

Let Your Fingers Do the Talking: An Analysis of a College Parent Listserv

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While the primary purpose of an institution is to focus on the student, colleges and universities would be remiss not to place emphasis on the relationships that students maintain with their parents during their college career. Parental involvement can have a positive impact on the students' personal development and success in college. This study explores the main concerns and questions of parents. Based on content and discourse analysis of a college parents listserv over a 5-month period, the main topics discussed were living arrangements and transportation. Other discussion topics included "letting go" and supporting the student. Knowing information like this means that orientation staff can adequately address these issues and keep parents involved in the life of campus.

Just a few decades ago, the notion of "parent relations" in higher education was virtually nonexistent beyond the payment of tuition bills. It is almost comical to read Dr. Robert Cohen's assertion from 1985: "Deans and others in student affairs should limit contact with students' parents. ... We do not consider parents part of our client population" (p. 3). Since that time a mere 20 years ago, programs and offices for parents have been unveiled at nearly all colleges and universities across the country. Programs encompass parent weekends, Web sites, newsletters, and other activities designed to connect parents to campus life (Coburn, 2006; Sandeen, 2000; "Good Parent Relations," 2005). Additionally, nearly all U.S. college campuses offer special orientation programs for parents and employ at least one staff member to work with parents on an ongoing basis (Perigo, 1985; Coburn & Woodward, 2001; Silverstein, 2004). More sophisticated parent programs range from toll-free hotlines for parental guidance to advisory groups for parents to confer with campus administration about institutional issues.

Institutional benefits may be obtainable through parental involvement. A retired educator from Appalachian State University said, "Some administrators who once feared that such initiatives would open the door to parent meddling now believe the programs are valuable marketing and fundraising tools" (Silverstein, 2004, A1). Beyond marketing and fundraising, a growing body of literature indicates that parental relationships have a positive impact on students' transitions to college and help with adjustment throughout the 4 (or more) years while on campus (Lapsley, Rice, & Fitzgerald, 1990; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000; Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004).

Specifically, the results of Lapsley et al.'s study (1990) suggests that "family relations

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[form] a secure base from which the adolescent may go forward to negotiate confidently the transition to college” (p. 565). The positive effects of attachment to parents are not just limited to freshman year, but continue while the students are upperclassmen. Academic, social, and personal-emotional attachments, as well as goal commitment, were all strongly predicted by relationships to parents (Lapsley et al.).

Mattanah et al. (2004) extended this idea to compare male and female students and their attachment to parents throughout college. Secure attachment to parents was positively associated with both men and women for an effective college adjustment (p. 222). Mattanah et al. indicated that all students strived to achieve individuation during their transition to college while also retaining a connection to their family. Wintre and Yaffe (2000) surveyed 408 Canadian students of various academic disciplines and found that students who maintained a relationship with parents were aided in navigating various changes at college. In particular, “discussion with parents about university-related issues had a direct effect on [students’] university adjustment” (p. 31).

The present inquiry is a basic mixed methods study that seeks to understand the phenomenon of interest—the interests and concerns of new collegiate parents. This study was conducted to determine with which university-related issues parents were most concerned at one type of institution and to lay the groundwork for similar studies at other types of institutions.

Two decades after Cohen (1985) suggested that student affairs professionals limit their contact with parents, Coburn (2006) wrote,

The challenge for us in higher education is not whether to involve parents. The challenge is to figure out how to enlist these already involved parents in our mutual goal of helping students become engaged learners, competent and creative problem solvers, and responsible and effective citizens. (p. 11)

Parents are eager and willing to participate in the lives of their college students. Orientation professionals need to give them the wherewithal to do so.

Purpose of the Study

Communicating with parents via the Internet and other online methods are becoming a popular feature for colleges. One program of note is housed at Whitman College in southeastern Washington. Whitman College offers “Parents Core,” a popular online course for parents to read and discuss the same literature that their freshmen explore through their great books curriculum. Grades are not assigned to the parents, but professors do post the same handouts and discussion questions online as students receive in class. The college hopes that Parents Core will promote conversation between students and parents on an intellectual level (Monaghan, 2005).

Another popular online method for connecting parents was just launched at the University of Alabama: a peer networking Web site, like Facebook, solely for parents of Alabama students called “myBama Family Connection” (Epstein, 2005). Using myBama, parents can chat with the university and their peers. Questions posted on the site generally get a university response within 72 hours. Although Whitman’s Parents

Core and Alabama's Family Connection are just two examples, computer-mediated communication is becoming a prevalent way to connect parents from across the country and the globe.

The focus of this study was the communication that took place on a parent listserv at a large, public, urban university in the northwest United States. A listserv is an online mailing list for communicating with other people who have subscribed to the same list (Mann & Stewart, 2000). The student affairs unit on campus created a listserv to engage parents following new student orientation. Using e-mail, participants correspond asynchronously on a specific topic of interest—in this case, parental concerns, comments, and questions about university life. When parents submitted messages to the server, the messages were then broadcast to all other participants via e-mail.

Institutions of higher education could learn about parental concerns and how to keep them informed by methodically studying a listserv such as the one mentioned here. Once parental concerns are identified, institutional leaders can address them with future constituencies. Coburn and Woodward (2001) wrote:

Parents who understand the institution and today's college scene are more likely to know when to support their children from a distance and when to intervene. They develop a clearer understanding of what is expected of their son or daughter, and what resources exist. They move beyond the glossy hype of the viewbooks and focus on a more realistic notion of the pressures and challenges facing new college students. They know how to help their student access appropriate resources when in need. (p. 37-38)

While the primary purposes of an institution are students and academics, colleges and universities would be remiss to neglect the relationships that students maintain with their parents during their college career. As noted in the literature review, parental involvement can have a positive impact on the students' personal and educational success in college. This study sought to identify parental concerns in order to engage them in their students' lives at college.

Theoretical Framework: Schlossberg's Theory of Transition

At various points in life, individuals are confronted with transitions, both positive and negative. Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) defined a transition as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 27). An example of such an event is a retirement or a student leaving for college; the individual anticipated and planned for that transition. A non-event would be not receiving a promotion or a rejection from medical school; both were a desired outcome, but they did not occur (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

Nancy Schlossberg created an adult transition theory in 1981, with modifications thereafter, to develop, according to Evans et al. (1998), "a framework that would facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and lead them to the help they needed to cope" (p. 108). In order to understand the meaning of a transition for a particular

person, one needs to examine the type of transition, its context, and its impact. The same transition, such as a child leaving for college, may have varying effects. Even individuals within the same household, such as a mother and father, can react quite differently to the same transition. College parents may find themselves balancing an awkward position between their old role and new one.

Sargent and Schlossberg (1988) suggest that “people in transition are often preoccupied and a little confused, even if the transition is a desired one” (p. 59). An individual’s effectiveness in coping with transition depends on a series of four S’s that Schlossberg introduced in her theory: Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies.

Within the Situation category, the individual determines the type of transition that is occurring. Important factors include the “trigger” or event that advanced the transition, the personal “timing” of one’s social clock in relation to the transition, the aspect of “control” for the transition, how a “role change” might be involved, the “duration” of the transition, the individual’s “previous experience” with a similar transition, other sources of “concurrent stress” and the “assessment” of whom is responsible (Evans et al., 1998).

Two factors are important for the Self classification: (1) personal and demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, health, and socioeconomic status, and (2) psychological characteristics—in particular optimism, values, and commitments. Within the Support category, Evans et al. (1998) cite four types of social support important to Schlossberg’s theory: intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and institutions and communities. The functions and measurements of these social supports also make varying impacts on a transition.

Lastly, Strategies influence the ways that persons modify the situation, control its meaning, and manage the stress surrounding the situation (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Individuals use various coping strategies to deal with the transition at hand. Taken in sync, Schlossberg’s four S’s are a systematic process of handling change. Evans et al. (1998) laud the theory as being “comprehensive in scope... conceptually and operationally sound. For the future, an expansion of the research base related to theory would be helpful” (p. 122). Hopefully this study will add to the compilation of research related to Schlossberg’s theory of transition.

Research Questions

With respect to parents of college students, institutions of higher education may enhance the transition and adjustment throughout the college years by offering support and strategies to cope with the situation. Woollen (2005) stated, “Both mothers and fathers ... have been waiting for an opportunity to share and express their fears and excitement about the impact the future separation [from their college student] will have on their relationship” (p. 82). The parent listserv was created to offer the opportunity to share fears, excitement, and ideas; ask for suggestions; and offer support. The listserv functioned as a transition aid. Therefore, in light of the theoretical framework, Schlossberg’s four S’s guided the research questions for this study on the listserv:

1. *Situation*: How do parents regard the transition of their student to college?
2. *Self*: Personal and demographic characteristics of parents may be implied through the demographic makeup of the student body, but what about their psychological outlook? How are optimism and values defined?
3. *Support*: What are the common concerns of college parents and how can the institution function as a source of social support based on these concerns?
4. *Strategies*: How do parents modify the situation and/or manage its stress?

Method

Participants

Participants were the 972 subscribers to the parent listserv at a large, urban, public university in the northwest. Parents' e-mail addresses were collected at advising sessions and summer orientation throughout 2004 and automatically entered as subscribers into the parent listserv. An introductory e-mail describing the listserv and its potential contents was then mailed to each participant in December of that year. Parents had the option to unsubscribe from the list if they did not want to be included.

The 972 subscribers represented a geographically diverse group of parents of first-year and transfer students from all over the United States. According to the university's online data book, the average age of an undergraduate in the fall 2004 was 22 years. The majority of undergraduate students were in-state residents, took 12.7 credit hours per semester, and earned a composite score of 22 on the ACT. The college with the largest enrollment at the university was Liberal Arts. Purposeful criterion sampling was used because all individuals had the same experience of being parents to students at this particular institution (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 1998).

Data Collection

In January 2005, the listserv moderator (a university employee) sent two "welcome to the listserv" e-mails to parents who had responded to the previous month's introduction. (See Appendices A and B for copies of the welcome message posted to the listserv in January 2005 and another brief message encouraging dialogue that was sent during the same month.) Throughout the spring semester (January–May 2005), 151 e-mails were sent via the listserv. The moderator sent six of the e-mails. Parent subscribers sent the remainder of the e-mails. The 145 parent messages were analyzed for this study. Collecting text from e-mail messages is a new form of data collection (Creswell, 1998).

The author of this study was an observer to the listserv and gained access through a yearlong internship with the Student Affairs Office on campus. She did not serve as the listserv moderator, merely an onlooker. All messages from the listserv were archived on the university Web site and the researcher's computer. Parents were not notified that e-mails would be part of this larger study. Mann & Stewart (2000) argue,

Messages posted on Usenet [and other mailing lists] are not equivalent to private

letters. Rather, they are public acts, deliberately intended for public consumption. ... Permission should not be sought for the recording and analysis of publicly posted messages. ... There are parallels here with the conventional FTF [face to face] context where consent is usually not obtained. (p. 46-53)

That being said, participants' anonymity and confidentiality was maintained by only referring to their e-mail headers. No names were known or used in the listserv or by the researcher.

To meet the two requisite standards of quality and verification, the researcher maintained a prolonged observation throughout the entire semester to learn the parent culture. Additionally, presenting data with "rich, thick description" enables readers to understand the setting and participants and determine its transferability (Creswell, 1998). Member checking was not an option since real names were not used; the researcher had no way of contacting the participants.

Data Analysis

Throughout the 5 months of the study, parents of college students posted 145 messages to the listserv. However, only 98 actual parents participated out of the 972 subscribers ($98/972 = 10\%$ participation rate). Sixty-nine parents each sent one message, and 29 parents sent the rest of the 76 e-mails. For example, as indicated in Table 1, three parents sent 10 percent of the e-mails distributed through the parent listserv. The listserv messages were analyzed using the processes of content and discourse analysis along with event and category mapping.

TABLE 1

Breakdown of Parent Listserv Messages

Number of Messages	Number of Parents	E-mail x Parents	Percentage
1	69	69	48%
2	19	38	26%
3	5	15	10%
4	2	8	6%
5	3	15	10%
Total	98	145	100%

Content Analysis

The 145 messages sent by parents were reviewed using content analysis, a common method for reviewing text and written documents (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Listserv

messages pertaining to technical difficulties (e.g., subscribe/unsubscribe from the list and “I’m receiving duplicate messages”) comprised 20 postings, or 13% of the total messages. These messages should have been directed toward the moderator, and instructions were provided with that detail, but persons unfamiliar with listserv “netiquette” sent them to the entire group. Messages such as these were more frequent when the listserv postings began in January 2005. Twelve such messages were posted that month. However, by April 2005, only one technically related e-mail was sent, and by May, none were present.

When these messages were removed from the analysis, the primary topic of discussion was living arrangements (30.4% of messages). The living arrangement discussion centered on where students should reside while attending college, whether on or off campus. Parents had relatively strong feelings about their preference for residence halls, Greek houses, or apartment living. As this listserv was tracked during the spring semester, many parents indicated that their students were currently deciding where to live for the following school year. Other top issues based on the number of postings were transportation and lodging (16% of messages) and general concerns including homesickness (12% of messages), although postings regarding housing equated to more than these two issues combined. Table 2 registers the frequencies of all messages.

TABLE 2

Frequency of Listserv Discussions by Topic

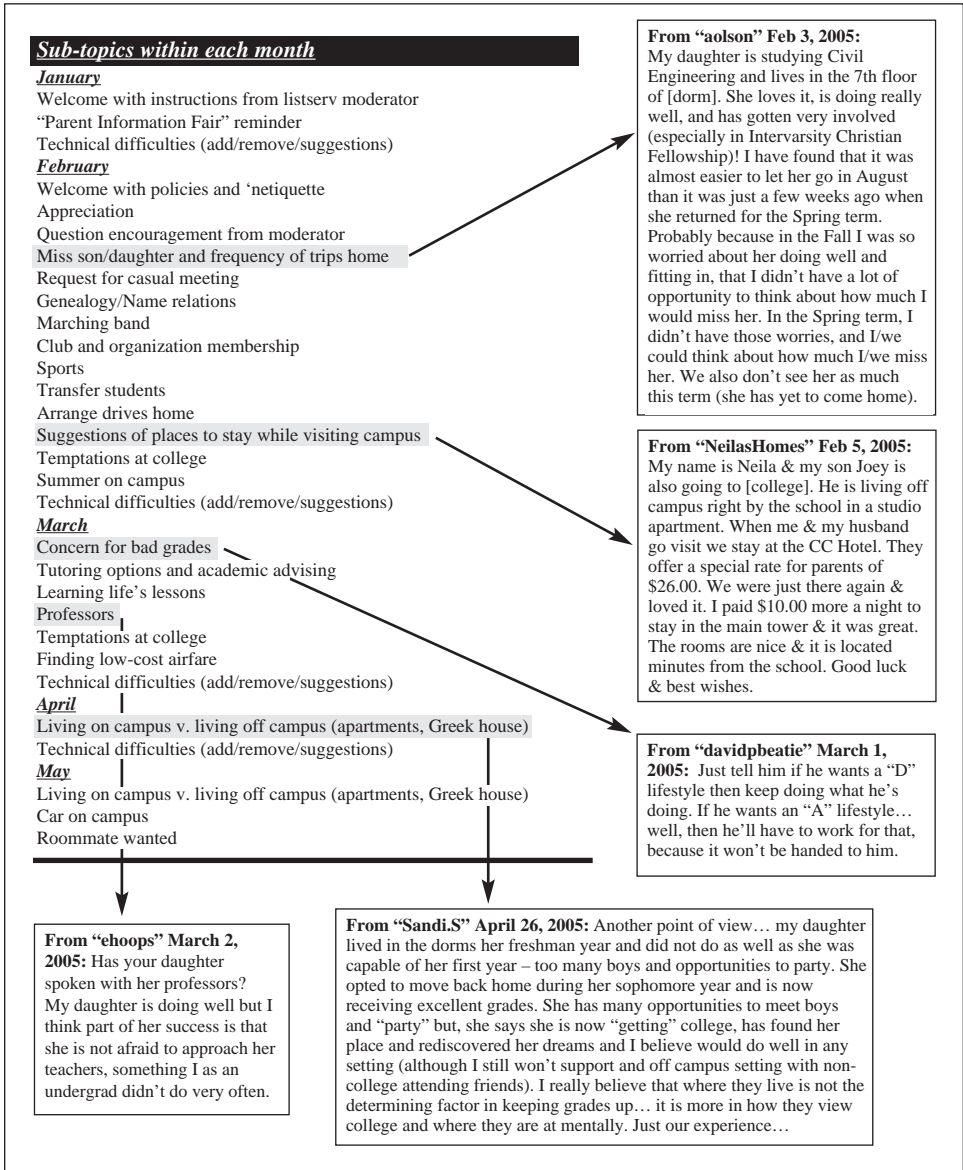
Primary Topics	Frequency of Discussion	Percentage of Discussion
Living Arrangements	38	30.4%
Transportation/Lodging	20	16.0%
General Concerns	15	12.0%
Student Involvement	14	11.2%
Academic Concerns	13	10.4%
Social Gathering	12	9.6%
Temptations at College	11	8.8%
Transfer Students	2	1.6%
Total	125	100.0%

The event map in Figure 2 delineates the subtopics discussed each month on the listserv and provides e-mail text examples. The subtopics varied each month; early

postings included missing the student and involvement on campus, whereas later postings reflected concern for poor grades (midway through the semester) and where to live the following school year (end of the semester).

FIGURE 1

Event Map



Discourse Analysis

In order to better understand the parental topics of discussion beyond the frequency numbers, the discourse (text) of each message was analyzed. Discourse analysis is a popular data analysis method for examining text within its context to discover themes. One prominent theme that emerged from the data was the encouragement of students. Whether they were challenged to overcome a grade hurdle, a tough class, a roommate issue, or difficult situation, the parents maintained a strong sense of supporting the student.

As an example, “Garnet” posted the following message on February 4: “My son started [college] last August. He is doing well but does get a little lonely once in a while. All we can do as parents is listen to them with open ears & hearts, we *encourage* [italics added] them, tell them how proud we are & that we believe & trust in them, their judgements [*sic*] & decisions [*sic*]. The best we can do for our children is to let them grow to be the INDIVIDUA:S [*sic*] we wanted them to be.”

The following day, “Jumpanil69” sent a message asking for suggestions on how to “make [his son] slow down as he have too much friend and party.” By February 20, part of the reply from “Robert.R” included the message, “With *your support* [italics added] your Son will do well. Keep *encouraging* [italics added] him, and let him know how great he is doing!” Subsequently, when the next message from “estanley” told “Jumpanil69” to “Quit trying!” a tirade of postings in reply to “estanley” reemphasized the encouragement point. Table 3 delineates part of this listserv transaction.

TABLE 3

Discourse Analysis of Listserv Messages Focusing on Parental Encouragement

Actor	Date	Question	Reply
estanley	Feb. 25	001 Quit trying! 002 If he hasn't got what it takes to buckle down and do what is necessary to be a successful student, you have no authority to fix him now. 003 He will either learn from his mistakes and do better 004 or he will be among that percentage of students who are too immature to be off on their own. 005 Don't beat yourself up. 006 you can't fix it. 007 Best wishes from a proud grandma of an "A" Freshman music student. 008 He was also a very responsible student in high school. 009 I think that makes the difference.	

Actor	Date	Question	Reply
gymcoach218	Feb. 28		<p>010 My daughter isn't the best student either.</p> <p>011 However, she does not party.</p> <p>012 I am lucky she does not drink, or do drugs.</p> <p>013 When her grades started getting low, I simply said "Well you can bring your grades up, or practice saying would you like fries with that.</p> <p>014 She didn't like that very much, but I think I made my point.</p> <p>015 She did excellent in high school.</p> <p>016 So I'm not sure there is a connection,</p> <p>017 but I think they make a decision at some point to either step up and work hard,</p> <p>018 and go after a career,</p> <p>019 or they live for the moment, and miss their future.</p> <p>020 At this age they know it all don't they.</p> <p>021 I would just keep trying to motivate him, and remind him of his future.</p> <p>022 Ask him what kind of life he can see for himself.</p> <p>023 If he wants to struggle, or live well.</p> <p>024 remind him of these things and keep trying.</p> <p>025 Don't ever give up on your children. ---</p>
kennyaxe	Feb. 28		<p>026 I have been receiving XYZ [University] e-mails nonstop for some time and have never replied to one.</p> <p>027 I read the reply from "proud grandma".</p> <p>028 I don't agree that you should stop trying or give up on your son--ever!</p>

Only two posted replies were used as examples in Table 3, but lines 021, 024, 025, and 028 (noted in bold type) all refer to the theme of parental encouragement.

Another common theme throughout the semester was the difficulty in “letting go.” This topic surfaced in a variety of messages, especially in postings about general concerns and living arrangements. On February 3, 2005, “Moconnor” wrote, “Yes, it is a learning experience, and not always easy to let go.” Table 4 highlights a few more messages with the letting go theme. In particular, lines 004, 006, 008, 012, 013, 014, 019, 020, 024, and 025 all communicate the difficulty in letting go.

TABLE 4

Discourse Analysis of Listserv Messages Focusing on Letting Go

Actor	Date	EmergentTheme	Message
Aolson	Feb. 3	Letting Go	<p>001 My daughter is studying Civil Engineering 002 and lives in the 7th floor of [dorm]. 003 She loves it, is doing really well, and has gotten very involved (especially in Intervarsity Christian Fellowship)!</p> <p>004 I have found that it was almost easier to let her go in August than it was just a few weeks ago when she returned for the Spring term.</p> <p>005 Probably because in the Fall I was so worried about her doing well and fitting in, 006 that I didn't have a lot of opportunity to think about how much I would miss her.</p> <p>007 In the Spring term, I didn't have those worries, 008 and I/we could think about how much I/we miss her.</p> <p>009 We also don't see her as much this term (she has yet to come home).</p>
Tahoe888	Feb. 4		<p>010 Last semester she was home every week-end – 011 I think more to see her boyfriend than us, 012 but we'll take what we can get.</p>

Actor	Date	EmergentTheme	Message
Clocey	Feb. 4	Letting Go	013 We visited last weekend and miss her, 014 but do speak nearly everyday. 015 The packages and goodies I UPS to her always make for a pleasant surprise. 016 She hopes to be home for a visit over the President's Day holiday weekend.
Dhall	Feb. 7		017 For most of these kids 018 its their first time anyway from home and family for such an extended time. 019 Read between the lines, keep in touch. 020 We want to let them have their independence but they still need us for guidance and support.
Stephanie	April 25		021 My daughter will be a sophomore next fall. 022 She lived in the dorms this past year and did very well. 023 Next year, she wants to move into an apartment with two friends. 024 We don't want to be too overprotective, 025 but we are hesitant to let her leave campus since her grades were so good.

Results

To answer the first research question on how parents regard the transition of their student to college, most parents defined the situation as having a hard time “letting go.” As evidenced in the discourse analysis, many parents alluded to missing their son or daughter, wanting them to visit, and keeping in touch.

The second research question sought to answer how parents defined optimism and values. A prominent theme that emerged throughout the 5 months was “encouragement.” A variety of parents from “Garnet:” “We encourage them, tell them how proud we are & that we believe & trust in them...” to the posting by “gymcoach218:” “I would just keep trying to motivate him,” showed that the majority of parents had a positive outlook and felt that their students could achieve success with parental support.

The third research question wanted to know what the common concerns of college parents were. Content analysis and event mapping revealed that living arrangements were the biggest concern for parents at this institution. Transportation and lodging also topped the list. The institution studied was a large, public, urban campus, so housing

issues may have been natural. However, this concern was in contrast to other research. For example, based on the University of Minnesota parent surveys, parents of first-year students were most concerned about health and safety (“Good Parent Relations,” 2005). Also, the “Parent Project” looked at goals of parents while they were attending new student orientation at southeastern institutions (Turrentine, Schnure, Ostroth, & Ward-Roof, 2000). Job preparation and quality education ranked at the top of the list. Interestingly, health, safety, job preparation, and quality education (other than concern for poor grades) did not enter this listserv conversation at all.

The issue that received the least amount of coverage in the listserv was transferring, despite the fact that the university had nearly 1,100 new undergraduate transfer students in 2004. The low frequency of transfer discussion on the parent listserv could be due to the unlikelihood of parents of transfer students to attend advising sessions and orientation programs where the e-mail addresses were collected.

Finally, the fourth research question examined how parents modified the situation and/or managed its stress. Parents relied on one another through listserv communication as one such way of understanding the transition and working through it. Overall, parents appeared to enjoy the listserv form of communication throughout the 5 months that were tracked for this study. Table 5 lists a few of the positive comments regarding the listserv format. Parents were pleased to have this outlet in which to communicate questions and concerns and swap stories. Knowing that another parent was experiencing the same issue at the same time was a comfort and relief.

TABLE 5

Positive Comments About Listserv Format

Actor	Date	Message
Chuckr	Jan. 31	It is nice to know we can keep in touch with the school where our son goes so easily.
Bsm413	Feb. 3	I love this communication between parents. Let's keep it up.
Susie	Feb. 4	Thanks to all of you who replied to my message. What a neat thing!
Lori.D	Feb. 5	It is great to hear the stories and see all the love pouring into these emails [sic]. Congrats to all of you and your awesome kids.
Elizabeth	Feb. 4	This really is a great service for us parents! It's a good way to get info.

Limitations of the Study

This was a basic, interpretive, qualitative study using criterion sampling. The results

only may be generalizable to institutions with a similar parent population. Perhaps parents at smaller schools, especially ones of a religious or liberal arts nature, might have different concerns for their children attending college. The same might be true for parents of students at historically Black colleges and universities, or colleges found in rural settings. The author recommends that listservs be established and this study be repeated at various institutional types.

Additionally, it should be noted that parents who are unfamiliar with computer-mediated communication or who do not have access to a computer would not have been studied through the listserv method. These parents and their concerns would have been inadvertently removed from the analysis because of their inability to participate. However, the Computer Industry Almanac, Inc. predicted that more than 1 billion individuals would be using the Internet in 2005, so computer-mediated communications like the listserv can and will be a powerful tool for connecting with the parent constituency in the future. Coburn (2006) indicated that computer-mediated communication with parents is rapidly growing: “With the increasing percentage of technology-savvy parents, parent communication is bound to take on more free-flowing dimensions” (p. 13).

Another limitation concerns the timing of the listserv’s launch. Because this parent service was initiated in the middle of the academic year, one of the heaviest times of parent use—the start of the year and the first weeks of separation between student and parents—may have been missed. To some extent, differences in results between this study and others may be a reflection of listserv timing.

Implications for Practice

Overall, this study confirms earlier research that parents want to stay involved in the lives of their children while at college (Silverstein, 2004; Coburn, 2006). Based on the outpouring of support for the listserv format, the university decided to continue it throughout the 2005-2006 school year. More e-mail addresses were added to the subscriber list as they were collected at new advising sessions and orientation programs. It is also a desire of the university to utilize the information identified through this study to shape future newsletters, orientation programs, and other communications with parents. To review, parental relationships have a positive impact on students’ transitions to college and help with adjustment throughout the 4 (or more) years while on campus. Learning what parents want—firsthand from the parents through the listserv—will assist any institution in providing this important constituency with the tools to assist their students throughout their college career.

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Appendix A.

Welcome to the university parents e-mail listserv!

The address for the listserv is parents@xyz.edu. Below is a brief description of the listserv and its policies and procedures. If you receive this message, you are currently subscribed to this listserv. There is no need to respond or subscribe once again.

The purpose of the listserv is to provide parents of university students with a valuable information resource. Parents can use the list to ask one another questions, share experiences, and stay informed regarding the university. The Parents' Network will use the list to regularly disseminate an e-newsletter for parents, as well as important announcements about University programs and services. The volume of mail exchanged on the listserv is up to you, the subscribers. We hope you will find this to be a useful resource for connecting with other parents and gathering information. We look forward to open communication, a diverse expression of ideas, and an active dialogue.

The parents listserv is a hidden list, which means the list of members is available only to the list administrator, the Parents' Network. Your name and e-mail address will not be visible to any other members of the list. Be aware that all posted responses will go to the entire list. Responses cannot be sent solely to an individual.

The listserv is moderated, meaning messages are held in an administrative queue for

approval prior to posting to the entire list. This will allow the Parents' Network to respond to administrative e-mails and questions without clogging the mailboxes of the entire listserv membership. This will also allow for inappropriate messages to be rejected (see the list of policies and netiquette below). If you post a message or reply, it will not be posted immediately. Please be patient. The Parents' Network will make every effort to check the queue regularly in order to keep the listserv dialogue timely.

To post to the listserv, simply send the e-mail to parents@xyz.edu. To respond to a posting from another subscriber, please hit the reply button on the original e-mail. Remember, your reply will be directed to the entire listserv. Hundreds of other university parents will receive and read any message you post, as well as any reply. Before posting or responding to the post of another subscriber, please review the policies and netiquette outlined below. Please direct administrative questions, comments, and requests, such as unsubscribing or changing your e-mail address, to parents@xyz.edu. Posting administrative messages directly to the listserv will clog the moderation system and slow the timeliness of the listserv.

To unsubscribe from this list at any time, go to <http://listserve.xyz.edu/mailman/listinfo/> and complete the unsubscribe instructions under the Subscribers heading. You will need the e-mail address to which the subscription is sent. This page can also be accessed from the Parents' Network homepage: <http://www.xyz.edu/stsv/saos/parents/>.

If you know any other parents who might like to subscribe to the listserv, please direct them to self-register at <http://listserve.xyz.edu/mailman/listinfo/>. This page can also be accessed from the Parents' Network homepage: <http://www.xyz.edu/stsv/saos/parents/>.

Those wishing to subscribe can also send an e-mail to parents@xyz.edu with "add me to the list" in the subject header. Only those who personally provide their e-mail address will be added.

Listserv Policies and Appropriate Netiquette

- Only parents of the University of XYZ students may subscribe to the listserv.
- Only subscribers who personally provide their e-mail address will be added to the list.
- Only list members may post to the list; however, postings may be forwarded to non-list members.
- To help ensure your privacy, the listserv is a hidden list, meaning list membership is available only to the list administrator, which is the University of XYZ Parents' Network. Your name and e-mail address will not be visible to any other members of the list.
- Before you post, please bear in mind hundreds of other parents will read your message.

- Typing in all capital letters is considered shouting and may irritate other subscribers. We ask that you please refrain from using all caps.
- Please direct administrative questions, comments, and requests to parents@xyz.edu. Posting administrative messages directly to the parents listserv will clog the mailboxes of other subscribers.
- The listserv cannot be used for commercial or fundraising purposes, so advertisements, sales announcements, and donation requests are strictly prohibited. Other prohibited postings include chain letters, e-mail forwards, political commentary, off-color humor, and foul language.
- The purpose of the parents listserv is to foster open communication, a diverse expression of ideas and an active dialogue.
- All postings must show respect for the dignity, worth, values, ideas, opinions, diversity, and rights of other subscribers. Personal attacks are strictly prohibited. When dealing with opinions opposite from your own, please use courteous language and focus on the strengths and weakness of the arguments being made, not on the personal qualities of those who may not share your position.
- The administrators of the parents listserv reserve the right to unsubscribe any list participant for violation of the aforementioned policies or to freeze or terminate the list at any time.

Appendix B.

Dear XYZ Parents,

We are so excited about the new parents listserv! This is your chance to talk with one another using e-mail. Do you have a specific question or comment you would like to share? Simply write an e-mail to parents@xyz.edu to get answers and input from hundreds of parents in your same situation.

Are you worried because your student is homesick? Ask the listserv what to do. Are you nervous because your student switched their major for the fifth time? Ask the listserv if anyone has had a similar experience. Want to share some great news about your student's specific school or college? Send it to parents@xyz.edu. Want to know the best place to stay the next time you visit your student? You guessed it.... ask the parents listserv!

The Parents' Network will use the listserv to send out important announcements from the university, as well as an e-newsletter, in an effort to keep you informed. However, this is *your* listserv. It is a tool for parents to connect and help one another. We hope it will be

a wonderful resource for all our parents and are excited about the potential it brings for an open, active dialog.

Have fun!

Parents' Network

University of XYZ