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Phone Home: Parent-Child Support in College Students' Social Interaction

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Research & Scholarship SYMPOSIUM

Phone Home: Parent-Child Support in College Students' Social Interactions

In this qualitative research study, we explored college students' understanding and appreciation of parental support in social interaction. We conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 college students who were found to have a close relationship with their parents from a previous study (relative to their peers). The first theme indicated that the majority of these students, who already have close relationships with their parents, benefitted from verbal communication, including phone call and texting with their parents. Texting enables the students and parents to remain in constant contact with each other throughout the day. Parents are able to encourage their children, and let them know they are being thought of and prayed for. They are also able to send reminders about important events, responsibilities, and daily encouragement. Phone calls are another form of communication that was reported. These calls enabled parents to hear about their child's life, specific stressful events, and personal conflicts in a more detailed way than texting. The second theme revealed that Participants also were grateful for their parents' availability, giving them a sense of support and security. The students commented that they feel loved and important as a result of being a high priority for their parents. The parents' consistent communication with their child also served as a morale and self-esteem boost. The last theme represented how students use their parents as a source of relief. When students are on the phone with their parents, the student will often fill in the details and emotions about a conflict and the parent can then provide a safe place for the student to process their thoughts.