# LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FAMILIES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AMID A PANDEMIC RESPONSE

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This study explores students' and their families' experiences during the pandemic response to COVID-19 by the higher education community. Using the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, we employed two open-ended surveys and semi-structured interviews of 16 parent-college student dyads (*N* = 34). The study draws on students' and parents' retrospective accounts beginning Spring 2020 through the Fall 2020 semesters.

Families experienced a disruptive event initialized by the ebb and flow of information. Students' experiences varied based on their expectations and academic classification. The most consistent family challenges were the displacement of students and parents from their physical education and work locations while having to maintain student and occupation responsibilities. The educational experience was inconsistent and dependent on each professors' capacity to engage the students in the online environment. Students expressed feelings of loss of their student and educational experiences, but most students felt the spring courses prepared them to continue their education. Assignments due at random times and poor communication about expectations inhibit students from having dedicated time to interact and make memories. Most families adapted to the new normal by supporting the family members' identities as students and employees and ensuring everyone had the resource needed to succeed. Families experienced monotony and temporal disorientation. Families made meaningful memories through conversation, outdoor recreation, and other activities outside the daily routine. Family members provided feedback to one another to help the family maintain a stable system.

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# LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FAMILIES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AMID A PANDEMIC RESPONSE

In a recent global pandemic resulting from the exponential spread of a novel coronavirus, COVID-19, the United States Executive national response called for social distancing and sheltering in place (MacFarquhar, 2020). Universities responded by taking precautions to combat the spread of the virus by restricting physical access to campuses. Most on-campus university students were required to vacate their college residences as a result of these precautions. This unexpected transition resulted in the shift of university students from the on-campus experience with fellow emerging adults and back into the students' parents' home and care (Hartocollis, 2020).

Although many persons did not test positive for the virus itself, the University's response to the threat of contracting the virus impacted everyone. Every person experienced the pandemic response differently, and it impacted all parts of their lives. For students and their families, the University's response to the shutdown was just one of many experiences they had in the midst of the pandemic. They were additionally met with the multiple responses of their local and associated communities. Families had no control over actions or implications of pandemic responses of forces outside the family (Boss, 2016). These circumstances necessitated that families and university students returning home adapt to the shifts in usual life events without having any control over decisions determined at the higher education level or the communities.

In the present study, we explore the lived experiences of undergraduate university students ages 18-23 and their families amidst the pandemic response phenomenon in the spring 2020 semester following the initial COVID-19 pandemic event. The lived experiences of

the phenomenon were the focus of the study, and thus employing a phenomenology approach provided the opportunity to hear the voice of those who experienced this event (Vagle, 2018). A hermeneutic phenomenology methodology was employed to provide a rich description of on-campus undergraduate students' and their families lived experiences of the pandemic response and interpretation and pedogeological application/implications (van Manen, 1990).

This qualitative investigation was specific to families of full-time undergraduate university students who had been living on-campus during the semester of the initial pandemic response that resulted in the restriction of access to the campus. The findings and interpretations yielded descriptions, themes, and interpretations of families' lived experiences amidst the pandemic response. These results will have pedagogical benefits for practitioners including counselors, faculty, administration, and community leaders. The outcome of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study is the illumination and interpretation of the lived experiences of families of on-campus college students experiencing the phenomenon of the pandemic response. The goal of interpretation is to provide pedagogical insight for higher education practitioners.

## Background

The experience of living through a global pandemic in the 21st century is unprecedented. Experiencing the higher education pandemic response of restricting access to university physical facilities, most undergraduate students relocated to complete their studies from off-campus locations, often returning to family homes (Hartocollis, 2020). As students relocate to universities, boundaries, roles, and expectations change within the family system (Johnson et al., 2010; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). It is likely, then, that when students return home

during COVID to live and continue studying from home that these dynamics would again shift. A pandemic of similar magnitude has not occurred since the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918 (CDC, 2019); thus, the present study provides an unprecedented examination of this type of crisis establishes a basis to understand families' experiences.

### *University Students*

Undergraduate students are in the stage of early adulthood. Transition to adulthood is signified by a shift toward independence observable across three primary tasks: taking personal responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2004). Most students who enroll in a traditional four-year university move from their adolescent residence and relocate to college-specific housing (Conger & Little, 2010). This residence change marks the shift of college students experiencing independence and assuming responsibility for daily needs (Johnson et al., 2010). Despite students moving to an independent residence and making independent decisions, about three-quarters of students are still financially dependent on their parents (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012).

The normative transition to adulthood is well documented and explored. However, until the current pandemic responses, there was little opportunity to examine how a mass disruption during this period impacts university students' developmental transition to adulthood. The phenomenon faced by university students during university campuses' shutdown is dissimilar to other disruptions students may have experienced. The broad impact of the disruption was evidenced in students moving back home, and this transition presents questions of how the pandemic will impact the students, parents, and the economic trajectory. Questions include whether in moving back home, whether students experience increased reliance on the

parent(s), and whether other behaviors associated with the transition to adulthood related to work, risk, romance, and independence may be affected (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012).

Undergraduate students are in the state of early adulthood. Most undergraduate students who enroll in a four-year university move away from home and relocate to university-specific housing (Conger & Little, 2010). This transition of location signifies the student shifting towards independence. Students transition to adulthood by engaging in the three primary tasks of taking personal responsibility, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2004). Moving to an independent residence marks the shift of college students experiencing independence and assuming responsibility for daily needs (Johnson et al., 2010).

If the pandemic response disrupts students' independence, the disruption may prolong students' progress toward adulthood. Students shifting back home and increasing reliance on the parent(s) may impact other behaviors associated with transitioning to adulthood related to work, risk, romance, and independence (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). Although progress toward independence and adulthood may slow, increased dependence on parents is positively related to higher academic achievement, higher living standards, and decreased stress (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). The immediate proximity to parents also affords other means of support such as practical support, advice, information, guidance, companionship, and emotional support (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). Thus, the reliance on parents during the global pandemic may have a longitudinal impact on the parent-child relationship and utilization of non-financial resources.

*Families of Emerging Adults*

Much existing literature on college students focuses on student's role as college students but does not examine families' well-being or functioning while students are in college. Researchers have explored students' retrospective perceptions of family functioning in relation to students' present academic functioning (Johnson et al., 2010), but literature is sparse on family functioning while students are in college. One explored element of student-family experiences while in college is familial communication regarding college and academics. Parent-student communication was found to be instrumental in students' academic success for non-first-generation college students (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017; Nichols & Islas, 2015).

Researchers also document findings on familial support of students while enrolled in college. Family support of students is related to the family's socioeconomic status and parents' completion of college (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017; Padilla-Walker et al., 2012) and family stability (Fomby & Bosick, 2013). Support includes but is not limited to financial (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012), social, emotional or academic support (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017). Minimal literature exists on social and emotional support, but the National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) consistently updates data on familial financial support. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) also indicates that between 2014 and 2017, about 70% of parents were supportive of their students staying in college.

Student's success in college is related to the student's retrospective accounts of family cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict (Johnson et al., 2010). Students who reported families as less cohesive before beginning college reported struggling with academic adjustment, social adjustment, and general psychological distress (Johnson et al., 2010). Expected student success

while transitioning during the pandemic may also be directly related to the prevalence of periods of family instability throughout the student's childhood (Fomby & Bosick, 2013). According to Fomby and Bosick's (2013) study results, the most significant parental predictors of students transitioning to adulthood through the means of traditional college are parents also having graduated from college. However, students who experienced family instability were significantly more likely to transition to adulthood through a path other than a college education (Fomby & Bosick, 2013).

## Theoretical Bias

Consistent with hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, a theoretical bias is identified by articulating the pre-data gathering interpretation through theoretical lenses (Peoples, 2020). The present theoretical application reflects the researcher's perception of the phenomenon through the family stress theory and family systems theory framework. The researcher cannot divorce perceptions and beliefs from observations as the researcher also experienced the pandemic. Documentation of the researcher's perception before the research activities serves to register bias and note how experience with existing theory shapes the researcher's perception of the phenomenon. The use of negative case analysis can be employed by looking for contradictions or challenges to the present theoretical application (Tracy, 2020).

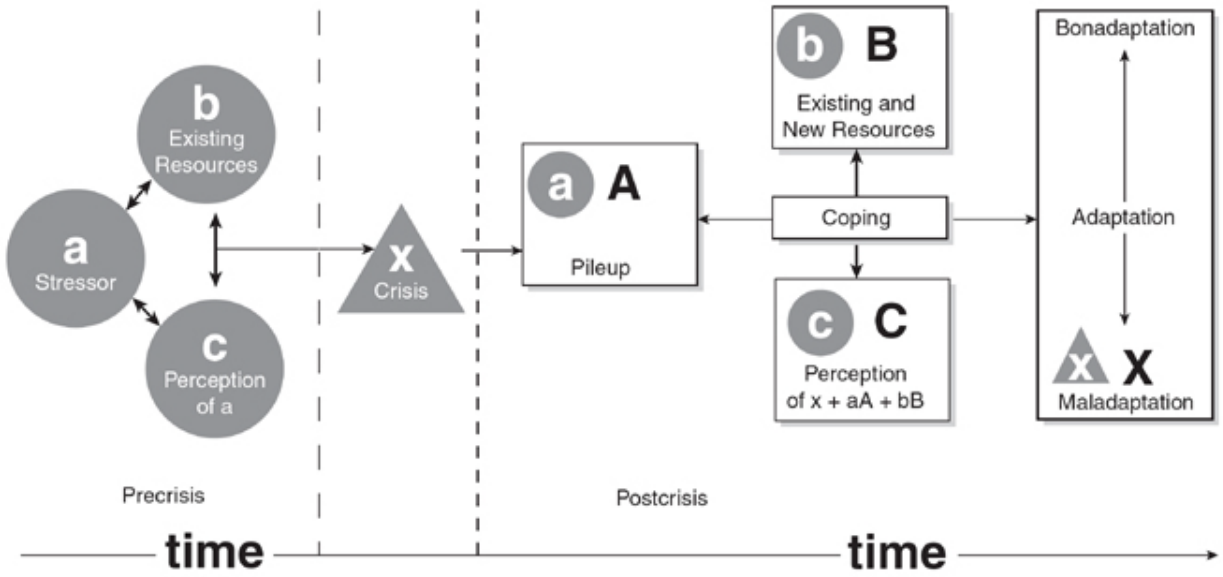
### *Family Stress Theory*

The double ABC-X model of family stress (Figure 1) can be used as a framework to conceptually approach the examination of families of university students experiencing the

pandemic response. A stressor (a) is any life event or transition momentous enough to change the family system. Stressors are not stress themselves but can lead to personal and familial stress. Stress is neither negative or positive nor desirable or undesirable. When faced with these stressors, family members use existing resources (b) and have a perception (c) of the stressor (a) with the existing resources (b). The family members interact and use their resources to adapt before a crisis occurs (x) (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Figure 1

*Double ABC-X Model of Family Stress*




Source: McCubbin & Patterson (1983)

Stressors can be internal within a family system resulting from a family member's action or externally based resulting from a force outside the family. Stressors can occur to just one member, which still affects the whole system or can occur with multiple members. Stressors can be expected normative events or non-normative events that are unexpected or common. For example, stressors related to university students' transition to college are generally

normative stressors, while returning home from university due to a pandemic would entail nonnormative stressors. Adding to the stressors' complexity, the stressor can have a sense of ambiguity when family members do not know specifics about the outcome. Stressors can be desired or undesired events or non-volitional events. Lastly, stressors can be an acute intense event or a chronic, long-lasting event (Boss, 2016). Thus, experiencing the pandemic response can be described as a non-normative, catastrophic, chronic event resulting from external forces with ambiguous implications. Presently, experiencing the higher education community's pandemic response can cause substantial disruption in families' functioning. A substantial disruption in family functioning is referred to as a crisis (x) (Boss, 2016).

The left side of the model in Figure 1 labeled a, b, c, x refers to a pre-crisis period. Families of university students are assumed to experience the results of the university's pandemic response as a crisis. However, the pandemic response of the university is not the only community pandemic response that families experience. Each family member experiences a pandemic response in each community with which the family member is associated. These responses may result in a substantial disruption in family functioning, as well. The collection of disruptive stressor events are represented as a pileup of crises (aA) in the model to form a collective set of crises for the family. Therefore, the double ABC-X model is the proper lens to examine the post-crisis pileup of family crises and exploring families' experiences of coping with resources and perception to navigate the pileup toward the direction of adaptation (xX) (Lavee et al., 1985).

In the double ABC-X model, when families experience crises, available existing resources will be used to adapt. If the family cannot use the available resources to adapt to the crises, the

family may seek new resources to add to the existing resources (bB factor) to resolve the crisis. The source of these resources can be individual, familial, or from a community. The resources are economic, psychological, and physical assets from the community, family, or individual (Boss, 2016). The family works as a system to use the resources to adapt to the perception of the pileup of crises (Lavee et al., 1985).

In conjunction with the resources, the individuals and collective family perceive the crises and the resources (cC factor). This perception is the family's general feeling and orientation toward the entire situation. Each member and the collective family perceive the sum total of the crises while also considering the available and new resources. The members interact with an individual outlook and beliefs. This member interaction negatively or positively impacts the experience's familial collective perception (Lavee et al., 1985).

### *Family Systems*

From a family systems perspective, individual members of a family and each individual's experiences and responses cannot be considered separately from the whole (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The family is a whole system and cannot be separated into individual parts removed from the whole. Each family member has a role and contributes to the system's overall functioning within the system's boundaries. When a student leaves home to attend college, this can be a change in boundaries. In other words, the student is still a part of the family system but is now a member at a distance and fulfills different roles. The student and the entire family become disorganized with this normative change and reorganize to adapt and achieve equilibrium after leaving home. When the student unexpectedly moves back home, the

family experiences a period of disorganization and reorganization of boundaries and roles to achieve a state of equilibrium once again (Smith & Hamon, 2012).

While reorganizing toward a state of equilibrium, family members provide feedback to all the system members. This feedback encourages members to either change or retain their behavior. In the case of a student moving back, the student may receive negative feedback due to the student's new independent lifestyle behaviors or the family system may appreciate the new independence and provide positive feedback to encourage the student to continue the independent behavior (Smith & Hamon, 2012; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Family experiences and dynamics of a family system during an unexpected event that disrupts the family system are unknown. The present study illuminates the lived experiences of families in this process.

## Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of on-campus university students and their family members when families experienced the transitions during the university pandemic response?
2. What are the educational implications of the lived experiences of on-campus university students and their family members when families experienced the transitions during the university pandemic response?

## Methods

In this study, the COVID-19 virus itself is not the phenomenon under study as the actual virus itself is not the experienced phenomenon. Instead, students and families experienced the pandemic response of each community within which they were associated and the community of higher education. Students and their parent(s) completed surveys and interviews to provide

a narrative about their experience during the 2020 pandemic response to describe the essence of the families' lived experience of the phenomenon. Published and publicly available material were collected and analyzed to provide national and university context by reflecting on the context content with the families' lived experience descriptions to describe and interpret the parts and the whole of the phenomenon (Tracy, 2020). The question, "What are the lived experiences of families of on-campus university students during the pandemic response?" is the focus of this research study with the predisposition that families experienced an unexpected crisis with ambiguous implications resulting from external forces that disrupted family functioning. Ethic Review committees of both the University where students were recruited and the University of North Texas approved the study. All participants completed an informed consent through Qualtrics before scheduling the interview. When the participants received the initial recruitment email, the email contained a link to access the informed consent. After completing the informed consent, the participant could complete the initial survey and schedule the interview. Participants had the opportunity to read/save/print the informed consent before participating.

### *Participants*

This study's focal population was families of undergraduate students (N = 14,459 students) enrolled in on-campus classes at a mid-sized, private, non-profit university in the southern United States during the spring 2020 semester. Recommendations for the sample size for a phenomenological study range from a case study to approximately 15 participants (Vagle, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Parent-child dyads are the unit of study instead of individual participants. The families participating in this research study were recruited from a list of

students and parents acquired during the Spring 2020 semester who indicated in a previous study that they would be willing to be interviewed about their experiences. This list was acquired by the present primary researcher with the IRB approval from the examined University for data collection for a study examining individual's perceptions of the disruption in the on-campus educational experience.

The study sample herein is 33 participants representing 16 families of undergraduate students. Every family is represented by one student and one parent except for one family. Both parents participated from the Stone family. Family demographic information is documented in Table A.1. Student information is in Table A.2. Parent information is in Table A.3. Narrowing the subpopulation of examination to students' families provides the potential for greater theoretical saturation and narrows the context for more specific and meaningful pedagogical insight. The purpose of the outcome is not generalizability but rather illumination and interpretation of the meaning of lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Family members may identify others in the family, but the researcher only gathered the student's perception and at least one parent to represent the family. When the researcher refers to the family in analysis, the family includes every identified member through the respondents' perception. The family identified in the methods of data collection refers to the student and parent(s). The collective respondents from each family are referred to as the family, and the collective whole of their responses are referred to as the family's responses. Individual responses may be referenced for personal perception of one's role.

### *Sites of Study*

The collection of data and correspondence were conducted virtually through Zoom, Qualtrics, and email. All interviewed families were directly associated with the University as students or parents of students. The private University attendance status for 2019 was 14,459 undergraduate students with a composition of 60% female. Enrolled full-time, on-campus students comprised 99% of the undergraduate student population. Sixty-one percent of students were from Texas, while 35% were from a different U.S. state, and 3% were international students. Sixty-one percent were White, 16% are Hispanic/Latino, 7% Asian, and 5% Black or African American. Compared to the private 4-year university national average, the student body composition has 13% more Asian students, 18% fewer Black or African American students, 66% more Hispanic/Latino students, and a comparable percentage of White students. By way of analyzing the 2019 *College Scorecard Data Files* from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019), the average net cost of attendance per year is $32,601, 45% above the average net cost of $22,470 for private universities. The tuition, fees, room and board without grants or scholarships is about $67,000 per year. The median household income is $73,627, 27% above the national median of $62,752 for private university students' family's income (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019).

### *Data Collection*

The researcher gathered data using multiple mediums (Table 1) to illuminate the parts and whole of families' lived experiences within the context in which the phenomenon occurs (Vagle, 2018). Specific methods and instruments are not required when implementing a hermeneutic phenomenology methodology; instead, any means of gathering data is

appropriate if a clear rationale for the inclusion of that data or method of data collection contributes to the purpose of illuminating, describing, and interpreting the lived experiences of the persons participating in the study (Vagle, 2018). Table 1 indicates the medium, source, format, and purpose of the data used in this study. In addition to elucidating the lived experience, including multiple sources can help establish the validity of the interpretation of the results and provide a rich description of the larger context in which the families exist (Tracy, 2020).

Table 1

*Data Sources*

| Source Medium | Start & Finish Dates | Frequency | Original Format | Contributor | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Researcher Journals | 6/1/20 4/1/21 | During Data Collection and Analysis | One Note | Researcher | Researcher Reflexivity |
| Fieldnotes | 6/1/20 8/31/20 | During Data Collection | One Note | Researcher | Researcher Reflexivity |
| Pre-Existing Survey Data | 3/15/20 7/31/20 | Weekly | Qualtrics | University Sample | Population Perspective |
| Preliminary Survey | 10/7/20 12/31/20 | Once | Qualtrics | Participants | Participant Perspective |
| Virtual Interview | 10/8/20 2/10/21 | Once | Zoom Video & Audio | Participants | Participant Perspective |
| Conclusion Survey | 11/1/20 3/10/21 | Once | Qualtrics | Participants | Participant Perspective |

Surveys

Students and their family members who wanted to participate in the study completed two surveys (see Appendix B) as a part of the present study. Participants completed the first

survey before scheduling an interview and the second survey at least one month after completing the first survey. The researcher sent a link to complete an initial survey to all individuals who indicated they would like to participate in the study (n=260). Twenty students and 18 parents completed the initial survey. Of the 38 participants who completed the initial survey, 34 completed both the interviews and follow-up survey. Due to language differences, both Chinese students' parents only completed the surveys but did not complete the interviews. The surveys were both translated into Chinese using the Qualtrics translate functions. Four different Chinese students verified that the accuracy in meaning for the translations of the survey into Chinese, and Google translate was used to translate the parents' results into English.

A link to complete the follow-up survey was sent via email to each participant about a month after completing the interview. The follow-up survey was the same as the initial survey, apart from changing the verbiage to reflect the period of time the survey is administered. The average completion time was about 10 minutes. The question types included asking for email addresses, completing multiple-choice, single-word answers, and seven short answer questions.

The researcher examined participants' initial survey before the participant interview to engage in greater researcher reflexivity. As the researcher asked the interview questions and responded to the participant, the researcher built on his understanding of the participants' lived experience to form a more holistic picture. The follow-up survey served as a means of prolonged exposure to the participant. These surveys added information to the whole picture as participants would often mention additional details about personal experiences. The use of two surveys at two points in time benefits the richness of data, consistency, and ease of

obtaining longitudinal insight. A survey is appropriate as the participants' responses to these questions are objective or follow a consistent pattern across respondents (Tracy, 2020). The use of structured surveys yields more consistent responses in comparison to semi-structured interviews.

The survey questions align with anticipated experiences hypothesized using the family stress theory and family systems theory. Survey questions were about the lived experience of the phenomenon, including meeting basic needs, feelings of safety, interpersonal relationships, and growth in academics and other areas. Consistent with family stress theory (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983), participants answered questions about experienced events, resources, and perception of the phenomenon.

## Interviews

The researcher used researcher-responsive semi-structured respondent interviews to gain each participant's unique insight in each unique context. Because the disruptive event also impacted the researcher, it is not possible to remain unbiased in interviews. Thus, the researcher used responsive interviewing (Rubin and Rubin, 2011) by acknowledging personal experience and bias during the interview. The mutual interaction fosters rapport between the researcher and participants (Tracy, 2020).

The interviews each lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted using Zoom. The semi-structured prompts (see Appendix B) served as a template for the interview. The researcher posed the question prompts in a form appropriate in each interview (i.e., based on language, student gender, etc.) and adapted to the context and participant. The researcher provided prompts and asked a series of questions to allow participants to

communicate personal lived experiences of the phenomenon authentically. The researcher attempted to guide the participants to describe the events as a narrative and avoid inferring causal implications. The interviews resulted in a narrative of events from the participants' perception of experiencing the phenomenon but avoided opinions (Vagle, 2018).

The researcher gathered data from surveys and interviews about each member of the family system. The researcher constantly compared the added information to what was already known until an understanding of the situation was achieved (Peoples, 2020). For responsive interviewing and employing a hermeneutic approach, the researcher analyzed the participant's family's initial survey responses before conducting the interview. The researcher identified consistencies, themes, and conflicts to be explored through a responsive interviewing style (Tracy, 2020; Vagle, 2018).

### *Analysis*

Excel and NVivo 12 Plus were used to store, organize, and analyze the obtained data from all sources. NVivo can store many diverse types of documents, but documents gathered for analysis were converted to PDF, Microsoft Word, or Excel documents to simplify the process of analysis in NVivo. The analysis occurred throughout the research study by using researcher reflexivity (Vagle, 2018). Regardless of the data medium, each additional piece of information is compared to the previous information and accommodated or adopted to form a more complete picture of the phenomena.

To create a record of the interview, the researcher used the Zoom recorder to record the interviews directly to the researcher's computer. The researcher uploaded an audio file for each interview to Google's auto transcription service. The audio transcriptions were loaded into

Excel. The researcher listened to each audio transcript to compare the audio and transcribed narrative, attribute the appropriate dialog to the speakers, and rectified any transcription errors.

The primary researcher conducted the initial thematic analysis in Excel by reading through the transcriptions and documenting observed themes. A second coder read through the text and themes and indicated any additional notes, issues, or thoughts about the content and the primary researcher's codes. The primary researcher and secondary coder met weekly while analyzing the interviews to discuss any discrepancies between the codes. The interview transcripts were exported to a PDF document, saved in NVivo, and categorized with the family and individual speakers for additional analysis.

Upon completing the interviews and surveys, five categories emerged for organizing the data from the participants' lived experiences: the initial disruptor event, students' experiences, family and living arrangements, and spring [2020] educational experiences. Each category is analyzed by following an adapted data analytic procedure for phenomenological research (Peoples, 2020). Peoples' (2020) procedure is for descriptive phenomenology, but a hermeneutic phenomenological approach requires additional interpretation and contextual integration. Each category is analyzed by itself before being integrated into the larger picture. After organizing the content from the interviews and surveys into the individual categories, the adapted procedure to analyze individual documents within each part is as follows:

1. Read the entire document.
2. Create initial "meaning units" or tags for the content in the document.
3. Generate themes from the meaning units for each document.

4. Create a summarized narrative for each document while emphasizing the generated themes and documenting noteworthy quotations.
5. Create a narrative for each part by synthesizing all the individual summarized narratives into one general narrative while integrating the major themes and appropriate noteworthy quotations.
6. Generate descriptions of the general narrative.

Negative case analysis was used to indicate conflicting experiences or provide greater insight into the previously identified theories and existing literature (Peoples, 2020). Establishing parallels to existing literature affords practitioners a more vital pedagogical insight (van Manen, 1990). The researcher provides pedological insight for higher education practitioners. In other words, after the lived experience description has been described within the larger context of the other three parts, the researcher will indicate pedological implications for higher education practitioners (van Manen, 1990).

## Findings

The findings follow an organizing system approach by developing a system of categories into which data is coded to illuminate the richness of the participants' lived experiences within the larger context of occurrence (Patterson, 2002). A traditional qualitative approach of reducing findings to a list of themes results in an analysis of the experienced phenomenon's parts instead of the presentation and analysis of the whole lived experience (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). Hermeneutic analysis requires the dynamic interplay of the parts and whole of the phenomenon nested in the greater context. This approach allows what occurred to reveal itself by gathering and compiling the data into a narrative that represents the lived experiences of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

In the present findings, data were coded into the organizational categories of the initial disruptive stressor event, student experiences, family and living arrangements, and spring [2020] educational experiences. Although each experience category was unique, six common spanning themes were prevalent throughout the categories: perceptions, relationships, miss or loss, challenges, resources, and time. The essence of the lived experiences was outlined and emphasized. Consistent themes were illuded to throughout the narrative, but due to the inter-relationship between the themes within the categories, reducing or isolating the themes would be counterproductive to presenting a holistic narrative of the participants' lived experiences (Patterson & Williams, 2002). The headings throughout the finding serve to illuminate the essence of lived experience instead of the common themes (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

While students live on-campus, their experiences and living arrangements were consistent and set up to facilitate students' engagement in their education and student life experiences. However, the experience of each individual who relocated during the pandemic was unique. The overwhelming common situation was that families experienced unexpected events and stressors for which they were unprepared. Based on the families' perception of experiences, they used existing and new resources to adapt to accomplish the desired purpose. The 2020 spring break period serves as a delineating point between pre-covid and post-covid experiences.

### *Disruptive Stressor Event: Ebb and Flow of Information*

Experiencing the disruptive stressor event of the University's response to the pandemic can be described through the ebb and flow of information about COVID-19. The flow of information began at the international level as news outlets covered the emergence of the

pandemic. Most families were not aware of the severity of the pandemic and had mixed beliefs about whether it was a conspiracy. As students were finishing up exams and assignments in preparation to engage in a weeklong spring break, the President of the students' University sent an email to all students, faculty and staff informing the community that there was a University website designated for communicating information about COVID-19. In this email and on the indicated website, students were encouraged to stay healthy, wash their hands, and take the spirit of the University's caring community with them during spring break by looking out for friends and peers. The tone of the communication was informative. Students left the campus with every intention of returning just 1 week later to finish the spring 2020 semester. Over the next 7 days, families received a barrage of information from news outlets, the government, health officials, and the University's communications department about the virus and response plan.

In the week of March 7 to 15, the 16 students eventually interviewed responded in different ways to the various pandemic-related information noted in Table 2. One student stayed on-campus, seven students traveled in state, four traveled to their homes in other states, while five traveled either out of the state or country for a vacation. The various travel plans resulted in students and their families receiving different information at different times from various outlets. Several participants noted that news outlets had been covering other universities' closures for several days and that information was coming from everywhere, but the University had not yet communicated any information. On the Wednesday of spring break, after over 120 colleges had already postponed classes or changed the mode of instruction to online instruction (Hartocollis, 2020), the University President announced that spring break

would be extended 1 week and that the following 2 weeks would be online instruction. The initial reaction from most interviewed students was excitement mixed with feelings that the University was overreacting.

Table 2

*A Selection of University Communications in March*

| Date | Author | Recipients | Information |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3/5/2020 | University President | Students, Faculty, and Staff | The University is monitoring the Corona Virus |
| 3/11/2020 | University President | Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents | Extends spring break, prepare for Online instruction for 2 weeks |
| 3/13/2020 | University President | Students, Faculty, Staff | University plan for the next three weeks (Transition to online instruction plan) |
| 3/16/2020 | University President | Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents | Remainder of the semester will be online & restriction to campus |
| 3/17/2020 | University President | Students Residing in On-Campus Housing | Books, laptops, and medicine can be shipped to students' homes at no cost |
| 3/24/2020 | Academic Provost | Students, Faculty, and Staff | Pass-fail option approved |

Students resolved to make the most of the extra week. However, the positive outlook changed to confusion, frustration, and concern. Parents indicated they felt it was a challenge to get reliable information about the virus or information about their student's education. Parents shared their feelings saying we were "getting information from all over the place." An off-campus sophomore shared, "The biggest concern I have heard is that students don't know what to do. They don't know whether or not to go back to campus or stay home. A lot of people out-of-state left a lot back at campus but don't want to make a trip down for a few things if we go

fully online. A big stressor is just not knowing the next step." The commonly shared perception that the University was always one of the last universities to communicate information about decisions and plans only intensified the challenge.

Next, the University informed students they would be "restricting access to residence halls to a limited number of students – those who have no other option than to be here – through the end of the semester." Students were not permitted to retrieve their belongings until the University established an approved protocol. All control in this decision was in the hands of the University administration and state-level legislators. The outlook was initially positive. Families thought they would shelter in place for 2 weeks and return to the normal routine after the 2 weeks of online education. One parent noted, "We thought it was just a week. I really didn't realize that it would be 6 months really before the kids went back to school." Multiple families indicated that having multiple students' home "was fun at first and then that got pretty old. Everybody was ready to go back to class well they never went back."

When instruction shifted online for the remainder of the semester, some families reported the experience became a catastrophic disruptive stressor event. A parent noted, "The virus completely blew my mind of how serious it actually was. What we considered 'normal life' was completely turned upside down." Jill, a junior, commented on her perception of the pandemic, "It feels like my semester/year was cut short, and unexpectedly. There isn't anyone to blame or any solution- we all just have to accept the outcome and move forward." For several who shared unpleasant experiences, they often qualified it with statements like, "But I know the University is doing their best." Still, some blamed the University or other entities for specific losses such as graduation, sports, and community.

Universities across the nation began to shift to virtual instruction for the remainder of the semester. Students felt like information flowed from many sources except the University. Many families felt paralyzed and unable to do anything until the University provided additional information. One mother, Audrey Todd, noted, “every day, new information comes out about the virus, and anxiety seems to continue to rise. I’m uncertain what [the University’s] next step will be and if there will even be any changes.” Four days after the initial announcement to extend spring break, the University announced that instruction would shift to virtual instruction for the remainder of the semester. With that information, families felt they could decide the plans for students’ residences. Still, one mother noted she went from believing COVID-19 was a “conspiracy” to being “livid,” to “confused,” and finally to being “concerned.” Several parents and students noted that they felt “cheated” or “robbed” and did not know what or who was to blame. “(It is) the spring break that never ended,” another mother shared, and “things are constantly changing. It's impossible to make real plans because of this. The unknown makes it difficult to be excited and forward-focused.”

All interviewed students interacted with their parents and the available information to make a collective decision. Students and parents noted some aspects they considered in whether or not students would come home included paid apartment rent, the COVID-19 outbreaks around the family home versus around the campus, available living space and resources at home, and the family home's proximity to the University. Only two of the interviewed students resided in their campus living establishment for the entirety of the semester. Some out-of-state and out-of-country parents did not like the idea that their child would be far away from them. One mother shared that she felt if something happened, she

would not be able to be close by to support her daughter. Some parents had health situations whereby a students' return home could pose more risk than if they remained at their University living space. For most families, the priority was the safety and wellbeing of the members of the family.

Students had a variety of experiences transitioning home. The primary variable contributing to the experiences was the proximity of the students' home to the University campus. Many students lived out-of-state and were already at their homes when they received the information that the campus would be closed for the remainder of the semester. The students' challenge was that their books, laptops, and other essential items needed to live were still at the University.

### Local Students

Of the interviewed students, two students (both freshman) lived in-state and were housed on-campus. These students had the opportunity to schedule a 4-hour window to clean out their rooms and take what was needed back home with them. These students did not indicate an issue of having to be without materials or personal resources that they could not access. The other seven students who also lived in-state had off-campus residences. Five of these seven students were with their families, either at home or on vacation, when they received information the University was moving to virtual learning and closing on-campus residence, classes, and activities. Six of the seven in-state students indicated they made a plan with their parents to secure their belongings from their University residence and relocate back home.

## Out-of-State Students

Four out-of-state students lived in University residences. The next day, after sharing the information that instruction would be online, the University informed the out-of-state students how they could obtain essential items from their dorms. The University representative would walk around the room on the video call asking the student to identify the essential items that the student needed. The representative would box up the learning materials and essential items from each room, and the University would ship those items to the student. The four out-of-state students who were already at their homes experienced this process. The difficulty with this process was that the University would only send back essential items that were absolutely needed. Two students physically traveled to the university to obtain their dorm room contents to obtain the remainder of their belongings (see Appendix C).

Skyler, a sophomore from Wisconsin, noted that she had a stressful exam week when she left and just threw two pairs of jeans and a couple of shirts in her suitcase because she would not be home for long. She had some clothes at home but was stuck wearing those two pairs of jeans for the next three months.

## International Students

Three international students were interviewed. The first student, Felicity Ignacia, a first-time freshman from Central America, was on a Spring break trip with her sister in Mexico when they received the information about instruction shifting to online. She said, “I never got to see my dorm again. many of my clothes were at [the University], and my notebooks and textbooks as well.” She came home right away with her sister. Throughout the transition and remainder of the semester, Felicity's experience was more similar to students in the United States than other

international students from Asian countries. Felicity noted that she felt very “lucky” to be home and safe with her mom and sister but was adamant that she had planned to return in the fall. She continued to share that other international students were not permitted to return due to border restrictions. She again felt lucky that she was able to return.

The other two interviewed international students were both Chinese students who lived in on-campus dorms. One of the two interviewed international students, a sophomore from China, decided to remain in on-campus housing. In efforts to stay at the University, Sophia intentionally withheld information from her parents about the dangers of the virus in the United States and limited her parents’ access to the information from the University. She was not alone in this. Sophia noted her circle of Chinese friends employed the same practices. She explained that because Chinese parents must connect to the Internet through a virtual public network, the accessibility of information is limited, and all the information her parents got was from her. Sofia indicated parents in China, hers and the other Chinese parents in her network were concerned about the students’ wellbeing. If the parents knew the severity of the virus's spread in the University town, they would have required her to come home.

Flora Chen moved back to China. After the University shifted to virtual education, Flora’s father called her and told her it was too dangerous in the United States. He said people were just treating this like normal life and did not realize the dangers of the virus. Flora explained the student visa process further complicated the decision for international students. Students who decided to move back to China during the semester would violate their visa status and risk having their visa revoked and classes canceled. Despite this potential reality, her parents indicated her safety was the greatest concern.

Flora indicated that because the University was one of the later Universities to move to online classes, it was difficult to secure a flight. About her trip, she said, “I bought four tickets, spent a lot of money, and cancelled three ticket, and only one tickets allow me to go back. I fly to California and stayed there for 30 hours. I didn't eat and didn't drink anything and then go back to China.” When she arrived in China, she was required to quarantine in a hotel for two weeks before being permitted to go outside the hotel. She had no interaction with other individuals at the hotel and could not see her parents or family until she completed quarantine.

### *Student: Thwarted Expectations*

Students indicated that being a student includes experiences such as extracurricular activities, relationships with other students, sorority events, fraternity events, sporting events, and general college life beyond their pursuit of a degree. Thwarted expectations concerning activities were part of the information shared by students. Note the educational experience and pursuing a degree for personal growth are also components of being a student but are addressed in the education category.

#### Relationships

When the students received the announcement about the remainder of the semester being online, the students almost all indicated most of their first thoughts were about interpersonal relationships. Non-familial relationships the interviewees discussed include significant others, best friends, roommates, and others in sororities/fraternities. Students shared that they did not expect the last time they would see their friends for the semester, or their college career was right before they left for spring break. First-time freshmen indicated

that they had just started to build strong relationships with their friends when COVID-19 got in the middle of it. They tried to keep in contact with one another, but it was hard.

Friendships struggled during the pandemic for many students, but they indicated a few strong friendships were some of the most impactful positive resources. One student said she quarantined with her best friend, referring to her sheltering-in-place time during the spring semester. She did not actually physically quarantine with her. Rather, she said, "I FaceTimed my best friend every single day for at least an hour. This really took my mind off what was happening in the world and let me escape for a little bit." It was as if her best friend was with her and helping her make it through while going through the same situation, just in a different location. Most students found ways to connect with their friends, whether it be over video games, zoom or FaceTime, or some students eventually started to meet others in person.

A junior shared about her relationship with a friend she had been close to for several years at college. The relationship was at a point of tension right before spring break and was not where she wanted it. She intended to return after spring break and work on fixing the issues. Because she could not move back, she indicated that she opted to wait until the fall to try to work out the tension in that relationship.

### Making Memories

One of the most striking contrasts is students' perception of college being a place and time when they should be making memories compared to every day blending together. Students wanted to make memories with their friends, noted a desire to attend specific events that were canceled, and lived the real college experience. However, students indicated they were not making memories as college students. Instead, they did not even know what day it

was. Everything they did daily would just run together, leaving the student disoriented to the time. They would “do school” on their laptop in their rooms, interact with the same people in their house every day and do it all over again the next day. Students referred to this as the “new normal” or their new college experience.

## Student Status

Interviewed students ranged from first-time freshmen to graduating seniors. These students' common experience was anticipating certain expectations for the spring semester, but the actual experience not aligning with the expectations. The anticipated experience compared to actual experience looked different for each student, depending on their expectations. However, almost all interviewed students shared what they experienced as a student in the spring is not what they expected. Students shared about differences from what they expected in the general college experience, friendships, University traditions, sports, and travel.

Students expected to have a typical college experience surrounded by peers and engaging in various activities specifically designed for college students. However, when students were sheltering in place at home, there was little change from day to day, and students reported days were melding together. Students learned content but did not engage in a college experience virtually. Based on the interviewed students’ classifications, they experienced the pandemic response differently. Students' expectations in comparison to what actually occurred appeared to be based on students’ academic classification.

### *Freshmen*

Four first-time freshmen participated in the present study. In the fall 2019 semester,

these students began to build relationships with new friends. The students participated in traditions, sporting events, and two of them pursued pledging in Greek organizations. They expected to have a typical freshman year full of University activities. An upperclassman told Felicity that all the fun stuff happens after spring break. Reflecting on the experience, Felicity wished that she would have spent more time making memories and less time studying. What they experienced was far from what they were expecting. The education was still there, but the community aspect was gone. They were concerned that they were never going to get those experiences and those memories again. Many freshmen positively reminisced about college before COVID-19.

*Sophomores and Juniors*

Nine interviewed students were either sophomores or juniors. These students expected to use their sophomore and junior years to get emersed in their major classes, connect with their major professors, and secure an internship that may lead to a full-time position. Students noted relationships with major professors were virtually nonexistent through distance education. They were also concerned whether or not the experience in their major classes in the spring yielded a strong enough foundation to continue to subsequent higher-level major courses. The most noted concern or experience was loss or change of internships used as a job interview to see if these students will work well with the company before offering the student an actual position. Of the nine students, four did not indicate internship plans, three students had internship offers rescinded, one student's internship was shifted to a virtual format, and only one student could engage in her planned internship. Most students whose internships

were canceled indicated they were exploring graduate degrees as their window to secure an internship leading to a job was closed.

Students experienced challenges in student leadership positions. Junior, Samantha Todd, had been voted into an executive role in her sorority. She had just started the position and had a lot to get done. Referring to her executive role responsibilities in the spring, she notes, “I also don’t know how to plan the rest of my extracurricular events because if (the University) is online for the rest of the semester, then there’s a lot I need to do for my organization.”

*Seniors*

Graduating seniors expressed loss and frustration about missing the last part of their college experience. Graduating seniors expressed their expectations of finishing the year strong and making lasting memories with friends. Gabby, an Art major, was preparing for her senior art exhibit. Gabby had to formally request access to university facilities to obtain her Canvases and art supplies. This exhibit was slated to be an in-person exhibit. Instead, the culmination of her scholastic career using a physical medium shifted to a virtual experience.

Grace Thomas noted that she would not have the opportunity to say goodbye to her professors or friends. She mentioned that she would like to come back in the fall for homecoming and celebrate as an alumnus. Grace wanted to visit the campus to say goodbye to the professors who impacted her life. She acknowledged that it would not be possible and did not know the next time she would experience the campus without COVID-19. She referred to her college experience as having ended at spring break.

### *International Chinese Students*

Chinese students were expecting to engage in a high-quality, in-person educational environment in the United States. The interviewed Chinese students had been in the United States for secondary education before enrolling in college. Flora attended school in the United States for 8 years and intended to graduate from the University. Her family's decision for her to move home completely changed her trajectory, knowing she most likely would not have the opportunity to return. Flora has not been able to return to the United States and is presently pursuing transferring to a different university that will allow her to complete her degree online.

Sophia remained on-campus through the Spring and into the Fall. An additional challenge she faced was feeling that she was treated differently or negatively due to her being Chinese. Although no interviewees indicated that they believed Chinese students or Chinese people were to blame, the United States President articulated that the virus was Chinese. When this occurred, Chinese students indicated experiencing complications. Sophia noted students treated her differently.

## *Family and Living Arrangements*

In general, on-campus college students' living arrangements are relatively consistent, predictable, and tailored to meet college students' needs. The family homes to which students transitioned were not tailored to meet the needs of a college student. The living arrangements among the interviewed families were quite diverse. Living arrangements extend beyond just the physical structure, functional space, and location. It also includes available resources, the other residents, and residents' needs for the spaces and resources.

The family of Gabby Tate, a senior Art major, experienced four college students relocating to their rural farm home as well as her parents running a business. Gabby's younger brother, Jake, attended the same university, but her older brother attended a different southern university. Over spring break, Gabby learned of the spring break extension while having her wedding shower at her home. Gabby's friends and older brother all left, but Gabby and Jake remained home. Additionally, Gabby's roommate could not return home, and Jake's girlfriend was also unable to relocate to be with her parents as her dad had a long-term contract working in China. Both students moved in with Gabby's family.

Gabby's father soon after lost his job in the oil industry. He previously purchased two semi-trailer trucks to run a part-time freight and logistics business to supplement his income when oil was slow. Now Gabby's father and mother, Ella, shifted their entire focus to running this small business out of their home. Gabby also was preparing to have her senior art exhibition (which was now virtual), looking for a job, and planning her May wedding. Gabby did not see her fiancé for two months, during which the fiancé had to buy a house without Gabby ever being able to see the new home physically.

Gabby's roommate slept on a trundle bed in Gabby's room while Jake's girlfriend stayed in the older brother's room. The family had the facilities to house the students and run the business but had limited rural Internet bandwidth. Ella brought everyone together to make a plan. They put everyone's schedules on one calendar to ensure everyone had access to the internet when needed. Gabby shared:

> We ended up printing out little calendar pages, and my mom would be like, "Okay, what we're gonna do is y'all get your schedules [together] when you start getting them after everything initially started going online and everything." Professors were not quite sure what to do at that point. After we started getting more of a schedule in, we'd go right on

> her little calendar thing. [We'd make sure] that somebody's not watching Netflix while another person is trying to do a Zoom meeting and two other people trying to take exams or something. We're trying to be really careful about how many people were on it and what they were doing on it and whether it be taking more bandwidth or not.

The two additional members further complicated the situation. Gabby noted that Jake's girlfriend was initially a bit reserved and did not initially understand or appreciate the family's sarcasm but eventually came around. Gabby and Ella indicated that she acted more like a family member by pitching in around the house. Conversely, Gabby's roommate did not help around the house resulting in the family getting frustrated. Ella did not feel Gabby's roommate realized what it meant to do chores or contribute to the family. Gabby felt her mom made an honest effort to give her opportunities to help but did not want to cause tension by pushing any issue.

### Family Physical Residences

Most students returned to their family's residences when the pandemic occurred. Physical living experiences were varied. Several students indicated their families were renovating, and work could not continue because workers could not continue. Restrictions on workers resulted in families living in unfinished homes. Three students' families had second homes in rural areas, which were used as an escape and referred to as "peaceful," "simple," and "refreshing."

Beyond the student who opted not to return home to China, two additional students experienced not living with their entire immediate family during the remainder of the spring semester. Gina Stevens, a graduating senior, opted not to return home. Her father was in the medical profession, and her mother is immune-compromised. Additionally, she believed she would not be able to thrive as a student in the family home and would be able to finish her

schoolwork if she stayed at the University. Her mother noted it was also beneficial for their family as they turned her room into a classroom for her siblings.

Frank Anderson, his mom and his two younger sisters moved to their grandparents' house when the pandemic hit. Frank's father is a surgeon at the local hospital. The family could still see each other from a distance, but the family attempted to minimized risk by maintaining separate dwellings because there was still so much unknown about the virus.

Based on the location of their home, three students experienced government restrictions. In China, restrictions were initially high but became much less restrictive as the virus became contained. In Central America and Southern California, students noted that the restrictions were much more extreme. Felicity shared, "I remember I was so jealous because I saw people in the U.S. and they were going out, and they told me, 'I went to a water park,' 'I went to the lake,' and I'm like 'I can't even go out and walk my dog after 5 p.m.'"

## Overview of Family Members

The members of the family and their needs contribute to dynamics in the living arrangement. As documented in Appendix A, the quantity, age, and life stages of interviewed students' parents and siblings vary. The unique composition of residents in each home inhibits the ability to approach any family structure as normal or standard. Of the randomly interviewed families, there is not a single structure that can be considered most common.

Of the 16 families, half the parents did not have any children living at home before the pandemic. Four students returned to single-parent homes. Two of these homes also had younger siblings in the home. As for the students' siblings, in spring 2020, four interviewed students had siblings who were graduating high school seniors, three only had siblings age 17

years or younger, three students only had older siblings, three were only children, and two students' other sibling was also was in college.

Lastly, only one interviewed student, Jane Townsend, had multiple younger siblings and multiple older siblings and a sibling who was a high school senior. In Jane's family, two older siblings, Jane, and her father, all shifted to the family home during the day. The two older brothers were both out of work and did not have much to do during the day. The father was not accustomed to being home during the day as his work as an orthodontist required he be in the office. Within one week, the number of family members physically present during the day increased from five to nine people. As Jane's brothers could not work, they would spend some of their time watching TV on the couch. Jane's father attempted to change his sons' behavior by telling them to do something more productive. The mother indicated that her sons needed that time to watch TV, and the father was trying to insert himself into the family's daily life when he is not usually there. She noted that the home is her domain, and the office is the father's domain. The father soon started to frequent the office more often instead of being at home.

Each one of the mentioned differences influences the living arrangements. Specific experiences and needs are associated with the life stage of each individual living in the home, as well as family members not living in the home. In addition to the immediate family members, five families had additional residents in the home, such as grandparents, aunts, or other college students. The additional residents were in the family system before the pandemic or became part of the family system during the pandemic. Thus, these members are referred to as part of the family, or families referred to as families with additional members.

## Pileup of Crises and Stressors

Most families did not experience the same quantity and severity of disruptive stressor events. Of the other interviewed families, only one parent lost full-time employment, and she also had two college students who returned home. Families used the home to meet the needs of the entire family. Students were among the first to experience the family home's capacity to meet their need for shelter, safety, and provision of a space to engage in online education. Students shifting to online education and moving home was just one of the crises experienced by families.

### *Working from Home*

The two most common disruptions to typical daily functioning were changes in the parents' employment situation and high school students' education. Nine parents shifted to working from home, five parents lost employment, three of whom had started new businesses, five parents' businesses (all business owners) closed for a period, and only six parents' employment was relatively unchanged (e.g., parents in real estate or medical professions).

Eight families had high school students living in the family home, four of whom were seniors in high school. These students also had to negotiate the available space and resources to be successful as students. However, not all high school students were successful. Several parents expressed frustration and fear of their high school student failing. Most interviewed students with siblings in high school noted the family effort to help the high school student succeed. For two families, their high school students also had learning disabilities for which they did not receive the appropriate accommodations for their students.

Of the 16 families, seven mothers indicated caring for the family to be their role. Of

these mothers, five were former primary or secondary teachers who either retired or chose to leave teaching to engage in the homemaker's role. Before leaving their fields to care for their families, Amelia Anderson was a professional in the medical field, and Addison Tanner was a business executive. Most mothers who left their fields to care for their families indicated that they used skills from their professional background to meet the educational needs or support the family's wellbeing during the pandemic.

### *Additional Stressors*

Families experienced other challenges as well. Many families felt the loss of not being able to take family vacations or planned trips. One set of parents canceled a planned family trip to celebrate their parents' 50th wedding anniversary. Other parents canceled planned trips throughout Europe or various places in the United States. Most parents expressed feeling isolated from friends or the loss of not being able to go to church. Parents of students also expressed hesitation about interacting with their parents as they did not want to put their parents at risk. Others noted that they could not be with their parents during a challenging time. One mother noted that her mother had stage 4 cancer and could not be with her during the treatments. Another parent shared that she had three family members pass away from COVID-19 and had to attend virtual funerals.

## Fulfilling Needs

Many family members' needs required the use of spaces in the home. Most families shared how they came together as a family and collectively decided to use the space to meet each individual's needs. Participants articulated how different family members would use

spaces in the house to accomplish a purpose. The father working from home most often used the home office, but that space might be available to the student on test days or other important events. The kitchen was for preparing meals and used by students in learning new hobbies and spending time with a parent. One daughter noted how she sat in the family study most mornings, sharing a cup of coffee with her mother. The family home was transformed and used as a house, office, classroom, church, meeting room, and other required facilities. Family members could fulfill almost any requirement from their home, but it came at the cost of not being able to leave the home. Many students emphasized that personal rooms were used to have privacy and be away from family.

The primary family need during this time, as indicated by the parents and students, was safety. Families indicated that they felt safe at home and felt that remaining at home kept their family members safe. One daughter recalls an interaction with her mother, “My mother came to my room and was like you're not going anywhere we can't do this anymore [go to her boyfriend's house]. Your dad could be at risk,” and all this stuff and then I ended up not seeing [my boyfriend] for six weeks.” Another student noted, “I wanted to be by myself, and I wanted to be back at college because I didn't want to lose out on that experience, but then my mom really wanted us close and safe.”

The home was not the safest location for all students. Sarah Tucker, a sophomore, went home to a mother who continued her work outside the home as a medical doctor and a brother who was a senior in high school. Sarah has a great relationship with her mother but describes the relationship with her brother as “horrible.” She indicated her brother has a medical condition that impedes his social awareness and behavior. About her brother, she shared:

> His voice makes me feel on edge, anxious, and just wanting to kind of get in a corner and stay away… I just felt really trapped in my house… Just physically being in my house makes me feel just hopeless, that I'm never going to go anywhere. I hate saying because my mom worked hard to try to make it a really loving home, but it just wasn't.

About later in the semester, she notes, “I found myself a corner in the office and just, like, I mean physically just rocking myself in this panic attack because I just couldn't handle it… I needed help.” Throughout the interview, Sarah noted that this was the worst school semester and all her grades suffered. She was trapped, did not feel safe, and all she wanted to do was sleep. She may have been safe from COVID-19, but her living situation proved to be extremely dangerous to her overall wellbeing.

### Parent and Child Perception of Family Experiences

Families contrasted the time in high school to their experience with their child being at home during the pandemic and indicated a lot less busyness in the spring than high school. The students were at home with the family instead of being carted around to different athletic events or extracurricular activities. With the absence of extra activities, families just had more time together as a family. Families indicated they engaged consistently in activities with the whole family, such as watching movies together, playing games, checking off a quarantine bucket list, having family dinner every night, going on walks, and just taking the time to talk.

Even though family members were all under the same roof for the entire day, several respondents indicated that they were unaware of what each other was doing during the day. Each member would often be in a dedicated area set up to succeed in their task for the day. As many fathers worked from home, they would stay in their office all day. Each child would often have a different area of the house to complete work. If a parent or child were in the home that

did not have specific tasks to accomplish during the day, those individuals would often be watching television in a common area.

Elizabeth Townsend, a mother of seven children, describes her experience with all her children being home and her husband being home from work. Her husband's dental practice was closed for eight weeks. Her daughter came home from the University, and her two oldest sons also came home from occupations in the sports industry. The two older sons did not have any specific work to accomplish while at home, so they would often spend time watching TV. Elizabeth was okay with her boys' daily activities, but the father's presence at home complicated the dynamic. Elizabeth home schooled many of her children and was accustomed to running the day-to-day in the home. Elizabeth shared:

> It was a pretty stressful environment because he would come in and now has his 24-, 22-, and 20-year-olds, all on the couch watching Netflix, you know. But there really wasn't a whole lot else for us to be doing… We laugh about it now for sure, but there were like moments of, "Y'all need to," he kind of came in and wanted to bark orders as to what we needed to be doing because he's used to being in control at his practice and the home is kind of… it's definitely my domain.

Elizabeth notes that she diligently makes herself aware of how everyone is doing. She is laid back and takes care of the emotional and physical needs of the family. In contrast, her husband needs to be in control. She compared him trying to bark orders in the home to her going into his office and telling his workers what to do. The home is her area, and the dental practice is his area. In that way, they are "definitely a team."

Elizabeth's husband seemed to be frustrated by the situation and looked for opportunities to engage in his occupational work. Elizabeth noted that he went into work and tried to get out of the house to be productive when he could. The anticipated outcome was what Elizabeth experienced with her husband coming home and attempting to fulfill his role as

a father in the home. However, his attempt to insert himself into the daily family routine is unique among interviewed families. Most other fathers who were at home were working and not interacting with family members during the day. Most parents who switched to working from home emphasized how their role during the day was work.

*Students as Adults*

Parents supported the college student as an adult in two different ways. Parents interacted with the student as an adult in conversation and general interactions. Parents noted that they enjoyed having meaningful conversations with greater substance than when the student was in high school. Many parents indicated that they intentionally set up their students to fulfill their responsibilities to complete their schoolwork. It was anticipated that the student might return home and revert to being treated as a child in the home environment. Instead, students were affirmed in their roles as students and given the space, time and resources to fulfill their roles. Parents reported that they avoided involving themselves in their student's academic work. However, Sarah Tucker noted that several of her friends indicated that their parents got too involved in their schoolwork when they got home. Her report highlights that the present sample does not represent an individual in such a situation.

For most families, the parent's extension of freedom did not extend to all areas. Often in conflict with personal desires, students were mostly expected to adhere to parents' rules restricting them from interacting with anyone outside of the house. Many students communicated that they felt restricted by the parents, while a few students indicated that they were a part of the decision-making process about limiting contact outside the house. Other examples of students feeling restricted or losing volition include both Jack's and Flora's parents

requiring them to return home, students not being permitted to see their significant others, or parents disciplining students for issues with laundry and maintaining a messy living area. Examples of students exercising their volition include both Sophia and Gina both staying at the University and not returning home, Jane taking more responsibility for the wellbeing of all her siblings, Jack working around the house to fix it up, and Grace taking multiple trips back to campus to see friends throughout the semester. Other instances include Summer Todd noting that she previously felt compelled to attend social gatherings. Experiencing COVID-19 allowed her to realize who she is and be more selective with the gatherings she attends.

*Student and Employees in the Home*

As a result of students and parents needing to complete tasks during the day for education and employment, most family members, both student and parent, indicated having little interaction with each other during the day. Family members would work in separate areas during the day and come back together at night for family meals. Most participants discussed family mealtimes as an event that happened consistently with the family in the spring. Family mealtimes in the spring were more consistent than when the student was in high school because family members were not busy with other activities. Some participants noted family members shared about their day, like they had all gone to work or school and returned home for the evening.

*Concealing Challenges*

Another common occurrence is that parents attempted to keep challenging experiences or stressors from their children, and children also tried to keep the challenges/stressors from their parents. Students and parents from multiple families consistently indicated they kept

challenges from the other family members because they thought the parents or students were already under enough pressure and did not want to add to their load. Despite their attempts to shelter their family members from experiences, the other family members seemed to be aware.

In contrast to that pattern, Jenna Tanner noted how her relationship with her parents changed during the pandemic. She describes the experience of her mother talking with her about a challenging experience:

> That was a cool moment with my mom. Just seeing her open up and be vulnerable about this and be like, “I don't know what to do.” It made me realize that my mom, who I think is perfect, and I've always seen the great things about her, that she's human, too, and she struggles with things. It was a cool, it was a hard talk, but it was very like, I remember that and just kind of like hearing her open up about it was cool to see.

Many parents and students discussed how this time together was filled with “talks” and “words of wisdom” from parents. There were some instances of parents being vulnerable with their adult children. It was a balance between passing on wisdom from a parent to a child and conversations between two adults.

*Family Memories*

Students did not make great memories in college in the spring, but most students and parents discussed making memories as a family. Even Sarah, who was mentioned earlier about having a challenging experience at home, shared her great vacation with her mom at the beach. While families were in the house and doing the same thing every day, the days seemed to run together. However, when families got outside, they emphasized the memories that they made. These memories were as simple as going for a drive, taking a walk or going on a bike ride. Several students took a road trip with a parent. Jill Stone, who lives in a West Coast State, mentioned that her family would just take drives out into the desert or down the bare city strip.

One of her favorite memories is driving up to Lake Tahoe with her dad for a few days. Multiple daughters talked about how meaningful their walks outdoors were with their mothers. Those times were filled with great conversations when daughters expressed how they got to know their mothers better. Faith Thorton shared about her walks with her mom, “I really liked my time alone with my mom because you really got to just spend good quality time. We weren't thinking about anything. We really just had to, it sounds silly, to get to know each other.”

### *Celebrations and Holidays*

Several families shared about their celebrations of holidays and birthdays. These celebrations allowed families to pool familial resources and creativity to make events special and memorable for their children. Several families indicated that they did not celebrate anything during the spring semester (see Appendix C).

## *Spring Education Experience: Consistently Inconsistent*

Experiencing the pandemic response “completely upended” students' lives. Students, when interviewed, indicated they genuinely desired familiarity and normalcy in their education experience. Instead, students indicated they received whatever professors could pull together. One mother noted, “[The University] suddenly had to prioritize the safety of the campus. Students, professors, & administrators had to figure out how to change to an online format rapidly. It was okay. Not great. But I was appreciative of what was being done.” Courses were supposed to be ready on the Monday after the second week of spring break. Students noted online components were not a requirement of all professors in the past. Professors seemed to have varying expertise in technology, and very few professors had experience using the provided learning management system (LMS) platform for content delivery and assessment.

Students indicated many faculty members did not have courses ready, nor did they know how to move their courses to the LMS platform. Material not being on the LMS platform resulted in students not knowing what to do.

Professors

The most consistent experience of the transition to online education in the spring was the lack of consistency in online education as observed in students' perceptions of professors. Students referred to professors as "amazing," "great," "difficult," "not living up to my expectations," "really old," "jammed with emails," "went above and beyond," "lost," "quality," "clueless" and other descriptions. Students shared experiences like, "One of my professors created an entire Lego set of trying to show like this is how you would market to these people." Another student shared, "I still have not heard from all my professors and have also received emails of professors saying they have no idea how to continue. There's tests I had coming up that I have not heard anything about." Many students indicated that one of the best resources for them during this time was one or multiple professors, while other students perceived the professors as having given up.

Students' experiences with professors were unique and based on what the professor could pull together in a week. Students noted that multiple professors did not contact them for several weeks while the professors were taught how to use Canvas. When professors learned to upload content, students noted that much of the learning material was low quality. One student shared her experience with a professor:

> My poor professor just was lost, and he was kind of putting up videos, but they were kind of just recordings from his phone. Then he would put up his handwritten notes that didn't quite match the video. He had one last test, I think, and one mini-quiz. Then when

> he graded them, he just set an incredible curve. I think we all passed the class. I don't think most of us were supposed to pass going into the break but then during the break, I genuinely think we set a pretty big curve just because he wasn't really sure how to do grading.

Overall, students and parents shared that they had difficult interactions with some professors but were overall appreciative because the professors were going through the same experience as the students. Additionally, students shared that they really missed the opportunity to connect with their professors and interact with them in a classroom setting. Students mentioned professors and small class sizes as some of the university's great elements that were no longer beneficial with school being online.

When professors adapted the courses after spring break, students consistently reported that faculty removed assignments and required less overall. Students appreciated the leniency from the professors but got frustrated by other new practices. When students were in face-to-face classes, assignments were due in class. With everything on the LMS platform, professors set less traditional due dates or class times, holding classes at times like a Friday or Saturday afternoon. Students shared that they felt like they had assignments due all the time. A student noted,

> It would just be really confusing having to keep up with all those different deadlines because you're like, “oh goodness” versus being, “Okay everything's due Sunday.” I know, “Hey! If I have a lot going on Friday, I can get It done on Saturday.” Or stuff that.

A graduating senior shared, "I feel robbed of my college experience because I didn't get to finish the year in my actual classes but rather had to do them through an online course. Which I HATE online courses, I'm not disciplined enough to do them." After students established their initial routine for the semester, students had to adapt to a new routine after spring break. Several students struggled to establish a new personal routine and maintain the discipline to

complete assignments on their own schedule, while other students found the lack of required routine freeing. Those students completed their work quickly and used the time to work on hobbies and other ventures. Many students expressed that lack of prior experience with online courses made it hard to maintain discipline and produce quality work, and the inconsistent deadlines and course meeting times added to the experienced difficulties.

### Communication

Communication was a common theme that students also had both appreciated and undesirable experiences. Students indicated that they appreciated clear and timely communication from professors and the university. A student noted, “I was initially stressed and anxious to find the new schedule but became more relaxed when the professors provided the plan.”

Conversely, many students never received clear communication about some of their classes. Several students indicated that for some classes, they received a couple of emails, finished a few random assignments, and the professor concluded the course. Other students experienced professors constantly changing the class, moving back due dates, and making assignments due at random, unpredictable times.

The education experience had changed entirely. A student noted, “Online schooling is the worst, especially when compared to how amazing (the University) is.” Education in the second half of the spring became something just to check off and finish. Conversely, another student noted that his perception of education changed in such a way that he began to genuinely appreciate the educational experience he had before COVID-19. "When I was in high

school, I was just focused on getting into college. But in the spring, I had to completely change the way I thought of the world and my education."

### Online Instruction

Instruction in the spring semester varied considerably between professors as well. A select few classes did have online meeting times via zoom. The students indicated they appreciated these professors' efforts to try to keep their experience as normal as possible. For most classes, there was no set class time. Many classes did away with live lectures and used recorded lectures instead. Those recordings also varied considerably in quality. For others, the professors put up PowerPoint slides, required readings, and assignments to be completed before the semester's conclusion. Students' responses indicate that every class was unique.

Students lost access to professors, as well as their learning communities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, students could help each other master challenging material. A student shared the following about calculus, "It was a struggle teaching calculus to myself because I didn't like the teaching style he used." Another student mentioned, "Trying to connect to classmates and professors through Zoom feels completely impersonal, and I feel like by the time I could ask questions during the lectures, it was too late because I couldn't interrupt from my own screen."

### Online Assessments

Online assessments were a new experience for many students. Professors required students to use a secure browser designed for online assessment proctoring. This browser would ensure students maintained eye contact with the screen and persons who could

influence the student were not in immediate proximity. This browser was the source of frustration for many students. Students expressed concern about possibly violating rules as family members walked behind them while taking a test. The student's environment was not controlled enough to ensure the student would be uninterrupted while completing online assessments. Some students felt self-conscious about a video being recorded, while others were fine with it.

Students consistently discussed the challenge of securing quiet spaces in homes to complete their work. A student may be working at the kitchen table or dining room table while a sibling or parent watches TV in the next room. Many homes had family desks and offices, but a parent or another sibling often used those spaces. Students often mentioned rooms with chairs adjacent to common family areas when discussing locations where they worked.

### Pass/Fail

Many students and parents referenced the University affording students the option for a pass/fail grade for the spring semester. Students mostly seemed to appreciate the option afforded to them. Students noted that every situation was unique, and individuals who struggled to secure their resources after spring break quickly often fell behind. One parent noted, "I appreciate that [the University] gave the kids the option [on pass/fail] grades because it absorbed some of that mess. It certainly helped [my son] hang on too. Because he's got an academic scholarship and we'd be we'd be sunk if he didn't have that." Other students mentioned frustrations with assessments, communication from professors, grading scales, dealing with mental issues, lack of motivation, unclear expectations, and other reasons that

made it difficult for them to succeed. These students expressed their appreciation for the pass-fail option.

### Perception of Learning

Several students noted that they felt they were not learning. Instead, they were memorizing content and taking an exam. Many courses should have been on-campus such as coding and art classes. Students felt they were not extending their learning to real-world applications in these classes and other upper-level classes. Some students were concerned that they were not prepared enough to succeed in higher-level classes or successful in their careers. However, others indicated that they felt prepared and could find ways to apply what they were learning outside of class. Another student noted, “I seemed to go through the motions a bit during last semester just because I was all online and I didn't feel like I was really in school.” Several other students shared a similar sentiment.

## Discussion

The uniqueness of each parents’, students’, and families’ experience was evident across interviews. It became apparent that every student had a unique experience and that it is not possible to generalize about students’ and families’ experiences during the pandemic. No two stories were alike. This revelation should encourage practitioners to make themselves aware of students’ unique situations that impact the educational experience. For example, students in China are in a different time zone and struggle to attend virtual classes at specific times when they should be sleeping. Internet access for rural students and Chinese students presents issues with lack of reliability during exams or lectures and inability to access sights restricted by the

Chinese government. For the online practitioner, increasing flexibility to accommodate diversity in experiences is a good first step to consider.

Ambiguity in the information available was a contributing factor to families' and students' lived experiences. Accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of information were the difference between families being able to make a plan compared to feeling loss of control. Most family members perceived the pandemic response as a crisis categorized as catastrophic, ambiguous, non-volitional, chronic, cumulative, and resulting from external forces (Boss, 2016). Families' perceptions of the crisis with the available resources enable families to employ resources to adapt (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Issues with timely access to accurate and complete information about the University's plan, family challenges, and schoolwork inhibited families and students from adapting to those stressors. The University was consistently one of the later Universities to make public their decisions about extending spring break, switching to virtual instruction, and postponing graduation. While waiting for the University's response, students and families remained incapacitated as they could not make plans without information. However, when the University released information, it was intentional and precise. Throughout the spring and summer, the University limited official communications and primarily focused on providing vital information and clarity. Families appreciated these efforts from the University as the information decreased ambiguity and enabled families to plan. Although delivery of the initial information was delayed, the clarity and succinctness of University communication served as a resource for families.

The stress of the pandemic response was evident in the interviews. Family members' inability to work or learn in the designated locations for those activities was the most prevalent

crisis. Families experienced the pileup of additional stressors concerning safety, employment, and sibling's education. As anticipated prior to collecting data, through the lens of Family Stress Theory, families adapted to meet needs and resolve stressors and crises. Family members assessed the needs presented by the challenges, used available resources, and acquired additional needed resources to adapt to the new normal successfully (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

It was anticipated participants would discuss challenges with meeting basic needs, feelings of loss of relationships, and struggling with engaging in higher education due to these losses (Alderfer, 1969). Instead, students experienced inaccessibility to desired novel items or desired food, but families' basic needs were met, and lack of basic needs was not perceived as a stressor. Students used technology to resolve the stressor of the loss of interpersonal relationships and accessibility to friends. Parents used the University parent network and religious groups to meet some of these needs. Family members resolved their loss of interpersonal relationships with the resource of family relationships (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Family members consistently increased the quality of relationships with family members by sharing meaningful time and conversations.

When families experienced the pileup of stressors resulting from family members working from home, families used existing resources to ensure everyone had what was needed to succeed in their role. Gina remaining at the university to protect her father and allow her siblings to use her room as a classroom is still an example of the Double ABC-x model. In this example, the entire family used available resources and a shared perception to adapt to the experienced crises (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Stressors of boredom and monotony resulted in daily experiences blending together. Families perceived this stressor, examined their existing resources, and most often used the resource of the outdoors to engage in a family activity such as a drive, bike ride, walk, road trip, campfire, or motorcycles. The resource of time was also needed for families to be able to engage in these outdoor activities. Students expressed that assignments due at random times and poor communication about expectations inhibit students from having consistent time dedicated to such activities. Unique activities with family members resulted in positive experiences and memories that broke up the daily monotony.

One of the elements of the experience of the pandemic talked about in the interviews was the different ways in which the changes impacted the students' family system. From a family systems perspective, students' and parents' return home is an unanticipated change in family boundaries (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Families experienced a reorganization of family boundaries and shifting from an open system to a closed system. When students left for college, the boundaries were ambiguous as they were physically absent but still psychologically present. Returning home decreased the boundary ambiguity as the students were also physically present, although unavailable during the day. Students returning home was not a foreign experience but rather a return to a similar structure when students were engaged in secondary education while living at home. The difference is that students were physically present in the home during the day while engaged in online learning. Parents now working from home experienced the same unique situation (Smith & Hamon, 2012).

The family shifted from an open system to a closed system. Some families were already a relatively closed system. For example, Gabby Tate's family lives in a rural part of Texas and

was already closed to outside interaction. However, the father's job loss closed the interactions at work. Gabby's family also added two new members to the family system when two students lived with them. The two students moving home with them is a unique situation as the family shifted towards being more of a closed system but increased its connection and openness to the two families of the students who lived with them. The family outlines how they attempted to reorganize the family system to achieve a state of equilibrium. One new member of the family made it more difficult to achieve this. When two new members were added to the family system, the Tate family provided feedback to both new members. Jake's girlfriend, who initially struggled with understanding the family's sarcasm and communication, eventually adapted to share similar communications and engage in behaviors desired by the family. Gabby and her mother both indicated that Gabby's roommate did not adapt to work as well within the family system. Although the entire family system provided feedback that her roommate's behavior was not in continuity with the expected behavior, her roommate continued to engage in the undesired behavior. The added stress of her not adapting to feedback directed at her behavior inhibited the family from achieving a state of homeostasis (Smith & Hamon, 2012; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

In Jane Townsend's family, two older siblings, Jane, and her father, all shifted to the family home during the day. Jane attempted to contribute to the family by engaging in chores and tasks that supported the family. The two older brothers were both out of work and did not have much to do during the day. The father was not accustomed to being home during the day as his work requires that he be in the office. Within one week, the entire system's daily interactions completely changed by essentially doubling the active members. The mother

indicated that the home is her domain, and the office is the father's domain. The father attempted to provide feedback to his sons, indicating that they should not sit on the couch watching tv. However, the mother provided feedback that it was acceptable behavior. The mother provided feedback to the father that his influence in that area was not beneficial. Eventually, the father found ways to get outside of the house as he was aware that his daily presence was not beneficial to the family system's equilibrium. The father was encouraged to change his behavior while the sons were encouraged to retain their behavior based on the mother's feedback.

Also consistent with the systems theory, family members quickly resolved interpersonal family conflict and noted that they intentionally avoided conflict to maintain peace in the home. One student noted that she did not anticipate that her brothers would come around to being individuals she enjoyed being around. Most families appeared to move toward a state of homeostasis.

Furthermore, although many challenges existed, the desired outcome was to maintain as much normalcy as possible. The members' location had changed, but the location change did not necessarily impact the family system's daily functioning. The family worked together to ensure all the members could accomplish their roles outside the home and often treated as if they were outside the home completing those roles, as evidenced by families attending family dinner and being unaware of each other's activities during the day. Families perceived the transition home as temporary. By maintaining normalcy for the family, parent, and student, the family set themselves up to return to school and work.

Students indicated they were not making memories as students and that days were

melding together when at home. The University's pandemic response resulted in students experiencing events in direct conflict with the student's actively constructed cognitive structure of being a student. Students were ready to assimilate all the expected college experiences into their cognitive structure of being a student. When students returned home, they experienced events in direct conflict with the developed cognitive structures of being a student. Students had to accommodate for this change (Lourenço & Machado, 1996). While discussing students experience as a student, the student may be recalling personal experiences from the pre-covid cognitive structures pertaining to being a university student. However, when asked about family experiences, students recalled the positive memories made with family members during that time.

### *Limitations*

The present results are not generalizable beyond the immediate context due to the small sample size and unique sample. Although many characteristics are representative of a national of students at private 4-year institutions, the present families are unique in two ways. First, the median income of families at the University is 27% above that of the national average of families of students attending private universities. Second, the parents were mainly married, and most students' parents both had bachelor's degrees or higher.

The purpose of hermeneutic phenomenology is to interpret the meaning of the lived experience, so lack of generalizability is not an issue. As the goal is to reveal the true nature of the phenomenon, limitations in the methods are the hindrances that cloud the obtained data from being a perfect representation of the phenomenon. Interviews were clouded by the indirect information filtered through the perception of the interviewee. The unnatural location

and technology issues may have hindered the connection between the researcher and interviewee. Additionally, the researcher's presence may have inhibited the authenticity of the response (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Surveys were limited by structured questions that did not allow flexibility. Depending on the device being used, respondents may not have fully expounded due to being forced to type on a mobile device.

The sources gathered to provide greater context were publicly published. This bias may have resulted in the publication being representative of how the author would like the subject matter to be perceived instead of what actually occurred. In other words, when including the context data, we are interpreting an idealistic communication. This may be true of any communication. The historical objectivity and purpose of the publication was considered when interpreting the content.

### *Future Directions*

The window to explore individuals' lived experiences of the initial pandemic response may be closed as participants specifically stated that they were struggling to remember some details as the experiences occurred almost a year prior. Future directions in research can explore the continued influence of COVID-19 restrictions on the students' educational experience. The accessibility of information for students and families and how access to that information impacts families' ability to adapt may provide greater insight into how to support students and families amid crises. The modality of education shifted to online in spring 2020, demonstrating the capacity to continue education amid a global crisis. However, students noted professors' limitations stifled the educational experience in the spring. Examining what

occurred from professors' perceptions and exploring how to be prepared for future shifts to online learning should also be considered.

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# APPENDIX A

# ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table A.1

*Families' Demographic Characteristics as of Spring 2020*

| Family | Primary Residence | Type | Secondary Residence | Marital Status | Children | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Total | In College | Children <18 | Post College |
| Anderson | Texas | Suburban | Rural | Married | 3 | 1 | 2 | — |
| Ignacia | Central America | Suburban | Suburban | Divorced | 2 | 2 | — | — |
| Thomas | Texas | Suburban | — | Married | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Stevens | Out-of-state | Urban | — | Married | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Simpson | Out-of-state | Suburban | — | Widowed | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Shepard | Out-of-state | Urban | — | Married | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Taylor | Texas | Urban | Rural | Married | 4 | 1 | — | 3 |
| Tate | Texas | Rural | — | Married | 3 | 3 | — | — |
| Tanner | Texas | Suburban | Rural | Married | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Zhang | China | Urban | — | Married | 2 | 1 | — | 1 |
| Thorton | Texas | Suburban | Suburban | Divorced | 3 | 1 | 2 | — |
| Todd | Texas | Suburban | — | Married | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Townsend | Texas | Suburban | — | Married | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| Chen | China | Suburban | — | Married | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Tucker | Texas | Suburban | — | Divorced | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Stone | Out-of-state | Suburban | — | Married | 2 | 1 | — | 1 |

Table A.2

*Students' Demographic Characteristics*

| Family | First | Role | Spring 2020 Status | Spring 2020 Residence | Fall 2020 Residence | Anticipated Graduation | Major |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anderson | Frank | Son | Fr | On-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2023 | Medical Humanities |
| Ignacia | Felicity | Daughter | Fr | On-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2023 | Business |
| Thomas | Grace | Daughter | Sr | Off-campus | Graduated | Spring 2020 | Child and Family Studies |
| Stevens | Gina | Daughter | Sr | Off-campus | Graduated | Spring 2020 | Biology |
| Simpson | Sarah | Daughter | So | Off-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2022 | Medical Humanities |
| Shepard | Jack | Son | Jr | Off-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2022 | Political Science |
| Taylor | Joseph | Daughter | Jr | Off-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2021 | Business |
| Tate | Gabby | Daughter | Sr | Off-campus | Graduated | Spring 2020 | Art |
| Tanner | Jenna | Daughter | Jr | Off-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2021 | Business |
| Zhang | Sophia | Daughter | So | Off-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2023 | Business |
| Thorton | Faith | Daughter | Fr | On-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2024 | Business |
| Todd | Samantha | Daughter | So | Off-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2022 | Business |
| Townsend | Jane | Daughter | Jr | Off-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2021 | Child and Family Studies |
| Chen | Flora | Daughter | Fr | On-campus | China (Home) | Spring 2023 | Business |
| Tucker | Sarah | Daughter | So | Off-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2022 | Business |
| Stone | Jill | Daughter | Jr | On-campus | Off-campus | Spring 2021 | Business |

Table 3A

*Parents' Demographic Characteristics*

| Family | First | Role | Occupation | Spring 2020 Employment | Owner | Interviewed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anderson | Amelia | Mother | Former Speech Therapist/ Homemaker | — | — | Yes |
| | | Father | Medical Doctor | Unchanged | Yes | No |
| Ignacia | Emma | Mother | Dentist | Lost Employment, Started New Business | — | Yes |
| | | Father | Medical Sales | Worked from Home | — | No |
| Thomas | Isabella | Mother | Teacher- Retired | — | — | Yes |
| | | Father | Community Management | Worked from Home | Yes | No |
| Stevens | Olivia | Mother | Former Teacher/ Café Owner/ Bookkeeping | Lost Employment, Started New Business | Yes | Yes |
| | | Father | Medical Therapist | Unchanged | — | No |
| Simpson | Ava | Mother | Software Trainer | Worked from Home | — | Yes |
| Shepard | | Mother | Gymnastics Coach | Worked from Home | — | No |
| | Ethan | Father | Financial Advisor | Worked from Home | — | Yes |
| Taylor | Emily | Mother | Real Estate Broker | Unchanged | Yes | Yes |
| | | Father | Real Estate Broker | Unchanged | Yes | No |
| Tate | Ella | Mother | Farming | Worked from Home | Yes | Yes |
| | | Father | Oil/ Freight and Logistics | Lost Employment, Started New Business | Yes | No |

| Family | First | Role | Occupation | Spring 2020 Employment | Owner | Interviewed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tanner | Addison | Mother | Retired | — | — | Yes |
| | | Father | Real Estate/ Retired | Unchanged | Yes | No |
| Zhang | Autumn | Mother | Manufacturing | Closed for a period of time | Yes | Yes |
| | | Father | Manufacturing | Closed for a period of time | Yes | No |
| Thorton | Abby | Mother | Former Teacher/ Substitute Teacher | Lost Employment | — | Yes |
| | | Stepfather | Transport- Exec | Worked from Home | — | No |
| Todd | Audrey | Mother | Former Teacher/ Homemaker/ Tutor | Lost Employment | — | Yes |
| | | Father | Supplier-Exec | Worked from Home | — | No |
| Townsend | Elizabeth | Mother | Former Teacher/ Homemaker | — | — | Yes |
| | | Father | Orthodontist | Closed for a period of time | Yes | No |
| Chen | Alyssa | Mother | Manufacturing | Closed for a period of time | Yes | Yes |
| | | Father | Manufacturing | Closed for a period of time | Yes | No |
| Tucker | Evelyn | Mother | Medical Doctor | Telehealth | Yes | Yes |
| Stone | Elena | Mother | Counselor | Unchanged | — | Yes |
| | Andrew | Father | Minister | Worked from Home | — | Yes |

# APPENDIX B

# INSTRUMENTS

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Lived Experiences of Families of University Students Amid an International Disruptive Event

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Shaun Eide

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Taking part in this study is voluntary. The investigators will explain the study to you and will any answer any questions you might have. It is your choice whether or not you take part in this study. If you agree to participate and then choose to withdraw from the study, that is your right, and your decision will not be held against you.

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to illuminate the experience of families of traditional university students pertaining to navigating the summer amid a pandemic event. We are asking you to take part in this study because information collected from you will advance science and health.

Study activities: If you choose to be in the study, you will:

- Complete an interview. This interview will last about 20 to 30 minutes and will be arranged to occur at a time convenient for you.
- Complete a follow-up survey one month after you are interviewed. The survey should take about 8 minutes to complete.

More detailed information may be described in this downloadable form:

<u>Informed Consent for Research Participation.</u>

Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research study.

By continuing to the next page of this survey, you are agreeing to be in this study. At the conclusion of the survey. If you would like to be removed from the study, you can email your request to shaun_eide@baylor.edu. You can print out a copy of this document for your records. We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

---

Follow Up Survey

Q1 Name:_____

Q2 email: _____

Q3 What is your role at [redacted]?

- Student
- Parent of Student
- Sibling of Student

Q4 What is your sex

- Male
- Female

Q5 What is your classification (or classification of your student)

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Masters Student
- Doctoral Student
- Post Doc Student

Q6 What is your major or anticipated major (or major of your student)

_____

Q7 Please provide one word describing how you are feeling about your day to day life.

_____

Q8 Please provide a word describing how you are feeling about your personal, academic, or professional relationships with others related to your role as a ${q://QID12/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry}.

_____

Q9 Please provide a word describing how you are feeling about the fall semester in your role as a ${q://QID12/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry}

_____

Q10 In your role as a ${q://QID12/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry} what are your plans for the fall semester?

_____

Q11 email Address:

_____

Q12 Can you tell me about experiences that make you feel that ${q://QID26/ChoiceTextEntryValue} describes your personal, academic, or professional relationships with others related to your role as a ${q://QID12/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry}.

_____
_____
_____

Q13 Can you tell me about experiences that make you feel that ${q://QID30/ChoiceTextEntryValue} describes your feeling about the fall semester in your role as a ${q://QID12/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry}?

_____
_____
_____

Q14 Can you tell me about experiences as a ${q://QID12/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry} during the Spring 2020 Semester?

_____
_____
_____

Q15 Please provide any other thoughts you would like to share about this survey or anything else you would like others to know about how you are feeling.

_____
_____
_____

Interview Protocol

Inform the participant that the interview is being recorded, but the recording will remain completely confidential and will not be made available to anyone outside of the research personnel.

Provide Informed Consent and obtain informed consent for the interview by the participant verbally agreeing to the interview and being recorded.

Thank you so much for agreeing to be a part of this study. Also, thank you for completing the survey. Your completion of the survey helps me to ask better questions and get to know you little bit more before we get started with the interview. I already took the opportunity to read through your responses and may inquire about the responses during our interview.

I am expecting that this interview will take about 30 minutes. Are you ok with that time frame?

At any point in time, if you need to cut the interview short or would like to stop for any reason, just let me know. Does that sound good?

Narrow down to four questions and have examples of probes in different situations.

Great. Well let's get started.

IQ1 When [redacted]'s campus closed, how did that impact the living arrangements of the student and family?_____

IQ2 Can you describe your experiences this past semester as a (as a parent, student, employee etc.)? _____

IQ 3 Can you talk about your relationships and interactions inside the family after the [redacted] campus closed?_____

IQ4 Can you describe how the members of your family were impacted by the events this past spring? _____

IQ5 What are your plans for the fall semester? future?

_____

IQ6 Please provide any other thoughts you would like to share or anything else you would like others to know about how you are
feeling._____

Examples of Probing Questions:

Can you help me understand _____ better?

Can you give an example of what you mentioned?

How did _____ impact you/your family?

How did you experience that?

How did your family deal with that?

Can you describe the experience you mentioned here _____?

When you say this _____ I am understanding it like this _____. Is that what you meant?

# APPENDIX C

# UNABRIDGED NARRATIVE FINDINGS

The findings follow an organizing system approach by developing a system of categories into which data is coded to illuminate the richness of the participants' lived experiences within the larger context of occurrence (Patterson, 2002). A traditional qualitative approach of reducing findings to a list of themes results in an analysis of the experienced phenomenon's parts instead of the presentation and analysis of the whole lived experience. A proper hermeneutic analysis requires the dynamic interplay of the parts and whole of the phenomenon nested in the greater context. It is about allowing what occurred to reveal itself by gathering and compiling the data into a narrative that represents the lived experiences of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

In the present findings, data were coded into the categories of the initial disruptive stressor event, student experiences, family and living arrangements, and spring educational experiences. Themes were coded to each of the categories. The essence of the lived experiences was outlined and emphasized. The consistent themes are illuded to throughout the narrative, but due to the inter-relationship between the themes within the categories reducing or isolating the themes would be counterproductive to presenting a holistic narrative of the lived experiences of the participants (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

While students live on-campus, their experiences and living arrangements are consistent and set up for students to engage in their education and student life experiences. However, the experience of each individual who relocated during the pandemic is unique.

The participants reflected a myriad of lived experiences organized in four categories of experiences: disruptive stressor events, student experiences, family and living arrangements, family life, and spring educational experience. Although each experience category is unique, six

common spanning themes are prevalent throughout the categories: perceptions, relationships, miss or loss, challenges, resources, and time. The overwhelming common theme is that families experienced unexpected events and stressors for which they were unprepared. Based on the families' perception of experiences, they used existing and new resources to adapt to accomplish the desired purpose. The 2020 spring break period serves as a delineating point between pre-covid and post-covid experiences.

### Disruptive Stressor Event: Ebb and Flow of Information

Experiencing the disruptive stressor event of the University's response to the pandemic can be described as the ebb and flow of information about COVID-19. The flow of information began at the international level as news outlets covered the emergence of the pandemic. Most families were not aware of the severity of the pandemic and had mixed beliefs about whether it was a conspiracy. As students were finishing up exams and assignments in preparation to engage in a weeklong spring break, the University president sent an email to all students, faculty and staff. She informed the students that there was a University website designated for communicating information about COVID-19. She continued by encouraging students to stay healthy, washer their hands, and take the spirit of the University's caring community with them during spring break by looking out for friends and peers. The tone of the communication was informative. Students left the campus with every intention of returning just one week later to finish the spring 2020 semester. Over the next 7 days, families received a barrage of information from news outlets, the government, health officials, and the University's communications about the response plan.

In the week of March 7 -15, of the 16 interviewed students, one student stayed on-campus, seven students traveled in state, four traveled to their homes in other states, while five students traveled either out of the state or country for a vacation. The various travel plans resulted in students and their families receiving different information at different times from various outlets. Several participants noted that news outlets had been covering other university closures for several days and that information was coming from everywhere, but the University had not yet communicated any information. On the Wednesday of spring break, after over 120 colleges had already postponed classes or changed the mode of instruction to online instruction (Hartocollis, 2020), the president of the University sent an email to the entire University body with the information that spring break would be extended one week, and the two following weeks would be online instruction. The initial reaction from most interviewed students was excitement mixed with feelings that the university was overreacting.

Not all students received the information about the pandemic and the campus shutting down on Wednesday. Sophomore, Julia Taylor, indicated that she was with her family in a remote part of Northern California. When the family went to the airport at the end of their family vacation, they were completely caught off guard as everything seemed to shut down, and the airport was empty. Julia and her family returned to their home in a large southern city and found the city officials, state, and families had already been reacting to the information for several days. Her family's delay in knowing about the pandemic response rendered the family unable to secure basic necessities as stores were already cleaned out of supplies.

Students made a plan with their families for the next two weeks. Some students initially attempted to extend their spring break plans, while others returned home immediately and

began to spend time with their families. Of the four students who traveled to their homes out-of-state, both upper classmen who had off-campus residences returned to the University as initially planned. The only two other students who remained on-campus for the second week were the two interviewed Chinese students. The other 12 students resided at their family homes until receiving more information.

### *Perceptions of Confusion, Control, and Blame*

Perceptions and beliefs were in a state of flux. Families were at a loss of what to believe and what to do. How participants described their experience of the pandemic response reflects what was initially registered as the researcher's anticipated result. First, experiencing the pandemic response was catastrophic and unexpected, as illustrated by comments such as “The virus completely blew my mind of how serious it actually was. What we considered "normal life" was completely turned upside down.”

Second, the details of what was actually occurring were unclear and ambiguous. When spring break was extended, many thought the University was being dramatic or overreacting but committed to making the most of the extra week. However, the positive outlook changed to confusion, frustration, and concern. Parents indicated they felt it was a challenge to get reliable information about the virus or information about their student’s education. Parents shared their feelings saying we are “getting information from all over the place,” An off-campus sophomore shared, “The biggest concern I have heard is that students don’t know what to do. They don’t know whether or not to go back to campus or stay home. A lot of people out-of-state left a lot back at campus but don’t want to make a trip down for a few things if we go fully online. A big stressor is just not knowing the next step.” This challenge was only perpetuated by

the perception that the University was always one of the last universities to communicate information about decisions and plans.

Next, students lacked the volition or choice to decide whether they would return to on-campus classes. All control in this decision was in the hands of the University administration. The outlook was initially positive and believed to be acute as the belief was that students and families would quarantine for two weeks and return to the normal routine after the two weeks of online education. Families felt confident that they could hunker down for that time to be a part of the solution. One parent noted, “We thought it was just a week. I really didn't realize that it would be six months really before the kids went back to school.” The transition home soon became a chronic stressor with no end in sight. Multiple families indicated that having multiple students’ home “was fun at first and then that got pretty old. Everybody was ready to go back to class well they never went back.”

Fifth, the stressor of experiencing the University's pandemic response was just one of the families' experiences. Every family had other experiences and setbacks due to COVID-19 that piled up on top of the implications of the university's decisions. Finally, what the families were experiencing was due to external forces outside of their control. Most communicated that there was no one to blame and this just happened, such as Jill, who said, “It feels like my semester/year was cut short, and unexpectedly. There isn't anyone to blame or any solution-we all just have to accept the outcome and move forward.” For several who shared unpleasant experiences, they often qualified it with statements like, “But I know the university is doing their best.” It is possible that respondents provided socially desirable responses or expressed the qualifiers to avoid putting others at fault. Still, some placed blame on the University or

other entities. The University may not have been responsible for the pandemic, but some parents and students assigned blame the university for specific losses such as graduation, sports, and community. Another mother mentioned, “I feel there is too much dissension with the decisions being made by the university. They are doing what they believe is best for our students, and I need to support not only them but my child as she adjusts to this new normal.”

As information continued to flow, the latest information often presented additional stressors to pile on top of university access being restricted. When instruction shifted to virtual delivery for the rest of the semester, one mother noted she went from believing COVID-19 was a conspiracy, to being livid, to confused, and finally concerned. Several noted that they felt cheated or robbed and did not know what or who was to blame. “(It is) the spring break that never ended,” another mother shared, and “things are constantly changing. It's impossible to make real plans because of this. The unknown makes it difficult to be excited and forward-focused.”

Universities across the nation began to shift to virtual instruction for the remainder of the semester. Information flowed from many sources except the University. Many families felt paralyzed and unable to do anything until the University provided additional information. Audrey Todd noted, “every day, new information comes out about the virus, and anxiety seems to continue to rise. I’m uncertain what [the University’s] next step will be and if there will even be any changes.” Four days after the initial announcement to extend Spring Break, the University announced that instruction would shift to virtual for the remainder of the semester. With that information, families felt they could decide the plans for students’ residences for the remainder of the semester.

As information continued to flow, added information often presented additional stressors to pile on top of restricted university access. Four days after the initial announcement to extend Spring Break, the University announced that instruction would shift to virtual for the remainder of the semester. With that information, families felt they could decide the plans for students' residences for the remainder of the semester. When instruction shifted to virtual delivery for the rest of the semester, one mother noted she went from believing COVID-19 was a "conspiracy" to being "livid," to "confused," and finally to being "concerned." Several noted that they felt "cheated" or "robbed" and did not know what or who was to blame. "(It is) the spring break that never ended," another mother shared, and "things are constantly changing. It's impossible to make real plans because of this. The unknown makes it difficult to be excited and forward-focused."

All interviewed students interacted with their parents and the available information to make a collective decision. Some aspects considered in whether or not students would come home included paid apartment rent, the COVID-19 outbreaks around the family home versus around the campus, available living space and resources at home, and the family home's proximity to the University. Only two of the interviewed students resided in their campus living establishment for the entirety of the semester. Some out-of-state and out-of-country parents did not like the idea that their child would be far away from them. If something happened, they would not be able to be close by to support the child. Some parents had health situations. The student would pose more of a risk to the family members to return home. The ultimate considered priority was the safety and wellbeing of the members of the family.

Students had a variety of experiences transitioning home. The primary variable

contributing to the variety in their experiences is the proximity of the students' home to the University campus. Many students lived out-of-state and were already at their homes when they received the information that the campus would be closed for the remainder of the semester. The students' challenge was that their books, laptops, and other essential items needed to live were still at the University.

### *Local Students*

Of the interviewed students, two students (both freshman) lived in-state and were housed on-campus. These students had the opportunity to schedule a 4-hour window to clean out their rooms and take what was needed back home with them. These students did not indicate an issue of having to be without materials or personal resources that they could not access. The other seven students who also lived in-state had off-campus residences. Most of them were with their families, either at home or on vacation, when they receive the information about the University moving to virtual learning. All in-state students made a plan with their parents to secure their belongings from their University residence and relocate back home.

### *Out-of-State Students*

Four out-of-state students lived in University residences. The next day, after sharing the information that instruction would be online, the University informed the out-of-state students how they could obtain essential items from their dorms. The University representative would walk around the room on the video call asking the student to identify the essential items that the student needed. The representative would box up the learning materials and essential

items from each room, and the University would ship those items to the student. The four out-of-state students that were already at their homes experienced this process. The difficulty with this process is that the University would only send back essential items that were absolutely needed. Students had to physically travel to the university to obtain their dorm room contents to obtain the remainder of their belongings.

Skyler, a sophomore from Wisconsin, noted that she had a stressful exam week when she left and just threw two pairs of jeans and a couple of shirts in her suitcase because she would not be home for that long. She was stuck wearing those two pairs of jeans for the next three months. Jill, a junior from Nevada, also only had a weeks' worth of clothes. Both Skyler and Jill traveled back after the semester was over to clean out their rooms. They had a 4-hour window to move all their belongings out. Skyler moved everything out by herself while Jill had her dad's help.

The off-campus student who was at the University when it was announced the remainder of the semester would be virtual was required by his parents to relocate back home. He left his car behind and left everything in his apartment. He was frustrated about being required to move back because he felt it was a waste to leave his apartment for which he was paying rent.

### *International Students*

Three international students were interviewed. The first student, Felicity Ignacia, a first-time freshman international student from Central America was on a Spring break trip with her sister in Mexico when she received the information about instruction shifting to online. She said, "I never got to see my dorm again. many of my clothes were at [the University], and my

notebooks and textbooks as well." She came home right away with her sister. Felicity's experience throughout the transition and remainder of the semester was more similar to students in the United States than other international students from Asian countries. Felicity noted that she felt very "lucky" to be home and safe with her mom and sister but was adamant that she had planned to return in the fall. She missed the ability to be a college student and freedom to just be able to go outside. She noted, "I remember I was so jealous because I saw people in the U.S. and they were going out and they told me, 'I went to a water park,' 'I went to the lake,' and I'm like I can't even go out and walk my dog after 5 p.m." She continued to share that other international students were not permitted to return due to border restrictions. She again felt lucky that she was able to return.

The other two interviewed international students were both Chinese students who lived in on-campus dorms. Of all the interviewed students, the Chinese students' decisions about living arrangements for the remainder of the semester carried the most significant long-term implications. If the student returned to China, it would be exceedingly difficult to return to the United States to study in the fall. Furthermore, students who relocated to China also had to ship their belongings home and experience international travel protocols during the pandemic.

Sophia Zhang, a sophomore Chinese student, decided to remain in on-campus housing. In efforts to stay at the University, Sophia intentionally withheld information from her parents about the dangers of the virus in the United States and limited her parents' access to the information from the University. She was not alone in this. Sophia noted her circle of Chinese friends employed the same practices. She explained that because Chinese parents must connect to the internet through a virtual public network, the accessibility of information is

limited, and all the information her parents get is from her. Sofia indicated parents in China were concerned about the students' wellbeing. If the parents knew the severity of the virus's spread in the University town, they would have required her to come home.

Flora Chen did move back to China. After the University shifted to virtual education, Flora's father called her and told her it was too dangerous in the United States. He said people are just treating this like normal life and do not realize the dangers of the virus. The student visa process further complicated the decision for international students. Flora explained that students who decided to move back to China during the semester would violate their visa status and risked having all their classes canceled and visa revoked. Despite this potential reality, her parents indicated her safety was the greatest concern.

Flora indicated that because the University was one of the later Universities to move to online classes, it was difficult to secure a flight back to China. Before she left the United States, she shipped her belongings overseas to be received and held by customs and in anticipation of her arrival. About her trip, she said, "I bought four tickets, spent a lot of money and cancelled three ticket, and only one tickets allow me to go back. I fly to California and stayed there for 30 hours. I didn't eat and didn't drink anything and then go back to China." When she arrived in China, she was required to quarantine in a hotel for two weeks before being permitted to go outside of the hotel. She had no interaction with other individuals, while she could not see her parents or family until she completed quarantine. Her family traveled several hours to the hotel just to see her through the hotel window. They also brought her food and items to lift her spirits. Flora has not been able to return to the United States and is presently pursuing transferring to a different university that will allow her to complete her degree online. She does

not anticipate that her parents will allow her to return to the United States but still desires to earn a degree from an American university.

## Student Experiences: Thwarted Expectations

Students are individual enrolled in courses at the University in pursuit of a degree. Student experiences include extracurricular activities, relationships with other students, sorority events, fraternity events, sporting events, and general college life. The educational experience and pursuing a degree for personal growth are also components of being a student but are addressed in the education category.

### *Relationships*

When the students received the announcement about the remainder of the semester being online, the students almost all indicated most of their first thoughts were about interpersonal relationships. Relationships the interviewees discussed associated explicitly with a student's role include significant others, best friends, roommates, and others in sororities/fraternities. The students did not expect the last time they would see their friends for the semester or their college career was right before they left for spring break. First-time freshmen indicated that they had just started to build strong relationships with their friends when COVID-19 got in the middle of it. They tried to keep in contact with one another, but it was hard.

Friendships struggled during the pandemic for many students, but they also indicated a few strong friendships were some of the most impactful positive resources. One student said she quarantined with her best friend, referring to her sheltering time in place during the spring

semester. She did not actually physically quarantine with her. Rather, she said, “I FaceTimed my best friend every single day for at least an hour. This really took my mind off what was happening in the world and let me escape for a little bit.” It was as if her best friend was with her and helping her make it through while going through the same situation, just in a different location. Most students found ways to connect with their friends, whether it be over video games, zoom or FaceTime, or some students eventually started to meet others in person.

A junior shared about her relationship with a friend she had been close to for several years at college. The relationship was at a point of tension right before spring break and was not where she wanted it. She intended to return after spring break and work on fixing the issues in that relationship. Because she could not move back, she indicated that she opted to wait until the fall to try to work out the tension in that relationship.

Six interviewed students had relationships with significant others during this time. Two interviewed female students had boyfriends who lived within 15 miles of their homes. Initially, the students went home to their own family’s homes and could not see their significant other for some time. The students indicated that all four families eventually decided that the child's significant other was an extension of their contact circles. She noted, “Our parents are really close, and they were we know they're taking It seriously. Y'all are in our circle now. Then we were able to go back and forth seeing each other.” For these students, the time they could interact in person with their significant other was of great support to them. Both students indicated that they looked forward to that interaction.

### *Making Memories*

One of the most striking contrasts is students’ perception of college being a place and

time when they should be making memories compared to every day blending together. Students wanted to make memories with their friends, attending the canceled events and live the real college experience. However, students indicated they were not making memories as college students. Instead, they did not even know what day it was. Everything they did daily would just run together, leaving the student disoriented to the time. They would “do school” on their laptop in their rooms, interact with the same people in their house every day and do it all over again the next day. Students referred to this as the “new normal” or their new college experience.

### *Student Status*

Interviewed students ranged from first-time freshmen to graduating seniors. These students' common experience was anticipating certain expectations for the spring semester, but the actual experience not aligning with the expectations. The anticipated experience compared to actual experience looked different for each student, depending on their expectations. However, almost all interviewed students expressed discontinuity between expectations and reality regarding the general college experience, friendships, University traditions, sports, and travel.

Students noted they expected to have a typical college experience surrounded by peers and engaging in various activities specifically designed for college students. However, when students were sheltering in place at home, there was little change from day to day, and days were melding together. Students were learning content but not engaging in the college experience. Based on the interviewed students’ classifications, they experienced the pandemic response differently.

The period of life of young adulthood is also comprised of many celebrations and milestones. The students routinely celebrate other students' birthdays engagement parties wedding showers and other major life celebrations. Students expressed a sense of loss not getting to celebrate with their friends for their personal celebrations or their friends' celebrations. They were expecting to be able to socialize and interact but were required to socially distance. Many students noted that they expected to be able to be away from home on their own, but they were forced to move back to their parents' homes. Most students indicated they had travel plans for the summer including studying abroad, vacations, and other university sponsored travel, but they were all canceled.

This institution is over 150 years old and is steeped in tradition. The sorority's student groups fraternities and overall university all have traditions that they engage in throughout the course of the year. The major tradition that students indicated was lost in the spring semester was a day when all the students take off school to celebrate the school's mascot. Many students were looking forward to this day and expressed the frustration that they weren't going to get to celebrate it. That tradition of celebrating the school's mascot on that day is the largest tradition that was missed. Organizations from across the campus contribute to putting on events and celebrating this day. Several students indicated that they were supposed to be contributing to those events in the spring semester. The loss of this opportunity was very devastating to these students.

In addition to traditions, this institution is strong in athletics. the switch to virtual learning for the remainder of the semester occurred just prior to the NCAA Basketball Tournament. Most students expressed frustration that they were not getting to participate in

watching and cheering for athletic events. At this University, attending sporting events is very much so a part of everyday life experiences as a student. Students were concerned that they were not getting to participate in cheering on their teams in the spring and were concerned about the fall semester. It just wasn't going to be the same if they could not attend their favorite sports. Several students reminisced about positive memories of athletic events in 2019 and wished that they could have those experiences again. Furthermore, students noted that they paid fees to be able to participate and attend the university and sports events. Students expressed frustration that they were still required to pay the fees despite not being able to attend any events.

Students' expectations in comparison to what actually occurred appeared to be based on students' academic classification. Furthermore, certain experiences and milestones are associated with students' academic classifications in college. The three categories are first-time freshmen, sophomores or juniors, and graduating seniors. In addition to these three groups, there were other smaller groups that also had unique experiences.

### *Freshmen*

Five first-time freshmen were interviewed. In the fall 2019 semester, these students began to build relationships with new friends. The students participated in traditions, sporting events, and two of them pursued pledging in Greek organizations. Before the fall semester even began, the students were already connected with other first-time freshmen. The interviewed students we're eager to continue those relationships well also participating in traditions and events with their new friends.

For these students, they were required to live on-campus during their freshman year. Well living on-campus, they were also able to make new relationships and connections. The students commented on how much they loved the social life and interaction with other university students. Their expectation was to have a normal freshman year where they feel like they are part of the University community. Felicity noted that she was looking forward to all the events that were happening after spring break. She was told by an upperclassman that all the fun stuff happens after spring break. Reflecting on the experience, Felicity wished that she would have spent more time making memories and less time studying. She wishes she would have enjoyed every last minute of normal life before everything changed. She wishes she would have enjoyed that time in the semester more and had to chance to say goodbye to everyone.

For Faith, a freshman student from Texas, she noted that before spring break she was having the full college experience. She was having dorm activities, sorority activities and all other types of fun experiences associated with being an independent college student. But when spring break hit, it's like everything just halted and was 100% gone. She was no longer having the real college experience.

The students' freshman year was supposed to be their first year of their real college experience. They were anticipating getting to be able to start the rest of their college career and life from this year. But what they experienced was far from what they were expecting. The education was still there but the community aspect was gone. They were concerned that they were never going to be able to get those experiences and those memories again. Looking back at the time before COVID-19, these students still have positive memories about their

experiences. Frank's mom noted that the Frank "loved his freshman year. He would love to be back on-campus."

### *Sophomores and Juniors*

Nine interviewed students were either sophomores or juniors. These students expected to use their sophomore and junior years to get emersed in their major classes, connect with their major professors, and secure an internship that may lead to a full-time position. Students noted relationships with major professors were virtually nonexistent through distance education. They were also concerned whether or not the experience in their major classes in the spring yielded a strong enough foundation to continue to subsequent higher-level major courses. The most noted concern or experience was loss or change of internships used as a job interview to see if these students will work well with the company before offering the student an actual position. Of the nine students, four did not indicate internship plans, three students had internship offers rescinded, one student's internship was shifted to a virtual format, and only one student could engage in her internship as planned. The student who "interned" as planned was interning with her parents' real estate company. The mother of the student whose internship was shifted to virtual noted:

> Jenna loves travel and was thrilled to be able to mix her love of new cultures and adventure with her practicum in Child Life. She was set to travel to the Philippines to complete her practicum required in her major. This was obviously cancelled, and her practicum was moved to online. Watching a child face any disappoint is hard as a parent and though this did not directly impact me, it was challenging to witness.

Of the students whose internships were canceled, most of them indicated that they were exploring graduate degrees after their senior year. They were concerned that their

window to secure a job post-graduation was stifled and possibly closed. Enrolling in grad school would afford an additional opportunity to apply for internships and jobs while in school.

Several sophomore and junior students indicated they had secured positions of leadership in sororities and student organizations across the campus. Junior, Samantha Todd, had been voted into an executive role in her sorority. She had just started the position and had a lot to get done. Referring on her executive role responsibilities in the spring, she notes, "I also don't know how to plan the rest of my extracurricular events because if (the University) is online for the rest of the semester, then there's a lot I need to do for my organization." She continued by reflecting on facilitating an event, "I had to host a fundraising event virtually for my sorority. Normally we would rent out (a large) hall and do a big event but I had to find a way to safely raise money that followed (University) guidelines."

Jenna Tanner also was elected to hold a prestigious position leading her sorority's entry in a University wide event competing against all the other sororities. This tradition involves the entire sorority and is celebrated by the students, administration, and alumni. The winners also get to perform at the next year's homecoming. Jenna's mother shared:

> As [an event] chair, I watched my daughter work tirelessly, selflessly and with great enthusiasm in [the event]. To win is a huge accomplishment and she so looked forward to preforming the winning act. What a great tradition [the University] Homecoming is and to not have these events in person is a huge disappointment for all of us.

The honor of performing this winning act was never actualized. Although she was in a leadership role in this group, many other students also lost the opportunity to perform under her leadership. The entire sorority lost the opportunity to share that experience.

*Seniors*

Graduating seniors expressed loss and frustration about missing the last part of their college experience. For graduating seniors, completing their degrees and graduating in the spring semester still happened, just not the way it was expected. Graduating seniors expressed their expectations of being able to finish the year strong and make lasting memories with friends. Gabi, an Art major, was preparing for her senior art exhibit. Gabi had to formally request access to university facilities to obtain her Canvases and art supplies. This exhibit was slated to be an in-person exhibit. Instead, the culmination of her scholastic career using a physical medium was shifted to a virtual experience.

Grace Thomas noted that she was not going to have the opportunity to say goodbye to her professors or to her friends. She mentioned that she would like to come back in the fall for homecoming and celebrate as an alumnus. She wanted to visit the campus at that point and say her goodbyes to the professors who made such an impact on her life. She acknowledged that it was not going to be possible and didn't know the next time she would get to experience the campus without COVID-19. She referred to her college experience as having ended at spring break.

Seniors were initially hopeful that the pandemic would be over before the end of the semester so they could have an in-person graduation. However, as time progressed, the students were informed that they would not be able to participate in an on-campus graduation ceremony. Grace's mother indicated that the spring experience was:

> Totally frustrating but we made the best of it because we were looking forward to graduation. Cheated out of the apartment, cheated out of the graduation experience. Virtual did not cut it especially knowing that the school was making football happen.

In the spring, the university announced that graduation was virtual. In other communications,

the University publicized that they were working to ensure the football season was going to happen. She felt hurt when they did not allow her to have graduation, but fans were permitted to come to football games.

### *Chinese Students*

Chinese students were expecting to engage in a high-quality in-person educational environment in the United States. The interviewed Chinese students had been in the United States for secondary education before enrolling in college. Flora had been attending school in the US for eight years and intended on graduating from the University. Her family's decision for her to move home completely changed her trajectory, knowing she most likely would not have the opportunity to return. Flora has not been able to return to the United States and is presently pursuing transferring to a different university that will allow her to complete her degree online.

Sophia remained on-campus through the Spring and into the Fall. An additional challenge she faced was feeling that she was being treated differently or negatively due to her being Chinese. Although no interviewees indicated that they believed that Chinese students or the Chinese people were to blame, the United States President clearly articulated that the virus was Chinese. When this transpired and blame for the virus shifted to China, the Chinese students indicated that they experienced complications. Sophia noted students treated her differently and, "other students would comment about how the virus comes from China and is Chinese." She felt as though other students perceived all Chinese people as responsible for the virus.

Many Chinese students remained on-campus after the University switched to virtual

education for the remainder of the semester. As international students were one of the only groups of students permitted to retain a residence on-campus, Sophia indicated that international students interacted with one another on a consistent basis during the remainder of the spring semester and into the summer. Although no one interviewed expressed blatant hostility towards them, the Chinese students did indicate that they felt that they were treated differently after the pandemic because of their country of origin.

## Family and Living Arrangements

On-campus college students' living arrangements are relatively consistent, predictable, and tailored to meet college students' needs. The family homes to which students transitioned were not tailored to meet the needs of a college student. The living arrangements between the interviewed families were quite diverse. Living arrangements extend beyond just the physical structure, functional space, and location. It also includes available resources, the other residents, and residents' needs for the spaces and resources.

### *Family Physical Residences*

Most students return to their family's residences when the pandemic occurred. There were many considerations when deciding what to do regarding the living situation. Three students experienced not living with their family during the remainder of the spring semester. Gina Stevens, a graduating senior, opted not to return home. Her father was in the medical profession and her mother is immune compromised. Additionally, she believed she would not be able to thrive as a student in the family home and would be able to finish her schoolwork if

she stayed at the University. Her mother commented on this indicating that it was also beneficial for their family as they turned her room into a classroom for her siblings.

Jack Shepherd, a junior, also lived off-campus. He did return to his family home during the pandemic but contested his parents' decision. He indicated that as soon as he was able to return, he took that opportunity. He returned to his campus residence right at the conclusion of the semester. he indicated the reason was because the place where his family home was a hot spot for the virus, and it was safer to live by the campus. Other students also indicated that they moved back to the campus throughout the summer. They expressed their desire to get back to normal college life at the earliest possible time. This was only possible for students who already had off-campus residences for which they were paying rent.

Frank Anderson, his mom, and his two younger sisters all moved to a new house when the pandemic hit. Frank's father is a cardiac surgeon at the local hospital and the family considered it safer for the father to be living at home separated from the family during that time. Frank and his family moved into his grandparents' house that was close by to their actual residents. Frank's grandparents moved out to their farmhouse during that time. The family was still able to see each other from a distance, but because there was so much unknown about the virus the family did not want to put the father at risk and the father did not want to put the family at risk if either one of them were exposed.

*Prepared for Students Moving Home*

When students moved home during the initial shutdown it was very apparent whether or not the families were prepared for the return of their student to the home. After the students left for college multiple families had relocated or downsized. As previously noted,

Gina's family was not prepared for three kids to engage in school at home as well as her mother working from home. It was better for Gina to stay at college so the physical spaces in the house could be used for the education of her two younger siblings. When Ethan returned home, his aunt was living in his room. There was not a room for him as the family had also downsized homes when Ethan love for college. The aunt had to move out and live with another family member on the East Coast well Jack was living at home. Because she was a teacher, she was able to work remotely to complete her job.

Grace Thomas was a graduating senior who was anticipating coming home after graduation. Her parents were renovating her room and other parts of the house in anticipation of her return. But the room was not ready for her out spring break. Due to the shutdown, it was not possible to get workers in to complete the work on her room. For a period of time, she was living in an unfinished room without air conditioning until workers were able to come in and finish. Similarly, Faith Thorton's mom had just purchased a new home. She was amid renovating the home well also living in it. when faith moved home only the upstairs was complete. the downstairs dining areas living areas and kitchen were still incomplete. They did not have appliances in the kitchen. Again, because of the limitations on workers call mom the family waited for about a month for all the work to be completed. Faith indicated that they had "takeout, lots of dry pre-made foods that you didn't have to do anything to. Lots of people, our good friends, brought us food and just left it on the doorstep. And then we eventually got the appliances."

*Use of Second Rural Home*

Three of the families had a primary home in more of an urban area and a second home in a rural area. The Tanner family owns a ranch on over 1,500 acres of multigenerational family land. They spent about 50% of their time at their ranch and probably would have spent even more time, except for the lack internet and phone service. Their daughter, Jenna, would travel between their family home and ranch every week with her younger brother who was a high school senior. When they were at their home, they would complete their schoolwork. At the ranch, they were able to spend time together. After the spring semester was over, they opted to install a phone tower on their property so they would be able to stay there more often. The mother, Addison, said, "retreating down there, everything became a lot more simplified. You just live in the ranch life which entails a lot of outdoors and just a lot of simple living, and I would say that was really refreshing."

The Anderson family was in the process of building a barn house on their multigenerational family land. The mother, Amelia, shared pictures of the progress and was excited about the prospect of having a place to get away with her family. In a follow-up communication, Frank wrote, "my parents barn is finished and lovely. Since they have the vaccine and so do my grandparents as well as [me getting] weekly tests we have gone up there a couple times and spent time with the family." Amelia also followed up and wrote, "It is so peaceful and quiet out there and it is my favorite place in the world."

Lastly, the Taylor family purchased a small 30-acre farm in the summer. Emily Taylor, who is a real estate broker, shared that they had been planning on purchasing a property like this for a long time. This was just the perfect time to do it. Their primary home is in the heart of

Houston, but they really don't like it. With all the restrictions in Houston, she was excited for this to be a place for her whole family, including her grown children with their families, to be able to get away. She also mentioned that the city in which they purchased the house did not have any mask restrictions. She was excited to be able to go to a place without those restrictions.

Government Restrictions

There were three areas in which students resided that students specifically mentioned the government restrictions and how those restrictions impacted their daily life. First, the students living in Central America said they were shocked to experience the restrictions. Felicity Ignacia shared:

> So, we came back and literally everything changed. We came back and I saw my mom the next day. I saw my best friends and that was a Saturday, I think. The president said we're closing the whole country no one can come in or out. All the churches and malls are closed. At first, I was so confused because that's never happened. I was so angry he's closing the church because he has something against us. So, everything stopped.

She came to the conclusion later that it was not a religious attack but rather something everyone was experiencing. But she contrasted the government restrictions in her country to the United States. "I remember I was so jealous because I saw people in the U.S. and they were going out and they told me, 'I went to a water park,' 'I went to the lake,' and I'm like I can't even go out and walk my dog after 5 p.m."

The student who returned home to China noted the strict regulations as she traveled into China, but now that China's cases are very low, they have a lot more freedom and can move about normally. Lastly, Jack Shepherd lived in California. He indicated that where he was just outside of Los Angeles was a hot zone for COVID-19. He said, "Finally my parents let me go

back [to the university] since we were paying for the apartment… We were in California. It was very strict because it was a hot zone there for the coronavirus." The government regulations for all three of these students seemed to change based on how prevalent the virus was in their area. Being the least prevalent in China in the summer, she experienced the least restriction.

## Overview of Family Members

The members of the family and their needs contribute to dynamics in the living arrangement. As documented in Table A.2, the quantity, age, and life stages of interviewed students' parents and siblings vary. The unique composition of residents in each home inhibits the ability to approach any family structure as normal or standard. Of the randomly interviewed families, there is not a single structure that can be considered most common.

Of the 16 families, half the parents did not have any children living at home before the pandemic. Four students returned to single-parent homes. Two of these homes also had younger siblings in the home. As for the students' siblings, in spring 2020, four interviewed students had siblings who were graduating high school seniors, three only had siblings age 17 or younger, three students only had older siblings, three were only children, and two students only siblings were also in college. Lastly, only one interviewed student had multiple younger siblings and multiple older siblings and a sibling who was a high school senior.

Each one of the mentioned differences influences the living arrangements. Specific experiences and needs are associated with the life stage of each individual living in the home, as well as family members not living in the home. In addition to the immediate family members, five families had additional residents in the home, such as grandparents, aunts, or other college students. The additional residents were in the family system before the pandemic or became

part of the family system during the pandemic. Thus, these members are referred to as part of the family, or families referred to as families with additional members.

## Family Narrative Exemplar

The family experiencing the greatest number of college students relocating to their home was the family of graduating senior art major, Gabby Tate. Her family's story provides a quality example of families experiencing a pileup of difficult events and using resources to navigate through the challenges. Every individual had unique challenges and the family used existing and new resources to find solutions. Gabby also had two other siblings in college. During spring break, when they received the information that spring break was going to be extended, Gabby was having her wedding shower at her home. She already had several friends staying over at the house from out of town. They all left shortly after, but Gabby, her roommate, and her siblings remained. Gabby's older brother did return to living at his residence at a different college. However, Gabby and her younger brother, Jake, both brough an additional guest to stay at the family home for the duration of the semester. Gabby's roommate was unable to return home and Jake's girlfriend was also unable to relocate to be with her parents as her dad had a long-term contract working in China. Both students moved in with Gabby's family.

The family also experienced the loss of their father's job in the oil industry. Prior to the pandemic, he prepared for recessions in the oil industry by investing in two semi-trailer trucks. He had used them in his part time freight and logistics business to supplement his income when oil was slow. Now he and his wife Ella, Gabby's mother, shifted their entire focus to running this small business out of their home. The family was running a logistics business and had four

college students engaging in online learning from a rural home in north central Texas. On top of these challenges, Gabby was preparing to have her senior art exhibition (which was now virtual), buying a house, looking for a job, and planning her wedding that was supposed to occur in May. Gabby noted that she did not see her fiancé for two months before their wedding and that he had to buy a house for them without her ever being able to physically travel to see the new home.

Pertaining to the spring semester living situation, Gabby's roommate slept on a trundle bed in Gabby's room on the first floor and the son and son's girlfriend each had their own rooms on the second floor. The family had the facilities to be able to house the students and run the business but being in a rural area presented challenges with internet use. The family has line of sight internet. That is, the internet is transmitted to the family home from a single access point that provides internet for all those who have a line of sight to that internet terminal. The internet speed is much lower making it difficult to engage in tasks requiring greater bandwidth. Gabby's father quickly contacted the internet company and secured the greatest bandwidth possible for their residence. Still, it was only enough to meet the most basic needs.

Gabby's mother, Ella, brought everyone in the house together to make a plan by putting all their schedules together on one calendar to make sure everyone had the access to the internet when they needed it. Gabby recounts the event:

> We ended up printing out little calendar pages and my mom would be like, "Okay what we're gonna do is y'all get your schedules [together] when you start getting them after everything initially started going online and everything." Professors were not quite sure what to do at that point. After we started getting more of a schedule in, we'd go right on her little calendar thing. [We'd make sure] that somebody's not watching Netflix while another person is trying to do a zoom meeting and two other people trying to take

> exams or something. We're trying to be really careful about how many people were on it and what they were doing on it and whether it be taking more bandwidth or not. I think that was just really bizarre as having to plan out all of that each and every day to make sure weren't overlapping on each other too much.

The family's situation was further complicated by the two additional members of the family. Jake had been dating his girlfriend for about six months before experiencing the pandemic. Initially, she was a bit reserved and did not understand or appreciate the sarcasm in the family. Gabby indicated that she eventually came around and started to put in a sarcastic comment here or there. She seemed to fit in well with the family and got along well with Gabby and Ella. When living in someone else's home for an extended period, Gabby and Ella indicated that she acted more like a member of the family by pitching in and doing what needed to be done around the house. Conversely, Gabby's roommate did not help around the house. She would often be watching Netflix while others would be pitching in. Ella mentioned that it seemed like she did not realize what it meant to do chores or contribute to the family. Gabby felt that her mom made an honest effort to give her roommate opportunities to help but didn't want to cause tension or strife by pushing any issue. The family got frustrated by her apparent lack of contribution. At the time of the interview, Gabby, Ella, and Jake's girlfriend were all still close while the relationship with the roommate became strained.

### *Pileup of Crises and Stressors*

Most families did not experience the same quantity and severity of disruptive events. Of the other interviewed families, only one parent lost full-time employment, and she also had two college students who returned home. Families used the home to meet the needs of the entire family. Students were among the first to experience the family home's capacity to meet

their need for shelter, safety, and provision of a space to engage in online education. Students shifting to online education and moving home was just one of the crises experienced by families.

## Working from Home

The two most common disruptions to typical daily functioning were changes in the parents' employment situation and high school students' education. Nine parents shifted to working from home, five parents lost employment, three of which started new businesses, five parents' businesses (all business owners) closed for a period, and only six parents' employment was relatively unchanged who were mainly in real estate or medical professions.

Eight families had high school students living in the family home, four of which were seniors in high school. These students also had to negotiate the available space and resources to be successful as students. That is not to say the high school students were successful. Several parents expressed frustration and fear of their high school student failing. Most interviewed students with siblings in high school noted the family effort to help the high school student succeed. For two families, their high school students also had learning disabilities for which they did not receive the appropriate accommodations for their students. For one student who has ADHD, the sister noted:

> We were trying to get my brother on a good schedule with high school and we kind of had to come to the realization that doing school at home Isn't going to be going to school from 8 am to 3. Because my mom at first kind of had my brother start, "okay It's 8 am. Get up for school. Get on a zoom. All right, you got to be working from 8 am to 3." But that's just not— You can't just sit at the kitchen table that long when you're at high school. You have breaks In between. You're going to lunch. You're talking to people. You're not in the classroom the whole time just sitting there doing work. We had to kind of find what routine was going to work best.

Of the 16 families, 7 mothers considered their role as caring for the family. Of these mothers, 5 were former primary or secondary teachers who either retired or chose to leave teaching to engage in the homemaker's role. Amelia Anderson was a professional in the medical field, and Addison Tanner was a business executive before leaving their fields to care for their families. Most of these mothers indicated that they used skills from their professional background to meet the educational needs or support the family's wellbeing during the pandemic.

Families experienced other challenges as well. Many families felt the loss of not being able to take family vacations or planned trips. One set of parents canceled a planned family trip to celebrate their parents' 50th wedding anniversary. Other parents canceled planned trips throughout Europe or in various places in the United States. Most parents expressed feeling isolated from friends or loss of not being able to go to church. Parents of students also expressed hesitation about interacting with their parents as they did not want to put their parents at risk. Others noted that they could not be with their parents during a challenging time. One mother noted that her mother had stage 4 cancer and could not be with her during the treatments. Another parent shared that she had three family members pass away from COVID-19 and had to attend virtual funerals.

### Fulfilling Needs

Many family members' needs required the use of spaces in the home. Most families shared how they came together as a family and collectively decided how to use the space to meet each individual's needs. Participants articulated how different family members would use spaces in the house to accomplish a purpose. The father working from home most often used

the home office, but that space might be available to the student on test days or other important events. The kitchen was for preparing meals but was be used to learn new hobbies and spend time with a parent. The study could be used to have a cup of morning coffee with a parent. The family home was transformed and used as a house, office, classroom, church, meeting room, and other required facilities. Family members could fulfill almost any requirement from their home, but it came at the cost of not being able to leave the home. Many students emphasized that personal rooms were used to have privacy and be away from family.

The primary family need during this time was safety. Families indicated that they felt safe at home and felt that remaining at home kept their family members safe. One daughter recalls an interaction with her mother, “My mother came to my room and was like you're not going anywhere we can't do this anymore [go to her boyfriend's house]. Your dad could be at risk,” and all this stuff and then I ended up not seeing [my boyfriend] for six weeks.” Another student noted, “I wanted to be by myself, and I wanted to be back at college because I didn't want to lose out on that experience, but then my mom really wanted us close and safe.”

Families’ decisions were often aimed at the goal of keeping the family safe which sometimes included keeping distance from other immediate family. The Stone family’s 90-year-old grandfather also lives with them. The elder son did not return to live at home during the pandemic. Part of the reason for him not returning was to ensure the safety of his grandfather. Although he was traditionally engaged regularly with the family, the pandemic inhibited him from being able to be physically present.

For most students, being at home was the safest location for them, but home was not a safe place for some students. Sarah Tucker, a sophomore, went home to a mother who continued her work outside the home as a medical doctor and a brother who was a senior in high school. Sarah has a great relationship with her mother but describes the relationship with her brother as "horrible." She indicated her brother has a medical condition that impedes his social awareness and behavior. About her brother, she shared:

> He has no frontal lobe control which controls outburst kind of emotional ups and downs he in the past few years has become really violent at home. I've called the cops on many occasions; most of it was towards my mom the other kind of towards me was more emotional yelling and then witnessing physical abuse... His voice makes me feel on edge, anxious, and just wanting to kind of get in a corner and stay away… I just felt really trapped in the in my house… just physically being in my house makes me feel just hopeless that I'm never going to go anywhere I hate saying because my mom worked hard to try to make it a really loving home, but it just wasn't.

About later in the semester, she notes, "I found myself a corner in the office and just, like, I mean physically just rocking myself in this panic attack because I just couldn't handle it… I needed help." Throughout the interview, Sarah noted that this was the worst school semester and all her grades suffered. She was trapped, did not feel safe, and all she wanted to do was sleep. She may have been safe from COVID-19, but her living situation proved to be extremely dangerous to her overall wellbeing.

## Parent and Child Perception of Family Experiences

Families contrasted the time in high school to their experience with their child being at home during the pandemic and indicated a lot less busyness in the spring than high school. The students were at home with the family instead of being carted around to different athletic events or extracurricular activities. With the absence of extra activities, families just had more

time together as a family. Families indicated they engaged consistently in activities with the whole family, such as watching movies together, playing games, checking off a quarantine bucket list, having family dinner every night, going on walks, and just taking the time to talk.

Even though all the family members were under the same roof for the entire day, several respondents indicated that they were unaware of what each other was doing during the day. Each member would often be in a dedicated area set up to succeed in their task for the day. As many fathers worked from home, they would stay in their office all day. Each child would often have a different area of the house to complete work. If a parent or child were in the home that did not have specific tasks to accomplish during the day, those individuals would often be watching television in a common area.

Elizabeth Townsend, a mother of seven children, describes her experience with all her children being home and her husband being home from work. Her husband's dental practice was closed for eight weeks. Her daughter came home from the University, and her two elder sons also came home from occupations in the sports industry. The two elder sons did not have any specific work to accomplish well at home, so they would often spend time watching TV. Elizabeth was ok with her boys' daily activities, but the father's presence at home complicated the dynamic. Elizabeth home schooled many of her children and was accustomed to running the day-to-day in the home. Elizabeth shared:

> It was a pretty stressful environment because he would come in and now has his 24-, 22-, and 20-year-olds, all on the couch watching Netflix, you know. But there really wasn't a whole lot else for us to be doing… We laugh about it now for sure, but there were like moments of, “Y'all need to,” he kind of came in and wanted to bark orders as to what we needed to be doing because he's used to being in control at his practice and the home is kind of… it's definitely my domain.

Elizabeth notes that she diligently makes herself aware of how everyone is doing. She is laid back and takes care of the emotional and physical needs of the family. In contrast, her husband needs to be in control. She compared him trying to bark orders in the home to her going into his office and telling his workers what to do. The home is her area, and the dental practice is his area. In that way, they are "definitely a team."

Elizabeth's husband seemed to be frustrated by the situation and looked for opportunities to engage in his occupational work. Elizabeth noted that he went into work and tried to get out of the house to be productive when he could. The anticipated outcome was what Elizabeth experienced with her husband coming home and attempting to fulfill his role as a father in the home. However, his attempt to insert himself into the daily family routine is unique among interviewed families. Most other fathers who were at home were working and not interacting with family members during the day. Most parents who switched to working from home emphasized how their role during the day was work.

Even though all the family members were under the same roof for the entire day, several respondents indicated that they were unaware of what each other was doing during the day. Each member would often be in a dedicated area set up to succeed in their task for the day. As many fathers worked from home, they would stay in their office all day. Each child would often have a different area of the house to complete work. If a parent or child were in the home that did not have specific tasks to accomplish during the day, those individuals would often be watching television in a common area.

This finding was in conflict to the anticipated outcome. The anticipated outcome was what Elizabeth experienced with her husband coming home and fulfilling his role as a father in

the home. It was anticipated that the student may return home and revert to being treated as a child in the home environment. The student's role identity as a student or as a child is affirmed or refuted by the feedback of the others in proximity to them. As the student is a child or a sibling to all others in immediate proximity to them, it was anticipated that the student's role as a family member would take precedence over the role as a student.

### *Students as Adults*

Parents supported the college student as an adult in two different ways. Parents interacted with the student as an adult in conversation and general interactions. Parents noted that they enjoyed having meaningful conversations with greater substance than when the student was in high school. Many parents indicated that they intentionally set up their students to fulfill their responsibilities to complete their schoolwork. It was anticipated that the student might return home and revert to being treated as a child in the home environment. Instead, students were affirmed in their roles as students and given the space, time and resources to fulfill their roles. Parents reported that they avoided involving themselves in their student's academic work. However, Sarah Tucker noted that several of her friends indicated that their parents got too involved in their schoolwork when they got home. Her report highlights that the present sample does not represent an individual in such a situation.

For most families, the parent's extension of freedom did not extend to all areas. Often in conflict with personal desires, students were mostly expected to adhere to parents' rules restricting them from interacting with anyone outside of the house. Many students communicated that they felt restricted by the parents, while a few students indicated that they were a part of the decision-making process about limiting contact outside the house. Other

examples of students feeling restricted or losing volition include both Jack's and Flora's parents requiring them to return home, students not being permitted to see their significant others, or parents disciplining students for issues with laundry and maintaining a messy living area. Examples of students exercising their volition include both Sophia and Gina both staying at the University and not returning home, Jane taking more responsibility for the wellbeing of all her siblings, Jack working around the house to fix it up, and Grace taking multiple trips back to campus to see friends throughout the semester. Other instances include Summer Todd noting that she previously felt compelled to attend social gatherings. Experiencing COVID-19 allowed her to realize who she is and be more selective with the gatherings she attends.

### *Student and Employees in the Home*

As a result of students and parents needing to complete tasks during the day for education and employment, most family members had little interaction with each other during the day. For example, Jack Shephard noted that he worked on fixing up the new house after he got done with his schoolwork for the day. He was proud of his success in watching YouTube videos, figuring out how to problem-solve and fix issues around the home. In a separate interview, his father also commented on the house getting fixed up but attributed the work to his mother and indicated that he did not think Jack did any of the home repair work.

Other students noted that families would all work in separate areas during the day and come back together at night for family meals. Most participants discussed family mealtimes as an event that happened consistently with the family in the spring. Family mealtimes in the spring were more consistent than when the student was in high school because family

members were not busy with other activities. Some participants noted family members shared about their day, like they had all gone to work or school and returned home for the evening.

### *Concealing Challenges*

Another common occurrence is that parents attempted to keep challenging experiences or stressors from their children, and children also tried to keep the challenges/stressors from their parents. Students and parents both indicated they kept the experience away from the other family members because they thought the parents or students were already under enough pressure and did not want to add to their load. Despite their attempts to shelter their family members from their experiences, the other family members seemed to be aware of those specific experiences.

In contrast to that pattern, Jenna Tanner noted how her relationship with her parents changed during the pandemic. She describes the experience of her mother talking with her about a challenging experience:

> That was a cool moment with my mom. Just seeing her open up and be vulnerable about this and be like, “I don't know what to do.” It made me realize that my mom who I think is perfect and I've always seen the great things about her, that she's human too and she struggles with things. It was a cool, it was a hard talk, but it was very like, I remember that and just kind of like hearing her open up about it was cool to see.

Many parents and students discuss how this time together was filled with “talks” and “words of wisdom” from parents. There were some instances of parents being vulnerable with their adult children. It was a balance between passing on wisdom from a parent to a child and conversations between two adults.

## Perception of the Pandemic Event

Students and parents generally shared a similar perspective of experiencing the

pandemic as a student and as a human being. Most expressed feelings of empathy and loss for one another for what they lost. However, that was not the case with every family. Emily Taylor and Julia Taylor both discussed how great their experience was during the pandemic. The family did experience difficulties and the entire family experienced contracting COVID-19 in the month of July. Despite that, both Emily and Julia talked about how much they loved spending time with one another. Emily noted, “We shared a lot with each other. Discussed future goals and how to obtain them, therefore we became so much closer than we already were.” In the interview, she apologized and indicated she didn’t know how helpful she would be because “I just don't feel like it was such a negative experience for us.” Both the mother and daughter expressed that they felt bad about sharing their positive experiences as so many others did not have positive experiences to share.

Emily and her husband are real estate brokers. They loved having their daughter home and considered it such a blessing because she normally never gets to come home during the school year. Emily shared that in the month of July, when they had COVID-19, it was their most profitable month in the company’s history. Shortly after that, they put in a bid to purchase a small farm that was located halfway between the University and their home in Houston. They were excited that they were going to be able to meet up with their daughter at the farm on the weekends during the school year.

### *Family Memories*

Students did not make great memories in college in the spring, but most students and parents discussed making memories as a family. Even Sarah, who was mentioned earlier about having a challenging experience at home, shared her great vacation with her mom to the beach.

While families were in the house and doing the same thing every day, the days seemed to run together. However, when families got outside, they emphasized the memories that they made. These memories were as simple as going for a drive, taking a walk or a bike ride. Several students took a road trip with a parent. Jill Stone, who lives in a West Coast State, mentioned that her family would just take drives out into the desert or down the bare city strip. One of her favorite memories is driving up to Lake Tahoe with her dad for a few days. Multiple daughters talked about how meaningful their walks outdoors were with their mothers. Those times were filled with great conversations when daughters expressed how they got to know their mothers better. Faith Thorton shared about her walks with her mom, “I really liked my time alone with my mom because you really got to just spend good quality time. We weren't thinking about anything. We really just had to, it sounds silly, to get to know each other.”

### *Celebrations and Holidays*

Several families shared about their celebrations of Holidays and birthdays. One family shared about their senior daughters’ prom. These celebrations gave families an opportunity to pool their resources and creativity to make events special and memorable for their child. There were also several families who indicated that they did not celebrate anything during the spring semester.

Elizabeth Townsend, mother to seven children, shared about several family events. She first said, “As far as supporting each other emotionally and showing up; I would say it's not any sort of official motto for our family but showing up for each other is really what they all do best.” Elizabeth goes on to describe several events:

> Saying hey, listen we're going to make tonight as special as we can for [our senior daughter]. Everyone is all in. They [prom and 21st birthdays] were all things that I remember very vividly from my life and it was hard to watch those things keep getting taken away from them. Prom was fully scheduled. It was that morning. We put a lot of planning into it… we went to dollar tree and got just cheap decorations. [Senior daughter] has this little party rocker [speaker & disco lights] … we all dressed up she wore last year's prom dress… Guys all put on coats and ties and we made a nice dinner set the table and then turned on her little party rocker and we danced. I mean when there's nine of us it's a little easier it doesn't feel quite probably dorky as it might have been but and we tried to salvage a little bit. I mean obviously it was not the same but she still to this day says it was one of the most fun because she saw that her family was doing what we could to redeem something that was lost.
>
> For Jane's 21st birthday. I mean Jane's a great girl. Going clubbing wasn't necessary. This was just devastatingly taken away from her but there is something about a rite of passage about turning 21 being carded and all of that. You're just "this is, I'm 21." We have great neighbors, and we have this little cul-de-sac. I sent a text to them and just said hey if you want it's Jane's 21st. if you want to participate great if you don't, no love lost. Because it's a court, we called it a court crawl. We gave her a crown and we took one of my son's golf drivers and we taped her id to the end of the driver. We put that party rocker on a little red wagon, and we had music. Jane would go to each house and they would walk to the end of the thing and they would card her, and they would give her a drink. I mean people were nice. It's not she took 10 shots or anything. I mean they would give her a little something and we just made our way around the court. I mean to this day it's one of my favorite family memories ever. Then we came back to the house and ate dinner and danced some more.

Other students also experienced celebrating birthdays, holidays, and other special events. Some families got creative or found ways to get together with friends and family while still exercising social distancing. One student had a party at a lake house with close family members for her 21st birthday. Another student mentioned how her father went to great lengths to source crawfish for a crawfish boil for her 20th birthday. Families that decided to make a day special seemed to find a way to accomplish that.

## Spring Education Experiences: Consistently Inconsistent

Experiencing the pandemic response “completely upended” students' lives. They genuinely desired familiarity and normalcy in their education experience. Instead, students indicated they received whatever professors could pull together. One mother noted, “[The University] suddenly had to prioritize the safety of the campus. Students, professors, & administration had to figure out how to rapidly change to an on-line format. It was ok. Not great. But I was appreciative of what was being done.” Courses were supposed to be ready on the Monday after the second week of spring break. The students noted online components were not a requirement of all professors in the past. Professors seemed to have varying expertise in technology, and very few professors had experience using Canvas for content delivery and assessment. Many faculty members did not have courses ready, nor did they know how to move their courses to Canvas. Material not being on Canvas resulted in students not knowing what to do.

### *Professors*

The most consistent experience of the transition to online education in the spring was the lack of consistency in online education. The lack of consistency is observable in students’ perceptions of interactions with professors. Students referred to professors as “amazing,” “great,” “difficult,” “not living up to my expectations,” “really old,” “jammed with emails,” “went above and beyond,” “lost,” “quality,” “clueless” and other descriptions. Students shared experiences like, “One of my professors created an entire Lego set of trying to show like this is how you would market to these people.” Another student shared, “I still have not heard from all my professors and have also received emails of professors saying they have no idea how to

continue. There's tests I had coming up that I have not heard anything about."

Many students indicated that one of the best resources for them during this time was one or multiple professors, while other students perceived the professors as having given up. Students' experiences with professors were unique and based on what the professor could pull together in a week. Students noted that multiple professors did not contact them for several weeks while the professors were being taught how to use Canvas. When professors learned how to put content up on Canvas, they noted that much of the learning material was low quality. One student shared her experience with a professor:

> My poor professor just was lost, and he was kind of putting up videos, but they were kind of just recordings from his phone. Then he would put up his handwritten notes that didn't quite match the video. He had one last test, I think, and one mini-quiz. Then when he graded them, he just set an incredible curve. I think we all passed the class. I don't think most of us were supposed to pass going into the break but then during the break, I genuinely think we set a pretty big curve just because he wasn't really sure how to do grading.

Many students shared similar experiences about interactions with professors who struggled with adapting. Overall, students and parents shared that they had difficult interactions with some professors but were overall appreciative because the professors were going through the same experience as the students. Additionally, students shared that they really missed the opportunity to connect with their professors and interact with them in a classroom setting. Students mentioned The professors and small class sizes as some of the great elements of the University that were no longer beneficial with school being online.

### *Communication*

Communication was a common theme that students also had both appreciated and undesirable experiences. Students indicated that they appreciated clear and timely

communication from professors and the university. A student noted, “I was initially stressed and anxious to find the new schedule but became more relaxed when the professors provided the plan.”

Many students never received clear communication about some of their classes. Several students indicated that for some classes, they received a couple of emails, finished a few random assignments, and the professor concluded the course. Other students experienced professors constantly changing the class, moving back due dates, and making assignments due at random, unpredictable times.

The education experience had changed entirely. A student noted, “Online schooling is the worst, especially when compared to how amazing (the University) is.” Education in the second half of the spring became something just to check off and finish. Conversely, another student noted that his perception of education changed in such a way that he began to genuinely appreciate the educational experience he had before COVID-19. "When I was in high school, I was just focused on getting into college. But in the spring, I had to completely change the way I thought of the world and my education."

### *Online Instruction*

Instruction in the spring semester varied considerably between professors as well. A select few classes did have online meeting times via zoom. The students indicated they appreciated these professors' efforts to try to keep their experience as normal as possible. For most classes, there was no set class time. Many classes did away with live lectures and used recorded lectures instead. Those recordings also varied considerably in quality. For others, the

professors put up their power point slides, required readings, and assignments to be completed before the semester's conclusion. Students' responses indicate that every class was unique.

### *Educational Routine*

Students spoke freely about the struggles in their experiences at home. A graduating senior shared, "I feel robbed of my college experience because I didn't get to finish the year in my actual classes but rather had to do them through an online course. Which I HATE online courses, I'm not disciplined enough to do them." After students established their initial routine for the semester, students had to adapt to a new routine after spring break. Several students struggled to establish a new personal routine and maintain the discipline to complete assignments on their own schedule, while other students found the lack of required routine freeing. Those students completed their work quickly and used the time to work on hobbies and other ventures. Many students expressed that lack of prior experience with online courses made it hard to maintain discipline and produce quality work. Students lost access to professors as well as their learning communities. Before COVID-19, students could help each other master challenging material. A student shares about calculus, "It was a struggle teaching calculus to myself because I didn't like the teaching style that he used." Another student mentioned, "Trying to connect to classmates and professors through Zoom feels completely impersonal, and I feel like by the time I could ask questions during the lectures, it was too late because I couldn't interrupt from my own screen."

When professors adapted the courses after spring break, students consistently reported that faculty removed assignments and required less overall. Students appreciated the leniency from the professors but got frustrated by other new practices. When students were in face-to-

face classes, assignments were due in class. With everything being on Canvas, professors could set the due dates for any time and any day. Students shared that they felt like they had assignments due all the time. A student noted,

> "It would just be really confusing having to keep up with all those different deadlines because you're like, "oh goodness" versus being, "Okay everything's due Sunday." I know, "Hey! If I have a lot going on Friday, I can get It done on Saturday." Or stuff that.

### *Online Assessments*

Online assessments were a new experience for many students. Students were required to use a specific software called lockdown browser. This browser was the source of much frustration for many students. Students expressed concern about possibly violating rules as family members walked behind them while taking a test. The student's environment was not always controlled enough to ensure the student would be uninterrupted while engaging in an online assessment. Some students felt self-conscious about a video being recorded, while others were fine with it.

Students consistently discussed the challenge of securing quiet spaces in homes to complete their work. A student maybe working at the kitchen table or dining room table while a sibling or parent is watching TV in the next room. Many homes had family desks and offices, but the father often used the office for work. The father requiring the use of the desk left the students to find a place to work. When discussing the locations of where they worked, students often mentioned rooms with chairs but did not mansion their bedroom. Those places with chairs are typically public areas better around other people.

### *Pass/Fail*

Many students and parents referenced the University affording students the option for a pass/fail grade for the spring semester. The students mostly seemed to appreciate the option afforded to them. The students explicitly referenced that every student's situation was unique, and individuals who struggled to secure their resources right at the return after spring break fell behind. One parent noted, “I appreciate that [the University] gave the kids the option [on pass/fail] grades because it absorbed some of that mess um certainly helped [my son] hang on too. Because he's got an academic scholarship and we'd be we'd be sunk if he didn't have that.” Other students mentioned frustrations with assessments, communication from professors, grading scales, dealing with mental issues, lack of motivation, unclear expectations, and other reasons that made it difficult for them to succeed. These students all expressed their appreciation for the pass-fail option.

### *Perceived Value of Education*

As students continued their education in the spring semester, the parents and students discussed their perception of the value and quality of the education in the spring semester. Students commented on the cost of attending the university and indicated that they felt like the value of education did not reflect the cost. However, these students and parents also noted that this was not something within the University’s control as all universities were experiencing the same challenges.

### *Perception of Learning*

Perhaps the more significant issue was the perception of student learning. Several

students noted that they were not learning. Instead, they were memorizing content and taking an exam. Many courses should have been on-campus such as coding and art classes. Students felt they were not extending their learning to real-world applications in these classes and other upper-level classes. Some students were concerned that they were not prepared enough to succeed in higher-level classes or successful in their careers. However, others indicated that they felt prepared and could find ways to apply what they were learning outside of class. Another student noted, “I seemed to go through the motions a bit during last semester just because I was all online and I didn't feel like I was really in school.” Several other students also communicated the same sentiment shared by this student.

# APPENDIX D

# EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

The exploration of university students' families' lived experiences during the spread of COVID-19 requires a diverse approach. The results are a narrative of the unanticipated intersection of multiple environments and constructs. Experiencing the higher education pandemic response of restricting access to university physical facilities, many undergraduate students relocated to complete their studies from off-campus locations, often returning to their family homes (Hartocollis, 2020). Just as the family boundaries and roles changed when the student relocated to the university, boundaries, roles and expectations changed again as the student returned home (Boss, 2016). Many parents took on new family roles, worked from home, or navigated the pandemic response without employment. A pandemic of similar magnitude has not occurred since the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918 (CDC, 2019). Thus, the present study is unprecedented and serves to establish a basis of understanding in this area.

The present examination of literature serves as a framework of existing literature related to the lived experiences of students and families of on-campus undergraduate students who experienced the pandemic response of the University in the spring 2020 semester. In the following review, I identify and describe persons, constructs, and theories related to the presently examined phenomenon. The review also is used to justify a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Situating the lived experiences within present literature supports the goal of interpretation to provide pedagogical insight for higher education practitioners (van Manen, 1990).

The literature review is the first methodological activity (Moustakas, 2014). The description, illumination of themes, and reflection on what is presently known in the literature

labeled as the researcher's assumptions and pre-understandings align with the first hermeneutic research activity *turning to the nature of the lived experience* (van Manen, 1990). Consistent with hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, a theoretical bias is identified by articulating the pre-data gathering interpretation through theoretical lenses (Peoples, 2020). The present review and identification of theoretical bias represent the initial reflective analysis of literature before data collection and the reflection on associated literature following data collection.

## University Students

Undergraduate students are in the stage of early adulthood. Transition to adulthood is signified by a shift toward independence observable across three primary tasks: taking personal responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2004). Most students who enroll in a traditional four-year university move from their adolescent residence and relocate to college-specific housing (Conger & Little, 2010). This residence change marks the shift of college students experiencing independence and assuming responsibility for daily needs (Johnson et al., 2010). Despite students moving to an independent residence and making independent decisions, about three-quarters of students are still financially dependent on their parents (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012).

The normative transition to adulthood is well documented and explored. However, until the current pandemic responses, there was little opportunity to examine how a mass disruption during this period impacts university students' developmental transition to adulthood. The phenomenon faced by university students during university campuses' shutdown is dissimilar to other disruptions students may have experienced. The broad impact of the disruption was

evidenced in students moving back home. This transition presents questions of how the pandemic will impact the students, parents, and the economic trajectory. Questions include: (1) in moving back home, do students experience increased reliance on the parent(s)? and (2)are other behaviors associated with the transition to adulthood related to work, risk, romance, and independence affected? (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012).

Despite students moving to an independent residence and making decisions independent of their parents, about three-quarters of university students are still financially dependent on their parents (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). Parents' financial support is inversely related to parents' and student's perceptions of achieving adulthood. Students perceive financial independence as a necessity to becoming an adult (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). Students who do not receive financial support from their parents are more likely to perceive themselves as adults. Although financially independent students appear to progress to adulthood quicker, this may be premature and associated with increased stress and lower living standards (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012).

If the pandemic response disrupts students' independence development, the disruption may prolong students' progress toward adulthood. Students shifting back home and increasing reliance on the parent(s) may impact other behaviors associated with transitioning to adulthood related to work, risk, romance, and independence (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). Although progress toward independence and adulthood may slow, increased dependence on parents is positively related to higher academic achievement, higher living standards, and decreased stress (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). The immediate proximity to parents also affords other means of support such as practical support, advice, information, guidance,

companionship, and emotional support (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). Thus, the reliance on parents during the global pandemic may have a longitudinal impact on the parent-child relationship and utilization of non-financial resources.

## Families of Emerging Adults

The literature on college students and their families is limited, and a large portion of the literature focuses on student's role as college students but does not examine families' well-being or functioning while students are in college. The related literature either explores family support and communication from a distance in relation to students' role as a student or discusses students' retroactive accounts of students' families. Many studies examine students' retrospective perceptions of family functioning and relate those accounts to students' present academic functioning (Johnson et al., 2010), but the literature is sparse on family functioning while students are in college. The scarcity of literature on college students' families may be due to students not being physically present in the home. One explored element of student-family experiences while in college is familial communication regarding college and academics. Parent-student communication was found to be instrumental in student success for non-first-generation college students (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017; Nichols & Islas, 2015). The present study findings conflict with the previously published results as students consistently noted the parents' emotional support and noted the parents tended not to be involved in their education.

Researchers also document findings on familial support of students while enrolled in college. Family support of students is related to the family's socioeconomic status and parents' completion of college (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017; Padilla-Walker et al., 2012) and family stability (Fomby & Bosick, 2013). Support includes but is not limited to financial (Padilla-Walker et al.,

2012), social, emotional or academic support (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017). Minimal literature exists on social and emotional support, but the National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) consistently updates data on familial financial support. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) also indicates that between 2014 and 2017, about 70% of parents were supportive of their students staying in college.

Student's success in college is related to the student's retrospective accounts of family cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict (Johnson et al., 2010). These three components of the family environment are related to the students' academic, social and emotional well-being. Students who reported families as less cohesive before beginning college reported struggling with academic adjustment, social adjustment, and general psychological distress (Johnson et al., 2010). Expected student success while transitioning during the pandemic may also be directly related to the prevalence of periods of family instability throughout the student's childhood (Fomby & Bosick, 2013). According to Fomby and Bosick's (2013) study results, the most significant parental predictors of students transitioning to adulthood through the means of traditional college are parents also having graduated from college. However, students who experienced family instability were significantly more likely to transition to adulthood through a path other than a college education.

## Working from Home

The literature pertaining to the disruption of student's education is most often relating to student drop-out or discontinuation of the role as a student (Ayala & Manzano, 2018; Muljana & Luo, 2019; Rotenberg & Morrison, 1993). Thus, the most consistent literature relating to students' transition from in-person education to distance education is possibly the

literature on employees working from home. In this comparison, dropping out of college would be the equivalent of quitting a job or being terminated from work, while shifting to distance or online education is similar to an employee working from home. Students' education may represent students' jobs or occupations, and family members are still students' immediate family members. One crucial difference is that in employee working from home literature, the employee is often a working adult with a spouse and child(ren) instead of fulfilling the role of an adult child. Other differences only permit the work-family literature to be proposed as a possible parallel that needs to be further tested before fully extending the implications of the employee working from home literature to the students working from home. Nevertheless, by drawing on this parallel, if students' experience of shifting to distance education mid-semester is similar to employees shifting to working from home, it may be possible to propose additional parallel implications from the rich literature of employees working from home.

Students shifting to engaging in distance education from home is similar to employees experiencing workplace ostracism when shifting to working from home. The employee may lose connection or feel ostracized from the workplace community. This experience leads employees to use their families as a relational resource (Liu et al., 2013). Similarly, students who feel ostracized may use their families as a relational resource to meet interpersonal relationship needs.

Unrelated to the literature on family systems theory, family members have space, time and role boundaries (Hunter et al., 2019). A violation of these boundaries would be when the student is interrupted by the responsibility or entity residing outside the presently engaged boundary. For example, if students engage in schoolwork during designated times for education

but are interrupted to play games or chores, the education boundary is violated. Students also have personal, academic, and familial goals. Students may perceive the interruption as a desirable or undesirable violation depending on whether the disruption aids in moving the student toward a goal desired by the student. However, if the disruption is not moving the student toward that goal, the disruption may be undesired and frustrating (Hunter et al., 2019). This frustration may lead to interfamilial conflict, while desired disruptions may not lead to conflict. If the student experiences a boundary violation from the home, the student may, in turn, allocate more resources to achieve the student's academic goals. Similarly, if academic requirements violate home boundaries, the student may find satisfaction with investing in their family (Hunter et al., 2019).

When shifting to distance learning, students experience flexibility in their academic schedules. Flexibility is positively correlated with employment and familial enrichment (Lott, 2018), but flexibility and control of one's schedule may not necessarily be correlated with performance (Carlson et al., 2010). Although students shifting to distance education may perform as well on academic assessments and requirements, the enrichment and satisfaction with experience may decrease. In a study of 350 distance education students, intrinsic motivation and enjoyment (student satisfaction) have been demonstrated to be positively predictive of academic persistence, and perceived competence (performance) was not demonstrated to be predictive of academic persistence (Brubacher & Silinda, 2019). Even though students may perform similarly in distance education, attention to students' enjoyment may impact students' persistence toward completing their education.

Work-family enrichment (Carlson et al., 2011) and experience of a major life event

(Bakker et al., 2019) may impact job performance. Family to work enrichment was not found to significantly impact job performance. However, positive work to family enrichment, partially mediated by the employee's positive mood, has been found to positively impact the employee's perception of job performance (Carlson et al., 2011). Students' education to family enrichment partially moderated by positive mood may positively impact students' educational performance. Also, employees working from home who experience a major life event have been found to ruminate about the major life event, which undermines self-efficacy in work engagement and subsequently job performance (Bakker et al., 2019). Similarly, students experiencing the pandemic response without being near other students with whom they have interpersonal relationships may result in students ruminating about their experiences and have a similar undesirable impact on students' self-efficacy and academic performance.

These parallels require studies specifically designed to explore these outcomes, and due to the window of time when students shifted to online learning, it may not ever be possible to test these outcomes to conclusively draw the parallels. However, as the present study is the beginning of a longitudinal exploration of students' and families' experiences and implications in relation to the phenomenon, attention to the work from home literature may yield possible connections implications for researchers to explore.

## Theoretical Bias

By articulating theoretical bias, the researcher reflects on and documents preexisting beliefs, biases, and theoretical applications before engaging in data collection (Vagle, 2018). Pre-judgments and theories serve as a framework to conceptualize or frame occurrences or situations. However, "negative space" or unanticipated blind spots occur in considering

everyday activities (Daly, 2003). That is, theorizing may address details about specific situations related to the theory, but the theoretical lens fails to expound on the richness of persons' day-to-day experiences.

Presently, by employing researcher reflexivity on family stress theory (McCubbin & Patterson, 1985), family systems theory and existence relatedness growth theory (ERG) (Alderfer, 1969), I examine how theory serves as a lens to interpret or explain the experienced phenomenon. Identifying this perception through the theoretical lenses before data collection prepared the researcher to be sensitive to and document content that does not fit the theoretical bias. Also, identifying bias permitted the use of negative case analysis by looking for contradictions that challenge the beliefs and theoretical applications (Tracy, 2020).

### *Family Stress Theory*

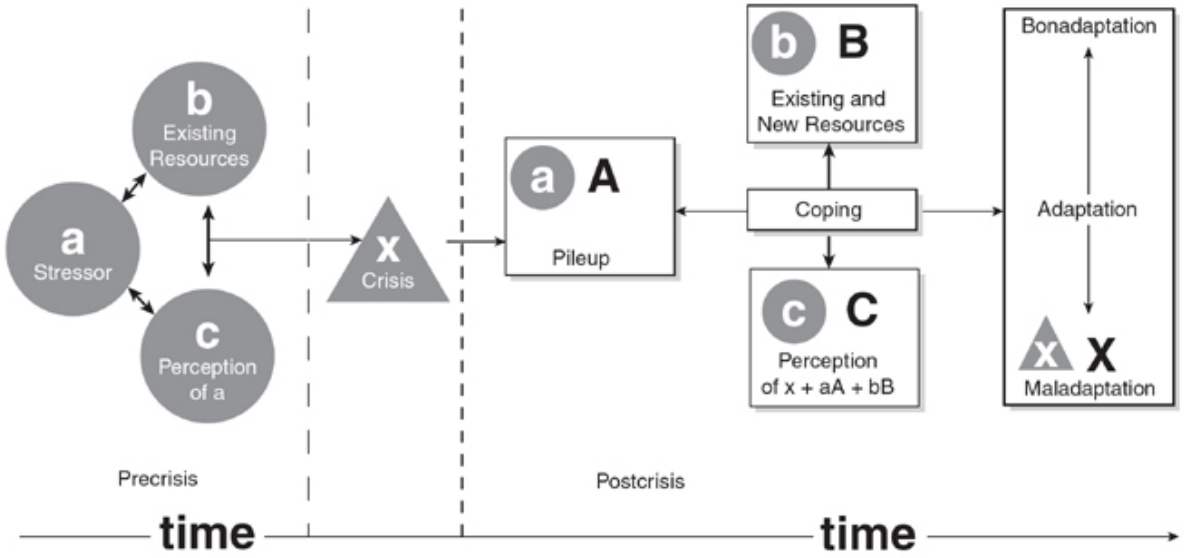
The double ABC-X model of family stress (Figure D.1) can be used as a framework to conceptually approach the examination of families of university students experiencing the pandemic response. A stressor (a) is any life event or transition momentous enough to change the family system. Stressors are not stress but can lead to personal and familial stress. Stress in and of itself is not negative or undesirable. When faced with these stressors, family members use existing resources (b) and have a perception (c) of the stressor (a) with the existing resources (b). The family members interact and use their resources to adapt before a crisis occurs (x) (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Stressors can be internal resulting from the action of a family member or from an external force. They can occur to just one member, which still affects the entire system, or can occur with multiple members. Stressors can be expected normative events or non-normative

events that are unexpected or common. Adding to the complexity of the stressors, the stressor can have a sense of ambiguity when family members do not know specifics about the outcome. Stressors can be desired or undesired events or non-volitional events. Lastly, stressors can be an acute intense event or a chronic, long-lasting event (Boss, 2016).

Figure D.1

*Double ABC-X Model of Family Stress*




Source: McCubbin & Patterson (1983)

Experiencing the pandemic response can be described as a non-normative, catastrophic, chronic event resulting from external forces with ambiguous implications. Presently, experiencing the pandemic response of the higher education community is assumed to cause substantial disruption in the functioning of the family. A substantial disruption in family functioning is referred to as a crisis (x) (Boss, 2016).

The left side of the model labeled a, b, c, x refers to a pre-crisis period. Families of university students are assumed to experience the results of the university's pandemic

response as a crisis. However, the pandemic response of the university is not the only community pandemic response that families experience. Each family member experiences a pandemic response in each community with which the family member is associated. These responses may result in a substantial disruption in family functioning as well. The pileup of these disruptions is represented as a pileup of crises (aA) in the model to form a collective set of crises for the family. Therefore, the double ABC-X model is the proper lens to examine the post-crisis pileup of family crises and exploring families' experiences of coping with resources and perception to navigate the pileup toward the direction of adaptation (xX) (Lavee et al., 1985).

In the double ABC-X model, when families experience crisis events, available existing resources will be used to adapt. If the available resources cannot satisfy the crisis, the family may seek new resources in addition to the existing resources (bB factor) to resolve the crisis. The resources are economic, psychological, and physical assets from the community, family, or individual (Boss, 2016). The family works as a system to use the resources to adapt to the perception of the pileup of crises (Lavee et al., 1985).

In conjunction with the resources, the individuals and collective family perceive the crises and the resources (cC factor). This perception is the family's general feeling and orientation toward the entire situation. Each member and the collective family have a perception of the sum total of the crises in relation to the available and new resources. The family works as a system to use the resources to adapt to the perception of the pileup of crises (Lavee et al., 1985).

The members interact with an individual outlook and beliefs. This member interaction

negatively or positively impacts the familial collective perception of the experience (Lavee et al., 1985). Although the double ABC-X model of family stress theoretically accounts for the members' interaction within the context of the crises and available resources, examination of the system is difficult to achieve for many reasons. One limitation is the difficulty in articulating the familial system interactions and the impact of the interactions on the members of the system.

A strength of the model is the historical precedence of integrating multiple theories and an abundance of literature on many familial stressors and crises. Literature can be used from symbolic interactionism, family systems theory, resource theory, and collective and self-efficacy. In the model, the family stress theory outlines the family experience a pileup of crises and stressors (aA) (Lavee et al., 1985), resources that can be used to satisfy the stressor event (bB) (Boss, 2016), and the perception of the stressor event in conjunction with the resources (cC). Family systems theory contributes to an understanding of how the family system interacts to either maintain or change the system in the process of adaptation (xX) (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

### *Family Systems Theory*

From a family systems perspective, individual members of a family, their experiences and responses, cannot be considered absent from the whole (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The family is a complete system and cannot be broken down individually. Each member in the family has a role and contributes to the overall system within the boundaries of the system. When a student leaves home to attend college, this can be a change in boundaries. The student is still a part of the family system but is now a member at a distance and fulfills different roles.

The entire family, including the student, becomes disorganized with this normative change and reorganizes to adapt and achieve equilibrium after leaving home. When the student unexpectedly moves back home, the family experiences a period of disorganization and reorganization of boundaries and roles to achieve a state of equilibrium once again (Smith & Hamon, 2012).

Throughout reorganizing toward a state of equilibrium, the family members provide feedback to the members of the entire system. This feedback encourages the members to either change or retain their behavior. In the case of a student moving back, the student may receive negative feedback due to the student's new independent lifestyle behaviors or the family system may appreciate the new independence and provide positive feedback to encourage the student to continue the independent behavior (Smith & Hamon, 2012; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The dynamics of a family during a period of unexpected change that is occurring nationally are unknown. The present study will shed light on the lived experiences of the family in this process.

Families experienced a reorganization of family boundaries and shifting from an open system to a closed system. When students left for college, the boundaries were ambiguous as they were physically absent but still psychologically present. Returning home decreased the ambiguity of the boundaries as the students were also physically present, although unavailable during the day. The students returning home was not a foreign experience, but rather a return to a similar structure of when students were engaged in secondary education while living at home. The difference is that students were physically present in the home during the day while

engaged in online learning. Parents now working from home experience the same unique situation (Smith & Hamon, 2012).

The family shifted from an open system to a closed system. The family outlines how they attempted to reorganize the family system to achieve a state of equilibrium. Although the entire family system provided feedback that her roommate's behavior was not in continuity with the expected behavior, her roommate continued to engage in the undesired behavior. This behavior added stress to the family and inhibited the family from achieving a state of homeostasis (Smith & Hamon, 2012; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

### *Existence, Relatedness, Growth Theory*

Humans seek to fulfill the most basic needs. The hierarchy of needs utilizes a base of what Maslow deems as the most fundamental need to all humans and gradually moves to less fundamental needs until arriving at the top of his pyramid at self-actualization. Maslow proposes that individuals will seek to fulfill lower needs before higher needs. Alderfer expanded on Maslow's work and proposed the Existence, Relatedness, Growth (ERG) Theory (Alderfer, 1969). Students and all family members must meet the basic needs of existence and relationships before being able to engage in growth. For example, if physiological needs of food, shelter, and rest are not met, family members would struggle to transcend the first level of need to meet a higher level. Similarly, in the present situation, if family members experience or fear sickness or do not feel safe, this perception will inhibit the members' relationships. If the lack of meeting basic needs inhibits members' relationships, the members will not move beyond the relationships to grow.

Students indicated being a student is associated with the anticipated outcome of mastery of concepts and skills to succeed in a chosen profession. This mastery requires students to grow. Growth is a human need, but Maslow and Alderfer (1969) contend an individual will not be able to meet higher psychological needs such as love, belonging, and growth until basic physiological needs such as shelter, safety, and food are met (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

## Methodology

### *Theoretical Philosophical Approach*

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach as well as a methodology (Vagle, 2018). As phenomenology is the study of a phenomenon, or more specifically, the human experience of a phenomenon, phenomenology is the most appropriate philosophical approach to resolve the identified research questions. The phenomenological philosophy posited by Hegel, Dilthey, Husserl, and Heidegger provides a tradition, mindset, or approach to perceive the phenomenon but not necessarily a methodology to exercise the philosophical approach. Philosophically, a phenomenon is the thing itself, not a generalization or interpretation of the thing. Presently, the phenomenon is the pandemic response of the University (Vagle, 2018).

We can generalize and interpret persons' experiences of the phenomenon by applying the work of scholars such as Giorgi, Dahlberg, Gadamer, and van Manen. The philosophy evolved into methodologies consistent with the phenomenological tradition, such as descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology (Sloan & Bowe, 2013).

In descriptive phenomenology, which is not appropriate for use in the present study, one removes the influence or "bracket" the excess or distracting content in efforts to identify,

illuminate and describe the essence of the phenomenon through the perspective of the person who experienced it (Sloan & Bowe, 2013). This approach views the phenomenon removed from the influence of time and the larger context of the person's world in which the phenomenon occurred. This more straightforward approach enables an emphasis on the essence, or objective core, of the phenomenon and may be beneficial if the socio-historical context is not of concern. The researcher documents descriptions of the essence of the lived experiences but does not interpret or propose themes (Sloan & Bowe, 2013).

### *Hermeneutic Phenomenology*

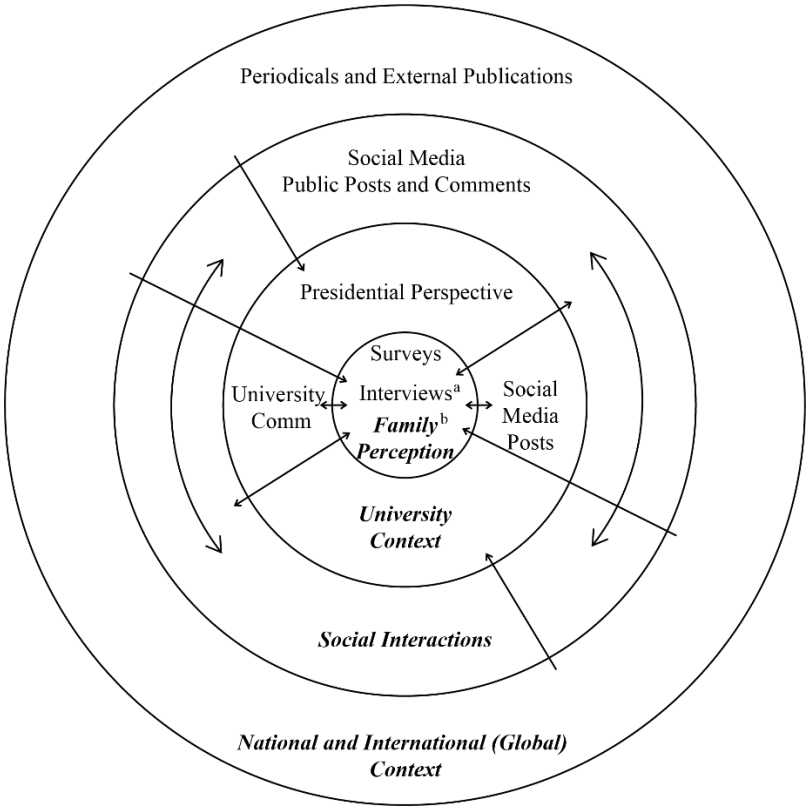
In contrast to descriptive phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology affords the opportunity to interpret the lived experiences and propose pedagogical implications from the derived interpretation (van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a methodology of reflecting on lived experiences and allowing the lived experience of the phenomenon to show itself for what it is within the context of which it occurs without being polluted with forced adherence to theory or preexisting beliefs (van Manen, 2014). This philosophy of allowing that which is lived to show itself guides all the researcher's actions and procedures. Employing the hermeneutic phenomenology method aims to illuminate and interpret the lived experience in context in the most accurate and unadulterated form. It is a methodology with no set methods. That is, there are many methods, techniques, and procedures that can be employed consistent with the hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy, but the methods should not guide the collection of data (van Manen, 1990). Instead, the phenomenon, purpose and philosophy should guide the use of the appropriate methods, techniques, and procedures (Vagle, 2018).

The researcher used Max van Manen's methodological structure for the present study.

van Manen (1990) builds on the hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy to provide a structure of six research activities. The research activities are not a set procedure but rather a dynamic interplay between six research activities: (1) Turning to the nature of the lived experience, (2) investigating experience as we live it, (3) hermeneutic phenomenological reflections, (4) hermeneutic phenomenological writing, (5) maintaining a strong oriented relation to the phenomenon and (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (van Manen, 1990). These six activities, spanning from the pre-research period to analysis and application, serve as a structure to organize the employed activities and methods. Consistent with van Manen's (1990) structure, in the present study, the researcher *turned to the nature of the lived experience* by identifying theoretical bias and documenting associated literature and anticipated findings before data collection, *investigated the experience as it was lived* by collecting data, engaged in *hermeneutic phenomenological reflection* through research reflexivity and thematic analysis, engaged in *hermeneutic phenomenological writing* by documenting, reflecting on and rewriting the narrative, and *maintained a strong oriented relation* by focusing the interpretation for the pedagogical purpose of practitioners in higher education. Throughout this methodological structure, the researcher attended to the appropriate construction, interpretation, and implications of the narrative of the phenomenon by *balancing the research context of the parts and the whole* (van Manen, 1990) as visualized in Figure D.2.

Figure D.2

*Parts and Whole of the Phenomenon*




Note. Parts and Whole of the Phenomenon is adapted from Bronfenbrenner's concepts in the Ecological System Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). [a] Regular font words are the sources of gathered data. [b] Bold italicized words represent the part of the phenomenon associated with the data within that circle.

Employing a hermeneutic approach with Heidegger's hermeneutic circle enables the researcher to use constant comparison and reorganization of information to build a richer understanding of the system. Heidegger's hermeneutic circle is not a method but rather a lens through which to interpret the system (Peoples, 2020). The researcher acknowledges their perception of the phenomenon as a fore-conception on which all other experiences and information is compared and built. This perception is presently represented in the initial literature analysis. As the researcher encountered data after the initial analysis of literature and documentation of fore-conception, the researcher broke down the new information and

previous information into parts and then put the whole back together as the researcher's new understanding of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2018). By constantly comparing newly encountered information to the researcher's continually evolving perception, the researcher's perception continued to reflect the culmination of the parts into the whole of the experienced phenomenon (Peoples, 2020). The researcher's reflective analysis of various data sources uniquely contributes to constructing the interpretation of the lived experiences of the phenomenon in context. Various data sources that contributed to illuminating the parts and whole of the phenomenon are visualized in Figure D.2.

### *Procedures*

To describe the essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon, the students and the parent(s) of the students were asked about this time using both surveys and interviews. Published and publicly available material will be collected and analyzed to provide national and university context by reflecting on the context content with the families' lived experience descriptions to describe and interpret the parts and the whole of the phenomenon (Tracy, 2020).

### *Plan for Analysis*

The analysis occurs throughout the research study by using researcher reflexivity (Vagle, 2018). Regardless of the data medium, each additional piece of information is compared to the previous information and accommodated or adopted to form a more complete picture of the phenomena. When interviewing the participants, the researcher employed a responsive role as a peer in the midst of experiencing the same phenomenon as the students and parents. Taking

a responsive role allowed the research to build a reciprocal relationship with the students and parents (Tracy, 2020). In responsive interviewing, the researcher reflects on shared experiences, significant events, communications and acknowledges personal experiences and biases during the process. The result of this approach can be an uninhibited narrative that may even be therapeutic for the participants (Tracy, 2020).

The researcher analyzed each record by following an adapted data analytic procedure for phenomenological research (Peoples, 2020). Peoples procedure is for descriptive phenomenology, but a hermeneutic phenomenological approach requires additional interpretation and integration of contextual content. Each record was analyzed individually before integrating the findings into the larger picture. After organizing the records into organizational categories, the adapted procedure to analyze individual documents within each part is as follows: (1) read the entire document, (2) create initial "meaning units" or tags for the content in the document, (3) generate themes from the meaning units for each document, (4) create a summarized narrative for each document while emphasizing the generated themes and documenting noteworthy quotations. (5) create a narrative for each part by synthesizing all the individual summarized narratives into one general narrative while integrating the major themes and appropriate noteworthy quotations and (6) generate descriptions of the general narrative (Peoples, 2020).

The narrative and descriptions give the reader a picture and understanding of the individual parts within the larger context. After the researcher generated descriptions of the general narrative, the researcher will interpret the findings in relation to the existing literature. Negative case analysis was used to identify persons' experiences that conflict with or provide

greater insight relating to the previously identified theories and existing literature (Peoples, 2020). Establishing parallels to existing literature affords the ability to posit pedological insight for higher education practitioners (van Manen, 1990).

## Validity

Specific methods and practices are encouraged while engaging in a phenomenological study. The encouraged practices are prolonged engagement, triangulation, rich descriptions, external audits, negative case analysis, and bias articulation (Peoples, 2020). The employed methods are unique to the present study and are employed to support the purpose of allowing what is experienced to reveal itself in its truest form.

### *Prolonged Engagement*

Prolonged engagement is encouraged to connect with each member of the family for longer than a single point in time (Peoples, 2020). To accomplish this end, each participant engaged in a minimum of three points of contact with the researcher over three months. Prolonged engagement with each participant increases validity by illuminating consistencies, changes, or additional insight for each participant (Peoples, 2020).

### *Triangulation*

Triangulation occurred by illuminating examining the experience from multiple sources and perspectives (Peoples, 2020). The researcher examined the larger context of the phenomena from published sources and participants' lived experiences from surveys and interviews. The larger context of the phenomena was illuminated by analyzing publications and communications at the University, state, and national level. Participants' responses are

understood within the larger context in which the participants reside. Employing a hermeneutic responsive approach, the researcher continuously built a picture of the whole with each additional part (Peoples, 2020).

### *Rich Descriptions*

The practice of collecting and analyzing multiple forms and sources of data also contributes to the ability to develop rich descriptions of the participants in context. When the interview is complete, the researcher documented the perception of the participants experience in relation to other family members and other families. The descriptions and narratives were constantly rewritten and formulated as additional information was added (Tracy, 2020). This was especially true as family stressors and resources were described. Each response contributed to developing a rich description that supported the purpose of allowing what is experienced to reveal itself in its truest form (Peoples, 2020).

### *External Audit*

As the present research was conducted under the guidance of a dissertation committee, the committee served as an external audit to challenge the methods, results, and conclusions to provide accountability and encourage objectivity. The influence of this peer review will be thoroughly documented as the committee feedback will contribute to the development of the whole picture (Peoples, 2020).

### *Negative Case Analysis*

The researcher used negative case analysis by actively pursuing participants and data that may conflict with the hypothesized outcomes. Pursuing participants and attending to

exploring possible conflicting cases resulted in a diverse sample and diverse represented experiences. Each person's experience is unique to them and cannot be generalized. However, highlighting conflicts in experiences demonstrates that the population constitutes various experiences requiring more generalized analysis to determine consistencies and generalizable themes. Conflicting literature and examples were explored to ensure varying perspectives and experiences are represented (Peoples, 2020).

### *Bias Articulation*

The researcher acknowledged apriori the inability to be unbiased and completely objective. By acknowledging bias and articulating personal perceptions and beliefs, the researcher identified the influence of biases and perceptions on the interpretation of results. The researcher documented initial beliefs and perceptions in the pre-data collection literature review and the researcher's journal. The researcher consistently updated the journal throughout the process of data collection, from which the researcher was able to trace the development of the greater perspective of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

## Format and Organization of Findings

The format of the findings is a descriptive narrative that appropriately represents the essence of the phenomenon through the lens of the individual parts and collective whole (van Manen, 1990). This narrative includes specific examples and quotations. The organization and content of the narrative were determined by how the phenomenon presents itself through the parts, themes, and contextual relationships (Vagle, 2018). The researcher communicated the results by describing the lived experiences and allowing that which is lived to show itself for

what it is within the context of which it occurs without being polluted with forced adherence to theory or preexisting beliefs (van Manen, 2014).

The findings follow an organizing system approach by developing a system of categories into which data is coded to illuminate the richness of the participants' lived experiences within the larger context of occurrence (Patterson, 2002). A traditional qualitative approach of reducing findings to a list of themes results in an analysis of the experienced phenomenon's parts instead of presenting and analyzing the whole lived experience (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). Hermeneutic analysis requires the dynamic interplay of the parts and whole of the phenomenon nested in the greater context. This approach allows what occurred to reveal itself by gathering and compiling the data into a narrative that represents the lived experiences of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

## Format and Organization of Discussion

The discussion follows van Manen's (1990) approach by seeking the meaning of the families' lived experiences within the larger context and proposing pedagogical implications for practitioners. The negative case analysis results are noted by identifying contradictions, adherences, and blind spots concerning continuity of experiences, theory, and preexisting biases (Peoples, 2020). The pedagogical insights, implications, and applications are discussed for the area of higher education.