STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND THE FAMILY

EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT OF 1974

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore students' attitudes related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), their perceptions of parent over-involvement (POI), and the relationships thereof. A brief overview of privacy laws and FERPA are discussed. Legal cases that involve FERPA, past research of parent involvement and millennials are also explored. This study surveyed undergraduate students currently enrolled at a large public research university in the Upper Midwest ($n = 537$). The data analysis used descriptive and inferential statistics. Despite a reported lack of interest in FERPA, students generally reported an awareness and understanding of FERPA as well as feelings of trust in the policy. The reported level of trust in FERPA had no relationship with any of the five types of POI. The implications of these findings and areas for future research related to FERPA and parent over-involvement are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of higher education is to provide the building blocks for a student to learn individual responsibility, accountability, and prepare them for today's society (Barnett, 2014; Smith, 1955). Over the past decade or so, the culture has shifted (Manos, 2009). Parents are more involved, and students are relying more and more on their parents to take care of things when life gets challenging (Manos, 2009). In the 1970s, Congress passed the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). This law prevents the release of records of a student without consent (Ramirez, 2009). However, over the years, higher education institutions have provided FERPA release forms to students, so they can give their parents access to most of their academic and financial records. While this law was created to provide students privacy rights of their college/university educational records, there is an underlying theme. Students who attend a higher education institution are, for the most part, eighteen or older. It is possible that FERPA, may be a mechanism to help keep parents from being involved and forcing students having to figure things out for themselves.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine students' attitudes related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and parent involvement. With numerous research studies in the area of student attitudes towards parent involvement, the results from this survey will contribute to the topic and open-up more areas for future research down the road. The researcher will also use the results from the data obtained from the survey to create a more effective outreach program for a higher education institution to use when talking with families about FERPA and parent involvement at the higher education level. At the public research

university, incoming students and their families who attend orientation are given a brief explanation of FERPA. When discussing FERPA with students and families, the law is tied into a presentation that includes countless other laws and regulations. In addition, an email, along with other types of communications, is sent to students regarding the law during the first week of school. From anecdotal evidence discussed in the limitations section, following orientation, students and families have no idea what FERPA actually is. By analyzing the results from the survey, the researcher could gauge if the information provided to the students and their families during orientation and through the emails sent during the first week of the academic year is effective. The results from the survey may also be used as part of a proposal to overhaul the current communications regarding FERPA.

Research Questions

This study ultimately seeks to address the following three research questions regarding FERPA awareness and parental over-involvement:

1. What is the general level of perceived awareness and understanding among undergraduate students regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974?

2. What are the typical levels of parental over-involvement (with respect to the dimensions of consumer advocate, fairness, vicarious college student, toxic, and safety parents) as perceived by undergraduate students?

3. What were the meaning relationships between FERPA awareness and the various parental over-involvement dimensions?

Significance of the Study

Higher education professionals routinely work with students and their families. Often, students rely on their parents to provide them with guidance without thinking for themselves. While there is research on "helicopter parents," there is very little on the relationship between FERPA and student perceptions of being adults (Couture, Schwehm, & Couture, 2017). The results from this study are both beneficial and practical for higher education professionals in the upper-Midwest and the United States. With the results from the survey, professionals in higher education can better gauge their communications and outreach to student and parents by evaluating how students perceive parent involvement.

Limitations

With most research studies, there are limitations related to author bias, survey instrument, and sample population. In regard to author bias, from anecdotal evidence, parents are largely involved in their child's tenure at a public research university. A majority of phone calls, emails, and walk-ins are largely from parents. In addition to author bias, a new survey instrument was created. This would be the first time this instrument would be used. With that being said, the results may not be as precise. The sample population used for this study was from one institution of higher learning in the upper Midwest and may not be a total representation of the whole country. The sample was made up of volunteers or self-selection, this may also cause bias to the results.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide an overview of student development and parent involvement within higher education. In short, this literature review provides a framework for this study through an examination of previous relevant research and historical context. This chapter will also discuss the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 and related legal aspects.

Student Development

In the last two decades, there have been numerous studies (Kiyama et al., 2015; Strage & Brandt, 1999; Trice, 2002) focused on student perceptions of parent involvement in higher education. From these studies, researchers focused on parenting styles and how these styles effected students during their college tenure (Kiyama et al., 2015; Strage & Brandt, 1999; Trice, 2002). These studies engrossed on students known to be a part of two generational groups. Millennials can be defined as "individuals born between 1980 and 2000 and these individuals are currently traditional-aged college students" (Kitch, 2015, p. 10). With millennials being about generational classification, another term arising from individuals 18-25 during this generational time period is emerging adults (Kitch, 2015). From a legal standpoint, adulthood starts at the age of 18, however there is a developmental period where individuals work on discovering their purpose. Arnett (2000) defines emerging adults as, "a relative independence from social roles and normative expectations, the main features of this period are identity exploration, instability, being self-focused, and feeling in-between" (p. 470). The second generational group is Gen Z. This generation shares similar traits with the millennial generation (Schroth, 2019). Gen Zers have been found to have greater economic well-being, are more highly education, and are more ethnically and racially diverse than any other generation" (Schroth, 2019, p. 5).

While the first part of this section focused on how students define themselves and begin to discover their purpose, the second section discusses the outcomes of parent involvement.

A theory conceptualized by Kegan (1994) and built onto by Baxter Magolda (1999, 2001, 2008, 2009), illustrates three dimensions of development of oneself. Kegan's theory, self-authorship, focuses on the cognitive dimension, intrapersonal dimension, and the interpersonal dimension. To put it simply, "the three dimensions were focused on how one makes meaning of knowledge, how one views one's identity, and how one constructs one's relationships" (Barber, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2013, p. 868). Numerous research studies and papers have found students begin to find themselves in college (Barber et al., 2013; Tinberg & Weisberger, 1998; Abes & Hernandez, 2016). Barber, King, and Baxter Magolda (2013) stated, "recent studies provided evidence from major national studies that many students make very small shifts in critical thinking and reasoning skills during college" (p. 866). In addition to the minimal shift in critical thinking and reasoning, students early on in college depend on authority for guidance and knowledge on various topics. "Relying on authority for knowledge is often accompanied by lack of awareness of one's values and social identities, which results in viewing differences as a threat to one's identity" (Barber et al., 2013, p. 867). However, as students' move through their college experience, they begin to create a cognitive understanding of themselves (Barber et al., 2013). In Barber et al. (2013) study, they interviewed 30 students from liberal arts colleges and asked a series of questions over the course of three years. From their research, they found 6 main themes and 1 overarching theme. Those themes are, experiences that fostered identity development, being challenged to evaluate knowledge claims, and take ownership of beliefs, belonging as a major source of support, encounters with diverse others and new cultures that promoted

reevaluating perspectives, exposure to tragedy or intense personal challenge that required shifting perspectives, and working through complex relationships (Barber et al., 2013).

Of all the themes, identity development plays a critical role with this thesis, as it lays out how a student develops and discovers their identity as an individual. "Many participants reported questioning one's initial beliefs, considering the multiple perspectives encountered in the college environment, and working to define one's own beliefs influenced reshaping identity around their evolving belief systems" (Barber et al., 2013, p. 880).

When it comes to parenting styles, researchers emphasized three main styles, authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. During the 1960s, Diane Baumrind, a developmental psychologist from a university in California, conceptualized the three parenting types. Known as the Baumrind's theory, a close relationship between behavior of children and parenting styles, which resulted in different outcomes in the children's lives (Pellerin, 2005). Baumrind (1971) described authoritative parenting style as warm and responsive, clearly defined rules, high expectations, and value independence. Children who had authoritative parents, illustrated cognitive and social competence (Strage & Brandt, 1999). Unlike authoritative, authoritarian parenting style is described as cold, strict rules, expect blind obedience, and high expectations (Parenting for Brain, 2019). Children with authoritarian type parents, illustrate lower cognitive self-worth and less well-honed self-regulatory abilities (Strage & Brandt, 1999). The third parenting type being permissive. The permissive style can be defined as a parenting style where the parent sees the child at the same level rather than a parent-child relationship (Baumrind, 1971). Some examples of a permissive parenting style could include bribery and/or gift giving as a parenting tool or avoiding punishing the child when they do something bad.

In a study conducted in 1999, Strage and Brant surveyed 236 students on their perceptions and attitudes of their parents. The survey was a 135-item anonymous self-report instrument. One of main outcomes from the survey was that "The more autonomy, demands, and supports parents provided, the more confident, persistent, and positively oriented to their teachers the students were" (Strage & Brandt, 1999, p. 146).

A study completed by Noel-Levitz, Inc. (2007), found that college-bound millennials are heavily influenced by their families. In 2006, students communicated with their families an average of 8.8 times per week (Howe & Strauss, 2008). In another study of 48 college freshmen, the researcher found that students contacted their families an average of 6.03 emails per a week (Trice, 2002). In the survey, he had the 48 college freshmen complete the Buri's Parental Authority Questionnaire and share their emails. When it comes to emails, females were more likely to email their parents than males and during stressful times, both males and females contacted their parents via-email around the same rate (Trice, 2002). With the emails, it was discovered that about 8% of student emails were about financial advice or assistance and 7% were about academic problems (Trice, 2002). Overall, the researcher found students from authoritative families contacted them more than students from authoritarian families (Trice, 2002). Interestingly, there was a difference between topics discussed via-email from students from authoritative and authoritarian families. "Students from authoritative families made more frequent email contact home than other students from authoritarian families and were more likely to share problems with their families, while students from authoritarian families were more likely to ask for specific advice about social and academic issues" (Trice, 2002, p. 8).

What these studies illustrate, are millennials relying on their parents during a time that should be focused on learning on becoming an adult. A major theme from these studies is a healthy balance in parenting styles is needed for a students' success in higher education.

Parent Involvement

Research regarding parent involvement in higher education has varied. Couture, Schwehm, and Couture (2017) stated, "some scholars have found students with involved and intervening parents are more engaged and gained more from their post-secondary education experience" (p. 10), while others have found that over-involved parents led to developmental issues and lack of individual responsibility (Schiffrin et al., 2014). Parent involvement continues to be a talking point among administrators in higher education, but minimal research (Segrin et al., 2012; Van Ingen et al., 2015) has been done on the relationship between FERPA, parent involvement, and student perceptions of being adults.

The term *helicopter parent* was first used in a 1969 book by Dr. Haim Ginott but did not become well known until the early 2000s (Couture, Schwehm, & Couture, 2017). The term is now used by higher education professionals to describe a type of over-parenting that overreaches involvement in their children's lives (Segrin et al., 2012). This type of parenting prevents young adults from taking responsibility for their own lives and for their own choices that they make (Segrin et al., 2012; Van Ingen et al., 2015). In a recent study conducted by Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014), they analyzed student attitudes towards parent involvement and over-parenting or helicopter parent. An example of parent involvement is contacting the professors and completing projects and assignments for their child (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). In their study, they found that there is a strong relationship with students living at home and over-involved parents but found a weak relationship with students living at home and parent

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involvement (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). The researchers also found that there is a difference between parent involvement and over-involvement when it comes to social self-efficacy. They found that parent involvement provides the support for their children to build confidence and abilities, while over-parenting creates a mind-set that one cannot survive on one's own (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). In a different study that supports their research, it was found that students who perceive their parents as helicopter parents feel a weakened ability to perform or accomplish tasks (Van Ingen et al., 2015). In the same survey, the relationship between peer attachment and helicopter parenting was analyzed. They hypothesized that, "…an overprotective parenting style may adversely affect a college student's relationship with peers and, consequently, the college student's functioning" (Van Ingen et al., 2015, p. 9). They discovered that students who have helicopter parents, had poor peer attachments, and had difficulty relating to their college aged peers (Van Ingen et al., 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for the second section of the survey instrument is presented in this section. Along with interviews with higher education professionals, Somers and Settle (2010) considered two theories when creating their typology. The two theories are the attachment theory and separation/individuation theory. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) was developed as a concept that explained the emotional connection a person has for another. Unlike attachment theory, the separation/individuation theory (Mahler, 1968) explains the positive effects of a person being separated from their parents (Somers & Settle, 2010).

With the two theories mentioned, the researchers were able to conceptualize their framework. Somers and Settle (2010) identified five types of over-involved parents: consumer advocate, fairness, vicarious college student, toxic, and safety parents. Looking at one of the

types of parents discussed in the typology, consumer advocate parents are probably the most prevalent at higher education institutions (Somers and Settle, 2010). According to Couture, Schwehm, and Couture (2017), "*Consumer advocate* parents view paying for college as an exchange of goods, and they want to be assured they are getting their money's worth" (p. 399). A survey conducted by College Parents of America (2018), found that nearly 45% of parents participating in the survey said that they are contributing more than 75% of the financial support for their child's higher education experience (Financial Support section, para. 1). Unlike consumer advocate parents, *fairness parents* believe that resources are not always evenly distributed, and they only want what is only fair for their student (Couture, Schwehm, & Couture, 2017). Another major type of over-involved parents are *toxic parents*. Somers and Settle (2010) suggested that toxic parents are the most controlling and often involved parent-child relationship issues. In another study, "87% of parents said that they are at least moderately involved parents who were in regular contact with their children because they believed that they are not grown-up" (Hamilton, Roksa, & Nielsen, 2018, p. 116). In another survey conducted in 2016 by the College Parents of America (2018), "36% of college parents surveyed communicate daily or multiple times per day with their student" (Parent Involvement, Communications & Distance section, para. 2). The fourth type of parent discussed by Somers and Settle (2010) is *safety patrol*. Parents who fall under this type generally do not trust an institution to keep their child safe (Somers & Settle, 2010). The authors also suggested that parents may ask an institution's leadership team what security and safety programs are being used (Somers & Settle, 2010). The final typology is the *vicarious college student*. Somers and Settle (2010) define vicarious college student as, "parents who participate with the student in the collegiate experience" (p. 7).

In a recent study conducted by Couture, Schwehm, and Couture (2017), they surveyed current higher education professionals and looked for patterns in their attitudes about working with families. In their Likert-scale survey, they asked 20 questions looking at how their institutions handle parents of students. The questions were geared around the parent typologies created by Somers and Settle (2010). While the study focused on how higher education institutions look at parent involvement, it provides a different perspective into the bigger picture of parent involvement. In the study, they found that over 60% of higher education professionals believe that their students' parents see services provided by the institution as something they have paid for (Couture, Schwehm, & Couture, 2017). Another takeaway from the study was that, of the 110 respondents, 35% signaled that their institution has an online parent portal for the parents (Couture, Schwehm, & Couture, 2017). In another similar question, 29% said that their institution has some sort of parent advisory committee, while 23% said they are unsure if their institution has a parent advisory committee (Couture, Schwehm, & Couture, 2017).

While there is mostly discussion on the negative aspects of helicopter parenting, there is currently discussion on the positive effects of this type of parent involvement. One researcher stated, "…it is important that we not lose sight of the fact that this behavior describes a minority of parents and that it may be the result of institutional failure to provide them adequate information and avenues of appropriate relationship with the campus" (Cutright, 2008, p. 47). In her article, Cutright (2008) discussed a few ways institutions can address helicopter parents. One strategy discussed is the relationship with parents. She recommended higher education institutions create partnerships with parents that are similar to traditional family structures (Cutright, 2008). Another strategy is related to the on-campus orientation activities. It is recommended that institutions create separate sessions during orientation for parents (Cutright,

2008). Similarly, in an article in *The Recruitment and Retention in Higher Education*, Santovec (2004) highlighted and supported the importance of a dual orientation program to allow parents a different perspective of college life. "The goal is to give parents the information and assurance they need — including showing them how they can be valuable advocates for their students. At the same time, the dual orientations allow new students to get acquainted with the university independently" (Santovec, 2004, p. 1). In another article published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a university in the mid-west created a web-portal for parents so they can see their child's grades and attendance in courses (Kolowich, 2014). The university who created this parent portal hopes that it will help parents better understand what kind of attention their children need (Kolowich, 2014). Interestingly, while this mid-western university is encouraging students to waive their FERPA rights to allow parents access to the parent portal, a recent study suggested that there is a negative correlation between parent involvement and academic performance of their child. Schiffrin and Liss (2017) stated, "Parents who are increasingly involved with creating performance goals for their children see an increase in their use of controlling parenting behaviors that reduces their children's academic performance" (p. 1477).

With the sections on student attitudes, parent involvement, and the theoretical framework focusing on the foundations to the second research question, the next two sections on FERPA will focus on the first research question.

Overview of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974

The foundations for privacy laws were laid down as early as the formation of our nation. According to Ramirez (2009), "The Constitution of the United States recognizes the privacy of United States citizens as an inalienable right, both explicitly and implicitly through the Fourth Amendment" (p. 1). Ramirez (2009) also suggested that the dialogue on privacy in general

focused on the relationship between citizens and their government. Ramirez (2009) pointed out that the first known publication to discuss and to advocate for legislation related to the invasion of privacy was published in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1890. The publication was entitled "The Right to Privacy" and was written by Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis. Privacy laws in the United States were mostly created at the state level even though the Fourth Amendment existed. This did cause some problems. "Despite foundations in United States Constitution, privacy was essentially left to local courts and states. This led to inconsistencies across court jurisdictions at the state level" (Ramirez, 2009, p. 4). Since the formation of the United States, there have been debates about both the philosophical and legal side of privacy. "Privacy was viewed as a personal right, one that ends with death of a person and one that only generated legal action when an invasion of privacy was determined to have occurred" (Ramirez, 2009, p. 4). It was not until the mid-1960s that the discussion about privacy and the Federal Government would be a priority in Congress. According to Ramirez (2009), "the House Committee on Government Operations examined a diverse variety of activities where the privacy of citizens could potentially be invaded and violated" (p. 5). In 1974, Congress wrote and passed The Privacy Act of 1974. According to Ramirez (2009), one of the major pieces of The Privacy Act of 1974 focused on the collection of personal information by the government.

Privacy, as it relates to education, began to become a part of the national privacy debate in the 1970's. A United States Senator named James Lane Buckley introduced an amendment to the General Education Provisions Act in 1974 (Fuller, 2017). This amendment, also known as the Buckley Amendment, would become the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) (Fuller, 2017). The amendment was signed into law by President Ford on August 21, 1974 (Ramirez, 2009). "In the canon of United States Law, FERPA is codified at 20 USC 1232g

and assigned to 34 CFR 99" (Ramirez, 2009, p. 16). Fuller (2017) revealed that U.S. Senator Buckley placed the amendment on the Senate Floor because he felt that there was growing evidence of the abuse of student records at educational institutions across the nation (as cited in U.S. Congress, 1975, p. 974).

According to Kaplin and Lee (2017), "FERPA places significant limitations on colleges' disclosure and handling of student records" (p. 503). It is also mentioned that FERPA applies to all public and private educational institutions that receive federal funds, also known as Title IV, from the United States Department of Education (Kaplin & Lee, 2017). FERPA affords students three basic rights. The first right allows students to review their own education records (Fuller, 2017). There are some exceptions to this right. According to Powers and Schloss (2017), "students do not have access to their parents' financial records, letters of recommendation for admission, employment, and honorary recognition if the student signed a voluntary waiver of such rights" (as cited in FERPA, 2016, p. 110). The second right allows students to request that corrections to the records be made if the information is found to be recorded inaccurately (Kaplin & Lee, 2017). The third right afforded to students is access to educational related records being restricted from others (Ramirez, 2009). Like the first two rights, there are some exceptions to the third right. The first exception is related to the families' financial status. "…an institution may disclose educational records to parents if the student is a dependent for federal income tax purpose" (Powers & Schloss, 2017, p. 197). The second exception is related to the students' safety. According to Powers and Schloss (2017), "an institution may disclose educational records to parents in connection with an emergency if such knowledge is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other persons" (p. 197). Aside from releasing information to families in an event of an emergency, FERPA affords institutions to automatically release some

information publicly. The law also prevents institutions to release certain information. This information is referred to directory and non-directory information.

FERPA also differentiates between directory information and non-directory information. Directory information is not considered a part of the educational record, nor does it harm a student or violate their privacy (Powers & Schloss, 2017). Directory information can include the student's name (Powers & Schloss, 2017), address (Ramirez, 2009), telephone number (Fuller, 2017), athlete's weight and height, enrollment status, dates of attendance, and degrees and awards received (Kaplin & Lee, 2017). Non-directory information can be defined as information that includes unique personal identifiers such as student ID numbers, and other unique personal identifier used by the student for purposes of accessing or communicating in electronic systems (Ramirez, 2009). While a student's record is protected by FERPA, a student can allow for a release of non-directory information by completing a written consent (Kaplin & Lee, 2007).

Since FERPA was signed into law, there has been a number of guidance and clarification documents issued from the Federal Government and the United States Department of Education (Fuller, 2017). One of the major clarifications issued by the United States Department of Education was a *Dear Colleague* letter sent to higher education institutions in August 2015 (Fuller, 2017). The letter provided guidance with medical records of students. "In instances wherein institutional health or counseling center provided medical or psychological services, institutions should follow provisions outlined under HIPAA" (Fuller, 2017, p. 30).

Legal Cases involving the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974

Since FERPA was enacted in 1974, there have been a number of court cases that have been related to the law. One notable case was *Gonzaga University v. Doe*. This case focused on penalties for noncompliance of FERPA. Under FERPA, institutions could lose federal funding if

the United States Department of Education found them to be in noncompliance (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). The case began as a lawsuit from a student who claimed he was wrongly accused of sexual assault, which resulted in the school reporting that he was ineligible to obtain a teaching license in the state of Washington (Ramirez, 2009). The student sued for invasion of privacy, defamation, breach of educational contract, and violation of FERPA rights (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). He won his lawsuit with the exception of the violation of FERPA claim. According to Ramirez (2009), "…the United States Supreme Court concluded that FERPA's nondisclosure provisions did not confer a private or individual right to sue" (p. 25).

Another notable case involving FERPA was *Krebs v. Rutgers*. In 1992, seven students filed a class action lawsuit against Rutgers University alleging that the school was abusing their privacy rights in requiring the disclosure of Social Security Numbers (SSN) for services on campus (Ramirez, 2009). Ultimately, the court ruled in favor of the students, saying that the SSN is an education record and defined legitimate educational interest as specific to the interests of the student and not the institution (Ramirez, 2009).

In another case, *Owasso Independent School District v. Falvo* (2002), a parent filed a legal case against the school district because they refused to update their policy forcing teachers to grade assignments themselves and not to use peer-grading after her children were embarrassed in class. The United States Supreme Court ruled students who grade other students' papers and call out the grades in class does not violate FERPA (Owasso Independent School District v. Falvo, 2002). They ruled that peer-grading does not fall under the definition of "educational records" because the peer-graded assignment was not being maintained by a school official (Ramirez, 2009).

With regards to the release of disciplinary records and investigations, in the mid-1990s a student newspaper had requested disciplinary records regarding an incident on the Miami University campus (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). The university provided the information, but most of the information was redacted. The editor of the paper felt that this violated the state's open records laws. The Florida State Supreme Court ruled disciplinary records were not related to academic performance and thus not covered under FERPA (Miami Student v. Miami University, 1997). In addition, they felt that this type of information could be released to the editor of the newspaper. After the ruling, the United States Department of Education filed a complaint in US District Court (United States v. Miami University, 2002), claiming that the Ohio Supreme Court's decision was a result of misinterpretation of FERPA and requested for the District Court to issue an injunction on the previous decision (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). The court ruled in favor of the government's argument (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). After a lengthy legal process, the courts ruled disciplinary records do fall under FERPA and state open records laws cannot override policies under FERPA. (Kaplin & Lee, 2007).

Some of the landmark legal cases discussed above were selected to highlight the broad scope and complexity of FERPA. Discussing the legal cases illustrate how FERPA is more than just a piece of legislation restricting the release of personal information from institutions of higher learning, but more of a component of our constitutional right to privacy.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This chapter gives the details of the research methods used for this study, including an overview of the research design, instrument design, sampling design, data collection procedures, and procedures for nonresponse. For reference, the three research questions for this study are repeated here:

1. What is the general level of perceived awareness and understanding among undergraduate students regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974?

2. What are the typical levels of parental over-involvement (with respect to the dimensions of consumer advocate, fairness, vicarious college student, toxic, and safety parents) as perceived by undergraduate students?

3. Are there any meaningful relationships between FERPA awareness and the various parental over-involvement dimensions?

Survey Instrument

Due to the newness of the particular topics involved, a questionnaire was designed for the purposes of this study. This questionnaire is composed of 29 items organized into three sections. The first section contains two questions which serve as an initial screening to eliminate graduate and international students. The second section contains 12 FERPA-related awareness and attitude items. The third section contains 15 items for measuring perceived levels of parental over-involvement (POI); more specifically, each of the five major types of POI (consumer advocate, fairness, safety, vicarious, and toxic) is measured by three items.

Most of the questions in the second and third sections use four-point Likert-type responses (the exceptions are two questions that use types of basic yes/no responses). Table

1 shows the basic composition and organization of the instrument.

Table 1

Composition of the Instrument

Component/dimension	Number of items
Screening items	2
FERPA-related items	
- Sense of independence	2
- Awareness/understanding of FERPA	4
- Interest in FERPA	1
- Trust in FERPA	2
- Waiving FERPA rights	3
Parental over-involvement dimensions	
- Consumer advocate	3
- Fairness	3
- Safety	3
- Vicarious college student	3
- Toxic parent	3

Based on the data collected in this sample, the reliability for the FERPA subscale was good (Cronbach's alpha = .769), and the reliability for the POI subscale was very good (Cronbach's alpha = .817).

Target Population and Sampling

The population the researcher will be surveying are undergraduate and professional students (year 1 and 2) pursuing a bachelor's degree public research university. Two of the subpopulations intentionally being excluded from the study are graduate students and international students. These two subpopulations are considered delimitations. Graduate students are traditionally seen as adults with dependents and for the most part do not receive support from

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their parent or legal guardians (TargetX, 2019). They may also view being adults and parent involvement through a different lens than a domestic undergraduate would. The other excluded subpopulation is international students. International students may view parent involvement differently than domestic students. Some cultures view the family as the most important component in one's life. In some cultures, having the family involved in all aspects of one's educational experience is seen as appropriate and encouraged (Ali, 2017).

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study was the master list of email addresses from the student information system of undergraduate and professional year 1 and 2 students at public research university for the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic year ($n = 8,875$). This sampling frame included both transfer students and first-time college students.

When it comes to coverage problems, there are three main issues. Those three are duplicates, missing elements, and foreign elements. Groves et al. (2009) define duplicates, "as one target population element with a relationship with multiple frame elements" (p. 79). One issue associated with duplications is students may have more than one student account (Campus Connection) with more than one university email address. This issue may have been as a result of human error on the side of University. Another reason could be a result of a student providing incorrect information during the application process and resubmitting an application with the correct information. Multiple applications with similar information, may be interpreted as different applicants. To help mitigate from this coverage issue, the researcher will use Microsoft Excel to remove the duplicate names and email addresses. With missing elements or undercoverage, "…items in the target population cannot appear in any sample frame created for the study" (Groves et al., 2009, p. 72). With this study, students may be admitted and enrolled

after the email list is created. Another example is undergraduate students who have neglected to add their official university email to their student account. The final coverage problem, foreign elements, emerge when units in the sampling frame are no longer in the target population (Groves et al., 2009). An issue with foreign elements is once the master list of enrolled undergraduate and professional students has been pulled, it is possible that some of the students enrolled may have withdrawn from all of their classes and left the public research university. To help mitigate this problem, the researcher will request the email list as close as possible to the actual release date of the survey.

Sampling Procedures

This study used a non-random volunteer sampling approach. After receiving IRB approval for this study, a data request was submitted to the University Office of Institutional Research and Analysis for the names and their official university email address from the student information system. This listing was checked for duplicates. The students were asked via email to complete the survey electronically. Two email reminders were sent to the students at one-week intervals.

Data Collection

Data were gathered using an online questionnaire form (Qualtrics) which was open for a total of 14 days. Three emails were sent over the course of two weeks: an initial invitation email and two follow-up reminder emails to the students who had not completed the survey.

Nonresponse

There are three general categories of nonresponse: unavailable (or noncontact), unable, and unwilling (or refusals). Looking at the first nonresponse category, noncontact, there are two issues associated with this research study. The first, students may not check their university

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email accounts on a regular basis. One strategy could be sending email reminders to those who have not completed the survey and have the survey available for a couple of weeks. In addition, it may be helpful to send out email reminders on Sunday afternoons, when students are getting ready for the week and may be looking at emails from instructors. Another issue could be related to the survey link in the email invitation not being properly linked to the survey. To correct this issue, the researcher would make sure the link is working properly and the survey is live before sending the email invitation to the population.

With the second category, unable, some of the students may have physical disabilities (for example, blindness) that may prevent them from completing the electronic survey. A strategy the researcher could implement is to mention in the email invitation that the survey can be completed in voice-recognition software offered by the university.

Looking at the third and final category, unwilling, students who see the survey link may disregard the email because they already see a number of email invitations from other departments and individuals on a daily basis. A strategy to encourage students to take the survey, is to have a catchy subject line and in the body of the email, then illustrate why this research is important and how the results could benefit them in the future.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the detailed results of the survey which looked at student attitudes related to FERPA and perceptions of parental over-involvement (POI). Included in this chapter are a report of the response rate, descriptive statistics for each survey item and composite scores, and inferential statistics for the relationships among the FERPA and POI variables. Additionally, the research questions for this study are also restated here as a convenient reference:

Research Question 1: What is the general level of perceived awareness and understanding among undergraduate students regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974?

Research Question 2: What are the typical levels of parental over-involvement (with respect to the dimensions of consumer advocate, fairness, vicarious college student, toxic, and safety parents) as perceived by undergraduate students?

Research Question 3: Are there any meaningful relationships between FERPA awareness and the various parental over-involvement dimensions?

Response Rate

For this study, an invitation was sent via email to 9,853 students. Of these, 38 were screened out as graduate students, international students, or those who did not respond to either of the screening questions ($N_0 = 9,815$). Upon conclusion of data collection, there was an initial count of $n = 700$ records (response rate = 7.1%). An additional 43 records which had no responses to any of the 25 main questionnaire items were eliminated, giving a sample of $n = 619$ usable records (usable response rate = 6.3%). Of these, 82 records had varying degrees of item nonresponse, giving $n = 537$ complete and usable records (complete and usable response

rate = 5.5%). None of the 82 records having some item nonresponse were eliminated since all of these could be used in at least one of the analyses.

<p style="text-align:center">Survey Results</p>

The questionnaire used in this study was organized into two major parts: The first part contained items on FERPA-related issues, and the second part contained questions regarding the different traits of parental over-involvement (POI). The results from this survey are organized in the same manner. The results in this section include descriptive statistics for each item as well as the composite scores.

FERPA-Related Issues

The FERPA items are organized into the following related themes: sense of independence, awareness of FERPA, interest in FERPA, trust in FERPA, and waiver status. Most of the FERPA items used a four-point Likert scale and the responses were scored as follows: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*. Only FERPA item 10 used a different response scale (*yes*, *no*, *N/A*).

Sense of Independence (Two Items)

FERPA questions 1 and 2 focused on a student's sense of independence. For reference, the question stems are listed here for FERPA items 1 and 2:

1. *I consider myself to be an adult.*

2. *I am entitled to my privacy.*

Descriptive statistics and response frequencies are shown in Table 2, and the relative frequencies are given in Figure 1. A great majority of the respondents indicated that they consider themselves to be an adult (96% responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to question 1); nearly all agreed or strongly agreed that they are entitled to their privacy (item 2).

<p style="text-align:center">24</p>

A sense-of-independence composite score was computed for each respondent as the mean of items 1 and 2 primarily for use in inferential statistical analyses. The descriptive statistics for this composite are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Summaries for the Sense of Independence Items and the Composite Score

Variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
FERPA question 1	619	3.31	3.00	0.56	3	22	374	220
FERPA question 2	619	3.62	4.00	0.50	1	2	228	388
Composite	619	3.47	3.50	0.44				

Note. SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Figure 1

Bar Graphs for the Sense of Independence Questions
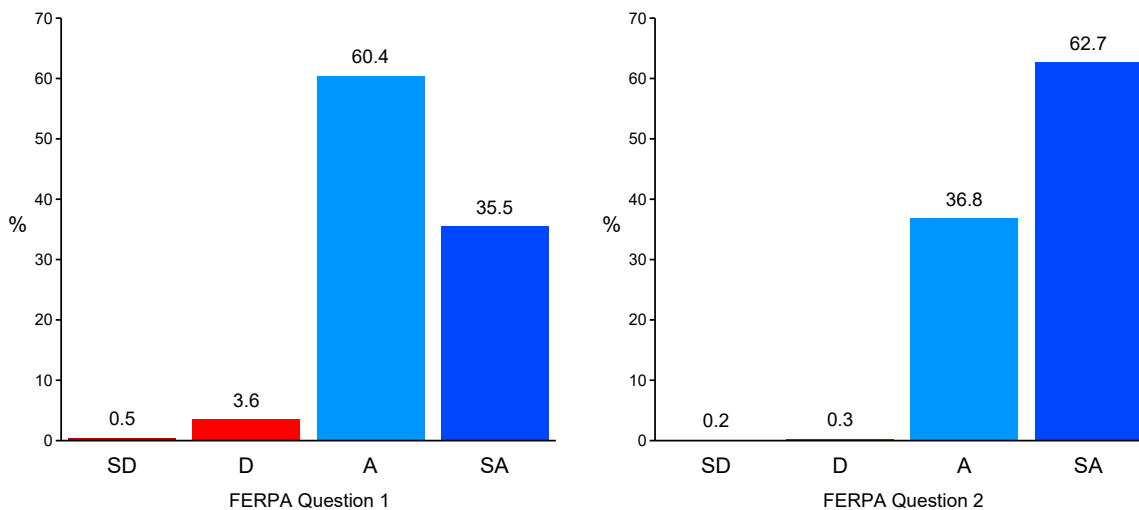
Awareness of FERPA (Four Items)

FERPA questions 3 through 6 deal with a student's awareness of FERPA. For reference, the question stems are listed here for FERPA items 3, 4, 5, and 6:

3. *I understand what the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is.*

4. *I understand my rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).*

5. *My rights under FERPA were adequately explained to me by a university/college official.*

6. *My rights under FERPA were adequately explained to me by my parents or legal guardians.*

Descriptive statistics and response frequencies are shown in Table 3, and the relative frequencies are given in Figure 2. A majority of the respondents indicated that they have a general understanding of FERPA: 75% and 70% responded in the affirmative (i.e., "agree" or "strongly agree") to questions 3 and 4, respectively. However, the affirmative proportions were just above 50% for the questions about how well their rights were explained to them (items 5 and 6).

A composite FERPA-awareness score was computed for each respondent as the mean of items 3 through 6 primarily for use in inferential statistical analyses. The descriptive statistics for this composite are given in Table 3.

**Table 3**

Summaries for the FERPA Awareness Items and the Composite Score

Variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
FERPA question 3	619	2.91	3.00	0.79	35	119	331	134
FERPA question 4	619	2.83	3.00	0.81	40	147	313	119
FERPA question 5	619	2.55	3.00	0.88	80	203	252	84
FERPA question 6	619	2.48	3.00	0.90	98	202	244	75
Composite	619	2.69	2.75	0.71				

Note. SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Figure 2

Bar Graphs for the FERPA Awareness Items

Interest in FERPA (One Item)

FERPA question 7 asked about the potential interest in learning more about FERPA. For reference, the question stem for FERPA item 7 is given here:

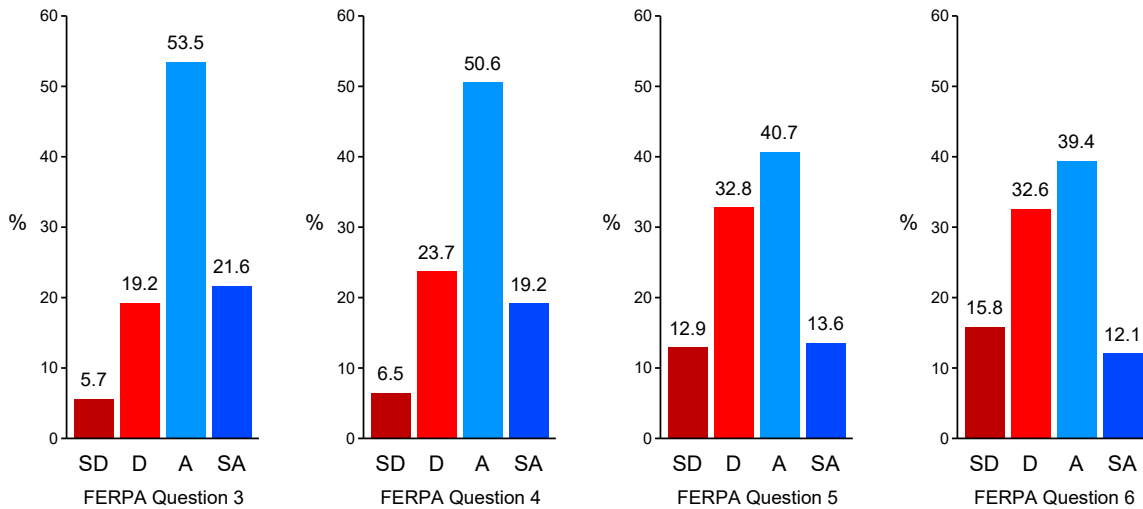7. *If the university/college offered information sessions regarding FERPA, I would attend.*

Descriptive statistics and response frequencies are shown in Table 4, and the relative frequencies are given in Figure 3. While there was some interest in attending a FERPA information session ("agree" or "strongly agree"), almost three-quarters (73%) of the respondents indicated a lack of interest ("disagree" or "strongly disagree").

Since there is only a single item related to interest in FERPA, no composite score is needed here. FERPA item 7 will be used in its given form in the inferential statistical analyses.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for the Interest in FERPA Item

Variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
FERPA question 7	581	2.12	2.00	0.72	106	316	143	16

Note. SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Figure 3

Bar Graph for the Responses to the FERPA Interest Item
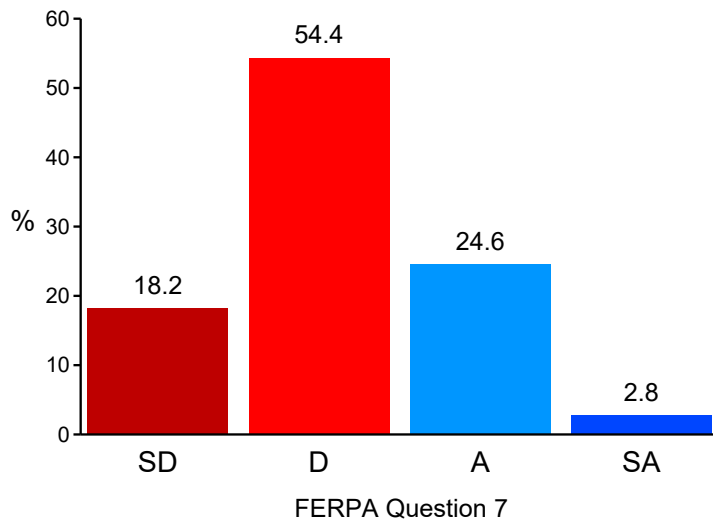
Trust in FERPA (Two Items)

FERPA questions 8 and 9 cover students' trust in FERPA. For reference, the question

stems are listed here for FERPA items 8 and 9:

8. *I believe my academic records and personal information are protected under FERPA.*

9. *I believe FERPA was created with protecting my privacy in mind.*

The descriptive statistics and response frequencies for these items are shown in Table 5,

and the relative frequencies are given in Figure 4. A large majority of respondents showed some

level of trust in FERPA (96% affirmative for item 8, 95% affirmative for item 9).

Primarily for use in inferential statistical analyses, a composite FERPA-trust score was

computed for each respondent as the mean of items 8 and 9. The descriptive statistics for this

composite are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for the FERPA Trust Items and the Composite Score

Variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
FERPA question 8	581	3.20	3.00	0.51	2	23	412	144
FERPA question 9	581	3.21	3.00	0.54	2	29	393	157
Composite	581	3.21	3.00	0.48				

Note. SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Figure 4

Bar Graphs for the FERPA Trust Items
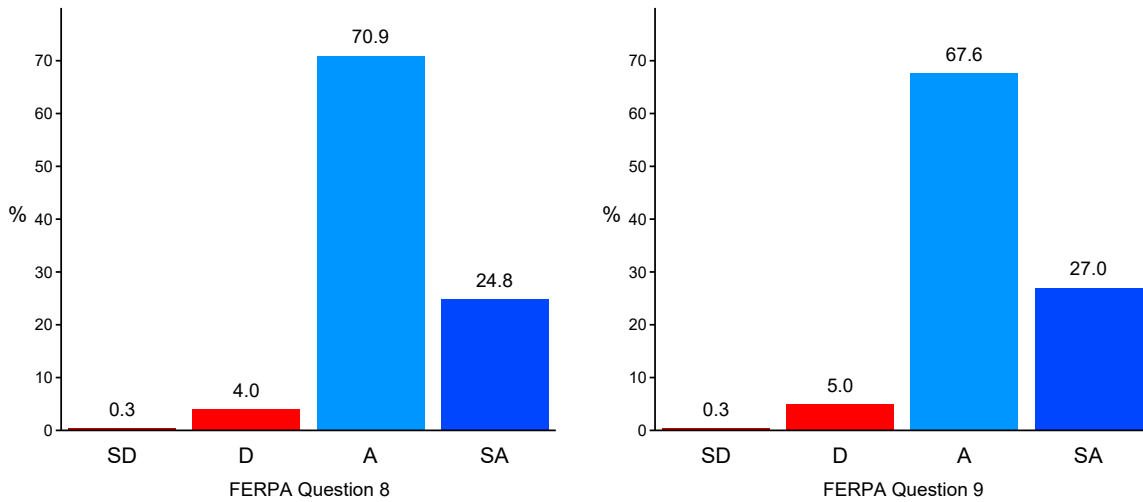
Waiving FERPA Rights (Three Items)

FERPA items 10, 10a, and 10b pertain to students officially relinquishing their FERPA rights. The first of these items was a question asking the student if they have signed a FERPA waiver giving consent for the disclosure of academic information to their parents/guardians (response options "yes," "no," and "N/A"):

> 10. *I signed a university/college FERPA release form to share my personal information with my parents or legal guardians.*

If the student responded "yes" to this question, two additional follow-up questions (10a and 10b) were presented:

> 10a. *I signed a university/college FERPA release form to share my information because my parents or legal guardians told me to.*

> 10b. *I signed a university/college FERPA release form to share my information because a school official told me to.*

FERPA questions 10a and 10b used the conventional four-point Likert response scale.

The response frequencies for item 10 are shown in Table 6 and a bar graph for the relative frequencies is given in Figure 5. A majority (63%) of students reported signing a FERPA release.

Table 6

Frequencies for Signing a FERPA Waiver

Response	n	Percent
Yes	387	62.52%
No	126	20.36%
N/A	106	17.12%
Total	619	

Figure 5

Bar Graph for Signing a FERPA Release
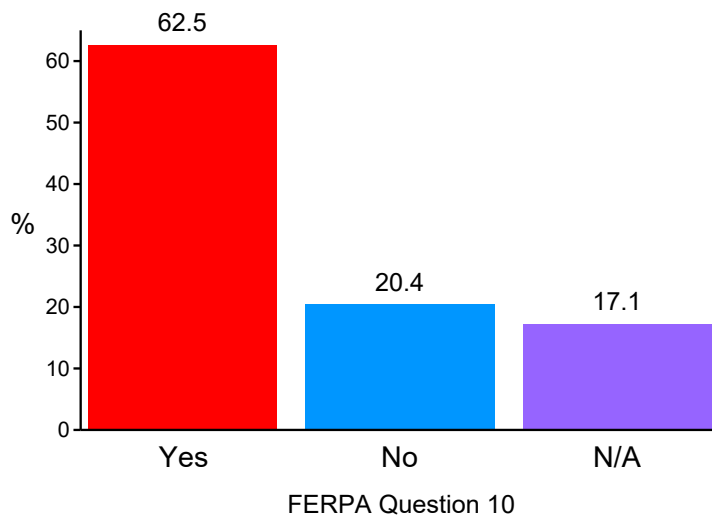
Students who responded "yes" to FERPA item 10 ($n = 387$) received two additional questions which asked about potential factors that may have led to the decision to waive their FERPA rights. The descriptive statistics and bar graphs for these two items are given in Table 7 and Figure 6, respectively. Twenty-three of these students did not respond to these two

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conditional items. Of the responses collected, 43% responded in the affirmative that they signed a FERPA waiver because they were instructed to do so by a parent or guardian; 26% responded in the affirmative regarding a school official.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for the Follow-up Items for FERPA Release

Variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
FERPA question 10a	364	2.38	2.00	0.86	54	155	118	37
FERPA question 10b	364	2.09	2.00	0.81	84	186	73	21

Note. SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Figure 6

Bar Graphs for the Follow-up Items Regarding a FERPA Release
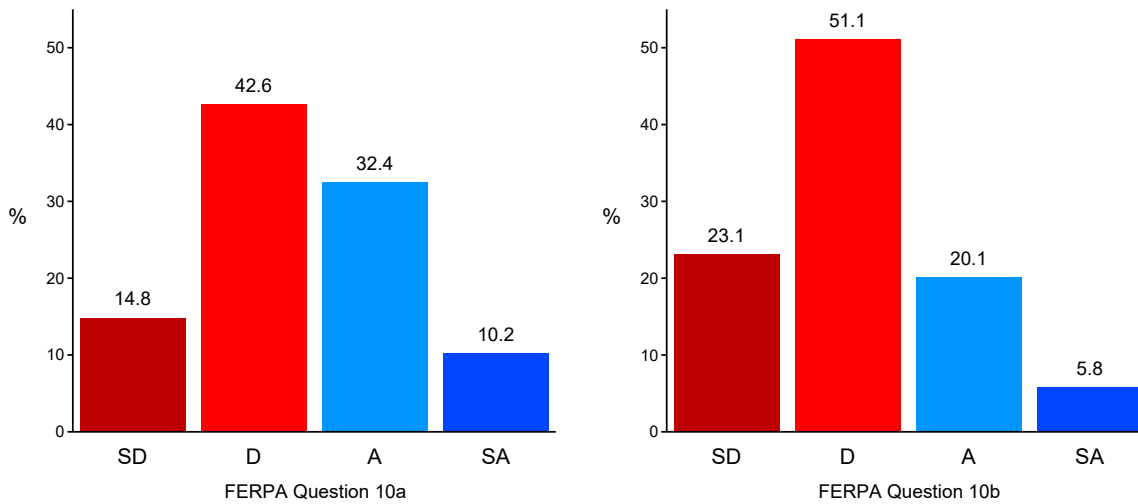
Note. These two items were presented only to those participants who reported signing a FERPA waiver.

Dimensions of Parental Over-Involvement (POI)

The second portion of the questionnaire focused on the five traits associated with parental over-involvement (POI): fairness, consumer advocate, safety, vicarious, and toxic. Each of these POI dimensions were measured by three items. Most of these items used a four-point Likert

response scale and were scored as follows: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*. Only POI toxic item 3 used a different response scale.

Fairness

The POI fairness dimension was measured by the following three questions:

1. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) believe that NDSU is treating me fairly.*

2. *To the best of my knowledge, my parent(s) or legal guardian(s) contact NDSU regarding university policies.*

3. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) question almost everything that NDSU says and does.*

Note that fairness item 1 is inversely worded relative to the orientation of fairness items 2 and 3.

Descriptive statistics and response frequencies are shown in Table 8, and the relative frequencies are given in Figure 7. The responses to fairness items 1 and 3 (4% and 90% in the affirmative) indicate that a large majority of parents have no salient concerns regarding fair treatment by the university. A majority of the responses to fairness item 2 also show the same attitude as items 1 and 3, but the distribution was not as skewed (60% affirmative).

A composite POI fairness score was computed for each respondent as the mean of the three fairness items. Fairness composite scores were computed using the reverse-scored responses for fairness item 1. This composite is primarily for use in inferential statistical analyses, but its descriptive statistics are given in Table 8.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for the POI Fairness Items and the Composite Score

Item/variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies[a]			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
POI fairness question 1[b]	562	3.36	3.00	0.59	4	19	307	232
POI fairness question 2	562	2.27	2.00	0.90	123	213	178	48
POI fairness question 3	562	1.70	2.00	0.73	241	264	40	17
Composite	562	1.87	2.00	0.51				

[a] SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

[b] This item is inversely worded relative to the other items.

Figure 7

Bar Graphs for the POI Fairness Items
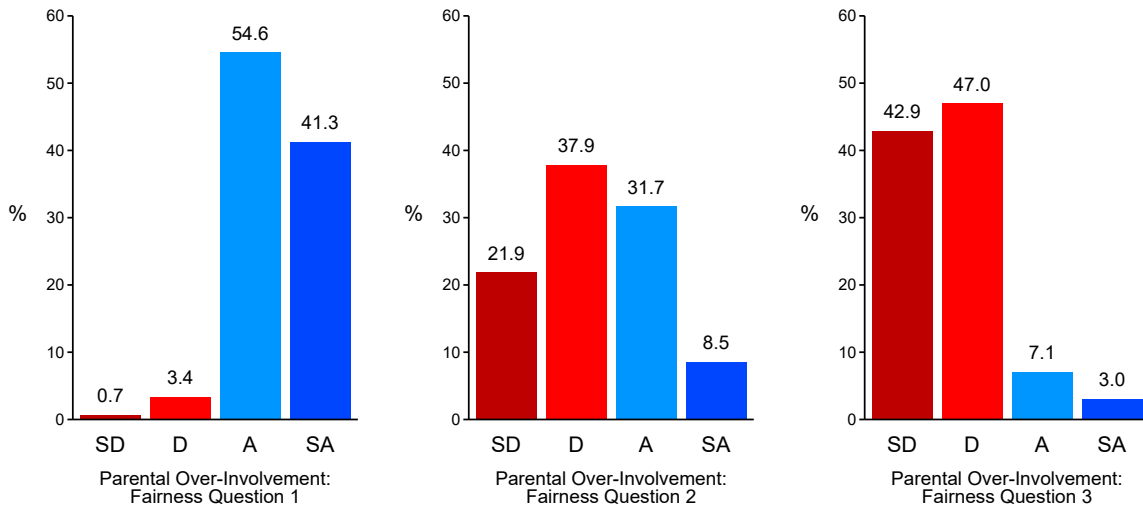
Note. POI fairness question 1 is reverse coded.

Consumer Advocate

The POI consumer advocate dimension was measured by the following three questions:

1. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) believe that since they are paying for my education, they have the right to know everything.*

2. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) often consult with me about NDSU's tuition and fees.*

3. *To the best of my knowledge, my parent(s) or legal guardian(s) contact NDSU to discuss my finances.*

Descriptive statistics and response frequencies are shown in Table 9, and the relative frequencies are shown in Figure 8. Although the three consumer items are moderately positively correlated, these results are somewhat mixed: Consumer items 1 and 3 both lean towards disagreement (66% and 77%, respectively), while 64% of the responses to consumer item 2 were in the affirmative.

A composite POI consumer advocate score was computed for each respondent as the mean of the three consumer advocate items. This composite is primarily for use in inferential statistical analyses, but its descriptive statistics are given in Table 9.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for the POI Consumer Advocate Items

Item/variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies[a]			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
POI consumer advocate question 1	543	2.15	2.00	0.93	153	205	137	48
POI consumer advocate question 2	543	2.69	3.00	0.90	69	126	255	93
POI consumer advocate question 3	543	1.92	2.00	0.85	195	223	101	24
Composite	543	2.25	2.33	0.71				

[a] SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Figure 8

Bar Graphs for the POI Consumer Advocate Items
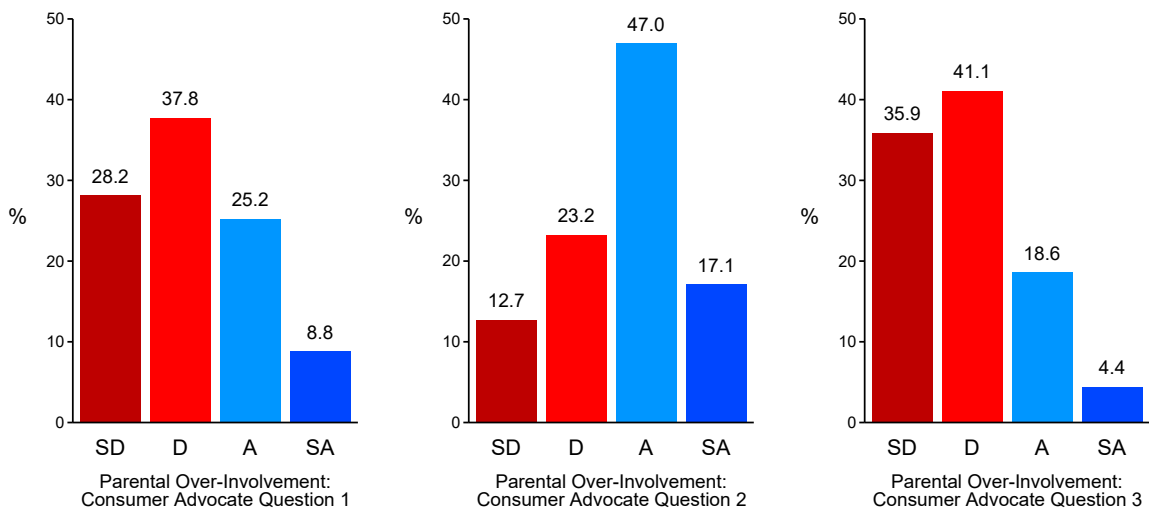
Safety

The POI safety dimension was measured by the following three questions:

1. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are concerned for my safety while I am taking classes at NDSU.*

2. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) want to receive emergency notifications from the university (for example, the Campus Emergency Notify System (CENS).*

3. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) often share with me news stories of criminal activity in and around NDSU.*

Descriptive statistics and response frequencies are shown in Table 10, and the relative frequencies are shown in Figure 9. The responses for the first two POI safety items are fairly evenly distributed (51% and 49% in the affirmative). The responses to safety item 3 are negatively skewed, albeit by a somewhat modest margin (60% responded "disagree" or "strongly disagree").

A composite POI safety score was computed for each respondent as the mean of the three safety items. This composite is primarily for use in inferential statistical analyses, but its descriptive statistics are given in Table 10.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for the POI Safety Items

Item/variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies[a]			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
POI safety question 1	538	2.46	3.00	0.97	106	160	193	79
POI safety question 2	538	2.47	2.00	0.88	75	200	196	67
POI safety question 3	538	2.28	2.00	0.92	120	202	163	53
Composite	538	2.40	2.33	0.69				

[a] SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Figure 9

Bar Graphs for the POI Safety Items
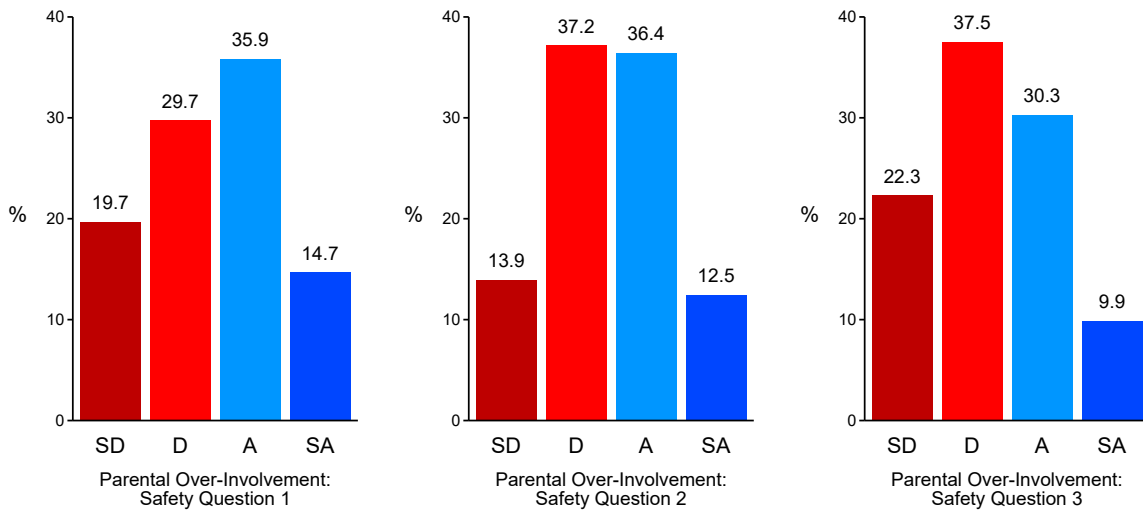
Vicarious

The POI vicarious dimension was measured by the following three questions:

1. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) often ask me about dates and locations of NDSU events.*

2. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) often participate in NDSU events (Alumni, athletics, etc.).*

3. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) use coming to NDSU for events as a way to spend time with me.*

Descriptive statistics and response frequencies are shown in Table 11, and the relative frequencies are provided in Figure 10. A majority of responses indicated general disagreement with these three statements. Items 1 and 3 both had 63% of the responses as either "disagree" or "strongly disagree"; however, a much larger proportion (80%) of the responses to item 3 were negatively oriented.

A composite POI vicarious score was computed for each respondent as the mean of the three vicarious items. This composite is primarily for use in inferential statistical analyses, but its descriptive statistics are given in Table 11.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for the POI Vicarious Items

Item/variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies[a]			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
POI vicarious question 1	538	2.22	2.00	0.84	110	230	167	31
POI vicarious question 2	538	1.85	2.00	0.80	205	225	93	15
POI vicarious question 3	538	2.17	2.00	0.89	142	197	165	34
Composite	538	2.08	2.00	0.69				

[a] SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Figure 10

Bar Graphs for the POI Vicarious Items
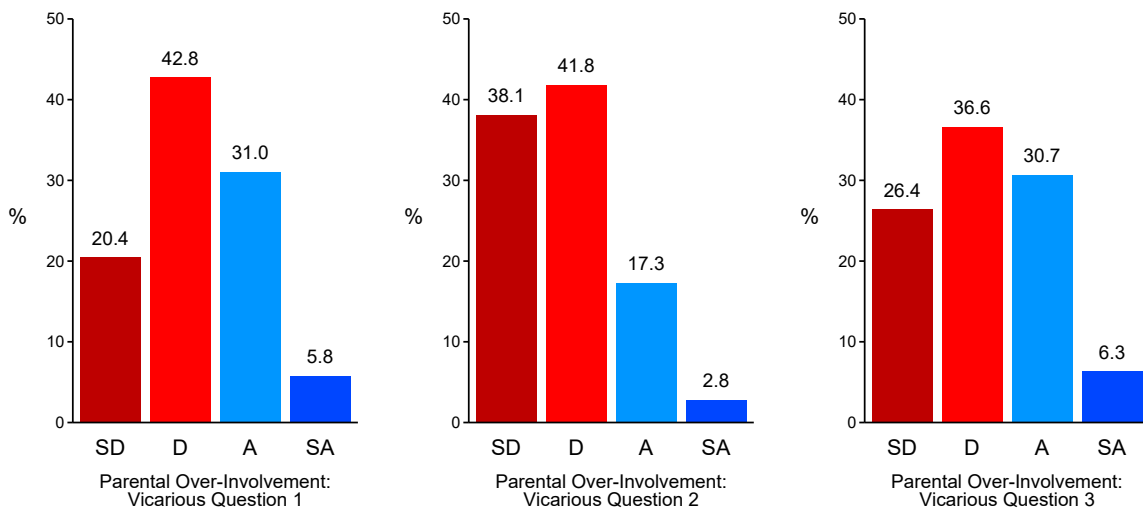
Toxic

The POI toxic dimension was measured by the following three questions:

1. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) believe I am irresponsible.*

2. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are involved in every aspect of my college experience.*

3. *My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) have some of my NDSU login information (Blackboard, Campus Connection, email, etc.).*

Note that the nature of the third toxic question required a slightly different set of response options: 1 = *definitely no*, 2 = *possibly*, 3 = *definitely yes*.

Descriptive statistics and response frequencies are shown in Table 12 for the first two toxic items and in Table 13 for the third. The relative frequencies for all three toxic items are shown in Figure 11. A large majority of students responded in the negative (either "disagree" or "strongly disagree") for toxic items 1 and 2 (92% and 85%, respectively). Nearly half (49%) of the students reported that their parents definitely did not have their login information (toxic item

3). The remaining 51%, was split almost evenly between "possibly" (28%) and "definitely yes" (23%).

A composite POI toxic score was computed for each respondent as the mean of the three toxic items. Although the response options (and range of scores) were different from the first two toxic items, the composite toxic score still incorporated the third toxic item. The three-point scale was transformed to a four-point scale so that it would not arbitrarily bias the composite score. This composite is primarily for use in inferential statistical analyses, but its descriptive statistics are given in Table 12.

Table 12

Summaries for the POI Toxic Items 1 and 2 and the Composite Score

Item/variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies[a]			
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	SD	D	A	SA
POI toxic question 1	537	1.59	1.00	0.72	281	211	31	14
POI toxic question 2	537	1.80	2.00	0.76	203	252	67	15
Composite	537	1.83	1.83	0.65				

[a] SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

Table 13

Summary for POI Toxic Item 3

Variable	Descriptive statistics				Response frequencies		
	n	*M*	*Median*	*SD*	Definitely No	Possibly	Definitely Yes
POI toxic question 3	537	1.74	2.00	0.81	264	148	125

Figure 11

Bar Graphs for the POI Toxic Items
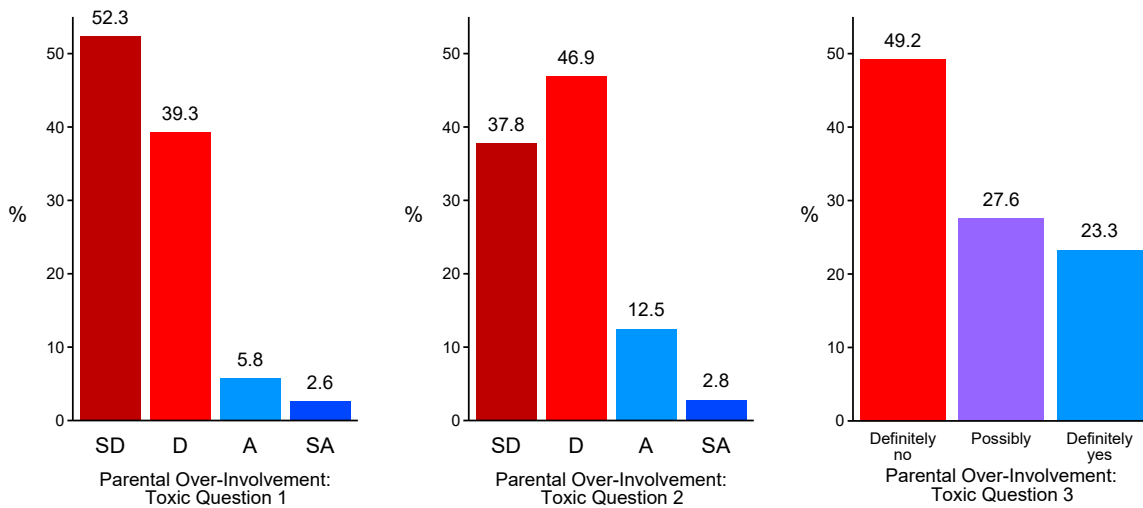
Relationships Among FERPA Awareness and the Types of POI

There were two main inferential analyses conducted on these data. First, correlational analysis was conducted to explore the associations among the composite variables described in the previous section—namely, the POI traits and the FERPA-related dimensions. The second major type of analysis was independent-samples *t*-tests to compare POI scores from students who have signed a FERPA release and those who have not.

Correlational Analysis

The Pearson product-moment (bivariate) correlations among these two sets of variables are given in Table 14. The sense of independence score had a significant negative correlation with all POI scores except safety. Similarly, FERPA awareness had significant positive correlations with all POI dimensions except safety.

Table 14

Correlations Among the Composite FERPA and POI Variables

POI composite variables	FERPA composite variables			
	Sense of independence	Awareness	Trust	Interest
Fairness	-.1155*	.2072*	-.0799	.2474*
	(562)	(562)	(562)	(562)
Consumer advocate	-.1065*	.1399*	.0661	.2019*
	(543)	(543)	(543)	(543)
Safety	-.0608	.0759	.0506	.1397*
	(538)	(538)	(538)	(538)
Vicarious	-.1440*	.1415*	.0711	.1653*
	(538)	(538)	(538)	(538)
Toxic	-.2080*	.1482*	.0102	.1172*
	(537)	(537)	(537)	(537)

Note. The number of observations used to calculate a correlation coefficient is shown in parentheses.

* $p \leq .05$. Significant negative correlations are shown in red; significant positive correlations are shown in green.

Comparison of POI Scores by FERPA Waiver Status

The composite scores from each of the five POI dimensions were compared according to two groups defined as students who reported signing a FERPA release form. The questionnaire item used to establish these groups (FERPA item #10) had three response options ("yes", "no", and "N/A"; see Table 6 for the observed frequencies). The "N/A" responders ($n = 106$) were eliminated from this part of the analysis, effectively reducing this item to a dichotomous variable.

The results for the five independent-samples *t*-tests are given in Table 15. Inspection of the data revealed possible violations of the assumptions for normality and homogeneity of variances; consequently, bootstrapping (500 replications) was applied to each of the tests. Any violations of the model assumptions (if present) had essentially no impact as the bootstrapping

estimates were virtually identical to the conventional results (the bootstrapping estimates are shown in parentheses in Table 15).

Table 15

Comparisons of POI Dimensions by FERPA Status

POI dimension	FERPA waived		FERPA retained		Diff.	*SE*	*t*	*df*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	n	*M*	*n*	*M*						
Fairness	352	1.919	118	1.678	0.241 (0.242)	0.053 (0.050)	4.532 (4.792)	468	< .001 (< .001)	0.482
Consumer	346	2.346	110	1.897	0.449 (0.456)	0.076 (0.079)	5.906 (5.677)	454	< .001 (< .001)	0.646
Safety	344	2.450	107	2.249	0.200 (0.202)	0.077 (0.079)	2.606 (2.530)	449	.009 (.011)	0.288
Vicarious	344	2.136	107	1.810	0.326 (0.325)	0.075 (0.072)	4.345 (4.536)	449	< .001 (< .001)	0.481
Toxic	344	1.926	106	1.520	0.406 (0.406)	0.068 (0.060)	5.985 (6.732)	448	< .001 (< .001)	0.665

Note. Values displayed in parentheses are the bootstrap estimates.

All *t*-tests were statistically significant, and all showed the same general pattern of the students who signed a FERPA waiver rating their parents higher on the POI dimension than those students who have not signed a release. The consumer-advocate and toxic dimensions showed the largest differences, both with medium effect sizes (Cohen's *d*). The fairness, safety, and vicarious dimensions all had small effect sizes.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter will focus on what the results suggest about student attitudes towards the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and parent involvement. This chapter will begin with a recap of the main points from the literature review, a discussion on the results, and a discussion on future research.

Literature Review Highlights

Within Chapter 2 of this study, three main topics were discussed. Those three were parent involvement, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), and student development. A number of theoretical frameworks were also discussed to illustrate past research and understanding of parent involvement at the post-secondary level. In that chapter, the five parent typologies used in this survey were discussed. The five are, consumer advocate, fairness, vicarious college student, toxic, and safety parents.

Discussion

The relevant results of this study are discussed under each of the three research questions. Following the sections in the survey, we will begin with the results of the questions regarding FERPA.

Research Question 1: What is the general level of perceived awareness and understanding among undergraduate students regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974?

Overall, undergraduate, and professional students at the public research university feel that they understand the federal law and its purpose. Interestingly, an overwhelming 99% percent of the respondents believe they are entitled to their privacy and 95% of them consider themselves to be adults. Nearly 75% of the respondents stated they understood what FERPA is and 25%

claimed they did not really understand what the law is. Interestingly, nearly 25% of the respondents said that they will attend an information session regarding FERPA. It is likely, the 25% of the respondents were the 25% that claimed they did not understand the federal law. Just over 60% of the respondents said that they filled out a FERPA release form to have their personal and academic information released to their families. Respondents who said that they filled out a FERPA release form were asked to follow up questions regarding if a school official or their parents/legal guardians told them to fill it out. Between the two questions, it appears parents or legal guardians directed their student to fill out the release form with 42% saying they believed they were told by their parents or legal guardians, while only 25% of the respondents claimed that a school official told them to fill out the release form.

Research Question 2: What are the typical levels of parental over-involvement (with respect to the dimensions of consumer advocate, fairness, vicarious college student, toxic, and safety parents) as perceived by undergraduate students?

Looking at the second part of the survey, parent typologies, we were able to see how students perceive their parents' involvement in their post-secondary experience. From a descriptive standpoint, families appear to be sidelined from their students' higher education tenure, with the exception of safety. This seems to align with other research results. In the study conducted by Somers and Settle (2010), they found that parents are concerned about their child's safety and often research safety and security at an institution. Under the safety parent typology, students were asked three questions. With an average of 50%, respondents claimed there were some concerns from their parents or legal guardians regarding their safety. In addition, about 48% respondents said their parents want to receive emergency messages from the school.

Beginning to look at the relationships between the parent typologies and if students retained or waived their FERPA rights, it is found that there is a very strong correlation between parents who are perceived by their student's to be aligned with consumer and/or toxic typologies and having their FERPA rights waived (Table 15). These correlations provide a deeper illustration of how students perceive their families. With consumer parent typology having the strongest correlation of the two, it appears that this aligns with a study done by College Parents of America (2018), which found that 75% of parents participating in the survey reported providing financial assistance. In this same study, 64% reported that their parents talk with them about tuition and fees. With regards to the toxic parent typology, respondents claimed that there is a 50% chance that their parents or legal guardians have their student login information. It's reasonable to assume that this associated with parents wanting access is due to them paying for college. This is surprising, since 92% of the respondents believe that their parents see them as responsible.

Research Question 3: Are there any meaningful relationships between FERPA awareness and the various parental over-involvement dimensions?

Looking at the correlations between the parent typologies and the FERPA variables (Table 14), we are able to see how parent over-involvement (POI) plays a role in a students' sense of independence, awareness, trust, and interest. With the first parent typology, fairness, there is a negative correlation between fairness and a sense of independence. The more students feel that their parents are trying to make sure their child is treated fairly, the less the student feels a sense of independence. This aligns with the authoritarian parent type side of the Baumrind's theory discussed in the literature. Additionally, this negative correlation illustrates the lack of social self-efficacy. In the study conducted by Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014), they

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found over-parenting creates a mind-set that one cannot survive on one's own. Interestingly, while there was a negative correlation with a sense of independence, there is a positive correlation with awareness and interest. Similarly, the consumer advocate, vicarious, and toxic parent typologies saw similar negative correlations with a sense of independence and positive correlations with awareness and trust. With the parent typology, safety, there was no correlation with a sense of independence, awareness, and trust. However, there was a positive correlation with interest. With the FERPA variable, trust, there was no negative or positive correlations with the five parent typologies.

Future Research

With generational changes in our society, these topics will always be evolving and adapting. This will continue to allow researchers to follow how college students perceive the federal law, FERPA and parent involvement. While this survey was strictly quantitative, research using qualitative methods are appropriate with a heavy focus on the five parent typologies. In addition, there may be some merit in researching the relationships between men and women when it comes to these topics. In addition, comparing and contrasting grade point averages may help understand how parent involvement affects academic performance. Another research area likely of importance in the professional enrollment management arena, is effective communication of the FERPA from the university/college to the student and their families.

Conclusions

In conclusion, while on the surface, it appears that students at the public research university perceive their parents to fall under the safety parent typology, talking a deeper dive into the data shows a different picture. Parents who fall into the consumer and/or toxic parent typology have some control over their student's college tenure.

There is, however, some merit with students having a perception of their parent's falling under the safety parent typology. With an increase threat of an incident happing on or near a campus, families are more cautious about their child's safety. This highlights the importance of communication from the institution to the students and their families. It is possible higher education institutions need to consider adding families to their emergency communications.

Based upon my own professional experiences in higher education, I anticipated the toxic and consumer parent typologies being major themes among current college students. Of course, it is possible that I was only hearing from a small subpopulation of students and parents and not hearing or seeing the greater population. But the data from the survey appear to corroborate my initial suspicions. From the students' perspective, families are doing what they expect them to do and there is no indication that they are getting in the way of the students experience at the public research university.

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The following provides the instructions and the question items for the instrument used in this study. With the exceptions of the two preliminary screening items, FERPA item 10, and POI toxic item 3, a four-point Likert scale was used (*strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*). Items 1 and 2 used a simple "yes" and "no" response option set, while the response options for FERPA item 10 were "yes," "no," and "N/A." Toxic item 3 used the responses "definitely yes," "possibly," and "definitely no." FERPA items 10a and 10b are conditional items which are presented to a respondent only if they answer "yes" to FERPA item 10.

Instructions: The researcher is conducting a research project to look at student attitudes towards parent involvement and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. This questionnaire should take between five and ten minutes to complete. This questionnaire is completely anonymous, and no identifiable information will be asked to be provided. In addition, your participation is entirely your choice, and you may change your mind or quit participating at any time, with no penalty to you.

Pre-screening Questions

1. Are you an international student?
2. Are you a graduate student?

FERPA Perceptions and Attitudes

1. I believe that I am an adult.
2. I am entitled to my privacy.
3. I understand what the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is.
4. I understand my rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).
5. My rights under FERPA were explained to me by a university/college official.
6. My rights under FERPA were explained to me by my parents or legal guardians.
7. If the university/college offered information sessions regarding FERPA, I would attend.
8. I believe my academic records and personal information are protected under FERPA.
9. I believe FERPA was created with protecting my privacy in mind.
10. I signed a university/college FERPA release form to share my information on my own accord.
    10a. [*Conditional follow-up to question to 10*] I signed a university/college FERPA release form to share my information because my parents or legal guardians told me to.

10b. [*Conditional follow-up to question to 10*] I signed a university/college FERPA release form to share my information because a school official told me to.

Parental Over-Involvement: Fairness

1. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) believe that NDSU is treating me fairly.
2. To the best of my knowledge, my parent(s) or legal guardian(s) contact NDSU regarding university policies.
3. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) question almost everything that NDSU says and does.

Parental Over-Involvement: Consumer Advocate

1. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) believe that since they are paying for my education they have the right to know everything.
2. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) ask me about NDSU's tuition and fees.
3. To the best of my knowledge, my parent(s) or legal guardian(s) contact NDSU to discuss my finances.

Parental Over-Involvement: Safety

1. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are concerned for my safety while I am taking classes at NDSU.
2. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) want to receive emergency notifications from the university (for example, the Campus Emergency Notify System (CENS).
3. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) share with me news stories of criminal activity in and around NDSU.

Parental Over-Involvement: Vicarious College Student

1. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) ask me about dates and locations of NDSU events.
2. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) participate in NDSU events (Alumni, athletics, etc.).
3. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) use coming to NDSU for events as a way to spend time with me.

Parental Over-Involvement: Toxic Parent

1. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) believe I am irresponsible.
2. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are involved in every aspect of my college experience.
3. My parent(s) or legal guardian(s) have some of my NDSU login information (Blackboard, Campus Connection, email, etc.).

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

NDSU | NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 12, 2019

Dr. Brent Hill
School of Education

Re: IRB Determination of Exempt Human Subjects Research:
Protocol #HE20139, "Student Attitudes toward Parents Involvement and FERPA"

Co-investigator(s) and research team: Michael Paolini
Date of Exempt Determination: 12/12/2019 Expiration Date: 12/11/2022
Study site(s): NDSU Sponsor: n/a

The above referenced human subjects research project has been determined exempt (category #2(i)) in accordance with federal regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46, Protection of Human Subjects). This determination is based on the revised protocol submission (received 12/12/2019).

Please also note the following:
• If you wish to continue the research after the expiration, submit a request for recertification several weeks prior to the expiration.
• The study must be conducted as described in the approved protocol. Changes to this protocol must be approved prior to initiating, unless the changes are necessary to eliminate an immediate hazard to subjects.
• Notify the IRB promptly of any adverse events, complaints, or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others related to this project.
• Report any significant new findings that may affect the risks and benefits to the participants and the IRB.

Research records may be subject to a random or directed audit at any time to verify compliance with IRB standard operating procedures.

Thank you for your cooperation with NDSU IRB procedures. Best wishes for a successful study.
Sincerely,

Kristy Shirley

Kristy Shirley, CIP, Research Compliance Administrator

For more information regarding IRB Office submissions and guidelines, please consult https://www.ndsu.edu/research/for_researchers/research_integrity_and_compliance/institutional_review_board_irb/. This Institution has an approved FederalWide Assurance with the Department of Health and Human Services: FWA00002439.