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Walden University
2020

Abstract

An Exploration of Experiences of Parents with Dependent Adult Children Expressed in

Social Media

by

Lanora Lynn Elliston-Gittings

MA, Walden University, 2019

MA, Liberty University, 2016

BS, University of West Florida, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human and Social Services

Walden University

March 2020

Abstract

Many young adults lack independence and parents are supporting their children in into adulthood. There are parents who feel frustrated, taken for granted, and alone while providing for their dependent children. A lack of resources led a population of parents to find support through private social media groups. No research that examined the perception of the experiences of parents of dependent adults and the perceived benefits of online resources was found. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand the parenting experiences of those who chose to join a private social media group and fill the literature gap regarding vulnerabilities of parents whose children are delaying transition to adulthood and social media support for parents of adults. The lens of the emerging adult theory was applied to address changes during young adulthood. Identities of the participants were protected in various ways. Ten members volunteered to allow their previous posts to be qualitatively studied using Thematic Analysis. Their data were analyzed with no follow up interview. The themes were indicative of unhealthy relationships regardless of the details. The parents believed the enabling of their children led to the problems they identify now. The parents in the group reported behaviors and thinking that are consistent with over-parenting or helicopter parenting. A study of the same population measuring a relationship between variables of those who identify as over-parents and the amount of money that parents spend on an adult child's monthly basic needs. The results could be used to raise awareness to human service professionals, specifically in financial education. The findings may contribute to social change by offering a perspective of the maladaptive outcomes of over-parenting styles.

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Dedication

I humbly dedicate this to Mary Louise Garnier Elliston who accepted her lot in life in time as a homemaker but refused to let her daughters and granddaughters do the same.

Table of Contents

iii

iv

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Fingerman, Kim, Birditt, and Zarit (2016) determined that many in the current 18 to 25-year-old age group in the United States were delaying traditional adult responsibilities, including self-sufficiency. As the young adults chose to delay these responsibilities, the responsibilities for their basic needs then fell upon their parents, guardians, or society (e.g., Fingerman et al., 2016). Emerging adult theorists suggested that the post adolescent 18 to 25 year-old age range is one of continued development (Arnett, 2015). Parents lacked preparation and support resources when faced with continued dependent parental-child relationships with their adult children (Burke, Segrin, & Farris, 2018). Social media has become a medium to seek support for those who perceive a lack support elsewhere (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015).

Background

Popular culture writers, employers, and those in academia each have expressed strong opinions regarding generations known to theorists as Millennials and Generation Z (Bencsik, Horvath-Csikos, & Juhasz, 2016; Boynton, 2015; Inam, Nomaan, & Abiodulah, 2016). Arnett (2016), who developed emerging adulthood theory, suggested acceptable reasons for which many young adults delayed traditional adult responsibilities and independence. There was a vast availability of peer-reviewed research conducted by those that sought to understand the roles, mental health, emotional health, financial help, and relationships from the perspective of the adult child (Copp et al., 2017; Fingerman et al., 2016; McKinney, Sterns, & Szkody, 2018). The availability of empirical literature

from the perspective of parents of problematic adult children was lacking (Saleem, Arati, Yadav, & Khadi, 2017).

Parents of young adults may or may not have had the means or desire to provide for their adult children (West et al., 2017). Some parents of dependent young adults developed personal financial problems due to the level of support they chose to provide (Fingerman et al. 2015). Young adults for whom their parents or guardians meet their basic needs and solve their problems have a higher incidence of delayed adulthood (Hong, Hwang, Kuo, & Hsu, 2014).

Problem Statement

Some parents find dependency problematic; others did not (Cui et al., 2018). Adult children who lived at the family home was a sign of dependence and contributed to parental stress (Casares & White, 2018). The incidence of adult children living at home increased over recent generations (Casares & White, 2018). The rate of adult children living at home for more than 4 months did not change from 1968–2007 and rose to 4% from 2007–2012 (Fry, 2017). In 2014, 32.1% of 18 to 34-year-olds were living with one or both of their parents, the number of young adults living with their parents was 21.6 million, in 2014 (Fry, 2017). Noncompliance to rules of the home or conditions of assistance led to additional stress (Casares & White, 2018). There were limited resources for parents of problematic or dependent adults from which to seek assistance or guidance (Fingerman et al., 2016). Human service resources are focused on vulnerable populations such as minor children, developmentally delayed children and adults, and the elderly (Cui

et al., 2018). The phenomenon of typically-developed young adults who delayed

independence was not consistent with an involuntary delay (Gilliagan, Suitor, & Pillemer,

2015). Gilliagan, et al. did not explore social or financial vulnerability (2015).   Those

who develop parenting programs have not recognized the need for services to parents of

dependent adults (McKinney, Mores, & Pastuszak, 2016). In this research, I addressed

the gap of empirical literature that explored the potential vulnerabilities of parents of

adults.

Burke et al. (2018) indicated an association between parenting style choices and

dependent or entitled outcomes in young adults (Burke et al., 2018). They suggested that

the chosen parenting style influenced potential outcomes (Burke et al., 2018). They did

not, however, establish methods for which the parents can address the effects of their

choices once the child is an adult (Burke et al., 2018). In this study, I addressed the

literature gap of exploration of the experience of parents whose children are having a

difficult transition to adulthood.

The use of social media has become a daily norm for most individuals (McKenna,

Myers, & Newman, 2017). It established a new medium of options for many seeking

support from peers with similar circumstances (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015) and social

media has become a medium in which support is available for almost any topic (Stieglitz,

Mirbabaie, Ross, & Neuberger, 2018). Those who share interests or concerns form

groups that have become a virtual place where they may communicate regarding private

concerns (Chun & Lee, 2017). Hard AfSegerstad & Kasperowski found that participation

in a virtual support group decreased feelings of social isolation (2015). Some parents who felt socially isolated by their adult children failing to meet social norms of independence (South & Lei, 2015) sought the support of their peers in the privacy of a closed social media group (Chun & Lee, 2017; South & Lei, 2015). There is a lack of extensive peer-reviewed research regarding the perceived support of social media networks (Stieglitz et al., 2018). In this study, I addressed the literature gap regarding social media support for parents of adults.

Although there is research regarding the characteristics of parents of adult children, I found no research that has examined the perception of the experiences of parents of dependent adults and their perceived benefits of online parenting resources. Further research was warranted to explore the perceived needs of parents who chose social media support for parenting resources (Chun & Lee, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

This generic qualitative study had three purposes: to understand the experiences of parents who chose to join a closed social media group, to assess social media support for parents of adults, and to fill the literature gap regarding potential vulnerabilities of parents whose children are having a difficult transition to adulthood. The results of this study could create awareness for parenting educators and counselors regarding the challenges of parents of typically-developed adult children.

Framework/Method

I applied the lens of Arnett's (2016) theory of emerging adulthood to address

societal changes in recent generations regarding the acceptance of delayed independence

in young adults. In 2004, Jeffrey Arnett published emerging adulthood theory (Reigman,

Arnett, & Colwell, 2007). Arnett (2016) theorized that young adulthood is a

developmental period between adolescence and adulthood. He contended that while

individuals in the developmental stage of emerging adulthood may lack life skills, they

are confident and have high standards (Arnett, 2015).

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Why did parents choose the support of a social

media group?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How do parents feel about the financial dependence

of their adult children?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do parents manage behavioral noncompliance

with their adult children?

Nature of the Study

I used a generic qualitative method for this study. Generic qualitative research is

appropriate when a researcher is interested in gaining an understanding of beliefs and

attitudes (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). I explored historical self-reported records of

parents' experiences with their adult children. Thematic Analysis (TA) is intended to

seek meaningful analysis in a methodical manner (Braun & Clark, 2017) I examined the

data obtained from the posts of each of the participant parents to identify meaningful themes that answer the research questions. Group characteristics sampling is a form of purposeful sampling (McKenna, Myers, & Newman, 2017). It is appropriately achieved by choosing participants only from the group as parents have chosen to participate in the group because they perceive to have various difficulties with their adult children (McKenna, et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2017) stated that the sample size is less critical than appropriately reporting the actual representation of the data and the analysis.

I explored information of 10 of the group members' posts beginning from their original posts. The group was created within the last six years (specific date withheld to protect the identity of the group). The posts could be from the inception of the group to July of 2019, depending upon when the participants joined the group. Latent themes are themes that develop immediately and are quite literal to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2017). I sought to find latent themes in their data regarding the reported reasons they gave for choosing support from the social media medium. Semantic data offers a deeper insight to understand the data (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Semantic data analysis of their reported experiences with their adult children emerged from a more in-depth analysis.

Definitions

Closed Social Media Group: A group in which their posts do not appear on the regular page of the poster is considered a closed or private group (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015).

Delayed Adulthood: A phenomenon in which a biological adult is still dependent upon others, generally parents or guardians, to meet his or her basic needs (Sharon, 2016)

Emerging Adulthood: A theory developed by Jeffrey Arnett, which defines a developmental stage between later teenage years and mid-'20s (Arnett, 2004).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative work were the reported experiences of ten parents of difficult adult children who chose to join a social media group for support. *Difficult* is subjective to the parent. I analyzed each parent's truth based on their posts within the group. I had no intention of using interviews to gain data not previously shared on the site. The study delimitations consist of the parents who have chosen to join a social media group understanding it was a non-representative sample of the entire population of parents who struggle with their adult children.

Limitations

The inability to determine causation or correlation is a limitation with qualitative studies (Staller, 2014). This work was not nationally representative. It is not appropriate to generalize the entire population of parents of young adult children to the experiences of the participants. Culture and ethnicity were not inclusionary or exclusionary criteria. Due to the potential diversity of the participants, cultural specificities could have had unmeasured implications for this work. As found in the prior research of Rehm, Dalins, Coccia, and Cui (2015), there was an expectation that selective memory would exist in the already subjective data provided by the participants.. When writing at the time of

experience, individuals reported their personal truths. The data were a report of their perceived truths and their stories at a particular time.

Significance

I intended to discover perceived experiences that led the parents to seek social media support and to explore the parents' reported financial support, conditional assistance, and compliance experiences with their adult children. This information may assist further researchers regarding parenting and mediums of support. This work gave a voice to parents who struggle emotionally and financially with the level of support they chose to contribute to their adult children. As there is a lack of research performed from the perspective of parents of young adults I can only speculate as to contributory factors to the phenomenon of their discomfort. Filling this literature gap will be helpful in bringing awareness to their experience.

Summary

There is a population of parents whose children have disregarded social norms by maintaining dependence during biological adulthood (Burke et al., 2018). This population lacked information, resources, and traditional peer support (Gilligan et al., 2015). Lack of awareness and resources led to feelings of isolation (Chun & Lee, 2017). Adverse relationships with adult children can strain the marriages and intimate personal relationships of their parents (Gilligan et al., 2015). Their financial welfare can be challenged by choosing to support their adult children (Descarte, 2008). Filling the literature gap regarding a population of parents who have difficulties with their adult

children who seek help from social media can offer information from which others may utilize to assist this population and utilize the social media medium. I sought to understand and bring awareness to the issue of parents who are struggling in various ways with their adult children.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research Strategy

In the literature search, I sought to examine issues of parenting typically-developed adults and social media support. I performed an electronic literature search in an academic library for the subjects of parenting adult children and social media support groups. Upon an initial search in the Walden University library for *parenting young adults*, there were 481 peer-reviewed results returned. Of these, none of the literature was that of parenting typically-developed young adults. Attempts to use *adult children* in the Walden library brought results for *adult children of...* populations such as parents with alcohol dependency issues, parents with borderline personality disorder, and parents with physical disabilities. Searches for *dependent adult children* resulted in research regarding adult children with documented developmental delays. In further searches, terms such as *parenting millennials,* (10 peer-reviewed results) *failure to launch adult,* (three peer-reviewed results) *excessive support parents,* (six peer-reviewed results) *emerging adults* (11, 276 peer-reviewed results) and *over-parenting* (312 peer-reviewed results) proved more successful. Of the 11, 276 peer-reviewed results from the search for *emerging adulthood,* 149 of them remained when the word *parent* was added to the search.

A search for *social media support groups* returned 260 peer-reviewed literature, few of which were regarding closed social media support groups. I found no research literature regarding specific social media support for parents of adult children, supporting

the existence of a literature gap. I intend to utilize the literature found as a compilation of research and ideas from other populations that feel isolated to transfer into the circumstances in which a parent may seek such support.

Review of the Literature

An increased number of young adults maintain some level of dependency on their parents well into their 20s and 30s (Burke et al., 2018). Researchers contend that there are external and internal influences that contribute to the trend of dependent young adults (Arnett, 2016; Fingerman et al., 2016; Usher, 2017). Researchers who consider external influence discuss the economy, job market, student loans, and the housing market (Arnett, 2016). Researchers who consider internal influence, discuss parenting styles and parental indulgence contributing to a young adult's comfort in their dependence on their family of origin (Fingerman et al., 2016). Schiffrin et al. (2013) quantitatively identified potentially undesirable outcomes, such as attitudes of entitlement and financial dependency, of the children who come from homes that practiced "helicopter parenting," also known as over-parenting. Schiffrin (2013) discusses the difficulties secondary to parenting choices, but not the experience of the parent during the transition.

Dependent Adult Children

Most parents expect that they will not be providing substantial support for their typically-developed, biologically adult children (est, Lewis, Roberts, & Noden, 2017). Those who are still providing substantial support for their adult children often expect that there would be gratitude or perhaps conditions placed on the support (Sechrist, Jill,

Howard & Pillemer, 2014). The frontier heritage in the United States historically

established as American cultural norms (Kottak, 1990) that adults should be autonomous

(Descartes, 2008). Contemporary parents of adults recalled that they perceived

dependency on their parents as unfavorable, even embarrassing (Veldorale-Griffin et al.,

2013). Parenting adult children who chose to violate societal norms by expecting intense

parental support had adverse emotional, social, and financial effects on parents (Gilligan

et al., 2015). There were confusing and frustrating feelings for parents who were

emotionally and financially uncomfortable supporting their adult children (Loveland,

2017). Parental frustration increased if those adult children behaved in a manner deemed

ungrateful, disrespectful, or challenging to the parent (West et al., 2017).

The subjective measurement of dependency is relative to the level of comfort of

the parent providing the support (Sechrist et al., 2014). The support can be in the form of

direct or indirect financial support, emotional support, or providing support in the form of

daily tasks and chores such as laundry, meals, transportation, or childcare (West et al.,

2017). Traditional ideology in the United States favored those who strived toward,

achieved, and maintained autonomy and self-reliance over those who are dependent upon

others (Bellah 2012). In the last generation, an identified change in the American

historical philosophy and societal acceptance of young adult dependence has occurred in

that a large percentage of parents of adult children reported that they financially

supported their adult children (Toohy, 2013).

Financial Dependence

Fingerman et al. (2015) examined the phenomenon of intense financial support of adult children by their parents (Fingerman et al., 2015). They found that the parents believed their intense level of support to be abnormal yet continued to provide intense support. Fingerman et al. (2015) further found that parents who could least afford to support their adult child would often do so to the extent of self-deprivation (Fingerman, et al., 2015). Parents who provided substantial support for their capable adult children were subject to stress, financial difficulties, individual emotional problems, and marital problems (Seal, Doherty, & Harris, 2016). Some adult children had come to believe substantial financial support from their parents was an entitlement rather than a gift (Chinsky, 2016). The contradiction of the social norm of relationship reciprocity within the parent-adult child relationship added to the stress of the parent to whom the adult child may not have expressed gratitude or attempted to reciprocate the financial support by other means (Hwang & Kim, 2016). Lack of reciprocity may have also exposed the adult child to stress if they desired to participate in reciprocity, but were financially unable, which added to potential discord to the relationship (Hwang & Kim, 2016).

Familial Consumer Relationships

Mansvelt, Breheny, and Stephens (2017) examined the role of consumer consumption of mothers providing for their adult children.   Parents who come from humble beginnings reported that they provided support for their adult children because they did not want to see their adult children struggle as they had (Mansvelt, Breheny, &

Stephens, 2017). Some parents who provided intense support to their adult children struggled with feelings of embarrassment and isolation (Fingerman et al., 2015). Those who associated their children's successes and failures in a personally reflective manner had exacerbated negative feelings from the perceived need to support their adult children (Soenens, Wuyts, Vansteenkiske, Mageu, & Brenning, 2015).

Dependent Relationships

The most prevalent parenting style of the 1980s and 1990s in the United States was associated with intense involvement with the daily lives and choices of their children to varying degrees (Burke et al., 2018). Parents who chose intense involvement found that allowing the child to seek developmentally appropriate independence was difficult as they transitioned from children to teens, and ultimately adulthood (Milita & Bunch, 2017). Children who lacked independence during transitions sought intense influence from their parents in daily decision making (Milita & Bunch, 2017). Parent-child dyads that did not evolve from dependency to autonomy were unknowingly renegotiated to evolve into a variation of the dependent relationship while the adult child enjoyed freedoms traditional to biologic adults without the responsibilities of independent adults (Descartes, 2008).

Parental Comfort Levels and Support

Not all parents who provided support for their adult children were uncomfortable with the arrangement (West et al., 2017). Descartes (2008) applied practice theory to examine the perspectives of parents and adult children in reciprocal relationships. She

found that the level of comfort in providing support was not correlated to the level of

support they chose to provide (Descartes, 2008). She concluded that while the support

was likely to occur, the parents' feelings of resentment and disappointment were related

to the level of comfort in giving the support (Descartes, 2008). Circumstances and

perspectives contributed to the level of comfort of the parents (West et al., 2017). Parents

whose adult children were still pursuing education may have had a higher tolerance for

providing support (West et al., 2017). Parents who felt as though their adult children

displayed gratitude for the contributions reported a higher tolerance for contributing

(Descartes, 2008).

Parents may experience ambivalence toward their children who chose not to meet

cultural norms of independence (Pillemer & Suitor, 2017). Researchers who primarily

focused on aging adults expanded their research to the effects of adult children on their

aging parents (Pillemer & Suitor, 2017). They observed levels of ambivalence,

favoritism variables, equity and support exchange, and adult-child parental estrangement

(Gilligan et al., 2015; Pillemer & Suitor, 2017; Sechrist et al., 2014; Suitor et al.,).

Maternal favoritism often occurred toward the adult children who were most independent

(Suitor et al., 2016). Although the mothers in the study maintained the provider

relationship with the dependent adult child, they reported less pleasure from relationships

with dependent adult children (Suitor et al., 2016).

Demographics

No ethnic demographic in the United States stood out as more or less likely to provide intense support of adult children (Fingerman et al., 2015). Goldfarb (2013) contended in her legal analysis that adult children whose family of origin was intact received more financial support than those who are families of divorce, separation, or were never married (Goldfarb, 2013). Fingerman et al. (2015) found differing socioeconomic demographics in parents who were less financially stable and had provided the most support for their adult children (Fingerman et al., 2015). Custodial mothers were found by Goldfarb (2013) to contribute disproportionately to support adult children in comparison to the contributions made by noncustodial fathers (Goldfarb, 2013). Goldberg did not clarify or define the level of disproportion (Goldberg, 2013). Ironically, many parents who participated in intense support viewed the intense support as abnormal and yet continued to participate (Fingerman et al,. 2016).

Child-Invested Self-Esteem

Scoenes, Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, Mageau, and Brenning (2015) investigated the phenomenon of mothers who gained self-esteem and thrived from taking care of their children of all ages. The mothers of the study showed fewer depressive symptoms while providing intense support (Scoenes et al., 2015). Child-invested contingent self-esteem is the terminology outlined in the study that described parents who associated their self-esteem and worth with outcomes of their children, including adult children (Scoenes et al., 2015). There was positive correlation to positive feelings of the mother whose

children vocalized sharing the extrinsic goals of the mother (Soenens et al., 2015).

Parents whose children rejected parental goals such as educational goals, felt more

uncomfortable providing intense support (Sechrist et al., 2014). Essentially, a parent felt

better about themselves and provided support for their adult child if the parent believed

the child has the same goals as the parent (Soenens et al., 2015). Parents whose self-

esteem was contingent upon their child experienced a more significant adverse effect

upon a disagreement of values with their child than other parents (Soenens et al., 2015).

Indulgence and Intense Support

Veldorale-Griffin et al. (2013) compared the perception of parents and

adolescents regarding parental indulgence and life stress. The parental and child

perception of indulgence differed as did the perception of happiness secondary to the

indulgence (Veldorale-Griffin et al., 2013). Parents who indulged their children reported

decreased life satisfaction (Veldorale-Griffin et al., 2013). Adult children who were

identified as indulged reported enhanced life satisfaction (Veldorale-Griffin et al., 2013).

Many who felt less life satisfaction from providing intense support to adult children,

would still dutifully provide support, even though they disagreed with the level of support

(Veldorale-Griffin et al., 2013). These parents may have displayed frustration or had

verbal disagreements with their adult children regarding intense support (Veldorale-

Griffin et al., 2013). Some mothers reported uncomfortable physical symptoms related to

the stress they perceived to be associated with the problems of their adult children

(Pillemer et al., 2017).

Parents often placed conditions on intense support but felt as though their children would fail in society without assistance (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015). The consequences of unmet conditions were not clear (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015). Once the adult children become parents themselves, the likelihood of them receiving intense support is enhanced (South & Lei, 2015). The parent, now a grandparent, experienced increased worry regarding the adult child's living arrangements and other basic needs when a grandchild was involved (South & Lei, 2015). Adult children were possibly aware that grandchildren offered them access to intense support that may not have been available before the birth of the grandchild (West et al., 2017). Access to the grandchild may have been contingent upon the adult child gaining further support (Sharon, 2016).

Child-Centered Marriage

Some parents created home environments that focused almost entirely on the children rather than the adult relationship (Seal et al., 2016). There was a defined difference between meeting the needs of the children as well as the natural changes that occur in a family as the children are born and allowing the child to be the center of the home rather than the marriage (Seal et al., 2016). Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield, and Weber's (2014) findings regarding child-focused homes and undesirable adult child outcomes suggested that children raised as the focus of the home continue to be the focus of the home as adults (Odenweller et al., 2014). Based on mixed-method research conducted at Stanford on the student population, adult children who were raised in child-centered homes lacked autonomy (McKinney, et al., 2016). Seal et al. (2016) and

McKinney et al.'s (2015) analysis indicated that the continuation of a home that is

focused predominantly on the children rather than the adult relationships could be

habitual as these children become adults, contributing to lack of focus on the intimate

relationship, finances, and social lives of the parents (Seal et al., 2016; McKinney et al.,

2015).

Millennials and Generation Z

The Millennial Generation, also referred to as Generation Y, is widely accepted

to include those born between 1980 and the early 1990s (Puiu, 2017). Generation Z is

defined by those born in the early 1990s to the early 2000s (Puiu, 2017). The current

population of young adults consists of portions of both generations (Swanson, 2016).

Theories involving these generations are used by economists, educators, marketing

executives, popular culture, human resources, and others in order to understand, sell,

educate, and understand the workplace (West et al., 2017; Lythcott-Haims, 2015; Puiu,

2017; Swanson, 2016; Smith 2004). Generally, the uses of these descriptions of age

groups are objective; some derogatorily interpreted stereotypes are concerning to those

within the described generations (Raymer, Reed, Spiegel, & Purvanova, 2017). The adult

children of the parents in this research could be of either generation. The identified

parenting trends that became prevalent in the 1990s were concurrent with the birth and

developmental years of Millennials and Generation Z (Comstock, 2016).

Mental Health Regarding Millenials and Generation Z

The diagnosis rate of mental illness for Millenials and Generation Z is several

times more than any generation that has preceded them (McGrady, 2016). The parents of

those with diagnosed mental illness may have perceived the offspring required more

parental care (Ni & Gau, 2015). Parents who believed that their adult child's mental

health contributed to or legitimized adult dependency were more likely to take on the

responsibility of providing for their adult child without expectation of reciprocity

(Mckinney et al., 2018).

Researchers are intrigued by the sharp increase in diagnosis and have begun

investigating possible contributing factors (Asmat, Uzma, & Shah, 2017). The rise in

diagnosis could be a result of an increase in awareness leading to decreased stigmas and

stereotypes involved with mental illness (Madewell & Ponce-Garcia, 2016). The

increase could be a result of increased availability and advertising for pharmaceuticals

(Yap, Pilkington, Ryan, & Jorn, 2014). The increased diagnosis could further be a result

of lower tolerance for delayed gratification reflected in current young adults secondary to

societal influence and parenting style (Loveland, 2017).

Researchers have investigated an increase in mental health diagnosis related to

parenting styles (Asmat et al., 2017). Parents of dependent adult children may have

removed the autonomy and independence of their adult child as the roles had not evolved

into parent and independent adult relationship (Fingerman et al., 2016). Lack of

autonomy and independence, traits associated with over-parenting have been found to

contribute to emotional pain in the parents and the offspring (Burke et al., 2018; Usher, 2017). Ni and Gau (2015) found that some parenting styles correlated with enhanced psychiatric symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) (Ni & Gau, 2015). The study did not examine the rate of diagnosis, rather the incident and severity of symptoms (Ni & Gau 2015). Those who over-parented could have been more hyperaware of their child's symptoms to report (Ni & Gau, 2015). The child could have exaggerated his or her symptoms to elicit a parental reaction (Ni & Gau, 2015). The study was not designed to measure causation, rather observe the co-occurrence (Ni & Gau, 2015).

Reciprocal Parental-Child Relationships

Consumer-driven or reciprocal relationships are evident, but not exclusive to this generation (Mansvelt, Breheny, & Stephens 2017). At least 38% of previously-married parents in 2017 were not raising their children with the child's other biological parent in the home (Centers for Disease Control, 2017). Children not raised by both biological parents were likely subjected to some level of knowledge of familial financial arrangements in the form of child support (Turner & Waller, 2017). The previous number does not include those who bore children and were never married to the biological parent (Centers for Disease Control, 2017). Child support laws vary from state to state, but general requirements, unless otherwise agreed upon or in the 13 states for which college-support is authorized, end upon the non-disabled child's graduation from

high school or 18th birthday depending upon which is later (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

Doherty (2013) theorized that the consumer-driven society created consumer-driven family relationships (Doherty, 2013). Some children and teens viewed the relationship with their parents and grandparents as "consumers of the goods and services of the parents and the community rather than citizens with responsibilities" (Doherty, 2013, pp. 39). Parents who provide intense support may believe that support entitles them to a level of authority beyond that of families whose young adults are independent (Padilla-Walker, Nelson, & Knapp, 2014). This philosophy could have been met with contention from the young adults who believe age, rather than the level of dependency, to imply independence regarding their behavior and decisions causing stress to the parent and in the home (Usher, 2017).

Child Support for Young Adults

A small number of young adults have sued their married and unmarried parents for college-support as a means in which to maintain financial support into their adult years (Chinsky, 2016). Goldfarb (2013) in her legal analysis of the changing trends and delays in the self-sufficiency of young adults, argued that "child support orders should be more broadly available for young adults" (Goldfarb, 2013, p. 45). Goldfarb (2013) additionally articulated the benefits of financial support for single parents of dependent young adults (Goldfarb, 2013). She asserted that given additional time and continued parental support, young adults would make more successful adult transitions (Goldfarb,

2013). Others, such as Lythcott-Haimes (2015) philosophized that if parents did not

require young adults to become self-sufficient, they will not be motivated to complete the

transition and will maintain dependency upon the parents (Lythcott-Haimes, 2015).

Others expounded on this philosophy stating that "adult children can make a career out of

earning income from their parents by working the emotional system" (Abraham &

Studaker-Cordner, 2015, pp 3). In cases in which parents were not in a relationship with

the other biological parent of the adult child, the parent is more susceptible to

manipulation of his or her 'emotional buttons' (Abraham & Studaker-Cordner, 2015).

Emotional manipulation enhanced the stress on the parent and the fiscal opportunity for

the young adult (West et al., 2017).

     South and Lei (2015) found that parents of disrupted or single-parent homes

encouraged young adults to move out of the family home earlier than those who lived in

the home with both of their biological parents (South & Lei, 2015). The study did not,

however, examine whether physically leaving the family home was synonymous with

independence (South & Lei, 2015). Those not living at home may have received

financial and other support from their parents (South & Lei, 2015).

Delayed Adulthood

     In the phenomenon of delayed adulthood, the parent or guardian likely was

expected to provide for the capable young adult (Sharon, 2016; Swanson, 2016). The

roles, responsibilities, and expectations of parents changed throughout the stages of the

life of the offspring (Odenweller et al., 2014). These differences can be influenced by

many variables to include, but not limited to culture, religion, ethnicity, and special needs

of the child (Schwartz, 2016; Bellah, 2012; Finerman et al., 2016; Parrott & McGill,

2013). Once a child reached the legal age of majority, or in some cases completed formal

higher education, that adult child would then be exclusively responsible for his or her

own decisions and care (Hong et al., 2014).

Historical Influences

Holt (1974) challenged traditional child-rearing in a historical, theoretical

movement that began in the 1970s, known as Children's Liberation (Holt, 1974). Holt

(1974) contended that minor children had the right to choose their living situations, enter

into legally binding contracts, and to maintain employment (Holt, 1974). Holt (1974)

contended that the parents or guardians were responsible to financially and emotionally

support their children's choices (Holt, 1974). Children's rights theories were not a new

way of thinking in America in the 1970s (Deegan, 2013). Jane Adams had recognized

the need to protect the fundamental human rights of children during her sociological

work in the late 1800s (Deegan, 2013). The expectation of the parent to maintain the

financing and support of the decisions of the children was new (Scott, 1993).

While Jane Adams and others had advocated for children's safety and welfare,

they did not recognize children and young adults as having decision-making rights (Scott,

1993). Those opposed to the child liberation theory of the 1970s believed that children

had the right to have their basic needs met by their parents or guardians such as nutrition,

housing, and education, but that their judgment competencies were lacking as they had

not developed due to their egocentric nature (Baumrind, 1978).

Holt (1974) acknowledged that each psychological, developmental stage of

children included egocentricity which prevented children from making sound decisions

based on logic (Holt, 1974). This acknowledgment caused additional concerns from

Baumrind (1978) and those opposed to the philosophy of Children's Liberation

(Baumrind, 1978). Baumrind (1978) voiced her strongest concern for the concept of

imposing additional responsibilities onto parents to assist in the implementation of the

proposed rights and choices of the children (Baumrind, 1978). While this debate began

more than 40 years ago, the debate regarding correct or acceptable parenting philosophies

have continued from educators and social scientists (Milita & Brunch, 2017; McKinney

et al., 2016).

Emerging Adulthood

Arnett, founder of emerging adulthood theory, has defined characteristics of

young adults as experiencing a transitional state, identity-searching, lack of stability in

love, work, and the home, focus on self, increased hope with endless possibilities defined

this developmental stage (Schwartz, 2016). Sharon (2016) defined adulthood utilizing

criteria of attaining particular developmental markers rather than achieving a particular

age (Sharon, 2016). Criterion markers such as marriage, finishing school, becoming a

parent, beginning a career, have been postponed in the current generation of young adults

compared to previous generations (Sharon, 2016). Postposing these milestones, she

argued, removes the maturation that each milestone offers and negatively affects personality development (Sharon, 2016). Postponement added burden to the parents who were expected to support the biologically adult child who has chosen to postpone adulthood (West et al., 2017).

Twinge (2013), acknowledged Arnett's (2004) theory of emerging adulthood (Twenge, 2013; Arnett, 2004). Twenge (2013) reported findings of which Arnett (2013) publically disagreed (Twenge, 2013; Arnett, 2013). Twenge (2013) found an increase in Narcissistic Personality traits in the current generation of emerging adults (Twenge, 2013). West et al., (2017) found that the majority of young adults believed reliance on parents for decision making regarding finances acceptable. There was no examination in this study as to the young adults' thoughts regarding the reciprocation relationship between young adults and their parents (Gains et al., 2014).

Social Media Support

Social media has become a daily influence. Positively, social media could connect people to friends and loved ones (Chung & Lee, 2017). Negatively, social media affects those who are easily influenced by an external locus of control (Chung & Lee, 2017). Social media can inundate parents of young adults with posts from their peers regarding the successes of their peers' children (Yang, 2018). Exposure can invoke feelings of frustration, jealousy, or shame in the lack of independence or success of their children (Suitor et al., 2016). Social media has broken down borders and made the world very small (Stieglitz et al., 2018). Regardless of the accuracy of those who presented

successful lives on social media, parents who deal with difficult adult children may have

had feelings of inadequacy (Coyne, McDaniel, & Stockdale, 2017). Social media also

offers individuals who felt isolated a place in which they may find support from others in

similar circumstances (Hard Af Segerstad & Kasperowski, 2015).

Parents could have felt socially or physically isolated as a byproduct of providing

the level of financial and emotional support that their adult children perceive to need

(Fingerman et al., 2015). They may have felt embarrassed or ashamed to discuss their

concerns with extended family members (Gilligan et al., 2015). They may have had

disagreements or tension within the home with family members who were not

contributing to the problematic situations, but affected by them (Gilligan et al., 2015).

They may have lacked funds to pursue their basic living or social needs as they have

overspent providing for their adult children (Fingerman et al., 2015). They may have felt

required to work extended hours or delay planned retirement as they averted those funds

to support their capable adult children (Fingerman et al., 2015). They may have felt as

though members in their traditional support system, who have adult children that were

thriving, were not capable of understanding their circumstances or would perhaps judge

them (Pillemer & Suitor, 2015). Anonymity and assumed privacy of a private social

media group allows individuals to feel a sense of safety from judgment and a feeling of

not being alone (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015). There are no additional funds required to

participate in social media support groups for those who already have internet services in

their homes (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015). These are some of the reasons that brought

those who may not have chosen to seek support in person, in their geographic communities, to seek social media support (Chun & Lee, 2017). Those who utilized social media could access their support system immediately and develop a level of intimacy and bonding over similar experiences rather quickly (Hard af Segerstad & Kasperowski, 2015). The combination of access and anonymity may have added to the appeal of the anywhere access model that is social media (Hard af Segerstad & Kasperowski, 2015).

Parents who associated their children's success and failures in a personal manner experienced enhanced feelings of social isolation (Soenens et al., 2015). Sensitive topics with little public attention brought feelings of shame and confusion (West et al., 2017). Partners of military veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), who also reported feelings of isolation, conveyed that they felt more comfortable addressing their feelings in their social media group (Ruiz & Stadtlandner, 2015). Further, they felt a camaraderie with those in the group as they shared feelings of social isolation (Ruiz & Stadtladner, 2015). Seeking support via social media offered empathy, understanding, and support for partners of veterans with PTSD and stood to reason that a population with similar feelings would seek the medium (Hard af Segerstad, & Kasperowski, 2015). This group offered a safe place for those who did not believe were understood by most in the general population (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015).

Social media offers groups for all interests, causes, sub-cultures, and lifestyles (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015). Anyone at any time can create a group (Ruiz & Stadtlander,

2015). There are varying levels of privacy offered to each group (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015). Each creator, also known as an administrator, can create a set of rules or guidelines that each member agrees to follow to maintain membership to the group (Stieglitz et al., 2018). Open groups are the most liberal as anyone can join without the knowledge of the administrator (Stieglitz et al., 2018). Closed or private groups can require screening and acknowledgment of agreements of behavior within the group (Stieglitz et al., 2018). The posts that are developed and shared by those in the group are only visible to others within the group (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015). Choosing to study a closed or private social media group offers a look at raw data the participants wrote that they knew would not appear on their regular social media page (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015).

Social media analysis is relatively new (Ruiz & Stadtlander 2015). Stieglitz et al., (2018) performed a literature analysis of the existing research methods to address issues (Stieglitz et al., 2018). The literature regarding analysis of social media data was readily available considering the limited time the medium has existed, data discovery, collection, and preparation information (Stieglitz et al., 2018). A similar study of social media support sampled 10 participant's cases and posted documentation as data (Ruiz & Stadtlander, 2015). Hard af Segertad and Kaspreowski (2015) followed three participants in their study of a social media group. I am unable to find research that explored the perspective of parents who self-identify as having difficult adult children. Difficulties

were expressed in a variety of constructs including emotional and financial dependency,

mental health, and lack of life skills.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

I explored the perspectives of parents who sought social media support for their experiences with their perceived dependent adult children. The purpose of this study was to address a gap in research of parents of adults who have sought support through a social media group. This study may raise awareness of the population of parents who perceive their adult children as challenging as well as social media as a medium for support.

Method of Study

I chose to explore the data in the form of a qualitative study to allow me to gather a broader scope of each parent's experience as I examined their user-generated information. The use of TA allowed for a flexible yet methodical manner in which to explore the data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The raw data for this research was the historical, user-generated, recorded social media posts on the experiences of parents in a social media group.

Research Questions

RQ1: Why did parents choose the support of a social media group?

RQ2: How do parents feel about the financial dependence of their adult children?

RQ3: How do parents manage behavioral noncompliance with their adult children?

Research Design and Rationale

My focus in this study was the support that parents of adult children have perceived to have gained from a social media group and why they believed they needed it. Generic qualitative design allows for an open exploration of data (Emmel, 2015). I chose a generic qualitative design as the data were vast and believed it would offer a richer exploration. Chung and Lee (2017) found that the use of historical social media data allowed for a snap shot of one's deeper truth. My use of previously expressed information offered a transparent, raw version of experience as the parents wrote them during times of frustration and chronologically closer to an event or occurrence with their adult child. Some parents had a vast amount of posts, while others had less. They all had multiple posts that reflected their ongoing experiences in a chronological self-described manner. This chronological record, which stands as an electronic diary, allowed exploration of a broader scope of each participant.

Sampling

Criterion sampling is a manner in which to ensure that those in the group meet the predetermined requirements of the sample (Percy et al., 2015). This sample was readily available from an established social media group created to support parents who perceive their young adult children to be complicated. Each member of the group had established characteristics that were appropriate as the group consists of only parents of adults who are uncomfortable with the circumstances of their adult children. The parents were each required to request permission to join the group filling out a short questionnaire to

confirm they meet the criteria of membership, including that they were the parent of at

least one adult child. I am currently a member of the group that I studied. When I joined,

there was a questionnaire asking why an individual would like to join. I indicated that I

was a mother of young adults and that at some point, I may wish to propose to research

the group. On April 14, 2018, I posted a feasibility-seeking question to the group

(Appendix B). I asked if some would be interested in allowing me to use their

information under the conditions that I remove all identifying information. I was clear

that I was merely proposing the research and not seeking volunteers or recruiting at that

time. At that time, I also discontinued interaction with the group to reduce bias or

otherwise compromise the prospective study.

Participant Selection

The participants were parents of a unnamed private social media group. The

group will remain unnamed as to protect the identities of the participants and non-

participants of the study. . Previous social media qualitative analysis reflected the

appropriateness of the sample size as they followed three individuals (Ruiz &

Stadtlander, 2015). The existence of the group and the reasons that parents join the group

included them as qualified participants.

Participant Choice

The specific criterion for study participants was that they were still active in the

group. I considered *active* to mean that they had created or replied to a post in the last

three months. Ideally, the longer they had sustained membership in the group, the more

valuable their data, simply because there was more data to collect. Additionally, the longevity offered more exploration regarding the journey a parent has taken with the group. . Those that reply to the parents (and have not opted out as consented participants) were secondary participants as their unidentified input and responses to the posts of the primary participants contributed to the answers and shared thoughts of the primary participants.

Participation request

Once approved by the Walden University IRB, I authored a post in the group, based on the informed consent, requesting participation. Of those who chose to have their data analyzed, I chose the members who authored the most recent ten posts from the date of the Walden University IRB approval who have also sustained membership in the group for 1 year or more.

Informed consent

I sent each volunteer a private message to ensure that they understood the original posts and were comfortable with participation in the study. Once each participant was comfortable and understood the process, an individual informed consent was completed and electronically collected.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this social media group was that of an observer and former participant. While minimal, I had participated in conversations within the group as a parent. Four of my children were young adults at that time. In 2017, I presented an uncomfortable event

we experienced with one of our children to the group. I sought the support as I had a

difficult time understanding the experience at the time. I received responses with which I

interacted. I have not presented myself as a subject matter expert or marriage and family

therapist within the group, rather a parent of young adults and teenagers. When joining

the group, I replied to the entry questionnaire stating that I am requesting to join as a

parent and potential future researcher of the group. I know none of the members

personally, nor am I associated with them on social media.

The potential for researcher bias, while determining themes in the qualitative data

set, was in the aspect of myself as a parent of young adults. I may have experienced

similar situations reported by the parents. Cunningham and Carmichael (2018) suggest

keeping a research log and analysis journal to provide reflexivity. As such, I kept both a

research log and analysis journal . Fortunately, utilizing the skill of reflexivity, as the

parent of several children, I understood that each experience with each child is different.

Further, this experience has allowed me to reflect over the last 25 years and to understand

fully that each parenting experience is different as well as each child. Braun and Clarke

(2016) advised the use of research questions to guide the TA as one method of TA, which

is what was done in this analysis.   To minimize additional bias, I refrained from posting

or replying to any posts from the time in which I had decided to study this group. I did

not want to appear as though I was coaching or leading.

Data Collection and Organization

I copied and pasted each published social media post and response from the social media group in its entirety onto an MS word document that I had created and categorized them according to the original participant. Any of the group members who requested to opt-out had all responses they provided to original posts removed and deleted from the MS Word document before analysis. The remaining data served as a raw manner to gain understanding of the emotions and thoughts of each of the parents in a particular moment in time in which they sought support. An interview of the same parent at that time, after the emotions had stabilized, would not have offered the most authentic view of the parent's concerns at the time of the event. There were never plans to request extended interviews to gain data not shared on the site.

Data Analysis Plan and Developing Results

I gathered information written by 10 volunteer participants and extracted the data verbatim of their posts, beginning with their original posts. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed and published TA in 2006 and designed it for flexibility with which qualitative researchers may examine data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are six phases of TA to allow the researcher a methodical manner in which to analyze qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2017). Theoretical TA, known as inductive analytic focus or a top-down analysis (Macguire & Delahunt, 2017). Theoretical TA occurs when the researcher develops the themes from the research questions (Macguire & Delahunt, 2017).

I hand-coding the data using t TA guided by the six-step principles of TA (Braun & Clarke, 2016) utilizing predetermined themes set by the research questions. The phases include (a) familiarizing one's self with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing potential themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing reports (Braun & Clarke, 2016). TA has been used to study the perspective of parents who alienated their children, social media analysis, as well as parental support groups (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018; Pousie, Matthewson, & Balmer, 2018; Thompson, Brice, McElroy, Abbott and Ball, 2016). TA offered sample size flexibility allowing me to focus on the available data and meaningful extraction..

During analysis, I explored each of the portions of the responses in attempts to find developing themes that will answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2016). I examined the semantic themed data to seek latent analysis and a deeper understanding of the experiences of the parents (Braun & Clarke, 2016).

Data Storage

I printed and maintained the raw paper data that was copied and pasted directly from the postings in a safe when not being analyzed. The data will remain secured in the safe for 5 years. Notes regarding the raw data are with the data in the safe. The raw electronic data and any electronic analysis notes remain password protected on my personal computer and backed up on to an external thumb drive that is stored in the safe as well. I am the only person with access to the safe. Raw, de-identified data will be stored for 5 years after publication, then destroyed.

- ***Procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection***

- I collected the data myself. There were no others to assist me as permission to view the data in the closed group was only to me.

- The data collection was considered historical.

- The first post collected was each participant's first post in the group.

- The IRB approval date was the date of the latest posts to be considered data.

- I determined the 10 participants as those who have posted most recently and have sustained group membership for at least one year. Once participants were determined, I searched and extracted each of their posts from the time that they joined the group.

- Time estimations were approximately 10–20 hours to extract the data of the ten members from the inception of the group to the current date while eliminating any response data that was of those who have asked to opt-out.

- The data were initially recorded as a copied and pasted word document and stored on a secure computer requiring a password to access.

- The participants were never engaged in the process of data collection and, therefore, would not be necessary to debrief or follow up regarding specific data.

- I offered each participant an electronic link to the published dissertation. I posted the abstract to the social media group. I made myself available for any participant questions at that time as well.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Braun and Clarke (2016) emphasized that prolonged engagement with the data is the first step of the process of TA and will address credibility. Prolonged engagement with the data leads to familiarity for the research analyst (Braun & Clarke, 2016). I had experience in reading the format and previous posts regularly before collecting and analyzing them, which contributed to prolonged engagement of the data. I did not engage with the actual participants after gaining permission and informed consent, only their data.

I ensured the removal of identification in the data or analysis by removing the names, gender, geographic locations, and any other potentially identifying information of the parent as well as of the adult child(ren) that mentioned in the posts. To ensure the removal of identifying information, I removed the actual age of the adult child mentioned and formulated an 'age group' demographic during analysis. The exact age was not necessarily valuable; differentiating between age groups was.

The use of established qualitative standards maintains the integrity of qualitative studies (Percy et al., 2015). I applied the established standards of TA. Audit trails contributed to achieving dependability (Cunningham & Carmichael, 2018). I achieved dependency, or stability of the collection of the data by the design of the study. The social media data format offered consistency in formatting.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical concerns were predominantly in regard to protecting the identity of the participants. Removing identifying factors at the beginning of the analysis process was intended to address this concern. Further, refraining from naming the group or specific social media platform enhanced the protection of the identity. Limitations and benefits of this particular study were the lack of data that is available to date from social media groups. Without specific attention to detail in the protection of the identity of the individuals, there was a potential to damage presumably fragile family dynamics. As the data is previously user-generated, the study did not ask the participant to revisit any stressful events or emotions and protected them from uncomfortable feelings from the study. Many participants stated that the benefit of the outcomes of the study could be additional resources becoming available to this population of parents due to raised awareness.

Summary

The use of a generic qualitative design offered an opportunity to explore the raw historical data. The previously established group had inclusionary requirements, which allowed me to utilize group characteristic sampling to achieve a sample of participants that was appropriate for the study. The collection of the data included each post and reply from each of the participants. As identity protection was a priority, I took several steps throughout collection and analysis to protect the identity of the individuals and the group.

Chapter 4. Results

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative research study was to understand the
reported experiences of parents of adult children who chose to join a closed social
support media group and to fill the literature gap regarding potential vulnerabilities of
parents who perceived that their children are having a difficult transition to adulthood. I
used TA (Braun & Clarke, 2016) to analyze the responses from the historical social
media posts. Rather than the proposed five participants, I used 10 volunteers. I
determined that the extent and diversity of the data were more valuable with the
additional data, allowing for a richer understanding of the parents' perspectives.

Data Collection

TA is a methodical approach to working with qualitative data (Braun & Clarke,
2016). I gathered historical data from social media posts written from the inception of the
group five years ago until the date in which I gained Walden University IRB approval in
July 2019. I was the only coder to see the data in its entirety. The data were copied and
pasted verbatim from the original social media posts and organized by each participant.
Each participants' identifying factors were deleted from the data completely. The data
were then organized by post as to which, if any of the research questions it best applied.
At this point, all the data were fluid within the category of the research question, and
there was no distinction between participants. The data were not be separated by each
participant again at any time through analysis. There was no interest in following a

particular parent; rather, to analyze the verbiage they chose. There were occasions in which the data in a post applied to more than one research question and were applied to both as appropriate. The raw data consisted of 59 pages of double-spaced text.

Analysis

Following the organization phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA, I then read the text several times and made notes in the margins. I created codes for the data that addressed the three research questions. I sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Why did parents choose the support of a social media group?

RQ2: How do parents feel about the financial dependence of their adult children?

RQ3: How do parents manage behavioral noncompliance with their adult children?

I highlighted and notated the statements, words, or phrases within the text that could answer each of the research questions. The initial codes that began to emerge were transcribed from my handwritten notes on the typed, double-spaced text of raw data to a lined paper pad. The codes that were repeated within the data were noted as such. The codes were then gathered and analyzed to identify initial sub-themes that could begin to answer the research questions.

As I was identifying and revising the themes, I was able to narrow the number of themes by broadening the scope of particular themes that were logically related. For example, phrases such as 'we spoiled them' or 'we gave them too much' were combined.

Non-identifying demographic information is not specifically part of the research

questions. However, I noted it for later discussion and potential future research.

The demographic information that arose:

- Not all of the participants reported their marital status, but of those who did there was a reported combination of blended (3), single parent (3), and married to the other biological parent (1).

- All of the participants identified themselves as mothers.

- All of the adult children discussed were in their 20's and early 30's.

- The majority of the parents either initiated posts or replied to the posts multiple times each week.

- The posts varied in length from one to two sentences to several paragraphs.

- The parents each had or desired vast details of their adult children's daily lives, financial circumstances, personal relationship details, academic details, occupational details, and other daily events.

- Many parents reported attempting to contact their adult children by text, internet messenger, and telephone multiple times per day.

- Few parents reported they had limited contact with their adult children.

- One parent reported estrangement from one of her adult children

- None of the adult children reportedly had educational or developmental delays and therefore were likely typically developed

There appears to be an informal hierarchy of unknown origin within the group. Some of the mothers appeared to assume leadership roles within the group as they gave advice confidently, and other mothers accepted the leaders. Those who are administrators/founders of the group were not participants of the study and therefore were not the ones who appeared to be leaders.

The following themes emerged within the categories of the research questions:

RQ1: Why did parents choose the support of a social media group?

The overall reason that parents joined the group was that they were displeased with their adult children in one form or another and expressed desperation to find solutions or connect with those who had shared experiences. Specific displeasure and feelings of despair were reportedly manifested in a variety of ways but were overall consistently negative toward their current situation with their adult children. Three parents acknowledged that they joined the group due to its privacy, and stated they were embarrassed by their circumstances with their adult children. How the parents were displeased or uncomfortable was further reflected in who they held responsible for their adult child's behavior and life choices. The blame was divided between the self (the parents), behavior, and external influences. Interpretation of blame of the behavior may also reflect blame to the individual adult child who is choosing the behavior. However, it was rare that the parents stated that their situation was the fault of their child. One parent gave the responsibility to their adult child.

Self-blame and enabling.

The most prevalent theme of blame that presented for RQ1 was self-blame, in that the parents believed they had created an environment of enabling and were now frustrated. They expressed desires to stop the enabling behavior; few reported they were successful in stopping. They were self-reported enablers and/or codependent upon their adult children and accepted responsibility for some or all of their circumstances as well as their children's behavior.

One participant stated, "I think as mothers, it just comes natural to enable our kids." Another participant who identified as married to the biological father of all her children stated that when her son moved a few hours away, "his girlfriend moved with him and I feel like I have lost my rock."

This enabling behavior reportedly caused difficulties in the parents' personal and professional lives. One mother stated "my boyfriend thinks I let her get away with too much, but he doesn't understand." Another chose to continue to work when she had planned to retire to continue to support her adult daughter financially. There was a fair amount of conflicting information within the posts that could be interpreted as the internal struggle that the parents experienced. For example, one parent stated that her child was a 'great kid' and in the same sentence described the same adult child as 'disrespectful.'

Blaming behavior.

The second theme that emerged for RQ1 was that of blaming the behavior of which they disapproved. The reports of behavior from the majority of parents regarding the adult children and what led them to seek support were that they were disrespectful. There were differences in how the disrespect manifested, such as manipulation, periods of estrangement, and rage.

One parent (of multiple adult children) stated: "It's been 2 years since she took a swing at me, and I kicked her out."

One parent stated: Today was his day off, so I tried to call him two times this afternoon, fairly sure he declined the call because it only rang three times…I saw he was active on messenger, and I called that way, cut off after four rings. I sent him a message 'please call me ASAP' notta, nothing, zilch.

It was not stated in the post if there was a specific reason she was trying to reach him.

External blame.

Lastly, the theme of external blame or responsibility emerged for RQ1. When placing blame externally, in order of prevalence, parents overwhelmingly blamed their adult children's partners for their behavior and any relationship difficulties between the parents and their children. Two parents blamed 'society.' One participant stated "we were always close until he met her."

One stated of her adult daughter's partner that "he took her away from me."

Another one "when he's alone, we talk on the phone for hours, when his girlfriend is there

he puts me on speaker phone and she follows wherever he goes."

RQ2: How do parents feel about the financial dependence of their adult children?

There was a prevalent theme regarding the financial support of their adult

children. Each of the parents reported that they strongly disapproved of their adult child's

financial dependence. However, they mostly continued to assist. The parents reported that

providing financially for their adult children has caused them financial and personal

difficulties. Each of the participants had at least one post referring to financial support in

some form their adult children. The actual term 'financial dependence' was explicitly

mentioned in nine of the posts. Several conversations between posts stated they believed

it was necessary to stop financially supporting their adult children. Only one of them

reported that she had stopped entirely financially supporting her adult child. She was less

comfortable supporting her daughter in her early 30's after her daughter reconnected with

a previous partner:

> She went back to her ex (who is unemployed, homeless, alcoholic, abusive,
>
> maybe on drugs) and let him move into her place. So I told her I would no longer
>
> give her financial help because he's a grown man and can get a job.

There was little mention regarding specific plans to require financial

independence from their children. It could be interpreted that the parents, while they

disapproved, accepted that their adult children would be financially dependent and

continued to provide financial support. Perhaps the parents felt fear for the safety or well-

being of their adult child should they cease the financial assistance. In discussions of why they chose to support their adult children financially, there were statements such as 'that's just what we do' or 'they can't keep a job.'

The mothers who had partners reported disagreements with the partners (biological fathers included) and conflicts in their relationships secondary to providing financial support to their adult children. There were discussions in the posts between the parents on ways in which to adjust the parental budgets to alleviate the hardship of supporting their adult children. As in RQ1, there were themes of blame and responsibility for financial dependence. Additionally, there were themes of desired actions and advice for actions. Follow-up posts lacked an indication of actions taken.

The parents overwhelmingly accepted responsibility for their adult children's financial dependence. Parents reported that they financially enabled their adult children, mainly if there are grandchildren involved. One parent stated that she believed her daughter used her grandson as leverage. One parent was raising multiple young grandchildren with no financial contribution from the parents of the grandchildren. Free childcare, groceries, and rent-free living accommodations were the most substantial portions of assistance given.

> One of the participants who stated she was a financial enabler wrote: even to the point of letting my adult son live in my 4-bedroom rental paying every utility bill and even making sure he had cable and internet just in case he wanted to look for a job.

A limited number of parents expressed a desire to minimize financial dependence by providing conditional financial assistance or expressing a desire to stop the assistance altogether. Parents reported disrespectful and ungrateful behavior from their adult children when they provide financial assistance. There were three reports that the adult child displayed rage when the parent withheld or placed conditions on financial assistance. Rage was not explicitly defined as to whether it was physical or verbal. There was advice given between the parents as to ways in which to help their finances due to the strain, including reverse mortgages and budget weddings to assist the adult children. There was no mention of attempts to gain formal or informal financial education for their adult children. There were parents who managed some of their adult child's finances to various extents.

One participant who managed all of her adult daughter's financial transactions and documents attempted to relinquish the responsibility of the documents to her adult daughter

> I tried giving her the hard copies (of her tax returns) last year when I filed for her. I found them in the fire pit. She's in her mid-20's (specific age withheld for privacy) and she should be able to keep up with her important documents herself.

RQ3: How do parents manage behavioral noncompliance with their adult children?

The most definite theme that arose from noncompliance management is inconsistency. The parents all recognized and stated the need to establish personal boundaries for their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Few of them reportedly

followed through long-term with the conditions of boundaries that they placed on themselves. The inconsistencies were not stated as such by the parents who chose to change or remove their boundaries. The parents stated they have given their children another chance, felt bad, or missed the child they used to be.

As non-compliance can be subjective, it was assumed during analysis that if the parent stated it was non-compliant or it was a behavior the parent complained about, it would be deemed non-compliant. Parents have varying thresholds of tolerance for behavior and what is considered disrespectful and non-compliant. For this purposes of this analysis, a behavior is disrespectful if the parent determines and describes it as such. The following categories utilized specific wording from the parents regarding the topics. Reported noncompliant behaviors displayed by adult children:

- Rage, rage from adult child's partner, verbal disrespect/abuse, irrational verbal attacks, lying to and about parents, withholding the adult child's place of residence, no cooperation at the home if they are living together, poor care of grandchildren, mismanagement of typical adult paperwork and money, estrangement, and cruelty.

Reported impact of the noncompliant behaviors on parents:

- Sadness, confusion, anger, physical symptoms such as migraines and anxiety attacks, guilt, grief, insomnia, depression, and anger. Some reported being actively in therapy.

- One stated, "Gosh, I'm sitting here reading the post and the comments and see so much of my life here and there. Who would have known that parenting adult kids would suck the life out of us?"

Reported consequences or actions:

- Boundaries, periods of disengagement, and self-care were mentioned in more posts than any other way in which to cope or manage.

- Tangible consequences placed upon the adult children included living agreement contracts or leases if they lived at home, eviction, calling the police when they felt it necessary, and psychiatric evaluations of the adult children.

Summary

Chapter 4 described the verbiage of the parents of the private social media group concerning the research questions. I explored the experiences that each parent reported as well as their responses to other parents. Many of the responses were the repetition of the specific parent's experience or reportedly unacceptable behavior of that parent's adult child rather than actual advice. It seems as though the parents attempt to connect with compared experiences. It further appears as though the other parents find it an effective way in which to connect as evidence in their continued participation in the group. Many of the parents initiated posts or replied to other posts several times per week. They each were very knowledgeable and consumed with day to day details of their adult children's lives regardless of whether the child still resided in the parental home. For example, one mother's mid-20's son moved hours away with his girlfriend for a job. The mother stated

'we had no notice…I know that it is not normal how close we are. We have a unique bond…he's my best friend, my rock, my confidant…" Another stated, "Today is my son's dog's (name withheld for privacy) birthday. I texted him twice for a picture and nothing. The husband texted him too and nothing. I'm so emotional over this." This parental behavior is consistent with a parenting style known as over-parenting or helicopter parenting (Soenens et al., 2015). Over-parenting, also known as helicopter parenting, indulged parenting, and intensive parenting, is characterized by levels of parental involvement that are not developmentally appropriate for the age or skill level of the child (Somers & Steele, 2010). It has been a widespread parenting practice of parents whose children were born in the early 1990s to today (Soenens et al., 2015). The style became prevalent, and even the norm, when today's young adults were born. Helicopter parenting, as a parenting style or theoretical term, was coined in a parenting book series in 1990 and went mainstream in 1991 in Newsweek (Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield, & Weber, 2014). None of the parents indicated the length of time in which they have maintained their reported level of involvement with their children.

The parent participants have a variety of specific reasons for seeking a private group. They likewise have a variety of ways in which they communicate and manage their self-reported uncomfortable situations. While the specificity differs and will be discussed in Chapter 5, themes of disrespect, enabling, blaming, and boundaries were most prevalent in all of the text.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative research was to understand the reported experiences of parents of adult children who chose to join a closed social media group. Additionally, the work filled the literature gap regarding potential vulnerabilities of parents whose children were having a difficult transition to adulthood and social media support for parents of adults. Further, the results of the research could create awareness for parenting educators and counselors regarding the challenges of parents of typically-developed adult children. I used the qualitative method with the intent to openly explore a sample of parents who struggle financially and emotionally due to issues with their adult children. I studied adults who sought support from social media for these problems. I sought to answer three questions with this exploration and categorized the responses to these questions into themes.

The research questions were:

- RQ1 Why did parents choose the support of a social media group?

- RQ2: How do parents feel about the financial dependence of their adult children?

- RQ3: How do parents manage behavioral noncompliance with their adult children?

The themes that arose in each of the questions were consistent with the evidence-based previous peer-reviewed research regarding over parenting and helicopter parenting

which was societally popular during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, subsequently, the

time in which the adult children mentioned in this study were in their early

developmental years.

It is impossible to indicate one specific variable that leads to the trend of over-

parenting. One theory is that with the increase in state social services, some parents

feared state interference for parenting choices that may have been considered standard

parenting practices in previous generations (Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield, & Weber,

2014). Pimentel (2016) suggested that the intense movement toward helicopter parenting

was a result of parents developing a fear of the social service intervention feeling an

infringement of their rights to allow children to explore the world more freely. The

movement of more 'working mothers' into the workforce in the 1980s and 1990s may

have led some to feelings of guilt replaced by over-compensation, particularly if they lack

fulfillment in their career choices or if their mothers were homemakers (Boynton, 2015).

Peer pressure and 'mom-shaming' may have contributed as those who did not practice

intense parenting were potentially perceived as neglectful (Lythcott-Haims, 2015). The

rise of 24 hour cable news and the internet also allowed citizens, including parents, to

hear news of children as victims of brutal crimes in small towns that they may not have

heard of before which could have scared them even though the number of violent crimes

against children by strangers has decreased in the last several decades (Federal Bureau of

Investigation, 2017).

Interpretation of the Findings

Discussion of Findings of RQ1

Two themes arose from the analysis as to why the parents joined the group: The behavior of the parent and the behavior of the adult child. The reported behavior of the parent was that of enabling, codependent behavior, and blaming. The reported behavior of the adult-child was that of various displays of perceived disrespect.

Parental Behavior

The term enabling, in the context of behavior, refers to protecting or shielding others from consequences of their actions rather than requiring them to accept their consequences (Keiser, Lebryton, & Hogan, 2015). The term is used extensively, though not exclusively, in the treatment of addictive behaviors (Cutler, 2017). Enablers are people who accept, excuse, or hide maladaptive behavior of others, enabling them to continue their maladaptive behavior (Gallagher, 2014). Typically, the enabler will either excuse the behavior of the person they are enabling or accept responsibility for the behavior themselves. Enabling and codependence often coexist (Bruna da Costa, Aparecida Sales, & Pagliarini Waidman, 2017). Codependence exists when one or both people in some form of a relationship is excessively reliant on the other for their emotional or psychological needs (Bruna da Costa et al., 2017). Parents who have feelings of personal violation or impact based on the behaviors and choices of their children are consistent with traits of codependence.

Parents in this group reported enabling and being codependent upon their children, and subsequently accepted responsibility for some or all of their circumstances. None of the parents stated whether they defined themselves as enablers or whether the term was determined by a professional. Each of them used the term correctly by definition and appeared to understand the definition. Accepting responsibility for another's action, such as stating that had they 'not spoiled them as much,' is a typical statement or belief of an enabler or codependent personality (Bruna da Costa, S., Aparecida Sales, M., & Pagliarini Waidman, M., 2017). This enabling behavior reportedly caused difficulties in the parents' personal and professional lives. Enabling is very much associated with blame. When the parents placed blame in their social media posts, only one parent blamed the adult child for the adult child's behavior.

The overwhelming majority of external blame was on the partner of the adult child and secondarily society. Perhaps circumstances made those statements accurate, however shifting blame away from the one they are enabling is consistent with an enabler. None of the parents referred to any substance abuse or addiction of their adult children. It can likely be assumed that either substances did not actually contribute to the issues in these families or that the parents did not believe substances to have contributed. It is possible that the parents believed substances to contribute and did not report it in their posts; however, the parents were very forthcoming and spoke to very personal issues.

Adult-child behavior

Addiction does not only refer to chemical substances. Maladaptive behaviors can be addictive, as well. The parents cited various levels of disrespect from their adult children that led them to the group. One indicative criterion for addictive behavior is an inability to quit (Cutler, 2017). A person who chooses disrespectful behavior as a way in which to gain the desired outcome will continue that behavior if it works and he or she is never required to learn more appropriate ways in which to obtain the desired outcome. As disrespect is somewhat subjective, the reported acts of disrespect varied as well. The parents did not report the length of time that the disrespect had occurred, although one parent indicated that her child was not a difficult child to raise. There were differences in how the disrespect manifested, such as manipulation, estrangement, and rage. The majority of the reported disrespect was in the form of specific acts that were interpreted, by the parents, to be disrespectful. Some acts were verbal in the form of yelling or cursing. Other acts were that of the adult child manipulating the parents by utilizing other family members as attempted allies during difficult times, lying, demanding resources, withholding affection, and attempting inflicting emotional or physical fear.

Discussion of Findings of RQ2

Parents reported having extended their enabling behavior to include financial enabling. Parents chose not to hold their kids accountable for their spending habits. If the young adults chose to spend their money frivolously, the parents would assist them by managing their financial responsibilities. The presence of grandchildren enhanced

financial support. This behavior is consistent with previous research involving intense

financial support (Fingerman et al., 2012). Fingerman et al (2017) also concluded that the

adult children were knowledgeable that their children offered them intensive financial

support from their parents with less scrutiny. The predominant form of financial

assistance given to the adult children was in the form of free childcare and free housing.

According to the National Association of Child Care Resources & Referral Agencies

(NACCRRA), average monthly childcare was $972.0 monthly for babies and toddlers

(2015). A grandparent providing that service for free does not only save the adult child

money but also prevents the grandparent from gaining a salary of his or her own.

Some parents believed their adult children to be financially dependent upon them, but

they did not specifically define their interpretations or the extent of financial dependence.

Those who believed their children to be financially dependent had expectations of

gratitude but often were not met with gratitude. Rather, they were met with rage and

disrespectful verbal and physical behavior when they placed conditions upon assistance

or when they withheld financial assistance. Rage and anger are consistent behaviors of

adult children who utilized maladaptive behaviors for which to gain favorable outcomes

from their parents. The chosen behavior patterns appeared to gain the outcome the adult

children preferred as the parents reportedly continued to financially assist their adult

children even after being confronted with rage and anger. Not all of the adult children of

the parent participants received financial assistance from their parents, although the

majority reportedly did. Some parents, particularly those who chose the helicopter-style

parenting model, were uncomfortable with the idea of their adult child struggling to any degree while others believe that struggling builds character and gratitude (Adamczyk, 2014). These differences could be contributory to their decisions regarding levels of support provided to adult children.

Indulged children often show in adulthood increased depression and anxiety and stifled self-regulating skills (Yap, Pilkington, Ryan, & Jorn, 2014). While the participants of this study did not state that they considered their financial assistance indulgent, some indicated that they indulged them as children and continued to provide for them into adulthood financially. The parents believed that adult children would struggle or would not be able to support themselves without parental financial assistance. Parents who participate in helicopter parenting, do not allow their children to "develop independence, resilience, or a strong work ethic" (Lythcott-Haims, 2015). Many in this indulged population will have difficulty maintaining steady employment due to poor performance and lack of initiative (Milita & Bunch, 2017). These traits contribute to the adult child perceiving the need for assistance with resources. It may also contribute to the parent believing the adult child requires the assistance as they may or may not realize the adult child's contribution to the reason they are unemployed or underemployed.

Shiffrin et al. (2013) applied self-determination theory to associate the reasoning behind maladaptive outcomes of over-parented kids. Learning autonomy, need for competence, and relatedness are basic needs that are often not met in over-parented children (Schiffrin et al., 2013). Indulged adult children often lack of autonomy, have

feelings of incompetence, and lack life satisfaction (Veldorale-Griffin, Coccia, Darling, Rehm, & Sathe, 2013). It is in completing challenges and tasks that one gains actual self-esteem and self-efficacy (van Ingen et al., 2015). The parents fear their adult child cannot support his or herself, which leads to the overparenting and indulgence. The overparenting outcomes of lower self-esteem could impact as to why they cannot or choose to not, support themselves. Fingerman et al. (2012), identified the association between parents who are considered helicopter parents and those same parents providing intense support to their adult children. It is as though the over-parenting continued naturally into the offspring's adulthood for the parents in their study (Fingerman et al., 2012).

Discussion of Findings of RQ3

Themes that emerged regarding how parents manage behavioral noncompliance from their adult children were: the behaviors of the adult children, the impact on the parent, and the reported consequences. Noncompliance could be socially noncompliant, legally noncompliant, or noncompliant of parental rules or conditions. Compliance with parental rules or conditions is not a requirement that most adults believe they must meet, regardless of living arrangements or level of resource support (Soenens & Beyers, 2012). Some parents believed that compliance was a contingency of resource support, while others believed their parental status justified the compliance with or without support. Parents of this study were extremely knowledgeable of the day to day academic, personal, social, professional, medical, and mundane details of their adult children as well

as the partners of the adult children. It is consistent that the mothers in the study who feel

their parental status entitles them to the knowledge of intricacies of their adult children's

lives is a result of the extension of their helicopter parenting style.

Nelson, Padille-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carroll (2011) quantitatively

examined the association between parenting style during emerging adulthood to adaptive

and maladaptive behavior outcomes. Reported maladaptive behaviors on the part of the

adult children could have been secondary to habitually utilizing these behaviors to

manipulate favorable outcomes from their parents. The behaviors could have also been

reactionary secondary to the parents' modification of parenting styles as a response to the

maladaptive behaviors of the adult children. In previous research, there was no significant

difference in the adaptive behavior of those emerging adults who rated their mothers and

father as authoritative or uninvolved (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, &

Carroll, 2011). Typically, authoritative parenting is associated with positive outcomes in

children and adolescents, and uninvolved parenting is associated with maladaptive

behaviors (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carroll, 2011). Most notably,

the change in parenting patterns seemed to suggest that perhaps parents were

experimenting with their parenting styles during the transition or had made the

adjustments secondary to the behavior of the transitioning emerging adult.

Parental Dependency-Oriented Psychological Control (PDOPC) is a term that

encompasses the idea that parents who choose the helicopter parenting style have become

codependent upon their children and the parent is entitled to continue to maintain the

same level of parental involvement during and beyond the child's transition to adulthood (Liga et al., 2017). The term Perceived Parental Psychological Control is the result of PDOPC (Liga et al., 2017) in which the adult child chooses maladaptive behaviors as a way in which to assert autonomy. Neither instance is likely conscious chosen behavior, rather the result of stunted development of healthy adult relationships in which each party is responsible for his or her own choices and consequences.

Mothers who over-parent are more likely to associate the happiness and success of their child with their self-esteem, happiness, and success (Soenens, Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, Mageau, & Brenning, 2015). As each of the participants were mothers, it is consistent that each of them reported emotional and physical symptoms associated with their relationships and perceived issues of their adult children. A mother's over-parenting could likely be interpreted as nurturing by the mother and the children (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015)

Some of the parents did not report any actual consequences to the adult child's maladaptive behaviors. They reported the desire to impose consequences but did not follow through. Some parents reported tangible consequences imposed, such as police involvement when they felt in danger due to the rage of their adult child. Others utilized proactive tools, such as living agreements or rental leases to clarify expectations. Of those who drafted living agreements, there was a mix of consequences, some evicted for noncompliance, and others did not impose the terms of the living agreement.

Some parents acknowledged that they participated in over parenting and have reportedly chosen to find healthier ways in which to manage their relationships with their adult children. Those who over parented, whether self-reported or reported behaviors consistent with over parenting, acknowledge that setting boundaries, temporary or permanent disengagement, and self-care were difficult as these mechanisms were against the habits that they had developed and practiced for more than 20 years. They further acknowledged that when they practiced the aforementioned coping mechanisms, they did find themselves more physically and emotionally comfortable.

Limitations

The most significant limitation to this study was the ability to gain access to a private group of parents in the desired circumstance. As a parent of young adults, I was permitted to access many similar groups. As a researcher, my access was limited. This work was a snapshot of previously posted, historical data of less than 10% of the members of a private group. It is not representative of the group as a whole. It relied upon the data written by parents, often in an emotional state. The data only tells one side of the story from the perspective of the parent at any moment. I chose not to ask follow up questions to avoid selective memory, but in doing so, prevented the ability for clarification of a particular post or event. Cultural implications cannot be considered as that demographic was not explored. Each of the participants wrote in fluent English.

Recommendations

A study separately interviewing the parent participants and their respective adult children would offer a more explicit, richer picture of an entire circumstance from both perspectives. It would offer an opportunity to understand each party's truth. A correlational study of the same social media group population measuring a relationship between variables of those who identify as over-parents and the amount of money that parents spends on his or her adult child's monthly basic needs. The results could be used to raise awareness to retirement financial planning.

Implications

The findings may contribute to social change by offering a perspective in the outcomes of over parenting styles. While this study brings awareness to the population of parents who are struggling with their typically developed adult children, it also may imply that they are not typically developed in the traditional sense as they may not have met developmental milestones. This work may offer an opportunity to reevaluate milestone achievement.

There has been research for educational professionals and human resource professionals to guide them in their interactions with parents of adult children who are involved in their children's higher education and professional lives (Milita & Bunch, 2017). By the time a parent is interjecting into their adult child's professional life, the behavior is a long-term habit. Perhaps this guidance could be offered to parents when

their children are far younger. Perhaps elementary schools can encourage a balance of

level of involvement for parents.

Reflection and Social Change

Social change is the change of sociological norms secondary to organic or

artificial stimuli (Gedeon, 2018). Social change influences various stages of parenting

from conception through the teenage years as societal changes occur from one generation

to the next (McKinney et al., 2016). The previously mentioned stages of parenting have

subsequently gained a great deal of attention from those in research academia (Inam,

Nomaan, & Abiodulah, 2016), social and human service (Burke et al., 2018), medicine

(Ni, & Gau, 2015), education (Hong et al., 2014), mental health (Asmat et al., 2017), and

even popular culture (Boynton, 2015). Parenting typically developed children after they

are biologically adults received less attention except for in the cases of parenting college

children and empty nests (Schiffrin et al., 2013). Research has addressed the concept of

adult children returning home (boomerang) or never leaving (failure to launch) from the

perspective of young adults, but rarely parents (West et al., 2017). The population of

parents who are still supporting their adult children is underrepresented in academic

literature (Fingerman et al., 2016). Many have sought support and guidance from literal

strangers in cyberspace, potentially due to feelings of isolation, concerns of judgment,

and the lack of local resources and awareness (Chun & Lee, 2017).

Exploring and offering a voice to an understudied population that lacks empirical

literature could lead to additional resources and new lenses through which to view.

Raising awareness of the experiences of parents with difficult or dependent adult children will contribute to additional research and social change in that a market for resources may be recognized and become more developed.

Conclusions

This study was initiated to fill a gap in research regarding parents of adult children who sought social media support and to provide a voice for the population of parents that struggle with a lack of resources for them to continue to parent their adult children who are still dependent upon them. The themes in each of the questions were indicative of unhealthy relationships regardless of the details. The parents who are now turning their attention on self-care, rather than the intricacies of their children's lives appear to be those who are accepting their adult children's life choices (positive or negative outcomes) and allowing their children to grow through their mistakes. These are also the parents who begin posting less. The parent participants report real emotional and physical pain due to their perceptions of the difficulties of their adult children. Helicopter parenting was likely a well-intended parenting style. Helicopter parents appear to have an overwhelming desire to have enhanced relationships with their children, which often appears to have the opposite result. As is the nature of helicopter parenting, children with helicopter parents have had tasks performed for them for which they could, and some argue should have done for themselves (Segrin, Waszidio, Givertz, Bauer, & Murphy, 2012). These children, as they became young adults, were left without necessary life skills. Children of overly intrusive and controlling parents have similar outcomes as adult children raised

with parents who are too distant because neither parenting method complies with the

developmental needs of the child.

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