Parental Involvement and Student Academic Success: Faculty Experiences and Perspectives

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Introduction of Topic & Presenters

▸ This program session focuses on the outcomes of a qualitative doctoral research study which examined parental involvement in higher education from the perspective of ten faculty members at Baylor University -- a mid-sized, private, religiously-affiliated, high-research activity institution in Texas.

▸ Personal/professional importance of topic to presenters

Order of Presentation

- Problem of Practice
- Research Design
- Findings
- Implications for Institutional Practice and Further Research
- Discussion - Implications for Parent Professionals

Problem of Practice

▸ As parent programs professionals, it is important to consider how to support faculty in the transition of parents and students to higher education from "K-12 partnerships."

▸ Parental involvement in higher education phenomenon has been studied on all accounts except faculty member's experience.

▸ Parents are "co-investors" in child's college education (Carney-Hall, 2008).

▸ Increased expectation for parental financial contribution for college.

▸ Student retention and graduation concerns.

▸ Existence of FERPA and its impact on traditional student-university relationship in light of increased parental involvement phenomenon.

Research Question & Design

"How do certain faculty members explain and make sense of parental involvement regarding traditional-aged undergraduate students' academic progress at a private, religiously-affiliated, high research activity institution?"

▸ **Qualitative Inquiry using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis** *(Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012)*

▸ **Data Collection - Purposeful Sampling of Faculty who:**

- Teach predominantly first-year student courses;
- Have experienced contact from parents at least once a semester for the last several years;
- Willing to participate in a doctoral qualitative research study with no incentives.

Data Collection

Faculty Pseudonym	Academic Discipline	Number of Years Teaching	Gender
Carol	Languages	17	Female
Clinton	Chemistry	39	Male
Harvey	Mathematics	15	Male
Jim	Great Texts	23	Male
Kate	Computer Science	18	Female
Lemony	Family & Consumer Sciences	15	Male
Marion	Biology	20	Male
Morty	Religion	19	Male
Pudgy	Chemistry	47	Male
Sharina	Apparel and Design	13	Female

Findings – Superordinate Themes

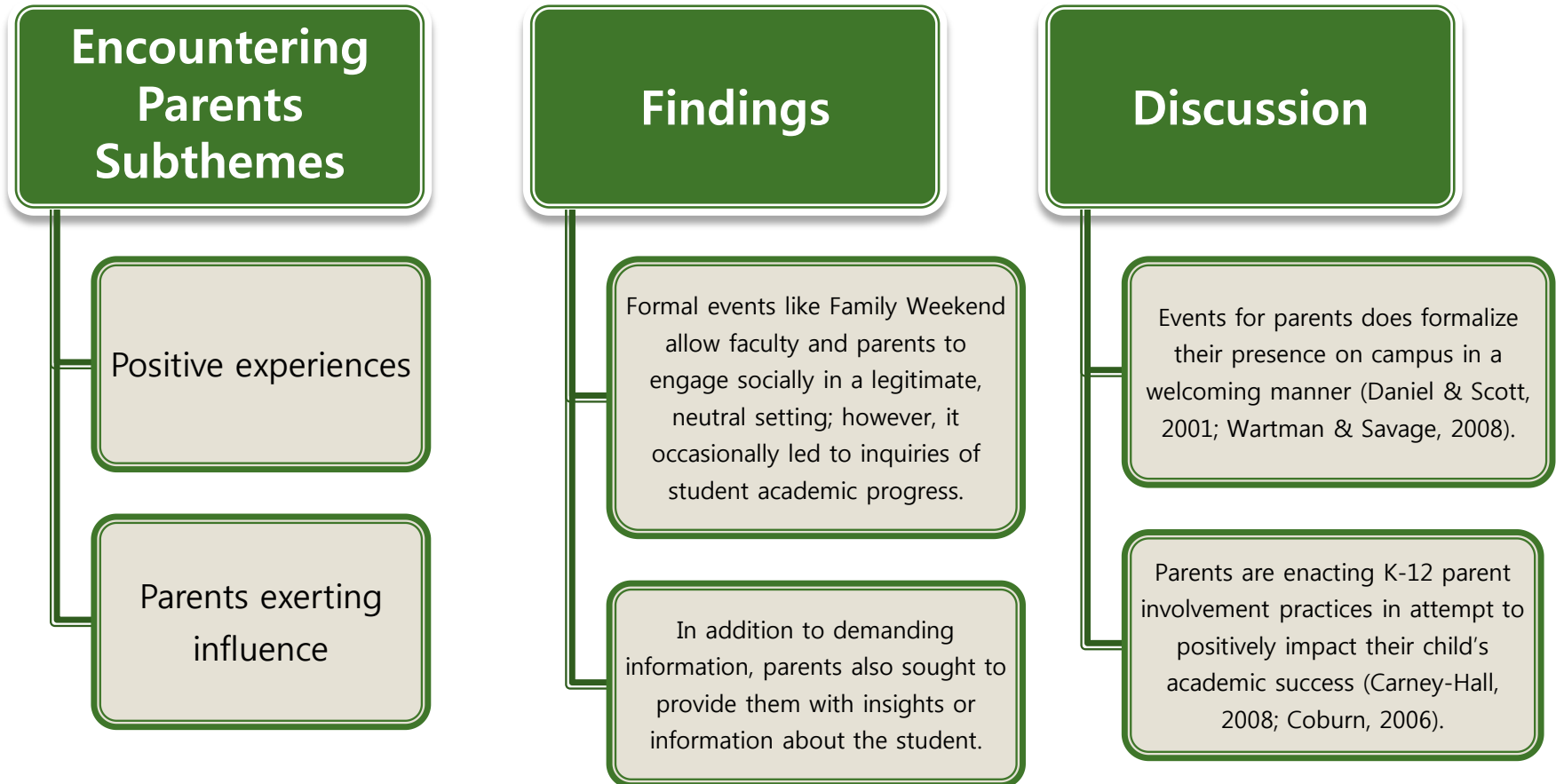| Encountering Parents	Responding to Parents	Sense-making
• Situations in which faculty participants experience parental involvement.	• How faculty participants respond to these encounters.	• The process by which faculty participants give meaning to their experiences.

Findings and Discussion – Theme 1

Encountering Parents Subthemes

Positive experiences

Parents exerting influence

Findings

Formal events like Family Weekend allow faculty and parents to engage socially in a legitimate, neutral setting; however, it occasionally led to inquiries of student academic progress.

In addition to demanding information, parents also sought to provide them with insights or information about the student.

Discussion

Events for parents does formalize their presence on campus in a welcoming manner (Daniel & Scott, 2001; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Parents are enacting K-12 parent involvement practices in attempt to positively impact their child's academic success (Carney-Hall, 2008; Coburn, 2006).

Findings and Discussion – Theme 2

Responding to Parents Subthemes

- Frequency
- Enacting FERPA
- Educating about Resources

Findings

Overall, parents engaged faculty infrequently (1-3 times per semester). Faculty perceive it happens more here at private, Christian university.

The nature of parent inquiries with faculty always involves the use of FERPA. Serves as a source of "protection" for both faculty and student.

Faculty are providing parents with academic support resources as a way to offer support and customer service without violating FERPA.
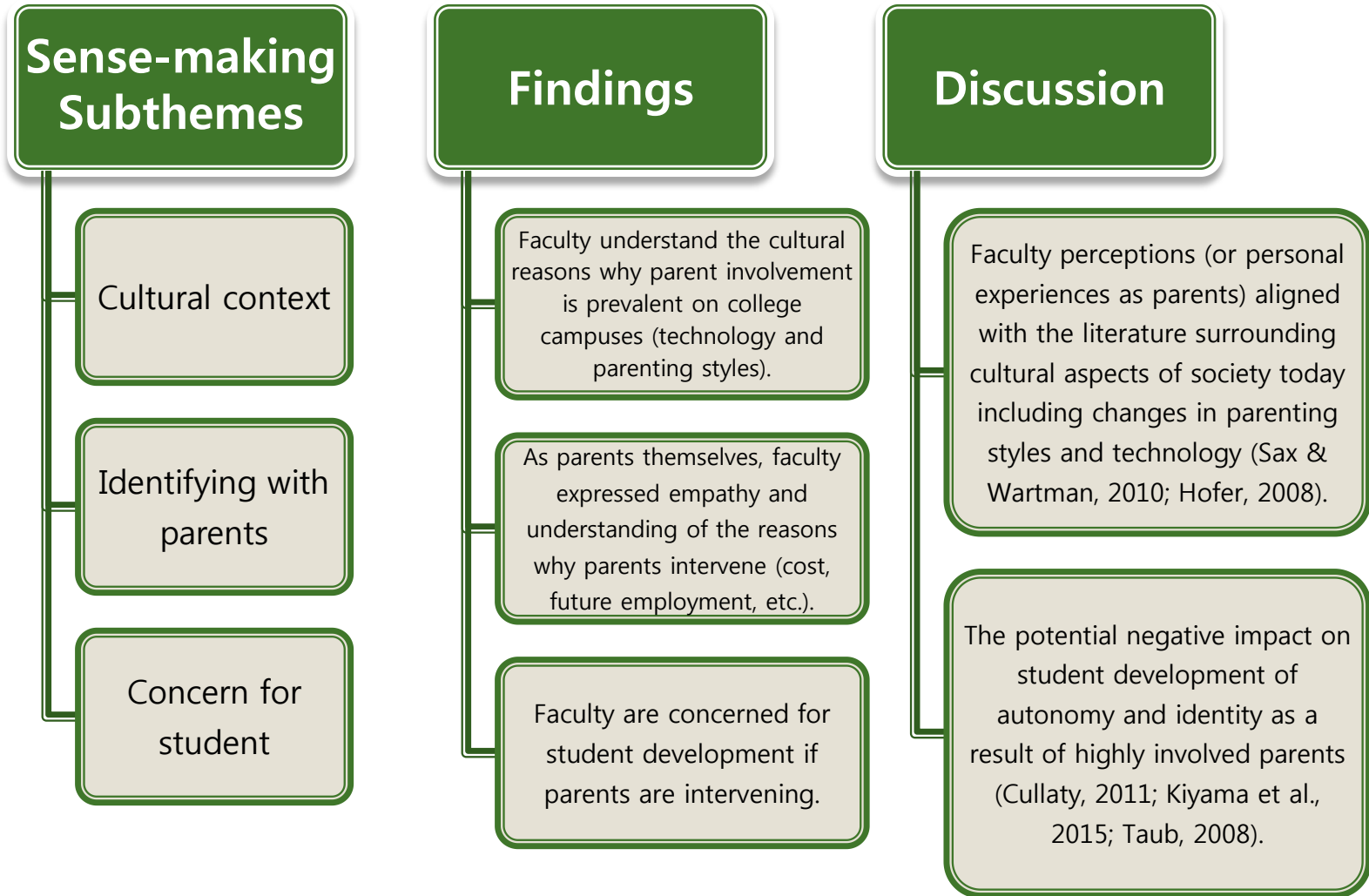
Discussion

Contradicts the pervasive stories of helicopter parenting as the norm (Somers & Settle, 2010; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012).

Hirt (2007) noted that parents of students who attend private colleges often foster a high level of "entitlement" due to cost.

FERPA provides significant privacy protections to students and faculty/staff, but can cause frustration for parents (Weeks, 2001).

Swartz (2008) asserts that family capital provides a helpful context for recognizing the ways parents continue to directly influence a child's education in college. Channeling their desire to help is necessary to engage their positive influence on students (Wartman & Savage, 2008)

Findings and Discussion – Theme 3

Sense-making Subthemes

- Cultural context
- Identifying with parents
- Concern for student

Findings

Faculty understand the cultural reasons why parent involvement is prevalent on college campuses (technology and parenting styles).

As parents themselves, faculty expressed empathy and understanding of the reasons why parents intervene (cost, future employment, etc.).

Faculty are concerned for student development if parents are intervening.

Discussion

Faculty perceptions (or personal experiences as parents) aligned with the literature surrounding cultural aspects of society today including changes in parenting styles and technology (Sax & Wartman, 2010; Hofer, 2008).

The potential negative impact on student development of autonomy and identity as a result of highly involved parents (Cullaty, 2011; Kiyama et al., 2015; Taub, 2008).

Implications for Institutional Practice

1. Develop institutional-wide philosophy that sets boundaries for parents while emphasizing shared goals of retention, graduation, and maturation.

2. Conduct an institutional assessment of faculty interaction. Data will aid in determining needed educational supports and training for faculty, parents, *and* students.

3. Conduct an institutional-wide assessment of current Family and Parent Programs using CAS standards.

4. Increase faculty training on FERPA and provide expectations for handling parent involvement.

5. For parent programming, educate about academic boundaries with faculty.

6. Consider Parent Portal if parent involvement is high and retention low.

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Implications for Future Research

1. Conduct similar study with department heads or undergraduate program directors to assess their experiences and/or pressures.

2. A study of expectations that parents have of faculty would aid in learning their reasons for contacting and expectations for information or collaboration.

3. Investigate parent's role in their student's academic coursework.

Reactions or Questions to Research?

Discussion and Implications for Practice for Parent and Family Program Professionals?

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Thank You for Attending our Session!

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Literature Review

- The Evolution of Parental Involvement in Higher Education
  - *Cohen, 1985; FERPA, 1974; Henning, 2007; Jackson, 1991; Lake, 2001; Lowery, 2005; Melear, 2003; Weeks, 2001; Zick, 2010.*

- Current Context for Parental Involvement in Higher Education
  - *Carney-Hall, 2008; Daniel & Scott, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hofer & Moore, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Keppler, Mullendore, & Carey, 2005; Shoup, Gonyea, & Kuh, 2009; Wartman & Savage, 2008.*

- Impact of Parental Involvement on Students
  - *Aquilino, 2006; Arnett, 2000, 2004; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Cullaty, 2011; Gofen, 2009; Kenny, 1987; LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Sax & Wartman, 2010, Swartz, 2008; Taub, 2008; Wolf, Sax, & Harper, 2009.*

- Institutional Response to Parental Involvement
  - *Bridges, Heiman, Hyer, Wright, & Heiselt, 2011; Cartmell, 2015; Coburn, 2006; Kennedy, 2009; Lum, 2006; Merriman, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008.*

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