AHEPPP Journal

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About the AHEPPP Journal
The AHEPPP Journal is a twice-yearly journal that publishes scholarly essays, research-based articles, personal essays, and reviews that address important issues related to parent/family services and that make an original contribution to the knowledge base about parent/family programs and services in higher education. The guiding editorial policy is that articles are of high standard, while including practical information of interest to parent/family professionals.

Membership and subscriptions
The Journal is provided online at no cost to members of the Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals. Subscription rate for non-members is $70 annually. For membership information, contact AHEPPP at 2995 Wilderness Place, Ste. 205, Boulder, CO 80301, or send a request to Sarah Schupp at sarah@aheppp.org.

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In this issue of the AHEPPP Journal, we look at the rising issue of Boomerang families. What happens when students graduate from college and, rather than begin an independent life, move back home? The research for this study is based on parent expectations and considers whether families are looking for guidance on bringing their "emerging adults" back into the nest; if so, who do they consider to be the experts on the topic? As it turns out, they trust us—parent/family program professionals—to provide the information they need.

A second article tells us the story of Syracuse University's Parents Office. Parent/family services at Syracuse were introduced at a time in U.S. history when most colleges and universities were pulling away from in loco parentis, just two years before the Buckley Amendment (FERPA) was enacted. The forward thinking of Syracuse—both in establishing a Parents Office and in housing the office in Student Affairs—was the inspiration for many higher education institutions.

The AHEPPP Journal relies on the interest and input of our membership, not only for contributing articles, but also in soliciting research reports from faculty and graduate students on the topic of parent/family relations. Please continue to keep the Journal in mind as you study your parent/ family populations and talk with academics about the profession. Submission guidelines are available at www.aheppp.org/aheppp-journal.

Special thanks to our editorial board for their assistance and guidance on the Journal. In addition, we owe a debt of gratitude to our Copy Editor, Chelsea Petree, a graduate student in Family Social Science and a research assistant in the University Parent Program at the University of Minnesota.

Deanie Kepler, Ph.D.
Southern Methodist University

Marjorie Savage
University of Minnesota

Boomerang Families: Navigating the Parent Role as Students Move Back Home

Chelsea A. Petree
Parent Program Graduate Research Assistant
University of Minnesota

Abstract

It has become increasingly common for young adults to return to the parental home after graduating from college. Recent changes in society, including a lack of jobs and the rising costs of college (and thus high levels of debt after graduation), have made it more difficult for college graduates to live on their own, making co-residence with parents more likely. Most parents are unprepared for the return of the "Boomerang" generation, and may turn to professionals for advice on how to negotiate the new roles that come with a young adult child moving home. This study examined parents' perceptions and expectations regarding their student's potential return home, including how parent professionals can deliver information and support. Findings revealed that parents preferred online information from professional sources. Parents requested a wide variety of information and expected that, upon moving home, their student would contribute to the household and be an active member of the family. Findings provide important implications for parent/family program professionals on college and university campuses.

Introduction

Throughout the 20th century, the number of published works on childrearing grew each decade (Rothbaum, Martland, & Jannsen, 2009). Parents of today's Millennials (children born between 1981 and 2000) have raised their sons and daughters during an unprecedented time of parenting advice from books and magazine articles, and the proliferation of online resources has enabled parents to have nearly unlimited access to information. New parents and those of younger children and teens have countless resources to rely on (Bernhardt & Felter, 2004). Recently, even parents of children entering college have had access to an influx of information, supporting a reliance on professionals for information on parenting. Parenting does not end, however, when parents drop their student off at college or as they receive a diploma.

Parents face continuing challenges from their nearly grown children. During this time in their child's life, parents refine their role as caretaker to a more mature, adult relationship (Aquilino, 1997). Most 18-25 year olds, however, do not yet consider themselves adults (Arnett, 2000), and they may continue to rely on parents for a variety of needs. Many of these returning students only plan to remain at home until they secure employment (collegegrad.com), but in recent years high unemployment rates have meant that they might remain at home longer than expected. Most parents are unprepared mentally, physically, and financially for the return of the "Boomerang" generation (Furman, 2005). Parents, who have relied on the guidance of professionals since before their child was born, have little information about how to negotiate the new roles that come with having an emerging adult child return home.

Rates of returning home can be difficult to measure and has been done infrequently (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). This is particularly true when it comes to college students, as students tend to move frequently during their time at college, and college may be a semi-independent route out of the home (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999; Mitchell, 2006). The primary goal of this study was not to measure rates of returning home or the impact on the parent or student, but rather to learn how parent and family professionals can best provide information to parents of college students when a child moves home upon graduation. To do so, a survey was sent to parents of college students about perceptions and expectations regarding their student's adulthood status and living situation, what information would be useful to parents, and how parent professionals can deliver information and support.

Literature Review

A review of relevant literature is necessary to understand the complexities of co-residence between parents and young adult children, thus supporting the idea that the return home can be a complicated time for families, and support from professionals may be sought. This section includes information on why young adults return home, implications for family relationships, and what has been found to be associated with successful co-residence.
It has become increasingly common for young adults to return to the parental home. In fact, nearly one-quarter of 18 to 24 year olds have moved back home with parents after living on their own (Pew Research Center, 2012). College students may have an even greater chance of returning home; estimates have shown that up to 65% to 85% of recent

college graduates moved home after receiving a diploma (Savage & Ziemniak, 2011). Emerging adults moved home for several reasons, including economic constraints, job opportunities, lack of alternative living arrangements, and financial situations (Sassler et al., 2008). In 2010, for example, the percentage of employed young adults aged 18 to 24 was at 54%, the lowest since data collection began in 1948 (Pew Research Center, 2012). The lack of jobs may mean the inability to afford to live on one's own.

Moving back home with parents, however, may not solely be a decision based on the economy or lack of jobs. While parents believed that their own children returned primarily for financial reasons, many young adults who lived at home in one qualitative study agreed that, while they could have probably afforded to live on their own, they could not afford to live on their own in the manner in which they expected or desired (Hartung & Sweeney, 1991). A second study found that returning home was less about material resources than social and emotional comforts (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). The benefits young adults saw did not just include financial privileges, but also the comfort of the familiar and, in some cases, personal services such as laundry and cooking (Hartung & Sweeney, 1991). Whatever the reason, co-residence between parents and adult children, particularly after time apart, will have implications for family relationships. As children age into adulthood, the parent-child relationship transitions from the parent as the caretaker to a more mature, egalitarian adult relationship (Aquilino, 1997). In one study, however, young adult respondents noted that the relationship with their parents reverted from one of friends back to that of parent-child once they returned home (Hartung & Sweeney, 1991). This reflects the potential conflicts that arise as families renegotiate the new living situation. Although parents have reported having disagreements with their co-resident adult child, frequency and intensity of disagreements were low (Aquilino & Supple, 1991). One study found that the frequency of disagreements did not significantly predict how well the living arrangement was working out, but the way parents and children resolved arguments did; likelihood of being satisfied was lower when families argued or shouted heatedly often or very often as a means to resolve disagreements compared to those that never or rarely engaged in this type of interaction (Mitchell, 1998).

Although disagreements did occur, frequency of shared leisure time and enjoyable activities has been found to be higher than the frequency of disagreements and arguing. Parents reported positive relationships and enjoyable social interactions with their children, including spending leisure time together, having private talks, and having an especially enjoyable time together. In fact, 70% of parents in one study reported that the co-resident living arrangement was working out well. This satisfaction with co-residence with adult children, however, was closely linked to the quality of the parent-child relationship. Parental satisfaction with co-residence appeared to be highest when parents and adult children participated in enjoyable activities and when children were more self-sufficient (Aquilino & Supple, 1991).

Similarly, help with housework and positive interactions, such as fewer arguments and more shared enjoyable activities, were significant predictors of how parents felt the co-residence living arrangement was working out. Parents were more likely to say that the living arrangement was working out well if their child contributed high levels of instrumental support (cleaning house, meal preparation, and laundry) and if there was shared enjoyment of activities (leisure activities, private talks, and especially enjoyable times) than those who contributed low levels or support and shared enjoyment (Mitchell, 1998).

It has been suggested that parents and children must negotiate roles and responsibilities when sharing a household (Aquilino & Supple, 1991). As stated above, however, parents of young adults may have fewer resources to rely on than parents of younger children when learning how to navigate this life stage. As news stories about young adults returning to the nest are common, parents may turn to the media to learn about the co-resident situation. In the 1990s, the media and general public attitudes about co-resident adult children were cited as having a negative impact on family well-being (Mitchell & Gee, 1996). Twenty years later, little has changed. While several news articles and websites offer facts about the boomerang trend and useful suggestions to parents of boomerang children, the overall attitude frequently appears negative. News articles, for example, may offer helpful advice, such as setting ground rules, establishing clear expectations, and supporting a job search, but titles such as, 'Boomerang kids? How to kick your kid out of the nest' and 'Adult children moving back home: Don't let "Boomerang Kids" derail your goals' might send different messages to parents and families (Girad, 2009; New York Life, 2010). These messages may not adequately prepare parents for the return of a young adult child.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore parents' perceptions and expectations regarding their student's adulthood status and living situation. This study further explored the types of information that parents were interested in and how parent professionals can provide information and support to families as young adult children graduate and return to the parental home. Specific research questions included:

1. What are parents' perceptions of their student's adulthood status, the likelihood of their student moving home after graduating from college, and expectations for their student if he or she returns home after graduating from college?

   a. What is the relationship between demographic characteristics and perceptions of student's adulthood status, the likelihood of moving home, and expectations for their student?

2. What delivery methods, sources of information, and topics do parents prefer as students move back home after graduating from college?

   a. What is the relationship between demographic characteristics and preferred delivery sources and requested information?

Method

Procedure

Parents were recruited to participate in an online survey through the member listserv of the Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals (AHEPPP). The association has a national membership of more than 100 higher education institutions. Recipients were asked to help us recruit parents of college students by presenting the survey link to parents of the students at their institutions. We suggested that professionals use email listserv, online newsletters, or upcoming events to invite parents and family members to participate.

Participants

Respondents included 928 parents of undergraduate students. Most respondents (87.4%) were the biological/adoptive mother; 11.6% were the biological/adoptive father. Respondents predominately reported their race as White or Caucasian (91.9%). The gender of the students was evenly split with 50.3% male and 48.8% female. Respondents further reported a relatively equal distribution across student year in school, with 25.4% freshmen, 19.3% sophomores, 20.0% juniors, 27.5% seniors, and 7.8% other. Most students attended a public (81.7%) and a 4-year (97.7%) institution (see Table 1 for all participant demographic information).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=928)

Characteristic	n	%
Relationship to student		
Biological/adoptive mother	811	87.4%
Biological/adoptive father	108	11.6%
Other	9	0.9%
Race		
White or Caucasian	853	91.9%
Asian	26	2.5%
Black or African American	18	1.9%
Hispanic or Latin American	12	1.3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	4	0.4%
Mixed Race	4	0.4%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2	0.2%
Other	9	1.0%
Student year		
Freshman	236	25.4%
Sophomore	179	19.3%
Junior	186	20.0%
Senior	255	27.5%
Other	72	7.8%
Household Income		
Less than $30,000	18	1.9%
$30,000-under $50,000	37	4.0%
$50,000-under $80,000	118	12.7%
$80,000-under $100,000	331	25.7%
$100,000-under $150,000	313	33.7%
$150,000-under $200,000	111	12.0%
$200,000 or more	0	0.0%
Highest level of parent education		
Less than a high school diploma	1	0.1%
High school graduate	60	6.5%
Associate's degree	99	10.7%
Bachelor's degree	421	45.4%
Master's degree	229	24.7%
Doctorate or equivalent	78	8.4%
Other	40	4.3%
Institution type		
Public college/university	758	81.7%
Private college/university	162	17.5%
Other	8	0.9%
Institution scope		
4-year college/university	907	97.7%
2-year college/university	0	0.0%
Other	21	2.3%

Measures

Adulthood status. Parents' perceptions of their student's adulthood status was measured by the statement, "I currently see my student as" with the options of "a child;" "an adult;" and "somewhere in between."

Moving home likelihood. Respondents were asked, "What is the likelihood that your student will move home after graduation?" and could select one of the following: "I'm sure of it;" "very likely;" "somewhat likely;" "rather unlikely;" "not a chance;" and "I haven't considered this possibility."

Expectations. In order to determine parents' expectations when a child moves home, a statement was included, "If my child moves home, I will" and respondents were asked to select any of the following that apply: "charge rent;" "enforce a curfew;" "expect my child to contribute to food and utility bills;" "expect my child to do household chores;" and "expect my child to inform me of his/her whereabouts." The number of "yes" responses for each option was summed to create a score between zero and five.

Delivery methods. Respondents were asked "What would be the best methods to receive information and advice about your child moving home after graduation from college?" and could select one of the following: "pamphlets or mailing;" "live workshops;" "emails;" "websites;" or "online workshops."

Information sources. Respondents were asked "Who would you like to receive information and advice from?" and were asked to select any of the following that apply: "parent/family professionals from your child's college/university" (professionals); "other parents who have recently had a child move home after college graduation" (recent parents); "other parents whose child is currently moving home after college graduation" (current parents); "your child;" and "other students moving home after graduation from college" (other students). The number of "yes" responses for each option was summed to create a score between zero and five.

Information preferences. Respondents were asked, "In preparation for the possibility of your child moving home after graduation from college, what types of information do you think you'd like to receive?" and were asked to select any of the following that apply: "how to communicate with my child in general" (general communication); "how to discuss financial concerns" (financial discussions); "how to negotiate household responsibilities" (household responsibilities); "how to negotiate house rules about houseguests, curfews, etc." (household rules); "how to encourage independence and growth" (independence); how to support a job search" (job search); and "how to establish boundaries for myself and my child" (boundaries). The number of "yes" responses for each option was summed to create a score between zero and seven.

Demographic variables. Respondents provided information about (1) student year in college; (2) highest level of parent education; and (3) household income (Table 1).

Open-ended questions. In addition to the above measures, respondents were asked to respond to three open-ended questions: (1) "What do you think will be the biggest challenge for you if your child moves home?" (2) "What do you think will be the biggest challenge for your student if he or she moves home?" and (3) "What do you most look forward to about the possibility of your child moving home?" Responses to these questions will be used to exemplify quantitative findings and provide specific examples of parents' perspectives about their students' return home.

Results

For all variables of interest, missing data ranged from 0% missing to 24.0% missing. A series of t-tests determined that respondents with missing data differed from respondents with complete data primarily in education and preferred delivery methods. The patterns of missingness revealed that missing values were missing at random (MAR); patterns of missing data could be explained by variables that were not of direct interest to this study. Expectation maximization was used to impute values for all missing data, as well as for "don't know or prefer not to answer" responses for the income variable. Missing data analyses, as well as all the following analyses, were conducted in SPSS 20.0.

Adulthood Status, Likelihood of Moving Home, and Expectations

The first research question, what are parents' perceptions of their student's adulthood status, the likelihood of their student moving home after graduating from college, and expectations for their student if he or she returns home after graduating from college, was answered primarily using descriptive statistics. Cochran's Q tests examined differences in the proportions of parents who had each expectation for their student. Cochran's Q is a nonparametric test that allows testing for differences between matched sets of frequencies or proportions. A Spearman Rho correlation examined the relationships between demographic characteristics and adulthood status. ANOVA tests examined demographic differences in moving home likelihood and the average number of expectations. Finally, open-ended responses provided examples about parents' perceptions of their child's adulthood status.

Adulthood status. Most parents in this study (64.1%) considered their student to be somewhere in between childhood and adulthood; 34.3% considered their student to be an adult and only 1.6% saw their student as a child. The Spearman correlation revealed a significant and positive relationship between adulthood status and student year (rs (926)=.34, p<.001), indicating that in general, more parents of older students saw their students as adults (Table 2). No significant differences were found in parent education or household income for adulthood status.

While parents agree that their student is between childhood and adulthood, open-ended responses suggested that this could cause confusion if the student moves home. When asked about potential challenges for themselves and their students, several parents noted the realization that their student is no longer a child, but an adult with life experiences outside the parental home. Parents wanted to support their student's independence and treat students like adults. One parent replied that a challenge would be "to remember that he is an adult now, and not fall back into the type of parenting that was required in the growing up years." Parents also reported awareness that their parental role will change to support independence and not monitor as much, including "establishing an appropriate parent/adult child relationship." Despite the potential challenges of dealing with their student's adulthood status, parents saw this as something to look forward to. In open-ended responses, parents explained looking forward to the opportunity to see their students as an adult and develop a new relationship. For example, one parent reported, "my daughter has grown into a mature young woman and we have started moving to a new stage in our relationship--friends rather than parent/child relationship."

Table 2:
Parents Perception of Adulthood Status by Student Year

Student Year	Adulthood Status		
	Child	Somewhere in between	Adult
Freshman	4.3%	77.9%	17.9%
Sophomore	1.7%	81.4%	16.9%
Junior	1.2%	63.6%	35.3%
Senior	0.0%	46.5%	53.5%

Moving home likelihood. When asked about the likelihood of their student moving home upon graduation, most parents overall fell in the middle with 35.1% responding 'somewhat likely' and 36.7% responding 'rather unlikely.' An additional 21.6% felt that it was very likely or certain that their student would move home while 4.0% responded 'not a chance.' The final 2.6% had not considered the possibility. ANOVA analyses revealed significant differences in moving home likelihood by student year [F (4, 923) = 4.60, p=.001]. Scheffe post hoc analyses revealed that parents of seniors (M=3.92) were significantly more likely to believe their student would be moving home than parents of freshmen (M=3.56; Table 3). No significant differences were found in parent education or household income for adulthood status.

Table 3:
Parents Perception of Adulthood Status by Student Year

Student Year	Moving Home Likelihood					
	I'm sure of it	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Rather unlikely	Not a chance	Haven't considered possibility
Freshman	3.7%	13.2%	41.6%	36.5%	5.0%	5.5%
Sophomore	2.9%	16.9%	34.9%	41.3%	4.1%	3.9%
Junior	7.0%	12.2%	39.0%	40.1%	1.7%	2.2%
Senior	8.2%	19.2%	32.2%	37.3%	3.1%	3.1%

Expectations. Parents overall reported having expectations of their student if their student moved home. These included expecting their child to do household chores (81.9%), expecting to be informed of their child's whereabouts (59.4%), expecting their child to contribute to food and utility bills (27.0%), charging rent (23.5%) and enforcing a curfew (12.1%). Cochran's Q tests revealed significant differences in the proportion of parents who had each expectation of their student (Cochran's Q=1301.75; p<.001). A significantly higher proportion of parents expected their student to do household chores than any other expectation. A significantly higher proportion of parents expected their student to inform them of his or her whereabouts than to contribute to food or utility bills, pay rent, or abide by a curfew. A significantly higher proportion of parents expected their student

to contribute to food and utility bills than to pay rent, or abide by a curfew. A significantly higher proportion of parents expected their student to pay rent than to abide by a curfew.

The number of expectations parents had for their student ranged from zero (9.1%) to five expectations (2.4%). Parents on average have 2.04 expectations. The average number of parent expectations decreased as students aged. ANOVA analyses revealed significant differences in the average number of expectations by student year [F (4, 923) = 8.11, p<.001]. Scheffe post hoc analyses revealed that parents of freshmen (M=2.32) had a significantly higher average number of expectations than parents of juniors (M=1.95) and seniors (M=1.85). Further, parents of sophomores (M=2.17) had a significantly higher average number of expectations than parents of seniors. No significant differences were found by parent education or household income.

Information Preferences

The second research question, what delivery methods, sources of information, and topics do parents prefer as students move back home after graduating from college, was primarily answered using descriptive statistics. Cochran's Q tests examined the differences in the proportions of parents who preferred each source of information and requested each topic. ANOVA tests examined demographic differences in preferred delivery methods and the average number of preferred sources of information and requested topics. Finally, open-ended responses provided examples about information about requested information about.

Delivery methods. Parents most preferred to receive information through emails (46.1%) and websites (30.6%). Fewer parents preferred to receive information through pamphlets or mailings (10.7%), online workshops (7.1%), and live workshops (4.3%). ANOVA analyses revealed a significant difference in income [F (5, 922) = 3.31, p=.006], indicating that there is a difference in mean income by preferred delivery method (Table 4). Post hoc analyses were not significant. No significant differences were found for student year or parent education.

Table 4:
Preferred Delivery Method by Household Income

Delivery Method	Household Income					
	Less than $30,000	$30,000 - under $50,000	50,000 - under $80,000	$80,000 - under $100,000	$100,000 - under $150,000	$150,000 - under $20,000
Pamphlets & mailings	16.7%	13.5%	9.3%	13.9%	7.0%	10.8%
Live workshops	16.7%	2.7%	4.2%	4.8%	3.8%	2.7%
Emails	44.4%	51.4%	52.5%	48.6%	42.5%	40.5%
Websites	11.1%	29.7%	28.8%	27.2%	34.2%	36.0%
Online workshops	11.1%	2.7%	3.4%	4.8%	10.9%	8.1%

Sources. Parents reported that they preferred to receive information from a variety of areas: professionals (65.1%); recent parents (54.5%); their child (29.4%); other students (27.2%); and current parents (18.4%). Cochran's Q tests revealed significant differences in the proportion of parents who preferred each source of information (Cochran's Q=696.76; p<.001). A significantly higher proportion of parents preferred to receive information from parent professionals than from any other source. A significantly higher proportion of parents preferred to receive information from recent parents than from their child, other students, and current parents. A significantly higher proportion of parents preferred to receive information from their child than from current parents. A significantly higher proportion of parents preferred to receive information from other students than from current parents.

The number of information sources preferred by parents ranged from zero (9.2%) to five sources (6.9%). Parents on average preferred information from 1.95 different sources. No significant differences were found for any demographic variables.

Topics. Parents indicated interest in a wide variety of information in preparation for the possibility of students moving home upon graduation: how to support a job search (63.8%); how to negotiate household responsibilities (41.2%); how to discuss financial concerns (40.3%); how to encourage independence and growth (37.8%); how to negotiate rules (32.7%); and how to establish boundaries (31.9%). Cochran's Q tests revealed significant differences in the proportion of parents who wanted information about each topic (Cochran's Q=607.19; p<.001). A significantly higher proportion of parents requested information about job search than any other topic. A significantly higher proportion of parents requested information about household responsibilities than household rules boundaries, and general communication. A significantly higher proportion of parents requested information about financial discussions than household rules, boundaries, and general communication. A significantly higher proportion of parents requested information about independence than household rules, boundaries, and general communication. A significantly higher proportion of parents requested information about household rules and boundaries than general communication.

The number of topics requested by parents ranged from zero (8.5%) to seven topics (6.7%). Parents on average requested information about 2.64 topics. No significant differences were found for any demographic variables.

Open-ended responses support the above finding that information regarding how to support a job search and negotiate household responsibilities were top needs for parents. Even though parents expressed general concern about their students finding jobs, parents frequently expressed concerns about patience and motivation or "being supportive and encouraging while looking for employment." Parents mentioned specific household responsibilities and rules as concerns, such as curfews, keeping the house clean, and doing laundry. Although parents occasionally responded that their student must adhere to rules already in place, parents more frequently said they would have to negotiate responsibilities and rules with their student upon returning home. Responses indicated willingness to compromise and communicate about expectations. For example, one parent said a challenge would be "setting appropriate expectations and communicating those in a manner that will instill respect."

Discussion

Findings of the current study revealed parents' perspectives about their student's adulthood status, moving home likelihood, and expectations of their student, as well as important implications for parent/family program professionals. Implications specifically fall into two categories: (1) methods for delivering information to parents; and (2) information needs. Finally, demographic differences should be recognized.

Adulthood Status, Moving Home Likelihood, and Expectations

Parents felt their students were in between childhood and adulthood. Even if a student has responsibilities of an adult and has reached the legal age of an adult, being in college itself may change parents' opinions on their student's adulthood status. College has been seen as a semi-autonomous route out of the home. Not only may students move in and out of the parental home during the college years, but also college students have been found more likely than a general sample of young adults in their 20s to say they were in between childhood and adulthood (Arnett 1997; Mitchell, 2006). Because these students do not yet consider themselves to be adults, they may continue to rely on parents for a variety of needs. Parents recognize this in-between status as a challenge to both themselves and their students; however, they also see getting to know their student as an adult as something to look forward to.

Parents in this study were unsure if their student would be moving home upon graduation from college, as most responded 'somewhat likely' or 'rather unlikely' when asked about their student's potential return. Parents' expectations and desire for information, however, indicate that they have at least thought about the possibility. Parents may be more accepting of their student moving home due to the current economic condition, which has led to higher amounts of debt and a shortage of jobs for college graduates.

Parents had expectations if their student moved home; more than half had the expectations that their child would contribute to household chores and would inform parents of their whereabouts. These expectations were further recognized in open-ended responses, which indicated that parents were concerned with the negotiation of household responsibilities and rules. The top expectations indicate that rather than just providing a room for their son or daughter, parents are looking for a family relationship and expect their student to contribute to chores, keep parents posted about their whereabouts, and be involved in the household.

Delivery Methods

Online sources of information, particularly emails and websites, were preferred by parents. This is not especially surprising; not only do most people have Internet access through their home, work, or public spheres (Dehaan, 2004), but also parents are already online communicating with their college student. In a 2010 study, parents reported using email (45.5%) and social networking sites (36.3%) as primary methods of communicating with students (Savage & Petree, 2010). Parents may utilize online sources for information as they are already using these sources to communicate with their student. Parent/family programs are frequently using online methods to communicate with parents of college students. The 2011 National Survey of College and University Parent Programs found that the use of online services, such as websites, email newsletters, and email responses, had all increased since 2009 (Savage & Petree, 2011). Findings of the current study indicate that parent and family professionals should continue this use of online resources to provide information to parents of college students, as that is how parents prefer to receive information.

Further, parents want to receive information from professionals or 'voices of experience.' Parent/family professionals and other parents who have recently had a child move home were the top two preferred sources of information for parents in this study. This demonstrates the necessary role for parent/family program professionals in delivering timely information to parents of college students. Parent/family program professionals have the advantage of reaching parents before their students move home, which means parents can prepare for negotiations that are suggested in this and previous research.

Information Needs

There are many difficulties associated with sharing a residence: lack of privacy or independence; child's lifestyle, including messiness or unwillingness to help out at home; fights or arguments; and negotiating a child's dependency (Mitchell, 1998). Parents' interest in a variety of topics, including information on discussing financial concerns, encouraging independence and growth, negotiating rules, and establishing boundaries, reflect potential difficulties. The top two topics that parents in this study requested were supporting a job search and negotiating household responsibilities and rules. Parents may be correct in wanting more information on these topics; previous research has found that these issues can cause potential problems in parent-adult child co-residence. For example, children's unemployment and financial dependency was related to negative parental perceptions of co-residence (Aquilino, 1991). Further, parents were more likely to say that the co-resident living arrangement was working out well if their child contributed high levels of instrumental support (cleaning house, meal preparation, laundry) and if there was shared enjoyment of activities (leisure activities, private talks, especially enjoyable times) than those who contributed low levels or support and shared enjoyment (Mitchell, 1998). Parent/family professionals not only can provide information regarding the top information needs, but can further support this transition by providing talking points and tips for parents preparing for the potential return of their student. Co-residence, as well as renegotiation of the parent-child relationship, may be more successful if families are able to discuss these topics and convey clear expectations and boundaries. The benefits of returning home have been found to outweigh the negative, but only when the relationship was strong or parents felt support exchanges were equal and fair (Mitchell, 1998).

Demographic Differences

This study examined differences in student year in college, parent education, and household income. Previous research has found demographic differences in studies of co-residence. For example, more highly educated parents and parents with a higher income reported more negative perceptions of co-residence (Aquilino, 1991). Additionally, research has found parents' concerns changed by student's year in college, suggesting a shift in information needs as students age (Savage & Petree, 2010). The current study found very few demographic differences in parent education and income. This may be because the educational level and income of parents in this study are highly skewed. While only 27.5% of the U.S. population has a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S Census Bureau, 2009), 82.8% of parents in this study had a bachelor's degree or higher. Further, the median household income in 2009 in the U.S. was $50,221 (U.S. Census Bureau), yet nearly half of this sample (45.7%) reported earning a household income of $100,000 or more. Parents

with lower education and income levels are not represented well in this sample; this study may not have captured the experiences of these parents.

Student year in college played the biggest role in these findings; differences by student year were found in adulthood status, moving home likelihood, and parent expectations. The number of parent expectations, for example, decreased as students aged, supporting the shift of seeing a student as an adult that occurred from freshman to senior year. As parents see their student on their own at college and adjust to the student's adulthood status, they may shift their expectations and prepare for adult negotiations rather than parent-child rules.

Whenever possible, parent professionals should consider the audience of their programming and remember that parents of younger students may have different information needs than parents of older students.

Limitations and Future Research

Future research can expand findings from this study and address study limitations. There were several sampling limitations to this study; participants were primarily mothers, White, and had high levels of education and incomes. Thus, findings may not reflect the concerns or information preferences of all parents of college students. Sampling methods that focus on under-represented populations can address additional issues or preferences not reflected in these findings due to this limitation. The current study contained no measures of the parent-child relationship or other outcomes, such as parental attitudes towards co-residence. It is unknown how the parent perspectives measured in this study will impact the family relationship or parents' satisfaction with co-residence. Additionally, future research can address specific information parents would like for each broad issue in order to help guide parent/family programs in the information they provide. Finally, this study only considered the parent perspective. Future research ought to use similar measures on a sample of college students or graduates in order to examine the young adult perspective on the return to the parental home.

Conclusion

This study indicates there is an important role for parent/family professionals in working with parents of students who are about to graduate or who have recently graduated from college. Today's generation of parents has relied on expert advice throughout the child-rearing years, and they will look for information on their new stage of boomerang parenting. What they want is practical advice on how to handle financial discussions, ideas for negotiating rules and responsibilities, and especially, ways to support a job search. They trust the advice of parent/family professionals along with real-life experience of other parents who have been through the process, and they will access online sources to guide them through their next steps.

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The History and Mission of the Parents Office at Syracuse University

Colleen O'Connor Bench
Director, Parents Office
Syracuse University

Missy Mathis-Hanlon
Assistant Director, Parents Office
Syracuse University

The Syracuse University Parents Office was created in 1972 by Chancellor Melvin A. Eggers in response to decreased federal funding to students for higher education. Because parents had to step up and financially assist their students to afford a Syracuse education, it was clear to him that the University would need an office to manage this emerging customer. With their finances now dedicated to an SU education, Eggers also recognized the demise of in loco parentis and the demand of parents to know more about their son's or daughter's education in a time of great student independence. It was for that reason that Chancellor Eggers strategically placed the service-oriented Parents Office within the Division of Student Affairs. As the years passed, many more colleges and universities followed his lead and today, many look to Syracuse University as a national model.

The SU Parents Office primarily serves parents, guardians, or supportive family members of undergraduate students at Syracuse University and at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF), which is adjacent to the SU campus and shares many campus services. On a daily basis, the office serves as a valuable resource for many internal departments and external clients (e.g., local businesses; Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau; colleagues from local and national institutions). We regularly communicate with parents through publications, social media, and a comprehensive web site.

The Parents Office has four main functions: information referral, academic/personal intervention, crisis intervention, and special events coordination and implementation. Staff members sometimes serve in an ombudsperson role for parents. Most importantly, the Parents Office encourages parents to take an active role in their sons' or daughters' SU experiences. We encourage family dialogue about academics and social activities so that students feel supported and parents/family members can discover the successes, challenges, and changes that their sons or daughters encounter at Syracuse University. Though our office is primarily focused on educating the parent constituency about the institution, in an effort for them to assist their students and give them direction, we meet with a large number of students. Students often come to our office after they or their parents are at "wit's end." Usually, it relates to academic, social, or personal issues that the student is seeking to resolve. We listen to them, provide referrals, help them to make connections in other departments, and follow-up with them to be sure that they are back on track. Often, we are a source of support for a student while they are away from their family—they stop by occasionally to check-in and let us know how things are going. If we note any concerns or issues, we are able to provide the student with some direction and at the very least, a home base.

We work with families in crisis as a result of student illness, injury, or death. Many times, the Director in particular is the primary contact or source of support for a family in crisis. This includes staying with a student at the hospital until family arrives, ensuring that family have a place to stay and that their basic needs are being met, and assisting them, if necessary, in making academic connections. Often, this relationship continues after the crisis period ends due to the intimacy of the relationship that develops during such sensitive times.

The Parents Office plans and executes all aspects of the over 55-year-old Family Weekend program and the parent/family orientation programs related to SU Welcome. These programs allow parents/family members to observe their student in his/her environment and provide an opportunity to learn about, and interact with campus resources. These programs also permit the Parents Office to proactively educate parents on ways in which they can effectively support their student, while still allowing their student to grow and develop at the University. In short, we teach parents how to help their students learn to help themselves. Arthur W. Chickering's Theory of Identity Development is the philosophical basis for the Parents Office and drives how we function.

Though the office is not directly responsible for the planning of Commencement, Alumni Relations or Admissions Office events, we maintain a key presence and provide information and assistance as necessary. The Parents Office also sponsors or co-sponsors topical programs at SU centers in New York City, Washington, DC, and Los Angeles. In its ongoing relationship with parents, the office works closely with the University's development operation to identify and cultivate potential donors and/or volunteers as well as to fundraise in support of its own operations.

We often hear from parents and students that we provide the "personal touch" that you normally do not find at a large university. Though we are a small staff, many families and their students get to know us well over the time the student is enrolled at SU. Some parents tell us that the fact that SU has a Parents Office is one of the primary reasons that their student enrolled at the University.

Working with parents and family members results in productive, respectful partnerships with these important campus constituents and presents a positive image of the University as a caring environment. The need and rationale for the SU Parents Office is no different now than on the day Melvin Eggers conceived it 40 years ago.


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