, 3.1 million, were part-time students. The one-year persistence rate of part-time students was 46% compared to 67% for full-time students. Among public 2-year college students, 37% of student family income was less than $20,000, with an additional 30% between $20,000 and $49,999, causing students to split their time between employment and their studies (CCRT, 2022). Approximately 35% of these students worked part-time, while 44.1% worked full-time. Community college students face external destabilizing factors such as housing and food insecurity, unreliable transportation, and childcare challenges (Goldrick-Rab, et al., 2013; Hart, 2019). The typical community college student profile is not conducive to a smooth and successful educational journey.

Furthermore, the Postsecondary National Policy Institute (PNPI, 2021) reported that 53% of all first-generation students enrolled in a 2-year institution for the 2011-12 academic

year, compared with 39% of first-generation students who enrolled in 4-year institutions. First-generation students account for approximately two thirds of the community college student population (RTI International, 2019). The high enrollment rate of first-generation students in community colleges demands that community colleges be prepared to guide first-generation students through the myriad of barriers they face in pursuit of a higher education. Barriers include navigating the admissions process, filing for financial aid, being prepared for essential coursework, fulfilling familial and work responsibilities, overcoming language proficiency level difficulties, and upholding cultural mores, among others. Moreover, they potentially face these hurdles without the support of parents or family due to the families' lack of insight into the postsecondary world. The overall impact on students is the decreased chances of earning their desired credential. College support of parent/family involvement and engagement is one strategic avenue for colleges to explore that could potentially help students overcome those barriers.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Four theoretical philosophies guided this research. First, Coleman's (1988) social capital theory is one of four theoretical concepts that framed this study. Focused on the value of social relationships and networks, it is believed that, applied to the higher education environment, families that build social capital can share that working knowledge with their students, enabling them to navigate the system successfully and access resources previously unavailable to them. Social capital can exist within the family and outside the family, as in relationships between the institutions and families.

Second, the term *helicopter parent* has distracted institutions from the value of family/parent involvement and engagement. Gofen's (2009) application of family capital acknowledges the values of families. Although families of first-time college students are often seen as unaware of how to help their student, this research project adopted a non-deficit approach to the family and encapsulated Gofen's family capital theoretical framework. Gofen's model identifies how families support "student persistence through the family's attitude toward education, relationships between family members and the values families have instilled in students" (Ziemniak, 2011, p. 16). It also contains elements of both social and cultural capital. The current study recognizes all supportive and valuable roles that families play in student success.

Third, working within a social and family capital framework requires that the research embrace an asset-based approach to family engagement. This approach believes that parents and families can support their student's learning regardless of socioeconomic standing or level of educational attainment. An asset-based approach holds that students are successful because of their "parent's influence, not in spite of it," as highlighted by Roksa and Kinsley (2019).

Lastly, Arnett's (2000) emerging adulthood theory reinforces this study's focus on students 18–24 years old. These students are, as defined by Arnett, in a transitory stage of development, striving for independence but still requiring guidance and support. The theory provides grounds for not abandoning traditional-aged students and their family support network. Arnett's work supports parent and family engagement programming and opportunities for their involvement. The current research study explores those opportunities

and barriers through the student lens, along with student perceptions of current levels of family support.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A major concern is that community colleges in general have not adopted parent/family involvement and engagement as a component of their student success model. For the most part, community colleges lag behind in offering this type of support that their students and families could potentially benefit from significantly. Of the 277 institutions that completed the 2019 Survey of College and University Parent/Family Programs, only three were community colleges (Petree & Savage, 2019). Of the 215 institutional members of AHEPPP: Family Engagement in Higher Education, only three are community college members. The nationally renowned Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) organization was established as a national center for advancement of educational practices almost 40 years ago. RNL is a national authority in student recruitment and retention and administers the Parent Satisfaction Inventory (PSI) designed to measure parent satisfaction and priorities. Unfortunately, RNL (2022) explicitly states on their website that the PSI "is not appropriate for parents of community college students" (para. 6). The inability to administer the survey to community colleges points to the lack of investment in parent/family engagement research in the community college context.

The problem is that community colleges across the country do not know their students' families. Institutions do not know how involved parents/families are in the students' academic lives, or if parent/family involvement and engagement would benefit the students. Nor do most community colleges encourage, support, or offer opportunities for parents or family members

to be involved in their student's academic journey. Higher education and community colleges can do better.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While numerous research studies address family engagement at the 4-year colleges and universities, limited research on the implication of such practices in the 2-year academic environment exists. Even less is known about the students' understanding of parent/family involvement given that the majority of the available research focuses on the parent/family member's lens. This study begins to fill that gap. No formal research has been conducted by the host community college to explore student perceptions of parent/family involvement, engagement, resource awareness, or communication behaviors around academics and college resources. Furthermore, neither parent/family resource awareness or communication around resources has been addressed in the literature. One implication of the current environment is that community college students are likely to benefit from 2-year colleges acquiring a deeper understanding of the parent involvement phenomena and establishing a family engagement strategy that enables families to stay involved with their students' academic lives through enhanced college knowledge and engagement opportunities with the college.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Scholars do not question the value of parent and family involvement during the elementary and secondary years. Four-year institutions continuously invest in family engagement. Yet, a chasm exists in offering family support on community college campuses. The literature defends the claim that providing resources and involvement opportunities to

families is a successful strategy for increasing student productivity, persistence, and overall success. Community college students and their families deserve to benefit from these resources as well.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of parent/family involvement from the community college student perspective. Ultimately, this research will address the dearth of literature that relates to how community colleges can include parent/family support as part of their student success initiative. The study provides a deeper understanding of how involved community college family members are in their students' academic lives, along with insight into student satisfaction levels, family members' awareness of student support resources, communication patterns around those support resources, and preferred family engagement opportunities. The research offers insight into the role that parent/family member involvement plays in the academic lives of community college students, along with empirical data to improve student–parent–institutional relationships in their shared goal of student success.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The fundamental question guiding this study was, "How can community colleges empower families to support their student's academic journey through family involvement, resource awareness, communication, and engagement with the college?" Specifically, the research focused on three variables: (1) level of parent/family involvement, (2) level of parent/family resource awareness, and (3) level of academic and resource communication. The study examined the relationship between those variables and student demographics, student grade point average (GPA), and the student's intent-to-persist. Additionally, five secondary

research questions were explored to add depth and richness to understanding the role of parent and family engagement on the community college campus. Potentially, this study could develop into a blueprint that addresses how community colleges can include family support as part of their student success initiative, specifically through resource awareness and parent/family engagement opportunities.

Primary Research Questions

1. Is there a difference between participant demographics and the mean scores of the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of academic and resource communication? Demographics included gender, race/ethnicity, enrollment status (full-time and part-time), and education level of selected family members.
2. Is there a relationship between student GPA and the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?
3. Is there a relationship between student intent-to-persist and the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?

Secondary Research Questions

1. How satisfied are students with their parent/family member's level of involvement?
2. What student support resources are parent/family members most and least aware of?
3. What is the preferred mode of communication between the student and parent/family member, and who initiates the communication?
4. What family engagement strategies do students perceive being of value to their parent/family member?
5. What barriers to parent/family involvement do students perceive their parent/family member encountering?

NULL HYPOTHESES

- H01 – There is not a difference between participant demographics and the mean scores among the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of resource communication.

- H02 – There is not a relationship between student GPA and the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of resource communication.

- H03 – There is not a relationship between student intent-to-persist and the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of resource communication.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on this study's purpose statement and review of research methods, a quantitative, nonexperimental research approach was selected as the best approach to answer the research questions. Holton and Burnett (2005) argued nonexperimental research is best when a true experiment is impractical or when descriptive quantitative data are needed, as in the case of this study. Specifically, the study utilized descriptive (survey) research methods and inferential statistics to address the overarching question of how community colleges can empower families to support student success. "Descriptive research uses surveys to gather information about people. . . . Its purpose is simply to describe characteristics of the domain" (Holton & Burnett, 2005, p. 33). In this case, the research gathered information about students and families, and the domain consists of family involvement and engagement in a community college environment.

Given that there is a paucity of current research regarding parent/family involvement and engagement at community colleges, the study also had an exploratory undercurrent. Exploratory research is used to "discover relationships, interpretations, and characteristics of

subjects" to either suggest new theories or define new problems (Holton & Burnett, 2005, p. 33). In these instances, research questions are offered in lieu of hypotheses. The current study presented three hypotheses and five secondary research questions to allow the researcher to learn as much as possible about the constructs under study.

A survey approach was selected for this research as it provides an excellent means for collecting original data that describes a population that is extensively large and allows for measuring attitudes and orientations in said population (Babbie, 2021). The instrument was designed by the researcher based on reviewed literature in Chapter 2, expert opinions, and previously established instruments, including those developed by Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014), B. Johnson (2019), and Payne (2010). A new instrument was designed to meet the specific needs of the community college population.

To help understand and measure student perceptions of family involvement and engagement at the community college, three composite scores/indexes made of various Likert-scale questions were designed for the questionnaire. The composite indexes are referred to as the parent/family involvement variable (PF-I), the resource awareness variable (PF-RA), and the academic and resource communication variable (PF-COMM). The PF-I explored the extent that a family member provided academic and emotional support to the student. The PF-RA measured a student's perception regarding how aware they think their family member is of the various support resources made available by the college. Lastly, PF-COMM captured how often students communicate with their family member about school-related, academic topics.

Other critical variables necessary to address the hypotheses included student and parent/family member demographics, a respondent's GPA, and their intent-to-persist. Student

and parent/family member demographics were captured using exhaustive and mutually exclusive nominal- and ordinal-type questions. Students self-reported their GPA and the student's intent-to-persist was measured with two Likert-scale questions. The student perception of preferred family engagement strategies was measured by indicating the likelihood of use of a series of best practice engagement strategies. Respondents were asked to indicate the likelihood their parent/family member would engage in each type of opportunity using Likert responses. Respondents were asked to identify and check any barriers that they perceived may prevent their parent/family member from participating in any of the family engagement strategies.

Additional questions included a Likert-scale item that captures student satisfaction with their parent/family member's level of involvement, a check-box item to capture financial support, and two items inquiring about preferred mode of communication and who is responsible for initiating the communication between student and selected family member. Lastly, students were invited to complete an open-ended question inquiring about how they would like their family members to be involved in their college life in the future. The questionnaire resulted in 29 items relevant to the study's research and secondary research questions.

The college under study does not maintain a family database other than emergency contact information, which could not be used for this study's purpose. Consequently, the researcher was only able to contact currently enrolled students. Because minimal research exists regarding family engagement at the community college level, let alone the various age ranges represented at the college, this study focused on a population for which a plethora of

literature does exist — traditional 18–24-year-old students. The sampling frame equated to approximately 16,600 students based on spring 2021 enrollment at the selected community college.

Data from surveys were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 28. Descriptive statistics including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations are reported. Additionally, inferential tests were calculated to determine relationships between variables including *t* tests, one-way analysis of variance, and Spearman's rho. Chapter 3 details the analysis used for each hypothesis and research question. The use of *t* tests and one-way analysis of variance tests was appropriate for this study given the levels of measurement for the independent and dependent variables. Frequency tables and post hoc analyses are presented to answer the secondary questions. The completed data analysis process allows the researcher to identify potential relationships between construct variables and opportunities for the college to empower parents and families in their desire to support their student's success.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The study used the following definitions, which clarify the meaning and implications of this study.

College knowledge: Includes a thorough understanding of the value of college, choices in college selection, college admissions and testing processes, costs and financial aid programs, college culture, academic expectations, and student success tools and resources.

Community college: A 2-year higher education institution that grants associate degrees and certificates and select bachelor degrees.

Selected family member: A person identified by the student as the one who is most involved in and supportive of the student's college endeavors. Whether the mother, father, grandparent, sibling, partner, friend, or primary guardian of a student, an individual is considered the selected family member if they provide a consistent source of support and reinforcement that is directly related to the student's personal growth and academic achievements (Schupp & Fowler, 2015).

First-generation college student: A student whose parents have not graduated from a 4-year institution.

Parent/family involvement: While parent and family involvement takes on various meanings depending upon a student's culture, family involvement is generally defined as "any involvement, support, or influence provided by the parent(s) of a student in his/her educational matters and decisions" (Hightower, 2014, p. 15). The definition of parent involvement was expanded in this study to include involvement from the student's selected family member.

Parent/family engagement: Engagement occurs when a family member interacts with the college through college-sponsored initiatives or tools that aid them in supporting their student. The definition of parent/family engagement was expanded in this study to include engagement by the student's selected family member.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

As a mother of four, the researcher places extreme value on the family, however a student defines it. She also values independence. Students need to be allowed to mature and grow into adults without unnecessary interference from their parents/family. It is important that readers do not misinterpret the researcher's support for family engagement as approval of

overbearing parenting. As a first-generation college student, she understands the difficulty students encounter when attempting to navigate postsecondary education. Not only did her parents not attend college, but her father did not graduate from high school. Her parents had zero knowledge of how higher education operated nor how to help her be successful. There is no comparison to her experience compared to that of her four children, whose parents both earned undergraduate credentials and their mother was a full-time faculty member and department chair at a large urban community college. She acknowledges her bias that family support can positively influence a student's trajectory yet was committed to suspending her biases, assumptions, and preconceived notions when conducting this research.

DELIMITATIONS

The study was delimited to a specific population of community college students. The participants of this study included students at one community college with a culturally diverse student body, located in an urban metropolitan area in the southern United States. The study was also delimited by the age of the participants and included students between 18–24 years of age. Approximately 70% of the institution's student population was not eligible to participate in the study. The researcher assumed that survey participants were a representative sample of the targeted student population and that participants answered the questions truthfully.

CONCLUSION

The relationship among the student, their family, and the college is powerful and can impact a student's trajectory for life. Starting in elementary school through high school, family support has played an integral role in the student's academic life. In light of this fact, parent

and family programming offices at colleges and universities have existed for over a century. The need and desire for this support does not cease to exist on the community college campus. The need deserves to be explored, defined, and attended to by the higher education administration, staff, and faculty. It is important to discover what family involvement and engagement looks like to community college students and their families, if, and how, families want to be involved, and what resources families need to enhance the academic achievements of their students. Most importantly, community colleges are home to some of the most financially, socially, and academically challenged and determined students earning a college credential. Now is the time for each college to empower families to become champions of their own student's success.

Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of the theoretical frameworks used for the study. It includes a review of the literature on the role of parent and family engagement in the student transition to college, persistence throughout college, and completion. Specific attention is paid to the first-generation student and traditionally underserved students and the potential impact family involvement can have on their success. The chapter presents a summary of researched best practices in parent and family programs and barriers to engagement. A final component of the chapter examines communication dynamics between Generation Z students and their parents. Chapter 3 details the research design and specifics of the methodology, allowing for duplication of the study. Limitations and delimitations are addressed. Chapter 4 reports the study results and offers analysis of those results. Chapter 5 presents a discussion surrounding the implications of the results and offers recommendations for higher education, but specifically community colleges. The chapter concludes with opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Savage (2007) noted: "When we treat parents as valued partners and give them information about student development, they can be our best allies in student success, retention, and graduation" (as cited in Beaman et al., 2010, p. 3). While the current research study does not focus solely on student development, Savage's perspective applies directly to the underlying phenomenon in this exploratory study, which is the role that parents and family play as partners in student success. The following question frames this study: How can community colleges empower families to support their students' academic journeys through knowledge of college resources, parent involvement, communication, and college engagement opportunities? To answer the question, the following literature review addresses the theoretical underpinnings of the study, including Coleman's (1988) and Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory, Gofen's (2009) family capital concept, Arnett's (2000) emerging adult theory, and application of an asset-based approach (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Additionally, this chapter reviews the known benefits of family engagement. Next, research is provided that documents the call by students and parents for more support in helping family members expand their level of college knowledge. The ways parent/family programming offices answer that call through best practices, while acknowledging barriers to family involvement, are also addressed. Lastly, the author explores documented

communication patterns between Generation Z students and their parents/family members to better understand communication around college resources.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

The theoretical backdrop for this research relies on social capital as conceptualized by Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986), and family capital as presented by Gofen (2009). An individual's social capital results from deliberately building social networks to benefit from resources not previously at one's disposal (Hightower, 2014). Coleman explained, "Social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (p. 98). The concept of social capital requires a synergy between social relations and social structure that continues as long as the relationship remains beneficial. It focuses on changes in relationships between individuals that lead to productive action. Grant (2020) summarized social capital as "the social networks and relationships that were valuable and helped students navigate unfamiliar environments, including relationships students developed with faculty and staff" (p. 21).

As applied to the family, Coleman (1988) defined social capital as the "relations between children and parents (and, when families include other members, relationships with them as well)" (p. 110). Parents build social capital through their relationships with their children and other adults as they work toward intergenerational closure, or the promotion and sharing of effective communication, commonly accepted norms and values, and goals and expectations (Perna & Titus, 2005; Sax & Wartman, 2010). Parents pass their social capital to their children.

Coleman (1988) found that a lack of social capital impacts various educational outcomes differently, including high school dropout rate. Specifically, in the *High School and Beyond* data set, he reported the percentage of students who dropped out was 6 percentage points higher for students from single-parent families (p. S112). Coleman identified the mother's expectation of the child going to college as an indicator of adult attention. The data showed an 8.6% difference in the dropout rate for high school students whose mothers set an expectation for their child that they would attend college, versus students not presented with the same expectation from their mothers. In the current study, the survey item inquiring about "setting expectations to do well in college" served as an indicator of internal family social capital.

One final variable to family social capital in Coleman's (1988) research is the frequency of talking with parents about personal experiences. Perna and Titus (2005) reported that parent–student discussions about education-related issues were associated with a greater likelihood of enrolling in both a 2-year and 4-year college. This study further examined the communication dimension by constructing a communication composite score between the student and their selected family member.

Social capital that contributes to a student's development can exist outside the family as well, especially in the form of relationships between the parents and the institutions of the community and between parents and other adults who are connected to the same institution (Coleman, 1988; Perna & Titus, 2005). Or, as in the current study under investigation, social capital could exist between the families and the higher education institution. In Coleman's (1988) study, he wrote that "the public goods quality of most social capital . . . is an important resource for individuals and may greatly affect their ability to act and their perceived quality of

life" (p. 118). Parent/family programming is an example of a type of social capital with the property of benefiting those families and students who invest in it. Coleman's approach to social capital corresponds to a positive-sum game. When students and families learn about institutional resources, and they share that knowledge with other members of their social network, it is a win-win situation for everyone involved.

Understanding the relationship between social capital and family involvement and engagement in secondary and postsecondary systems has grown in popularity (Baker et al., 2021; Beaman et al., 2010; Hart, 2019; Hightower, 2014; Perna & Titus, 2005; Roksa & Deutschlander, 2018; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Silva, 2018). In one study, Hart (2019) interviewed 45 community college students at two California community colleges. The author found that "students engage in security work across two dimensions: managing income flow (including paid work and financial aid) and managing care of families, food, housing, and transportation" (p. 1). Results indicated that institutional precarity created barriers and prevented community college students from fully engaging with academics. Students lacked clarity around complicated college policies and processes. Knowledge on how to interact with faculty, advisors, and financial aid staff was foreign to the students, especially the first-generation students who lacked college knowledge and whose parents lacked cultural and social capital.

Using data from the Educational Longitudinal Study, Roksa and Deutschlander (2018) explored the relationship between family social and cultural capital and the probability of academic undermatch. By recognizing the role of family in educational decision making, the authors were able to further understand the "embedded nature of students' attitudes and behaviors, and the central role that family plays in shaping students' educational decisions"

(p. 21). In particular, the study uniquely explored the role of family resources, noting that students rely heavily on their family's social and cultural resources when making college-related decisions. They also noted the findings have implications for postsecondary policy and practice by involving families in the student college decision-making process in more elaborate ways earlier than usual. Roksa and Deutschlander concluded with numerous interventions that serve as support for engaging with parents and reducing inequality in college access and choice.

Baker et al. (2021) studied the concept of cultural capital and habitus when developing an authentic and culturally responsive family engagement plan for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, families, and communities at Chaminade University of Honolulu (CUH). After examining several comprehensive family engagement best practice literature reviews, Baker identified three interrelated constructs of privilege functioning at the core of higher education family engagement programs. They included access, time, and money (p. 92). The intent is not for family engagement programs to privilege one group of students or families over another, but to afford equal opportunity for all to access the social capital afforded by family engagement programs. Following focus groups with Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) students about what to include or not include in a family engagement program, Baker developed a program that was culturally appropriate, inclusive, and based on "underlying assumptions related to family structure, resources, commitments and time allocation, tacit cultural knowledge and other similar factors" (p. 91).

Other studies demonstrate how parent and family programming offices (PFP) fulfill the public goods quality of capital by facilitating relationship building and networks so families can access needed resources. In studying how parents of first-generation college students

experience the transition to college through the first college year, Harper et al. (2020) interviewed eight families and gathered focus group data. Parents reported feelings of appreciation for the parent relations office being their first campus contact. Participating parents expressed a connection with the university and placed importance on knowing that the services and programs existed. The authors recognized the parents' desire to rely on an established relationship with one institutional staff member versus seeking out other unknown campus representatives who might be better positioned to assist the family member. As a result, Harper et al. called for staff training and additional structures that would assist parents in developing multiple personal connections with support services and build a larger network of contacts across campus.

Family Capital Theory

In addition to the resources accessible to students and their families through social capital, family capital is another resource that propels students toward secondary and postsecondary success. In a seminal piece conceptualizing the concept of family capital, Gofen (2009) explained that historically first-generation higher education students were portrayed as "succeeding despite their family background" (p. 104). However, through in-depth, semistructured interviews of Israeli first-generation students (N = 50), Gofen identified and described the nonmaterial resources necessary to break the intergenerational cycle of education level by conceptualizing the investment as "family capital." Family capital not only encapsulates the concepts of social capital and cultural capital, but, as Gofen explained, it also "attempts to capture *all* aspects of investment made by the family for the benefit of the children's future" (p. 107). Specifically, family capital includes the additional features of a

family's day-to-day life broken down into three categories: (1) attitude toward education, (2) interpersonal relationships, and (3) family values.

Current research continues to rely on Gofen's work as a framework for studying parent and family involvement (Gaymon, 2013; Grant, 2020; Kiyama & Harper, 2018). Grant (2020) adopted a family capital framework when studying what role, if any, the support of parents and family helps first-generation students to persist in their academics during the first year of college at a 4-year institution. The qualitative study involved interviewing six sophomore first-generation college students along with six of their family members. Results indicated that parent support was instrumental in helping the first-generation college students persist during their first year in school, especially support with financial resources, emotional encouragement, and motivational support. Grant's findings also support Gofen's (2009) perspective that families are capable of promoting student success through "nonmaterial resources such as priorities, time, and behavior[s]" (p. 106). These non-financial resources allow for accomplishments that may normally be out of the family's reach.

Gofen's (2009) conceptualization of family capital contributed to the framework used by Gaymon's (2013) qualitative study when studying how parental involvement influences the social and academic integration of first-year college students at a 4-year institution. By interviewing five full-time, first-time, and first-year students, Gaymon captured accounts of each student's parental involvement experiences and the impact of that involvement. Transcript analysis resulted in three superordinate themes and six subthemes, including (1) Involvement in Everything, (2) Importance of Involvement, and (3) Being a Young Adult. By encompassing a multidimensional definition of family involvement, Gaymon found parental

involvement essential to first-year college students. For the participants, parental involvement symbolized “support, encouragement and advocacy in times of conflict” (p. 104). Findings reinforced that first-year college students not only benefit from their parents’ guidance and support but need it as they build capital and navigate through the new collegiate environment.

Asset-Based Approach

Social capital and family capital theories recognize that families make significant contributions to a student’s academic journey through their bonds and connections to one another and outside networks and resources. Additionally, families contribute by offering encouragement, motivation, and reinforcing family values. Both theories culminate into an asset-based approach to family engagement. In a recent Carnegie report on embracing a more liberatory approach to family engagement in elementary and secondary schools, Mapp and Bergman (2021) described an asset-based approach in the context of family engagement. They explained that an asset-based approach “means understanding that all caregivers are capable of supporting student learning and development and engaging as equal partners in the education of their children” (p. 13). The authors viewed taking an asset-based approach as a fundamental shift in all aspects of family engagements.

Roksa and Kinsley (2019) highlighted asset- or strength-based models in opposition to the traditional literature that describes families as lacking the ability to support students due to their socioeconomic status or the lack of knowledge required to manage the higher education system (Perna & Titus, 2005; Roksa & Deutschlander, 2018). Not only did the analysis of 728 first-year low-income students by Roksa and Kinsley indicate that family emotional support plays a vital role in fostering positive academic outcomes for these students, but results

illustrated the influence families have in supporting low-income students in college. These findings can serve as an influence on institutional policies and practices surrounding first-year low-income student success.

North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, is a prime example of what can be accomplished when institutions embrace the social and family capital harnessed by students and focus on an asset-based family approach. The college's Cardinal First program was recently recognized by Excelencia in Education as one of the top four example programs in the nation. According to Excelencia in Education, "Cardinal First (CF) is a cohort-based program welcoming first-generation college students and their families that recognizes and celebrates their identity as an asset and intentionally connects them to faculty, resources, and experiences to promote academic and personal success" (Ruf, 2021, para. 5). By adopting a family capital, asset-based approach, the Cardinal First program values the life wisdom of parents and family members who did not attend college and prioritizes a sense of belonging among family members and the students (Carballo, 2022).

Emerging Adulthood

Arnett (2000) conceptualized emerging adulthood as the developmental period from the late teens through the twenties, specifically focused on ages 18–25 years. Emerging adulthood is characterized by a "distinct period demographically, subjectively, and in terms of identity explorations" (Arnett, 2000, p. 470). The demographic variable for 18–25 year olds is volatile and unpredictable, including one's residential status and college attendance. An emerging adult's subjective sense of attaining adulthood is characterized by two intangible criteria: when one *accepts responsibility for oneself* and *makes independent decisions*. Arnett

pointed out a third tangible criterion, that of *becoming financially independent*. Only upon reaching these qualities can emerging adults experience a transition into young adulthood, which is customarily by the late twenties in American society (Arnett, 2000).

Emerging adults exist in a transitory stage of life, having not quite left adolescence but not fully entered adulthood. Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) reported that the "the majority of 18–25 year olds (i.e., emerging adults) in the United States do not consider themselves to be adults" (p. 1179). Previous research by Nelson et al. (2007, as cited in Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012) found that "many parents feel they still need and want to help their children navigate this period of experimentation and exploration, while at the same time allowing them the autonomy they want and need" (p. 1179). Benito-Gomez et al. (2021) described it as emerging adults relying on their parents to attain self-sufficiency as they become more autonomous.

Various authors over the last decade have applied Arnett's (2000) emerging adult theory to their research on family involvement and engagement (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Gaymon, 2013; Kiyama & Harper, 2018; Lewis, 2021; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Benito-Gomez et al. (2021) explored college students' perceptions of parental support as an important factor that relates to their adjustment during the college years. Through a series of 53 student interviews, the study identified three different classifications of parents based on levels of support: supportive, ambivalent, and unsupportive. They ascertained that most interviewees perceived that their "parents' support positively impacted their transition to college and academic success" (p. 13). The authors emphasized that parental support during the college experience

can potentially have lifelong effects, and, consequently, it is vital to understand the role of parental support as emerging adults adapt to the higher education system.

Lewis (2021) applied Arnett's emerging adulthood theory to a quantitative study examining the relationship between family support, emerging adulthood characteristics, Generation Z demographic variables, and adjustment outcomes during the first year of postsecondary studies. Results indicated that students did not view this period in their lives as a time to separate from parents, but as a time for exploration, learning to think for oneself, becoming self-sufficient, and transitioning into adulthood. Interestingly, survey participants believed strongly that college was a time to take responsibility for themselves but also relied "on multiple family members as support structures while learning to survive the first year" (p. 132). Students reported a deep feeling of stress associated with this period along with feelings of excitement for the "many possibilities" ahead of them.

Academic research had already established a strong connection between Arnett's (2000) emerging adult theory and parent involvement in the early 2010s (Gaymon, 2013; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Winegard, 2010). Student participants in Gaymon's (2013) research portrayed parent involvement as supportive throughout their college experience and necessary during times of conflict. All five of Gaymon's participants described themselves as young adults, highlighting the difference between their current stage of life and adulthood. Winegard (2010) examined the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Winegard "reaffirmed the theoretical postulate that traditional-age undergraduate students were a part of an age group known as emerging adults, meaning that students were still in the pursuit of

their long-term occupation and goals" and reinforced that "parents of emerging adults did not consider their children as adolescents or as adults" (p. 106). The researcher recommended that senior-level student affairs professionals lead institution-wide conversations on developing partnerships with parents in order to promote student learning and success.

The social capital theory, family capital theory, asset-based approach, and emerging adulthood theory provide the theoretical framework for this research and help ground the study. The current study is founded in the belief that social capital can lead to connections and ties that will support a student's academic success journey. While not all students inherit social capital, family capital is an additional resource that community college students have available to them. As families support their traditional-age students, both the family and students recognize that the students are in a transition period between adolescence and adulthood, referenced as emerging adulthood. As emerging adults, students learn to navigate the resources available to them, whether social capital, family capital, or those provided by the college.

BENEFITS OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The benefits of parent and family involvement in elementary and secondary school saturate the literature and go unquestioned (Durisic & Buijevac, 2017; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Lopez Turley et al., 2010; Mapp & Bergman, 2021). However, early research on parent and family engagement at the collegiate level questioned whether those same benefits carried over into the higher education space, or if parent involvement possibly led to deleterious effects on student development and autonomy (Cullaty, 2011; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Wartman, 2009).

Current scholars document that the benefits of collegiate parent and family involvement begin well in advance of their first step on campus. Before a student's first college class, familial involvement positively impacts college enrollment (Hashmi, 2015; Hightower, 2014; RNL & CampusESP, 2021a; Roksa & Deutschlander, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Silva, 2018), the transition to college (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Gaymon, 2013; Rucks-Ahidiana & Bork, 2020), and selecting a major (Fizer 2013; Thome, 2016). Once enrolled and taking classes, family involvement has been found to positively impact student GPA (Mulcahy, 2019), persistence rates and retention (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Carballo, 2022; Deutschlander, 2019; Grant, 2020; Murphy, 2014; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019), and student success outcomes for females in STEM fields (O. Johnson, 2019).

Less tangible variables positively impacted by parental involvement focus on mental health (Payne, 2010), the student experience and academic adjustment (Gaymon, 2013; Lee, 2019), and student satisfaction with the institution (Oliver, 2011). Family involvement continues to impact students as they transfer to university or transition from college to career (Frett, 2018; Maliszewski Lukszo & Hayes, 2020; Silver et al., 2020). These studies establish the justification for institutions of higher education to invest in and establish processes that educate parents and families on the potential influence they can have on student success. Additionally, these studies identify a need for institutions to offer parents and families opportunities to be involved and engaged with their students' collegiate experiences.

Types of Support

While there are numerous ways for parents and family members to impact student success outcomes, a familiar thread running through several parent approaches is student

support. Student participants in Benito-Gomez et al. (2021) "highlighted the importance of having supportive parents 'to make it,' 'to not drop out,' and 'to graduate'" (p. 14). Specifically, Benito-Gomez et al. studied college students' perceptions of parental support and the impact of this support, or the lack of, during the college years. Results, based on narratives generated during 53 semistructured interviews, called for three broad categories of parental support, including, (1) emotional support, (2) academic support, and (3) financial support. Emotional support and academic support were not as commonly discussed as was financial support.

Using a quantitative approach, Lewis (2021) analyzed the same three types of parent support as Benito-Gomez et al. (2021) through a series of nine questions. Unlike the results reported by Benito-Gomez et al., participants in Lewis's study sought out emotional support from their family members more than any other support type (p. 97). Taking a slightly different case study approach, Harper et al. (2020) found that eight families of first-generation first-year students supported their students "financially, emotionally, and with guidance or problem-solving techniques" (p. 550). Participants in Grant's (2020) phenomenological study identified financial support and emotional support as two important factors in helping them persist during their first year of college (p. 84). Clearly, parents use a variety of supportive approaches to guide and assist their students during their academic journeys.

Although students benefit from all the various forms of parental support, emotional support appears to have a stronger influence than all other support types on students who are not in the demographic majority on campus, such as low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities (Deutschlander, 2019). Roksa and Kinsley (2019) measured family support using two key measurements. First, they asked participants to rate

the extent of emotional support they received from family using a single 5-point Likert scale question. Second, an average of three survey items measured the amount of financial support students received. Results from the 728 first-year low-income respondents indicated that "when students reported receiving more emotional support from their families, they were more likely to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher, more likely to accumulate at least 24 credits, and more likely to persist through the second year of college" (Roksa & Kinsley, 2019, p. 425). However, family financial support was not related to those same outcomes. When focusing on the working class and low-income students, Wartman (2009) discovered through open-ended interviews that participants "privileged emotional support over financial support" (p. 126). Emotional support is a powerful force in student success.

Research on traditional student populations also corroborates the impact of parent emotional support. Weintraub and Sax (2018) found in their study of 1,155 first-year students that "students who had earned higher GPAs tended to receive more social and emotional support from their father (or stepfathers) and had higher quality interactions with their mothers" (p. 69). A study by Haines (2017) found that "most students saw their parents as the persons they can count on to provide emotional support" (p. 57) without parental involvement interfering with the student becoming autonomous.

The above studies serve as evidence that parent and family emotional support is critical to student success. Students seek and rely on it, especially during their adjustment years in college (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021). Having identified that family emotional support promotes psychological well-being and greater engagement, Roksa and Kinsley (2019) called for higher education student success models to include family emotional support as a key component.

Weintraub and Sax (2018) explored the relationship between quantity of parent communications and grade point average (GPA) at a large 4-year public institution. The authors acknowledged that that GPA is strongly associated with second-year student persistence rates through graduation. Their research summarized numerous factors that impact persistence such as parental income, pre-college experiences, peer relationships, institutional context, and in- and out-of-class experiences.

Roksa and Kinsley (2019) studied 728 first-year low-income students from 4-year institutions. Specifically, they researched how family support — emotional and financial — related to various academic outcomes such as grades, credit accumulation, and, ultimately, persistence. Emotional support was measured on a single 5-point scale item. While financial support was not related to the outcomes examined, family emotional support was found to be an important predictor of grades, credit accumulation, and persistence. The authors relied on institutional data from the participants' GPA and number of completed credit hours. Furthermore, they pulled data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to determine fall-to-fall persistence and the following spring.

In a qualitative study conducted at a small private institution, Grant (2020) explored what role, if any, parent and family support contributed to first-generation students persisting in their academics during the first year of college. Among the three findings that emerged, including that students and parents hold different views about the college experience and parents struggle in addressing student mental health concerns, was that parental support was instrumental in fostering persistence in first-generation college students during their first year

in school. Grant captured feelings of frustration among family members who felt regret about not being able to help their students in the same way as other parents. The research concluded with a call for parent and family programming to support first-generation students' educational experiences.

Although persistence was not the focus of a recent study by Benito-Gomez et al. (2021), the authors titled their research report after a major finding related to persistence. Fifty-three students, the majority female, from a large public university were interviewed about parent–college student relationships. Questions focused on maternal and paternal support during college and the impact of that support on their academic experiences and success. Identified themes aligned with traditional forms of support, including emotional, academic, and financial support. These forms of support culminate into persistence for the students. As one student shared, "I think that my mom is a huge support system and that if I hadn't had that support system, I think I would have dropped out by now" (p. 14). The authors highlighted the value of parental support "to make it, to not drop out, and to graduate" (p. 14).

The work of Benito-Gomez et al. (2021) drives home the importance of family involvement. Whether it is quantitative research tracking student data through the National Clearing House or qualitative interviews capturing the student voice, these studies elevate the value of family involvement programming and justify an institution's investment in supporting parents and families.

Family Involvement Fails to Make a Difference

Research, at times, has produced opposing or mixed results when measuring the effect of parent and family involvement on higher education outcomes. In a qualitative study of 34

second-generation immigrant seniors, Silver et al. (2020) examined the ways students made meaning of parental involvement and negotiated relationships with parents during the transition out of college. While some participants viewed their parents as a "crucial component of their sense of self and success with their goals," other seniors "perceived parental involvement as a barrier to success" (p. 563). Still, another group of seniors "took a nuanced view of parental involvement, emphasizing that their parents were helpful and encouraging in some respects, while also acknowledging areas of tension" (p. 563).

B. Johnson (2019) surveyed 132 first-year students and found that there was no significant relationship between family involvement while students attended an institution of higher learning and student success in college (p. 35). Nor did Johnson report any statistical significance for the "main effects of family involvement in college or the interaction effect of family involvement in college and race" (p. 35). Johnson's research did not produce any statistical significance between GPA and the parent's attendance at freshman orientation or completion of a Partners in Education form (a student information release form granting parents access to student files). The author recognized several limitations to the study that may have influenced the results, including the instrument itself and its narrow perspective on family involvement. Additionally, measuring student achievement by only GPA is limiting and may not capture parental influence on other success factors, such as persistence and hour accumulation.

Lack of Parental/Family College Knowledge and Need for Resources

Wartman (2009) identified three types of student struggles that align with the various types of support labeled by Benito-Gomez et al. (2021), including (1) financial struggles,

(2) academic struggles, and (3) social/personal struggles. These struggles are met with corresponding support from parents, family, and friends. However, at times, students need to turn elsewhere to obtain the type of academic or financial support they are seeking due to parent or family lack of social capital and college knowledge (Grant, 2020; Wartman, 2009). Parental and family lack of "college knowledge" can be a problem for all students, but especially for those from lower-income families, families of color, or families with no 4-year college experience (Carballo, 2022; Grant, 2020; Harper et al., 2020). High school students exploring the possibility of college also experience the deleterious effects of low family college knowledge (Hashmi, 2015; RNL & CampusESP, 2021a; Silva, 2018), as do community college students (Lewis, 2021; Maliszewski Lukszo & Hayes, 2020; Rucks-Ahidiana & Bork, 2020).

First-generation students interviewed by Grant (2020) acknowledged their parents' lack of knowledge and resources affected their academic experiences during the first year of college. Students experienced frustration because their "parents could not provide them with tangible advice on how to navigate the college, especially in areas such as academic support. These students wished they had received parental help with homework assignments, finding resources, tutors, classes, and major selection" (Grant, 2020, p. 88). The study's participants also described a perceived gap in their parents' ability to recognize and understand the mental health issues they face. Grant called for parental programming not only to support first-generation students' academic experiences, but for "mechanisms to help parents become aware of the mental health challenges of students" (p. 89). Additionally, participants expressed a desire for parental support in selecting a major and determining a career path. However, as Grant reported, parents were unable to offer this type of support or information. Grant's

research highlighted students' perceptions of their parents' need for increased college knowledge around academic, mental health, and career resources.

In a partnership with CampusESP, RNL surveyed 5,291 prospective families on various topics relating to the college search process (RNL & CampusESP, 2021a). When asked "What are the five most important topics for prospective families?" 90% of the respondents answered: (1) academics (programs, majors, minors, etc.); (2) strength of the academic programs; (3) financial aid and/or scholarships; (4) application process, timeline, and admissions requirements; and (5) account services and how to pay the tuition bill. The authors pointed out a frightening difference in the families who have received, seen, or accessed information on these college planning topics. Whereas higher-income, White families, or families with a 4-year college degree were more likely to report having seen information on the identified topics, low-income, families of color, and families with no 4-year college experience reported having difficulty locating the information. If families are not able to locate information on these critical topics, then their levels of college knowledge remain low, and students will not benefit from parent knowledge when making college enrollment decisions.

High school programs like the TRIO Upward Bound Program (Silva, 2018) and Families United in Educational Leadership (FUEL) (Hashmi, 2015) demonstrate that when secondary parents are provided with resources and gain access to college information, they can overcome the barrier of college knowledge and guide their students' college enrollment decisions. In a mixed-methods approach, Hashmi (2015) surveyed and interviewed 93 parents or guardians of high school students to determine how the level of parent knowledge about college preparation changes after participating in FUEL and how they use the information learned. Prior

to FUEL, students commented about how their parents' lack of college knowledge prevented the parents from being more engaged in the college preparation process. Following FUEL participation, "Many parents commented that knowing that various resources were available, such as scholarships, gave them and their children hope that college was financially feasible" (Hashmi, 2015, p. 40).

Silva (2018) found similar results concerning the positive effects of the TRIO program on secondary parents' college knowledge. Results indicated that as parents gained access to college information, they moved from passive involvement to an active parental role.

> Participants described TRIO as the main contributing factor for parents to overcome barriers they encountered to be involved in their children's process of preparation for college entrance. Parents stated that TRIO helped them overcome the barrier of college knowledge and money. (p. 58)

The TRIO and FUEL programs focused on building college knowledge of secondary parents. While this researcher does not assume that the results of Silva and Hashmi (2015) are transferable to college parents, it is reasonable to believe that providing information to parents does build college knowledge and assists them in overcoming barriers to supporting their students.

Need for Parental and Family Resources at Community Colleges

The limited family engagement research available on community college students identifies parents and family members lacking in college knowledge and searching for information resources. Hart (2019) interviewed 45 college students from two community colleges, one small rural college and one suburban midsize institution. By studying precarity in community colleges and precarity in students' lives, the author discovered that students

worked with unclear or inaccurate information as they tried to manage the institution's complex policies and curricular requirements. Students were confused about how to manage basic interactions with advisors and instructors, choose classes, and complete financial aid forms. Hart explained:

> Their lack of savvy about navigating their programs was likely compounded by the fact that many were first-generation students and lacked well-informed parental insight on their efforts. Even many of the most privileged community college students in this study, those who were able to live at home, work minimally or not at all, and attend full-time, had limited access to "college knowledge" because they were often the first in their families to attend college. (p. 9)

Community college students are faced with a host of difficulties due to the institutional and personal uncertainty they face daily. Building parent and family college knowledge can help mitigate the disquiet associated with their postsecondary education.

Rucks-Ahidiana and Bork (2020) studied the community college environment based on the complementary nature of on- and off-campus relationships. As described by the authors, on-campus relationships are more transactional in nature, offer the student general information about the college policies and procedures, and offer very little support. They are usually new relationships and parties remain distant from one another. Off-campus relationships, on the other hand, are commonly more established and deeper. They provide personalized information, personal experiences, and support and encouragement.

Throughout their 96 interviews with first-year community college students, Rucks-Ahidiana and Bork (2020) discovered a complementary nature between on- and off-campus relationships, and that community college students "leverage relationships across their preexisting off-campus relationships and their newly developed on-campus relationships for different forms of information and support" (p. 599). Knowing that students benefit from both

types of relationships and that they remain closely tied to their off-campus life throughout the college process, the researchers wrote that it would behoove institutions to integrate family and friends in the college process early on through orientations and information sessions so they can be prepared for the expectations of college. This approach would "provide both information and support in ways that complement the information and support provided by on-campus relationships" (p. 600). By providing resources and support to the off-campus partners, they can motivate and offer personal information to the student and reinforce the information shared with the student through on-campus relationships.

In striving to understand the evolving relationship among students, their families, and the college, Lewis's (2021) quantitative study of one 4-year and one community college revealed critical recommendations for higher education leaders and administrators, including those leaders from community colleges. One recommendation was that more assistance and support resources be available to family members and students from community colleges and 4-year institutions. The author called for the development of family programs, if not already on campus, and emphasized the need for these programs to include programming and resources for parents and all family members. The study concluded that "many family members are essential to today's students" (p. 146).

As students complete their educational experience on the community college campus, their reliance on parent and family support continues. Maliszewski Lukszo and Hayes (2020) employed a case study design to gain an understanding of transfer student capital (TSC), including sources of TSC and how TSC is used by community college transfer students to navigate transfer to a public 4-year institution. Through 17 transfer student interviews,

observations of pre-transfer meetings, and document reviews, the authors identified family and peers as the most common way the students gain TSC. Maliszewski Lukszo and Hayes discovered that, in addition to providing advice and guidance, family members explained what *not* to do as well, ultimately shaping the students' transfer planning process. Similar to Rucks-Ahidiana and Bork's (2020) argument, community colleges can contribute to student TSC by providing transfer resources to the off-campus relationship partners (such as parents) to ensure they communicate accurate and current information with their students. This process would complement the information provided by on-campus partners and enhance the student's transfer capital.

For students transferring into the workforce or a 4-year institution, parental involvement plays a role in their career development, so much so that Thome (2016) developed a model parent orientation session on the topic of career development to provide parents with information and strategies to support students' career development. The project's goal was to "reduce the pressure placed on students to make hasty and uninformed career decisions" (p. 11) while educating parents on how to be informed career development resources for their students.

Whether first-generation, marginalized, or from a community college, students from all backgrounds recognize the value of, and need for, parent and family support throughout their academic experience. They identified the need for emotional support, academic support, financial support, mental health awareness, and resources to expand their parents' level of college knowledge. According to Grant (2020),

> [Students] perceived that their parents being the adults should have had the knowledge to support their academic pursuits. For these students it was not enough for their

> parents to say, “try your best” or “do what’s right.” Student participants wanted tangible information about navigating college. (p. 90)

Parent participants in Grant’s study agreed with their students and were cognizant of their own limitations. They expressed feelings of regret and powerlessness because they were not able to provide the requested or necessary informational and academic support to their students. Parents were fearful that their lack of knowledge about college was harmful to their loved ones. Grant captured these agonizing frustrations through parent comments, including one who professed, ‘“I wish I understood how college works’” (p. 97).

As reported earlier, Winegard (2010) researched the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students at midsized, private residential colleges and universities. According to administrators, one reason parents reached out to them was because they were looking for information or assistance. They had questions and concerns and were hopeful that administrators could provide solutions regarding their students’ college experience.

Responding to the Call for Resources

Scholars in the family engagement discipline have responded to student and parent requests for help by asking colleges and universities to take a more proactive approach to offering support to these families (Baker et al., 2021; Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Carballo, 2022; Grant, 2020; Harper et al., 2020; RNL & CampusESP, 2021a; Spurlock, 2017; Thome, 2016; Winegard, 2010). Author and director of first-generation initiatives at North Central College in Illinois, Julie Carballo, understands the desire of families for their first-generation students to be successful and fully supported throughout their education. Carballo (2022) professed that

families want to know what opportunities and resources are accessible to their children. She exclaimed that it is

> crucial that institutions do more to educate parents about the hurdles first-generation students may face and how to navigate them; to give them the language to use to support their student throughout the different phases of their journey, from application to graduation; and to make information, opportunities, and resources easily accessible for them. (p. 1)

The author advised institutions that they "would be wise to proactively inform, educate and help them understand how and when to encourage their students to connect with them" (p. 3).

RNL and CampusESP (2021b) identified the willingness to produce resources for first-generation, lower-income, and families of color as a key takeaway from their parent survey. The organization also argued that institutions should customize the resources to these families' specific needs. Grant (2020) described a gap in programming and services for parents and maintained that "parents of first-generation college students need additional support structures from the college. These support mechanisms could provide parents with resources and information to better guide their loved ones in the college environment" (p. 102).

Parent and student requests for familial support are being heard and some scholars have taken further action by calling for a collaborative relationship between the institution and family members on college campuses (Baker et al., 2021; Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Grant, 2020; Harper et al., 2020; Lewis, 2021). Benito-Gomez et al. (2021) called for colleges to collaborate with parents and foresees parental support being integrated into models of student support and academic success. Spurlock (2017) captured the value of partnering with parents and families in an exploratory study of 34 highly recognized parent family programs (PFPs), most of which were 4-year universities: "The more aware parents/families are of resources, the

better they can partner with universities in promoting their student's success" (p. 149). As noted, when supporting the connection between family engagement and social capital, Harper et al. (2020) recognized that "the parents who participated in structured programs said it helped offer a more comprehensive understanding of the university" (p. 554) and that they benefited from the wide range of campus resources and services offered to parents. As acknowledged by Grant (2020), college programming has the potential to

> provide parents with the knowledge and the skillset to understand the complexities of the college environment. Parents should receive support to be able to understand the needs of their loved ones in such core areas of college life as academics, finances, social and cultural experiences, career outcomes, and health and wellbeing. Programming should teach parents where to obtain information and resources on these key areas. (p. 104)

Claudia, one of the parent participants interviewed by Grant, summarized parents' needs for access to and understanding of college resources when encouraging her son to use college resources on campus. Claudia explained that it could be a little awkward encouraging her son to go ask for help when he was having trouble communicating with his instructors or finding classes if she didn't know where to send him or guide him. Fortunately, by attending orientation, she was able to partner with the institution and direct her son to the counselors on campus.

As Deutschlander (2019) pointed out, "If parents learn new strategies for academic success, they use this information to influence student behavior in school" (p. 240). Partnering and collaborating with parents and family members not only supports parents in their desire to be there for their students, but it also reinforces the college's commitment to student success and all those willing to make it happen.

RESEARCHED BEST PRACTICES IN PARENT AND FAMILY PROGRAMMING

One group of parent program practitioners committed to student success and supporting families convened in Denver, Colorado, in 2007 to formalize principles and policies for partnering with parents of college students (Beaman et al., 2010). Thus, the *Denver Manifesto* was established. The nine parent program professionals created the *Denver Manifesto* with the intention of serving as a contextual framework for best practices and standards for the field of parent and family programs (PFP) (Beaman et al., 2010). The document provided a rationale for providing services and information to parents and family members, as well as defined principles and policies for working with parents of college students. Within this context, the authors identified 10 behaviors of parents who are appropriately involved, including parents who

- Stay informed about campus resources, timely student issues, and current campus issues
- Encourage their student to take advantage of campus resources, activities, and leadership development opportunities
- Understand and support the institution's policies, procedures, and code of conduct.

The following section of this literature review identifies best researched practices in higher education family engagement that support the above behaviors.

Wartman and Savage (2008) produced one of the first foundational reviews of parent services and best practices in their Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Higher Education Report titled *Parent and Family Engagement in Higher Education*. Their work was then expanded upon in an ASHE monograph by Kiyama et al. (2015). In addition to identifying best practices for PFPs, the authors made two claims that are vital to this study. First, Kiyama

et al. were the first authors to reference the work of Clark (2006), which identified building relationships with parents of commuter students and communicating with them throughout the year as important for commuter students as for residential students. It is not uncommon for PFP research to ignore commuter campuses and their students. Second, before identifying best practices, the authors made clear that before an institution develops a PFP on campus, the first step must be "assessing the parental needs of the campus population and developing a mission statement and program that focuses on addressing those needs" (p. 53) while meeting the institutional mission at the same time. In meeting those needs, Kiyama et al. recognized the value of parental and familial support and acknowledged parents and family members as key stakeholders throughout a student's academic life cycle, benefiting the student, institution, and family.

While ensuring that services and resources offered are inclusive, customized, and welcoming to all students and their family support members, Kiyama et al. (2015) provided broad categories of nationally agreed-upon parent and family programs and services. The first category is outreach and communication efforts. It includes websites, print or electronic newsletters or magazines, social media presence such as Facebook, parent/guest-only family portals, and possibly participation in institutional mobile apps.

Parent and family orientation programs comprise the second category. Such programs serve as a means to orient, educate, and support the student, parents, and family members as they transition, adjust, and learn to manage a new collegiate experience and set of expectations. The authors covered specific components of "successful" orientation programs

such as high school to college transition, changing relationships, health and safety information, academic and financial information, and tools and resources for student success.

The third category covers parent- and family-focused programs. These events usually serve to develop connections between the families and the institution, share academic resources for student success, build a community of support among families, and guide parenting expectations informed by student development theory. Typical examples might include family weekend, sibling weekends, welcome week activities, educational workshops, and parent social events. At some institutions, parents are involved in community relationship building, recruiting, and state legislative advocacy. Lastly, select institutions turn to their parents as potential fundraising sources. These PFPs often work in conjunction with college and university foundations or alumni foundations to accomplish this work.

The most current and comprehensive review of family engagement programs is the Survey of College and University Parent/Family Programs currently sponsored by the Rochester Institute of Technology's Parent & Family Programs and AHEPPP: Family Engagement in Higher Education (AHEPPP) (Petree & Savage, 2021). Other scholars have contributed best practice reviews and critiques as well, including Baker et al. (2021), Spurlock (2017), and Wartman and Savage (2008). Institutions of higher education should review all researched-based practices when designing a program that meets their constituents' specific needs.

The biennial Survey of College and University Parent/Family Programs has existed since 2003 with the purpose of collecting information on changes and developments in services over time specific to collegiate family programming (Petree & Savage, 2021). In 2021, over 2,200 surveys were distributed electronically throughout the United States and Canada with 236

institutions responding. Noteworthy to this study is that 97% of responses to the survey were from 4-year institutions and new questions were included regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family engagement offices. The survey solicited information in six areas, but for the purposes of this study, only the services and programming content is reviewed.

According to Petree and Savage (2021), "The most common services offered by parent/family offices included family orientation (98%), family weekend (95%), parent/family website (95%), email newsletter (90%), other events (85%), and a handbook, guide, or calendar (80%)" (p. 5). Respondents also reported offering other services including additional events (e.g., welcome events, spring family day, local tours, commencement events), educational services (e.g., Facebook live conversations, workshops), online services (e.g., family e-space, chatrooms), and parent mentor programs (e.g., parent network, ambassadors, peer-to-peer connections). A dedicated phone number and email address for parents was prevalent among programs as well.

The College and University Parent/Family Programs survey (Petree & Savage, 2021) requested participants to identify their most and least successful services. Respondents named their most successful services as email newsletter (32%), family orientation (31%), and family weekend (12%) because they provided important information (36%), reached the highest number of parents (32%), and encouraged parent engagement (20%) (Petree & Savage, 2021, p. 12). Conversely, the least successful services were the parent/family website (13%) and Facebook page (9%) due to low participation or reach (42%), insufficient impact on program goals (29%), difficulty managing (17%), or not used at all (14%) (p. 12).

In contrast to the biennial Survey of College and University Parent/Family Programs, RNL and CampusESP (2021b) conducted the 2021 University Family Survey of 36,000 parents recently amid a national pandemic and reported parents did rely on institutional parent pages for various reasons. Website information, from most used to least, included information regarding the academic calendar (85%), costs and tuition (83%), account services and payment plans (81%), parent website area/parent portal (80%), financial aid and scholarships (78%), academics (76%), athletic season (75%), COVID-19 dashboard (72%), and the financial aid/scholarship calculator (65%) (RNL & CampusESP, 2021b).

PFP professionals in the Petree and Savage (2021) survey identified current trends in the discipline. At the top of list was mental health (e.g., services, anxiety, difficulty finding friends: 46%), followed by:

- Changes in parent engagement (e.g., desire for more engagement/information, parents advocating for students, access to student information): 22%
- Academic concerns (e.g., virtual learning, academic support, professors): 15%
- Student engagement opportunities (e.g., campus events and opportunities): 14%
- Housing/dining concerns (e.g., off-campus housing, meal plans, dorms): 6%
- Diversity and inclusion: 4%

COVID also caused PFP professionals to be innovative and introduce new services such as a heavier reliance on webinars, town halls or leadership panels, new or increased communications, and conversion to virtual events (p. 15). Institutions considering building new programs will want to consider these trends and practices as part of their deliberations.

Spurlock (2017) conducted an exploratory study designed to reveal how highly recognized PFPs in colleges and universities were “implementing best practices within the field

and the resulting implications for student success" (p. 5). By surveying 27 PFP directors and further interviewing 10 respondents, the author identified ways in which highly recognized PFPs were organized, operated, and resourced; undertook events and provided services; incorporated and learned from assessment; and faced challenges.

PFP directors indicated the electronic newsletter, parent website, emails, parent orientation, Facebook page, parent/family handbook, and parent/family calendar were the most common services provided among the highly recognized programs (Spurlock, 2017). Directors ranked the effectiveness of these standard offerings highlighting parent orientations, parent/family weekends, electronic newsletters, and basic emails as being effective or very effective. Specially designed parent/family Facebook pages were identified as the most effective forms of social media, and parent websites and parent/family handbooks were ranked similarly for the parent education category.

When exploring the impact on student success, 13 PFP directors reported their parent orientation program as the most important, followed by six directors identifying emails or electronic newsletters (Spurlock, 2017). Ultimately, Spurlock (2017) found that the most important contribution to student success was the daily resource/referral work done by PFPs. As for innovative or unique offerings by these highly recognized PFPs, Spurlock noted that "much of the innovation these programs are currently doing lies not in the novelty of a given event or service, but in the level of excellence and execution they are bringing to their resources for parents" (p. 99). Additionally, these PFP directors bring innovation to the table as they focus on continuously educating their own colleagues, including faculty and staff, about the inherent value of viewing parents and families as partners in student success.

Beyond best practices, Spurlock (2017) impressed upon the reader that the goal for the PFP offices should be "to harness the ability of the parent to assist their student in locating and accessing available resources" necessary for student success. To achieve that goal, resources must be organized and shared with families in effective ways that maximize and adapt the best practices as demonstrated by these highly recognized programs. PFP practitioners and institutional leadership must continue to build a supportive culture among colleagues and share the vision of how, by empowering families through college knowledge and resources, they can help students be more successful.

Sonn et al. (2017) recognized critical services as part of ongoing family programs, including family orientations (noting the name change from parent orientation to family orientation) and ongoing orientation or education. Sonn et al. described ongoing orientation as efforts made by the college to ensure continual resources are available for parents and families long after the summer orientation experience. Educational opportunities should cover the student's academic journey from enrollment to career.

As with Spurlock (2017), Sonn et al. (2017) did not acknowledge the community college student or their families in the article and, consequently, referenced program experiences that are not necessarily relevant to the community college context, such as "upper-division seminars." They did offer recommendations for all PFP offices that meet the changing needs of Generation Z students and their parents, such as customizing orientation resources that connect with diverse student populations, addressing the rising concern in mental health issues, and augmenting in-person family orientation with online modules, which is timely given required adjustments due to COVID. The authors called for PFP professionals to understand

their family demographics and ensure the families' specific needs are addressed in the parent and family programming.

What all these programs and best practices have in common is the ultimate goal of providing parents and families with the necessary resources to support their students as needed throughout the student's academic journey.

Positive Response to Parent Family Programming

Parents, families, and students have responded positively to the outreach initiatives. Harper et al. (2020) reported, "Overall, our participants greatly valued the ways university campus events and institutional programs target parents. . . . The parents expressed particular appreciation for the organization of institutional structured programs" (p. 554). In a quantitative study of a university's family e-newsletter, Lovell et al. (2017) surveyed two groups of parents regarding whether they read the survey and if they perceived it to be effective. With 68% of parents reading the newsletters and 82% evaluating the newsletters as effective, the authors were pleased to find that 74% felt informed about university resources for their students and 66% felt included by the newsletters. This work is important as Thome (2016) highlighted: "Parents can remind their student of the availability and value of campus resources and encourage them to seek appropriate help on their own" (p. 45). Sonn et al. (2017) asserted that "many administrators see the value of keeping parents happy by providing learning opportunities and sharing resources to help both the parent and the student" (p. 5). Research supports the effectiveness of PFP offices and the various programming, events, and resources made available to students' parents and their families.

Barriers to Parent/Family Involvement

Although research has documented students' desires for their parents to have more college knowledge, along with parents' willingness to be more involved in their students' academic journeys, it is not always an easy undertaking. Numerous barriers prevent parents from reaching the level of involvement that they and their students prefer. Barriers exist at the personal, cultural, financial, and institutional levels. These barriers are in addition to the barriers presented by parents' lack of college knowledge addressed earlier in this review.

Barriers to parent involvement do not just begin at the collegiate level. Families experience barriers starting back in primary school. Hornby and Blackwell (2018) identified four types of barriers to parent involvement at the primary level, including (1) parent and family factors, such as their own negative schooling experiences, parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement, along with the parents' class, ethnicity, and gender; (2) parent–teacher factors, such as teachers treating parent involvement as an afterthought, parents worried about being judged or criticized, and language barriers; (3) societal factors, including demographic, political, and economic issues as well as mental health issues; and (4) practical barriers such as school hours, no internet access for families, lack of time, and parents' uncertainty on how to interact with school staff. These four types of barriers do not suddenly disappear once a child matriculates.

Baker et al. (2021) and Kiyama and Harper (2018) identified access to information, time, and money as major barriers for collegiate parents as well. Baker et al. explained that assuming families have time to spend on engagement activities, have the money to pay fees to attend events, or have time available to spend with students on college matters when perhaps they

have other family obligations to attend to, are assumptions built on privilege. Kiyama and Harper (2018) encouraged higher education institutions to reflect on barriers inherent in privileged and non-inclusive practices or policies at the college that may restrict ways diverse families can be engaged. The authors warned of family engagement practices that further perpetuate color-blind and class-blind ideologies. They recommended institutions revisit policies that require fees to attend parent and family orientations, or events that span multiple days, denying those parents who are unable to take off work the opportunity to attend.

In a survey conducted by RNL and CampusESP (2021b), parents identified three key reasons for not attending virtual events held during the COVID-19 pandemic: (1) not being invited (38%), (2) not at a convenient time (34%), and (3) did not think it was necessary (28%). Although 21% of all parent respondents in the study reported having no college and 8% had 2-year college experience, the research only included respondents who were parents of students attending 4-year institutions. Consequently, the survey results do not capture the community college parent perspective.

Other barriers include channels of communication such as online only, in person only, English only materials, or materials designed for those with college experience. Kiyama and Harper (2018) encouraged institutions to reflect on whether the institution has done everything to create a welcoming diverse campus climate for all families.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as a Barrier

Colleges' interpretations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, also known as the Buckley Amendment, have caused parents to question whether the college wants them involved and, if so, to what extent (Oliver, 2011). Former Senator James Buckley sponsored the

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 to establish parameters for access to educational records and assure parents and students protection of individuals' rights to privacy surrounding academic records (120 Cong. Rec. S39860, 1974). FERPA grants five basic rights to parents, one of which is the right to "gain access to their students' records if a financial dependency relationship exists" (Weeks, 2001, p. 45). Weeks (2001) explained, however, institutions of higher education have adopted very strict interpretations of the transfer of privacy rights to a student once they turn 18 years or enroll in an institution of higher education, consequently denying any access rights to parents without specific written consent of the student.

This strict interpretation of FERPA causes a rift between the institution and parents and is in opposition to the intent behind the law, as written by Senator Buckley (Spurlock, 2017). The senator explained, "The amendment proposed would make it clear that the parent of a dependent student, as defined for income tax purpose, would have a right to information about his child without the institution having to seek the students' consent" (120 Cong. Rec. S39860, 1974, p. 39863). Weeks (2001) expounded, "The law provides that parents may have access, if the institution *chooses* [emphasis added] to provide it" (p. 45).

Wartman and Savage (2008) pointed out that the way institutions interpret FERPA and apply it to their own policies has allowed them to take a formalized hands-off approach in terms of communication with families, causing a barrier to parent involvement. Spurlock (2017) posited that "one overall consequence of FERPA was a lower rate of communication between colleges . . . and parents than experienced in the past" (p. 27). According to Weeks (2001), numerous colleges hide behind FERPA to avoid parents, while too few colleges make use of the

provisions approved by the Buckley Amendment to facilitate communication between parents and students. As institutions review barriers to family engagement, it would behoove administrators to revisit their institution's application of FERPA (Weeks, 2001, p. 49). Instituting strict FERPA policies sets a tone on the college campus that parents have no rights to be involved in their students' academic journey and creates a culture toward parent involvement that is not welcoming.

Including Helicopter Parenting in the College's Lexicon as a Barrier

Not only does a college's interpretation of FERPA have the potential to deter parents from being involved in their student's academic life, so does the use of the term *helicopter parents* on college campuses. Kiyama and Harper (2018) called for research on whether negative messaging about intrusive parent involvement has led to "reduced engagement among parents and families who do not want to be perceived as overly intrusive or bothersome" (p. 8). Mulcahy (2019) defined helicopter parents as those who are "overly involved, autonomy-restrictive, make decisions for their children, personally invest in their children's goals, and who intervene for their children in difficult situations" (p. 54). Wartman and Savage (2008) pointed out that the term had become so popular among mainstream media that it merited being included in *Wikipedia.* The authors summarized the many negative stereotype terms associated with the concept such as "Black Hawk" parent, "lawnmower" parent, "submarine" parent, and "stealth missiles" (p. 4). Other labels identified by Kiyama and Harper (2018) included "bulldozers" and "kamikaze parents." Wartman and Savage wisely pointed out that "as a result of the media coverage of parental involvement, this image has become familiar to the general public, including parents themselves" (p. 4). The possibility of

being characterized or judged as a helicopter parent or "one of those parents" poses a potential barrier to parent involvement (Oliver, 2011).

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

King (2007) explored parental involvement from the perspective of 122 student–parent matched pairs from seven 4-year institutions. The author examined the similarities and differences in the pairs' perceptions of parental involvement levels. Specifically, the researcher sought to determine if differences existed in their expectations of parent involvement based on nine various demographics. Gender, race/ethnicity, and first-generation status are three of the variables relevant to this study. Results indicated that gender and first-generation status did not produce any significant differences in any category. Poor wording on the first-generation question may have confused respondents, so the authors warned against drawing any conclusions from those responses. However, analysis of the ethnicity data indicated that the parents of Caucasian students differed significantly from parents of African American students. Furthermore, African American students differed from parents of students categorized as "other."

Payne (2010) found female first-year students at a large research university scored significantly higher on measurements of parental involvement, satisfaction with parental involvement, and frequency of communication. Conversely, males reported significantly more parental involvement with the college choice variable. Overall findings showed parents of female students are more involved in their student's life than those in male students' lives. While King did not find a significant impact of race on mental health scores, Payne found Caucasian students scored higher in terms of parental involvement variables involving college

choice, social life, academics, and satisfaction levels. Overall, a greater number of Caucasian participants reported high and medium levels of parental involvement, whereas a greater number of non-Caucasian students reported low levels of parental involvement. A majority of students in Payne's study, 61%, identified as first-generation college students. These students reported less parental involvement with five variables, including college choice, social life, academics, satisfaction, and communication. First-generation students also indicated more frequent visits with parents.

In a seminal piece providing a state of affairs for the field of parent involvement, Sax and Wartman (2010) reviewed a host of studies reporting mixed results on the effects of gender on student–parent relationships. Although the authors reviewed studies that indicated college-age women and men show attachment differently, they wrote that "in general, women considered themselves to be more attached to their parents compared to men" (p. 238). At the same time, the authors summarized research that concluded gender was not a key consideration in determining parent-student attachment. At the time of publication, Sax and Wartman recognized that few studies examined parent involvement across different racial and ethnic groups and called for more research in this area. The studies reviewed produced mixed results regarding the impact of race on college adjustment and attachment.

When studying parental involvement and student satisfaction, Oliver (2011) explored the effect of student demographics on student satisfaction with parent involvement at a 4-year university from the student's perspective. Results of the study showed females reporting higher levels of satisfaction with parental involvement in college choice, social experience, and academic experience than the male students. Similarly, first-generation students reported

lower levels of satisfaction for all three variables. Additional development of a regression model revealed first-generation status and gender as significant predictors, with first-generation having the greatest impact on satisfaction with parental involvement.

Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014) explored the antecedents and consequences of parental involvement and over-parenting as related to participants' college experiences and workplace expectations. Their study of 482 university students found that female respondents recorded higher levels of parental involvement than male students. Less parental involvement was reported by Hispanic participants than non-Hispanic students, while White students reported more parental involvement than did non-White students (p. 321). The latter relationship seemed to be a "by-product of parental educational attainment" (p. 323), however. Regarding the over-parenting variable, Asian participants reported more than non-Asian participants reported.

STUDENT AND PARENT/FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Generation Z students now fill the hallways of higher education institutions. Although there are no rigid cutoff dates for determining the years defining their births, an approximate range for these students' birth years is from 1995 through 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Seemiller and Grace (2016), authors of *Generation Z Goes to College*, surveyed up to 759 Generation Z students on self and peer group characteristics, communication habits, relationships, social media use, engagement, and other relevant topics. (The *n* varied based on the number of responses received for each question.) The authors described these young adults as digital natives or the Net Generation, having grown up with a new set of social norms and etiquette rules. Their childhood and early teen years have been framed by two presidents, an

economic downturn, smart phones, GPS, and virtual reality. They have grown to outnumber the millennials on college campuses or, in some cases, have millennials as parents. As Sonn et al. (2017) explained, the shift to a new generation of parents and students has led to a shift in technology use and communication patterns between the two generations. Colleges and universities need to understand these shifts in order to better understand students, their goals, values, relationships, and communication patterns with parents and families. Only then will institutions of higher education be able to better serve the academic dreams of students and their families.

Student Closeness With Parents/Family

According to Seemiller and Grace (2016), Generation Z users are "the most mobile device-dependent generation yet" (p. 58), preferring texting over phone calls, emails, and instant messaging. They can be found on a computer or mobile device 41% of their time. These digital natives are fond of Instagram and YouTube and prefer to be in social media spaces void of their parents and family members. However, despite their preference not to hang in the same social media crowd with their parents and their reliance on smartphones and technology, the authors found that 83% of Gen Z respondents preferred in-person communication with their family and friends. Furthermore, Seemiller and Grace reported that 88% of respondents felt an extreme closeness to their parents. This closeness leads Generation Z students to have high regard for their parents, "and more than half take the opinions and perspectives of their family into consideration in their decision making" (p. 89). Consequently, it follows that Gen Z students call, text, and connect frequently with their parents, as reported by the authors.

Universities and colleges may not fully understand this connection between Generation Z and their parents and families. In the recent Student Voice study released by *Inside Higher Ed* and College Pulse (2022), 2003 undergraduates responded to 22 survey questions regarding student struggles and feeling understood. When presented with the statement "My college or university understands the connections I have to my family and home community," one in 4 students disagreed at least somewhat (Ezarik, 2022). Further analysis of the results indicated that White participants *strongly disagreed* the most at 11%, while Black or African American students reported the highest percentage of *somewhat disagree* and *strongly disagree* at 27%. Of the 250 community college respondents, 41% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, higher than the 4-year average.

More research is needed to examine the connections among community colleges, their students, and students' families. As Lewis (2021) posited, "The more we understand the role parents and families play and the extent to which that varies for students—the better-equipped institutions will be to develop programs and services (for students, parents, and families)" (p. 5). Additional research on community college campuses is necessary to further explore Lewis's claim as experienced by 2-year college students.

Identified Academic Supporter

While students rely on and receive support from numerous people and support networks, it is not uncommon for parent/family involvement research to ask respondents to identify the one key person in their life whom they turn to for support during their college experience. The closeness identified above is commonly developed with one or two family members. Overwhelmingly, students identify their mother as fulfilling that role. Mulcahy (2019)

reported that approximately every 3 out of 4 students identified their mother as the parent most involved in their college life. Additionally, Lewis (2021) identified the biological mother as the highest ranked primary caregiver, followed by the biological father, and stepparents. Other extended family members were identified to a lesser extent. The current study asked participants to select a parental figure, family member, or friend who is most involved in and supportive of their college endeavors. The selected individual was then referred to as the student's "family member" for the remainder of the survey.

Mode, Initiator, and Content of Communication

Communication plays an important role in these student–parent/family relationships and the level of closeness between the two. Research in the area has traditionally focused on the mode and frequency of communication, in addition to who is responsible for initiating the communication. This study examined the mode and who is initiating the communication. In 2010, Sax and Wartman produced a thorough review and agenda for research on the impact of parental involvement on college student development. As a result of that review, the authors argued that "the very first step should be to assess the nature and extent of parental involvement in the lives of college students" (p. 246). They put forth numerous questions related to communication for future research, including:

- What are the various forms of parent–student interaction and communication during the college years?
- What are the frequency and duration of these interactions?
- What is the mode of interaction (in-person, telephone, email, regular mail, text message, online social network, etc.)?
- What are the primary reasons for the interaction (to seek/provide advice on academic or social matters, to discuss family matters, etc.)?

- Who initiates the communication—the student or parent?

The following studies address some of these questions from various perspectives.

Mode

A decade ago, participants in a study conducted by Spence (2012) indicated texting as their preferred channel of communication. One year later, students in Gaymon's (2013) research reported the phone as their primary communication method, while one student mentioned emailing her father and Facetiming with her mom. Both Spence's and Gaymon's studies were almost 10 years ago and earmarked the beginning of texting and the beginning of communication applications becoming popular among college students. Six years later, texting emerged in Mulcahy's (2019) research as students' preferred mode of communication, followed by phone calls and video chats. Video chats were becoming more popular among university students.

Most recently, Lewis (2021) examined the frequency and mode of Generation Z's communication patterns with their family during the first year of postsecondary studies and how those patterns varied by select demographics. The sample population was selected from one 4-year public university and one 2-year public institution. The study received a 16.22% response rate (*n* = 430). Far fewer community college students (*n* = 34) responded compared to 4-year respondents (*n* = 396). When examining results by institution type, Lewis found respondents attending 2-year institutions and 4-year institutions alike both preferred in-person communication. The author reported slight differences when examining by race. The preferred mode of communication for the majority of students, who were White/Caucasian, with their

primary supporter was in-person communication, followed by talking on the phone. However, Black/African American respondents indicated a preference for talking on the phone and text messaging slightly more than in-person communication. Students took advantage of social media and video chat to communicate with primary caregivers and siblings as well. Findings noted that video chat platforms were more popular than social media and email. While the preferred channel of communication may vary by racial demographics, one common thread running through current research is that email is the least preferred communication mode for students (Lewis, 2021; Mulcahy, 2019). Consequently, colleges may want to identify alternative methods of communication besides email.

Research by Weintraub and Sax (2018) was mentioned earlier in this review as support for the relationship between emotional support and higher earned student GPAs. The authors also studied the students' perception of the role that communication with parents played in contributing to first-year academic performance at a public university. Specifically, Weintraub and Sax explored the impact of frequency, mode, perceived satisfaction, and quality of communication with parental figures on student success as measured by GPA. Findings revealed that respondents who communicated more frequently by email with their parents were in the highest GPA quartiles as compared to those respondents who did not. Furthermore, communicating via video chat with mothers, although used more rarely than other channels, was a more common behavior among students in the highest GPA quartiles than among students in the lowest GPA quartile.

In summary, students sought communication with their parents and did not indicate they experienced too much communication. Weintraub and Sax (2018) recommended further

research that dives deeper into the content and nature of students' conversations with their parents about academic matters and whether parent advice to students on academic strategies improves grades. Similar topics are addressed to a certain extent in the current research study.

Content of Communication

In contrast to research investigating the mode of communication between students and family members, research that investigated the purpose or nature of the contact is limited. Over two decades ago, Wintre and Yaffe (2000) studied 408 first-year students enrolled in a large Canadian university. The research focused on the effect of mutual reciprocity, psychological well-being, and parent–student discussions on adjustment to university life. While not all variables under investigation relate to this study, parent–child relationships were found to be significant predictors of university adaptation. Additionally, student discussions with parents about college-related topics were found to have a direct effect on adaptation to the university. The authors concluded it is critical to provide parents with relevant information regarding college life and academics.

Focused on the parent perspective, Spence (2012) interviewed 12 parents during their students' last 2 years of college. The purpose was to explore the impact of communication on the development of independence, self-direction, and critical thinking. The author explored conversation topics, direction of the conversations, and perceived outcomes of the conversation. Among several significant results, findings revealed that parents encouraged critical thinking and problem solving through their discussions but offered advice when their students encountered interpersonal conflicts. Lastly, frequency of communication between the student and parent was associated with parental influence on decision making and career-

related decisions. Consequently, Spence recommended that universities value parents as partners in the student's education and provide parents the resources and education necessary to fulfill that role successfully.

Initiator of Communication

Parent/family involvement studies often focus on who initiates the communication between the student and family member. Often this research is conducted with the purpose of searching for over-involved parents or in support of the emerging adult theory. Results indicate that students regularly initiate communication with their family member(s) and/or split the responsibility (Gaymon, 2013; Spence, 2012). Over two thirds of students in Mulcahy's (2019) research claimed that they were as likely to initiate parental involvement as were their parents. Participants also reported that if responsibility for parental involvement was not equally shared between the student and parent, students were more likely to initiate parental involvement than the parent. As with the results from Mulcahy, Harper et al. (2020) found that it was not uncommon for students to initiate communication with the parent, even calling or texting the parent unprompted to check up on them. Participants in this study attended a 4-year public university.

Summary

Students and parents have access to more communication channels than ever before. Students carry smart devices allowing for texting, phone calling, video chatting, or live streaming with one another. Still, despite the increased channels of communication, and student-initiated communication, studies report that students wished for more communication

with their parents at some level (Beaman, 2010). It is important to keep in mind that these studies involved students enrolled in 4-year institutions.

While the previously reviewed articles started to address these questions raised by Sax and Wartman (2010) over a decade ago, few focused on the latest Generation Z student communication patterns, and even fewer included community college students or their parents. The current research under investigation addresses both variables. This study seeks to explore the nature of parental involvement in the lives of community college students and communication patterns between the two.

Communication Between Parents/Family Members and Institutions

Parents and family members' communication channel preferences differ from those of their students. Amid a national pandemic, RNL and CampusESP (2021b) conducted the 2021 University Family Survey of 36,000 parents. Parents overwhelmingly preferred to communicate via email at 96%, followed by text messaging; 34% of parents preferred communication via the parent/family portal. While a vast majority of institutions (92%) reported using email to communicate with parents, only 11% reported using text messaging. Note that 46% of parents indicated they preferred communication via text message. RNL suggested giving parents the opportunity to opt-in and then use text communications to send parents useful information. In the RNL report, only 1% of parents preferred never to receive any communications from the university, while 41% preferred at least once a week, followed by 33% approving of the college sharing information whenever they have important information to share.

Even though parents prefer email as their main communication channel, which differs from that of the students, Harper et al. (2020) reported that parents of first-generation

students chose texting their students given the uncertainty of the students' schedules and the desire not to interrupt them during class or work. This research shows that parents are conscious of students' needs and adapt accordingly.

LACK OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH

Unfortunately, minimal investigation has been conducted on parent and family engagement at the community college level throughout the last decade. A review of 76 scholarly articles, monographs, and original dissertations on collegiate familial engagement resulted in only 11% (*n* = 9) of studies focused on the community college context (Barbatis, 2008; Bers, 2005; Deutschlander, 2019; Hightower, 2014; O. Johnson, 2019; Lewis, 2021; Maliszewski Lukszo & Hayes, 2020; Moore, 2009; Rucks- Ahidiana & Bork, 2020). The remaining articles or research studied parent and family engagement from either the 4-year college and university perspective or high school lens. The community college student body is vastly different than the traditional 4-year student body on many fronts, including admission requirements, full-time versus part-time enrollment numbers, distance from home, residential housing options, class sizes, degree programs, costs, parent education, and extracurricular activities, to identify a few. Consequently, it is not always appropriate to apply the results from 4-year institutions to the community college context. Additional research that focuses on community college students and their specific needs and perceptions is necessary.

CONCLUSION

The intent of this literature review is to provide an overview of the theories and research that serve as the foundation for the current study on how community colleges can

empower families to support student success. Taking an asset-based approach to family capital, the researcher believes that parent and family programming can contribute to students' social capital as students move from emerging adults to college graduates and productive members of society.

Although not foolproof, research has proven that parent/family involvement beginning from college selection and enrollment to graduation and career transition can make a positive difference on student success outcomes. Of the various types of support offered by parents and family members, including emotional, academic, and financial support, emotional support often yielded the strongest impact on the students. Parent and family programming offices across the country offer numerous ways for parents to be involved, whether it is through outreach and communication efforts, orientation programs, or parent/family programming events.

Unfortunately, this review of research, covering approximately the past 20 years, shows that not all parents have the necessary level of college knowledge to support their student at the level they or their student desire. Scholars in the parent and family programming profession have called on institutions to begin to, or expand on, the resources they make available to parents. Yet, even if resources are made available, they are at risk of not being culturally appropriate, or barriers prevent families from taking advantage of them. The largest barrier for community college students and family members is that family engagement is not offered nor encouraged on most community college campuses.

The lack of parent and family programming on 2-year campuses may be a result of the sparse research conducted involving community college students. The problem is perplexing, given that research shows the immense value of parent/family involvement during the high

school-to-college transition and the first-year adjustment period (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Gaymon, 2013; Hashmi, 2015; Hightower, 2014; Roksa & Deutschlander, 2018; Rucks-Ahidiana & Bork, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Silva, 2018). In searching for a solution, the current study focused specifically on the community college population.

The upcoming chapter outlines the methodology for this study that focused on the student perception of family involvement, college resource awareness, and communication about college resources with their selected family member. The chapter details the research design, hypotheses, population and sample, and instrumentation. Finally, data collection and analysis are addressed.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to better understand parent/family involvement from the community college student perspective and identify possible relationships between various parent/family engagement variables. The research study explored how community colleges can empower families to support their student's academic journey. Chapter 1 provided the context for the problem. Community colleges across the country generally do not know their students' families. Nor do most community colleges encourage, support, or offer opportunities for parents or family members to be involved in the student's academic journey, even though family involvement has proven to positively impact student success variables. Chapter 2 provided a theoretical foundation for the study while identifying the benefits of and best practices in parent/family engagement on college campuses. Chapter 2 made it evident that more research on family engagement at the community college level is necessary to increase levels of parent/family college knowledge and engagement. Lastly, Chapter 2 described the characteristics of this study's population and their communication patterns with supporting family members. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and approach, the population, sample, and demographic information, along with the timeline and setting of the study. Additionally, the chapter describes the data collection methods, instrumentation, and data analysis methods, including the statistical analysis employed.

Broadly speaking, the results of this research could aid the college administration, faculty, and staff in seeing the value of family engagement on the community college campus and gain an understanding of the students' perceptions of family engagement. Specifically, it could identify means in which the college can support families who desire to be involved in their student's academic life while possibly eliminating barriers to family engagement. Lastly, this research will contribute to a clearer understanding of how the current generation of students communicate with their families about academics and educational resources, consequently identifying more potential avenues for student and family support.

RESEARCH PARADIGM

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) explained that the "research paradigm and methodology work together to form a research study" (para. 3). The methodology begins with the choice of research paradigm and is "guided by philosophical beliefs about the nature of reality, knowledge, and values and by the theoretical framework that informs comprehension, interpretation, choice of literature and research practice on a given topic of study" (Kawulich & Chilisa, 2012, p. 3). Mackenzie and Knipe credited a research paradigm as the key influencer on how knowledge is studied and interpreted. According to the authors, a scholar's choice of paradigm "sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research" (para. 5). The current study was designed and conducted under the guise of a post-positivist research paradigm.

In alignment with the post-positivist ontology, the author holds that "reality does exist but maintain[s] that it can be known only imperfectly because of the researcher's human limitations" (Kawulich & Chilisa, 2012, p. 8). As Trochim (2022) explained,

> The goal of science is to hold steadfastly to the goal of getting it right about reality, even though we can never achieve that goal. . . . Most post-positivists are constructivists who believe that we each construct our view of the world based on our perceptions of it. Because perception and observation [are] fallible our constructions must be imperfect. (Positivism & Post-Positivism section)

From an epistemological viewpoint, "Post-positivists believe that perfect objectivity cannot be achieved but is approachable" (Kawulich& Chilisa, 2012, p. 9). Lastly, a post-positivism axiology supports this study. The author believes that one's own background knowledge, along with the theories and hypotheses, can strongly influence what is observed and the outcome of what is observed.

In alignment with the post-positivism paradigm, the purpose of this study is to find the strength of relationships among variables. The literature review and problem statement allowed for a clear methodology in which the variables to be studied and the relationship among them are identified. The study is conducted in a way that the variables are operationally defined allowing others to replicate, verify, and confirm the findings. The study followed a traditional quantitative method using a survey design.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PURPOSE

Social research can be categorized as exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory, in which an individual study can serve more than one purpose (Sue & Ritter, 2012). This quantitative study was designed as descriptive research investigating students' perceptions of family engagement behaviors, familial resource awareness, and communication behaviors as they related to various demographics, student grade point average, and persistence. At the same time, the study also has an exploratory angle as the researcher aimed to learn more about the various supporting behaviors of community college students' family members and student

perceptions of familial use of, and barriers to, family engagement. DeCarlo (2018) explained that exploratory research is used when very little prior research has been conducted on a subject and descriptive research is applicable for projects in which the purpose is to describe or define a particular phenomenon. Both approaches are appropriate for this study given the sparse research available concerning family engagement at community colleges and the non-existent research available concerning communication behaviors surrounding familial awareness of available college resources.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to understand how students perceive their family member's level of involvement in their college life and how community colleges can empower family members to support their student's success and preferences for family involvement. The following research questions were posed to meet the study's purpose:

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there a difference between participant demographics and the mean scores of the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of academic and resource communication? Demographics included gender, race/ethnicity, enrollment status (full-time and part-time), and education level of selected family members.
2. Is there a relationship between student GPA and the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?
3. Is there a relationship between student intent-to-persist and the following variables: (a) perceived level of family involvement, (b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and (c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How satisfied are students with their parent/family member's level of involvement?

2. What student support resources are parent/family members most and least aware of?
3. What is the preferred mode of communication between the student and parent/family member, and who initiates the communication?
4. What family engagement strategies do students perceive being of value to their parent/family member?
5. What barriers to parent/family involvement do students perceive their parent/family member encountering?

Additionally, survey participants were asked to answer one open-ended question designed to give students the freedom to describe family involvement in their own words and how they would like it in the future.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a quantitative methods approach was chosen. Creswell (2009) defined quantitative research as a means to testing theories by exploring the relationship among variables. Those variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, allowing for statistical analysis of numerical data. Goertzen (2017) posited that because quantitative research focuses on data that can be measured and analyzed, this type of research is "effective at answering the 'what' or 'how' of a given situation" (p. 12). Combining this study's focus on exploring relationships and research questions that focus on the "what," a quantitative approach was deemed appropriate. Additionally, according to McLean (2012), quantitative research "is often used to test a hypothesis, and normally involves large volumes of data" (section 8.2). Such is the case for this research in which a survey was sent to over 16,000 students that explored the relationship among data. McLean continued to explain that the data

can be gathered at a much lower cost through a quantitative approach, which was beneficial to this researcher as well.

Goertzen (2017) described quantitative studies as allowing the researcher to "learn more about the demographics of a population, how many patrons use a service, . . . examine attitudes and behaviors, document trends, or explain what is known anecdotally" (p. 12). Many of those benefits align with this study's research questions. The data gathered through this quantitative study allowed for the collection of demographic data and barriers to potential use of family engagement services while capturing student attitudes and perceptions of parent and familial engagement behaviors. The study also captured participants' anecdotal explanations of how their family members are involved in their academic lives.

Through a survey of closed- and open-ended questions, the investigation sought to learn more about the ways one community college can empower families to support their students through three key variables, including (1) parent/family involvement, (2) parent/family college resource awareness, and (3) parent/family communication about academics and college resources. Additionally, student satisfaction with current levels of family member involvement was measured. Lastly, students provided their perception of the likelihood that their family members would take advantage of family engagement opportunities and what they perceived as potential barriers to engagement. This study measured differences between groups based on various student demographics and the selected family member's college attainment levels while exploring the impact of family involvement on student GPA and intent-to-persist. Composite scores measuring levels of parent/family involvement, resource awareness levels, and communication behaviors were calculated to obtain overall scores for students. Ultimately,

this study can, as Goertzen (2017) stated about quantitative investigations, provide a baseline for future evaluation of family involvement and engagement for the community colleges under investigation.

POPULATION

The institution under study does not maintain a parent/family database; as a result, the researcher was not able to contact parents or family members of students. Consequently, students became the unit of analysis. The sampling frame for this study consisted of 16,605 students, 18–24 years old, currently enrolled in a large urban community college (UCC) in the South. The institution's enrollment at the time of the study was 37,019 students. UCC is a multi-campus institution that primarily offers associate degrees and certificates, but also awards several baccalaureate degrees. Full-time and part-time students were invited to participate, and on-campus housing is not available at the college. Additional population demographics are discussed in Chapter 4.

The researcher had access to the entire sampling frame and, at the recommendation of the statistician consultant, implemented a census approach to the study. Lavrakas (2008) defined census as "attempts to collect information on all eligible elements in a defined population" (para. 9). Similarly, census was defined by Fowler (2009) as "gathering information about every individual in a population" (p. 4). Consequently, the entire population was invited to participate in the study. This approach was believed to increase response rates and equity among various student demographic groups. The resulting sample shared similar demographic characteristics of the population being studied based on gender, age, enrollment status, and race/ethnicity, allowing for statistical generalization to the population (Laerd, n.d.). Dual credit

and Early College High students were not involved in this study for two reasons: (1) the majority of high school students are under the age of 18 and required additional permissions to survey, and (2) high schools offer their own parent programming. Students over the age of 24 were excluded from the study given their increased independence from parents and the lack of literature pertaining to that age range.

INSTRUMENTATION

The data were collected using an instrument formulated by the researcher based on the literature review, previously established instruments, and expert opinions. Appendix A contains the survey instrument. While numerous instruments exist that capture levels of parent/family engagement at the university level, few focus on the community college population. These instruments tend to ask questions that are not appropriate for this study's population, including questions regarding dormitories, roommate conflicts, family visits, and Greek life. Additionally, none of the reviewed instruments included questions on college resource awareness, communication about college resources, parent/family engagement opportunities, or barriers to engagement.

Review of scales used by Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014), B. Johnson (2019), and Payne (2010) provided an initial framework for the final questionnaire used in this study. However, because of their lack of connection with the community college population, none of the surveys were selected to be used as designed. This study's final instrument consisted of 29 items pertinent to the research questions, one consent item, and two optional items related to the participation drawing for a prize and family member contact information. The first 11 questions were profile questions designed to learn more about the participants including

demographics, such as described above. Composite scores were calculated in order to measure the student's perceptions of the three main variables under investigation, including parent/family involvement (PF-I), parent/family awareness of college resources (PF-RA), and parent/family communication about college resources and academics (PF-COMM).

VALIDITY

Two forms of translation validity were used to determine the validity of the instrument. Trochim et al. (2016) explained that in translation validity "you focus on whether the operationalization is a good translation of the construct. . . . It assumes you have a good, detailed definition of the construct and that you can check the operationalization against it" (p. 130). Two forms of translation validity used in this study were content and face validity. Five content experts who are members of AHEPPP: Family Engagement in Higher Education (AHEPPP) reviewed the instrument for construct validity, understanding, and flow. Babbie (1990) contended that all scholarly textbooks encourage researchers to pretest their research design. Babbie continued that the pretest of some aspect of the study's design, such as the draft questionnaire, can prevent unforeseen errors. The content experts were asked to answer the following questions:

1. Do the items truly reflect or capture the construct they are intended to measure (per headings on the instrument)?
2. Were any major considerations or options left off the survey?
3. Are the answers exhaustive and mutually exclusive?
4. Will a student understand the question?
5. Does the question logic flow correctly?
6. Any other issues stand out to you that need to be addressed?

The experts were reminded that the instrument was intended for students to complete, not parents. Feedback on scaling measurements, specificity of parent education levels, what was considered "social" media, and clarity was incorporated into the final instrument.

Fowler (2009) explained that "the best way to pretest a self-administered questionnaire is in person, with a group of potential respondents" (p. 124). Given this research took place during COVID, in-person testing was not possible, but it was possible virtually. Consequently, student focus groups were conducted on the study's instrument to gauge clarity of the instructions and improve upon comprehension, flow, wording, exclusivity, and exhaustivity. Four students participated in three virtual focus groups. Eight students did not attend as planned. Attendees signed an electronic consent form prior to participating. Students provided feedback on the length of the consent document, the order of the questions, answer stem options for gender, and formatting of the questions. They suggested putting several questions into table format for ease of completion. Content feedback related to needing additional explanation on what "credit hours" meant and what was a G.P.A., and they asked for more examples for several of the questions.

Reliability

Internal consistency reliability of the three separate composite scores, PF-PI, PF-RA, and PF-COMM, was calculated using Cronbach alpha. Bhattacherjee (2012) defined internal consistency reliability as a "measure of consistency between different items of the same construct" (p. 57). According to Trochim et al. (2016), Cronbach alpha is one specific method of estimating the internal consistency reliability of a measure and "tends to be the most frequently used estimate of internal consistency" (p. 127). According to Gleim and Gleim (as

cited in Lewis, 2021, p. 90), “The closer the Cronbach alpha coefficient is to 1, the greater the subscale items’ internal consistency. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) claimed acceptable values of alpha range from 0.70 to 0.95. The Cronbach alpha for each composite score is reported along with an explanation of the items included in the composite score. All composite scores in this study fell within the acceptable range.

Composite Index Scores and Individual Items

According to Babbie (1990), “A composite index is created for the purpose of measuring some variable” (p. 151). “It is constructed through the simple cumulation of scores assigned to specific responses to the individual items comprising the index” (p. 148). This study revolved around three composite index scores, including (1) parent/family involvement (PF-I), (2) parent/family resource awareness (PF-RA), and (3) parent/family communication (PF-COMM). All three composite indices were necessary to test the study’s three hypotheses. Composite scores were calculated by summing the total scores of each item in the index and dividing by the total number of questions in the index resulting in an average score. Each item in the composite score was weighted equally, as recommended by Babbie (1990). If a participant did not provide answers to all items included in the composite index, they were excluded from the construction and analysis of the data.

All composite index scores were created using 4-point Likert scale items, with the exception of parent/family resource awareness (PF-RA). PF-RA included a fifth “I do not know” response because it was possible that a respondent may not have known their family member’s resource awareness levels. All other indices were designed using forced-choice response scales where participants were forced to label their perceptions of parent/family involvement,

resource awareness, and communication behaviors (Trochim et al., 2016). Although a forced choice could be viewed negatively if the respondent does not have an opinion, these questions focused on personal issues in which the student would be able to make an educated choice.

The Likert method is one of the most frequently used scaling approaches in modern survey instrument design (Babbie, 2021). Bhandari and Nikolopoulou (2020) identified several advantages of Likert scales, including the ability to operationalize multifaceted topics; capture deeper understanding of perceptions, opinions, and behaviors; and allow for a "user-friendly" experience. Likert scales also result in manageable data sets from large samples. Babbie (2021) explained Likert scaling is valuable due to its "unambiguous ordinality of response categories" (p. 179) that allows for the construction of a clear simple index. However, they are also prone to response bias, where respondents may choose what they perceive as the "normal" response; user fatigue/inattention, when the respondent loses interest; and "subjective interpretation," when the participant interprets the scale wording differently than the researcher intended (Bhandari & Nikolopoulou, 2020). However, it was determined that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages for this study.

The parent/family member involvement composite score (PF-I) measured the extent to which the student perceived their family member was involved in their academic life. It encompassed the student's perception of their family member's level of academic support with three questions (items 18a–18c) and their family member's level of emotional support with two questions (items 18e–18f). The PF-I was calculated by averaging the responses to the five 4-point Likert-scale items asking students to indicate how frequently their family member engages in the following activities: (1) Offers you general words of support and encouragement

(e.g., You got this; We believe in you; You can do it), (2) Provides you emotional support when stressed or worried (e.g., listens to you; offers advice), (3) Establishes an expectation for you to perform well academically (e.g., Work hard; Do your best; Pass your classes), (4) Encourages you to use resources available at the college to help you be successful, and (5) Encourages you to contact faculty, staff, or administrators, if necessary. The Likert scale ranged from *often* = 1, *sometimes* = 2, *rarely* = 3, and *never* = 4. The higher the PF-I score, the less involvement perceived by the student. The questions were influenced by items on the Parental Involvement Scale (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014) and the Family Involvement in College section of the Family Involvement and Academic Success survey (B. Johnson, 2019). Although questions were not taken directly from either instrument, permission was obtained from the authors to use and modify, as needed. The Cronbach alpha for PF-I was 0.835.

The parent/family college resource awareness composite score (PF-RA) measured the extent that a student perceives their family member is aware of the various college resources made available to students in support of student success. The PF-RA consisted of a set of seven Likert-scale survey items (items 13a–13g) designed by the researcher. The questions focused on key resources available at the college, including: (1) Financial Aid Resources (e.g., loans, grants, scholarships), (2) Academic Support Resources (e.g., tutoring, learning labs, advising), (3) Career Resources (e.g., career center, resume writing, interview practice), (4) Student Life and Extracurricular Resources (e.g., student clubs, intramurals), (5) Mental Health/Stress Management Resources (e.g., counseling, workshops, hotlines), (6) Local Community Resources (e.g., housing, food pantries, transportation), and (7) Safety Resources (e.g., theft prevention, emergency preparedness, sexual assault prevention). Students were asked to rate on a 5-point

Likert scale (i.e., *very aware* = 1, *aware* = 2, *unaware* = 3, *very unaware* = 4, and *I do not know their knowledge level* = 5) their perception of their family member's awareness level regarding each college resource. The higher the PF-RA score, the less awareness perceived by the student. The PF-RA resulted in a Cronbach alpha of 0.918.

The parent/family resource communication composite score (PF-COMM) measured the frequency with which students communicate with their selected family member about academic topics and the college resources. PF-COMM consisted of a set of nine 4-point Likert-scale survey items (e.g., *often* = 1, *sometimes* = 2, *rarely* = 3, and *never* = 4). PF-COMM was calculated by averaging the responses to the nine items for each participant (items 16a–16g, 17b, 17e). The items, designed by the researcher, focused on: (1) academic progress (e.g., grades, attendance, GPA), (2) courses (e.g., assignments, instructors, lectures), (3) college-related extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, student government, intramural sports), (4) financial needs (e.g., tuition, books, fees), (5) selecting a major, (6) class schedule (e.g., which classes to take, how many classes to take), (7) safety concerns on campus, (8) mental health concerns (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression), and (9) job or career plans. Due to the scoring of the instrument, higher scores indicated a lower level of communication. The Cronbach alpha for PF-COMM was 0.857. The composite score provided insight into the frequency of communication between the parent/family member and student and which topics generated more conversation between the parties.

Critical to this study was a question (item 10) asking participants to identify a figure in their life who was most involved in and supportive of their college endeavors. The identified figure would serve as the "selected family member" for the remainder of the questions in the

questionnaire. Students selected from mother, father, spouse, siblings, extended family member, friend, guardian, or other. The identified individuals represent the population of parents and family members the institution desires to empower as they support their student's academic success.

Research Question Variables

All three hypotheses were tested using the three composite scores described above, PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM. All composite score data were treated as interval data and distance between categories was presumed to be equal (Bhandari & Nikolopoulou, 2020).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 tested whether there was a difference between each score and participant demographics. The questionnaire captured traditional demographics for each participant, such as gender, race and ethnicity, and age. In addition, characteristics common to community college students were included, such as enrollment status, credit hours, high school status, and first-generation status (items 2, 3, 6–9). The questions were exhaustive and mutually exclusive. Not all demographics were included in the final analysis. Those that were included—gender, race and ethnicity, enrollment status, and first-generation status—were treated as nominal data and as the independent variables.

Hypothesis 2

To test the study's second hypothesis, students self-reported their GPA by checking the appropriate range from a list of forced-choice GPA categories (3.5–4.0, 3.0–3.4, 2.5–2.9, 2.0–2.4, less than 2.0, and "I do not know"). To test if there was a difference in composite scores

between GPA categories, we compared the averaged scores within each GPA category. GPA (item 4) was treated as ordinal data and labeled as the independent variable for the sake of the one-way analysis of variance.

Hypothesis 3

To assess the study's third hypothesis, the student's likelihood to persist was measured with two multiple-choice items allowing for *yes*, *no*, or *unsure* responses and tested against the three composite scores. The first item (item 22) asked about the student's enrollment plans for the upcoming semester(s). The second item (item 23) required the student to indicate their intention to graduate with a college degree or credential. Both items were treated as nominal data and the independent variable for the sake of the comparative testing.

Various items were added to the instrument to answer the five secondary questions. Each question and the appropriate items are identified below.

Secondary Research Questions

Secondary Research Question 1

How satisfied are students with their parent/family member's level of involvement?

A separate question (item 20) measured student satisfaction with their perceived level of parent/family member overall involvement in college life. When related to PF-I, this question provided a deeper understanding of community college student perceptions of family engagement and their preferred level of family engagement. The data provide a baseline for understanding student perceptions of family engagement and their current desire for more or less involvement. The variables PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM were the dependent variables and

treated as continuous, interval levels of measurement. Level of satisfaction was the independent variable and treated as categorical, ordinal data.

This section of the questionnaire included the one fundamental open-ended question asking how the respondents would like their family member to be involved in their college life in the future (item 21). The question was intended to also provide insight into student satisfaction levels with parent/family engagement and offer guidance to the community college on student preferences for parent/family engagement.

Secondary Research Question 2

What student support resources are parent/family members most and least aware of?

Results from the PF-RA composite score were used to answer this question. Additionally, a Likert-scale question (item 27) asked students to rate the extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement that their family member could benefit from free resources on how to help students be successful in college. Respondents then indicated whether they wanted their family member to receive the free resources (item 28), and, if so, which resources (item 29). The list of resources aligned with the resources mentioned earlier in the chapter regarding awareness of college resources. Respondents were then invited to submit their family member's name and contact information, including address and email (item 30). This information was vital to adding an action statement to the survey and will result in aiding some families' immediate need for information. Lastly, students were invited to share their name and contact information if they wanted to participate in the drawing for one of two gift cards (item 31).

Secondary Research Question 3

What is the preferred mode of communication between the student and parent/family member, and who initiates the communication?

Two questions focused on communication behaviors in order to provide further insight into Generation Z student communication habits. The questions (items 14–15) explored the communication channels used by students and who is responsible for initiating the communication between the student and family member. When asked about preferred communication channels, students were invited to check as many channels that they use with the selected family member. Options included in-person/face-to-face, phone call, video chat via cell phone, text messaging, social media app, email, and a messaging app. This information can guide institutions as they reach out to students and their family members.

Secondary Research Question 4

What family engagement strategies do students perceive their parent/family member using?

The student's perception of preferred family engagement strategies was measured by indicating the likelihood of use for a series of engagement strategies. Selected strategies were derived from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and common practices identified by Petree and Savage (2021). Respondents indicated the likelihood their family member would engage in each type of opportunity using 4-point Likert responses (e.g., *very likely* = 1, *likely* = 2, *unlikely* = 3, and *very unlikely* = 4). Engagement opportunities were divided into two categories. The first category focused on engagement activities that required access to and ability to use technology (items 24a–24g). In contrast, the second category focused on non-technical/in-person engagement opportunities (Items 25a–25g). Both measures were comprised of seven items.

These data can contribute to understanding the needs of the community college families and enable the institution to consider those needs when building a parent and family program.

Secondary Research Question 5

What barriers to parent/family involvement do students perceive their family member encountering?

Respondents were asked in a separate question (item 26) to identify and check any barriers that they perceive may prevent their family member from participating in any of the family engagement strategies. Barriers were identified from the literature review and from the student focus groups.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES (SURVEY ADMINISTRATION)

The researcher used Illume, a program provided by Civitas Learning, to identify all students enrolled for the spring 2021 semester ages 18–24 years old. The researcher had permission from the institution's Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Programs (via email) to obtain the student email addresses for the purpose of this study. Students received an email from the researcher explaining the purpose of the study and inviting them to participate in the research by completing the questionnaire via SurveyMonkey®. Three reminder emails were delivered to students during the open survey window over a 2½-week period. Reminders were sent on different days, at different times, and with different subject lines with the intent of increasing response rates (Betancourt & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2019; Van Mol, 2017). If students chose to participate after reading the email, they clicked on the link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire provided in the email. If they chose not to participate, they could close their browser and delete the email. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary.

The email explained that the survey was anonymous. Students were notified in the email that participants could enter a drawing for one of two $50 Amazon gift cards, but they would need to submit their name/email address on the survey to enter the drawing. Research indicates that incentivizing the completion of the survey with a small token such as a gift can increase the study's response rate (Betancourt & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2019). They could also submit a family member's name/email address if they wanted resources emailed to their family member. Any personal identifying information provided by the student was disassociated from the data files before analysis began, and confidentiality was guaranteed. Students were informed that it would take 10–13 minutes to complete the survey.

Survey Completion

Once students clicked on the SurveyMonkey link, they were presented with an Informed Consent form that explained more details about the purpose of the study and its intended use. They were reminded that responses were anonymous unless they chose to provide their contact information, or that of their family member, in which case confidentiality was guaranteed. Respondents were then invited to click one of two options: (1) *Yes*, acknowledging they have read the Informed Consent and wanted to continue, or (2) *No*, they chose not to participate, at which point they were directed to the disqualification screen, thanked for their time, and reminded to close their browser.

Respondents choosing to continue were presented with the survey divided into the following sections: (1) demographics, (2) parent/family college resource awareness, (3) parent/family communication, (4) parent/family member involvement, (5) student intent-to-persist, (6) parent/family engagement opportunities, (7) barriers to family involvement and

engagement, and (8) contact information for drawing and additional information. Students could exit the survey at any time by closing their browser. Any responses collected from students not within the required age range were not included in the final data analysis.

The chosen survey method was selected because "surveys are useful in describing the characteristics of a large population," which was at the heart of this research (Babbie, 2021, p. 281). Babbie (2021) continued that surveys in general make it feasible to collect data from large samples and that large samples are critical for descriptive analyses, which are involved in this study. This survey method was appropriate for this population given that the researcher had a complete, current list of email addresses for each participant, and the overall population was viewed as computer literate with access to the necessary technology to complete the questionnaire (Fowler, 2009). Self-administered questionnaires are also "generally cheaper and quicker" to administer than other forms of surveys, which was valuable to this researcher. Fowler (2009) identified other advantages of self-administered, electronic surveys that align with the goals of this survey, such as more accurate reporting of sensitive information, which could apply to participants reporting on their family member's level of involvement and knowledge of college resources, as well as how often they communicate with one another.

SurveyMonkey was selected as the survey development and application tool for this study. It is a secure, cloud-based software that was made available through the hosting institution. The company provides a customizable link to the survey to share with respondents and is easily opened on any electronic device, enhancing the survey's response rate. SurveyMonkey's functionality enables data to be exported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data collected from the electronic surveys were exported from SurveyMonkey into the statistical software, SPSS, version 28, for computational analysis. All data were inspected for errors and cleaned, if necessary. The analytical procedures used for statistical testing included examining a variety of inferential statistics and basic descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency tables. The inferential testing was comprised of Spearman's rho correlations, independent samples *t* tests, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. If an ANOVA produced a significant result ($p < .05$), the Tukey post hoc test was run to identify which "specific group means (compared with each other) [were] different" (Glen, 2022, para. 1). If the Tukey test resulted in significance, partial eta-squared was then used to determine the percentage of variance in the dependent variable accounted for by the independent variable. Cohen's *d* was used to determine effect size when a *t* test resulted in a significant finding.

Qualitative data from the open-ended question were reviewed, organized, and coded using Quirkos software. The researcher relied on content analysis to predetermine potential themes while allowing for the discovery of new themes at the same time. Key words, phrases, and tone played a central role in identification of themes and coding. After initial coding was completed, a sample of the responses was reviewed by a second coder to ensure accuracy of the coding.

ETHICS

Institutional Review Board approval was received from both the university sponsoring the researcher and the participants' home institution. See Appendices C and D for the approval

letters. The email inviting participants explained the purpose of the study, the grounds of anonymity and confidentiality, expected time to complete the study, and the possible minimal risk involved, which was associating the survey with negative feelings toward family involvement. As mentioned above, anonymity was guaranteed to participants as long as they did not provide their or their family member's contact information. In the event they did provide contact information, that information was disassociated from the files before proceeding with any analysis. SurveyMonkey did not save any IP addresses or identifying data. Data files were exported into the institution's secure cloud site, *Box,* and worked on using a secure laptop with double authenticity.

LIMITATION/DELIMITATIONS

The study was limited to one very large community college in a southern urban city. The student demographics at that institution are not representative of other community colleges, especially given the unusually high number of part-time students. It is expected that institutions varying in size, demographics, economic make-up, and located in various parts of the country will receive different results.

The study was also conducted during COVID, which might have impacted the family member's involvement with the student, given that most students were taking online courses from their homes, thus possibly impacting the students' perceptions of those relationships. Online learning also caused students to spend an exorbitant amount of time on their electronics, contributing to mental fatigue and "Zoom" fatigue. Completing the survey might not have been a priority at that time.

Initially, the researcher aimed to include parents and family members in the research. However, the institution's lack of contact information prevented the researcher from including them. Working to build a family database over time by which the parents and family members can be contacted will contribute to stronger research in the future. Potentially working with other community colleges that have access to family data currently may be considered beneficial as well.

The data were collected via a self-report instrument. Response bias when self-reporting GPA was a concern. It is assumed that respondents were thoughtful and honest in their responses. Additionally, the questionnaire inquired about the student's perceptions of family member resource awareness level. Without directly asking the family member, there is no way to guarantee the accuracy of the student's response.

By recognizing these limitations and delimitations, educated decisions can be made about the results reported in Chapter 4. They will also help enrich and strengthen future research efforts.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 provided a comprehensive description of the design and methodology of the study. Starting with the research paradigm, which led to the type of the study, and then to the research questions, the chapter offered a deeper understanding of the purpose of this study. That purpose can be achieved only by following the meticulous methodology outlined here in this chapter. By following these data collection methods, including the composition of the instrument, the data collection processes, and data analyses, it is possible for researchers to duplicate the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to gain a richer understanding of parent/family involvement from the community college student perspective by examining student perceptions of parent/family involvement, satisfaction with parent/family involvement, parent/family college resource awareness, and parent/student communication behaviors around college resources. Additionally, the research explored possible parent/family engagement opportunities and barriers to involvement and engagement. The study examined possible relationships between each of the three main research variables — parent involvement (PF-I), resource awareness (RA), and academic and resource communication (COMM) — and student demographics, GPA, and persistence. This chapter presents results of the data collection process and analysis of data gathered via a questionnaire created by the researcher. The data analysis consisted of quantitative analysis for the three primary research questions and five secondary research questions using descriptive statistics and a variety of inferential statistics, including one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests and *t* tests. Qualitative analysis was used to analyze the open-ended question on the survey instrument and provided additional insight. The chapter is divided into four sections, including (1) description of the population, (2) results and analysis of inferential statistics for each

hypothesis, (3) results and analysis of inferential and descriptive statistics for the five secondary questions, and (4) results of the qualitative analysis.

PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

The following data provide a description of the student population surveyed in this study that were enrolled during the spring 2022 semester at a large urban community college, referred to as UCC. Given that most academic research focuses on 4-year institutions encompassing traditional students, the population for this study was limited to traditional students aged 18–24 years. The selected age frame aligned with the home institution's database records and made it convenient for the researcher to obtain data from the college and align results. Student names and institutional email addresses were obtained from the institution's Civitas database.

All students within the required age bracket were invited via email to participate in the study and were provided an electronic link to the questionnaire in SurveyMonkey. Appendix B contains a copy of the invitation email. Thirty electronic invitations bounced back, leaving 16,605 emails delivered successfully for the initial invitation. Three reminder emails were delivered to students during the open survey window. Participating students were offered an opportunity to enter a drawing for one of two $50 gift cards. Incentives have been shown to increase participation as well (Betancourt & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2019; Kolek, 2012). Based on these actions, the researcher demonstrated a good faith effort to increase the response rate as much as possible.

The number of students who responded to the study and provided consent to participate was 1,355. That resulted in a response rate of 8.12%. This is a slightly above average

response rate for large institutions, according to the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), which reported the average response rate for large colleges is 7.3% (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2021). The "host" institution is classified as a large institution by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (American Council on Education, 2022). Thirty-one students opened the survey and did not provide consent and were removed from the survey at that point. After removing students from the data analysis who identified as not meeting the age criterion (*n* = 15) or skipped the age question (*n* = 88), 1,252 usable cases remained. Table 1 presents a summary of participant self-reported data, including gender, race, enrollment status (part-time or full-time), and first-generation status based on the selected family member. The demographics of the population were vital components of this study and served as the independent variables when answering Research Question 1.

Student Demographic Characteristics

Gender

Table 1 shows that female students comprised the majority of respondents at 70.8% (*n* = 887) and male students comprised 22.6% (*n* = 283). Non-binary students accounted for 4.8% (*n* = 60). Students who preferred not to answer or were missing comprised 1.8% (*n* = 22) of the respondents. The non-answered cases were not included in any analysis that was dependent on the gender variable. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education explained that female students are overrepresented in online surveys; therefore, it is important to note the distribution of respondent demographics compared to actual enrollment (American Council on Education, 2022, p. 2). The most current data available from the National

Center for Education Statistics (NCES, n.d.), which is for the fall 2020 semester, indicated that females accounted for 60% of the host institution's student population, and males comprised 40% of the population. NCES does not capture non-binary gender responses in its data. The researcher decided that the 10% difference in female respondents compared to female enrollment did not pose any risks to the data analysis, given that the results based on the gender variable were not significant. Nor did the imbalance outweigh the risk of reduced accuracy in sampling variance, standard deviation, and standard error, which increase due to data weighting (Thomas, 2017).

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics as a Percentage of the Sample (n = 1252) Comparison to NCSE Data

Demographic	Category	Survey Frequency	Survey Percent	NCES Percent Comparison
Gender	Female	887	70.8%	60%
	Male	283	22.6%	40%
	Non-binary	60	4.8%	n/a
	Missing	22	1.8%	n/a
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian/Native American	5	.4%	0%
	Asian/Asian American	117	9.3%	6%
	Black/African American	77	6.2%	8%
	Hispanic/Latinx	495	39.5%	38%
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	6	.5%	0%
	White/Caucasian	444	35.5%	42%
	Multiple ethnicity/Other	102	8.1%	4%
	Missing	6	.5%	n/a
Enrollment Status	Full-time	484	38.7%	22%
	Part-time	763	60.9%	78%
	Missing	5	.4%	
Selected Family Member	Mother	729	58.2%	n/a
	Father	253	20.2%	n/a

Demographic	Category	Survey Frequency	Survey Percent	NCES Percent Comparison
	Step-parent	10	0.8%	n/a
	Grandparent	22	1.8%	n/a
	Aunt or Uncle	17	1.4%	n/a
	Sibling	62	5.%	n/a
	Guardian	4	0.3%	n/a
	Friend	51	4.1%	n/a
	Spouse	66	5.3%	n/a
Selected Family Member Educational Attainment	Bachelor's degree or higher	488	39%	n/a
	Less than bachelor's degree	711	56.9%	n/a
	Missing or did not know	53	4.3%	n/a

Racial and Ethnic Demographics

Racial and ethnic demographic responses bore close resemblance to the student demographics of the hosting institution, as shown in Table 1. The largest percentage of study participants, or 39.5% (*n* = 495), identified as Hispanic/Latinx. The second largest group of respondents was 35.5% (*n* = 444) White/Caucasian, followed by 9.3% (*n* = 117) Asian/Asian American and 8.1% (*n* = 102) multiple ethnicity/other. Black/African American respondents accounted for 6.2% (*n* = 77), 0.50% (*n* = 6) identified as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and an additional 0.40% (*n* = 5) identified as American Indian/Native American. Half of a percent of participants (*n* = 6) chose not to respond. Comparatively, based on data from NCES (n.d.), this study's response rate is representative of the home institution's racial/ethnic breakdown at 42% White, 38% Hispanic, 8% Black/African American, and 6% Asian. Notably 6.5% fewer Caucasian students responded, as well as 1.8% fewer Black or African American students; 3.3% more Asian students responded than the percentage of enrolled students.

Additional NCES data indicated 4% enrollment of two or more races, 1% race/ethnicity unknown, 1% non-resident alien, and 0% American Indian/Alaskan or Native Hawaiian. In contrast, the current study captured 11 students who identified in those latter NCES racial/ethnic categories. Additionally, the current study reported a 4% greater percentage of respondents who marked multiple ethnicity/other than the NCES data. The researcher deemed the study's population representative of the sample population.

Full-Time vs. Part-Time Status

Respondents were asked to identify whether they were currently full-time or part-time students. As shown in Table 1, the majority, or 60.9% (*n* = 763), indicated they were enrolled part-time, while 38.7% (*n* = 484) indicated they were full-time students. Five responses were missing. NCES (n.d.) reported higher part-time enrollment for the college at 78% and lower percentage of full-time students at 22%. However, this variable was not critical in the overall study and consequently was not weighted to adjust for the differences in responses versus the actual population.

First-Generation Status

The survey asked students two questions regarding educational attainment of their family members. First, students were asked if either of their parents had attained a 4-year degree. Students who answered "no" were coded as first-generation students. A 4-year degree was set as the criterion for first-generation status per federal guidelines. The Higher Education Act of 1965 Amendments (1998) define the term *first-generation college student* as

> (A) An individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree; or (B) In the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only

> one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree. (pp. 3–4)

A slim majority of students, 51.2% (*n* = 641) reported being first-generation students, while 44.8% (*n* = 561) indicated a parent or guardian had completed a 4-year degree. Several students, 3.8% (*n* = 48), reported they did not know their parent's or guardian's educational attainment. Neither NCSE (n.d.) nor the institution track first-generation data for the college, so comparison information is not available.

Selected Family Member's Educational Attainment

More important to this study than first-generation status based on parent or guardian educational attainment is the educational attainment of the student's key educational support person. One item in the survey instrument instructed students as follows:

> As you answer the questions on this survey, please select a parental figure, family member, or friend who is most involved in and supportive of your college endeavors. Indicate the person you have chosen below. This person will be referred to as your "family member" for the remainder of the survey.

Table 1 shows that a majority of students chose their mother (58.2%) as their selected family member, followed by father (20.2%), spouse (5.3%), sibling (5%), and friend (4.1%). Fewer students selected grandparent (1.8%), aunt or uncle (1.4%), stepparent (0.8%), or guardian (0.3%). Students who wrote in comments identified their boyfriend or girlfriend, mentor, non-binary parent, fiancé, and nobody.

Next, students were asked to identify their "selected" family member's highest level of education. Although 3.3% (*n* = 41) of respondents did not know their selected family member's educational level and 1.0% (*n* = 12) of students did not answer the question, Table 1 shows that 56.9% (*n* = 711) of respondents indicated their selected family did not have a bachelor's degree

or higher level, and 39% (*n* = 488) reported their selected family member had at least a bachelor's degree or higher. The selected family member's educational level plays a vital role throughout this study as they are the individual the respondent identified as being the student's number one "go-to-person" for educational support and questions. Respondents were asked to answer the remaining survey questions based on their interactions and relationship with their selected family member.

Additional identifying items were collected but not used in the final analysis, including age, high school status, and credit hours earned.

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A mixture of descriptive and inferential statistics was used to test the null hypotheses and answer secondary research questions. Specific analyses are discussed with each research question. The assumptions for statistical tests require independence and for data to be normally distributed. The data in this study should be independent because each participant was limited to one response by SurveyMonkey. Although the data violated the null hypotheses of the normality tests, that was to be expected due to the large sample size (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Additionally, examination of the Q-Q plots showed that there were not any grievous deviations from normality. A statistical consultant was used to guide the analysis of the data and interpretation of results using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 28).

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Is there a difference between participant demographics and mean scores of the following variables:

(a) perceived level of family involvement,

(b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and
(c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?

Demographics included gender, race/ethnicity, enrollment status, and education level of selected family member.

Gender

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between a student's gender and their perceived levels of PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM. For these analyses, the independent variable gender was treated as nominal data and had three levels: female, male, and non-binary. The dependent variables were PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM and were treated as continuous or interval variables. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and satisfied via Levene's *F* test for each dependent variable: PF-I (p = .807), PF-RA (p = .179), and PF-COMM (p = .511). Examination of Table 3 reveals that there was not a significant difference between gender and PF-I, $F(2, 1102) = 1.05$, p = .351, or PF-RA, $F(2, 1137) = 1.61$, p = .201 at the .05 significance level. There was a significant difference between gender and PF-COMM, $F(2, 1139) = 3.35$, p = .030. Based on this finding, examination of the post hoc Tukey HSD table was warranted. However, examination of the Tukey table indicated that there were no pairwise comparisons that were statistically significant, $p < .05$. Therefore, these results suggest that gender did not impact the dependent variables PF-I or PF-RA, and future studies may want to explore the impact on PF-COMM.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Gender by PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM

	Gender	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Involvement	Female	798	1.81	.76	.027
	Male	250	1.82	.73	.046
	Non-Binary	57	1.96	.79	.104
	Total	1105	1.82	.75	.023
Resource Awareness	Female	824	2.34	.75	.026
	Male	260	2.40	.72	.045
	Non-Binary	56	2.50	.84	.112
	Total	1140	2.36	.75	.022
Communication	Female	826	2.12	.67	.023
	Male	258	2.20	.63	.039
	Non-Binary	58	2.33	.64	.084
	Total	1142	2.15	.66	.020

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA: PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM Based on Gender

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*f*	Sig.
Involvement	Between Groups	1.18	2	.590	1.05	.351
	Within Groups	621.13	1102	.564		
	Total	622.31	1104			
Resource Awareness	Between Groups	1.79	2	.894	1.61	.201
	Within Groups	632.26	1137	.556		
	Total	634.04	1139			
Communication	Between Groups	3.09	2	1.547	3.53	.030*
	Within Groups	498.81	1139	.438		
	Total	501.91	1141			

*$p < .05$.

Race/Ethnicity

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the relationship between a participant's race/ethnicity and their perceived levels of PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM in order to determine if there was a difference in each of the race categories. Race/ethnicity served as the independent variable and was treated as nominal data. Race/ethnicity had seven levels: Asian/Asian American, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, White/Caucasian, American Indian/Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Multiple ethnicity/Other. The dependent variables were PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM and were treated as continuous or interval variables. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics: Race by PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM

	LEVEL	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Involvement	Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify)	88	1.89	.77	.082
	American Indian/Native American	5	1.56	.17	.075
	Asian/Asian American	106	2.08	.78	.076
	Black/African American	60	1.91	.83	.108
	Hispanic/Latinx	454	1.84	.79	.037
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	5	2.32	.70	.314
	White/Caucasian	401	1.70	.66	.033
	Total	1119	1.82	.75	.022
Resource Awareness	Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify)	95	2.33	.80	.082
	American Indian/Native American	5	2.31	.54	.242
	Asian/Asian American	109	2.43	.78	.075
	Black/African American	66	2.16	.74	.091
	Hispanic/Latinx	467	2.38	.77	.036
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	5	2.76	.73	.325
	White/Caucasian	409	2.35	.69	.034
	Total	1156	2.36	.74	.022
Communication	Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify)	90	2.27	.66	.069
	American Indian/Native American	5	1.84	.61	.274
	Asian/Asian American	110	2.259	.75	.072

	Level	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
	Black/African American	63	2.10	.67	.084
	Hispanic/Latinx	469	2.16	.69	.032
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	6	2.56	.71	.291
	White/Caucasian	413	2.08	.60	.030
	Total	1156	2.15	.66	.019

The one-way ANOVA in Table 5 reveals that there was a statistically significant difference in PF-I mean scores for at least one race category, $F(6, 1112) = 4.68$, $p = <.001$, and in PF-COMM scores for at least one race category, $F(6, 1149) = 2.26$, $p = .036$. No significance was found for PF-RA.

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA: PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM Based on Race/Ethnicity

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*f*	Sig.
Involvement	Between Groups	15.511	6	2.585	4.68	<.001**
	Within Groups	614.218	1112	.552		
	Total	629.729	1118			
Resource Awareness	Between Groups	4.313	6	.719	1.30	.255
	Within Groups	636.166	1149	.554		
	Total	640.479	1155			
Communication	Between Groups	5.900	6	.983	2.26	.036*
	Within Groups	500.543	1149	.436		
	Total	506.443	1155			

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Because the ANOVA resulted in a statistically significant result for PF-I and PF-COMM, the Tukey post hoc test was calculated. This test is designed to compare each race level mean to every other race level. Tukey's HSD test for multiple comparisons found that the mean value of PF-I was significantly different between Asian/Asian American and White/Caucasians,

p = <.001, 95% CI = [.1398, .6193], and Asian/Asian American and Hispanic/Latinx, *p* = .047, 95% CI = [.0018, .4754]. Review of the means in Table 6 indicates that Asian/Asian American respondents appear to experience significantly less PF-I than White/Caucasian respondents and Hispanic/Latinx respondents. The higher the mean score, the less parent involvement perceived by the student. There was no statistically significant difference in mean scores between PF-I and other race categories at *p < .05*.

Table 6: Tukey HSD Multiple Comparisons; Asian/Asian American

Dependent Variable	(I) What is your race/ ethnicity?	(J) What is your race/ethnicity?	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Involvement	Asian/Asian American	Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify)	.19779	.107	.517	–.1188	.5144
		American Indian/Native American	.52302	.340	.722	–.4816	1.5276
		Black/African American	.16969	.120	.795	–.1850	.5243
		Hispanic/Latinx	.23864	.080	.047*	.0018	.4754
		Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	–.23698	.340	.993	–1.2416	.7676
		White/Caucasian	.37953*	.081	<.001*	.1398	.6193

**p < .05.*

Table 7 reveals an eta-squared effect size for PF-I and race of .025. According to SPSS Tutorials (n.d.), this is a small effect, which suggests race has a practical, albeit small, effect on

PF-I. However, since there were significant differences within two race categories (Asian/Asian American and White/Caucasian; Asian/Asian American and Hispanic/Latinx), additional research may be warranted.

Table 7: Measure of Effect Size: PF-I and Race/Ethnicity

	ETA-SQUARED	EFFECT
Involvement	.025	Small

Further analysis of Tukey's HSD test for multiple comparisons did not find any significant difference in PF-COMM scores and any race categories. However, given the ANOVA indicated significance but the more conservative Tukey HSD test did not, this research area may also be ripe for further investigation.

Enrollment Status

An independent samples *t* test was calculated to compare each of the dependent variables including PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM between participants who attended college full-time (≥ 12 hours) and those who attended college part-time (< 12 hours). None of the tests reached statistical significance. A significance level of .05 was used for all tests. Levene's test revealed that the data did not violate homoscedasticity for PF-I (p = .102) and PF-RA (p = .669). However, homogeneity of variance was violated for PF-COMM (p = .023) indicating the equal variances not assumed measurement would be used for PF-COMM. Table 8 summarizes the group mean data, and Table 9 reveals the *t* test outcomes. Examination of group means for PF-I found there was not a significant difference in the scores for full-time students (M = 1.81, SD = .72) and part-time students (M = 1.83, SD =.77); $t(1116) = –.35$, p = .726. No significant

difference was found for PF-RA between full-time students (*M* = 2.40, *SD* = .74) and part-time students (*M* = 2.33, *SD* = .75); *t*(1153) = 1.61, *p* = .108. Final examination of group means for PF-COMM found no significant difference between full-time students (*M* = 2.13, *SD* = .62) and part-time students (*M* = 2.15, *SD* = .69); *t*(1026.37) = .58, *p* = .586. These results suggest that enrollment status did not have an effect on PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM.

Table 8: Group Statistics for Full-time and Part-time Enrollment

	IV	LEVEL	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Involvement	Enrollment	Full-time Part-time	436 682	1.81 1.83	.72 .77	.035 .029
Resource Awareness	Enrollment	Full-time Part-time	454 701	2.40 2.33	.74 .75	.035 .028
Communication	Enrollment	Full-time Part-time	450 705	2.13 2.15	.62 .69	.029 .026

Table 9: Independent Samples *t* Test Comparing Full-time and Part-time Enrollment on PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM

VARIABLE	LEVENE'S TEST FOR EQUALITY OF VARIANCES	*t* TEST FOR EQUALITY OF MEANS				
		F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Involvement	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	2.67	.102	–.35 –.36	1116 970.76	.726 .722
Resource Awareness	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	.18	.669	1.6 1.6	1153 971.69	.108 .108
Communication	Equal variances assumed	5.15	.023	–.55 –.56	1153 1026.367	.586 .577

Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	*t* Test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Equal variances not assumed					

Selected Family Member's Educational Attainment

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between each of the dependent variables, including PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM, and selected family members who obtained a 4-year degree (labeled degree) and those who did not obtain a 4-year degree (labeled no_degree). The independent samples *t* tests revealed significant statistical differences for PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM between family members with a degree and those without a degree. Examination of group means in Table 10 reveals that students with family members with no_degree reported higher means for each construct, which due to the instrument's inverse scaling translates to lower levels of perceived experience with each variable. Levene's test for equality of variances was violated for all three variables (PF-I, p = <.001; PF-RA, p = .010; PF-COMM, p = .018). Consequently, the two-side p value was measured by the equal variance not-assumed measurement. Specific results for each variable are described below.

Table 10: Group Statistics: Selected Family Member's Educational Attainment; Degree and No Degree

	IV	Level	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Involvement	Educational Attainment	Degree	437	1.69	.67	.03
		No Degree	648	1.91	.78	.03

	IV	LEVEL	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Resource Awareness	Educational Attainment	Degree	457	2.29	.70	.03
		No Degree	665	2.42	.77	.03
Communication	Educational Attainment	Degree	453	2.09	.62	.03
		No Degree	666	2.18	.68	.03

PF-I and Family Member's Educational Attainment

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to compare PF-I outcomes for differences in family members with and without a degree. As shown in Table 11, there was a significant difference in the scores for family members with a degree (M = 1.69, SD = .67) and family members without a degree (M = 1.91, SD = .78), $t(1026.43) = –5.00$, p = <.001. Levene's test for equality was significant, so the p value for equal-variances-not-assumed was appropriate and the p value remained significant (p = <.001). In addition to being statistically significant, the effect size using Cohen's d was calculated in SPSS. According to Sullivan and Feinn (2012), Cohen classified effect sizes as small (d = 0.2), medium (d = 0.5), and large ($d \geq 0.8$). Table 12 shows the effect size was –0.30, a small to medium effect size (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Based on the instrument's scoring, the lower the mean score, the higher the perceived level of parent involvement. People with no degree would have a mean PF-I that is 0.3 standard deviations above the mean of the people with a degree. In other words, students whose family member had a degree experienced higher levels of parent involvement than those who did not have a degree. Results from the *t* test imply educational attainment of the student's selected family member does influence perceived family involvement outcomes.

Table 11: Independent *t* Test of Selected Family Member's Educational Attainment and PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM Outcomes

Item	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	*t* test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed *p*)
Involvement	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	19.99	<.001	–4.85 –5.00	1083 1026.43	<.001 <.001**
Resource Awareness	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	6.70	.010	–2.99 –3.05	1120 1037.35	.003 .002
Communication	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	5.66	.018	–2.18 –2.22	1117 1028.47	.029 .027*

**p < .05. **p < .01.*

Table 12: Measure of Effect Size: PF-I, PF-RA, PF-COMM and Selected Family Member Educational Attainment

	Cohen's d	Effect
Involvement	–0.300	Small–medium
Resource Awareness	–0.182	Negligible
Communication	–0.133	Negligible

PF-RA and Family Member's Educational Attainment

An independent samples *t* test was calculated to compare levels of PF-RA in family members who have a degree and in family members who do not have a degree. Table 11 showed there was a significant difference between the scores for family members with a degree (*M* = 2.29, *SD* = .70) and family members without a degree (*M* = 2.42, *SD* = .77),

$t(1037.35) = -3.05$, $p = .002$. The *t* value results indicate the students with family members with a degree had the lower mean for PF-RA, resulting in higher levels of perceived resource awareness. Levene's test for equality was significant, so the *p* value for equal-variances-not-assumed was appropriate and significant ($p = .002$). Although statistically significant, Table 12 shows the effect size as measured by Cohen's *d* was –0.182. People with no degree would have a mean PF-RA that is 0.182 standard deviations above the mean of the people with a degree. "A small effect of 0.2 is noticeably smaller than medium but not so small as to be trivial" (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012, p. 281). A Cohen's *d* value of –0.182 is less than .2 and requires caution when interpreting. This study sample was large ($n = 1251$) and Sullivan and Feinn advised that:

> With a sufficiently large sample, a statistical test will almost always demonstrate a significant difference, unless there is no effect whatsoever, that is, when the effect size is exactly zero; yet very small differences, even if significant, are often meaningless. (p. 280)

These results suggest there is the possibility of a family member's educational attainment influencing the student's perception of the family member's level of awareness of college resources. Yet, additional research is warranted in this case to confirm any significant, practical effect.

PF-COMM and Family Member's Educational Attainment

As with the previous variables, an independent samples *t* test was conducted to compare levels of PF-COMM in family members who have a degree and in family members who do not have a degree. Table 11 indicates there was a significant difference between the scores for family members with a degree ($M = 2.09$, $SD = .62$) and family members without a degree ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .68$), $t(1028.47) = -2.22$, $p = .027$. Students with family members with a degree

had the lower mean for PF-COMM resulting in higher levels of communication. Levene's test for equality was significant, so the *p* value for equal-variances-not-assumed was appropriate and significant ($p = .026$). Table 12 indicates PF-COMM resulted in a Cohen's *d* effect of –.133. People with no degree would have a mean PF-COMM that is 0.133 standard deviations above the mean of the people with a degree. The same caution applied to interpreting the results of PF-RA should be applied to PF-COMM given the large sample size and very small effect size. Overall, the findings suggest the possibility of the selected family member's educational attainment influencing the student's perceived level of communication with the family member regarding college resources.

Research Question 2

Is there a relationship between student grade point average (GPA) and the following variables:

(a) perceived level of family involvement,
(b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and
(c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between various categories of student GPA categories and PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM. Respondents were asked to self-report their GPA in question 4 on the questionnaire by marking the appropriate range category for their GPA. Range categories included 3.5–4.0, 3.0–3.4, 2.5–2.9, 2.0–2.4, and <2.0. Approximately 35% of the respondents reported a GPA of 3.5 or greater with an additional 24% reporting between 3.0 and 3.4. Only 16.4% reported a GPA between 2.0–2.9, while 3.5% indicated a GPA of <2.0. The remaining 21.2% marked they did not know their GPA.

For this study the independent variable was the respondent's self-reported GPA and was treated as an ordinal variable. The dependent variables were PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM and were treated as continuous variables. A review of the means presented in Table 13 shows minimal differences. Examination of the one-way ANOVA results in Table 14 confirms that there were no statistically significant differences on GPA: PF-I, $F(4, 891) = .26$, $p = .904$; PF-RA, $F(4, 923) = 1.13$, $p = .343$; or PF-COMM, $F(4, 922) = 1.97$, $p = .097$, between participants in the five GPA categories. Consequently, the hypothesis that there was a relationship between GPA and family involvement, family member resource awareness, and family communication was not supported.

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics: PF-I, PF-RA, PF-COMM by GPA

	GPA	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Parental Involvement	3.5 – 4.0	399	1.80	.73	.036
	3.0 – 3.4	275	1.83	.77	.047
	2.5 – 2.9	139	1.87	.76	.065
	2.0 – 2.4	45	1.83	.84	.124
	< 2.0	38	1.84	.75	.122
	Total	896	1.82	.75	.025
Resource Awareness	3.5 – 4.0	414	2.40	.75	.037
	3.0 – 3.4	281	2.33	.74	.044
	2.5 – 2.9	144	2.42	.72	.060
	2.0 – 2.4	48	2.24	.55	.079
	< 2.0	41	2.49	.89	.139
	Total	928	2.38	.74	.024
Communication	3.5 – 4.0	414	2.09	.66	.033
	3.0 – 3.4	284	2.16	.66	.039
	2.5 – 2.9	141	2.21	.65	.054
	2.0 – 2.4	47	2.04	.74	.108
	< 2.0	41	2.31	.76	.119
	Total	927	2.14	.67	.022

Table 14: One-Way ANOVA Comparisons for PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM Based on GPA

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Resource Awareness	Between Groups	2.481	4	.620	1.13	.343
	Within Groups	508.268	923	.551		
	Total	510.748	927			
Parental Involvement	Between Groups	.587	4	.147	.26	.904
	Within Groups	504.852	891	.567		
	Total	505.440	895			
Communication	Between Groups	3.495	4	.874	1.97	.097
	Within Groups	409.228	922	.444		
	Total	412.723	926			

Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between student intent-to-persist and the following variables:
(a) perceived level of family involvement,
(b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and
(c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?

A student's intent-to-persist was measured with two survey items inquiring about the respondent's intent to enroll in classes in the upcoming semesters (question 22) and their intent to graduate with a credential from any institution (question 23). Respondents were able to select from *yes*, *no*, or *unsure* options. In order to analyze the results, the "unsure" responses were recoded as "no'' in the final analysis, resulting in a nominal variable with two levels. After the recoding, independent samples *t* tests were calculated for each of the persistence items.

Intent to Enroll

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to compare enrollment intention outcomes in students' PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM scores. Review of data descriptives in Table

15 revealed there was not a significant difference in means between PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM and a student's intent to enroll or intent to graduate. Examination of the *t* test results in Table 16 confirms there were no significant differences in the groups with each of the three variables either: PF-I scores for students who intended to enroll in the upcoming semester (M = 1.84, SD = .77) and those who do not intend to enroll (M = 1.75, SD = .64), $t(242.06) = 1.65$, $p = .101$; PF-RA scores for students who intend to enroll (M = 2.37, SD = .75) and those who do not intend to enroll (M = 2.34, SD = .74), $t(1075) = .40$, $p = .688$; PF-COMM scores for student who intend to enroll (M = 2.15, SD = .67) and those who do not intend to enroll (M = 2.13, SD = .64), $t(1109) = .40$, $p = .690$. These results imply that a student's perceived levels of PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM do not influence their intent to enroll the next semester at the institution based on this survey's questions.

Table 15: Group Descriptives: Intent to Enroll

	PERSIST - ENROLL	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Involvement	Yes	950	1.84	.77	.025
	Not yes	160	1.75	.64	.051
Resource Awareness	Yes	923	2.37	.75	.025
	Not yes	154	2.34	.74	.060
Communication	Yes	950	2.15	.66	.022
	Not yes	161	2.13	.64	.051

Table 16: Independent *t* Test of Intent to Enroll and PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM Outcomes

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	Sig (2-tailed *p*)
Involvement	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	7.52	.006	1.45 1.65	1108 242.058	.147 .101
Resource Awareness	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	.25	.615	.40 .40	1075 208.322	.688 .687
Communication	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	1.42	.233	.40 .41	1109 222.305	.690 .683

Intent to Graduate

An independent samples *t* test was calculated in order to determine if there was a significant difference in students' PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM scores among participants who intended to graduate with a credential and those who did not intend to graduate with a credential. Review of data descriptives in Table 17 and *t* test results in Table 18 reveals there was not a significant difference in any of the three variables: PF-I intend to graduate (M = 1.81, SD = .76) and those who do not intend to graduate (M = 1.91, SD = .71), $t(1108) = -1.62$, p = .105; PF-RA intent to graduate (M = 2.35, SD = .75) and students who do not intend to graduate (M = 2.46, SD = .72), $t(1075) = -1.77$, p = .08; PF-COMM intent to graduate (M = 2.14, SD = .67) and students who do not intend to graduate (M = 2.21, SD = .63), $t(1109) = -1.41$, p = .158. These results suggest that students' levels of perceived family member involvement, resource awareness, or communication about resources do not influence their intent-to-persist, as measured by this study. Consequently, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 17: Group Statistics: Intent to Graduate

	PERSIST - GRADUATE	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Involvement	Yes Not yes	922 188	1.81 1.91	.76 .70	.025 .051
Resource Awareness	Yes Not yes	898 179	2.35 2.46	.75 .72	.025 .054
Communication	Yes Not yes	923 188	2.14 2.21	.67 .63	.022 .046

Table 18: Independent *t* Test of Intent to Graduate and PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM Outcomes

ITEM	LEVENE'S TEST FOR EQUALITY OF VARIANCES	*F*	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed *p*)
Involvement	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	1.01	.316	–1.62 –1.72	1108 282.850	.105 .089
Resource Awareness	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	1.04	.308	–1.77 –1.82	1075 261.037	.077 .070
Communication	Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	1.90	.169	–1.41 –1.47	1109 279.582	.158 .143

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In addition to the three main hypotheses that drive this study, additional research questions were posed. Given there is very little known about parent and family engagement at the community college level, these questions were presented as a means to learn more about the sample population and their views regarding the construct under investigation and to explore areas for possible future research areas.

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How satisfied are students with their parent/family member's level of involvement?

Table 19 shows the descriptive statistics for all students who participated in the online Community College Family Involvement Survey and indicated their satisfaction level with their family member's overall involvement in their college life. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a 4-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 (*very satisfied*) to 4 (*very dissatisfied*). The design of the scale means the lower the average the higher the level of satisfaction with their family member's overall involvement in their college life. As Table 19 indicates, a majority of the students (81.7%) were *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the current level of their family member's level of involvement in their college life.

Table 19: Frequency Table: Satisfaction with Family Member's Overall Involvement in College Life

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR FAMILY MEMBER'S OVERALL INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR COLLEGE LIFE?	*n*	%
Very satisfied	577	46.1%
Satisfied	446	35.6%
Dissatisfied	80	6.4%
Very dissatisfied	18	1.4%
Missing System	131	10.5%
Total	1252	100.0%

Knowing how satisfied the respondent was with their family member's current level of involvement in their college life is a broad measurement. It served as a starting point to understanding the student perspective of family involvement. A post hoc analysis of satisfaction

level of involvement and perceived level of parent/family involvement (PF-I), parent/family resource awareness (PF-RA), and parent/family communication (PF-COMM) provided deeper meaning of the data. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in at least one level of satisfaction and PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM mean scores. The variables PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM were the dependent variables and treated as continuous, interval levels of measurement. Level of satisfaction was the independent variable and treated as categorical, ordinal data. The ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference at .05 level in student levels of satisfaction between at least two groups for all three dependent variables. Table 20 presents the descriptive statistics for the PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM variables.

Table 20: Descriptive Statistics: PF-I, PF-RA, PF-COMM by Satisfaction with Overall Family Involvement

		n	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Involvement	Very satisfied	576	1.47	.52	.022
	Satisfied	446	2.05	.68	.032
	Dissatisfied	80	2.78	.81	.090
	Very dissatisfied	18	3.22	.83	.195
	Total	1120	1.82	.75	.022
Resource Awareness	Very satisfied	565	2.16	.73	.031
	Satisfied	429	2.52	.67	.033
	Dissatisfied	76	2.86	.74	.085
	Very dissatisfied	17	2.98	.90	.219
	Total	1087	2.36	.75	.023
Communication	Very satisfied	577	1.90	.58	.024
	Satisfied	446	2.30	.59	.028
	Dissatisfied	80	2.79	.63	.070
	Very dissatisfied	18	3.20	.71	.167
	Total	1121	2.144	.66	.020

Satisfaction with Overall Involvement and PF-I

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in Table 21 indicates that there was a significant difference in satisfaction levels of family member's overall involvement and PF-I levels, $F(3, 1116) = 176$, $p = .000$. Tukey's HSD test for multiple comparisons found that all the pairwise comparisons came back as being different with the exception of no statistically significant difference between *dissatisfied* and *very dissatisfied*. The trend was the more satisfied the student, the more involved the parent was. The eta-squared effect size reported in Table 22 was $\eta^2 = .321$, which is recognized as a large effect size (SPSS Tutorial, n.d.). The results suggest that the level of parent/family involvement may have a large impact on overall satisfaction with parent/family involvement in a student's college life, accounting for 32% of the variance in overall satisfaction. Caution should be used when interpreting this result, as it is a post hoc analysis.

Table 21: One-Way ANOVA for PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM Based on Satisfaction With Family Member's Overall Involvement in College Life

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Parental Involvement	Between Groups	202.024	3	67.341	176	.000**
	Within Groups	427.014	1116	.383		
	Total	629.038	1119			
Resource Awareness	Between Groups	59.397	3	19.799	38.96	.000**
	Within Groups	550.342	1083	.508		
	Total	609.739	1086			
Communication	Between Groups	98.663	3	32.888	94.11	.000**
	Within Groups	390.333	1117	.349		
	Total	488.996	1120			

**p <. 05. **p < .001.*

Table 22: Measure of Effect Size: PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM and Satisfaction with Overall Family Involvement

	ETA-SQUARED	EFFECT
Involvement	.321	large
Resource Awareness	.097	medium
Communication	.202	large

Satisfaction With Overall Involvement and PF-RA

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated to determine if there was a significant difference in satisfaction levels of family member's overall involvement and PF-RA levels, $F(3, 1083) = 38.96$, $p = .000$. Descriptive data can be examined in Table 20. The effect size was measured with eta-squared resulting in $\eta^2 = .097$ as seen in Table 22, a medium effect indicating PF-RA explains 9.7% of the variance in overall satisfaction (SPSS Tutorial, n.d.).

Satisfaction With Overall Involvement and PF-COMM

A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the effect of PF-COMM on student levels of satisfaction with overall family member involvement in their college life. Examination of Table 21 reveals that there is a significant difference in satisfaction with overall family involvement and levels of PF-COMM, $F(3, 1117) = 94.114$, $p = .000$. The eta-squared measurement for PF-COMM was large at $\eta^2 = .202$, as shown in Table 22 (SPSS Tutorial, n.d.). Examination of the Tukey HSD post hoc analysis revealed significance between all groups. The results imply that the level of parent/family communication had a large effect on overall satisfaction with parent/family involvement in a student's college life.

The post-hoc ANOVA revealed that each of the variables, PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM, play a role in how satisfied students are with their parents' involvement. For context, when comparing the three variables, PF-I has the biggest impact on whether a student is satisfied with their parents' involvement, followed by PF-COMM, while PF-RA has the lowest impact.

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What student support resources are parent/family members most and least aware of?

To answer this question, several variables in the study were explored, including the PF-RA composite score and various questions taken from the survey questionnaire instrument. Items from the questionnaire included (a) question 27, whether students believed their family member could benefit from free resources on helping their student be successful in college; (b) question 28, whether the respondents chose to have resources sent to their family member; and (c) question 29, which resources were requested. Lastly, in a post hoc analysis, the relationship was explored between question 18.5, which measured the frequency that a family member encourages their student to use college resources, and PF-RA scores, and between question 18.5 and PF-COMM scores.

First, an examination of the variables that formed the parent/family resource awareness (PF-RA) composite score provided insight into the extent that students perceived their family member was aware of various college resources. Students were asked to rate their perception of their family member's level of awareness of each college resource on a 4-point Likert scale including a fifth "do not know" option. The scale was set as 1 = *very aware*, 2 = *aware,* 3 = *unaware,* 4 = *very unaware*, and 5 = *I do not know their knowledge level*. The possible college resources included (1) financial resources, (2) academic resources, (3) career resources,

(4) student life resources, (5) mental health/stress resources, (6) local community resources, and (7) safety resources. Examples were provided for each category to add clarity for respondents. Table 23 shows the frequency and number of respondents who selected each awareness rating for each college resource. Analysis of the results indicates students perceived their family members were most aware of financial aid resources (*n* = 387, 31.77%), as measured by the resource, with the greatest percentage marked *very aware*. Academic support resources followed in a distant second (*n* = 251, 20.61%). On the flip side, students perceived their family members as *least aware*, as measured by the resource, with the greatest percentage reporting *very unaware* of mental health/stress management (*n* = 200, 16.41%) and student life and extracurricular resources (*n* = 178, 14.61%), which was closely followed by local community resources (*n* = 177, 14.53%). Career resources had the highest reported number of *unaware* responses (*n* = 397, 31.7%).

Table 23: Frequency Table: Student Perceived Levels of Family Member's Awareness of College Resources

Please indicate to what extent you perceive your family member is aware of the following college resources.	VERY AWARE	AWARE	UNAWARE	VERY UNAWARE	I DO NOT KNOW THEIR KNOWLEDGE LEVEL	MISSING SYSTEM
Financial Aid Resources (e.g., loans, grants, scholarships) *Total = 1127*	30.4% 381	43.2% 541	10.9% 136	5.5% 69	6.1% 76	3.9% 49
Academic Support Resources (e.g., tutoring, learning labs, advising) *Total = 1105*	19.5% 244	41.4% 518	18.9% 237	8.5% 106	7.8% 98	3.9% 49
Career Resources (e.g., career center, resume writing, interview practice) *Total = 1073*	13.5% 169	28.4% 355	31.7% 397	12.1% 152	10.5% 131	3.8% 48

Please indicate to what extent you perceive your family member is aware of the following college resources.	VERY AWARE	AWARE	UNAWARE	VERY UNAWARE	I DO NOT KNOW THEIR KNOWLEDGE LEVEL	MISSING SYSTEM
Student Life and Extracurricular Resources (e.g., student clubs, intramurals) *Total = 1062*	11.90% 144	29.89% 359	31.94% 384	14.61% 175	11.66% 141	3.9% 49
Mental Health/Stress Management Resources (e.g., counseling, workshops, hotlines) *Total = 1055*	13.3% 167	26.1% 327	29.2% 365	15.7% 196	11.9% 149	3.8% 48
Local Community Resources (e.g., housing, food pantries, transportation) *Total = 1045*	12.0% 150	27.4% 343	30.1% 377	14.0% 175	12.6% 158	3.9% 49
Safety Resources (e.g., theft prevention, emergency preparedness, sexual assault prevention) *Total = 1044*	15.11% 182	31.79% 377	27.00% 323	13.54% 162	12.55% 152	4.5% 56

Note. Total number does not include "do not know" or "missing" responses.

Students were asked to indicate using a 4-point Likert scale if they *strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed,* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement that their family member could benefit from free resources to help them be successful in college. Table 24 shows the number of responses and frequency for each possible response. An overwhelming majority of students indicated they either *strongly agreed* (*n* = 249, 19.9%) or *agreed* (*n* = 549, 43.8%) their family member could benefit from free resources to help them be successful in college. Only 20.8% (*n* = 260) either *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. These results imply that students see the value of and potential in their family member having access to free resources, which could include, for example, educational brochures, websites, and campus programming.

Table 24: Frequency Table: Family Member Could Benefit From Free Resources

My family member could benefit from free resources on helping me be successful in college. Total = 1058	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Missing system
Percent	19.9%	43.8%	16%	4.8%	15.5%
n	249	549	200	60	194

Note. Total number does not include "missing" responses.

Although a majority of the respondents indicated that they believed their family member could benefit from receiving free resources to help them be successful in college, a much lower percentage of respondents answered *yes* to question 28 when asked if they would like their family member to receive free educational information regarding student support resources available at the college. Only 24.4% (*n* = 306) answered *yes* to the question, while 49% (*n* = 614) answered *no*, and 12.4% (*n* = 155) indicated there was no need to send materials because they would not be at the college the next semester. Table 25 reports the frequency and percentage for all respondents to the question. The drop in number from those students who believe their family could benefit from free resources to those who responded with *yes*, they would like their family member sent resources, may be due to the impersonal nature of the online survey and the perception that they were being asked to share personal information with an unknown source.

Table 25: Frequency Table: Would You Like Your Family Member to Receive Free Educational Information Regarding Student Support Resources Available at the College?

Would you like your family member to receive free educational information regarding student support resources available at the college? *Total = 1058*	YES	NO	NOT NECESSARY, NOT RETURNING	MISSING SYSTEM
Percent	24.4%	49.0%	12.4%	14.1%
n	306	614	155	177

If a participant checked *yes* that they wanted their family member to receive free resources, they were invited to select which resources they would like sent from a list of topics, including financial resources, academic resources, mental health/wellness resources, job opportunities/career paths/interviewing resources, extracurricular/intramurals information, campus safety resources, community housing/food resources, or none of the above. Table 26 shows the preferences of the 306 students who checked *yes*, identifying the frequency and number of respondents for each possible resource. The top two choices for students included financial resources (18%, *n* = 225) and career resources, including job opportunities, career paths, and interviewing resources (15%, *n* = 188). The next three choices were academic resources (14.3%, *n* = 179), mental health and wellness resources (12.6%, *n* = 158), and community housing and food resources (10.3%, *n* = 129). The least requested resources were extracurricular and intramural information (7.7%, *n* = 96), followed by campus safety resources (6.4%, *n* = 80). Some students selected only one or two resources, while other students checked all resources.

Table 26: Frequency Table: Requested Resources for Family Members

Resource	Frequency	% of requestors *n* = 306	% of all respondents *n* = 1250
Financial Resources	225	73.5%	18.0%
Job opportunities, career paths, interviewing resources	188	61.4%	15.0%
Academic resources	179	58.5%	14.3%
Mental health, wellness resources	158	51.6%	12.6%
Community housing, food resources	129	42.2%	10.3%
Extracurricular, intramural information	96	31.4%	7.7%
Campus safety resources	80	26.1%	6.4%

As a follow up to reporting what resources respondents wanted their family member to receive, they were asked to provide their family member's contact information so that resources could be either delivered to them electronically or through the mail. Approximately 185 students provided mailing addresses and email contact information.

These results indicate that some students believe there is value in their family member receiving educational materials to help them be successful on a variety of topics ranging from financial aid, to job opportunities, to mental health and personal well-being. Additionally, the results imply there may be potential for the college to fill a knowledge gap on behalf of their students' families.

The question arises then, does a family member's level of awareness of college support resources (PF-RA) impact students? While this question was not the direct purpose of this study, post hoc analysis of the collected data provided insight into the question. A Spearman's

rho was computed to assess the relationship between PF-RA and question 18.5, which was the frequency in which the student's family member encourages the student to use resources available at the college to help them be successful. Frequency was measured on a 4-point Likert scale and ranged from 1 (*often*) to 4 (*never*). There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r(1084) = .432$, $p < .001$. This result summarized in Table 27 is encouraging and may imply that increasing a family member's level of knowledge regarding college resources could possibly affect how frequently they encourage their student to use those resources.

Table 27: Spearman's Rho Correlations Between PF-RA, PF-COMM and Encouragement to Use College Resources

	Encouragement to Use Resources	PF-RA	PF-COMM
Encouragement to use resources	–	–	
PF-RA	.432**	–	
PF-COMM	.558**	.408**	–

*$p < .05$. **$p < 0.001$ level (2-tailed).

An additional post hoc analysis led to exploring the relationship between PF-COMM and the extent that the family member encourages the student to use resources available at the college, which was asked about in question 18.5. A Spearman's rho was calculated to explore the relationship between student perceived level of parent/family communication (PF-COMM) and the frequency in which the student's family member encourages the student to use resources available at the college to help them be successful. A review of Table 27 finds there was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r(1118 = .558)$, $p = <.001$. This finding may imply that PF-COMM may have the potential to impact the frequency with which the family

member encourages the student to use support resources available at the college. The results should be interpreted with caution given they were part of a post hoc analysis.

Secondary Research Question 3

What is the preferred mode of communication between the student and parent/family member, and who initiates the communication?

Respondents were provided with a list of communication channels in question 14 and were asked to rate using a 4-point Likert scale how frequently they use each channel when communicating with their selected family member. The scale ranged from 1 (*often*) to 4 (*never*). Table 28 summarizes the frequency with which each channel was selected and percentage. Students' top two preferred communication channels with their family members, as measured by the highest number of *often* ratings received, was in-person (69.8%, *n* = 874), followed very closely by text messaging (63.7%, *n* = 798). When the *often* and I ratings were combined, text messaging surpassed in-person slightly by 4% (85.9%, *n* = 1,076). Phone calling (48.6%, *n* = 609) was the third most popular channel of communication, followed by video chatting via cell phone (26.3%, *n* = 329). The least frequently used channels of communication, as defined by the greatest number of *never* ratings, was the use of messaging apps such as GroupMe and WhatsApp (50%, *n* = 626), followed by social media apps, such as SnapChat and Instagram (40.4%, *n* = 506). While email communication was not the least chosen communication channel, it did receive the lowest number of *often* used ratings and the highest number of *rarely* used.

Table 28: Frequency Table: Frequency Use of Communication Channels

Indicate how frequently you use the following communication channels with your family member	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Missing system
In person; face-to-face *Total = 1161*	69.8% 874	12.1% 152	9.4% 118	1.4% 17	7.3% 91
Phone call *Total = 1152*	48.6% 609	32% 401	9.6% 120	1.8% 22	8.0% 100
Video chat via cell phone (e.g., Facetime or any platform) *Total = 1157*	26.3% 329	24.8% 310	20.1% 252	21.2% 266	7.6% 95
Text messaging *Total = 1154*	63.7% 798	22.2% 278	4.5% 56	1.8% 22	7.8% 98
Social media app (e.g., SnapChat/Instagram) *Total = 1154*	19.5% 244	15.4% 193	16.9% 211	40.4% 506	7.8% 98
Email *Total = 1153*	8.2% 103	15.3% 192	29.9% 374	38.7% 484	7.9% 99
Messaging app (e.g., GroupMe/WhatsApp *Total = 1155*	18.2% 228	10.3% 129	13.7% 172	50.0% 626	7.7% 97

Note. Total does not include missing system data.

The popularity of in-person communication speaks to the community college population living at home or close to home, in comparison to students attending 4-year universities who live away from home. Approximately 68% (*n* = 850) of survey respondents reported living with the family member selected for this survey. If not in-person communication, the preferred technical communication channel is text messaging. Understanding the students' preferred

communication channel is useful to institutions as they determine the best way to share information with them and their families.

Participants in the study appear to share responsibility for initiating communication with their family member. When asked in question 15 who is responsible for initiating the communication most often between the student and their family member, 73% (*n* = 914) of students indicated they and the family member both initiate the communication. The remaining respondents were split in their answers, where 9.6% (*n* = 120) claimed they initiated communication with the family member and the remaining 9.8% (*n* = 123) reported the family member initiated the communication between the two of them. Table 29 summarizes the frequencies and percentage of who initiates the communication between the student and family member. Analysis of the data implies that students are as interested in communicating with their family members as family members are with them. The results seem to dispel the myth that family members are the ones who reach out and do all calling.

Table 29: Frequency Table: Who Initiates the Communication

Who is responsible for initiating the communication most often between you and your family member?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
I usually initiate communication with my family member.	120	9.6%
My family member usually initiates communication with me.	123	9.8%
My family member and I both initiate communication between us.	914	73.0%
Missing	95	7.6%

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION 4

What family engagement strategies do students perceive being of value to their parent/family member?

Two categories of possible engagement strategies were created based on a review of literature. The first category, as shown in Table 30, focused on family engagement strategies that involved technology, including a dedicated family webpage, newsletter, social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), podcasts, email listserv, blog, or group text messaging app (e.g., GroupMe, WhatsApp). The second category, as illustrated in Table 31, concentrated on in-person engagement opportunities, including a dedicated family weekend (e.g., visit campus, take tours, meet faculty and staff), advisory panel (e.g., provide input on events and family resources), event gatherings (e.g., semester kick-off events, graduation celebrations), mentor programs (e.g., families supporting new families), volunteer opportunities (e.g., on- and off-campus events), and educational workshops (e.g., financial aid, career paths, transferring). Respondents were asked in questions 24 and 25 to rate the likelihood that they perceived their family member would use each of the engagement opportunities using a 4-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 (*very likely*) to 4 (*very unlikely*).

Table 30: Frequency Table: Student Perceived Level of Family Member's Likelihood of Use of Technical Engagement Strategies

Please indicate how likely your family member is to use the following college engagement opportunities, if available.	VERY LIKELY	LIKELY	UNLIKELY	VERY UNLIKELY	MISSING SYSTEM
Parent/family webpage *Total = 1090*	7.6% 95	18.3% 229	30.5% 382	30.7% 384	12.9% 162

Please indicate how likely your family member is to use the following college engagement opportunities, if available.	VERY LIKELY	LIKELY	UNLIKELY	VERY UNLIKELY	MISSING SYSTEM
Parent/family newsletter *Total = 1090*	5.9% 74	17.1% 214	31.3% 392	32.7% 410	12.9% 162
Parent/family social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) *Total = 1088*	7.7% 97	17.3% 217	26.1% 327	35.7% 447	13.1% 164
Parent/family podcasts *Total = 1083*	2.9% 36	7.0% 88	30.5% 382	46.1% 577	13.5% 169
Parent/family email list *Total = 1088*	8.5% 107	22.2% 278	26.2% 328	30.0% 375	13.1% 164
Parent/family blog *Total = 1088*	3.3% 41	10.0% 125	31.3% 392	42.3% 530	13.1 164
Parent/family group text messaging app (e.g., GroupMe, WhatsApp) *Total = 1089*	7.4% 93	10.3% 129	28.0% 350	41.3% 517	13.0% 163

Note. Total does not include missing system data.

Table 31: Frequency Table: Student Perceived Level of Family Member's Likelihood of Use of In-Person Engagement Strategies

Please indicate how likely your family member is to participate in the following academic engagement opportunities (virtual or in-person).	VERY LIKELY	LIKELY	UNLIKELY	VERY UNLIKELY	MISSING SYSTEM
Parent/family orientation *Total = 1085*	7.5% 94	23.3% 292	27.2% 340	28.7% 359	13.3% 167
Parent/family weekend event (e.g., visit campus, take tours, meet faculty & staff) *Total = 1087*	7.1% 89	24.1% 302	25.3% 317	30.3% 379	13.2% 165

Please indicate how likely your family member is to participate in the following academic engagement opportunities (virtual or in-person).	VERY LIKELY	LIKELY	UNLIKELY	VERY UNLIKELY	MISSING SYSTEM
Parent/family advisory panel (e.g., provide input on events and family resources) *Total = 1086*	5.8% 73	14.6% 183	31.4% 393	34.9% 437	13.3% 166
Parent/family gatherings (e.g., semester kick-off events and graduation celebrations) *Total = 1087*	11.7% 146	23.1% 289	22.5% 282	29.6% 370	13.2% 165
Parent/family mentor program (e.g., families supporting new families) Total = 1086	5.6% 70	14.4% 180	30.3% 379	36.5% 457	13.3% 166
Parent/family volunteer opportunities (on or off campus) Total = 1088	4.9% 61	14.8% 185	31.9% 399	35.4% 443	13.1% 164
Parent/family college-related workshops (e.g., financial aid, career-paths, transferring) *Total = 1087*	6.5 81	21.6% 270	26.7% 334	32.1% 402	13.2% 165

Note. Total does not include missing system data.

The technical strategies perceived by the students as the most likely for their family to use, as measured by the highest number of *very likely* ratings received, were parent/family email list (8.5%, *n* = 107), followed by parent/family social media channels (7.7%, *n* = 97), and parent/family webpage (7.6%, *n* = 95). However, when combining the number of *very likely* and *likely* ratings, parent/family webpage (25.9%, *n* = 324) received equal standing compared to parent/family social media channels (25%, *n* = 324). Parent/family email list received the

highest total of *very likely* and *likely* ratings (30.7%, *n* = 385). These data imply that respondents perceive that their family members would be more likely to use a parent/family email listserv, followed by a parent/family webpage, a designated parent/family social media channel, and an electronic parent/family newsletter, if available.

The in-person engagement strategies perceived by the students as the most likely for their family to participate in, as measured by the highest number of *very likely* ratings received, were parent/family gatherings (e.g., semester kick-off events and graduation celebrations) (11.7%, *n* = 146), followed by parent/family orientation (7.5%, *n* = 94), and parent/family weekend events (e.g., visit campus, take tours, meet faculty and staff) (7.1%, *n* = 89). However, when combining the number of *very likely and likely* ratings, parent/family weekend events (31.2%, *n* = 391) rose to a narrow second place, followed by third ranking parent/family orientation (30.8%, *n* = 386); parent/family college-related workshops (6.5%, *n* = 81) was fourth. Parent/family gatherings remained in first place when combining *very likely* and *likely* (34.8%, *n* = 435). These data imply that students perceive their family members might be interested in participating in parent/family campus gatherings, parent/family weekend events, parent/family orientation, and workshops designed to increase college knowledge, if offered.

Interestingly, parent/family gatherings, which received the highest percentage of *very likely* ratings, surpassed the highest technical engagement strategy of parent/family email list by 3.25%. Additionally, when combining the *very likely* and *likely* ratings, the top three in-person family engagement strategies rated as more likely to be used by family members than the highest rated technical strategy. This observation suggests that of the students who perceive their family member is likely to engage with the college, they perceive the

engagement might be more likely to occur through in-person events than technical engagement strategies. The researcher acknowledges that only a third or more of respondents perceive their family member is likely or very likely to engage with the college, either in person or through technology. These results speak to two needs. First is the need for a college to obtain contact information for families so they can be surveyed directly. Second is the need for a well-developed communication plan if family engagement opportunities were to be offered at the college.

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION 5

What barriers to parent/family involvement do students perceive their family member encountering?

Respondents were presented with a list of possible barriers to family engagement in question 26 and invited to check any that they perceived applied to their selected family member. Table 32 lists each barrier and the frequency and percentage of times selected by the students. Participants were allowed to check more than one barrier. The top four barriers included (1) family member has limited or no time (44.2%, *n* = 553), (2) family member has other family members to care for (28.5%, *n* = 357), (3) family member does not know how to support or help me with my college life (20.9%, *n* = 262), and (4) English is not my family member's primary language (17.7%, *n* = 222). Less frequently selected barriers included family member does not live close to me (15.1%, *n*=189), I do not want to have my family member involved in my college life (11.7%, *n* =146), family member lacks interest (9.2%, *n* = 115), and family member prefers I do not attend college (0.9%, *n* = 11). Some respondents marked *other* (4%, *n* = 50) as a barrier. Comments in the *other* category alluded to the family member is not financially well off, family member is ill, family member does not have college experience,

family member wants student to be independent, and family member does not understand my struggles. The *none of the above* response was checked by 175 students.

Table 32: Frequency Table: Possible Barrier to Parent/Family Involvement

What barriers to parent/family involvement do students perceive their family member encountering?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SURVEY PARTICIPANTS
Family member has limited or no time.	553	44.2%
Family member has other family members to care for.	357	28.5%
Family member does not know how to support or help me with my college life.	262	20.9%
English is not my family member's primary language.	222	17.7%
Family member does not live close to me.	189	15.1%
I do not want to have my family member involved in my college life.	146	11.7%
Family member lacks interest.	115	9.2%
Family member prefers I do not attend college.	11	0.9%
Other	50	4.0%
None of the above	175	14%

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION FINDINGS

Item 21 on the questionnaire was an open-ended question that invited students to freely share their thoughts regarding family involvement: "Please describe how you would like your family member to be involved in your college life in the future. You can use ideas mentioned in this survey if that helps you. Would you like more or less involvement? Please explain." The researcher used quantitative content analysis to analyze the 569 student responses. Zull (2016) defined quantitative content analysis as "the classical method of

analyzing responses to open-ended questions" (p. 4). The process involved coding the responses using an inductive method that allowed the researcher to begin with a list of themes and add to the list as the coding and research process continued (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Creswell (2009) recommended that researchers use codes on topics they would "expect to find based on the past literature and common sense," and codes that are "surprising and that were not anticipated at the beginning of the study" (p. 187). Each code in the categorization scheme was defined with key words and examples. Quirkos software was used to facilitate the analyses. After coding was completed, a sample consisting of 10% of the responses was reviewed by a second coder for reliability, as recommended by Zull. Reliability was determined to be sufficient, with the suggestion to add an additional subcategory for resources. The process resulted in seven themes students identified in their responses to the open-ended question. This chapter addresses six of the seven themes most directly related to this study: (1) satisfaction with level of family involvement, (2) types of family support, (3) communication, (4) barriers to family involvement, (5) resource awareness, and (6) first-generation status.

Levels of Satisfaction with Level of Family Involvement

As a theme, 222 students indicated an overall satisfaction with their family member's level of involvement. Overall satisfaction implied that a student was content with their family member's current level of involvement. This category does not indicate any correlation between degree of satisfaction and amount of involvement. A student whose family member was very involved may or may not have been as satisfied as a student whose family member was not involved. It simply indicated that the student was satisfied with the family member's level of involvement.

Analysis of the overall satisfaction theme resulted in three subcategories, including students with a quantitative perspective (*n* = 76), a judgmental perspective (*n* = 42), and/or an emotional perspective (*n* = 58). Student comments that were quantitative in nature based that satisfaction on the "amount" of their family member's involvement. Key words or phrases labeled the "amount" or "level" of involvement as "enough," "adequate," or "just fine." For example, a student wrote, "I think my family member has enough involvement in my college life." Another respondent expressed, "So far both of my parents are involved an adequate amount." One more participant stated, "I would like the same amount of involvement in the future." At times, students attached a judgment to the amount of involvement such as, "The amount of involvement and support is perfect right now" and "I believe that my mother['s] involvement is good enough."

The second subcategory focuses on judgmental statements about the family member's involvement. Key words or phrases in this subcategory included "just right," "just fine," and "works well." These statements may or may not reference an amount of involvement such as, "I think we work fine the way we are now," and "They are doing everything perfectly fine." Other respondents wrote, "It's fine how it is," and "It's going good."

The third subcategory centered on the respondent's emotional connection to the family member's involvement and often included the self in the comment. Keywords included "happy," "love," "content," and "satisfied." One student shared, "I'm pretty happy with how involved my father is with my college career," while another participant wrote, "I'm pleased with their involvement," and another stated, "I am pretty content with my family member's level of involvement in my education." Satisfaction was mentioned by several students as

shown in the following example: “I am satisfied with the involvement my family member gives me.” Love was also used by some students to describe family involvement as in the following example: “I love the involvement my mom has in my college life already. There is nothing I would change.”

Students expressed messages of appreciation when describing their satisfaction with a family member’s involvement. A respondent exclaimed, “I really appreciate my family member’s involvement and wouldn’t want to change it.” Another student wrote, “I appreciate her helping me and guiding me.” Lastly, a student expressed, “I am grateful for what they have given me all the time . . . I really think that they don’t need to do more.” In these examples, it is clear that some students equated satisfaction with what they deemed to be an appropriate amount of family involvement. Other participants responded by evaluating their family member’s involvement. Still other participants referenced how their family member’s involvement made them feel. An unexpected result was that some students associated feelings of gratitude and appreciation with their family member’s involvement.

As discussed above, the category of satisfaction with current levels of family involvement did not necessarily identify the amount of involvement or whether the respondent desired more or less involvement. However, 177 respondents did indicate in their open-ended response a directional preference for family involvement, with 119 students expressing a desire for more family involvement. Thirty-six participants identified a desire for less involvement by their family member, and 22 were striving for a healthy balance of family involvement.

Respondents indicated they desired increased family involvement by including the key word “more” in their open-ended responses. Either it was a generic response of indicating a

desire for just “more support,” or the student explained what type of support they wanted more of, or how the family member could provide more support. Examples include, “I would like him to be more involved as in being there for me emotionally,” and “More involvement in my life, especially with my mental health.” Although discussed later in this chapter, students indicated a desire for more help financially as well, such as, “I [would] like more involvement and help with my college expenses,” and “I would appreciate more financial help.” Two students did not explain what type of support they desired more of but explained why they yearned for more support. These responses included, “I would like more involvement because I still don’t understand a lot about everything,” and “More involvement because I have no clue what I’m doing sometimes.”

On the opposite side of wanting more involvement, 36 students specifically answered the open-ended question by stating they preferred a decrease in family involvement. The keywords respondents used were “less” or “decrease.” Similar to the students who desired more involvement, some respondents distinctly claimed, “I would like less involvement,” while other students explained why they desired less involvement. Reasons acknowledged the need for growth and a desire for independence. Similar to the students who desired more involvement, some respondents distinctly claimed, “I would like less involvement,” while other students explained why they desired less involvement. Another student wrote, “In the future, I would like a little less involvement as I am growing up.” Participants also noted the desire for less involvement due to the stress related to the family member’s involvement, as noted in the following comments: “I would like them to worry about my academic stuff a little less because they are always asking how things are going and grades. I don’t like that very much. I feel like

there should be a limit." A different participant explained, "Sometimes I prefer less involvement. I feel like I do so much to stay on top of things and he can start to feel overbearing with his involvement." One student summarized this feeling by writing, "Less involvement, it can be overwhelming." Surprisingly, one student commented that they would like their family member to be "less involved financially." That was the only comment requesting less financial support.

A different theme that arose in student responses indicating they desired less involvement was the idea of qualifying the degree of "less" involvement. While some students clearly stated they wanted "less involvement," other students modified the degree of less as in the following examples: "In the future, I would like a *little* less involvement as I am growing up." Another respondent wrote, "In the future I would like my family member to continue being supportive of my college plans. I think I would like a *little bit* less involvement in my day-to-day activities from this family member." Lastly, a participant explained, "I think I will benefit most from a *gradual decrease* in involvement. As I grow through college, I would like to shift the majority of responsibility on myself." These respondents acknowledged the value of their family member's support, while at the same time recognized the need to accept responsibility as they advance through the stages of emerging adulthood.

While student comments indicated a desire for more involvement or less involvement, numerous students (n = 22) expressed a desire for a healthy balance between too much and too little involvement. These students acknowledged the value of family involvement and spoke of it in terms of "balance," "just the right amount," "perfect amount," "in moderation," and "not too little or too much." One student referenced the Goldilocks effect: "I feel like there is a

Goldilocks amount of involvement for me. I don't feel bugged about my coursework, and if I need help or advice, I can ask for it." The balanced approach to family involvement referenced the need for independence but at the same time having family support as a back-up plan, as explained by the following statement: "The level of involvement that she has is pretty much perfect for me. Enough space to learn myself but a supportive figure if needed." A second student explained it well: "I would like for them to keep the same involvement as they do now. Which means they are there when I ask for help without smothering me." A healthy balance approach often referred to the familial support being available when needed by the student.

Not all respondents talked about their degree of satisfaction in response to the open-ended question. It was common for students to say they either were or were not satisfied. Those that did indicated one of three ratings. They either wanted more involvement, less involvement, or believed their family member's level of involvement was just right. Students wanting more provided insights as to how they wanted support and why. Those that preferred less provided valid reasons, including the need for growth and independence. Lastly, there appears to be a desirable amount of involvement that when reached and maintained, students feel supported yet maintain the opportunity to grow in ways they each desire.

Independence

For this study, *independence* included students who claimed to be already independent and do not need family support, as well as students who are not yet fully independent but recognized the value of it and had set it as a personal goal. A total of 34 respondents referenced independence in this way. The category was broader in scope than the aforementioned categories. Key words or phrases describing this subcategory included "on my

own," "independent," "hand-holding," and "do it myself." Respondents who believed they achieved independence wrote comments such as, "I don't think I need a lot of involvement when it comes to my college life"; "Less involved, makes it easier if I do it on my own"; and "I work overnights full-time. I rarely see my family because I'm busy. . . . They understand I'm supporting myself." Survey participants who acknowledged they are not yet independent but are progressing toward independence wrote, "I believe I wouldn't want to change their level of involvement, but I predict as I get older and more independent, I would be relying on them less and less"; "I am hoping one day I can support myself more independently, but I do not think that will be possible for another few years." A final example is, "I want to be more independent in the future, but I am happy to receive their help and support too." Overall, it was not logical for students to wish for more family involvement and independence at the same time. Independence was associated with less involvement and a goal worthy of achieving in the future.

Types of Support

The second largest theme that resulted from the open-ended question focused on various types of support. Research has typically identified three major areas in which parents and families support their students, including (1) emotional support, (2) financial support, and (3) academic support. Participants in the current study reported similar findings when responding to the open-ended question. However, not all responses that referenced support fell into those three categories. Additional categories included general support, support of mental health, support for one's career choice, extracurricular involvement, and desire to transfer. General support comments did not mention any of the three traditional categories yet

called for support in a generic way, such as just checking in on the student, asking how the student was doing, or just being there for the student.

Emotional Support

The emotional support subcategory had the largest number of student comments (*n* = 93). Key words and phrases included various forms of the following: “emotional support,” “moral support,” “encouragement,” and “motivation.” Overall responses either indicated a desire for more of a specific type of emotional support or articulated appreciation for the support. The greatest number of comments in this category referenced emotional support without any other qualifiers. Students simply wanted more or expressed gratitude for the support, even referencing that it was more important in some cases than financial support. A basic statement was, “I would like him to be more involved as in being there for me emotionally. More as a support.” Another participant stated, “I would like them to offer their emotional support.” Lastly, a student wrote, “I . . . wish at times, however, that they encouraged me more and checked in on how I was emotionally handling college.” There were no statements in which a student expressed a desire for less emotional support. A few responses commented that emotional support was as important in lieu of financial support. A student expressed this sentiment by writing, “Although nobody supports me financially for school, I support myself, I am still grateful for the emotional support.” A second respondent wrote, “As my family member is 5 years older than I, there is not much they can do for me financially as they are also in college as well. The encouragement I get emotionally is enough as is.” Given no comments referenced the desire for less emotional support and several comments

acknowledged the value of emotional support even when financial support was not available, the comments speak to the value of emotional support in a student's academic journey.

Respondents spoke of the importance of encouragement and motivation when feeling down, stressed, or wanting to give up. One student explained,

> When I have no motivation to keep on going, my mom always encourages me and reminds me how important it is to get some kind of degree. She knows that's the only way I can be successful in life, and I appreciate that a lot.

Another student wrote, "I feel my mom's support and [she] always pushes me to do great. I couldn't ask for anything more. She helps me when I'm feeling stressed and encourages me when I feel overwhelmed with school." The following comments highlight students' desires for family members to continue to motivate them to do their best, reach their goals, or hold them accountable: "I would like for my family member to push me more to exceed my goals and tell me more about their struggles"; "More involvement in helping me stay motivated and [o]n track with assignment due date[s]. I would like them to hold me accountable." Lastly, a student summarized their desire concisely by writing, "Keep encouraging me to do my best and keep going." Students commented on emotional support and all its subcategories more frequently than all other forms of support, placing it at the top of the priority list for respondents and the institution.

Financial Support

Students conveyed appreciation for the financial support they receive and expressed a desire for financial support to help cover tuition and school-related costs, housing costs, transportation costs, childcare tuition, and insurance fees. Several students did not necessarily ask for more financial support but did hope for more help finding financial aid information.

These students reported wanting “help with financial aid info” and “more involvement in the financial resources aspect, scholarship aid.” While some students desired greater financial support, they acknowledged it may not be realistic, as stated by one student, “I do wish that I had more financial support, but our family cannot afford it.” In all, only 52 students referenced any type of financial support in their open-ended response, which was slightly more than academic support but less than emotional and motivational support.

Academic Support

Academic support was the third major category of support as identified in the research. It was not, however, a major focus for participants in this study. Overall, only 35 students made reference to academic support in their response to the open-ended question. Comments included statements regarding homework, assignments, scheduling, registering, and academic pressure. No major theme surfaced in this category. A few students mentioned they wanted their family members to check in with them and ask about how their classes were going. One participant wrote, “It would be nice to have them check up on how my grades are. Touch base on work, school, and family juggling.” Other participants expressed a specific need for more help with assignments, proofreading papers, remembering deadlines, managing difficult work, and passing. Respondents wrote, “I like how involved they are already, if more, then I’d saying helping with assignments”; “More involvement, more help with homework.” Two students expressed a desire for less pressure academically as in, “I would keep the involvement the same financially but I feel like they are too concerned with classwork.” In comparison to emotional and financial support, survey participants did not indicate a strong desire for more academic support.

Mental Health

Mental health surfaced as an independent subcategory given the number of students (*n* = 20) who wrote about it in their open-ended response. While the key word for this subcategory of support was "mental health," "anxiety" was also mentioned by a few students. Participants wrote that they desired more involvement from their family member regarding their mental health, wanted them to prioritize it, or care more about their mental health. A participant shared, "More involvement in my life, especially with my mental health." As referenced earlier, a student explained, "I wish my family member put less pressure on me to do well academically and prioritized my mental health more." A second pattern in these responses centered around students identifying their family member's lack of knowledge regarding mental health concerns and how to handle or recognize them. Keywords included "understanding," "awareness," and "knowledge." For example, a participant wrote, "I feel like I would like him to be more aware of my mental health." Another participant expressed, "I wished she listened and had more knowledge on the importance of mental health, rather than being intimidated by the topic." Some students took it one step further and identified a third theme, which was their desire to talk about their mental health with their family member. One student wrote, "I think overall the relationship is well but it would be nice to talk more in a vulnerable sense. Talk more about mental health and over working." A similar thought was shared by another respondent:

> I want my family member, and I to talk more about mental health in college because I feel like it is a very important topic. We do talk about it, but not as much as we talk about my progress and grades in classes.

One final comment by a participant summarizes this section well: “More involvement in understanding mental health and that mental health and mental health needs need to be taken seriously.” Based on other responses, this student is not alone. There are numerous opportunities for the college to act on these needs.

Other Forms of Support

Students (*n* = 25) identified other areas to a much lesser extent in which they desired family support, including choice of major and future career, extracurriculars, and transfer. In this category, students expressed the most desire for involvement with their career or major. Three subthemes developed. First, respondents wrote about wanting their family member’s help in selecting a major or future career. Comments were as direct as, “I need help deciding on a major so I suppose I would like more help in that!” One student felt the complete opposite and expressed, “I just don’t want them telling me what degree plan I should choose. It’s happened before and I had to change major because I wasn’t happy.” Next, students wrote about their need for the family member to support their major or career choice without pressure to consider alternative careers. An example included, “Maybe supporting my major and passion for art and music instead of reminding me that I could have become a nurse like her, as with most of my family members.” Another student shared a similar feeling:

> I wish they could be more supportive of my major sometimes. They’re supportive of me going down their track, but when I bring up what I want to do for a living, they don’t seem pleased so it’s normal for me to hide the career goals I don’t want them to know about.

One respondent astutely noted that the lack of support could be tied to a lack of knowledge: “Only a bit more of support in my major but there is a lack of knowledge.” Lack of

knowledge was the third career category. In describing their family's support, a student explained, "My mother provides me with [moral] support; I'm sure she'd offer more if she was knowledgeable about what I'm studying."

A rare discovery was having three students identify a desire for their family member to help them locate extracurricular activities, as shown in this comment: "I wish in the future she may help me find more student orgs or actively get me involved in an honor society, but she has already done so much for me." Another participant commented, "More involvement in looking for extracurricular activities would be nice." Lastly, one student recognized the need for help transferring to a university by writing, "I would like them to be understanding and helpful when I transfer to a university, after my associates degree. Going to a university is a big deal to me, as well as scary." From transfer, to extracurriculars, to career choices, participants identified several critical ways they see family members being involved in their academic lives.

Communication

Communication is a different type of support that feeds the soul and mind. These students (*n* = 39) did not directly indicate a need for academic, financial, or emotional support, but their comments called out for more communication. Key words and phrases identified in this theme included "talk more," "more conversation," "more communication," and "ask." It was common to see comments similar to "I think overall the relationship is well, but it would be nice to talk more"; "I would appreciate talking to my family member more about my degree and college life"; "I would like more involvement. I think communicating with one another more often is key." Other phrases included comments such as, "I would like them to be more involved, make more conversation about how it's going." Another student expressed, "Just for

them to understand me and see that sometimes I just need to talk to them about my issues like a child does with a parent." Participants (*n* = 5) also called on their family members to get more involved and ask them about their college life. One respondent stated, "I would like my Mother to be involved with my college life by asking me about my classes and how did class go." A second student agreed and wrote, "I would like them to ask about my school more." "I would like them to ask me more rather than me telling them everything," explained one student.

Communication could not take place without a listener. Six students identified a need for the family member to listen to them, truly listen, and listen without judgment, as witnessed in this student's statement: "I wish they would truly listen instead of being like 'this is not that hard,' 'you're only in school so why are you so stressed.'" Another participant wanted their family member to "take the time to ask [how] it's going and actually want to hear." While not the largest category of comments, student comments clearly identified communication and listening as a key role in family involvement. These comments also support the idea that some students desire more communication with their family member.

Barriers to Family Involvement

Although the open-ended question did not lead participants to discuss barriers to family involvement, some barriers were mentioned in the responses, including language, being too busy, and the family member living far away. The greatest barrier to family involvement identified by the students (*n* = 28) was the family member's lack of knowledge. Lack of knowledge was a broad category that included numerous key words and phrases and often alluded to a general lack of understanding of, or experience in, college life. In response to the open-ended question, students wrote the following: "It would be nice if they knew at least the

basics of what college is and how it works"; "The way I would like them to be involved is not necessarily possible. I would like for my parents to be able to answer my questions about my course work or just college in general." Another student shared,

> I would like to have someone who could have told me what to do before I got to college so I would know what major to choose or how to register or how to do anything, but I didn't. I had to figure everything out on my own and that was really stressful.

Two additional comments in this category stood out because they speak to how vital college knowledge is for family support members. First, a respondent wrote, "I'd like more involvement. I'm unsure as to how she would go about this." Second, "I would appreciate more understanding of why college is helpful for me." These comments highlight action steps institutions can take to increase the family member's college knowledge level.

Some students implied that lack of college knowledge prohibited their family member from understanding the difficulties they experience during college. It started with a basic statement of wanting the family member to "get more informed and . . . understand how college life can be," and "I wish my family member would be able to understand how complex college life is. I would like for them to help me with work when I find it difficult." Some comments were specific about what they wanted their family member to understand, as in this example: "I would like my mother to have a better understanding about expenses and realistic time management expectations when it comes to being a full-time student." Lastly, a participant wrote, "She doesn't know a lot about college so it's hard to explain the difficulties of it." In addition to the above comments about the general lack of college knowledge, respondents also wrote about the family member's lack of knowledge in their major/career and mental health. Both of these topics were previously addressed under support. As is evident by

the student responses, there are many opportunities for an institution to enhance a student's support network by eliminating the barriers to family involvement, such as the lack of college knowledge by one's family member.

Resource Awareness

Related to the lack of college knowledge and support categories, few students (*n* = 12) reported a desire for increased family involvement through awareness of college resources, as represented in this comment: "More involvement in just helping me to reach out [to] the college resources." Few respondents expressed desire for help with specific resources in mental health, finances, careers, and community resources, evident in the following comments: "I do wish that my family knew a little more about the community involvement of [UCC college] and the resources they provide that aren't necessarily directly for school-related concerns"; "More involved related to college resources/anxieties"; "More involved financially and aware of resources"; "I would like her to be more informed about my college life career-wise, like the opportunities [UCC college] offers with their resources and specifically for my major." Three participants acknowledged that their family members are aware of college resources and that they encourage them to use those resources. A student commented, "My mother has always been very involved in my education. . . . She . . . always supports me and she encourages me to use the resources at [UCC college]." Another participant wrote,

> In the future, I would like my family members to be just as involved in my college life as they are now. . . . They try their best to help me when I don't understand something, and they encourage me to seek help from resources provided to me by the school.

However, not all students are as fortunate, as described by this comment,

> I also wish they could understand how helpful [UCC's] tutoring services are. They don't understand the need to spend time after class with a tutor when I could be looking it up

> on YouTube at home. I wish they would understand that it's difficult trying to do work in a loud environment, [UCC College's] library is so peaceful, but they don't like me staying for too long because I have duties at home.

These comments identify areas that the college can include in any efforts to close the knowledge gap.

First-Generation Students

While 51.2% of survey respondents (*n* = 641) reported being first-generation students, only 11 participants acknowledged that status in their response to the open-ended question. Respondents either claimed to be a first-generation student or stated that their family member did not go to college. Within those 11 responses, three students referenced experiencing a struggle in their college life. One student explained,

> I would like my family member to be involved in my college life in the future by realizing that this struggle I am going through is something that I am handling all on my own. Despite how I may portray myself I am human, and I deserve some empathy and help. I am more than my academic failures. I am learning through trial and error . . . . I'm the first in my family to do this.

Two students described the pressure to succeed that comes with being a first-generation student. One wrote, "I am satisfied with the involvement my family member gives me. The only concern is the pressure that comes with finishing school because it was never completed for her." The other explained, "I don't want to talk to them about my classes because if I am doing bad . . . I will feel like I'm a bad student and setting a bad example when I am seen as a first-generation student in my family." Another theme that percolated up from these students' comments was the idea of learning or doing something college-related on their own. A respondent shared, "I'm first generation so all that I know are things that I've learned on my own because my family can't help." A second respondent explained, "I understand how

my mom didn't go to college, so she doesn't know how to be involved. For the most part it's not a problem for me since I can manage to figure things out on my own."

Not all comments contained a negative undertone. The following student comment captures the power of family capital that served as part of this study's theoretical foundation: "I find comfort in knowing that my Mother is amazingly involved with my school life. She is so proud and always excited to get involved as I am first gen." From struggles, to feeling an exorbitant amount of pressure, to succeeding while doing it on their own, first-generation students present many ideas that colleges can use to empower families even more than they already do to champion student success.

Summary

In summary, this section reported results from the open-ended question asking respondents to describe how they would like their family member to be involved in their college life in the future. Would they like more or less involvement? They were asked to explain their response. As a result of content analysis, seven themes were identified. Six themes were addressed in this chapter. Students wrote about their satisfaction with their family member's level of involvement above any other theme. Within that theme, more students articulated a desire for increased family involvement compared to those wanting less or claiming to have a healthy balance of involvement. Taking a unique perspective, some participants described themselves as independent, not needing family involvement, while others appreciated the family support currently but are aiming toward independence in the future.

Of the types of family support identified in Chapter 2, respondents also related to emotional, financial, and academic support. Emotional support, including the desire for

encouragement and motivation, ranked as a top priority for students, with some students noting its importance over financial support. Considering the other forms of support, including general support of their college life, career choice, and mental health, participants commented most frequently about mental health. Key issues identified were for family members to understand and support their mental health needs and develop a willingness to talk about mental health concerns. Participants indicated a desire for more communication with their family member, while fewer students asked for their family member to engage in listening. Respondents believed that the most concerning barrier to family involvement was their family member's lack of college knowledge. Whether it was a general lack of understanding of how college works or the inability to offer guidance, students believed the lack of knowledge contributed to a lack of understanding of the difficulties surrounding college life. Although some students noted that their family member is aware of college resources, others wished that their family member was more knowledgeable. Increased awareness and college knowledge was also a common theme noted by participants who identified as first-generation students. Additionally, their comments described struggles, pressure to succeed, and learning how to manage college on their own.

A total of 569 students wrote comments in response to an open-ended question asking how they would like their family member to be involved in the future. Their responses provide insight into how these students view family involvement, the value of family involvement in their college life, and the largest barrier they perceive to family involvement. Most importantly, their personal insights can guide future action steps by their college in empowering families to support student success.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 presented quantitative results from a survey designed to measure how community colleges can empower families to support student success through the student's view of family involvement. The survey was administered to students 18–24 years old at a large urban community college in the southern United States during the spring 2021 semester. The study focused on three major variables, including parent/family involvement, parent/family resource awareness, and parent/family resource communication. A series of *t* tests and ANOVAs were used to analyze the data and answer the study's three hypotheses. Post hoc analyses, including Spearman's rho tests and numerous frequency tables, were used to address five secondary questions. Results also included a detailed analysis of the single open-ended question designed to solicit the students' insights on how they would like their family members to be involved in their college life in the future.

Chapter 5 includes a more in-depth and detailed discussion of the major findings shared in this chapter. Limitations of the study and considerations for future research are also presented.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 provides a review of the purpose of this study and the methodology, discusses the study's findings, and highlights how the study connects to earlier research on parent and family engagement. Furthermore, implications for theory and practice are considered. The chapter ends by acknowledging limitations to the study and putting forth recommendations for further research.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of parent and family involvement from the community college student perspective. The value of parent and family support has long been recognized at 4-year institutions, yet literature investigating similar phenomena on the community college campus is sparse. This research begins to fill that gap by examining the community college student perception of family involvement, family awareness of support resources, and communication behaviors regarding those resources. Additional factors such as student satisfaction, Generation Z communication patterns with family, possible family engagement strategies, and barriers to family engagement are explored to provide an initial understanding of the potential of community college family engagement. Ultimately, this research helps position community colleges as they build relationships with families and learn how to empower them in their quest to support student success.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The study sought to explore and describe community college student perceptions of family involvement, levels of resource awareness, and communication behaviors around resources using a quantitative approach and an online survey created by the researcher. The instrument consisted of forced-choice questions and one open-ended question. A large sampling frame consisted of 16,605 students, 18–24 years old, enrolled in a large urban community college in the southern United States. After removing students who either did not answer the age qualifying question or did not qualify based on age, the sample yielded 1,252 usable cases.

To better understand how community colleges can empower families to support student success, the survey was designed to address three primary research questions and five secondary research questions, which are discussed below in detail. To answer the three main research questions, three composite scores were calculated to measure the student's perception of the main variables under investigation, including parent/family involvement (PF-I), parent/family awareness of college resources (PF-RA), and parent/family communication concerning academic related topics (PF-COMM). Secondary questions were answered through a variety of individual survey questions. The parent/family member involvement composite score (PF-I) measured the student's perception of how involved their family member was in their academic life. It encompassed the student's perception of their family member's level of academic support with three questions (items 18a–18c) and their family member's level of emotional support with two questions (items 18e–18f).

The parent/family college resource awareness composite score (PF-RA) measures the extent to which a student perceives their family member is aware of the various college resources made available to students in support of student success. The PF-RA consisted of a set of seven Likert-scale survey items (items 13a–13g) designed by the researcher. The questions focused on key resources available at the college, including: (a) financial aid resources (e.g., loans, grants, scholarships), (b) academic support resources (e.g., tutoring, learning labs, advising), (c) career resources (e.g., career center, resume writing, interview practice), (d) student life and extracurricular resources (e.g., student clubs, intramurals), (e) mental health/stress management resources (e.g., counseling, workshops, hotlines), (f) local community resources (e.g., housing, food pantries, transportation), and (g) safety resources (e.g., theft prevention, emergency preparedness, sexual assault prevention).

The parent/family resource communication composite score (PF-COMM) measures the frequency with which students communicate with their selected family member about academic topics. The items, designed by the researcher, focused on (a) academic progress (e.g., grades, attendance, GPA), (b) courses (e.g., assignments, instructors, lectures), (c) college-related extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, student government., intramural sports), (d) financial needs (e.g., tuition, books, fees), (e) selecting a major, (f) class schedule (e.g., which classes to take, how many classes to take), (g) safety concerns on campus, (h) mental health concerns (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression), and (i) job or career plans.

Analysis of the quantitative data collected included conducting a variety of inferential statistics, such as Spearman's rho, independent samples *t* tests, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. Additionally, examination of basic descriptive statistics included

reporting the mean, standard deviation, and use of frequency tables. Qualitative data gathered from the open-ended question were analyzed using content analysis that resulted in seven identified themes. Six of the themes are addressed in this study, including: (1) satisfaction with level of family involvement, (2) types of family support, (3) communication, (4) barriers to family involvement, (5) resource awareness, and (6) first-generation status. The discussion below, organized by research question, conveys the significant findings of the study as they relate to the literature review and theoretical framework of the study. Implications for practical application and future research studies are identified, as well as limitations of the study.

FINDINGS

Each of the three primary research questions tested for differences between the specific identified factor (demographics, GPA, and persistence) and the study's three main variables, PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM.

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1

Is there a difference between participant demographics and the mean scores of the following variables:

(a) perceived level of family involvement,
(b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and
(c) perceived level of academic and resource communication? Demographics included gender, race/ethnicity, enrollment status (full-time and part-time), and education level of selected family members.

Gender. Participants were asked to identify their gender in item 7 on the questionnaire. They selected from *female*, *male*, *non-binary*, and *prefer not to answer*. Females overwhelmingly comprised the majority of the respondents at 70.8% (*n* = 887). Male students

comprised 22% (*n* = 283), and non-binary students accounted for 4.8% (*n* = 60). Percentiles did not exactly replicate the student body breakdown but were deemed similar enough so as not to have to weigh the data. Results indicated that gender did not impact PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM. These results are not surprising given that the literature review in Chapter 2 produced mixed results when examining the effects of gender on various parent/family involvement variables. While several studies found females to have increased levels of parental attachment or involvement (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; Oliver, 2011; Payne, 2010), others found gender to have no effect (King, 2007; Sax & Wartman, 2010). The results of this study contribute to the continued debate as to whether student gender impacts parent/family involvement variables. Statistically, perhaps the number of females in the study made it difficult for testing to detect any effect that would have been identified if there was a greater balance of each gender identity. Or perhaps the PF-I, PF-RA, PF-COMM composite scores did not consist of enough items to detect the nuances that may exist between females, males, and non-binary students.

An unexpected result was the number of non-binary students identified in the study. Neither the host institution nor the National Center for Education Statistics (NCSE) track non-binary student data. Likewise, non-binary student data were not reported in any of the articles reviewed in the literature review. These students present opportunities for further research in the parent/family involvement domain as colleges learn how to identify and adapt to their needs.

Race/Ethnicity. The sample's racial/ethnic breakdown was representative of the overall population with the greatest percentile identifying as Hispanic/Latinx (39.5%), followed by

White/Caucasian (35.5%), Asian/Asian American (9.3%), and multiple ethnicity/other (8.1%). Black/African American students represented 6.2% of the sample, with Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.50%), and American Indian/Native American reporting at 0.40%. An analysis of the survey data ultimately showed race/ethnicity to have no significant impact on PF-RA or PF-COMM. However, the analysis found significant differences in means for PF-I between Asian/Asian American and White/Caucasians and between Asian/Asian American and Hispanic/Latinx. Asian/Asian American respondents appeared to experience significantly less PF-I than their White/Caucasian or Hispanic/Latinx peers.

This finding is similar to the results reported by Taub (1997, as cited in Sax and Wartman, 2010, p. 240) that found Asian women reported significantly lower scores than Latinas in the area of the parents providing emotional support. PF-I results from the current study directly oppose one finding reported by Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014), where Asian participants reported greater levels of over-parenting than non-Asian participants reported. However, this is assumed to be due to the differences between the over-parenting construct and PF-I and providing emotional support construct. Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan defined *over-parenting* as "both an excessive amount of parental involvement and as different types of behaviors demonstrated" (p. 322). One example provided by the authors to differentiate the term was an involved parent may suggest that their student visits a professor, while the over-parenting parent might contact the instructor directly. The PF-I composite score focused on emotional support and providing encouragement, which are different from over-parenting, as measured by Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan.

Overall, current results do not support previous research findings in which White/Caucasian students reported higher levels of parental involvement when compared to all non-Caucasian students (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; Payne, 2010). The findings, outside of the result concerning the Asian/Asian American respondents, seem to contradict previous research that indicated families of color were often at a disadvantage when benefiting from various forms of parent/family involvement. Not only was that not the case for PF-I, but it also does not appear significant for PF-RA. For example, in RNL and CampusESP's (2021a) survey, families of color with no 4-year college experience indicated having difficulty locating information on important college topics. The PF-RA scores reported here suggested that there were no differences between the various races/ethnicities and student perception of their family member's awareness of college resources. This difference in findings could be due to the unique measurements of resource awareness in each study and the fact that RNL and CampusESP provided the parent perspective. In contrast, the current study provided the student's perception of their family member's awareness. Also, the population composition and percentage of each race/ethnicity represented in the different studies varied greatly, potentially impacting the statistical findings.

In totality, these results could potentially indicate that the community college student body in this study is similar to one another in terms of parent/family involvement and parent/family resource awareness despite the diverse racial/ethnic makeup of the participants. It is proposed that the community college identity factor overshadows any impact that race or ethnicity may have on student perceptions of parent/family involvement or resource awareness. This commonality among community college students may not exist among 4-year

students who were the subjects of previous studies; consequently, differences in parent/family involvement and resource awareness based on race and ethnicity are more apparent in those studies.

Enrollment Status. Research on parental involvement involving full-time residential students at 4-year institutions is abundant (Alger, 2011; Gaymon, 2013; Mulcahy, 2019). However, research that focuses specifically on enrollment status of students as a distinct variable is almost non-existent. The literature review for this study resulted in very few studies that recognized that a difference could potentially exist in parental involvement for full-time versus part-time students. Part-time students were allowed to enroll in Grant's (2020) study, but the author never identified which, if any, of the six students in the qualitative study were part-time. Lewis (2021) acknowledged that part-time students were excluded from the author's study "because their adjustment to higher education is expected to differ substantially from full-time students" (p. 65). Over a decade ago, Sax and Wartman (2010) called for research to collect data that account for the experiences of various student populations, including the part-time student. The current study answered that call.

For the sake of this study, part-time enrollment was defined as taking 11 or fewer credit hours. The majority (60.9%) of respondents self-identified as part-time. The study's percentage of part-timers was slightly less than the host institution's actual enrollment figures, which was 78%, as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, n.d.). Results indicated that enrollment status did not have an effect on PF-I, PF-RA, or PF-COMM. One plausible explanation is that parents and family members are interested in their student's education regardless of the number of hours the student is taking. Whether a student is enrolled in 3

credit hours, 9 credit hours, or 12 or more, these findings indicate that the family member's level of involvement may remain unchanged. This study begins to fill a gap in the literature surrounding a student's enrollment status and parent/family involvement.

Selected Family Member. Unique to this study as compared to other research on parent/family involvement was the definition of *family member*. Students were encouraged to select a parental figure, family member, or friend who is most involved in and supportive of their college endeavors. The person was referred to as the student's family member for the remainder of the survey. This was critical to gaining as deep an understanding of the student's support network as possible, as Lewis (2021) explained: "Research using [just] the term "parent" may not capture the views of other family and educational supporters" (p. 38). Students selected from a list of relationships including mother, father, stepparent, grandparent, aunt or uncle, friend, sibling, spouse, guardian, or other and wrote in their person. The majority of respondents (58.2%) chose their mother as their selected family member, followed by father (20.2%), spouse (5.3%), and sibling (5.0), with the remaining distributed among other key relationships.

The selection of mother as the key person involved in their college life aligns with previous findings by Mulcahy (2019), in which a slightly higher percentage of participants selected their mother at 75.9%, and Lewis (2021), where mother ranked the highest at 47.20%. In both Mulcahy's and Lewis's studies, father was ranked second. The data across all these studies, whether they were conducted at a small private university, small 4-year public university, small public 2-year college, or a large community college, highlight that the maternal relationship is key for many college students, as is the paternal role. Coleman (1988) argued

that the mother's academic expectations of a child heavily influence that child and contribute to their social capital. Colleges and universities may want to ensure that these selected family members have the tools and resources necessary to adequately support their students academically. Given that 21.6% of respondents in the current study selected a person other than mother or father, as Lewis (2021) expressed, this may indicate that "Generation Z students have much more diverse families than any other generation before them" (p. 94).

Selected Family Member's Educational Attainment (First Generation Status). First-generation status for each participant was determined by the selected family member's educational attainment. Using the federal definition of *first-generation college student* as one whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree, 56.9% of respondents indicated their selected family member did not have a bachelor's degree or higher-level degree. This is 5.7% greater than what the percentage would be if the respondents were forced to choose a parent when answering the question. First-generation status based on a parent's educational level was 51.2%. Allowing the student to select a non-parent provided the researcher with a more accurate picture of whom college students are turning to for support and guidance and highlights the urgency behind offering support to a wider support network than just parents.

Significant differences were found between PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM and selected family members who obtained a 4-year degree and those who did not obtain a 4-year degree. An analysis of results showed that students who selected family members with no degree reported lower levels of perceived parent/family involvement, lower levels of perceived parent/family resource awareness, and lower levels of parent/family communication. These results are not surprising given the plethora of parent/family literature focused on first-

generation students and the struggles they face (Cantu, 2019; Carballo, 2022; Frett, 2018; Gibbons et al., 2019; Grant, 2020; Harper et al., 2020; Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005).

The parent/family member involvement composite score (PF-I) measured the student's perception of their family member's level of academic and emotional support with a total of five questions. The PF-I asked students to indicate how frequently their family member engaged in the following activities: (1) Offers you general words of support and encouragement (e.g., You got this; We believe in you; You can do it), (2) Provides you emotional support when stressed or worried (e.g., listens to you, offers advice), (3) Establishes an expectation for you to perform well academically (e.g., Work hard; Do your best; Pass your classes), (4) Encourages you to use resources available at the college to help you be successful, and (5) Encourages you to contact faculty, staff, or administrators, if necessary. Cohen's *d* was used to measure effect size and resulted in –0.30, implying that a family member's educational attainment may have a small-to-medium influence on the student's perception of the family member's level of parental/family involvement.

Current results complement findings by Payne (2010), who found that first-generation students reported less parental involvement than non-first-generation students along five variables, including college choice, social life, academics, satisfaction, and communication. At the same time, Oliver (2011) reported similar results in that first-generation respondents indicated lower levels of satisfaction with parental involvement in college choice, social experience, and academic experience. First-generation status was identified as the greatest predictor of satisfaction with parental involvement.

The interesting dynamic is that Oliver (2011) and Payne (2010) studied students from 4-year institutions, whereas the current research focused on community college students. Even still, it too found that first-generation students are at a disadvantage compared to their non-first-generation peers as it relates to parent/family involvement. Interestingly, the most current literature around first-generation students focuses on the barriers to their success and the extreme challenges they face with enrollment, transitioning, completion, and persistence. Few articles examined and measured the difference of parent/family involvement between the two classifications of students. This study works toward closing that gap in helping to identify whether parents/families of first-generation students are actually less involved than non-first-generation families. It is important to note that less involvement does not equate to less concern or less desire to be involved. The causes of this lack of involvement are worthy of further investigation. This author suspects that one potential cause for less involvement by first-generation parents and family members is lack of college knowledge or know-how, especially where there are fewer resources to support such efforts. The following discussion on parent/family resource awareness (PF-RA) begins to address that concern.

The parent/family resource awareness (PF-RA) composite score measures the extent to which a student perceives their family member is aware of the college resources available to support student success. As discussed above, the measurement consisted of seven items covering various resources available on campus. PF-RA resulted in a negligible effect size using Cohen's *d* (–0.182), which implies there is a possibility that a student's perception of the family member's level of college resource awareness may be influenced by the family member's educational attainment level.

The PF-RA composite score is a new measurement that examines to what extent students perceive their family member is aware of helpful resources like the learning labs and counseling centers. The researcher could not locate any similar instruments or questions that measure similar concepts. Consequently, exact comparisons to previous research are not reasonable. However, these findings connect to previous research that illustrates first-generation families lack the exposure to or experience with academia to be adequately knowledgeable about the support resources colleges make available to their students. As discussed in Chapter 2, Grant (2020) claimed that parents of first-generation college students need support in understanding the world of academia and where to find key resources. In working with first-generation families directly, Carballo (2022) asserted it is vital to make information and resources more easily accessible to these families. A recent survey by RNL and CampusESP (2021a) explained that not only should these resources be made known to first-generation families, but they should also be customized to their specific needs. The current findings provide evidence and reasoning for previous calls for resources and programming for first-generation families as they overcome challenges in supporting their student's academic life.

The parent/family resource communication composite score (PF-COMM) measures the frequency with which students communicate with their selected family member about academic topics. PF-COMM was measured with a set of nine questions described earlier. PF-COMM yielded similar results as the PF-RA in that an analysis of the data yielded a significant difference between students whose selected family member had a degree and those who did not. Like PF-RA, PF-COMM resulted in a negligible effect size using Cohen's *d* (–0.133),

which implies there is a possibility of a student's communication with their family member being influenced by the family member's educational attainment level.

Like PF-RA, PF-COMM takes a unique perspective when investigating the communication between students and their family members. Historically, parent/family literature has focused on the mode, frequency, and initiator of the communication (Gaymon, 2013; Harper et al., 2020; Lewis, 2021; Mulcahy, 2019; Spence, 2012; Weintraub & Sax, 2018). Although this study speaks to similar concepts later in the discussion, the PF-COMM honed in on the topics of conversation. It addresses what students and family members are talking about and how often. When examining the questions that comprised PF-COMM in the context of first-generation students, it is understandable that first-generation students would report lower scores on PF-COMM. Family members may be at a loss when it comes to communicating about courses or class schedules, not knowing the difference between a 3-hour course and a 4-hour lab, or what courses are needed for a specific degree plan, or how many hours are required to qualify for financial aid. How can they offer their student assistance when selecting a major if the concept of a major is unclear to them, or they do not know what majors are available? Most importantly, conversations about financial aid, scholarships, and work-study are difficult for first-generation families to have when they may not understand how the institutional systems work, or worse, are not aware of their existence.

This research is one of few investigations to study the frequency with which students and family members discuss academic topics. It supports an article by Wintre and Yaffe (2000) in which they studied first-year students when exploring adjustment to university life. The authors recommended that universities involve and educate parents about topics central to

university life. The current study provides up-to-date and deeper insight into the relationship between students and family members than previous research that focused on mode and frequency. Given the percentage of first-generation students who participated in this study, these findings point to the urgent need to provide the necessary resources, services, and education to family members so they can initiate and participate in supportive, encouraging conversations with their students.

Summary. The field of parent/family involvement has had mixed results when examining the relationship between student demographics and parent/family involvement. First, while some research has identified differences between genders, this study did not. However, analysis of results did identify possible future research in the area of parent involvement and non-binary students and parents.

Second, although the literature has raised concern about historically underserved populations due to race and ethnicity, current results did not identify similar findings in researching PF-RA or PF-COMM. This research suggested, however, that Asian/Asian American students perceived less parent/family involvement (PF-I) than other racial/ethnic participants. Taking this finding into consideration with the finding that no other differences in race categories were found, the study contributes to the continued debate surrounding the effect of race/ethnicity on the parent involvement construct.

The third demographic examined was the student's enrollment status. No significant differences were found between students enrolled part-time versus full-time. This is a subject that has largely been ignored in the literature and has little historical data to use as comparison. As a result, this study begins to lay a foundation for research in this area.

Lastly, significant differences were found between students whose selected family member had a degree and those who did not have a degree, for all three of the study's variables: PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM. First-generation status, as defined by the student's selected family member's education attainment, had the greatest effect on PF-I. What is unique about this result is that this study contributes to a gap in the literature that quantifies the difference between degree and non-degree family members. It has often been assumed that first-generation family members are less involved due to a lack of college knowledge, but few studies have examined that assumption in quantifiable terms. The researcher posits that by exploring PF-RA scores, future research may be able to identify a cause for the difference in PF-I scores. Although the effect was negligible, family members with no degree may have a harder time being involved in their student's college life due to a lack of college knowledge. Causality was out of scope for this study, but current findings suggest the area is prime for additional research.

Differences in PF-COMM scores were the last to be discussed. Current findings dove deeper into the student–parent/family relationship by examining how often they communicated about academics. All findings impacted by the student's first-generation status highlight the urgency behind providing first-generation families the educational opportunities and resources necessary to build their college knowledge and empower them in their efforts to be there for their students.

Research Question 2

Is there a relationship between student GPA and the following variables:
(a) perceived level of family involvement,
(b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and

(c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?

Analysis of the data suggested that there was no relationship between a student's GPA and their perceived levels of family involvement (PF-I), family member resource awareness (PF-RA), or family communication (PF-COMM). This finding aligns with previous research by Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014) that reported that parental involvement did not predict student self-reported GPA. Additionally, B. Johnson (2019) reported no main effect of family involvement and student success as measured by self-reported GPAs. These findings contradict results by Roksa and Kinsley (2019) that found students who reported higher levels of emotional support from their families were more likely to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher as stated on their college transcript. However, Roksa and Kinsley measured the family emotional support variable with only one Likert scale item, thus limiting the range of what was being measured. In contrast, the parent/family involvement construct in the current study included academic and emotional support, not just emotional support. Mulcahy (2019) also identified a relationship between GPA and a broader measurement of parental involvement. Results discovered parental involvement as one of five predictors of a student GPA.

Understanding whether there is a relationship between GPA and parent/family involvement provides deeper understanding of how parent/family involvement potentially influences a student's academic success. GPA is an important student outcome as it is often used to determine transfer acceptance and job placement. To date, the research appears to produce mixed results as to the exact relationship between parent/family involvement and GPA. Much is dependent on how the parent/family constructs are being measured. Differences in student outcomes could be the result of GPA being self-reported, as in the current study.

Self-reported GPA scores are prone to inflation bias or, as Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014) wrote, “Self-report GPA is notorious for being a faulty proxy for actual GPA” (p. 563). Both studies that found a relationship between GPA and the parent involvement measure deferred to college records for gathering GPA data (Mulcahy, 2019; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019). One consideration about the type of GPA to use is that even though using institutional data guarantees an accurate data set, which may impact the findings, it eliminates the possibility of conducting a completely anonymous study. Researchers will need to consider what is best for their study.

One interesting note is that over 21% of the respondents (*N* = 1,252, *n* = 266) in the current study indicated not knowing their GPA. This seems relatively high compared to Lewis (2021), who reported only 3.95% (*N* = 430, *n* = 17) of the sample did not know their GPA. The Lewis study included community college participants as well, but they accounted for only 7.91% of the sample. Speculation could lead to thinking that students enrolled in community colleges are not aware of grade point averages or how to retrieve their GPA, or the value of tracking one’s GPA. The survey wording could have been confusing to students in that it asked for the “current overall/cumulative grade point average.” Some students could have thought “cumulative grade point average” was different than just GPA. Research on the relationship between parent/family involvement and GPA needs to be examined further and clearly refined.

Research Question 3

> *Is there a relationship between student intent-to-persist and the following variables:*
> *(a) perceived level of family involvement,*
> *(b) perceived level of family resource awareness, and*
> *(c) perceived level of academic and resource communication?*

A student's intent-to-persist was measured with two survey items asking about the respondent's intent to enroll in classes in the upcoming semesters and their intent to graduate with a credential from any institution. The results failed to identify any differences in means between either of the two intent questions and parent/family involvement (PF-I), parent/family resource awareness (PF-RA), or parent/family communication (PF-COMM).

Current findings counter considerable literature that indicates family involvement impacts persistence at some level (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Grant, 2020; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019; Weintraub & Sax, 2018). This could be explained in several ways. First, there are many factors that influence a student's intent-to-persist that perhaps were not captured by asking only two nominal items; consequently, the items may not have captured the full context of the construct or the differences in the student sample. Second, 85.5% of respondents indicated they intended to enroll the next semester, and 83% stated they intended to graduate with a degree. While it is rewarding to see students report the best intentions, it is questionable whether they all will meet their goal. In this case, use of official data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to determine actual results, as in the Roksa and Kinsley (2019) study, would be a more reliable measurement than measuring student intent. Families influence student persistence in many ways, which are difficult to capture in a quantitative study. Whether it is encouraging a student through a tough exam or providing a few extra dollars for a late-night Starbucks, or not getting upset at them for working on an assignment instead of spending time with the family, each act contributes to that student being one step closer to their goal. Future instruments need to be able to capture a broader range of behaviors to truly measure the impact of family involvement on student persistence.

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Secondary Research Question 1

How satisfied are students with their parent/family member's level of involvement?

Two forms of satisfaction are usually examined in the realm of parent/family involvement. Those areas tend to investigate how satisfied students are with their family member's level of involvement and whether there is any relationship between satisfaction with the family member's involvement and satisfaction with the institution. This study focused on the former.

Satisfaction with the selected family member's level of involvement was measured with one 4-point Likert scale item ranging from *very satisfied* to *very dissatisfied.* While 81.7% of respondents reported being *very satisfied* (46.1%) or *satisfied* (35.6%), the measurement did not reveal what level of involvement the students were experiencing. Students could be satisfied because their family member was or was not involved. Consequently, a post hoc one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to provide deeper analysis. Three significant findings emerged from the ANOVA as student satisfaction levels tended to increase as the family member's level of PF-I, PF-RA, and PF-COMM increased. Of the three main variables, PF-I accounted for the greatest variance in overall satisfaction ($\eta^2 = .321$), followed by PF-COMM ($\eta^2 = .202$), and then PF-RA ($\eta^2 = .097$). These findings hold true to the literature that suggests student satisfaction with parent/family involvement is related to the level of parent/family involvement (Oliver, 2011; Payne, 2010; Weintraub & Sax, 2018).

However, these findings prove more useful to parent/family involvement research than previous findings in that they measure the amount of involvement, awareness, and

communication that other research studies did not. For example, Oliver's (2011) Parental Involvement Survey (PIS) explored student satisfaction with parental involvement at a 4-year institution in three areas: college choice, social experience, and academic experience. Given the regression model results, the study suggested a relationship between student satisfaction and parental involvement, as measured by Oliver. The PIS instrument measured only satisfaction levels, and the results assume that satisfaction parallels parental involvement. The data analysis appears to have ignored the possibility that a satisfied student could be satisfied because their parents are not involved. Payne (2010) used an unpublished version of the PIS and reworded the questions to calculate composite scores for the various parental involvement variables, thereby addressing the concern with the original PIS and interpreting the results. As Payne noted, the scoring changes allowed for further data analysis compared to that of the original instrument.

The articles referenced above, as with the majority of research on parent/family involvement, reported on students at 4-year universities. The current results, based on students at one southern community college, reported similar findings in that the trend is for student satisfaction levels to increase as parent/family involvement levels increase. This finding speaks to the value of parent/family involvement across various higher education contexts. Additional research is called for to investigate whether the trend holds true at various types of institutions across various student populations.

Secondly, understanding the relationship that exists between student satisfaction and levels of parent/family interaction, resource awareness, and communication gives voice to the students who participated in the study and mandates that the college recognize the importance

of parents and families in these students' academic lives. For the host institution, decision makers can use this information to enhance parent/family involvement, create spaces for conversations about academics, and provide families with educational materials and opportunities to learn about college resources. As Oliver (2011) wrote, "It is essential for higher education administrators to understand how students feel about their parent's involvement and how satisfied they are" (p. 4). This is an opportunity for 4-year and 2-year institutions to truly make an impact on student success.

Secondary Research Question 2

What student support resources are parent/family members most and least aware of?

Closing the college knowledge gap and enhancing family members' awareness of the various resources and opportunities available to their students is a goal of most parent and family programming offices. Current research speaks to the knowledge deficit that still exists among families on college campuses, especially among first-generation students and historically underserved students (Carballo, 2022; Grant, 2020; Hart, 2019). This research question was intended to investigate one component of the knowledge gap, which was the family member's awareness of resources available to students on the college campus (physically or virtually) to support their success. As far as the author is aware, it is the first measure of its kind in the literature. It specifically asked students to what extent they perceived their family member was aware of (1) financial resources, (2) academic resources, (3) career resources, (4) student life resources, (5) mental health/stress resources, (6) local community resources, and (7) safety resources.

Based on student perceptions, family members were most aware of financial aid and academic resources but least aware of mental health/stress management resources, followed by student life and extracurricular resources. Given the increasing costs of college tuition, books, fees, and related expenses, it is logical that family members would be most aware of financial aid resources (e.g., loans, grants, scholarships). Most concerning, but not surprising, is the finding that students reported their family members are least aware of the mental health/stress management resources available. As one student explained in the open-ended question response, "I wish she [selected family member] listened and had more knowledge on the importance of mental health, rather than being [*intimated*] by the topic." Petree and Savage (2021) highlighted the mental health concerns as a current trend that parent and family programming professionals are having to address. Furthermore, Grant (2020) elevated students' concerns about their family members' perceived lack of ability to recognize and understand the mental health crises faced by college students today. Across 4-year and 2-year campuses, institutions of higher education not only have an opportunity, but a responsibility to address the mental health concerns of their students. Higher education professionals can do this by arming parents and family members with the knowledge of resources available on campus to assist in combating this crisis.

Not only did this study measure student perceptions of family member resource awareness, but the survey also asked them directly if they believed their family member could benefit from free resources that would help them (the student) be successful in college. Over 63% (*n* = 798) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Another 12.4% said it was unnecessary because they were graduating or transferring to another institution,

leaving only 24.4% of students declining the offer. Again, this is the first of this type of data to be collected on community college students, but it seems clear that the students in this study were very interested in helping close the knowledge gap that exists among their family members. These students' responses eliminate doubt for decision makers at this college about the value of providing information and resources to family support members. Lewis (2021) made a similar claim for 4-year and community colleges when pointing to the need for these institutions to offer assistance and support resources for family members, calling the need essential.

The most critical factor discovered by the current study as it relates to resource awareness was the positive correlation between the family member resource awareness score and question 18.5, which asked how frequently the family member encouraged the student to use resources available at the college to help them be successful. These results imply the more aware the family member is of the resources available on campus, the more likely they may be to encourage their student to use the resources. Previous literature recognizes that family members are more likely to encourage students to use resources of which they are aware. Thome (2016) wrote parents can serve as reminders and encouragers to use the resources, and Spurlock (2017) likened parents to referral agents. Both authors speak of the urgency for institutions of higher learning to "harness the ability" of the parent and family to encourage and assist their student in locating, accessing, and using available resources (Spurlock, 2017, p. 42). This study, however, is one of the first research studies to support that claim with statistical data.

This study has revealed that the more a family member of a participating student is aware of college resources, the more inclined they may be to encourage their student to use the resources. The students have indicated what resources they perceive their family members are and are not aware of, and that they would like their family members to receive information on the available resources to help them be successful. The conditions are prime for the college to make concerted efforts to close the college knowledge gap and adopt policies and practices that spread awareness of support resources among the students' family members.

Secondary Research Question 3

What is the preferred mode of communication between the student and parent/family member, and who initiates the communication?

Respondents indicated a top preference for in-person communication (69.8%, *n* = 874) with their family member, which was followed by text messaging, with phone calling as a distant third. Text messaging jumped to the top ranking, however, when combining the *often* and *sometimes* ratings. Overall, these findings resemble those by Lewis (2021), who reported 2-year and 4-year student respondents preferred in-person communication with their family member. The top three modes of communication align with Lewis' study and the current results. Students from both studies ranked video chat platforms as a moderately preferred channel and email communication as rarely or never used.

While it would be easy to claim that the preference for in-person communication was a result of 68% of the current respondents living at home, approximately 60% of Lewis's (2021) respondents did not live at home and they reported the same preferred communication channel. Research by Seemiller and Grace (2016) suggested that the preference for in-person

communication should not be surprising given the extreme closeness Gen Z has developed with their family members. Current results also complement the finding shared by Seemiller and Grace, that 83% of Generation Z students preferred in person communication with their family over other modes.

One cannot assume, however, that the results transfer over from family to institution, but as Lewis (2021) pointed out, higher education institutions will want to practice caution when relying on email to communicate critical information to their students. As Generation Z's least preferred mode of communication, it would behoove the institutions to invest in establishing other methods of communicating with their student body. They may find more success with text messaging.

Additionally, Rucks-Ahidiana and Bork (2020) discussed the benefit of institutions providing resources and support to off-campus partners, such as families members, because they realize that the off-campus partners can reinforce the information already shared with the student through on-campus offices. Colleges will want to recognize the potential of an off-campus partner who is informed about college matters sharing that information with the student in a face-to-face exchange. That conversation could potentially be more impactful than any email or text from the institution.

In addition to understanding the survey respondents' preferred mode of communication, the study sought to understand who is responsible for initiating the communication between the student and family member. Interestingly, there has been a shift in the responsibility party. In 2010, Payne reported that 38.4% of students initiated the communication themselves. Approximately, 34% of communications were initiated by the

parent, and 27.7% reported sharing the initiation responsibilities. Two years later, Spence (2012) found that parents and students shared responsibility for initiating communication. Another year later in a small qualitative study, Gaymon (2013) discovered students were more likely to initiate communication. The literature seems to have balanced out recently with Mulcahy (2019) finding that 67.7% of participants equally shared responsibility with their parents for initiating the involvement. This study's results align most closely with Mulcahy in that almost three quarters of the students (73%, *n* = 914) revealed they share responsibility for initiating the communication between themselves and their family member. This is the largest reported percentage of shared responsibility known to the researcher. The remaining participants were equally split between the student and family member as to who initiated the communication.

The above finding draws attention to the significant role that a student's selected family member plays in their life. Not only are family members initiating communication with the student, but the student is also reaching out to the family member equally as much. The data analysis implies that this is a two-way relationship. The results also seem to support the work of Seemiller and Grace (2016), who explained that over half of Generation Z students in their study placed their parents in high regard, viewed them as trusted mentors, and took their opinion and perspective under consideration when making decisions. The students from the current study are communicating with their family member, and they are initiating that communication as well. Knowing this, community colleges can support that parent/family-student relationship by offering families information and resources to share with their students and providing the students with information to share with their families on engagement

opportunities. As one respondent wrote when indicating they wanted their family member to receive free resources, “I would have to just share it with them.” The research supports the institution being equally present in the students’ and parent/family members’ lives.

Secondary Research Question 4

What family engagement strategies do students perceive being of value to their parent/family member?

In the Association for the Study of Higher Education monograph focused on parent services and best practices, Kiyama et al. (2015) argued that before an institution establishes any parent and family programming on campus, its first step must be to conduct a needs assessment and develop specific strategies based on those needs. Question 4 of the instrument used in this study was aimed at taking that first step. For clarity purposes, *family engagement* was defined as any time a family member interacts with the college through college-sponsored initiatives or tools that aid them in supporting their student. The literature review resulted in two categories of parent/family engagement strategies: technical and in-person.

The top four technical strategies, as perceived by the students, were (1) parent/family email list, (2) parent/family social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), (3) designated parent/family webpage, and (4) electronic parent/family newsletter. The latter choices switched rankings depending upon whether the *very likely* and *likely* results were combined. However, the parent/family email listserv remained top ranking regardless of how the tallies were calculated.

While the students clearly identified which technical strategies they perceived their family members would be most likely to use, they also indicated that they perceived their

family member would be more likely to participate in in-person engagement strategies over technical strategies. The top four in-person strategies, as perceived by the students, included (1) parent/family gatherings (e.g., semester kick-off events and graduation celebrations), (2) parent/family orientation, (3) parent/family weekend events (e.g., visit campus, take tours, meet faculty and staff), and (4) parent/family college-related workshops (e.g., financial aid, career-paths, transferring). The latter choices changed rankings depending upon whether the *very likely* and *likely* results were combined. Parent/family gatherings remained the top choice regardless of how the final tallies were calculated. The parent/family gatherings category included graduation celebrations, which warrants caution when interpreting this result because it is very common for family members to attend graduation celebrations, and this may have skewed the student's rating.

While none of the current findings align perfectly with PFP service rankings from other research reports, some do resemble practices recognized by Petree and Savage (2021) and Spurlock (2017). Current students placed highest value on gatherings and weekend events, and those same services ranked second and third as the most successful practices in the Survey of College and University Parent/Family Programs (SCUPFP) (Petree & Savage, 2021). Student respondents ranked the parent/family webpage and electronic newsletter as third and fourth, which is similar to what those services ranked for the most common practices in the SCUPFP survey. Students ranked email communication and parent/family social media outreach as the top two technical strategies, yet these two services were not ranked highly by SCUPFP. They were, however, ranked as the third and fifth most common strategies by Spurlock (2017). Overall, there appears to be no steadfast rule on which PFP services are best all around. It is

also difficult to compare the results exactly because the current study represents the perceptions of community college students and what strategies they perceive their family member would use, while other studies are based on what PFP professionals at primarily 4-year universities are currently doing.

Realistically, efforts to provide family engagement opportunities must take into account that more than half of the participants perceived that their family member was unlikely or very unlikely to use any of the identified technical or in-person strategies. This could be because no opportunities have existed before for the families on the community college campus, and the concept is foreign to the students. Moreover, as discussed below, this uncertainty could be due to a host of barriers, as the family member does not currently know how to engage.

Ultimately, the PFP services offered by an institution must be designed to meet the needs of the specific families and students that they are serving. As Sonn et al. (2017) recommended, PFP offices need to consider their students' and families' demographics, cultural values, and specific needs when designing programming. Modality considerations are pertinent to today's post-COVID world, as are topics that are rising in concern, such as mental health issues and careers for today's graduates. Which set of practices are best for building relationships among the parents/family members, student, and institution will vary depending on the needs of the constituents, and it is imperative to understand what those specific needs are before launching services.

Secondary Research Question 5

What barriers to parent/family involvement do students perceive their parent/family member encountering?

Question 26 presented respondents with a list of eight potential barriers to family engagement. They were then asked to review the list and check any barriers that they perceived applied to their selected family member. While every option was identified by some students, the top four barriers included family member has limited or no time (44.2%, *n* = 553), family member has other family members to care for (28.5%, *n* = 357), family member does not know how to support or help me with my college life (20.9%, *n* = 262), and English is not my family member's primary language (17.7%, *n* = 222). The remaining less-selected barriers included family member does not live close to me (15.1%, *n*=189), I do not want to have my family member involved in my college life (11.7%, *n* =146), family member lacks interest (9.2%, *n* = 115), and family member prefers I do not attend college (0.9%, *n* = 11). A small portion of students marked *other* (4%, *n* = 50), while 175 (14%) students checked *none of the above*.

While barriers to parent involvement are thoroughly discussed at the secondary level (Brenden, 2020; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Silva, 2018), they are less frequently examined at the postsecondary level (Baker et al., 2021; Kiyama & Harper, 2018; RNL & CampusESP, 2021a). Literature on parent/family barriers is almost nonexistent from the community college student perspective. Students from the current study were perceptive and identified several critical barriers that also appear in the literature, such as time, parent uncertainty, and language barriers. Both Baker et al. (2021) and Kiyama and Harper (2018) raised concerns about parent/family programming privileging one group of students and families due to undervaluing and misunderstanding cultural differences. Baker et al. spoke of three interrelated sites of privilege, which are "access, time and money" (p. 92). Students perceived time (limited time or

no time) and caring for another family member, which also requires time, as the top two barriers of parent/family engagement.

An additional barrier the student respondents identified was that English was not their family member's primary language. The survey respondents attend a Hispanic Serving Institution and come from very diverse backgrounds, with 65% reporting a race/ethnicity other than White/Caucasian. It is not surprising that the students perceive language as a potential problem. Linguistic barriers have been recognized by scholars as a barrier to parent/family engagement at the secondary and postsecondary levels (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Kiyama & Harper, 2018). One current survey respondent wrote, "More involvement would be better[;] maybe have a parent event for Spanish speakers." Fortunately, more institutions are striving to provide communications and printed materials in languages other than English (Spurlock, 2017). This practice must grow, and institutions need to support the practice by allocating funds for the translations of distributed materials and at public events.

Time, caring for family, and language are barriers embedded in the student's culture and are at risk of reducing a family member's level of engagement if PFP professionals do not stay in tune with and remain consciously aware of them when making programming decisions. Baker et al. (2021) cautioned against programming that ignores differences in collective and individualistic cultures and could lead to families feeling out of place and unwelcomed. If program offerings violate cultural norms, they may consciously or unconsciously influence those who are and are not able to participate.

One additional barrier identified by the students was that their family member did not know how to support or help them with their college life. Unfortunately, this finding holds true

to previous research and reinforces the need for community colleges to provide the support and resources a family member needs to adequately support their student's success (Grant, 2020; Lewis, 2021; Rucks-Ahidiana & Bork, 2020). Literature has identified the value of emotional, academic, and financial support provided to the student by the parent/family member (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Harper et al., 2020; Weintraub & Sax, 2018). By ensuring families have the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to offer those types of support, the parent/family member can be available to support the student across their entire academic journey.

Scholars have documented the importance of family support from the early moments of deciding to attend college (Hashmi, 2015; Roksa & Deutschlander, 2018; Silva, 2018), to transitioning through their first semester (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Gaymon, 2013; Rucks-Ahidiana & Bork, 2020), persisting from fall to fall (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Carballo, 2022; Deutschlander, 2019; Grant, 2020; Murphy, 2014; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019), and achieving the end goal of transferring to a 4-year institution or entering the workforce (Frett, 2018; Maliszewski Lukszo & Hayes, 2020; Mulcahy, 2019). Unfortunately, the detrimental effects of a lack of family college knowledge can impact any student, but it is especially a concern for students from lower economic status backgrounds, first-generation students, and historically underserved students of color. The students in this study have identified that their family member, not knowing how to support them, is a genuine concern for them. Their voices have been captured here and can be used to propel the development of parent and family programming services on their college campus.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Goodrich (2021) explained, “The primary goal of the research is to guide action, gather evidence for theories, and contribute to the growth of knowledge in data analysis” (para. 1). Expanding on that explanation, Goodrich included the goal of discovering and seizing opportunities. The current research study contributed to all those goals in some capacity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

Social Capital Theory

Coleman’s (1988) social capital theory is one of four theoretical concepts that provided the framework for this study. Social capital focuses on building and maintaining relationships and networks to attain certain outcomes that would otherwise seem impossible. The synergy among relationships and social structure causes a forward movement benefiting those lacking in social capital. Within the family, social capital is transmitted from parents and any others considered to be family to the student. The relationships family builds outside the family unit, such as those between the family member and the institution or between the family member and others associated with the institution, can contribute to the family’s social capital and, consequently, the student’s.

Current study results contribute to the development of social capital theory in several ways. First, the parent/family member resource awareness composite score (PF-RA) can be considered a type of social capital measurement. The PF-RA measured how aware the student perceived their family member was of the various support resources made available by the college to the student. Findings revealed significant differences between first-generation students and non-first-generation students, indicating a difference in the level of social capital

available to some families. Future parent/family programming offices need to ensure equal access to resources that build social capital. Furthermore, 63.7% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that their family member could benefit from free resources notifying them about the student support available on campus. More powerful than students requesting the resources for their family member is the 185 students who provided their family member's contact information so they could receive the resources. Whether consciously or unconsciously, these students were building relationships and networks for their family member, thereby constructing social capital for themselves and the family.

Family Capital Theory

According to Gofen (2009), first-generation students who attain a higher education should not be portrayed as "succeeding despite their family background" (p. 104). Often families facilitate student success by prioritizing education through nonmaterial resources. Family capital is the process of breaking the intergenerational cycle of education level through nonmaterial resources. Gofen analyzed family capital according to three categories: (1) attitude toward education, (2) interpersonal relationships, and (3) family values. Grant (2020) included emotional encouragement, motivational support, and prioritizing time as family resources that enhance student success. This research furthers the study of family capital theory in two ways. The first way is through this study's parent/family resource awareness score (PF-RA). When testing for a relationship between PF-RA and the frequency with which a family member encourages the student to use resources available at the college, results implied that increasing a family member's awareness of student support resources could potentially influence how frequently they encourage their student to use those resources. The parent/family

communication composite (PF-COMM), which measured the frequency of communication between the family member and student regarding academic and personal topics, yielded similar results. This trend illustrates that when families are empowered with the resources, they tap into their own family capital resources, such as communication and encouragement, to support their student.

Secondly, the respondents' open-ended comments spoke highly of the various types of nonmaterial resources offered by their family member, highlighting their reliance on family capital. Students shared the following comments:

- "Just being there for me is all I need."
- "Keep encouraging me to do my best and keep going."
- "Just keep being involved in asking me how I'm doing as it really does motivate me to try harder."
- "I am enjoying very much the support from my family member because it is a reminder that I am not alone and have someone other than myself [to] cheer me on."
- "Although nobody supports me financially for school, I support myself, I am still grateful for the emotional support."

Through these comments, students speak about the value of family capital and how the support it offers can make a difference in their academic journey. Parent/family programs will want to highlight the value of family capital in family orientation sessions and newsletter communications, thereby encouraging the families to engage in these behaviors as deemed appropriate by the family.

Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood has been conceptualized by Arnett (2000) as a developmental period that occurs from the late teens through the twenties, focusing on ages 18–25 years. Arnett characterized the emerging adulthood concept by two intangible criteria: when one accepts responsibility for oneself and when one makes independent decisions. A third tangible criterion is becoming financially independent. Arnett explained that only upon meeting all three criteria does an emerging adult transition into young adulthood. Student responses to the open-ended question in this study directly and indirectly support Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood.

- "The level of involvement that she has is pretty much perfect for me. Enough space to learn myself, but a supportive figure if needed."
- "I would like more independence and separation as I get older, but I like the amount of involvement and encouragement I get from my family member."
- "I believe I wouldn't want to change their level of involvement, but I predict as I get older and more independent I would be relying on them less and less."
- I am hoping one day I can support myself more independently, but I do not think that will be possible for another few years."

During the emerging adult time, it is common for parents and family members to follow a strategy in which they grant their child autonomy when appropriate but are also there to help them traverse through times of growth, experimentation, and discovery (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Many of the student comments above referenced both sides of the emerging adult dichotomy. Findings also closely align with Lewis's (2021) quantitative study that involved Generation Z students from one community college and one university. Similarly, Lewis found students strive for independence and learn to think for themselves while relying on multiple

families to support them through the transition process. This study contributes to the body of literature over the last decade that has applied Arnett's (2000) emerging adult theory to family involvement and engagement practices.

Implications for Higher Education

The present study has led to several opportunities for the host institution. These opportunities, if taken advantage of, could potentially lead to empowered families and increased student success. The community college campus has been void of parents and families for too long, while 4-year universities have adopted families as partners for decades. The following implications are drawn from a comprehensive literature review and the survey results of 1,252 community college students. They address the question "How can community colleges empower families to support student success?"

Implication 1

The host community college should demonstrate commitment to their students and their students' families by incorporating parents and families into the college's strategic planning and student success initiatives. The commitment of upper administration across all divisions, student affairs and instructional, is necessary to ensure that everyone works together to build a warm, culturally sensitive, family-friendly culture. Historically, the college has hidden behind FERPA, which resulted in parents and family members being ignored and excluded from their students' academic experience. However, offering generic support resources and educational materials to family members does not violate FERPA regulations. An institutional shift that moves university practitioners from viewing parents not as helicopter parents but as key stakeholders in their student's educational journey will need to occur. The upper

administration's commitment is necessary to show all faculty and staff the inherent value of creating relationships between the institution and parents and families.

The following strategic statement is recommended for the college (UCC) to take under consideration for adoption:

> Parents and family members play an important role in the growth, development, and success of UCC students. Family members have long been part of our students' lives, and UCC understands that students are more successful when their parents or family members are appropriately informed and involved. Numerous opportunities exist for the college to engage directly with families from application to graduation. UCC is committed to empowering families to support success.
>
> UCC is committed to:
>
> 1. Creating a vision of family engagement shared by UCC students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
> 2. Developing a comprehensive program for family engagement and education through communications, events, building community, and one-on-one support.
> 3. Implementing an approach that provides family members with a high-quality experience that supports their diverse needs and establishes a culture of inclusiveness and belonging.

According to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2018),

> When colleges . . . commit to involving parent/families in appropriate and effective way, they have the potential to both harness parent and family support for student success and develop institutional advocates eager to promote and support its vision and mission. (p. 3)

By including families in its strategic planning, the institution is changing the conversation around student success, giving voice to overlooked partners, and creating new alliances moving forward.

Oliver (2011) wrote, "Higher education no longer has the luxury of keeping parents at arm's length" (p. 111). The author points out that institutions "cannot push parents away when

the overall mood of the students is one of satisfaction with their parents' involvement" (p. 112). The current study found similar results in a post hoc analysis where student satisfaction with parent/family involvement increased when parent/family involvement, parent/family communication, and parent/family resource awareness increased. Additionally, content analysis of the open-ended question revealed that 119 students directly indicated they desired more family involvement at some level. Research on Generation Z students by Seemiller and Grace (2016) solidifies this thought:

> They see their parents and family as sources of emotional and financial support. . . . Generation Z's parents are their role models. It is no wonder, then, that our study revealed that Generation Z students have high regard for their parents, and more than half take the opinions and perspective of their family into consideration in their decision making. (p. 89)

Together, the quantitative and qualitative data should lead higher education administration to understand these students' desires to have their family involved in their academic career. The institution is encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to develop community and institutional relationships with the students and their parents and families.

Implication 2

The results of this study support that the host community college should establish and sustain a parent and family relations (PFR) office designed to empower families as they support their student's academic goals and transition into the workforce. While the establishment of a new office requires reflection at many levels, three considerations rise to the forefront.

Align Parent and Family Programming Along Academic Timeline. First, research documents that parents and families influence every defining moment of a student's academic journey. From the pivotal moment the student decides to attend college (Hasmi, 2015; Silva,

2018), persisting from semester to semester (Benito-Gomez et al., 2021; Grant, 2020), to the moment they cross the stage at graduation, parents and family members can impact student outcomes and success. Before getting too far into the development process, however, Kiyama et al. (2015) claimed it will be vital to include family members in a needs assessment and address those needs through services and resources that align with the institution's mission.

The college will want to determine, with input from the student and family stakeholders, what information and support resources are needed at critical moments throughout the educational experience. Students provided some insight with their responses to the survey's open-ended question. The content analysis highlighted students' request for familial support at various points throughout their education. These comments go beyond the traditional academic, emotional, and financial support categories.

- "I would like to have someone who could have told me what to do before I got to college so I would know what major to choose or how to register or how to do anything but I didn't. I had to figure everything out on my own and that was really stressful."
- "I think giving students a option to include parent emails in things, regarding payment and registration before deadlines."
- "I would like her to be more informed about my college life career-wise, like the opportunities [the college] offers with their resources and specifically for my major."
- "I would like them to be understanding and helpful when I transfer to a university, after my associate degree. Going to a university is a big deal to me, as well as scary."
- "Just by being their [*sic*] and helping with enrollment or graduation."

The above student comments capture the need for parent and family programming throughout the student's academic experience. It will be critical to include the student and family voice as those defining moments come to fruition for the student.

Offer a Variety of Programs and Services. Second, the PFR office can offer support along each touch point on the academic timeline through outreach and communication efforts, family orientation programs, and parent- and family-focused programs (Kiyama et al., 2015). After conducting a thorough needs assessment with key stakeholders, it is recommended that in the development of the PFR office the college considers the best practices identified by the Association for the Study of Higher Education's monographs on parent and family engagement (Kiyama et al. 2015), the biennial Survey of College and University Parent/Family Programs (Petree & Savage, 2021), and the CAS Standards for parent and family programs (CAS, 2018). Outreach and communication efforts include websites, print or electronic newsletters, and social media. Parent and family orientation programs would serve to orient and educate involved family members as they support their students and learn to adjust and manage a new collegiate experience for them and their student. Relevant topics would include definitions of college terms, explanations of college policies and procedures, demonstrations on how to access tools and resources for student success, health and safety information, academic and financial information, and adjusting to life having a college student. Lastly, parent and family programming could include activities such as family weekend, sibling weekend, welcome week, educational workshops, and social events.

Incorporating the findings from the current study, in which students perceived their family would be more likely to engage with in-person events, the recommendation is to begin with an in-person family orientation, while having a virtual option available for those unable to attend. Parent/family weekend events and educational workshops could be launched as the program grows. Simultaneously, technical strategies could be launched, including a family email

Listserv and newsletter along with a designated family home page. A social media presence could be considered as staffing allows. One student even recommended a family portal:

> I'd love it if there was a way for family members to be involved in my college life through a platform uniquely for them. For example, my first year of college I attended Texas Tech University, and my mother was able to join family/parent groups and communicate with other families regarding events, important information, and much more! In doing so, my mother was also able to update me and provide me with useful information I wasn't aware of already, so this was a great way to check-in, and make sure I had everything I needed to succeed in school!

Results from the current study support the development of the PFR office. When the participants were asked if they believed their family member could benefit from free resources on helping them be successful in college, 63% strongly agreed or agreed. A portion of those students then provided their family member's contact information so that information could be shared with them. By providing information and resources to family members, the study shows they are more likely to share that information with their student. One statistical trend was that as a family member's resource awareness score increased, so did the student's perception of how frequently the family member encouraged them to use those resources.

The survey results indicated that the college may want to consider offering specialized programming to assist students with current mental health concerns. Analysis of the current study's students' comments aligned with Grant (2020), who found "parents were either skeptical or dismissive of their [student's] mental health concerns" (p. 105). Comments from the recent study, such as, "I would like for my mother to check up on me and my mental health more often," and "I feel like I would like him to be more aware of my mental health," justify further investigation into how PFP offices can help build parent/family knowledge around the mental health issues facing today's college students.

Focus on First-Generation Students and Families. Findings from the current study suggest a new PFP office should establish an early focus on first-generation students and their families. Approximately, 60% (*n* = 710) of student respondents were first-generation based on their selected family member's educational attainment level. Of those first-generation students, 75.2% (*n* = 534) were students from traditionally underserved, underrepresented race/ethnic backgrounds. Survey results indicated first-generation students perceived their family member as having significantly less parent/family involvement, less parent/family resource awareness, and less parent/family communication. Parent and family programming designed around these families' needs while incorporating their cultural values could possibly contribute to closing the equity success gap on college campuses. One participant shared:

> It would be nice if my mom could relate to me better as a college student, but it's difficult for us to connect together since she did not go to college, which means she does not have a lot of specific advice/experience related to college life like the parents of other people my age.

As discussed earlier, PFP contributes to a family's social and family capital, thus building college knowledge and empowering the parents to support their students.

Survey participants perceived their family member could encounter several barriers to family engagement, including not having enough time, not knowing how to support the student, and English not being their primary language. Any new PFP office would need to be cognizant of the time commitment that the orientation and other events would require and when in-person events are offered. Numerous offerings might need to be scheduled to meet evening and weekend preferences, so family members do not have to take off work to attend. The students identified the need for translators to be present at events and distribute communications available in multiple languages. PFP offices have the potential to close the

knowledge gap for first-generation families and their students. Higher education does not have to remain a mystery to those who do not have direct experience.

Implication 3

While not all students indicated a desire for parent/family involvement or had a person in their life to turn to, the current research found that the community college students involved in this study were interested in parent and family involvement and engagement. Open-ended comments and the statistical findings that show a relationship between satisfaction and level of parent/family involvement, resource awareness, and communication all document the students' openness to including their family member in their academic life at some level. Grant (2020) and Hart (2019) found that a lack of college knowledge and resources during the first years of college affected students' academic experiences. Community colleges are the first two years of college, and community college students experience similar difficulties. Having a little better insight into the students' views of those who participated in the study and knowing that they support parent/family involvement will hopefully motivate the community college sector to explore the possibilities of offering parent/family programming on their campuses.

Implications for Future Research

What an exciting time to be studying parent/family engagement. Generation Z has shown itself to be extremely close to their parents and views the parent/child relationship as one of a trusted mentor (Grace & Seemiller, 2016). As these students walk the halls and log into Zoom sessions, community colleges have unlimited opportunities to introduce and welcome their family members to campus. The current study was significant in that it contributes to a sparse body of literature by focusing on parent and family engagement at one community

college. The research must continue to gain a deeper, more thorough understanding of the benefits of family engagement and how community colleges can empower families to support student success. The following recommendations are made for future research.

This study focused on the student perception of parent/family involvement, family member resource awareness, and communication between the student and family member. It was a necessary starting point for a college that does not currently offer any form of organized support for family members of current students. The student perspective is critical in deciding whether the institution should invest time and resources in developing a parent/family program. To have a complete understanding of all key stakeholders and their needs, future research should involve the parent and family member perspective as well. Research could study just the parent/family member (Harper et al., 2020; Spence, 2012) or study pairs of students and parents (Grant, 2020; O. Johnson, 2019) to see if students and family members have similar understandings and expectations of the role of family engagement in student success. The parent/family member perspective is also necessary when designing programming to meet their specific diverse needs. A mixed-methods approach or qualitative study may yield a more comprehensive understanding of family needs and the cultural values that guide their family involvement decisions.

The instrument used for this study was designed by the researcher to explore one established construct of family involvement and two new constructs: the family member's awareness of college resources and frequency of communication between the student and family member regarding college-related topics. A new instrument was required because many of the existing instruments were designed for 4-year parent/family programs and contained

questions that were not relevant to the community college student (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; B. Johnson, 2019; Mulcahy, 2019; Oliver, 2011). Additional research needs to continue the development of an instrument that captures all of the elements of parent and family engagement but is customized for the community college context.

The current study used self-reported student grade point averages (GPA) when testing to determine if there was a relationship between student GPA and the three main variables that comprised the study. Self-reported GPA was selected to ensure anonymity to the respondents. However, Kuncel et al. (2015) reported that "self-reported grades are less construct valid than many scholars believe . . . and should be used with caution" (p. 63). Future studies may want to use college-retrieved data from student transcripts to ensure accuracy of the data and to avoid the potential of making a type I or type II error in the research. This process will require more time and more care when handling data to ensure participants' confidentiality. Researchers will want to ensure that the students are clear on the meaning of GPA, as well. Furthermore, B. Johnson (2019) mentioned alternative ways of measuring academic achievement besides GPA. This researcher concurs and recommends future research, including persistence rate data or perhaps other culturally defined definitions, which can be explored in qualitative research.

When exploring the relationship between the three main variables and various demographics, two additional areas for future studies surfaced. One was to explore the parent/family involvement construct from the perspective of the non-binary student. While not the focus of this study, 60 students identified as non-binary and bring to light the potential for specific research on how parent and family engagement can meet their specific needs. Second,

more research needs to examine the relationship between enrollment status and parent/family engagement variables. Although this study begins to address the gap in literature, future studies should examine if family members experience different levels of involvement or commitment, or have different needs, based on their student's enrollment status.

Lastly, when defining engagement opportunities, this study focused on technical and in-person strategies. An array of options was offered in each category, including websites, electronic newsletters, family orientation, and weekend events. One area that was not addressed and does not appear in the research often is the role of faculty in supporting a college's family engagement program. Petree and Savage (2021) listed faculty/staff meet-and-greets as one way faculty are involved. Spurlock (2017) addressed the importance of PFP programs training faculty and staff about the value of family engagement, including what a parent and family programming office does and how they can be a resource for the faculty and staff. Finally, Deutschlander (2019) explored the impact of a low-cost, light-touch intervention, such as sending text messages to parents to remind them to encourage their student to visit with their professors during the student's first year. Future research could explore potential partnerships with faculty regarding how they can involve families more in the students' instructional activities and curriculum.

LIMITATIONS

In addition to the limitations identified around the methodology in Chapter 3, the following additional limitations should be noted by future researchers. This study was based upon one large urban community college in the southern United States. The demographics of the institution, which vary greatly from other community colleges, include a very large part-

time population. The results ascertained here cannot be generalized to any other population. Next, the age demographic for this study was set to 18–24 years. However, that age group represents only approximately 37.4% of the student enrollment at the host institution. Results cannot be generalized internally to the remaining 63.6% of the student population. Additionally, the institution for this study does not offer parent and family services. Consequently, participants may not be as familiar with parent and family programming as respondents in other studies at institutions where parent and family offices have a presence. Student responses may have been influenced by their lack of exposure to the value of parent and family engagement. Lastly, the student perspective was central to the current study. However, it was limited in that the student was asked to gauge their parent/family member's awareness level of college resources. There is no way to validate the accuracy of their responses. Surveying the family member directly is the most precise way to obtain that data, but contact information for the family members was unavailable.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 5 provided a review of the purpose of this study and the methodology. A discussion of the study's findings followed, which highlighted how the study connected to previous research on parent and family engagement. The significance of those findings was explained, and implications for theory and practice were presented. The chapter ended by putting forth recommendations for further research and acknowledging limitations to the study.

CONCLUSION

As stated throughout the dissertation, the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of parent/family involvement from the community college student perspective. While the topic of parent/family engagement at community colleges sounds simple enough, the end-product was a multi-layered research project that contributed to numerous areas of study. Through the development of three composite scores (PF-I, PF-RA, PF-COMM), the researcher discovered that the students involved in this project were inclined to favor parent/family involvement in their academic lives. As part of Generation Z, they have established a different kind of relationship with their parents or selected family member, unlike previous generations. Participants show here that they reach out to their parent/family member as much as the parent/family member initiates contact with them. Community colleges should no longer ignore this connection but nurture it and develop it through whatever means possible.

The most reasonable means to develop the student's family support network is through PFP measures. Whether these measures take place through technical means such as an electronic newsletter or parent/family home page, or in-person events such as a parent/family orientation and family weekends, community colleges have an opportunity to invite their students' families into the academic fold. Small measures can make large gains toward closing the knowledge gap for first-generation families. However, institutions need to be aware of the potential barriers identified by the students that may prevent their parent/family member from engaging, especially barriers that are related to differences in cultural norms and attitudes toward education and family. A major barrier identified by these participants, besides lack of time, was that their family member did not know how to support them. Fortunately, the college

can address that barrier through a PFP office and by including the family as part of its strategic planning and student success initiatives.

Not only was this study grounded in theory, but its findings furthered the underpinnings of social capital, family capital, and emerging adult theories. Student participants testified to the desire of reaching independence, but also recognized the value of family support throughout their academic careers. Institutions do not need to fear that PFP will prevent students from achieving growth and development goals. Results also support the notion that PFP programming contributes to family resource awareness and consequently contributes to a student's family and social capital. However, some students were clear that their parent or family member's emotional support and encouragement can be enough to sustain them through their higher education experience.

As with any research, the conclusion is not the end. It is just the beginning of exploring the future of parent/family engagement on community college campuses. The current study has led to more unanswered questions and research opportunities. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the parent/family member is a critical partner in a young child's education through secondary school. For some students, the family support network is just as vital to their collegiate careers. Community colleges will gain much by learning to foster the parent/family support network and welcoming them as partners in the student success journey.

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APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY COLLEGE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Community College Family Involvement

Welcome & Agreement to Participate

Project Title: Student Perception of Parent/Family Involvement at Community Colleges
Researcher: Theresa E. Glenn (Tglenn2@austincc.edu)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the *"Community College Parent/Family Involvement"* survey. Your participation will directly benefit students and families at Austin Community College.

Your responses are anonymous. However, after completing the survey, you will be invited to enter your name and email into a drawing for one of two $50 Amazon gift cards. You may also share your family member's name and email address if you would like them to receive free information on parent/family involvement resources.

If you choose to provide contact information for yourself or your family, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher, but confidentiality is guaranteed. Any personal data will be disassociated from your survey responses. Answers to open-ended questions may be quoted by the researcher using pseudonyms. However, no identifying information will be included in any publications or presentations. For additional information about confidentiality, protected data, and any possible risks associated with the survey, click here. You may refuse to answer any question you wish or withdraw from the survey at any time by closing your browser. Although you are an ACC student, ACC is not sponsoring this project.

Scroll down and click the "NEXT Box" to start the survey.

Thank you!
Theresa Glenn

Community College Family Involvement

Consent

* 1. Check below to acknowledge your understanding of the 'Informed Consent and Agreement to Participate'.

- ◯ I hereby acknowledge receiving and understanding the Informed Consent and **agree** to participate in the survey of my own free will. I understand I can cease participation at anytime without any repercussions.
- ◯ I do **not** want to participate, please remove me from the email list.

Community College Family Involvement

Thank you for considering to participate in my Community College Family Involvement research study. If the information provided or the purpose of the study invoked troubling thoughts or feelings, please contact the counseling services on your college campus. If you are ever interested in learning more about parent/family involvement on community college campuses, please contact the researcher, Theresa Glenn, at Tglenn2@austincc.edu. You may close your browser now.
Thank you.

Community College Family Involvement

Demographics

This page allows the researcher to learn more about the respondents. You may skip any question you are uncomfortable answering and move to the next question.

2. What is your current enrollment status?

- ◯ Full-time (≥ 12 credit hours per semester/usually 4 classes or more)
- ◯ Part-time (≤ 11 credit hours per semester/usually 3 classes or less)

3. How many credit hours have you earned toward your current degree? This may be an estimate. (Typically each course is 3 or 4 credit hours.)

- ◯ 0-15 credit hours
- ◯ 16-30 credit hours
- ◯ 31-45 credit hours
- ◯ 46-60 credit hours
- ◯ >60 credit hours
- ◯ Do not know

4. What is your current overall/cumulative grade point average (GPA)?

- ◯ 3.5 - 4.0
- ◯ 3.0 - 3.4
- ◯ 2.5-2.9
- ◯ 2.0 - 2.4
- ◯ < 2.0
- ◯ I do not know

5. How old are you?

- ◯ Under 18
- ◯ 18
- ◯ 19-21
- ◯ 22-24
- ◯ 25 or older

6. Are you a high school/dual credit student?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

7. What is your gender?

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Non-Binary
- ◯ Prefer not to answer

8. What is your race/ethnicity?

- ◯ American Indian/Native American
- ◯ Asian/Asian American
- ◯ Black/African American
- ◯ Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify)
- ◯ Hispanic/Latinx
- ◯ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ◯ White/Caucasian

9. Have either of your parents or guardians completed a 4-year degree?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I do not know.

10. As you answer the questions on this survey, ***please select a parental figure, family member, or friend who is most involved in and supportive of your college endeavors***. Indicate the person you have chosen below. This person will be referred to as your "family member" for the remainder of the survey.

- ◯ Mother
- ◯ Father
- ◯ Step-parent
- ◯ Grandparent
- ◯ Aunt or Uncle
- ◯ Friend
- ◯ Sibling
- ◯ Spouse
- ◯ Guardian

Other (please specify)

11. What is your selected family member's highest level of education?

12. Do you live with your selected family member?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Community College Family Involvement

College Resource Awareness

13. Please indicate to what extent you perceive your **family member** is aware of the following college resources at ACC. There are no "right" or "wrong" responses.

	Very aware	Aware	Unaware	Very unaware	I do not know their knowledge level
Financial Aid Resources (e.g., loans, grants, scholarships)	○	○	○	○	○
Academic Support Resources (e.g., tutoring, learning labs, advising)	○	○	○	○	○
Career Resources (e.g., career center, resume writing, interview practice)	○	○	○	○	○
Student Life and Extracurricular Resources (e.g., student clubs, intramurals)	○	○	○	○	○
Mental Health/Stress Management Resources (e.g., counseling, workshops, hotlines)	○	○	○	○	○
Local Community Resources (e.g., housing, food pantries, transportation)	○	○	○	○	○
Safety Resources (e.g., theft prevention, emergency preparedness, sexual assault prevention)	○	○	○	○	○

Community College Family Involvement

Family Member Communication

Please keep your selected family member in mind as you answer the following questions. Note, all families communicate differently, there are no "right" answers to these questions.

14. Indicate how frequently you use the following communication channels with your family member.

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
In person; face-to-face	◯	◯	◯	◯
Phone call	◯	◯	◯	◯
Video chat via cell phone (e.g., Facetime or any platform)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Text messaging	◯	◯	◯	◯
Social media app (e.g., SnapChat/Instagram)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Email	◯	◯	◯	◯
Messaging app (e.g., GroupMe/WhatsApp)	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

15. Who is responsible for initiating the communication most often between you and your family member?

- ◯ I usually initiate communication with my family member.
- ◯ My family member usually initiates communication with me.
- ◯ My family member and I both initiate communication between us.

16. Please indicate how often you communicate with your family member about each of the following school-related topics during the semester.

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Academic progress (e.g., grades, attendance, GPA)	○	○	○	○
Courses (e.g., assignments, instructors, lectures)	○	○	○	○
College-related extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, student govt., intramural sports)	○	○	○	○
Financial needs (e.g., tuition, books, fees)	○	○	○	○
Selecting a major	○	○	○	○
Class schedule (e.g., which classes to take, how many classes to take)	○	○	○	○
Safety concerns on campus	○	○	○	○
Sense of belonging and fitting-in at the college	○	○	○	○

Any other school-related topics? (please specify)

17. Please indicate how often you communicate with your family member about each of the following personal topics during the semester.

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Physical health concerns	○	○	○	○
Mental health concerns (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression)	○	○	○	○
Romantic relationships	○	○	○	○
Social life/friendships	○	○	○	○
Job or career plans	○	○	○	○

Any other personal topics? (please specify)

Community College Family Involvement

Family Member Support

18. Please indicate how frequently your family member engages in the following activities.

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Offers you general words of support and encouragement (e.g., You got this; We believe in you; You can do it).	○	○	○	○
Provides you emotional support when stressed or worried (e.g., listens to you, offers advice).	○	○	○	○
Establishes an expectation for you to perform well academically (e.g., Work hard; Do your best; Pass your classes).	○	○	○	○
Helps you with your coursework and assignments (e.g., proof-reading papers, studying for exams, conducting research).	○	○	○	○
Encourages you to use resources available at the college to help you be successful.	○	○	○	○
Encourages you to contact faculty, staff, or administrators, if necessary.	○	○	○	○

19. Which of the following expenses does your family member help you pay? Check all that apply.

- ☐ **College expenses** (e.g., tuition, books, fees, supplies)
- ☐ **Living expenses** (e.g., live at home, rent, food)
- ☐ **Transportation expenses** (e.g., gas, car insurance, bus fees, car maintenance)
- ☐ **Personal expenses** (e.g., cell phone, computer, clothing, health care)
- ☐ **Other** (please specify)

  _____

- ☐ **None of the above**

20. How satisfied are you with your family member's overall involvement in your college life?

◯ Very satisfied ◯ Satisfied ◯ Dissatisfied ◯ Very dissatisfied

21. Please describe how you would like your family member to be involved in your college life in the future. You can use ideas mentioned in this survey if that helps you. Would you like more or less involvement? Please explain.

_____

Community College Family Involvement

Intent to Persist

22. Will you enroll in class(es) at ACC or another institution this coming summer and/or fall semesters?

◯ Yes ◯ No ◯ Unsure

Please explain if you are unsure or will not be returning.

_____

23. Will you graduate with a college degree/credential (from ACC or any institution)?

◯ Yes ◯ No ◯ Unsure

Please explain if you are unsure or do not expect to earn a college degree or credential.

_____

Community College Family Involvement

Parent/Family Engagement Opportunities

24. Please indicate how likely your family member is to use the following college engagement opportunities, if available.

	Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very unlikely
Parent/Family webpage	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family newsletter	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family podcasts	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family email list	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family blog	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family group text messaging app (GroupMe, WhatsApp)	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify other ideas not listed here)

25. Please indicate how likely your family member is to participate in the following academic engagement opportunities, if available. They might be virtual or in-person.

	Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very unlikely
Parent/Family orientation	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family weekend event (e.g., visit campus, take tours, meet faculty & staff)	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family advisory panel (e.g., provide input on events and family resources)	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family gatherings (e.g., semester kick-off events and graduation celebrations)	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family mentor program (e.g., families supporting new families)	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family volunteer opportunities (on or off campus)	○	○	○	○
Parent/Family college-related workshops (e.g., financial aid, career-paths, transferring)	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify other ideas not listed here)

Community College Family Involvement

Potential Barriers to Family Involvement

26. Which of the following pose a possible barrier to your family member being involved in your college life? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Family member does not know how to support or help me with my college life.
- [ ] Family member has limited or no time.
- [ ] Family member has other family members to care for.
- [ ] English is not my family member's primary language.
- [ ] Family member lacks interest.
- [ ] Family member does not live close to me.
- [ ] Family member prefers I do not attend college.
- [ ] I do not want to have my family member involved in my college life.
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] None of the above

Community College Family Involvement

Request for Family Member Resources

27. My family member could benefit from free resources on helping me be successful in college.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
○	○	○	○

28. Would you like your family member to receive free educational information regarding student support resources available at Austin Community College?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not necessary, I will not be at ACC next semester.

Community College Family Involvement

Family Member Contact Information

29. We will be happy to provide your family member with free resources. Please check any of the resource materials you would like sent.

- [ ] Financial resources
- [ ] Academic resources
- [ ] Mental health/wellness resources
- [ ] Job opportunities/Career paths/interviewing resources
- [ ] Extracurricular/intramurals information
- [ ] Campus safety resources
- [ ] Community housing/food resources
- [ ] None of the above

Other (please specify)

30. Please share your family member's contact information so we can send the resource materials to them immediately. Their contact information will not be shared with any other entity.

Name

Address

Address 2

City/Town

State/Province -- select state --

ZIP/Postal Code

Email Address

Community College Family Involvement

End of Survey

31. Thank you for completing this survey. Would you like to enter the raffle drawing for one of two $50 Amazon gift cards?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

32. Please submit your name and e-mail contact to be entered into the drawing. Good luck!

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Thank you for your participation. Please contact the researcher, Theresa Glenn, at Tglenn2@austincc.edu if you are interested in receiving a copy of the results.

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY

Hello there!

As an [UCC] student, you are invited to participate in a voluntary survey about student perceptions of parent/family involvement during your enrollment at U Community College [UCC]. You are being asked to participate because you are a current student between 18-24 years old, and your opinion matters. This research is a part of my graduate studies. It explores how ACC can empower families to support students during their college years. In addition, the study seeks to identify any perceived barriers to family involvement and ways families can be engaged with the college. Information collected in this survey will directly benefit students and their families.

The survey should only take approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. Your responses are anonymous. However, upon completing the survey you will be invited to enter your name and email address into a drawing for one of two $50 Amazon gift cards. For additional information about confidentiality, protected data, and any risks associated with the survey, click here.

To BEGIN the survey, CLICK HERE!

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, contact the Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410G, Big Rapids, MI 49307 (231) 591-2553 or IRB@ferris.edu. If you have questions about this study, please email me, the Principal Investigator, Theresa Glenn, at Tglenn2@xxxxxcc.edu, or my Responsible Faculty, Dr. Vanessa Lazo, at Vanessa.lazo@xxxxxcc.edu. You may print this informed consent form for your future reference.

Thank you for participating!

Theresa Glenn
Communication Studies, Prof
Sabbatical Recipient
Ferris State University,
EdD Candidate

APPENDIX C: FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL LETTER

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
1010 Campus Drive FLITE 410 Big Rapids, MI 49307
www.ferris.edu/irb

Date: March 21, 2022

To: Susan DeCamillis, EdD and Theresa Glenn
From: David R. White, Ph.D, IRB Chair
Re: IRB Application *IRB-FY21-22-74 Parent/Family Involvement at Community Colleges: The Student Perspective*

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your request for revisions to the study, *Parent/Family Involvement at Community Colleges: The Student Perspective(IRB-FY21-22-74)*. Approved of this revision follows the status check-in date of your initial application approval. As such, you may collect data according to the procedures outlined in your application until December 16, 2022.

Your project will continue to be subject to the research protocols as mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) for using human subjects in research. It is your obligation to inform the IRB of any changes in your research protocol that would substantially alter the methods and procedures reviewed and approved by the IRB in your application. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let us know if the IRB can be of any future assistance.

Regards,

David R. White, Ph.D., IRB Chair
Ferris State University Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX D: HOST INSTITUTION IRRC APPROVAL

[REDACTED] Community College
Institutional Research Review Committee
Letter of Agreement

DATE: December 14, 2021

TO: Theresa Glenn
1205 Faber Dr.
Pflugerville, TX 78860

FROM: [REDACTED], Ph.D.

On behalf of the Institutional Research Review Committee of [REDACTED] Community College, I am pleased to inform you that the proposal you submitted, "Parent/ Family Involvement at Community Colleges: The Student Perspective" has been approved.

If you wish to pursue this proposal, please sign and return this letter to the Office of Institutional Research and Analytics by January 14, 2022. All [REDACTED]-based research must be completed within one year of this agreement, unless otherwise stated.

If you have any questions, please contact us.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED] 12/17/2021

[REDACTED], Ph.D. Date
Chair, [REDACTED] Institutional Research Review Committee
Vice Chancellor, Office of Institutional Research and Analytics

[REDACTED] Community College
Institutional Research Review Committee
Researcher's Statement Regarding Proposal: Parent/Family Involvement at Community Colleges: The Student Perspective

I have read the **Research Review Process** and agree to abide by the guidelines specified there.

I understand that my Research Proposal has been approved contingent upon the modifications listed above.

I understand that approval of this project does not imply [REDACTED] Community College's endorsement of either the project or it results.

I understand that [REDACTED] Community College is not responsible for any debts that I may incur as part of this project nor will it provide consumable resources.

I will provide a copy of the results of this study to the Institutional Research Review Committee of [REDACTED] Community College.

Theresa Glenn February 21, 2022

Theresa Glenn, Researcher Date