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Life variables of college students who report helicopter parenting

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Life Variables of College Students Who Report Helicopter Parenting

An Honors College Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Health and Behavioral Studies
James Madison University

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Acknowledgements | 3 |
| Abstract | 4 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Method | 16 |
| Results | 20 |
| Discussion | 25 |
| References | 31 |
| Tables and Figures | 38 |

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Abstract

Emerging adulthood is a time when young people around 18 to 25 years old try out different experiences and work their way toward commitments in love and work (Arnett, 2006). Many emerging adults are in college and are expected by society to become independent from their parents by the time they graduate. Parents who remain high on warmth and support but high on control and low on granting autonomy inconsistent with the age of the child are considered helicopter parents (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). The current study examined the association between helicopter parenting, aggression, entitlement, materialism, and substance use of four hundred college students (108 males) through an online survey. The results suggest students who perceived higher levels of helicopter parents self-reported being more aggressive, entitled, and materialistic than students who perceived lower levels of helicopter parenting. Furthermore, males who did not use cannabis perceived significantly higher levels of helicopter parenting than male cannabis users. Consistent with previous research, males in the current study self-reported more physical and verbal aggression, as well as consuming alcohol and using cannabis more. Future research is needed to examine the effects of helicopter parenting on overall alcohol and cannabis use.

Life Variables of College Students Who Report Helicopter Parenting

Jeffrey Arnett (2000) describes emerging adulthood as a time when young people around 18 to 25 years old try out different experiences and work their way toward commitments in love and work. Arnett describes five features that differentiate emerging adulthood from other stages of life such as adolescence or adulthood. Emerging adulthood is the age of identity exploration, the age of instability, the self-focused age, the age of feeling in-between, and the age of possibilities (Arnett, 2000). Nelson and Barry (2005) described four criteria that are necessary for adulthood. These criteria are being independent and self-reliant, being able to form mature relationships, being able to comply with societal norms, and being able to provide and care for a family. Emerging adults work toward the criteria of adulthood. Recent research consisting of mainly college students show that only 25% of young people consider themselves to be adults and parents do not view them as being full adults (Nelson & Barry, 2005; Nelson et al., 2007). Parental involvement is an important factor for a child's cognitive, emotional, and social adjustment but in recent years, parents have become more involved in their emerging adults' lives (Combs-Orme et al. 2003; Pomerantz et al., 2007).

When children are little, their parents guide and support them; however, not all parents are the same. There are several different types of parenting styles. Permissive parenting does not demand much from children. There are few rules and few punishments. Permissive parents treat their children like friends, monitoring them little and allowing them to make decisions on their own (Baumrind 1971). Authoritative parenting is high on warmth and control. These types of parents are assertive and discipline using supportive rather than punitive methods. Authoritarian parenting emphasizes directions and rules and they are demanding and responsive. They use punishment to control their children and are less warm than parents using other styles (Baumrind

1971). Cui, Graber, Metz, and Darling (2016) describe indulgent parenting as parents with high responsiveness and low demands. Indulgent parents are generous with money, toys, and material possessions. Clarke et al. (2014) described three aspects of indulgent parenting: giving children material goods (material indulgence), doing things for children that their children should be doing for themselves and being overly involved and protective (relational indulgence), and holding few expectations about mature and responsible behavior or shielding children from consequences of their own behavior (structural indulgence). Helicopter parenting is a style simultaneously high on warmth and support, yet high on control and low on granting autonomy to the child (Padilla-Walker & Nelson 2012).

Helicopter parenting is similar but not the same as the other types of parenting. Permissive parenting and helicopter parenting both have high levels of warmth toward children, but permissive parenting is low on control and helicopter parenting is high on control. Authoritative, authoritarian, and helicopter parenting styles have high levels of control. Highly controlling parents may set rules and discipline their children. For example, parents may set curfews, limit who with and when their child can spend time, or discipline their children if the children disobey rules. Authoritative parents and helicopter parents have higher levels of warmth than authoritarian parents. Authoritarian parents and helicopter parents grant low autonomy to the child and the parents make decisions for the child. Indulgent parents and helicopter parents have high levels of warmth and control. The main difference between helicopter parenting and other types of parenting is that helicopter parents grant low amounts of autonomy inconsistent with the age of the child (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Characteristics of helicopter parenting, such as intrusiveness and micromanagement are often seen when parenting younger children (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). These characteristics are good for young children, but

are inconsistent for emerging adults who society expects to learn how to be autonomous in college and be fully independent soon after.

One reason college students may not immediately experience autonomy upon arrival at college is because they are financially tied to their parents. Some parents agree with the statement “if I pay, I have a say.” Lowe, Dotterer, and Francisco (2015) found that parental payment of college education and helicopter parenting were positively associated. Parents also might pay for their child’s car, car insurance, phone, monthly phone bill, rent, food, and tuition. A parent who pays 100% of expenses might believe that he or she has a higher say in the child’s life than a parent who pays 75%, 50%, 25%, or 0%. Lowe, Dotterer, and Francisco (2015) thought that parents’ fears of their child dropping out of school and losing their money spent on tuition and other expenses motivates parents to hover over their children in order to protect their financial investments.

Another reason some college students do not experience autonomy is because their parents do not view them as full adults (Nelson et al., 2007). Nelson et al. (2007) studied 800 emerging adults in undergraduate and graduate school who had at least one parent who agreed to participate in the study. Nelson et al. (2007) asked emerging adults questions about their perceived adulthood such as “do you think you have reached adulthood?” while parents responded if they thought their child had reached adulthood. Emerging adults also answered questions regarding the criteria for adulthood mentioned previously. The results showed some disagreement on the emphasis parents and emerging adults placed on various criteria for adulthood (Nelson et al. 2007). The majority of parents viewed their children as adult in some ways but not others. Emerging adults believed that the four most important criteria for adulthood were accepting responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions, establishing a relationship

with parents as an equal adult, financial independence from parents, and deciding on beliefs/values independent of parents/other influences. Both mothers and fathers listed their preferred criteria as accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, avoiding petty crimes like vandalism and shoplifting, avoiding drunk driving, and becoming less self-oriented and developing greater consideration for others. Parents listed norm compliance as more important for adulthood than did the emerging adults, but both groups listed relational maturity as the most important (Nelson et al., 2007). Norm compliance criteria include avoiding becoming drunk, avoiding drunk driving, or avoiding petty crimes. Relational maturity criteria include accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, establishing a relationship with parents as an equal adult, and becoming less self-oriented and developing greater consideration with others (Nelson et al., 2007).

The current study aims to expand previous knowledge of the characteristics of helicopter parenting and emerging adulthood. In particular, the current study will explore parent-child conflict, social aggression, academic entitlement, materialism, and alcohol and drug use variables. Parent-child conflict and social aggression are two topics that are not often studied in relation to helicopter parenting. Academic entitlement and materialism have research evidence that associates them with helicopter parenting and the current study expected to provide more understanding for the positive association between academic entitlement and helicopter parenting, as well as the positive association between materialism and helicopter parenting. Scholarship studying the association between drugs and alcohol use and helicopter parenting has provided support for both a positive and negative association. The current study expected to provide additional support regarding drugs and alcohol in relation to helicopter parenting and clarify mixed findings.

Parent-Child Match

Helicopter parenting and its limitations on the autonomy of a child has the potential to create conflict between an emerging adult and his or her parents. Twenge (2017) mentions that iGen'ers, the generation raised by smartphones and smarter technology, are more likely to agree with the statement "I wish I could return to the security of my childhood" and are less likely to agree with the statement "I would rather be an adult than a child" as compared to groups from different generations. When previous generations moved to college, many were enthusiastic to explore their newfound autonomy. This is not always the case and emerging adults may agree with Twenge's (2017) statements about the security of childhood. Such an emerging adult may not explore his or her identity, explore the possibilities presented in college, and desire his or her parents to make decisions. In this instance, parents must be more involved in their emerging adult's life than parents anticipated in order to guide and support him or her. This may create parent-child conflict because the emerging adult is dependent on the parents who did not expect to be as involved.

Alternatively, the conflict may arise from an emerging adult who enters college and desires to explore his or her identity and the possibilities but whose parents are more involved in his or her life than desired. Segrin et al.'s (2012) study of over 500 parent and college student pairs attempted to determine what parenting style was most dominant for each parent based on a parental authority questionnaire. Both parent and young adult communication was assessed. Results of the study showed that over-parenting was associated with lower quality parent-child communication, as was reported by both groups. Even though parents believed they were helping their child, the emerging adults may not have understood their parents' motives because of the

poor communication between them. Emerging adults under the assumption that their parents are overinvolved withdraw from the conflict rather than discuss it (Segrin et al., 2012).

Aggression

Just like parent-child conflict, aggression is a construct that researchers do not often study in relation to helicopter parenting specifically. Social or relational aggression harms others by purposefully manipulating and interfering with friendships and feelings of inclusion by peer groups. Social aggression can be a direct or indirect way of manipulating relationships and damaging another's self-esteem, social status, or both (Weyns et al. 2017). Loukas, Paulos, and Robinson (2005) found that maternal psychological control was associated with girls' use of overt aggression, especially for older females.

Going to college and making a new group of friends can be difficult and may be a reason for social anxiety and negative self-evaluation. Socially anxious children who have overcontrolling parents and less autonomy are more likely to have elevated levels of fear and negative evaluation that can result in socially aggressive behaviors (Loukas, Paulos, & Robertson, 2005). Also, Crowe et al. (2016) identified two groups of entitled individuals: emotionally stable and emotionally vulnerable. Emotionally stable individuals have higher levels of antagonism compared to a control group and emotionally vulnerable individuals score lower on openness. The emotionally vulnerable group in Crowe et al.'s (2016) study reported low self-esteem and high levels of disinhibition, and intrusive parenting. Both groups were more antagonistic but the emotionally stable group reported more antisocial behavior consistent with disinhibition problems. Finally, Wagner and Abied (2016) suggested that college students with highly psychologically controlling parents show more aggression in interpersonal relationships than those with less psychologically controlling parents. Students who had high levels of

physiological arousal during experiences of parental control tended to show retaliatory aggression toward others while students with low arousal showed manipulative aggression. These studies suggest that higher levels of parental control possibly result in social aggression and antagonism.

Academic Entitlement

Unlike parent-child conflict and social aggression, there is empirical research regarding the association between helicopter parenting and academic entitlement. Kopp et al. (2011) define academic entitlement as the expectation that one should receive positive academic outcomes, often independent of performance. Segrin et al. (2012) found that over-parenting was positively associated with young adults' sense of entitlement. Padilla-Walker and Nelson's (2012) scale of helicopter parenting includes measures such as "my parent makes important decisions for me" or "my parent solves any crisis or problem I might have." Emerging adults whose parents guide and support them with financial assistance and problem solving may come to expect that treatment from others as well (Segrin et al., 2012). In a college context, an entitled student may believe he or she deserves good grades and he or she should be given opportunities to aid in academic success. An emerging adult may then not put in the effort to study in college because he or she expects to do well despite the lack of effort. A student might expect to do well in his or her college classes when he or she has not put in the effort that professors expect of students. The student might expect a professor to guide him or her to success just as his or her parents did previously. Turner and McCormick (2017) studied 233 psychology students from the ages of 18 to 25. Participants answered an online questionnaire about their perceptions of their parents. Turner and McCormick (2017) found that both parental warmth and psychological control were related to greater entitled expectations. The implications of this suggest that students who

perceive their parents to have high levels of warmth or psychological control, two characteristics that may be associated with helicopter parenting, have higher entitled expectations. Higher expectations may lead to academic entitlement actions like making the arguments that “Professors should only lecture on material covered in the textbook and assigned readings,” or “If I cannot learn the material for a class from lecture alone, then it is the professor’s fault when I fail the test.” These items are found in Kopp et al.’s (2011) academic entitlement scale.

Materialism

Just as college students with perceived helicopter parents may expect academic privileges, college students may also assume financial success and material goods. Dittmar, Bond, Hurst, and Kasser (2014) define materialism as individual differences in people’s long-term endorsement of values, goals, and associated beliefs that center on the importance of acquiring money and possessions that convey status. A student may place high values on money and possessions especially if his or her parents provide financial assistance, find the child a well-paying internship, or purchase the child a nice car, for example. Higher values of money then might lead to goals and beliefs related to material possessions. Park, Twenge, and Greenfield (2014) selected national data from three different time periods to compare prerecession and recession materialism values among at least 18,000 high school seniors. The measure included a materialism measure assessing the importance of having expensive items, lots of money, and a job that makes lots of money. Results suggested adolescents valued expensive material items more during prosperous times. Kim and Chatterjee (2013) used longitudinal data collected annually from families over the course of four decades to examine predictors of financial attitudes and practices among adults. Results of the study suggested that parental warmth had a modest negative association with responsibility for managing money. Parents with higher levels

of warmth were consistent with emerging adult's mismanagement of their finances. This possibly encourages parents to provide money for their child in emerging adulthood because the emerging adult was not managing their money well. Examples of financial assistance include paying tuition, paying for groceries, or paying for gas.

As previously mentioned, Clarke et al. (2014) described three aspects of indulgent parenting. Structural indulgence and relational indulgence are similar to the characteristics of helicopter parenting. Clarke et al. (2014) did not explicitly connect material indulgence and helicopter parenting. Upon considering how helicopter and indulgent parents have high levels of warmth, there may be an association. Money is a material possession. If parents who provide financial assistance to emerging adults are providing them with material goods and this is an act of warmth, then emerging adults may come to expect and value materials and goods.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Even if parents provide financial assistance for their child, parents may not always know what their children are buying with it. College students may spend the money on drugs and alcohol. Despite this, Wils and Dishion (2004) concluded that good parental control serves as a resistance factor against substance abuse. Typically, the independence of being away from one's parents and home, where there is often supervision, encourages young adults to drink upon their arrival in college. Drinking and going to parties are social reinforcers for making friends and meeting others. Lipperman-Kreda et al. (2017) surveyed 1200 15-18 year olds from 24 cities in California. The authors found that increased exposure to restaurants, bars or nightclubs, and outdoor places was associated with increased likelihood of drinking among the sample. In college, there are opportunities for even more exposure to these settings, leading to higher levels of alcohol consumption. For 15-18 year olds, parental control was associated with reduced

exposure to bars and nightclubs. Sometimes parents want to maintain high levels of control when their child attends college and may do things such as manage money, track phones, or visit their child often. Such actions may be protective factors against substance abuse. In fact, Patock-Peckham and Morgan-Lopez (2006) study included 420 introductory psychology students who reported drinking alcoholic beverages. Patock-Peckham and Morgan-Lopez (2006) found that permissive parenting is a risk factor for alcohol use and abuse. High levels of control as a protective factor against alcohol use and abuse suggests then that students with perceived helicopter parents would have lower levels of alcohol consumption.

There is also research that reports the opposite results. In Cui, Graber, Metz, and Darling's (2016) study, 450 participants recruited from two courses in a university answered an online survey assessing their parents' indulgent behaviors during childhood and adolescent years as well as current alcohol and substance use. The results supported the hypothesis that parental indulgence experienced in childhood and adolescence was predictive of behavioral problems in young adulthood. Children were more likely to engage in drinking, drugs, and engage in criminal behavior if their parents were indulgent earlier in life. Hoffman and Bahr (2010) examined the associations between parenting styles and alcohol use among 5,500 adolescents. Hoffman and Bahr found that adolescents with indulgent parents were more likely to drink heavily than adolescents with authoritative parents.

Drug use, particularly marijuana, is always an important variable to consider. With its legalization in some states, use has increased since the 90s (Twenge, 2017). Research using samples of college students typically includes measures regarding substance use because young adults' illicit drug use is higher than any other age group (Murphy & Dennhardt, 2016). Fagan,

Horn, Hawkins, and Jaki (2012) found that even for 10th graders, weak parental controls were significantly related to increased substance abuse.

Gender Differences

Previous literature suggests gender differences for several of the variables aforementioned, particularly aggression and substance use. The vast majority of aggression research suggest sex differences in the male direction, with males showing more physical and verbal aggression, with the difference being larger for physical aggression. Prior literature also shows the absence of a sex difference in anger. Females tend to use more indirect or displaced forms of aggression and score slightly higher for indirect hostility (Archer, 2004). In addition, young adults between the ages of 18-25, otherwise considered emerging adults, have higher rates of past-month heavy episodic drinking and illicit drug use than any other age group (Murphy & Dennhardt, 2016). Males consistently consume more alcohol and have more alcohol related problems than females as well. Furthermore, while teen boys and girls have similar rates of drug use in late adolescence, males show a higher quantity and frequency of use than females in young adulthood that they maintain throughout adulthood (Schulte, Ramo, & Brown, 2009). Such gender differences may occur in the current study and may be associated with the perception of helicopter parenting.

Hypotheses

Based on previous literature, (Nelson et al., 2007) I predict only 25% of students will consider themselves to be adults. I expect students who consider themselves to be adults to perceive less helicopter parenting. Moreover, students who are adults should perceive less conflict and more satisfaction with parent involvement.

Assuming there are differences between the students who perceive themselves as adults and those who do not, I will conduct analyses only on those students who do not consider themselves adults. I predict those who do not consider themselves to be adults and perceive helicopter parenting will have more reports of aggression. I will examine gender differences for aggression as previous literature shows there to be moderate differences.

Based on previous literature from Segrin (2012), I expect to replicate and find that helicopter parenting is associated with entitlement. Previous research has proposed associations between indulgent parenting and helicopter parenting on physical materials. The current study aims to extend this to materialism and predicts that students with perceived helicopter parenting will place higher values on materials. Finally, past literature from Lipperman-Kreda et al. (2017) and Patock-Peckham and Morgan-Lopez (2006) has suggested that helicopter parenting is a protective factor against drugs and alcohol. Yet, there is also literature from Cui, Graber, Metz, and Darling's (2016) and Hoffman and Bahr (2013) to suggest that helicopter parenting is associated with higher substance abuse. I expect students who perceive helicopter parenting to report a lower frequency of alcohol and marijuana consumption.

Method

Participants

I collected online survey data from 400 college students, 27% of whom were male. Eighty-five percent of students were in their first two years of undergraduate studies and 99% were between 18 to 21 years old. The majority of the students were Caucasian (78 %), with others being Asian (6.2 %), Hispanic or Latino (5.5 %), Black (5.2%), or of mixed race (3.5%). The majority of students reported both their parents received a college degree and their parents'

estimated combined income was either over \$100,000 (50.5%) or under \$100,000 (49.5%). Fifty-five percent of the students reported their parents paid for more than 75% of their tuition, and 66% answered their parents paid for over 75% of their rent. Most students either reported their parents only paid for 0-25% of their groceries and gas (34%) or their parents paid for more than 75% (35%). Finally, the majority of students (70%) do not have a job during the academic year.

Students received participation credit for the James Madison University psychology participant pool. Students in introductory psychology courses must participate in surveys and research that other students and professors conduct for course credit. The online survey was conducted through Qualtrics.

Measures

The participants took an online assessment that included items from the following scales:

Helicopter Parenting. Padilla-Walker and Nelson's (2012) scale contained 14 items divided into three categories- helicopter parenting, behavioral control, and psychological control. Helicopter parenting assessed the extensiveness of parents making important decisions for their adult children. Behavioral control assessed how parents control aspects of their child's life, such as money, friends, and activities. Psychological control assessed the subjective impact on an emerging adult's psychosocial adjustment (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Participants rated statements such as "my parent tries to control how I spend my money" or "my parent looks for jobs for me or tries to find other opportunities for me" on a scale from 1= not at all like me/him/her to 5= a lot like me/him/her. The reliability for the current study was acceptable ($\alpha = .78$)

Adult Status. Nelson et al. (2007) used a one question assessment of adult status. Emerging adults were asked “do you think you have reached adulthood?” and chose between yes, no, in some respects yes, or in some respects no. Nelson et al. (2007) used this method of adult-status classification. The method has adequate face validity and the single item adequately differentiated individuals who answered yes from the other answers on important developmental features including participation in risk behaviors such as illegal drug use (Nelson & Barry, 2005).

Positive Self View. Park, Twenge, and Greenfield (2014) used this three item scale to measure how participants view themselves. The first two items- “how intelligent do you think you are compared with others your age?” and “rate your school ability compared with others your age throughout the country” used a Likert scale from 1 (far below average) to 7 (far above average). Finally, participants rated “how satisfied are you with yourself” from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 7 (completely satisfied).

Aggression Questionnaire. The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire consisted of 29 items related to physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Participants self reported the items on a Likert scale from 1= extremely uncharacteristic of me to 5= extremely characteristic of me. Statements included “given enough provocation, I may hit another person,” “my friends say that I’m somewhat argumentative,” or “when people are especially nice, I wonder what they want.” The reliability for the current study was acceptable for physical aggression ($\alpha = .84$), verbal aggression ($\alpha = .77$), anger ($\alpha = .81$), and hostility ($\alpha = .80$).

Entitlement Rage Subscale. Pincus et al.’s (2009) Entitlement Rage Subscale contained eight items from Pincus’s full Narcissism scale. Items included “I get angry when criticized,” “I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve,” or “I get annoyed by people who are not

interested in what I say or do.” The current study had an acceptable reliability for entitlement range ($\alpha = .87$).

Academic Entitlement. Kopp, Zinn, Finney, and Jurich’s (2011) Academic Entitlement Scale contained eight items. Items included “Professors should only lecture on material covered in the textbook and assigned readings,” “If I cannot learn the material for a class from lecture alone, then it is the professor’s fault when I fail the test,” or “I should be given the opportunity to make up a test, regardless of the reason for the absence.” The current study was reliable ($\alpha = .89$).

Materialism. This scale by Park, Twenge, and Greenfield (2014) measured the importance of various aspects to participants. Participants use a Likert scale based on how much they agree or disagree with six statements. For example, participants rated the importance of having “a job is worthwhile to society” or the importance of “having lots of money” on a 4-point scale from 1= not important to 4= very important. The other 4 statements- the importance of having a single family home, having a vacation home, having a recreational vehicle, and buying a new car every two or three years- were asked as separate items but the results were combined to form a composite score. The internal consistency of the four items is .70.

Material Values Short Form. This short form by Richins (2004) contained 18 statements that address a person’s judgment of the self and others in terms of success, the centrality of possessions in a person’s life, and the belief that possessions equate to happiness and life satisfaction. Examples of statements addressing success included “I like to own things that impress people” or “I don’t pay much attention to the material objects other people own.” Examples of statements addressing centrality include “I usually buy only the things I need” or “I enjoy spending money on things that aren’t practical.” Examples of statements addressing

happiness included “I have all the things I really need to enjoy life” and “I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things.” The reliabilities were adequate for success ($\alpha = .71$), centrality ($\alpha = .71$), and happiness ($\alpha = .74$).

Alcohol. Labrie and Sessoms’s (2012) five question assessment measured student alcohol use. On a scale of 1 to 9 depending on the question, students reported the number of drinking days per month; average number of drinks consumed on each drinking occasion; the total number of drinks consumed each week; maximum number of drinks consumed at one time in the past month; and number of occasions participants had consumed at least four (females) or five (males) drinks within a two-hour period over the past two weeks.

Daily Sessions, Frequency, Age of Onset, and Quantity of Cannabis Use Inventory (DFAQ-CU). This scale contains 24 items measuring three aspects of using cannabis, but only four items which were important to and included in the current study. These items included “have you ever used cannabis,” which of the following best captures when you last used cannabis,” which of the following best captures the average frequency you currently use cannabis,” and “which of the following best captures the number of times you have used cannabis in your entire life?” Specified in this scale is that cannabis includes marijuana, cannabis concentrates, and cannabis-infused edibles.

Results

I was interested in comparing levels of perceived helicopter parenting between students who considered themselves adults and students who did not. Nelson et al. (2007) found that 72% of emerging adults indicated “in some respects yes” or “in some respects no” to whether they thought they had reached adulthood, while 16% indicated “yes.” I hypothesized that 25% of

students would consider themselves to be an adult. A frequency analysis indicated 84% considered themselves to be adults in some respects and only 6% fully considered themselves to be adults ($n= 24$). The remaining 10% of students said they did not believe themselves to be adults or did not believe they are adults in some respects. Due to the small sample size of adults, I did not run the analyses examining differences between adults and non-adults; however, I excluded students who considered themselves adults in further correlational analyses. Most students perceived their parents to have some characteristics of helicopter parenting. I conducted correlational analyses between perceived helicopter parenting and entitlement, aggression, materialism, and substance use. The means, standard deviations, and ranges for the students' scores for each measure can be found in Table 1. Following initial review and noticing the differences in means between males and females for several variables, I examined gender differences in more detail.

Aggression

I predicted that students who perceived more helicopter parenting would report more aggression. Consistent with the prediction, all types of aggression were positively and significantly correlated with perceptions of helicopter parenting such that higher perceptions of helicopter parenting indicated higher scores of physical aggression, $r= .31, p <.001$, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. However, the mean scores of each of the types of aggression suggest that most students did not report being highly aggressive. See Table 2 for correlations among the measured variables.

Entitlement

Based on previous literature, I predicted that students who have higher perceptions of helicopter parenting would self report more entitlement. Consistent with predictions, there was a

significant positive correlation between helicopter parenting and academic entitlement, $r = .26$, $p < .001$. Students who perceived higher levels of helicopter parenting self reported being more academically entitled, although the majority of students reported relatively low levels of entitlement. Helicopter parenting and entitlement were also significantly and positively correlated such that students who reported higher perceptions of helicopter parenting also reported having more entitlement, $r = .40$, $p < .001$. Similar to academic entitlement, the majority of students did not report having high entitlement. See Table 2 for correlations between helicopter parenting and entitlement.

Materialism

I then examined the self reports of perceived helicopter parenting and materialism. There was a significant positive correlation, such that higher levels of perceived helicopter parenting were associated with higher levels of materialism. The mean of the materialism measure suggests students generally report a moderate level of materialism as the mean was closer to materials being extremely important to students; see Table 1. The three subtypes of materialism were the success, centrality, and happiness of material goods. All three subtypes were positively associated with perceptions of helicopter parenting. Students who perceived higher levels of helicopter parenting also self-reported material goods being a marker for success, a central component in their life, and affecting their happiness. The means of all three subtypes suggest students report themselves as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the questions specific to the subtypes students answered. Table 2 includes the general materialism correlation as well as the three subtype correlations.

Alcohol and Substance Use

The final hypothesis was students who perceive helicopter parenting would report a lower frequency of alcohol and marijuana consumption. The results were not significant for any of the alcohol measures, although most of the students reported a moderate amount of alcohol consumption on a moderately frequent basis. Half of non-adult students ($n= 190$) reported using cannabis and there was a significant difference in perceived helicopter parenting for students who reported using cannabis ($M=1.82, SD= 0.68$) and those who did not ($M= 2.05, SD= 0.76$); $t(375) = -2.99, p<.05$) such that students who did not use cannabis perceived higher levels of helicopter parenting.

The next analyses excluded students who reported they never used cannabis. The correlations between helicopter parenting and students' last use of cannabis, $r= .07, p=.28$, the average frequency of current cannabis use, $r= .10, p= .17$, and total frequency of cannabis use among users, $r = .08, p =.24$, were not significant. The majority of the students who reported they used cannabis did not report using cannabis more than 2-3 times a month or using it more than 6-10 times in their life. The means also suggest most students reported using it in the last 1-3 months; see Table 1.

Gender Differences

I explored gender differences for all the variables as there was previous literature suggesting differences between males and females, particularly for aggression and substance use. Table 3 includes the means, standard deviations and statistics for an independent samples t-test for all the variables. Males ($n= 95$) self reported having significantly higher levels of physical aggression, verbal aggression, and anger than females, where equal variances were assumed. There were also significant differences between males and females for alcohol measures. While there was not a significant difference in the number of drinking days per month, males reported a

significantly higher average number of drinks consumed on each drinking occasion, total number of drinks consumed each week, max number of drinks consumed at one time in the past month, and number of occasions participants consumed at least four (female) or five (male) drinks within a two-hour period over the past two weeks.

Males who did not use cannabis ($M= 2.21$, $SD= 0.73$) perceived significantly higher levels of helicopter parenting than males who used cannabis ($M=1.74$, $SD= 0.62$); $t(93) = -3.32$, $p<.05$. Female users were not significantly different compared to female non-users ($p>.05$). In addition, males reported using cannabis more recently and using it more frequently on average compared to females, with equal variances assumed. Finally, males reported a significantly greater overall use of cannabis use than females, though equal variances were not assumed.

I revisited each hypothesis to see if the separate genders had significant correlations with each of the variables. See Table 4 for the correlations of each gender for each variable. For males, perceived helicopter parenting was positively and significantly associated with academic entitlement, $r = .40$, $p<.001$, entitlement rage, $r=.54$, $p<.001$, all types of aggression, materialism, and all the subtypes of materialism. Males who perceived higher levels of helicopter parenting self-reported being academically entitled, having more entitlement rage, being more aggressive, and being more materialistic. Half of non-adult students reported using cannabis, but none of the drug and alcohol measures were significant. For females, perceived helicopter parenting was positively and significantly related with academic entitlement and entitlement rage, $r = .35$, $p<.001$, physical aggression, $r = .32$, $p<.001$, anger, hostility, materialism, and the success subtype of materialism. Females who perceived higher levels of helicopter parenting did not report verbal aggression and the centrality and happiness subtypes of materialism at a

significant level. Perceived helicopter parenting was not significantly associated with any of the drug and alcohol measures.

Discussion

The current study aimed to expand previous knowledge on characteristics of helicopter parenting and emerging adulthood and in particular, the associations between perceived helicopter parenting and aggression, entitlement, materialism, and substance use. The current study found positive correlations between perceived helicopter parenting and four types of aggression, entitlement rage and academic entitlement, materialism generally and three subtypes of materialism such that students who perceived higher levels of helicopter parenting self-reported higher levels of each variable. Half of students reported using cannabis and there was a significant relation between helicopter parenting and cannabis use; however, there were not significant relations between helicopter parenting and cannabis frequency items or alcohol items.

Adult Status

Similar to the results of Nelson et al. (2007), the current study indicated the majority of students believe themselves to be adults in some respects but not in others. Sixteen percent of the participants reported considering themselves adults in the Nelson et al. (2007) study for which participants included graduate students. The current study only collected data from undergraduate students, 6% of whom considered themselves adults. Because the sample of students who reported being adults was too small to analyze ($n=24$), the current study could not provide results to further explore the results of Segrin et al. (2012).

Aggression

Prior to the current study, researchers did not often connect aggression to helicopter parenting explicitly. The correlations between perceived helicopter parenting and the four types of aggression were all positive. Students who perceived higher levels of helicopter parenting self reported being more physically aggressive, verbally aggressive, angry, and hostile. Prior research has suggested that college students with highly psychologically controlling parents show more aggression in interpersonal relationships (Wagner & Abied, 2016). Physical and verbal aggression are more overt types of aggression, in line with the research of Loukas, Paulos, and Robinson (2005) who found that maternal psychological control was associated with girls' use of overt aggression. The current study did not examine the gender of helicopter parent in relation to the student and the sample of the Loukas, Paulos, and Robinson (2005) study was younger than the sample of the current study. However, characteristics of helicopter parenting such as intrusiveness and being over-solicitous are often seen when parenting younger children (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012), and such characteristics are inconsistent for emerging adults. The results of the current study indicate perceived helicopter parenting is related to more aggression, a characteristic that can affect interpersonal relationships. Higher levels of aggression may negatively affect some of Nelson and Barry's (2005) characteristics of being adult such as being able to form mature relationships, being able to comply with societal norms, and being able to provide and care for a family.

Entitlement

There is empirical research regarding the association between helicopter parenting and academic entitlement. Results from the current study support previous literature from Segrin et al. (2012) and Turner and McCormick (2017). Perceived helicopter parenting was significantly and positively related to academic entitlement and entitlement rage such that students who

perceived helicopter parenting were more likely to report that they get annoyed by people who are not interested in what they say or do, they will never be satisfied until they get all that they deserve, professors should only lecture on material covered in the textbook and assigned readings, and if they are struggling in a class, the professor should approach them and offer to help. An entitled student may believe he or she deserves good grades. Expectations of success and having rage if not successful, as well as not putting in an effort to work, have an impact on adult life, whether it be relationships, career, or health.

Materialism

While parents provide financial assistance, emerging adults appear to be materialistic. Previous research from Park, Twenge, and Greenfield (2014) indicating adolescents value expensive material items during prosperous times was supported by the current study. Students who had higher perceptions of helicopter parenting reported more materialism, as well with the success, centrality, and happiness related to owning material goods such as cars and homes and having a job that makes a lot of money. Clarke et al. (2014) discussed how structural indulgence and relational indulgence were similar to the characteristics of helicopter parenting but material indulgence was not explicitly related. However, material indulgence may be related to helicopter parents if parents use material goods as a way to show warmth and then threaten the removal of the material goods as a way to increase control.

Alcohol and Substance Use

The past literature for parenting styles and substance use is mixed. Most of the literature suggests that good parental control serves as a resistance factor and that permissive parenting is a risk factor for alcohol use and abuse (Wils & Dishion, 2004; Patock-Peckham & Morgan-Lopez, 2006). Despite this, the results were not significant for items regarding substance use. There

were, however, significant differences between students who perceived helicopter parenting and if they used cannabis. The correlations between perceived helicopter parenting and drinking frequency and amount as well as average frequency of current cannabis use and total frequency of use were not significant. This does not necessarily support the notion that weak parental controls were related to increased substance abuse (Fagan, Horn, Hawkins, & Jaki (2012), nor does it support Hoffman and Bahr (2013) who suggest that helicopter parenting is associated with higher substance abuse. Cui Graber Metz, and Darling (2016) suggested that indulgent parenting, as defined by Clarke et al. (2014), was predictive of behavioral problems such as engaging in drinking, drugs, and criminal behavior in young adulthood. While the results of current study suggest half of students used cannabis, it does not necessarily support behavioral problems regarding the drug. Future research is needed to provide evidence in support of either claim made in previous literature.

Gender Differences

After examining the initial data, I noticed differences between males and females for several variables and decided to examine gender difference for all variables. Although there were not significant differences between males and females for perceived helicopter parenting, entitlement, or materialism, there were significant differences for aggression, alcohol consumption, and cannabis use. The results of the current study were mostly consistent with previous literature regarding gender differences in physical and verbal aggression, drinking habits, and cannabis use. Differing from previous research that suggests there is not a gender difference for anger, males in the current study reported significantly higher levels of anger than females. Although females in prior research show more indirect hostility, females in the current study were not significantly different than males in this regard. Overall, the results suggest males

reported being more physically and verbally aggressive, drink more, consume cannabis more than females; however, males are not significantly different for perceived helicopter parenting, entitlement, and materialism. Moreover, males who were not cannabis users perceived significantly higher levels of helicopter parenting compared to cannabis users but this significance did not occur in females. Because helicopter parenting was not significantly different for males and females and the current study's results were mostly consistent with past literature, it does not appear perceptions of higher levels of helicopter parenting had an effect on the gender differences that already exist for aggression, alcohol consumption, and cannabis use.

Future Research

One major limitation to the study was that I was unable to test my primary hypothesis examining the differences between adults and non-adults because of the small number of students who considered themselves to be adults. Such a sample may be unlikely to occur in a college setting; however, expansions to other settings such as community colleges, graduate schools, or technical schools may provide a larger adult sample.

Positive and significant associations between helicopter parenting with aggression and entitlement rage provide a basis for further research as there is not much previous literature on the topics. Aggression may be aimed towards parents if students are frustrated with their involvement, not toward peers. The direction of aggression may affect interpersonal relationships. Also, entitlement may have an impact on various aspects of a student's academic experience. Interactions with professors and peers as well as dealing with problems with grades or roommates may be poorly impacted by higher levels of academic entitlement and entitlement rage. Students may go to their parents for academic help instead of asking their professor for

help or they may request help finding an internship instead of applying for one using their resources.

In addition, materialism's overarching definition of material goods may be narrowed down to what types of material items students have in college. Students who take more vacations, have a newer car, or are given a larger allowance may be more materialistic than a student who does not have those material items or luxuries. Also, material indulgence also may be more explicitly related to helicopter parenting than previous literature from Clarke et al. (2014) suggest and this ought to be explored. Using material goods such as a car as a way to show warmth and then threatening to take it away to maintain higher levels of control may be consistent with the definition of helicopter parenting.

The timeline of adulthood may be different than in the past. Many emerging adults in college still rely on their parents to pay for tuition, groceries, or gas. They also may be receiving emotional and academic support. Parents' willingness to assist their student in college may prolong full autonomy. Even though 18 is the legal age of adulthood, most students today do not see themselves in this way. The current study examined relations between perceived parenting and factors related to college life. Students' perceived parental influence was related to aggression, entitlement, and materialism. During college, these characteristics may negatively impact interpersonal relationships, academics, and internships. Moreover, they may also transfer when they graduate from college and finds themselves looking for a career. Examining aspects of emerging adulthood in the college culture is valuable to college professionals, instructors, and others that work in this field.

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*Tables and Figures***Table 1** Means and SD for measured variables

| Measures | M (SD) | Range |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Helicopter parenting | 1.94 (0.72) | 1.00- 4.20 |
| Physical aggression | 1.91 (0.73) | 1.00- 4.11 |
| Verbal aggression | 2.59 (0.81) | 1.00- 4.80 |
| Anger | 2.15 (0.77) | 1.00- 4.57 |
| Hostility | 2.58 (0.79) | 1.00- 4.63 |
| Entitlement rage | 2.16 (0.77) | 1.00- 4.75 |
| Academic entitlement | 2.84 (1.21) | 1.00- 7.00 |
| Materialism | 2.30 (0.56) | 1.00- 4.00 |
| Material values- success | 2.73 (0.70) | 1.00- 4.83 |
| Material values- centrality | 3.00 (0.63) | 1.43- 5.00 |
| Material values- happiness | 2.85 (0.73) | 1.00- 5.00 |

Table 2 Summary of bivariate correlations among measured variables

| Measures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Helicopter parenting | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Physical aggression | .31*** | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Verbal aggression | .16** | .56*** | - | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Anger | .25*** | .57*** | .66*** | - | | | | | | | |
| 5. Hostility | .22*** | .37*** | .55*** | .63*** | - | | | | | | |
| 6. Entitlement rage | .40*** | .38*** | .49*** | .57*** | .52*** | - | | | | | |
| 7. Academic entitlement | .26*** | .19*** | .15** | .25*** | .22*** | .31*** | - | | | | |
| 8. Materialism | .19*** | .15** | .13* | .13* | .19*** | .28*** | .18*** | - | | | |
| 9. Material values- success | .31*** | .25*** | .27*** | .30*** | .33*** | .42*** | .26*** | .44*** | - | | |
| 10. Material values- centrality | .10* | .09 | .19*** | .22*** | .19*** | .16** | .12** | .18** | .48*** | - | |
| 11. Material values- happiness | .17** | .24*** | .29*** | .29*** | .37*** | .30*** | .28*** | .40*** | .52*** | .35*** | - |

$n = 401$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples T-test for Males and Females

| | M _{males} (SD) | M _{females} (SD) | Sig. (2-tailed) | <i>t</i> | df |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------|--------|
| 1. Helicopter parenting | 2.00 (0.72) | 1.90 (0.72) | .32 | 1.00 | 372 |
| 2. Physical aggression | 2.44 (0.72) | 1.74 (0.64) | .00 | 9.02 | 372 |
| 3. Verbal aggression | 2.78 (0.78) | 2.53 (0.82) | .01 | 2.54 | 372 |
| 4. Anger | 2.29 (0.76) | 2.10 (0.77) | .04 | 2.06 | 372 |
| 5. Hostility | 2.66 (0.72) | 2.55 (0.81) | .27 | 1.10 | 372 |
| 6. Academic entitlement | 2.82 (1.10) | 2.85 (1.25) | .84 | -0.204 | 372 |
| 7. Entitlement rage | 2.19 (0.83) | 2.15 (0.75) | .68 | 0.42 | 149.20 |
| 8. Materialism | 2.38 (0.55) | 2.28 (0.56) | .12 | 1.55 | 371 |
| 9. Material values- success | 2.83 (0.67) | 2.70 (0.70) | .12 | 1.56 | 370 |
| 10. Material values- centrality | 2.94 (0.58) | 3.01 (0.65) | .35 | -0.94 | 371 |
| 11. Material values- happiness | 2.96 (0.73) | 2.82 (0.73) | .09 | 1.69 | 371 |
| 12. Number drinking days per month | 20.45 (1.34) | 20.48 (1.25) | .85 | -0.19 | 371 |
| 13. Average # drinks per occasion | 4.00 (2.03) | 3.33 (1.49) | .00 | 2.95 | 130.47 |
| 14. Total # drinks per week | 3.62 (2.30) | 2.87 (1.76) | .00 | 2.89 | 133.77 |
| 15. Max # of drinks at one time in the last month | 3.98 (2.31) | 3.18 (1.78) | .00 | 3.06 | 133.06 |
| 16. Number of times binge drinking in last two weeks | 2.55 (1.74) | 2.03 (1.22) | .01 | 2.67 | 127.27 |
| 17. Last cannabis use | 6.49 (2.79) | 5.31 (2.54) | .01 | 2.62 | 188 |
| 18. Average frequency of cannabis use | 7.14 (3.82) | 5.13 (3.08) | .00 | 3.55 | 188 |
| 19. Total # of times of cannabis use | 4.12 (2.24) | 2.88 (1.71) | .00 | 3.35 | 57.12 |

Table 4 Summary of correlations for males and females separately

| Helicopter Parenting | Males | Females |
|--|--------|---------|
| 1. Helicopter parenting | - | - |
| 2. Physical aggression | .33** | .32*** |
| 3. Verbal aggression | .35*** | .10 |
| 4. Anger | .42*** | .18** |
| 5. Hostility | .35*** | .18** |
| 6. Academic entitlement | .40*** | .22*** |
| 7. Entitlement rage | .54*** | .35*** |
| 8. Materialism | .24* | .17** |
| 9. Material values- success | .35** | .29*** |
| 10. Material values- centrality | .24* | .03 |
| 11. Material values- happiness | .33** | .10 |
| 12. Number drinking days per month | .05 | .00 |
| 13. Average # drinks per occasion | -.03 | -.07 |
| 14. Total # drinks per week | -.04 | -.06 |
| 15. Max # of drinks at one time in the last month | -.04 | -.04 |
| 16. Number of times binge drinking in last two weeks | .02 | .07 |
| 17. Last cannabis use | .06 | .11 |
| 18. Average frequency of cannabis use | .11 | .11 |
| 19. Total # of times of cannabis use | .03 | .10 |

$n = 95(279)$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$