

January 9, 2015

## Project Proposal

### The Problem:

Getting out into the world from under protective wings is a busy process and (after the home sickness wears off) often those responsible for raising you get forgotten until you need them, which doesn't seem fair to anyone. Parents and guardians of new adults (starting about age 18) are eventually forced by the natural course of life to watch their children leave the comfort and familiarity of their homes to go off and start their own lives. This period of time, which can span 3 to 5 years, is often ambivalent to both parties; parents don't always know how to cope with an empty nest and new adults don't always know how to cope with a lack of constant direction and advice. Human beings are creatures of habit and, while the gift of adaptation may be the legacy of the human race, major life changes are not easy to adjust to. The primary issue with this transitional period for both parties is the art of balance. It may not always be the case that these new adults feel as though they do not communicate with their guardians as often as they should, but it is probably the case that their guardians do.

Whether new adults are leaving home to pursue some kind of education, or whether they are leaving to go straight into work or getting married, they are still leaving home. Sometimes leaving home means moving to other towns, or states, or even time zones and sometimes it means just moving down the street. Regardless of these things though, leaving home always involves establishing your own routines, your own rules, your own schedules, and your own priorities. For the parents, losing a child from the household creates a void; there is more time to do things, less things to clean, and less noise to fight with. For new adults, leaving home has a seemingly opposite effect; there are more responsibilities to manage, more things to clean, and more people to interact with. It is this opposition that often results in the parent party feeling like there isn't enough communication and the new adult party thinking that they communicate plenty.

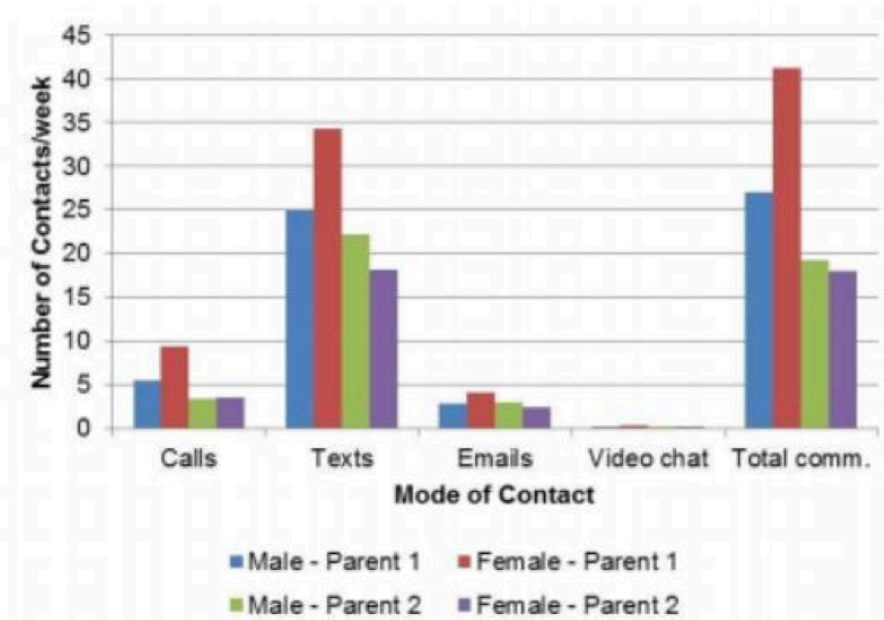
Communication Patterns	Number of Occurrences
Text messages usually have to do with logistical concerns	9
Parent and student communicate multiple times a week	6
Parent and student communicate once a week or less	6
Student usually initiates contact	5
Initiation of communication is a 50/50 split	4
Parent usually initiates contact	3
Phone calls usually more substantial	2

*Table snippet from Hofer's 2011 publication of "Student-Parent Communication in the College Years: Can students grow up on an electronic tether?" demonstrating various details regarding frequency of contact between student and parent.*

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Recent Stats:

Universities are especially interested in parent – student communication and its effects on students because it is something parents who are paying for tuition are concerned about. Some recent studies are showing that “highly frequent contact between parents and students during the college years seems to be a pervasive phenomenon” (Hofer, 2011) due to recent technology and social media. A study from 2011 showed that on average those students were communicating in some form to their parents an average of 13.4 times a day. Another study from 2012 found that those parents who were in the most contact with their children were primarily texting (Spence, 2012). Yet another study from 2013 shows that students communication frequencies with their parents has grown 2-3 times from the study in 2011 (Golonka, 2013).



*Figure from Golonka's 2013 study regarding frequency of parent-student communication and its effects on student autonomy demonstrating frequency of communication by medium*

However, the 2011 study showed a correlation between the students with higher frequencies of communication with their parents and lower autonomy and academic performance. This point brings us back to the idea of balance. The real issue here isn't that parents aren't talking to their children enough, it's that they are unable to achieve a satisfactory level of communication that also does not interfere with the new adult's life establishing process and responsibilities.

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Resources:

- Golonka, M. (2013). Keeping in Touch: Relationships between Parenting Style, Parent-Child Electronic Communication, and the Developing Autonomy and Adjustment of College Students. *Duke Dissertations*. Retrieved January 9, 2015, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10161/7242>
- Hofer, B. (2011). Student-Parent Communication in the College Years: Can students grow up on an electronic tether? *The Bulletin*, 79(2). Retrieved January 9, 2015, from <http://www.acui.org/publications/bulletin/article.aspx?issue=28134&id=14773>
- Spence, Patrick Thomas, "Parental Involvement in the Lives of College Students: Impact on Student Independence, Self-Direction, and Critical Thinking" (2012). Dissertations. Paper 315. [http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/315](http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/315)