Studying the Impact of Parental Involvement on College Student Development: A Review and Agenda for Research

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Introduction

The involvement of parents in the lives of college students has become an area of significant interest to higher education practitioners and the mass media. Calling them "helicopter parents," a term originally used by Cline and Fay (1990) to describe an "ineffective parenting style" in their book *Parenting With Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility*, both the media and college administrators regularly share stories of extreme parent behavior: contacting the college late at night to report a mouse discovered in a daughter's room, complaining about a roommate who snores, or expressing anger over a grade on a paper "my son worked so hard on" (Coburn, 2006, p. 9).

Parental involvement does include examples of such extreme parent behavior. However, it also reflects a more general trend of parents showing interest in the lives of their college-going offspring and in gaining more information about college (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Indeed, the parents of today's traditional-aged college students today maintain close ties with their children (Coburn, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Taub, 2008), which has also led to a high frequency of communication between parents and students. According to the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which posed questions about the parent-student relationship, seven out of ten students said that they communicated "very often" with at least one parent or guardian during the academic year (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007).

In general, a number of contributing factors have led to the increase in parental involvement (Carney-Hall, 2008; Merriman, 2006; Wartman & Savage, 2008). First, there has been a generational shift where today's college students share a significant closeness with their parents that was not characteristic of the previous generation (Howe & Strauss, 2003). In addition, there have been changes in parenting style. For many parents, the 1990s (the childhood of today's college students) was a time

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where shuttling children from activity to activity was popular and the trend of managing overscheduled kids was dominant (Stearns, 2003, p. 9). Rising college costs have also led parents to become more involved, as parents are more frequently helping to finance the education of their children and bearing the burden of these increased costs (Johnstone, 2005). Finally, growth in the use of technology has also contributed to the phenomenon of parental involvement, providing students and parents with more ways to communicate with one another, whether by cell phone, e-mail, instant messaging, or text messaging.

The trend of parental involvement in higher education represents a cultural shift in the relationship among three respective parties: student, parent, and institution (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Just as the relationship between parents and their students in college has changed over time, so too have the relationships between student and institution and between parent and institution. The student-parent-institution dynamic has evolved from the doctrine of *in loco parentis*, with parents expecting the university to take care of their children, to this new situation where parents have a direct relationship with the university (Henning, 2007). According to Merriman (2006), who surveyed student affairs administrators at 127 doctoral research institutions, 93% of respondents said that there had been an increase in the number of interactions they had with parents in the previous 5 years.

The response from colleges to the phenomenon of parental involvement also demonstrates the shifting relationship between parents and institution, as institutional representatives attempt to "manage" parental involvement (Carney-Hall, 2008). At some colleges and universities, administrators actively resist parental involvement, even to the point of assigning, "parent bouncers" to prevent parents from accompanying students to course registration at orientation (Shellenbarger, 2005). Other institutions have assigned staff to respond to parent concerns and to provide services to parents, including parent orientation programs, parent communications such as newsletters and e-mails, and family-focused events (Savage, 2008; Ward-Roof, Heaton, & Coburn, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

What effects do the shifts in the parent-student-institution relationship have on student development? Student affairs administrators are concerned that parental involvement negatively impacts students' development (Savage, 2003; Taub, 2008). Many administrators adhere to the theory that students should have a balance of challenge and support in their college experience (Sanford, 1962, and therefore are concerned that parents are upsetting this balance and tipping the scales by providing too much support to students through intervening on their behalf (Taub, 2008). However, the significance of parental involvement has received very little attention in the scholarly literature on college student development. This chapter reviews what we know about the impact of parental involvement on college student development and proposes a research agenda that will advance our understanding of the implications of this phenomenon for college students, researchers, and higher education practitioners. We begin with a review of theoretical concepts used in the current research related to higher education and then highlight the methodology used in these studies, both quantitative and qualitative. Next we discuss findings

of the relevant empirical work. We will conclude with recommendations of how to approach study of this topic in the future.

Theoretical Approaches to Studying Parental Involvement

In general, theories about the relationship between students and parents do not focus on college students' development or on the broader college context. In addition, those theories that do account for college student development largely do not factor in the role of parents. Most student development theories were developed before the shift in the parent-student-institution relationship occurred and the doctrine of *in loco parenti*s was overturned; theorists did not view parents as playing a direct role in students' development at college (Taub, 2008). Further, the student development theories that do include parents focus primarily on the transition to college and students' process of "leaving home." As discussed below, there is a conflicting tension in the literature between the ideas of students' separating from parents and staying attached, and which is the healthier option. In addition, the ways in which autonomy and independence are constructed, and whether college students are children or adults, are important theoretical questions to consider when looking at the impact of parental involvement on college student development.

Separation-Individuation

Separation-individuation is most frequently described as a developmental process that begins with separation from parents in order to gain the ability to function autonomously (Mattanah, Brand, & Hancock, 2004; Rice, 1992). Traditionally, the prevailing theory about college student development was that acquiring autonomy and individuation were necessary developmental goals. According to this theory, students who understand themselves as individuals are better able to perform what is required of them as college students, such as waking up on time, attending classes, choosing courses, and navigating the social atmosphere at college (Mattanah et al., 2004). Erikson used this theory to describe the central task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Chickering used this theory as the basis for his idea of autonomy development in *Education and Identity,* first written in 1969 and revised with Reisser in 1993. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), a necessary developmental process for students is learning to function with emotional independence, or without the need for reassurance, affection, or approval from parents.

Attachment

Human development research has contributed to the largest body of literature on the student-parent relationship. Bowlby originally conceptualized attachment theory

in 1973 to explain the distress that infants and young children experience when separated from their parental caregivers (Schwartz & Buboltz, 2004). It is based on the idea that the infant's ability to explore the world is a direct result of having a parent as a "secure base" (Schwartz & Buboltz, 2004; Vivona, 2000). According to attachment theory, attachment is a bond that can promote autonomy, rather than signaling dependency (Ainsworth, Blehar, Walters, & Wally, 1978; Bowlby, 1988).

Attachment relationships exist across one's life span, not just in infancy (Ainsworth, 1989). When the framework of attachment is applied to the college context, it challenges the more traditional student development concept of separation-individuation. A number of human development theorists support the theory of attachment to more accurately describe the developmental relationship between parents and their college students. For example, according to Kenny (1987), secure attachment relationships offer support in times of stress, allowing students to explore their new environments with more confidence. Therefore, for college students, the process of leaving home can be described as a situation in which the availability of parents may support, rather than threaten, a student's development of competence and autonomy (Kenny, 1987). According to this theory, rather than needing a defined break from parents, students may benefit from regular parental contact and support. Further, some theorists believe that—given the supposed primacy of relationships for women (Gilligan, 1993)—the attachment perspective more adequately accounts for the experiences of female college students than does separation-individuation.

Combining Theories

Ultimately, it may be a combination of separation-individuation *and* attachment that leads to positive emotional adjustment. According to Schwartz and Buboltz (2004), although there appears to be a tension between the concepts of psychological separation and attachment they are not mutually exclusive; there is an equilibrium (Schwartz & Buboltz, 2004). Schultheiss and Blustein (1994) found that the combined effects of separation-individuation and attachment predicted college student development for women and college student adjustment for men (Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994).

In addition, Mattanah et al. (2004) proposed a model where a history of secure attachment leads students to feel more comfortable about the process of separation-individuation and therefore have more success adjusting to college. The authors found that the process of individuation was actually facilitated by the presence of secure attachment relationships with parents. For Josselson (1987), the definition of separation-individuation includes elements of attachment theory. According to Josselson (1987), the problem of separating from one's parents, "is the problem of not only becoming different but of becoming different and maintaining connection at the same time" (p. 171). Therefore, even though it is necessary for students to become distinct individuals from their parents, maintaining the connection to their parents is a central component of separation-individuation (Josselson, 1987).

These theories show that attachment does not need to be positioned in opposition to separation-individuation. Both attachment and separation-individuation may be working together to have combined effects on student adjustment to college.

Measuring Autonomy

In addition to the concepts of separation-individuation and attachment, another question that emerges in the study of college student-parent relationships is how to measure autonomy. Some theories have considered autonomy as different types of independence. For example, Hoffman (1984) discusses psychological separation as functional, emotional, conflictual, and attitudinal independence. Functional independence includes that ability to manage and direct one's practical and personal affairs without the assistance of a parent. Attitudinal independence is defined as having unique beliefs, values, and attitudes from one's parents. Emotional independence refers to a freedom for a need for emotional support, and conflictual independence is having a freedom from guilt or anxiety as these feelings relate to one's parents (Hoffman, 1984).

In addition, Chickering and Reisser (1993) describe their vector, Moving Through Autonomy to Interdependence, as having three components: emotional independence, instrumental independence, and the recognition of interdependence. Similar to Hoffman (1984), Chickering and Reisser's emotional independence refers to a freedom from a need for continuous approval from parents. Instrumental independence is the ability to solve problems on one's own- in a self-directed way. Finally, interdependence includes an awareness of one's role in the larger community (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Emerging Adults

The shifting parent-student-institution relationship also raises a fundamental philosophical question about whether college students are children or adults. Arnett (2000, 2006) suggests that college students occupy a unique category in between child and adult. He calls this period "emerging adulthood" and proposes a theory to describe the developmental period from the late teens through the twenties, with a specific focus on ages 18–25. According to Arnett (2000, 2006), "emerging adulthood" is neither adolescence nor young adulthood; it is theoretically and empirically distinct from both. Defined by a relative independence from social roles and normative expectations, the main features of this period are identity exploration, instability, being self-focused, and feeling "in between" (Arnett, 2000, 2006).

Social Capital

The theory of social capital is sometimes used to discuss the role of parental involvement in college access, and might be applicable to studying parental involvement

and the college student experience. According to Coleman (1988), social capital refers to the possession of valuable relationships that can assist students in gaining other kinds of tangible and symbolic resources, such as human capital or education. It may also help students to gain forms of cultural capital, or cultural signals of social and cultural selection processes (such as college admissions) (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Parents' social capital is usually generated from parents' relationship to their students as well as their relationship to other adults (Coleman, 1988). A key component of social capital in the education context is intergenerational closure, or the sharing of commonly-accepted norms and values. Social capital is primarily passed from parents to children, and parental involvement can build social capital (Coleman, 1988). However, students can also gain social capital from sources outside the family, such as school personnel (Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Perna and Titus (2005) conceptualized parental involvement as social capital in the context of enrollment in college. In their study, they considered the relationship between parental involvement, student social capital, and the chances that a student would enroll in a college or university (either 2 or 4 year) in the fall following their high school graduation. In their model, they constructed parental involvement as a form of social capital based on Coleman's (1988) model of relationships. Parental involvement was based on three primary relationships: parent-student involvement, parent-school involvement, and parent-to-parent involvement as well as any disruptions to this involvement (Perna & Titus, 2005). Perna and Titus found that these measures of parental involvement were related to students' enrollment in higher education immediately following high school graduation.

These existing theories provide several useful lenses for examining the impact of parental involvement, though no single theory emerges as the most appropriate theoretical perspective for considering the role of parents during college. With that in mind, we turn to a discussion of the place of parental involvement within models of college impact.

Models of College Impact

It is important to consider whether and how parental involvement fits (or could conceivably fit) in models of college impact. Existing models focus specifically on the "processes and origins of change" experienced by college students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 52), and consider the impact of a wide range of college experiences after accounting for the socializing influences of students' background and pre-college experiences. Parent-student interactions certainly qualify as a potential source of influence during college, however, as noted by Wintre and Yaffe (2000), "none of the previous models demarcate specific elements of the parent-child relationship, which may contribute to adaptation to the university" (p. 10). Below we review some of the most well-known college impact models (plus one newer model) to assess where parental involvement might be located within the model.

Astin's Input-Environment-Outcome (IEO) model (1968, 1993) provides a clear-cut approach to assessing the process of student change during college. It is probably the most general of the college impact models, in that it views college student outcomes as a function of environmental influences that are considered after controlling for a wide range of input (background) factors. While Astin's model does not explicitly account for the ongoing role of parents (except primarily as an "input" that shapes students' characteristics as they arrive at college), it does not preclude it either. The notion of "environment" is broad enough to account for parents as a potential source of influence.

Similarly, Pascarella's (1985) model of college impact does not directly account for the role of parents during college, though the influence of parents can be inferred. The model highlights the student and institutional factors that contribute to learning and cognitive development, including: student background/pre-college characteristics, structural/organizational characteristics of institutions, institutional environments, interactions with agents of socialization, and quality of student effort. The role of family is mentioned among background traits, though an ongoing parental role certainly qualifies for inclusion in Pascarella's category for "interactions with agents of socialization" (p. 50).

The role of parents is addressed more explicitly in Weidman's (1989) model of undergraduate socialization. The model represents a multi-stage process of development that accounts for the "joint socializing impacts" (p. 298) of student background characteristics, parental socialization, and non-college reference groups on students' experiences and ultimate socialization. Thus, Weidman specifically acknowledges the role of parents as an ongoing source of normative pressure influencing students' socialization during college.

Tinto's (1993) six-stage model of student departure also accommodates the influence of parents during the college years. His model considers the role of family as part of an "external community" that has an ongoing influence on students' departure decision during college. According to Tinto, strong relationships with members of the community before and during college can serve to facilitate adjustment and retention through their indirect effects on academic and social integration. Further, he acknowledges that student-family interactions can serve competing purposes, as they may both support and detract from students' institutional commitments.

More recently, Perna and Thomas (2008) specify "family context" as one of four layers of influence on college success. The other three layers are described as "internal context" (students' attitudes and behaviors), "school context" (which extends from primary school through college), and "social, economic and policy context." In their model, family is viewed as shaping student attitudes and behaviors, and ultimately student success in college. Though the model does not talk explicitly about the influence of parental involvement during college, it represents a notable contribution by emphasizing the ongoing role of families in shaping students' college outcomes.

Thus, to varying degrees, the models described above can be used to study the impact of parental involvement on college student development. One question,

however, is whether to consider parents as an exclusively "external" force, as suggested by several models. Today, with student-parent communication at an all-time high, and with parents increasingly interacting directly with the institution, one could argue that parents have become less of an external influence, and more integrated into the everyday lives of students and institutions. This will be an important consideration as newer models are developed to account for the role of parents during college.

Empirical Research on Parental Involvement and College Student Development

Thus far, we have described a range of theoretical perspectives—sometimes conflicting—on the role of parents in the lives of traditional-aged college students, and we have revealed the fairly tangential role that parental involvement plays in existing models of college impact. Now it is important to review what the empirical literature tells us about the role of parents in the college student experience. We begin with a discussion of the methodological approaches that have been used to study this topic, followed later by a summary of findings emanating from that body of work.

It is important to clarify the scope of the literature included in this review. First, we focus exclusively on research that examines the role played by parents *during college*. We acknowledge that several studies have focused on the pre-college years, such as those using the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS) questions on parental involvement in the preparation for or transition to college (e.g., Ma, 2009; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Perna & Titus, 2005). However, as suggested by Arnett's (2000, 2006) concept of "emerging adulthood," an understanding of the role played by parents during the college years cannot rely solely on findings from research on early- and mid-adolescents.

Second, though we aimed to identify research on the impact of parental involvement as a set of behaviors (e.g., frequency and nature of parent-student contact in college), we have learned that much of the research focuses more on the *qualities* of the parent-student relationship (e.g., level of attachment, separation, autonomy, etc.). Some of these concepts are addressed via an assessment of parent behaviors, but often are measured in terms of students' perceptions about their relationship with their parents. Thus, our review adopts a somewhat loose definition of "parental involvement" in order to include the research—mostly out of the field of human development—on the quality of parent-student relationships in college.

Finally, because the majority of research on the interplay between parent-student relations and college student development has been quantitative in nature, the majority of studies included in our review are based on quantitative methods. Thus, our review includes approximately fifty articles that rely on quantitative methods, and about one dozen that use qualitative methods. Some articles use mixed methods, as discussed later.

Quantitative Research

This section reviews this body of work across the following categories: (a) populations studied; (b) measures of the parent-student relationship; (c) student outcome measures; and (d) methodological approaches.

Populations Studied

For the most part, research on this topic has relied on samples of traditional-age college students attending 4-year residential colleges and universities. The samples tend to be fairly small, usually ranging from 100 to 400 students. In about half of the quantitative studies we reviewed, the samples were comprised of first-year college students who were surveyed at orientation or large introductory courses such as Psychology or English. Studies focusing exclusively on first-year populations include those by Bartle-Haring, Brucker, and Hock (2002), Berman and Sperling (1990), Kenny (1987), Kenny and Donaldson (1991, 1992), Kenyon and Koerner (2009); Mallinckrodt (1988), Rice (1992); Samoulis, Layburn, and Schiaffino (2001), and Wintre and Yaffe (2000). In most of this research, students completed survey instruments at a single point in time, though in two studies—Bartle-Haring et al. (2002) and Berman and Sperling (1990)—students were surveyed a second time during their first year in college, and Rice (1992) followed-up his first-year sample in their junior year.

   Some research on this topic has drawn samples from multiple cohorts of college students, comparing an aspect of parent-student relations across cohorts (Taub, 1997) or between upper- and lower-division students (Lapsley, Rice, & Fitzgerald, 1990). However, in many other studies where students varied by year in school, a comparison across cohorts is not central to the analysis (e.g., Cutrona, Cole, Colangelo, Assouline, & Russell, 1994; Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993; Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002; Ketterson & Blustein, 1997; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Mattanah et al., 2004; Mounts, 2004; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990; Rice, Cunningham, & Young, 1997; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994).

   Finally, it was surprising that only two of the quantitative studies we reviewed included data collected directly from parents (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002; Kenyon & Koerner, 2009). In both of these studies, parents completed an instrument designed to measure aspects of parent-child separation. As we will discuss later, parents' perspectives and experiences are vital for research on the impact on parent-student relations on college student development.

Measures of the Parent-Student Relationship

How have parental involvement and other aspects of the parent-student relationship been examined in the quantitative literature? Our review suggests that there are two major categories of parent-student measures: (1) theoretically-derived scales drawn from established instruments in the field of psychology; and (2) measurements from

institutional or multi-institutional surveys in the field of higher education. A review of these major categories and specific survey instruments is below.

Established Measures

The majority of published research on the nature of college students' relationship with their parents relies on well-developed psychological scales for attachment, separation, or other aspects of the parent-child relationship. For the most part, these instruments were not designed exclusively for use on the college student population, but on adolescents and/or young adults in general. These instruments are summarized below in terms of their focus on attachment, separation, and other domains (e.g., social provisions, parental reciprocity, parental authority, and family structure).

Attachment. The two most widely used instruments to assess students' attachment to parents are the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ) and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachments (IPPA). The PAQ, developed by Kenny (1985), is a 55-item self-report instrument that measures how young adults perceive their relationship with their parents. Based on Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) notion of attachment, the PAQ is "designed to assess the following: perceived parental availability, understanding, acceptance, respect, and facilitation of autonomy; students' interest in interaction with parents and students' affect towards parents during visits; student help-seeking behavior in situations of stress; and students' satisfaction with help obtained from parents" (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991, p. 480). The PAQ includes three scales—Affective Quality of Attachment, Parental Fostering of Autonomy, and Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support—that have been used in several studies on college students (e.g., Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991, 1992; Kenny & Perez, 1996; Taub, 1997).

The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachments (IPPA), developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987), is a self-report questionnaire that assesses students' perceptions of their relationship with parents as well as peers. The 28-item IPPA scale related to parents produces several factors representing aspects of the parent-student relationship: trust, understanding and respect, accessibility, responsivity, predictability, isolation, anxiety, and detachment. Like the PAQ, several studies on college students have used the IPPA, including: Ketterson and Blustein (1997), Lapsley et al. (1990), Mattanah et al. (2004), Schultheiss and Blustein (1994), Schwartz and Buboltz (2004), Sorokou and Weissbrod (2005), and Vivona (2000).

A lesser-used instrument in this body of research is the Continued Attachment Scale—Parent Version (CAS-Mother and CAS-Father), an instrument designed by Berman (1988) and revised by Berman, Heiss, and Sperling (1994) to reflect Bowlby's (1973) conceptualization of attachment and separation behaviors. The questionnaire elicits information such as how much the child thinks about, is reminded of, and misses his/her parents. The CAS was used by Samoulis et al. (2001) in a study of college student identity development.

Separation. We identified two established instruments used to assess the notion of "separation" between college students and their parents. The first is the Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI), a 138-item self-report questionnaire developed by Hoffman (1984) as a way to assess four different dimensions of students' independence from their parents: functional independence, emotional independence, conflictual independence, and attitudinal independence. Several studies have used the PSI to study the relationship between separation/independence and aspects of college student development, including: Kenny and Donaldson (1992), Kenyon and Koerner (2009), Lapsley and Edgerton (2002), Rice (1992), Rice et al. (1990), and Schultheiss and Blustein (1994).

Another survey used to assess separation is the Parents of Adolescents Separation Anxiety Scale (PASAS), a 35-item instrument that was developed by Hock, Eberly, Bartle-Haring, Ellwanger, and Widaman (2001) as a way to assess separation anxiety from the perspective of the *parent*. The instrument includes two subscales: Anxiety about Adolescent Distancing, and Comfort with Secure Base Role. Bartle-Haring et al. (2002) used the PASAS in their study of the impact of parental separation anxiety on identity development among their college-going children.

Additional measures of student-parent relationship. Several other instruments have been used to tap into specific dimensions of the student-parent relationship, though they do not focus exclusively on the concepts of attachment or separation described above. This section describes four that have been used in research on the impact of parents on college student development.

First is the Social Provisions Scale-Parent Version (SPS-P), which was developed by Cutrona (1989) to assess six provisions: "guidance (advice and information), reliable alliance (tangible assistance), attachment (caring), social integration (similarity of interests and concerns), reassurance of worth (positive evaluation of skills and abilities), and opportunity to provide nurturance (providing support to others)" (Cutrona et al., 1994, p. 371). The SPS-P was used by Cutrona et al. (1994) to examine how parental social support predicted college student GPA.

Second is the Perception of Parental Reciprocity Scale (POPRS), developed by Wintre, Yaffe, and Crowley (1995) to examine the reciprocal nature of the student-parent relationship (i.e., the degree of sharing and level of respect in student-parent interactions). Wintre and Yaffe (2000) used the POPRS to assess the impact of parent-student relations on students' adjustment to college and GPA.

Third is the Parental Authority Questionnaire, developed by Buri (1991). This instrument includes scales to assess three dominant parenting styles of mothers and fathers: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. It has been used on research on college students by Kenny and Donaldson (1992), Trice (2002), and Wintre and Yaffe (2000).

Finally, the Family Structure Survey (FSS) was used in research by Kenny and Donaldson (1991). The FSS was developed by Lopez, Campbell, and Watkins (1988) to "assess the presence of inappropriate family interactions and consists of four subscales measuring parent-child over-involvement, family fear of separation, parent-child role reversal, and parental marital conflict" (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991, p. 481).

Newer Measurements from the Field of Higher Education

The instruments described above emanate primarily from the field of psychology and reflect well-developed and theoretically-derived notions of parent-child relations. Our review of research findings, which follows in a later section, is based primarily on research that has used these instruments. However, at this point it is also important to acknowledge how parent-student relations in college are assessed via instruments developed out of the field of higher education. The inclusion of questions about parent-student relationships on these instruments does not appear to be a mechanism for testing theoretical conceptions of this relationship, but instead to gather useful information for higher education researchers and practitioners.

As interest in parental involvement in higher education has grown, questions on this phenomenon were added to two of the most well-known and widely-used surveys of college students: the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) 2007 Freshman Survey and the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The CIRP addressed the issue of parental involvement fairly briefly, with a question asking entering college students how involved their parents (or legal guardians) were in the student's decision to attend college, the college application and college choice process, the student's dealings with college officials, and in decisions regarding course-taking and college activities. Such information on parental involvement was gathered from a very large sample (375,000 college students from over 500 colleges and universities) affording the opportunity to study parental involvement at both the national and institutional levels (Pryor, Hurtado, Sharkness, & Korn, 2007). However, given the timing of the CIRP survey (usually administered at first-year orientation or during the first week of classes), it is important to remember that the survey primarily elicits information on parental involvement just *prior* to college.

The NSSE instrument included a greater number of questions on parental involvement than did the CIRP, however the questions were administered only to a subset of 9,184 students at 24 institutions who completed NSSE online (Shoup, Gonyea, & Kuh, 2009). The NSSE instrument gathered the following information regarding parental involvement and parent-student interaction: frequency and method of contact (in-person or electronic), topic of discussion (academic/vocational, personal, social, financial and family matters), perceived quality of relationship with parents, parental involvement in students' college affairs, and likelihood of following parental advice. A noteworthy aspect of the NSSE questions is that they distinguish between the role played by mothers versus fathers.

Parental involvement also has been addressed by another multi-institutional survey: The University of California Undergraduate Experience Study (UCUES). The UCUES instrument is designed to collect information on the backgrounds and experiences of UC undergraduates, with the ultimate goal of creating a longitudinal database for institutional and scholarly research (Brint, Douglass, Flacks, Thomson, & Chatman, 2007). The 2006 UCUES included a set of questions related to parents in its "Student Development" module, which was completed by 10,760 undergraduates at nine campuses in the University of California system. Students were asked

to indicate the frequency and method of communication with parents (phone, text message, email or in person), aspects of parental involvement in students' academic decision-making, and students' attitude regarding their parents' level of involvement (Wolf, Sax, & Harper, 2009).

Parental involvement is the focus of another multi-institutional research study, currently in the field, sponsored by NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. The study involves longitudinal surveys of students and parents at six institutions, with the goal of examining the impact of parental involvement on college student development (King, Watson, & Mullendore, 2009). Though findings have not yet been published, it is important to acknowledge the survey of parents as a new development in research on this topic. Specifically, the parent survey asks a wide range of questions about the parent-student relationship, including frequency of contact and communication, degree and nature of parental involvement, and perceived student response to parental involvement. In addition, the survey acknowledges the parent-institution relationship by including questions about the frequency and nature of parents' communication directly with the college, such as during a parent information session, family weekend, or online.

Also worthy of mention is the survey of parents conducted by College Parents of America, a membership organization that serves as a resource for parents of college students (College Parents of America, 2009). Though the survey is not intended for scholarly research, it is useful to point out the nature of the questions included on the instrument, including: frequency and method of contact, who initiates parent-student contact, nature of parent concerns, nature of advice requested by student, and parents' level of contact directly with the institution.

Finally, it is also important to acknowledge the existence of a range of parent surveys administered directly by individual institutions to parents of currently-enrolled students. Though too numerous to mention individually, such surveys serve as a way to collect information on areas of parental satisfaction or concern, to solicit parental interest in involvement or fundraising, and to assess parent services that have been implemented as a response to the perceived "helicopter parent" phenomenon.

Student Outcome Measures

Measures of parental involvement and parent-student relationships that emerge from the instruments described above are typically conceptualized in the literature as a set of independent variables that serve to shape or predict various aspects of college student development. At this point, it is useful to review the nature of outcome (or dependent) variables that have been addressed in research on the impact of parental involvement on college student development outcomes. Because research on parental involvement tends to be cross-sectional, studies often focus on the role of parents in predicting *levels* or *stages* on a particular aspect of development, rather than addressing student development longitudinally. This is especially true for research conducted out of the field of psychology. The following student outcome domains are most prevalent in this body of research: adjustment to college, identity

development, psychological well-being, educational outcomes, and other college behaviors. These outcomes are discussed below in terms of the survey instruments and specific measures that have been used to assess them.

Adjustment to College

Widely used in research on the impact of parent-student relationships is the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) (Baker & Siryk, 1999). The SACQ is a 67-item scale that measures the variety of ways in which students must adapt to life in college. Items from the SACQ are used to create several factors reflecting various aspects of college adjustment: Academic (e.g., academic motivation, performance, and satisfaction), Social (e.g., involvement in campus social life, quality of relations with others), Personal-Emotional (e.g., physical and psychological well-being), and Goal Commitment (e.g., satisfaction with choice of college and commitment to degree completion). These factors have been used as outcomes in a several studies on the impact of parents on student adjustment to college (e.g., Kenny & Donaldson, 1992; Lapsley et al., 1990; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Mattanah et al., 2004; Rice, 1992; Rice et al., 1990, 1997; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

Identity Development

Research on the impact of parents has also tapped into a variety of instruments designed to assess aspects of identity development. First is the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Inventory (STDLI) (Winston, 1990), an instrument which is based on the theoretical work of Chickering and Reisser (1993) and which measures students' level of success in Establishing and Clarifying Purpose (i.e., having a clear personal, educational, and vocational direction), Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships (i.e., having high-quality relationships and a respect for difference), and Academic Autonomy (i.e., ability to manage emotional and academic affairs independently).

The STDLI was used in research by Schultheiss and Blustein (1994) to examine the impact of parental attachment on student identity development. An updated version of the instrument—the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment (STDLA)—was developed by Winston, Miller, and Cooper (1999), and is currently being used in the NASPA study introduced earlier.

Research on the impact of parents has also examined student outcomes in line with Marcia's (1966) Theory of Ego-Identity Development, which describes a process by which individuals form identity through engaging in "exploration" (differentiating oneself from peers and searching for identity) and "commitment" (a sense of stability and comfort with one's chosen identity). Samoulis et al.'s (2001) research on attachment and Bartle-Haring et al.'s (2002) research on separation anxiety focus on outcome domains that are based in Marcia's theory.

Psychological Well-Being

Some research has focused on psychological well-being as an outcome of student-parent relations. Using instruments such as the Texas Social Behavior Inventory (TSBI; Helmreich, Stapp, & Ervin, 1974) and the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (HSCL; Derogatis, Lipman, Rickles, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974), Kenny and Donaldson (1991, 1992) consider outcomes including social competence, self-esteem, and psychological functioning in areas such as interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety and depression.

Educational Outcomes and Other College Behaviors

Though numerous studies have examined how students' educational and career decision-making are predicted by parent characteristics such as income and occupation, only a limited number of quantitative studies have specifically focused on the impact of parental involvement on educational outcomes. Examples include studies that predict the impact of parent-student relations on grade-point average (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000), persistence in science (Ratelle, Larose, Guay, & Senecal, 2005), and the "gender traditionality" of students' career choice (Ketterson & Blustein, 1997). Additional outcomes examined in research on the impact of parental involvement and/or the parent-student relationship include college drug and alcohol behaviors as examined by Mounts (2004) and self-reports of assertion and dating competence addressed in Kenny's (1987) research.

Methodological Approaches

As discussed earlier, most research on this topic has been cross-sectional, not longitudinal, so it is difficult to consider parental involvement or parent-student relations as a *predictor* of student development. As a result, research in this area often has been limited to testing relationships among variables or between sets of variables. For example, a range of analysis of variance techniques (e.g., ANOVA, MANOVA, MANCOVA) have been used to compare some aspect of the student-parent relationship (e.g., attachment or separation) by student gender, year in school, residential status or other factor. Studies which have limited their analysis primarily to ANOVA techniques include: Bartle-Haring et al. (2002), Mounts (2004), and Rice (1992). Other research has used Canonical Correlation Analysis to assess the nature and degree of the association between two sets of variables, usually a parental relationship set and a student outcomes set (e.g., Kenny & Donaldson, 1991, 1992; Kenny & Perez, 1996; Ketterson & Blustein, 1997; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994).

Multiple regression analysis is also used in a number of studies, though again the research is more helpful in understanding relationships among variables than establishing causal connections between parent variables and student development (e.g., Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002; Kenny, 1987; Laspley et al., 1990; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Samoulis et al., 2001; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). We found only one study that used regression analysis and a longitudinal pretest–posttest design to suggest

causality, in this case between parental separation anxiety and student identity development (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002).

A few studies have contributed an important dimension to this area of research by using structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine variables that may mediate the effect of parent-student relationship. Mattanah et al. (2004), for example, used SEM to examine whether separation-individuation mediates the impact of attachment on student adjustment to college. Similarly, Rice et al. (1997) examined whether the impact of parental attachment on emotional well-being was mediated by students' degree of social competence. As discussed later, the consideration of mediating variables is useful when aiming to determine the impact of parents on students' adjustment and development.

Another key consideration addressed in several studies is whether the impact of student-parent relationships is moderated (or conditioned) by certain student characteristics, such as gender or race. The presumption is that not all students will react in the same ways to the nature of their relationship with their parents. This is an important direction in research on parental involvement, and in fact, numerous studies provide evidence that the impact of parent-student relations differs by gender (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002; Kenny, 1987; Rice, 1992; Samoulis et al., 2001; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). Though some have examined conditional effects of parent-student relations as a function of students' race (e.g., Mounts, 2004) and combination of race and gender (Rice et al., 1997), there is not enough research on the race-based conditional effects of college to draw firm conclusions. As will be addressed later in this chapter, assessing the conditional effects of parent-student relations based on race, gender, and socioeconomic class remains one of the most important directions for future research.

Qualitative Methodology

While most studies address parent-student relationships using quantitative approaches like those reviewed above, there are a few studies that address the parent-student relationship and its impact on college student development using qualitative methodologies. Many such studies address the role of parents in college choice and enrollment (e.g. Ceja, 2006; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008; Smith, 2001), especially for students from families of lower socioeconomic status. In fact, the majority of qualitative studies we reviewed tended to focus on students from lower socioeconomic class backgrounds as well as students of color (e.g. Attinasi, 1989; Barnett, 2004; London, 1989; Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2005; Torres, 2004; Wartman, 2009). Many studies also include student's relationship to parents as only one factor in the student's experience rather than the main focus of the study (e.g. Attinasi, 1989; Barnett, 2004; London, 1989; Sanchez et al., 2005; Terenzini et al., 1994). As with the quantitative studies, very few of the qualitative studies reviewed included the perspective of parents. However, four studies did capture parent perspectives. Kenyon and Koerner (2009) asked both students and parents to elaborate on survey responses through an open-ended question, and

the NASPA longitudinal study on the impact of parental involvement on college student development also includes open-ended responses on its parent survey (Merriman & Rissmeyer, 2009). In addition, studies by Karp, Holmstrom, and Gray (2004) and Wartman (2009) included interviews with parents.

Different types of methodologies were employed in the studies above, including grounded theory (see Karp et al., 2004; Sanchez et al., 2005; and Torres, 2004), phenomenology (see Wartman, 2009), and general descriptive content analysis (see Barnett, 2004; Kenyon & Koerner, 2009; Merriman & Rissmeyer, 2009). In terms of data collection techniques, in addition to open-ended questions, most researchers used in-depth interviews with students (see Attinasi, 1989; Barnett, 2004; London, 1989; Torres, 2004; Sanchez et al., 2005), parents (see Karp et al., 2004) or both (see Wartman, 2009). Sample sizes for the interview studies ranged from 6 to 83 students and from 7 to 30 parents. Terenzini et al. (1994) used focus groups of up to eight students.

In general, qualitative studies on this topic are limited in number, perhaps due to the value placed on quantitative research in the field of student affairs (Harper & Kuh, 2007). Yet, given the depth of information revealed by individual points of view through a qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), it is clear that more qualitative studies are needed in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon.

What Does the Research Tell Us?

The studies reviewed above provide an overview of the current research related to the topic of parental involvement and student development. The next section of the chapter will summarize the findings from this empirical research, highlighting what we know and can learn from it. As we stated before, empirical studies of parental involvement and college student development can be placed into two major categories: developmental studies within the field of psychology and more recent institutional or multi-institutional surveys in the field of higher education. Some studies look at the parent-student relationship generally, some consider student identity factors (such as gender or race) as a variable in this relationship, and some include student identity factors as the central focus of the study's research questions. Studies that address student identity factors, like gender and race, as well as socioeconomic class, as the overall focus to the study or as one conclusion among many, are summarized separately in order to highlight the research that exists in these areas.

Results from Psychology

Most of the empirical studies we reviewed about student-parent relationships from the field of psychology focus on the concepts of attachment, separation, and autonomy. Major findings from these studies are organized by the following

student outcome domains, which were discussed earlier: adjustment to college, identity development, psychological well-being, and educational outcomes and college behaviors.

Adjustment to College

One major focus of the psychological research has been the effect of the parent-student relationship on the student's adjustment to college. A number of studies have found that having a positive attachment relationship with parents can assist students in transitioning to college (e.g. Lapsley et al., 1990; Mattanah et al., 2004; Rice, 1992; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). For example, Lapsley et al. found that attachment to parents was related to adjustment to college, especially for upperclass students. However, Mattanah et al. (2004) found that it was not just secure attachment relationships to parents, but also healthy separation-individuation, that ultimately best predicted adjustment to college.

Schultheiss and Blustein (1994) found that attachment to parents, in addition to attitudinal dependence, or sharing the same beliefs, was associated with positive adjustment to college for women, but not for men. Therefore, for women, sharing an emotional connection to parents as well as beliefs and attitudes helps to facilitate the college adjustment process. In addition, Wintre and Yaffe (2000) found that it was a perception of reciprocity with parents, or a relationship where individuals perceive each other as relative equals, as well as the specific communication content of discussing college-related issues, which led to direct effects on university adjustment. The authors suggest that colleges should educate parents about university life in order to help facilitate these discussions and therefore improve the transition process (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

In a mixed methods study, Kenyon and Koerner (2009) looked at autonomy in the transition to college and specifically focused on both students' and parents' perceptions of autonomy. They showed that students and parents had different expectations for levels of autonomy, with parents more likely to hold higher expectations for their child's autonomy, both emotional and functional. In fact, college students reported that they thought they would be more emotionally dependent on parents than their parents reported they would be (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009).

Identity Development

Attachment to parents, particularly for first-year college students, has been positively linked to identity development (e.g. Bartle-Haring et al., 2002; Lapsley et al., 1990; Samuolis et al., 2001). Samuolis et al. (2001) found that a female's identity development was related to attachment to her parents. They did not draw the same conclusion for the males' identity development however, as identity was not significantly related to attachment of either parent. Samulois et al. (2001) concluded that thinking about parents and being in frequent touch with them may be healthy for identity development, particularly for female students. This is a departure from the idea that high levels of attachment and contact lead to emotional distress. Lapsley

et al. performed an additional study that measured effects of parental attachment on identity development and found that parental attachment predicted personal and social identity for men as well as women. According to Bartle-Haring et al. (2002), it was the connection to mothers in particular, and their provision of a secure base, that led both men and women to explore identity.

Psychological Well-Being

Kenny and Donaldson (1991) considered attachment to parents and family structure and how these were related to first-year students' social and psychological functioning. They found that women reported more psychological symptoms in the transition to college, while the results for men were not significant. In particular, family anxiety surrounding separation, along with parental marital conflict, were associated with these psychological symptoms. The women who described themselves as having positive attachment relationships to their parents reported higher levels of both social competence and psychological well-being (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991).

Educational Outcomes and Other College Behaviors

Studies on educational outcomes include a few that focus on the role of parents in student academic success and career choice. Cutrona et al. (1994) measured whether perceived social support from parents would influence academic performance in college during the first 2 years. They predicted that support from family would cause students to have low anxiety and the low anxiety would, in turn, determine academic self-efficacy, or the belief that one has the ability to perform in ways that will allow him or her to meet his or her goals. Academic self-efficacy would then be a predictor of the student's academic performance, which could be measured by his or her GPA (Cutrona et al., 1994). Their study did show a positive correlation between parent support and GPA, when controlling for ACT scores, family achievement orientation, and family conflict. Parental support predicted GPA across a heterogeneous sample group of varying majors and abilities (Cutrona et al., 1994). In their study of first-year students' adjustment to college, Wintre and Yaffe (2000) also considered students' academic achievement but found conflicting results to the Cutrona et al. study. In their analysis, parents did not play a direct role in predicting students' academic adaptation to college (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

In another study that focused on academic success as a student outcome, Ratelle et al. (2005) considered how parental support predicted students' persistence in science. They found that when students perceived parental involvement and support, they were more likely to perform well and to persist in a science program. Students' perceptions of parental autonomy led to feelings of autonomy and competence in their field (Ratelle et al., 2005).

Ketterson and Blustein (1997) researched parent-student relationships in the context of career exploration. Their study focused on students' overall level of exploratory activity, defined as exploration of one's personal values and interests as well as exploration of career environments. They also considered the gender traditionality of the students' career choices. Overall, they found that

age, attachment to mother, and attachment to father were associated with more self and environmental exploration; gender traditionality was not related to exploration.

As we mentioned in the previous section on quantitative research, there are two studies that examine the role of parents in additional student outcomes, besides those described above. For example, in a study of the role of parental involvement and college adjustment for Black and White first-year students, Mounts (2004) considered student levels of drug and alcohol abuse. She found that in general White students reported higher levels of binge drinking and drug use, but that parental support was not a predictor of these behaviors for either group of students. In addition, Kenny (1987) considered how parental attachment related to reports of assertion and dating competence, and found that close parental relationships related to higher self-reports of assertion among college women.

Results Focused on Gender, Race, and Socioeconomic Class

In this section we will address the research that exists on the student-parent relationship and differences by student gender, race, and socioeconomic status. These are areas that we believe need attention in future research.

Gender

Some studies have found that female students are more attached to their parents than male students. For example, according to Sorokou and Weissbrod (2005), who measured need and non-need based contact patterns (such as telephoning, e-mailing, visiting, etc.) between adolescents and their parents in the first year of college, male and female students in their study had different contact patterns with their parents. This suggests that men and women in college may show attachment in different ways. Females tended to perceive a higher quality attachment to their mother, while males and females did not differ in their attachment to their father. In addition, Kenny and Donaldson (1991) studied a sample of first-year college students and found that, in general, women considered themselves to be more attached to their parents compared to men. Although they did not specifically measure attachment relationships, Valery, O'Connor, and Jennings (1997) found that female students were more likely to both request and receive emotional support from both their mothers and fathers.

Other studies conclude that gender is not a factor in parent-student attachment relationships. For example, Lapsley et al. (1990) did not find a gender difference in attachment to parents. In addition, Mattanah et al. (2004) suggest that having a history of secure attachment would mediate the effects of separation-individuation and lead to successful college adjustment. The authors found that secure attachment was associated with college adjustment for both men and women, which challenges the idea that men and women may approach these relationships differently (Mattanah et al., 2004).

Research supports the idea that women who have stronger attachment relationships to their parents are more likely to successfully adapt to the college environment. In addition, women who reported higher levels of attachment also reported higher levels of both social competence and psychological well-being (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). In Rice, Cunningham, and Young's (1997) study of attachment to parents in Black and White college students, women's attachment to both mother and father predicted social competence (attachment to mother alone was not a significant predictor). For the men in the sample, attachment to father was a more important predictor of social competence than attachment to mother.

For women, positive adjustment has also been associated with a high degree of attitudinal dependence; women are more likely to report that they have similar beliefs and values to their parents. Schultheiss and Blustein (1994) note that separation-individuation may actually best be obtained through the context of adolescent parent-connectedness. In their study, Schultheiss and Blustein (1994) tested whether attitudinal independence and parental attachment were positively associated with college student adjustment and development. They found that it was for women but not for men. These results suggest that women have strong attachment relationships to their parents as well as share similar beliefs are more likely to develop autonomy.

In terms of gender and identity formation, Samuolis et al. (2001) studied identity development of both males and female first-year students. Results showed that for women, attachment to mother and to father were both associated with positive identity development, but not for men. This led the authors to conclude that for the women, attachment led to identity development. In addition, Taub (1997) examined autonomy and parental attachment in traditional-age undergraduate women. Results included an observation that students showed increasing levels of autonomy with each class year (seniors were found to be significantly more autonomous than both first-year students, as well as juniors). At the same time, however, Taub (1997) found that parental attachment did not decrease significantly with the increase in autonomy; students could maintain contact with their families and still gain autonomy while maintaining contact with their families. These findings support the idea that undergraduate women may actually become more autonomous without experiencing a break in parental attachment (Taub, 1997).

Race

There is a relative lack of literature on the topic of the role of race in parent-college student relationships. Theorists themselves acknowledge the absence of this topic in the research. For example, according to Mattanah et al. (2004), more attention is needed to examine attachment and separation-individuation across different racial and ethnic groups, especially because there is an emphasis on collectivism and interdependence in certain cultures such as Asian, African, and Latino. For the most part, the topic of race and parent-student relationships is primarily considered in literature when it is combined with other factors, such as parent education level, socioeconomic status, and gender. Studies on race and parental involvement are both quantitative and qualitative.

There is some limited quantitative research looking at race and attachment relationships. For example, Hinderlie and Kenny (2002) studied attachment, social support, and college adjustment among Black students at predominantly White universities. The authors acknowledged that Black students value close family connections, but wanted to find out if family culture would negatively affect adjustment to college. Their goal was to explain more about the relationship between these students and their parents. Results showed that parental attachment was positively associated with all aspects of college adjustment for these students. Kenny and Perez (1996) considered family attachment and the degree to which it is related to psychological well-being at the time of college entry for a sample that included African American, Latino, and Asian American students. They found that students with perceptions of a positive family attachment figure who encouraged their independence were in a better position to adjust to college.

In addition, Rice et al. (1997) and Mounts (2004) compared parental attachment between Black and White college students. Neither found significant differences in attachment to parents between these two populations. In Taub's (1997) study of women's identity development, whether parental attachment varied by race and ethnicity was a secondary research question. Taub (1997) found that in particular, Latinas had significantly higher scores than Asian women in the area of the parents providing emotional support. Taub (1997) suggests that these findings reflect cultural differences in the relationships between these parents and their daughters in college.

Mallinckrodt (1988) studied the experience of Black students. Specifically, the study looked at the relationship between persistence and perceptions of social support from members of the campus community as well as family members. He found that perceived encouragement from family members correlated to persistence for White students, but not for Black students. Relationships with members of the campus community were most strongly associated with persistence.

In terms of qualitative research about race and the parent-student relationship, Sanchez et al. (2005) looked at the role of significant relationships in the academic experiences of Mexican American college students. The students reported that their parents provided different types of support: cognitive guidance, emotional support, informational and experiential support, modeling, and tangible support (Sanchez et al., 2005). These types of support are not that different from attachment. The combination of the love from parents in combination with practical support from educational sources, especially in the area of scholarships and financial aid made the students successful.

Barnett (2004) looked at the ways in which family support contributed to adjustment to college, persistence, and graduation for Black students at an Ivy League university. Barnett (2004) found that family support and interaction with family members led to social adjustment. These results conflicted with those of Mallinckrodt (1988). According to Barnett (2004), Black parents not only encouraged their students to attend college, but they also prepared them for a "racist environment that depreciates African-American values, culture, and people" (Barnett, 2004, p. 54). Parents provided emotional support to their students and

were able to communicate how to navigate the stresses these students encountered at a predominantly White university (Barnett, 2004).

Adjustment to college and identity formation are also primary themes in these studies. In the adjustment to college, students' development of independence and their own identity formation are influenced by their relationships with parents. Torres (2004) studied the familial influences through a longitudinal study of the identity development of Latino first-year students. She found that the primary conveyors of cultural heritage for students were family members, and students' development of ethnic identity was ultimately determined by the degree to which parents were acculturated, or the way in which they combined Latino and Anglo cultures (Torres, 2004).

Socioeconomic Class

There are a number of studies that address the role of parents and socioeconomic class. However, the majority of these address the issue of parents' role in college access. In terms of the relationship between socioeconomic class, parental involvement and student development, the most closely related studies address parental education level and consider first-generation students' perspective of parents' role in their transition to college. What role do their parents play in the college adjustment process, according to these students? The studies on this topic are primarily qualitative.

Attinasi (1989) conducted an exploratory study of first-generation Mexican- to persist or not persist in higher education. He found that oral communication of expectations was extremely important to students. Parents communicated to their students the idea that they were "college-goers" (Attinasi, 1989, p. 270). In addition, a student's willingness to "stick it out" once in college was a result of parents socializing him or her for college (Attinasi, 1989, p. 270).

Some students reported experiencing anxiety over a changing relationship with parents and other family members. For example, students in Terenzini et al.'s (1994) focus groups for a study on the transition to college, particularly those first-generation students from Black, Hispanic, or Native American families reported that as parents (or other parental figures such as grandparents) realized that their children might never metaphorically, "return home," they tried to maintain a consistent relationship. (Terenzini et al., 1994, p. 66).

According to London (1989), one of the biggest challenges for first-generation students is reconciling the tension that emerges between requirements of family membership and upward mobility. For many first-generation students, even though they may experience a personal growth from their college experience, they may also feel a loss in their relationship to their family. Some parents give students conflicting messages: to both stay at home and to achieve in the larger world, which can cause an internal struggle for this student population. In his qualitative study, students speak of this push-pull. Student find they have to renegotiate relationships with their families, as well as with themselves (London, 1992, p. 6). These students talk about existing on the "margins of two cultures" (London, 1992, p. 7).

Wartman (2009) looked at parental involvement for low-income and working class students during the first semester of college, suggesting that the "helicopter parent" image portrayed by the media is socioeconomic-class based. The qualitative phenomenological study of parents and students at 4-year colleges, who had attended an alternative high school where parental involvement was supported and encouraged, focused on aspects of the student-parent, as well as student-parent-institution, relationship. Results showed that these students' parents, who had not attended 4-year colleges, did not have any direct connection to their students' colleges and universities. Instead, students served as intermediaries in the relationship between parent and institution. In terms of the parent-student relationship, the study found that the parents had positive, emotionally supportive relationships with their students. Students were autonomous and functionally independent, but emotionally interdependent with parents (Wartman, 2009).

Although most research that examines the parent-student relationship and socioeconomic class has focused on experience of students from lower socioeconomic class groups, some research does focus on the experience of upper middle class parents, especially as it relates to the concept of "leaving home." If a student's parents attended college, the experience is significantly different than that of first-generation students. Karp et al. (2004) observed that the parents in their study expressed many worries about their students' transition to college. However, these fears were different than those expressed by parents of first-generation college students. In particular, a central concern of parents was whether their children had made the right college choice. Parents seemed to have the idea that the "fit" at some colleges on their students' lists of potential choices might be better than at others (Karp et al., 2004, p. 367). According to the researchers' analysis, these parental worries were often rooted in parents' own experiences of leaving home to attend college.

Recent Research Efforts in Higher Education

The results of the studies just reviewed come from the field of psychology and focus primarily on measuring students' attachment, separation, and autonomy. As we mentioned, within the field of higher education there have been some recent attempts to measure and quantify parental involvement, primarily for researchers and practitioners. These studies include the 2007 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement, the 2006 University of California Undergraduate Experience Study (UCUES) (discussed in Wolf et al., 2009), and the NASPA longitudinal study on the impact of parental involvement on college student development (King, Watson, & Mullendore, 2009), which although not yet completed, has released some preliminary findings.

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP)

According to results from the 2007 CIRP survey of first-year undergraduates, students are, for the most part, comfortable with the roles their parents currently play

in their lives. A majority of first-year students considered their parents' participation in their college careers to be the "right amount." Eighty-four percent said their parents were involved the "right amount" in their decision to go to college, 80.5% in their decision to attend the institution they chose, and 77.5% in communicating directly with college officials. At the same time, almost one quarter reported that their parents displayed "too little" involvement in helping them choose their college courses and 22.5% wished their parents were more involved in helping them choose college activities. Students of color were more likely than White students to indicate that their parents were not involved enough in "dealing with college officials," "choosing college courses," and "choosing college activities." Latino students in particular were most likely to report "too little" parental involvement in these three areas. First-generation students were also more likely to report "too little" parental involvement than their peers whose parents attended college (Pryor et al., 2007).

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

The 2007 NSSE revealed trends in parent-student interaction. In terms of parent-student communication, seven out of ten students said that they communicated "very often" with at least one parent or guardian during the academic year. It was more popular to communicate using electronic media than face-to-face. Students reported different conversation topics with mothers than with fathers, being more likely to talk to their mother about personal issues, academic performance, and family matters. Academic performance was the most common discussion topic with fathers. In general, students also reported following their parents' advice. About 75% of students said that they frequently followed the advice of a parent or guardian.

The results also revealed information about parent-institution interaction and its effects. Thirteen percent of first-year students had parents who frequently contacted college officials to intervene on their behalf. About 25% had parents who sometimes did so. In addition, according to the results of the 2007 NSSE, the parent-student relationship can have an effect on student engagement and the student-institution relationship. Students who frequently talked with their parents and whose parents contacted the college on their behalf were more likely to participate in college activities and were more satisfied with their college experience overall. However, this group of students with highly involved parents also reported significantly lower grades (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007).

The University of California Undergraduate Experience Study (UCUES)

The UCUES measured general parental contact as well as parental engagement in college students' academics. In terms of parent-student contact, the telephone was the most popular form of communication with about 25% of students speaking with their parents by phone every day. About 30% said they spoke to their parents

by phone a few times per week. Over half of the students talked to their parents frequently: a few times per week or more. In terms of parental involvement in academics, the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that parents showed a high level of interest in students' academics but played less of a role when it came to academic decision making such as choosing courses or an academic major (Wolf et al., 2009).

Wolf et al.'s (2009) analysis revealed how these parental involvement factors differed by student year in school, gender, socioeconomic class status, parental immigrant status, and race/ethnicity. In terms of students' year in school, there was a declining involvement over time; seniors had less frequent contact and less academic involvement from parents than first-year students did. Regarding gender, women noted slightly more contact with parents about academics and had higher levels of contact overall. In addition, concerning socioeconomic status, students from higher socioeconomic status groups reported more parental involvement and higher levels of engagement with parents than did students from lower socioeconomic status groups did. Students whose parents were not born in the U.S. had below average involvement from parents in terms of academic subjects but higher than average ratings for general contact with parents.

The study found some significant differences when it came to parental involvement and race/ethnicity. In particular, "above-average levels of contact between Mexican American, Latino/Other Spanish, Japanese/Japanese American, and American Indian/Alaska Native students were paired with below-average ratings of parental involvement in their academics" (Wolf et al., 2009, p. 22). In general, the conclusions from this study point to the idea that parental involvement is not the same among different populations of students.

NASPA Longitudinal Study

The NASPA longitudinal study on the impact of parental involvement on college student development (King, Watson, & Mullendore, 2009) is not complete, yet the study team has released some preliminary findings. Descriptive results from a survey of parents of first-year reveal some broad trends. In terms of the parent perspective on their involvement, 88% of parents reported that they were either "somewhat involved" or "very involved" during the first semester of their students' experience at college and for 71% of these parents, this level of involvement was the same or greater than it had been in high school (King et al., 2009).

The NASPA study also asked specific questions about parent-institution interaction. Only 18.9% of all of the parent participants said that they had contacted their child's institution. Of the parents that had contacted the institution, they, for the most part, had only done so one (52%) or two times (25%) between the beginning of the school year and November. Seventy percent of the parents who had contacted the institution reported that it was their students who had asked the parent to intervene on his or her behalf (King et al., 2009).

Summary of the Literature

Overall, from the studies reviewed in this section, we learn of the prevalence of student-parent interactions, and that strong parent-student relationships can lead to positive outcomes for students such as adjustment to college, identity development, and career exploration. We also learn that these relationships can vary for different student populations. While this information does help us to better understand the parent-student relationship, there are still considerable gaps in the literature. We will discuss the limitations of these studies as well as our suggestions for how to close these gaps in the next section.

Setting a Research Agenda

Our review of previous research reveals the fairly nascent state of scholarship on the topic of parental involvement and college student development. To be sure, there are *elements* of prior research that are useful as we consider an agenda for future study, such as: the existence of established scales for aspects of the parent-student relationship, the exploration of factors that mediate the effects of parental involvement, and the consideration of differences by race and gender. However, existing work does not address our central question: What is the impact of various forms of parental involvement on student development over the course of college? Instead, the existing literature is limited in several major ways.

First, it often lacks an educational perspective. As noted earlier, much of the work on parental involvement and college student development is designed to advance theoretical perspectives on human development. While prior studies include college students in their samples, the focus is not on students' experience in the *college context*. At the same time, research on the impact of college conducted within the field of higher education typically does not account for the influence of parental involvement during college. Instead, parents are usually conceptualized as a source of influence on students' experiences and dispositions *before* arriving at college, and may be represented by measures of parental education, income or occupation.

Second, existing research tends to apply theoretical approaches that view college students as adolescents, not as "emerging adults." As suggested by Arnett (2000, 2006), college students should have their own unique developmental category because they are neither children nor adults, but rather somewhere in between. Research also needs to consider appropriate developmental goals that are congruent with this stage, as current developmental goals (which are often used as outcomes on instruments measuring the parent-student relationship) may not fit with college students' unique stage of development.

Third, most research views attachment and separation as competing concepts. This is perhaps complicated by the fact that, within the field of higher education, separation-individuation remains the most popular student development theory

within this context, while attachment theory has largely been used in the field of psychology (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Research ought to consider the *complementary* role of attachment and separation-individuation, as maintaining close ties with parents and having warm, supportive relationships can provide emerging adults with the security to ultimately develop independence and autonomy (Kenny & Rice, 1995).

Specific Recommendations

These gaps in the literature present significant opportunities to shape a research agenda on parental involvement that adopts an educational perspective, views college students from a post-adolescent framework, and considers both autonomy *and* attachment as markers of healthy student development. Below we propose major questions and methodological approaches that ought to be considered in order to advance this research in a way that contributes to both scholarship and practice in higher education.

Major Questions

Given how little we know about this topic from the perspective of higher education, the possibilities for future research are endless. However, we propose three key questions, and related sub-questions, that we believe are the most critical first steps in advancing research on this topic: (1) What is the nature of parental involvement in higher education? (2) What are the effects of parental involvement on college student development? (3) What does this phenomenon look like for different populations? Each of these questions is elaborated below.

The Nature of Parental Involvement

The very first step is to assess the nature and extent of parental involvement in the lives of college students. Questions that should be addressed include:

- 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, e-mail, 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?
  ○ What are students' and parents' perceptions of their interactions with one another?
  ○ How does the quality of the parent-student relationship correspond to the nature and frequency of interactions during college?
  ○ How does the nature and quality of the interaction change over the course of college?

- What are the various forms of *parent-institution* interaction and communication during the student's time in college?

  ○ With whom does the parent communicate (professors, administrators, residential life, etc.)?
  ○ What is the frequency of parent-institution interactions?
  ○ What is the mode of interaction (in-person, telephone, e-mail, etc.)?
  ○ What is the purpose of the interaction (to inquire about the student's well-being, to advocate on behalf of the student, to seek information or advice, etc.)?
  ○ Who initiates the communication—the parent or institution?
  ○ How does the nature of the interaction change during the years that the student is in college?
  ○ To what extent do students negotiate the parent-institution interaction?

Effects of Parental Involvement

After identifying the various forms and purposes of parent-student and parent-institution interaction during college, the next question adopts a longitudinal perspective and asks what impact these interactions have on student development. Specifically:

- What impact does parental involvement have on college student adjustment and development across a broad range of outcomes, especially: academic and social adjustment to college, identity development, sense of autonomy, psychological well-being, academic performance, degree attainment, career orientation, and post-college outcomes?
- How does the impact of parents compare to that of other sources of influence, such as peers, faculty, and staff?
- Are the effects of parental involvement direct or do they operate indirectly through mediating variables such as academic or social integration?
- Does the concept of "emerging adulthood," and the idea that college students are not necessarily adolescents, help us to better understand the impact of parents on students in college?

Differences Across Student Populations

For each of the questions listed above, there must also be a consideration of differences in parent-student and parent-institution interactions across different student populations. As discussed earlier, both the nature and consequences of parental involvement may depend on a range of student characteristics, including: race, class, gender, age, year in school, place of residence, and type of institution attended. Awareness of differences across these subgroups is critical to providing appropriate services to diverse populations of parents and students.

Research must also be sensitive to the diversity of family configurations, where siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other individuals may function in

a parental role. This may be especially important when studying diverse populations, as Kenny and Perez (1996) found that, among a sample consisting of African American, Latino, and Asian American students, more than a quarter turned to "other family members" (i.e., not the mother or father) as their primary source of support.

Methodological Recommendations

To address the questions raised above, we offer several methodological recommendations for future research. With some exceptions, these recommendations apply to both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In fact, we encourage researchers to adopt a mixed-methods approach when studying this topic, as qualitative methods will be especially important in providing depth of information regarding the nature of the phenomenon, while quantitative methods will be useful in generating evidence on the frequency of parental involvement and identifying key relationships among variables. Kenyon and Koerner (2009) provide an excellent example of a mixed-methods study on the parental role in students' transition to college.

Recommendations for future research are presented below as they correspond to the three major research questions outlined above:

The Nature of Parental Involvement

- Develop new questionnaires and interview protocols that account for the range of parental involvement behaviors. In the field of higher education, large-scale surveys like CIRP, NSSE, and UCUES have attempted to shed light on this topic, though space limitations have prevented these instruments from going into greater depth on the nature of this phenomenon. The parent survey used in the longitudinal study on parental involvement currently being conducted by NASPA (King et al., 2009) is an important step in that direction by accounting for the frequency and nature of parental involvement with the student *and* with the institution.
- Take advantage of existing instruments designed to measure aspects of parent-student relationships, such as the PAQ, IPPA, PSI, and other instruments described earlier. Scales derived from these instruments have already shown good psychometric properties and have identified several factors that can be useful in assessing the *quality* of the parent-student relationship.
- Ask questions that distinguish between the role of mothers and fathers, and allow for the role of extended family members who might serve in a parental role.
- Collect data at multiple time points to account for the potentially changing nature of parent-student and parent-institution relations during college. Consider collecting data at key transition points, such as: pre-application, choice/decision, transition to college, end of each year, the transition out of college, and even in the years after college.

Effects of Parental Involvement

- Utilize models of college impact when conducting longitudinal research on the effects of parental involvement. Because these models account for both the range of student background (pre-college) characteristics, as well as the broader college context, researchers will be better-positioned to distinguish the effects of parental involvement from the role played by confounding influences.
- Consider whether there are certain variables that mediate the role of parental involvement. For example, if discussions with parents regarding academic matters predict higher grades, we would want to know the mechanism behind this. Perhaps parents provide students with advice on specific strategies shown to improve grades (e.g., effective study habits, meeting with faculty). Alternatively, discussions with parents might increase students' interest in course content, which would then contribute to improved performance. In these cases, the effect of parental involvement would be considered "indirect."

Differences Across Student Populations

- Collect data from large and diverse samples of college students to enable comparisons across various groups as defined by race, class, gender, age, etc.
- Ensure that data collection accounts for the experiences of part-time and commuter students, not just full-time residential populations.
- Collect data from a variety of institutional types, including community colleges, where there is practically no research on the role of parental involvement.
- When developing factors that measure aspects of parental involvement, test the reliability of the factor structures for different student populations.
- When studying the impact of parental involvement, adopt a variety of data collection techniques and use analytical approaches that account for differences in impact across different student populations.

Conclusion

As parents have become increasingly involved in the lives of their college-going students, it is important to develop an understanding of the consequences of that involvement for students. This chapter has reviewed the current state of knowledge on the phenomenon of parental involvement, with special attention paid to the theoretical and methodological approaches that have been used. We have concluded that, despite the existence of a large number of studies on the quality of relationships between college students and their parents, the extant research does not sufficiently address our central question of how parental involvement impacts student development.

We are encouraged by the fact that these questions are gaining attention in the higher education community, as evidenced by three current research efforts currently in the field, all of which use data sources described previously in this

chapter: (1) the NASPA longitudinal study on parental involvement and college student development, which continues with data collection through 2010 (King et al., 2009); (2) a research paper that uses UCUES data to examine the influence of parents on college students' personal, academic and social adjustment (Harper, Sax, & Wolf, 2009); and (3) a recent conference paper that uses NSSE data on the relationship between parental involvement and college student engagement (Shoup et al., 2009). Each of these represent efforts to advance research on this topic by examining parent-student interactions and their relationship to some aspect of student development, though only one of them (the NASPA study) involves the collection of longitudinal data.

In this chapter, we have proposed several important directions and methodological approaches that we believe will considerably advance the state of knowledge on this topic. Future research will contribute to filling significant gaps in the literature, but should also play a vital role in improving institutional practice. The more that we understand the role that parents play—and the extent to which that varies for different student populations—the better-equipped institutions will be to develop programs and services (for both students and parents) that promote healthy student adjustment and development.

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