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Comparing Mothers' and Fathers' Helicopter Parenting as Predictors of Self-Efficacy Among Emerging Adults in College

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COMPARING MOTHERS' AND FATHERS' HELICOPTER PARENTING
AS PREDICTORS OF SELF-EFFICACY AMONG EMERGING
ADULTS IN COLLEGE

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Presented to

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Master of Science

Family and Child Life

by

Jineui Kim

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CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

COMPARING MOTHERS' AND FATHERS' HELICOPTER PARENTING AS PREDICTORS OF SELF-EFFICACY AMONG EMERGING ADULTS IN COLLEGE

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Jineui Kim

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This study examined the association between helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college. While some existing research revealed that emerging adults could benefit from helicopter parenting, previous studies identified a wide range of negative outcomes of helicopter parenting on emerging adult's psychological well-being. Also, previous research has shown that mothers and fathers play different roles in parenting. This study adds to understanding of this phenomenon by comparing the salience of mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting as a predictor of self-efficacy among emerging adults in college. Data were collected from 175 participants between the ages of 18-24 by using an anonymous online survey shared on social media as well as in hard-copy format in university classrooms. Results revealed that there was a negative association between students' reports of mothers' helicopter parenting and their self-efficacy. No association was found between fathers' helicopter parenting and students' self-efficacy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is universally known that parents have significant impacts on their children across their life span. Emerging adulthood, a time between 18 to 25 years of age, is a period of change and exploration of life possibilities, including love, work, and worldviews, all of which are instrumental in the process of exploration of possible future life directions (Arnett, 2000). Parental behaviors play a significant role in the healthy development of emerging adult children in college. One of the key characteristics that supports healthy development during this transition is self-efficacy which influences individuals' cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy provides college students with a sense of self-reliance, which allows them to handle stressful situations during emerging adulthood. However, when parents are overinvolved in their emerging adult children's lives, parental behaviors sometimes labeled "helicopter parenting," such as taking higher levels of personal responsibility, promoting dependence, and delaying children's identity development, can threaten development of self-efficacy. Though much of the research on this phenomenon does not focus on parental gender, mothers and fathers potentially play different roles in terms of quality and frequency of support they provide to their emerging adult children. In general, mothers tend to be involved in diverse activities and are more influential than fathers in their emerging adult children's lives (Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2006). To address this gap in the literature, this study examined the association between helicopter parenting and college students' self-efficacy and compare mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting as predictors of self-efficacy among emerging adults in college. To

inform this effort, current literature that examines self-efficacy, helicopter parenting, and their association, are reviewed, followed by an exploration of gender differences in parent-child relationships in emerging adulthood.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an important developmental milestone and is associated with better health, higher achievement, and greater social skills (Bandura, 1977). An individual's perceived self-efficacy contributes to views of optimism and self-confidence to deal with life stressors (Scholz, Gutiérrez Doña, Sud, & Schwarzer, 2002). In general, perceived self-efficacy has impacts on choice of behaviors and it helps individuals believe they have effective coping skills (Bandura, 1977). With self-efficacy, individuals can judge themselves to be able to handle fearful or stressful situations on their own instead of avoiding them. Self-efficacy also determines the initial decision to perform a behavior; therefore, one's level of self-efficacy is a strong predictor of behavioral changes (Sherer et al., 1982). Those who believe in their ability to create a desired effect can have a more active and self-determined life, and take the adaptive actions necessary to deal with challenging situations (Scholz et al., 2002). In sum, self-efficacy is an individual's sense of optimism or self-confidence in their capability to deal with stressful environments.

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is derived from “four major sources of information: performance accomplishment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal” (p. 195). First, performance accomplishment implies that repeated success develops strong efficacy since self-efficacy is based on personal mastery experiences. When individuals accomplish difficult tasks through sustained effort, it strengthens their self-motivated persistence, while failures lower self-expectations for

mastery. Parents contribute to an individual's performance accomplishment by modeling through guided performance, which provides individuals with opportunities to gain generalizable skills to successfully cope with stressful situations. Similarly, vicarious experience informs self-efficacy through inferences; when people see others mastering activities, they infer that they can also be successful if they make intense and persistent efforts. When individuals observe their parents' successful performance, these modeled behaviors by parents show their children how temporary distress can be overcome without severe negative consequences. Third, verbal persuasion implies that individuals can be persuaded into believing in their abilities to overcome through verbal encouragement, although this is less impactful than expectations developed through experience. Parents play an important role as a source of their children's self-efficacy by suggesting that mastery of a task or overcoming an obstacle is within their abilities. Lastly, emotional arousal hinders performance, and when people perform poorly they feel more fear and anxiety, which informs their sense of self-efficacy. Awareness of fear and its physiological effects serve to increase anxiety in fearful situations, further diminishing self-efficacy and creating a feedback loop. However, parental modeling can help to enhance self-efficacy and reduce dysfunctional fears. Parents contribute to diminish these children's cycle of fear by teaching effective coping skills and demonstrating effective ways of handling fearful situations.

Family Systems Framework

Bowen's (1978) Family Systems Theory claims that family is an emotional unit and family members are affected with each other by their thoughts, feelings, and actions under the same emotional skin. The emotional interdependence promotes cohesiveness

and cooperation in the family to protect and connect the family members. Family Systems Theory also suggests that as children develop and transition to adulthood, separation and individuation from family of origin needs to be facilitated and recognizes the importance of balancing connectedness and individuation between individuals and family (Kenny, Donaldson, & Harmon, 1991). Family members gain both feeling of belongingness and differentiation from healthy family systems, and extremely close or enmeshed family systems are considered dysfunctional. Enmeshed families provide their family members higher levels of belongingness instead of balancing out belongingness and differentiation. Clear interpersonal boundaries allow families to maintain an appropriate degree of differentiation between parents and children. When these boundaries are too diffuse, family members are more likely to be overinvolved, such as by invading privacy or constraining independence. As a result, these families tend to be anxious about separation or independence from their family members.

Helicopter Parenting

The concept of helicopter parenting began to emerge on college campuses by the early 2000s when the millennial generation entered college (van Ingen et al., 2015). Although helicopter parenting exists on a continuum, it is common in both media and scholarly publications to refer to those who exhibit high levels of helicopter parenting as helicopter parents. Helicopter parents are those who engage in a type of overparenting in which they exhibit excessive involvement in their emerging adult children's lives and "apply developmentally inappropriate tactics by failing to allow for levels of autonomy suitable to their child's age" (Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, Bauer, & Murphy, 2012, p.238). Recent media also defines helicopter parents as parents who are overly involved in the

lives of their emerging adult children (Willoughby, Hersh, Padilla-Walker, & Nelson, 2015). Parents who exhibit high levels of helicopter parenting behaviors typically experience extreme separation anxiety such as when their children leave home for college and have difficulty detaching from their children (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). The expression “helicopter parents” has been recognized in many industries, including education and media, as overbearing parenting strategies regardless of the child’s age (van Ingen et al., 2015). Although this type of parenting style could theoretically be observed at any developmental stage in a child’s life, most of the time it is a reference to parents of late adolescent or emerging adult children (Segrin et al., 2012) because this is a time when it is adaptive to give more freedom.

Previous scholars have attempted to define the concept of helicopter parenting in various ways. While some researchers recognize highly involved parents as helicopter parents (Shoup, Gonyea, & Kuh, 2009), others use the term overparenting in the same contexts (Segrin, et al., 2012). Another study recognizes intensive support provided by parents many times a week as nonnormative support, which involves a wide variety of support, such as financial support, emotional support, and providing advice on their life in general (Fingerman, Wesselmann, Zarit, Furstenberg, & Birditt, 2012). Finally, parental involvement, which is generally considered to be beneficial, is distinguished from overparenting in that the degree and quality of supportive behaviors are developmentally appropriate and involve few efforts to limit autonomy (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012).

Helicopter parents are conceptualized as hyperinvolved or risk-averse parents who attempt to protect their emerging adult children from obstacles and take higher

levels of personal responsibility for their children's success and happiness (Segrin et al., 2012). Although helicopter parents may believe their actions to be necessary and helpful, they ultimately delay their emerging adult children's identity development and independence, and leave emerging adults unprepared for independent adult life after college (van Ingen et al, 2015). For example, parents who exhibit higher levels of helicopter parenting insert themselves into their emerging adult children's decision-making processes in inappropriate ways. As a result, children do not have opportunities to face the consequences caused by their poor decisions when their parents step in to fix their problems. Moreover, many parents who display higher levels of helicopter parenting have a tendency to make academic decisions for their children in college, and experience intense disappointment when their children do poorly in college.

To our knowledge only one study has attempted to develop a measure of helicopter parenting and establish it as a construct distinct from other forms of parental control (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). According to Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012), helicopter parenting is not necessarily a new dimension of parenting, but is a parenting style that reflects a particular prioritization the existing dimensions of parenting (high control and involvement, and low autonomy granting). Behaviors that would qualify as helicopter parenting involve excessive limiting of autonomy in developmentally and contextually inappropriate ways. For example, instead of asking their child about the content of courses they plan to take, a helicopter parent might order a copy the textbook ahead of time in order to evaluate the quality of the course and determine whether or not the student should enroll. Later research (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Nielson, 2015) found that high levels of involvement that limit autonomy

were particularly harmful in the absence of maternal warmth, suggesting that conceptualizations of helicopter parenting as a maladaptive style of parenting should also take parental warmth into consideration.

Also, important to note is that the source of information on parenting behaviors also varies across studies. Some studies measure helicopter parenting solely through emerging adult children's perceptions, and others draw from both parental self-reports and their children's perceptions. On one hand, having parent-child dyad samples can be beneficial in that it allows researchers to more directly assess parental behaviors (Segrin, et al., 2012). On the other hand, self-reported surveys completed by children can allow researchers to understand how emerging adults experience their parents' behaviors and has been shown to be an important predictor of mental health outcomes (Shiffrin et al., 2013).

Finally, there is some evidence that the concept of helicopter parents is cross-cultural, and this trend of helicopter parenting is confirmed outside the United States as well. Kwon, Yoo, and Bingham (2016) replicated the experimental research which was originally conducted by LeMoyne and Buchanan in 2011 in the United States, and recognized helicopter parenting as existing in current Korean culture. Another study confirmed the phenomenon among Hispanic/Latino college students and found that there were no differences in the relations between helicopter parenting and children' mental health between non-Hispanic and Hispanic students (Kouros, Pruitt, Ekas, Kiriaki, & Sunderland, 2017).

Patterns of Helicopter Parenting

Intense and inappropriate involvement is common among parents of emerging adults in college, and previous research has identified trends in demographic characteristics of parents who engage in this type of parenting. It was found out that parental overinvolvement is more likely when parents have more education, when biological parents are their guardian, and when children are female or younger in age (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). Also, more than 20% of emerging adults reported that they were receiving several types of intense support several times a week (Fingerman et al., 2012). Research also shows that overparenting is more common when children still live with their parents and have fewer siblings (Fingerman et al., 2012). In terms of ethnicity, overparenting is more common among Asian families than other ethnicities (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). Some evidence suggests helicopter parenting behaviors are also motivated by parents' emotions. (Rousseau & Scharf, 2017).

Contributions to the Phenomenon

Advanced technologies, such as texting, social media, or Facetime, have made it easier for parents and children to keep close (Shoup et al., 2009). Most emerging adults in college and parents have a smart phone, which they mainly use to communicate with each other when children are away in school. With regards to the nature of parent-child communication, most emerging adults communicate with their parents more frequently than they did in the past through text messages, phone calls, or other social network media, and they discuss a wide variety of topics (Shoup et al., 2009). Based on the data collected from 4,532 first-year students and 4,652 seniors in college, emerging adults share with their parents about all aspects of their lives, such as academics, campus

administration systems, personal concerns and their relationships. It was also found that emerging adults are more likely to follow their parents' advice when they discuss a wide variety of topics with their parents with a high frequency. Subsequently, parents and families are highly important support networks for emerging adults in college, and current technology contributes to frequent parent-child communication.

Outcomes Associated with Helicopter Parenting

Previous research has shown both positive and negative outcomes of helicopter parenting, however, inconsistent measurement may contribute to the mixed findings. For example, there is evidence that high levels of parental involvement, which is an element of helicopter parenting, is positively associated with children's engagement and self-reported gains in college (Shoup et al., 2009). Using a sample of 4,532 first-year and 4,653 senior students, it was revealed that emerging adults in college with highly involved parents reported that they were more engaged in effective educational achievements in school, possibly because of higher levels of parental encouragement, expectations, and support to focus on college and do well. Consequently, it was concluded that emerging adults seemed to benefit from their additional supports and encouragements their parents provide, and their results show no evidence that highly involved parents are problematic for their emerging adult children. In another study, frequent parental involvement was found to be associated with higher levels of well-being among emerging adults in college (Fingerman et al., 2012). Fingerman et al. (2012) conducted research with 592 emerging adults in college and 399 of their parents and revealed that emerging adults in college had a better sense of goals and higher levels of

life satisfaction when they perceived they have frequent intense parental involvement through a self-reported survey.

Important to note, however, is that the way these two studies (Fingerman et al., 2012; Shoup et al., 2009) measured helicopter parenting was not consistent with Padilla-Walker and Nelson's (2012) conceptualization. Shoup et al. (2009) measured helicopter parenting with a focus of the frequency of parent-child communication, and one item that asked how often parents communicated with university administrators. Fingerman et al. (2012) used a measure that focused on parental support, and their description of the measure does not clarify whether autonomy limiting was assessed. These studies may have found helicopter parenting to be associated with positive outcomes because the measures of parenting do not effectively capture the dimension of low autonomy granting that previous research has shown to be a fundamental element of helicopter parenting (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012).

Other studies have found helicopter parenting to be associated with less desirable outcomes with respect to family and peer relationships (Segrin et al., 2012; van Ingen et al., 2015), mental health and wellbeing, and adjustment. The studies reviewed each used different measures of helicopter parenting, and some characterized parenting behaviors as overparenting or overprotective parenting. Even so, the instruments used to assess these parenting behaviors all captured perceptions of autonomy-limiting behaviors in some regard.

One study (Segrin et al., 2012) that focused on family outcomes collected survey data from 538 parent-child dyads. Helicopter parenting was operationalized as overparenting, which included high levels of control, involvement, risk aversion, and

concern for the child's happiness. Though autonomy limiting was not specifically mentioned as a characteristic of overparenting, several elements of the instrument used to measure overparenting reflected this type of parenting (e.g. problem-solving for the child, providing tangible assistance, and removing obstacles for the child). Findings suggested that both parents and children indicated that overparenting was associated with lower quality of parent-child communication, and was indirectly associated with family satisfaction (through parent-child communication). Additionally, emerging adults' perception of helicopter parents has been found to be negatively associated with alienation from peers and lack of trust among peers (van Ingen et al., 2015). In a survey of 190 undergraduate students, participants were asked about their mothers' and fathers' overprotective parenting, which was operationalized as ranging from allowing autonomy on the low end, to intrusion and excessive contact on the high end. Results indicated that perceptions of overprotective parenting were correlated with poor peer attachment, mistrust of peers, feelings of alienation from peers, and poor peer communication (van Ingen et al., 2015).

Other studies suggest helicopter parenting has implications for mental health and wellbeing. For example, a study (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011) conducted with a sample of 317 college students found that perceived helicopter parenting was associated with increased odds of having a prescription for anxiety or depression. In this study, helicopter parenting was operationalized as reflecting parents' perceived inability or unwillingness "to allow their children to experience life's challenges independently" (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011, p. 405). Results also indicated that helicopter parenting was associated with lower scores on a measure of global well-being. Similarly, it was observed from a

survey of 297 college students, that helicopter parenting was associated with diminished psychological well-being (Schiffrin et al., 2014). In this study, helicopter parenting was operationalized as behaviors that reflect high levels of control and acting on the child's behalf. Emerging adults who perceived high levels of helicopter parenting were more likely to report that their basic psychological needs were not being met, and reported lower levels of perceived autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A path analysis also suggested that helicopter parenting was indirectly related to higher levels of depression and poor life satisfaction through unmet psychological needs.

Helicopter parenting has also been linked to poorer adjustment. One study indicated that overparenting was a predictor of maladaptive response to workplace scenarios (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). In this study, 482 undergraduate students responded to online surveys. The measure of overparenting used included items that reflected high involvement and low autonomy granting, and was shown to be distinct from parental involvement through a factor analysis. Results suggested that students who perceived higher levels of overparenting tended to endorse solutions to workplace issues that relied on others rather than taking responsibility themselves. In another study, helicopter parenting has been found to be negatively associated with emerging adults' locus of control. In a study that surveyed 412 undergraduate students in South Korea, participants who perceived their parents as controlling and overinvolved, tended to have lower levels of internal control (Kwon, Yoo, & Bingham, 2016).

As discussed above, although previous studies have attempted to capture the concept of helicopter parenting, it has been operationalized and measured in a variety of ways. Evidently, helicopter parenting is a relatively new construct and methods for

measuring and defining it are still evolving. A review of the current literature suggests differences in measurement may also lead to the inconsistency in findings. In particular, measures that captured autonomy limiting tended to show associations with negative outcomes whereas those that focused only on parental involvement and support were more likely to find associations with positive outcomes.

Helicopter Parenting and Self-Efficacy in Emerging Adulthood

One outcome that may be particularly associated with helicopter parenting in emerging adulthood is self-efficacy. Helicopter parents may obstruct developmental tasks of growing into mature adulthood, which leads to emerging adult children's lower levels of maturation and social competence (van Ingen et al., 2015). Moreover, helicopter parenting may send the message that children cannot be responsible for their own lives, which could explain its association with emerging adults' self-reliance and self-efficacy. Another study claimed that while parental involvement was positively associated with children's social self-efficacy, overparenting was negatively associated with children's social and general self-efficacy (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). Findings suggest that while parental involvement promotes emerging adults' competence and confidence, overparenting limits autonomy in inappropriate ways and functions to create a sense that emerging adults cannot achieve goals without their parents' support (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014).

Parental Gender

There is little research on helicopter parenting of emerging adults (van Ingen et al., 2015), let alone studies that examine parental gender differences. Only one study could be identified that examined differences between perceived maternal and paternal

helicopter parenting in terms of comparing relations to self-efficacy among college students (van Ingen et al., 2015). Results suggested that perceived maternal helicopter parenting was a stronger predictor children's general self-efficacy than perceived paternal helicopter parenting. Another study focused on mothers' and fathers' personalities as predictors of helicopter parenting styles with a sample of 96 families (Rousseau & Scharf, 2017). The findings explained some differences between mothers and fathers and included several direct and indirect associations between parents' personalities and helicopter parenting. First, though prevention focus was associated with higher levels of helicopter parenting for both parents, higher levels of interpersonal regret were correlated with lower levels of helicopter parenting only for fathers. Also, mothers' prevention focus, promotion focus, and interpersonal regret were indirectly related to more helicopter parenting behaviors by fathers. Findings were explained as consistent with the spillover hypothesis, which implies that individuals' emotions affect their partners' feelings. In this case, findings may suggest that fathers' helicopter parenting behaviors may be in part driven by mothers' emotions.

Although research on this specific difference between mothers and fathers is limited, other studies suggest there may be differences in other areas of parenting, supporting the idea that mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting may also have differential relations with emerging adults' self-efficacy. For example, some studies suggest that adult attachment relationships with mothers have stronger associations with adult attachment style than relationships with fathers (Collins, Read, & Reis, 1990). According to a longitudinal study of 712 children, emerging adults who reported a closer relationship with their mothers tended to receive more economic and housing support,

while closeness with their fathers had no association with economic support and a negative association with housing supports (Swartz et al., 2011). The authors concluded their findings implied there may be different sets of criteria for relationship quality for mothers and fathers, with different implications for intergenerational support.

Another study examined perceived parent-child relationship, sympathy, social competence, and self-worth with a sample of 108 adolescents. Their findings suggested that emerging adults tend to see mothers as more involved, more understanding, more likely to implement strict control than fathers since emerging adults perceive higher levels of intimacy and disclosures from mothers than fathers (Laible & Carlo, 2004). Additionally, results indicated that while perceived maternal support was positively associated with adolescents' sense of sympathy, social competence, and self-worth, perceived paternal support was not related to adolescents' adjustment (Laible & Carlo, 2004). Other research suggests that paternal and maternal involvement have different correlations with emerging adults' academic self-concept, specifically, perceptions of mothers', not fathers', perceived interests in their grades were negatively associated with their GPA (Mailhot & Feeney, 2017).

Justification

As described above, self-efficacy is an important developmental resource in emerging adulthood. It is significantly correlated with many aspects of behavior choices in emerging adulthood. Perceived self-efficacy determines the initial decision to act and choice of behaviors, which provides emerging adults with the ability to encourage themselves in order to be able to cope with fearful or stressful situations rather than engaging in avoiding behaviors. Emerging adults in college who have strong beliefs that

they are able to create a desired effect can have a more active and self-determined life with a sense of optimism and self-confidence, which allows them to be more successful in their educational, professional, and personal lives.

Additionally, parental behaviors are associated with children's self-efficacy development. Even after emerging adults leave their parents' home for college, parental involvement and support, such as guidance, disclosure, and emotional support, are profound resources for children's self-efficacy. At the same time, as the Family Systems Theory indicates, family members need to facilitate individualization and separation with well-balanced level of connectedness for children to gain independence.

Although research is mixed, studies more frequently find helicopter parenting behaviors to be associated with negative rather than positive outcomes for emerging adults. Parents who exhibit high level of helicopter parenting potentially discourage their emerging adult children from gaining maturity and social competence by providing age inappropriate support. Engaging in higher levels of helicopter parenting in particular may thwart development of self-efficacy because it denies opportunities for emerging adults to learn how to overcome obstacles on their own.

Furthermore, previous literature recognized the possibility that mothers and fathers may play different roles and have different levels of influence in their emerging adult children's lives. Therefore, it is expected that emerging adults' perceptions of both mothers' and fathers' degrees of helicopter parenting may have different levels of associations with their self-efficacy. However, most previous research has focused on helicopter parenting in general, without examining the influence of each parent separately. The purpose of the present study is to compare the association between

helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college between parental genders. The comparison is conducted within two-parent families to examine relative influences between mothers and fathers. This study will contribute to existing literature by separately assessing the relationship between mothers and fathers who exhibit higher levels of helicopter parenting and emerging adults' self-efficacy.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Is there an association between perceived helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college? Does parental gender contribute to different levels of association between helicopter parenting and emerging adults' self-efficacy?

Hypothesis 1: There will be a negative association between helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college because helicopter parents discourage their children from gaining independence, maturity, and social competence by offering age inappropriate support. Hypothesis 2: Emerging adults' perceptions of maternal helicopter parenting will be a stronger predictor of low self-efficacy than perceptions of paternal helicopter parenting because previous research shows that mother's parenting is a stronger predictor of various outcomes than father's parenting (Collins et al., 1990; Laible & Carlo, 2004; Rousseau & Scharf, 2017; Swartz et al., 2011).

CHAPTER III
JOURNAL ARTICLE

Comparing Mothers' and Fathers' Helicopter Parenting as Predictors of Self-Efficacy Among Emerging Adults in College

It is universally known that parents have significant impacts on their children across their life span. Emerging adulthood, a time between 18 to 25 years of age, is a period of change and exploration of life possibilities, including love, work, and worldviews, all of which are instrumental in the process of exploration of possible future life directions (Arnett, 2000). Parental behaviors play a significant role in the healthy development of emerging adult children in college. One of the key characteristics that supports healthy development during this transition is self-efficacy which influences individuals' cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy provides college students with a sense of self-reliance, which allows them to handle stressful situations during emerging adulthood. However, when parents are overinvolved in their emerging adult children's lives, parental behaviors sometimes labeled "helicopter parenting," such as taking higher levels of personal responsibility, promoting dependence, and delaying children's identity development, can threaten development of self-efficacy. Though much of the research on this phenomenon does not focus on parental gender, mothers and fathers potentially play different roles in terms of quality and frequency of support they provide to their emerging adult children. In general, mothers tend to be involved in diverse activities and are more influential than fathers in their emerging adult children's lives (Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2006). To address this gap in the literature, this study examined the association between helicopter parenting and college students' self-efficacy and compare mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting as predictors of self-efficacy among emerging adults in college. To

inform this effort, current literature that examines self-efficacy, helicopter parenting, and their association, are reviewed, followed by an exploration of gender differences in parent-child relationships in emerging adulthood.

Literature Review

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an important developmental milestone and is associated with better health, higher achievement, and greater social skills (Bandura, 1977). An individual's perceived self-efficacy contributes to views of optimism and self-confidence to deal with life stressors (Scholz, Gutiérrez Doña, Sud, & Schwarzer, 2002). In general, perceived self-efficacy has impacts on choice of behaviors and it helps individuals believe they have effective coping skills (Bandura, 1977). With self-efficacy, individuals can judge themselves to be able to handle fearful or stressful situations on their own instead of avoiding them. Self-efficacy also determines the initial decision to perform a behavior; therefore, one's level of self-efficacy is a strong predictor of behavioral changes (Sherer et al., 1982). Those who believe in their ability to create a desired effect can have a more active and self-determined life, and take the adaptive actions necessary to deal with challenging situations (Scholz et al., 2002). In sum, self-efficacy is an individual's sense of optimism or self-confidence in their capability to deal with stressful environments.

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is derived from “four major sources of information: performance accomplishment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal” (p. 195). First, performance accomplishment implies that repeated success develops strong efficacy since self-efficacy is based on personal mastery

experiences. When individuals accomplish difficult tasks through sustained effort, it strengthens their self-motivated persistence, while failures lower self-expectations for mastery. Parents contribute to an individual's performance accomplishment by modeling through guided performance, which provides individuals with opportunities to gain generalizable skills to successfully cope with stressful situations. Similarly, vicarious experience informs self-efficacy through inferences; when people see others mastering activities, they infer that they can also be successful if they make intense and persistent efforts. When individuals observe their parents' successful performance, these modeled behaviors by parents show their children how temporary distress can be overcome without severe negative consequences. Third, verbal persuasion implies that individuals can be persuaded into believing in their abilities to overcome through verbal encouragement, although this is less impactful than expectations developed through experience. Parents play an important role as a source of their children's self-efficacy by suggesting that mastery of a task or overcoming an obstacle is within their abilities. Lastly, emotional arousal hinders performance, and when people perform poorly they feel more fear and anxiety, which informs their sense of self-efficacy. Awareness of fear and its physiological effects serve to increase anxiety in fearful situations, further diminishing self-efficacy and creating a feedback loop. However, parental modeling can help to enhance self-efficacy and reduce dysfunctional fears. Parents contribute to diminish these children's cycle of fear by teaching effective coping skills and demonstrating effective ways of handling fearful situations.

Family Systems Framework

Bowen's (1978) Family Systems Theory claims that family is an emotional unit and family members are affected with each other by their thoughts, feelings, and actions under the same emotional skin. The emotional interdependence promotes cohesiveness and cooperation in the family to protect and connect the family members. Family Systems Theory also suggests that as children develop and transition to adulthood, separation and individuation from family of origin needs to be facilitated and recognizes the importance of balancing connectedness and individuation between individuals and family (Kenny, Donaldson, & Harmon, 1991). Family members gain both feeling of belongingness and differentiation from healthy family systems, and extremely close or enmeshed family systems are considered dysfunctional. Enmeshed families provide their family members higher levels of belongingness instead of balancing out belongingness and differentiation. Clear interpersonal boundaries allow families to maintain an appropriate degree of differentiation between parents and children. When these boundaries are too diffuse, family members are more likely to be overinvolved, such as by invading privacy or constraining independence. As a result, these families tend to be anxious about separation or independence from their family members.

Helicopter Parenting

The concept of helicopter parenting began to emerge on college campuses by the early 2000s when the millennial generation entered college (van Ingen et al., 2015). Although helicopter parenting exists on a continuum, it is common in both media and scholarly publications to refer to those who exhibit high levels of helicopter parenting as helicopter parents. Helicopter parents are those who engage in a type of overparenting in which they exhibit excessive involvement in their emerging adult children's lives and

“apply developmentally inappropriate tactics by failing to allow for levels of autonomy suitable to their child’s age” (Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, Bauer, & Murphy, 2012, p.238). Recent media also defines helicopter parents as parents who are overly involved in the lives of their emerging adult children (Willoughby, Hersh, Padilla-Walker, & Nelson, 2015). Parents who exhibit high levels of helicopter parenting behaviors typically experience extreme separation anxiety such as when their children leave home for college and have difficulty detaching from their children (LeMoynes & Buchanan, 2011). The expression “helicopter parents” has been recognized in many industries, including education and media, as overbearing parenting strategies regardless of the child’s age (van Ingen et al., 2015). Although this type of parenting style could theoretically be observed at any developmental stage in a child’s life, most of the time it is a reference to parents of late adolescent or emerging adult children (Segrin et al., 2012) because this is a time when it is adaptive to give more freedom.

Previous scholars have attempted to define the concept of helicopter parenting in various ways. While some researchers recognize highly involved parents as helicopter parents (Shoup, Gonyea, & Kuh, 2009), others use the term overparenting in the same contexts (Segrin, et al., 2012). Another study recognizes intensive support provided by parents many times a week as nonnormative support, which involves a wide variety of support, such as financial support, emotional support, and providing advice on their life in general (Fingerman, Wesselmann, Zarit, Furstenberg, & Birditt, 2012). Finally, parental involvement, which is generally considered to be beneficial, is distinguished from overparenting in that the degree and quality of supportive behaviors are

developmentally appropriate and involve few efforts to limit autonomy (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012).

To our knowledge only one study has attempted to develop a measure of helicopter parenting and establish it as a construct distinct from other forms of parental control (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). According to Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012), helicopter parenting is not necessarily a new dimension of parenting, but is a parenting style that reflects a particular prioritization the existing dimensions of parenting (high control and involvement, and low autonomy granting). Behaviors that would qualify as helicopter parenting involve excessive limiting of autonomy in developmentally and contextually inappropriate ways. For example, instead of asking their child about the content of courses they plan to take, a helicopter parent might order a copy the textbook ahead of time in order to evaluate the quality of the course and determine whether or not the student should enroll. Later research (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Nielson, 2015) found that high levels of involvement that limit autonomy were particularly harmful in the absence of maternal warmth, suggesting that conceptualizations of helicopter parenting as a maladaptive style of parenting should also take parental warmth into consideration.

Also, important to note is that the source of information on parenting behaviors also varies across studies. Some studies measure helicopter parenting solely through emerging adult children's perceptions, and others draw from both parental self-reports and their children's perceptions. On one hand, having parent-child dyad samples can be beneficial in that it allows researchers to more directly assess parental behaviors (Segrin, et al., 2012). On the other hand, self-reported surveys completed by children can allow

researchers to understand how emerging adults experience their parents' behaviors and has been shown to be an important predictor of mental health outcomes (Shiffrin et al., 2013).

Outcomes Associated with Helicopter Parenting

Previous research has shown both positive and negative outcomes of helicopter parenting, however, inconsistent measurement may contribute to the mixed findings. For example, there is evidence that high levels of parental involvement, which is an element of helicopter parenting, is positively associated with children's engagement and self-reported gains in college (Shoup et al., 2009). Using a sample of 4,532 first-year and 4,653 senior students, it was revealed that emerging adults in college with highly involved parents reported that they were more engaged in effective educational achievements in school, possibly because of higher levels of parental encouragement, expectations, and support to focus on college and do well. Consequently, it was concluded that emerging adults seemed to benefit from their additional supports and encouragements their parents provide, and their results show no evidence that highly involved parents are problematic for their emerging adult children. In another study, frequent parental involvement was found to be associated with higher levels of well-being among emerging adults in college (Fingerman et al., 2012). Fingerman et al. (2012) conducted research with 592 emerging adults in college and 399 of their parents and revealed that emerging adults in college had a better sense of goals and higher levels of life satisfaction when they perceived they have frequent intense parental involvement through a self-reported survey.

Important to note, however, is that the way these two studies (Fingerman et al., 2012; Shoup et al., 2009) measured helicopter parenting was not consistent with Padilla-Walker and Nelson's (2012) conceptualization. Shoup et al. (2009) measured helicopter parenting with a focus of the frequency of parent-child communication, and one item that asked how often parents communicated with university administrators. Fingerman et al. (2012) used a measure that focused on parental support, and their description of the measure does not clarify whether autonomy limiting was assessed. These studies may have found helicopter parenting to be associated with positive outcomes because the measures of parenting do not effectively capture the dimension of low autonomy granting that previous research has shown to be a fundamental element of helicopter parenting (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012).

Other studies have found helicopter parenting to be associated with less desirable outcomes with respect to family and peer relationships (Segrin et al., 2012; van Ingen et al., 2015), mental health and wellbeing, and adjustment. The studies reviewed each used different measures of helicopter parenting, and some characterized parenting behaviors as overparenting or overprotective parenting. Even so, the instruments used to assess these parenting behaviors all captured perceptions of autonomy-limiting behaviors in some regard.

One study (Segrin et al., 2012) that focused on family outcomes collected survey data from 538 parent-child dyads. Helicopter parenting was operationalized as overparenting, which included high levels of control, involvement, risk aversion, and concern for the child's happiness. Though autonomy limiting was not specifically mentioned as a characteristic of overparenting, several elements of the instrument used to

measure overparenting reflected this type of parenting (e.g. problem-solving for the child, providing tangible assistance, and removing obstacles for the child). Findings suggested that both parents and children indicated that overparenting was associated with lower quality of parent-child communication, and was indirectly associated with family satisfaction (through parent-child communication). Additionally, emerging adults' perception of helicopter parents has been found to be negatively associated with alienation from peers and lack of trust among peers (van Ingen et al., 2015). In a survey of 190 undergraduate students, participants were asked about their mothers' and fathers' overprotective parenting, which was operationalized as ranging from allowing autonomy on the low end, to intrusion and excessive contact on the high end. Results indicated that perceptions of overprotective parenting were correlated with poor peer attachment, mistrust of peers, feelings of alienation from peers, and poor peer communication (van Ingen et al., 2015).

Other studies suggest helicopter parenting has implications for mental health and wellbeing. For example, a study (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011) conducted with a sample of 317 college students found that perceived helicopter parenting was associated with increased odds of having a prescription for anxiety or depression. In this study, helicopter parenting was operationalized as reflecting parents' perceived inability or unwillingness "to allow their children to experience life's challenges independently" (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011, p. 405). Results also indicated that helicopter parenting was associated with lower scores on a measure of global well-being. Similarly, it was observed from a survey of 297 college students, that helicopter parenting was associated with diminished psychological well-being (Schiffrin et al., 2014). In this study, helicopter parenting was

operationalized as behaviors that reflect high levels of control and acting on the child's behalf. Emerging adults who perceived high levels of helicopter parenting were more likely to report that their basic psychological needs were not being met, and reported lower levels of perceived autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A path analysis also suggested that helicopter parenting was indirectly related to higher levels of depression and poor life satisfaction through unmet psychological needs.

Helicopter parenting has also been linked to poorer adjustment. One study indicated that overparenting was a predictor of maladaptive response to workplace scenarios (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). In this study, 482 undergraduate students responded to online surveys. The measure of overparenting used included items that reflected high involvement and low autonomy granting, and was shown to be distinct from parental involvement through a factor analysis. Results suggested that students who perceived higher levels of overparenting tended to endorse solutions to workplace issues that relied on others rather than taking responsibility themselves. In another study, helicopter parenting has been found to be negatively associated with emerging adults' locus of control. In a study that surveyed 412 undergraduate students in South Korea, participants who perceived their parents as controlling and overinvolved, tended to have lower levels of internal control (Kwon, Yoo, & Bingham, 2016).

As discussed above, although previous studies have attempted to capture the concept of helicopter parenting, it has been operationalized and measured in a variety of ways. Evidently, helicopter parenting is a relatively new construct and methods for measuring and defining it are still evolving. A review of the current literature suggests differences in measurement may also lead to the inconsistency in findings. In particular,

measures that captured autonomy limiting tended to show associations with negative outcomes whereas those that focused only on parental involvement and support were more likely to find associations with positive outcomes.

Helicopter Parenting and Self-Efficacy in Emerging Adulthood

One outcome that may be particularly associated with helicopter parenting in emerging adulthood is self-efficacy. Helicopter parents may obstruct developmental tasks of growing into mature adulthood, which leads to emerging adult children's lower levels of maturation and social competence (van Ingen et al., 2015). Moreover, helicopter parenting may send the message that children cannot be responsible for their own lives, which could explain its association with emerging adults' self-reliance and self-efficacy. Another study claimed that while parental involvement was positively associated with children's social self-efficacy, overparenting was negatively associated with children's social and general self-efficacy (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). Findings suggest that while parental involvement promotes emerging adults' competence and confidence, overparenting limits autonomy in inappropriate ways and functions to create a sense that emerging adults cannot achieve goals without their parents' support (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014).

Parental Gender

There is little research on helicopter parenting of emerging adults (van Ingen et al., 2015), let alone studies that examine parental gender differences. Only one study could be identified that examined differences between perceived maternal and paternal helicopter parenting in terms of comparing relations to self-efficacy among college students (van Ingen et al., 2015). Results suggested that perceived maternal helicopter

parenting was a stronger predictor children's general self-efficacy than perceived paternal helicopter parenting. Another study focused on mothers' and fathers' personalities as predictors of helicopter parenting styles with a sample of 96 families (Rousseau & Scharf, 2017). The findings explained some differences between mothers and fathers and included several direct and indirect associations between parents' personalities and helicopter parenting. First, though prevention focus was associated with higher levels of helicopter parenting for both parents, higher levels of interpersonal regret were correlated with lower levels of helicopter parenting only for fathers. Also, mothers' prevention focus, promotion focus, and interpersonal regret were indirectly related to more helicopter parenting behaviors by fathers. Findings were explained as consistent with the spillover hypothesis, which implies that individuals' emotions affect their partners' feelings. In this case, findings may suggest that fathers' helicopter parenting behaviors may be in part driven by mothers' emotions.

Although research on this specific difference between mothers and fathers is limited, other studies suggest there may be differences in other areas of parenting, supporting the idea that mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting may also have differential relations with emerging adults' self-efficacy. For example, some studies suggest that adult attachment relationships with mothers have stronger associations with adult attachment style than relationships with fathers (Collins, Read, & Reis, 1990). According to a longitudinal study of 712 children, emerging adults who reported a closer relationship with their mothers tended to receive more economic and housing support, while closeness with their fathers had no association with economic support and a negative association with housing supports (Swartz et al., 2011). The authors concluded

their findings implied there may be different sets of criteria for relationship quality for mothers and fathers, with different implications for intergenerational support.

Another study examined perceived parent-child relationship, sympathy, social competence, and self-worth with a sample of 108 adolescents. Their findings suggested that emerging adults tend to see mothers as more involved, more understanding, more likely to implement strict control than fathers since emerging adults perceive higher levels of intimacy and disclosures from mothers than fathers (Laible & Carlo, 2004). Additionally, results indicated that while perceived maternal support was positively associated with adolescents' sense of sympathy, social competence, and self-worth, perceived paternal support was not related to adolescents' adjustment (Laible & Carlo, 2004). Other research suggests that paternal and maternal involvement have different correlations with emerging adults' academic self-concept, specifically, perceptions of mothers', not fathers', perceived interests in their grades were negatively associated with their GPA (Mailhot & Feeney, 2017).

Justification

As described above, self-efficacy is an important developmental resource in emerging adulthood. It is significantly correlated with many aspects of behavior choices in emerging adulthood. Perceived self-efficacy determines the initial decision to act and choice of behaviors, which provides emerging adults with the ability to encourage themselves in order to be able to cope with fearful or stressful situations rather than engaging in avoiding behaviors. Emerging adults in college who have strong beliefs that they are able to create a desired effect can have a more active and self-determined life

with a sense of optimism and self-confidence, which allows them to be more successful in their educational, professional, and personal lives.

Additionally, parental behaviors are associated with children's self-efficacy development. Even after emerging adults leave their parents' home for college, parental involvement and support, such as guidance, disclosure, and emotional support, are profound resources for children's self-efficacy. At the same time, as the Family Systems Theory indicates, family members need to facilitate individualization and separation with well-balanced level of connectedness for children to gain independence.

Although research is mixed, studies more frequently find helicopter parenting behaviors to be associated with negative rather than positive outcomes for emerging adults. Parents who exhibit high level of helicopter parenting potentially discourage their emerging adult children from gaining maturity and social competence by providing age inappropriate support. Engaging in higher levels of helicopter parenting in particular may thwart development of self-efficacy because it denies opportunities for emerging adults to learn how to overcome obstacles on their own.

Furthermore, previous literature recognized the possibility that mothers and fathers may play different roles and have different levels of influence in their emerging adult children's lives. Therefore, it is expected that emerging adults' perceptions of both mothers' and fathers' degrees of helicopter parenting may have different levels of associations with their self-efficacy. However, most previous research has focused on helicopter parenting in general, without examining the influence of each parent separately. The purpose of the present study is to compare the association between helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college between parental

genders. The comparison is conducted within two-parent families to examine relative influences between mothers and fathers. This study will contribute to existing literature by separately assessing the relationship between mothers and fathers who exhibit higher levels of helicopter parenting and emerging adults' self-efficacy.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Is there an association between perceived helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college? Does parental gender contribute to different levels of association between helicopter parenting and emerging adults' self-efficacy?

Hypothesis 1: There will be a negative association between helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college because helicopter parents discourage their children from gaining independence, maturity, and social competence by offering age inappropriate support. Hypothesis 2: Emerging adults' perceptions of maternal helicopter parenting will be a stronger predictor of low self-efficacy than perceptions of paternal helicopter parenting because previous research shows that mother's parenting is a stronger predictor of various outcomes than father's parenting (Collins et al., 1990; Laible & Carlo, 2004; Rousseau & Scharf, 2017; Swartz et al., 2011).

Methods

Sample

Participants of this study included 175 students who were enrolled in two-year and four-year colleges and universities, primarily in the northwestern United States. To be eligible to take the survey, participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 24. Since differences between parents in single-parent or step families may be conflated with other factors such as residential status, we only included students whose parents were

heterosexual, either biological or adoptive, and who were married (to each other) at the time of the survey in analyses. Although many students were not part of families with this normative structure, limiting the sample in this way best allowed us to examine relative influences between mothers and fathers (A. Acock, personal communication, June 25, 2018). A demographic description of the sample is provided in the results section. We excluded participants with incomplete data on the independent or dependent variables from the analysis.

Procedures

We developed a survey in both electronic and hard copy formats, and participants were recruited through convenience sampling methods. The survey was distributed online through social media as well as in hard-copy format in university classrooms. The paper survey was handed out at a single regional public university in the Pacific Northwest. General education classes that had relatively high enrollment and presumably a more representative portion of the student population were targeted. We maintained anonymity by ensuring that IP addresses were not collected from online participants, and by ensuring that the researchers were not present for the collection of completed paper surveys. Approval from the institution's human subjects council was obtained prior to distribution.

Measures

Demographics. Demographic variables such age, gender, race/ethnicity, class standing, living situation, and parents' marital status, were included at the beginning of the survey. Participants were asked if they had someone in their life they consider be a mother/mother-figure and father/father-figure and to categorize the relationships with

their mother and father figure. We also investigated parental demographic variables, such as education level, marital history, and nativity in the survey.

Helicopter Parenting. The helicopter parenting scale developed by Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) was used to assess levels of helicopter parenting that college students perceive. This scale consisted of 5 items with 5-point semantic differential response options. A response of 1 indicated *not at all him/her* and a response of 5 indicated *a lot like him/her*. A sample question asked in the survey is “My parent makes important decisions for me (e.g., where I live, where I work, what classes I take).” We asked participants to provide separate responses for both fathers and mothers. The composite score for each parent was calculated by adding scores on each item together, and then dividing by the number of items. A higher computed mean score for the scale indicated greater helicopter parenting. The scale was also evaluated for internal consistency. Adequate reliability was observed; the Cronbach’s alpha for the mother’s scale was .79 and for the father’s scale it was .83.

Self-Efficacy. The Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Sherer et al. (1982) was used to assess college students’ self-efficacy. This scale consisted of 23 items with 7-point Likert response options. General self-efficacy was measured with 17 items such as “if something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.” A response of 1 indicates *strongly disagree* and a response of 7 indicated *strongly agree*. We only included general self-efficacy in the analysis. The composite score was calculated by adding scores on each item together, and then dividing by the number of items. A higher computed mean score for the scale indicated greater self-efficacy. The scale was also

evaluated for internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha was .88, and indicating strong reliability.

Analytic Strategy

Hypotheses were subjected to a multiple regression model that included control variables, reported self-efficacy, and perceived helicopter parenting for both mothers and fathers. We assessed differential relations between mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting and self-efficacy by examining differences in significance and direction/strength of the regression coefficient for each parent. To begin with, we conducted a multiple regression with both parents' helicopter parenting variables to see if they were significant predictors of self-efficacy. Then, a follow-up analysis was conducted to see if paternal helicopter parenting predicted self-efficacy when maternal helicopter parenting was excluded from the model.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

As shown in Table 1, participants of this study were 175 students who were enrolled in universities, primarily in the northwestern United States. The participants were primarily female (61.7%), and while they ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old, the mean age was 20.2 years old ($SD = 1.71$). A majority of the participants identified as Caucasian/White (68.6%) followed by 15.4% Hispanic/Latino, 8.6% Multicultural, 4.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.3% Black/African American, and 1.1% other. The sample consisted of 33.7% first -year students followed by 25.1% sophomores, 21.7% seniors, 14.3 juniors, and 5.1% graduate/post graduate students. Approximately a half of the participants (54.3%) answered that they were in a committed mutually exclusive romantic

relationship and 4.0% of the participants responded that they were married. The majority of participants lived with roommates (55.4%), whereas 19.4% were living with one or more of their parents, 13.1% were living alone, and 9.7% reported living with a romantic partner. A little over half the participants (53.1%) had either a full-time or part-time job.

As described in Table 2, most participants (96.6%) listed their biological mother as a mother figure, and the rest listed adoptive mothers. Thirty-one-point four percent of the mothers finished high school/GED followed by mothers with Associate degree (24.0%), Bachelor's degree (21.1%), Master's degree (14.3%), and PhD or other professional degree (1.1%). Most of the mothers (86.9%) were born in the United States. In terms of fathers' demographic variables, 96.0% of the participants saw their biological father as a father figure, and the remaining 4% listed adoptive fathers. Approximately one-third (37.1%) of the fathers finished high school/GED followed by fathers with Bachelor's degree (28.6%), Master's degree (13.1%), Associate degree (7.4%), and PhD or other professional degree (4.6%). Most of the fathers (82.9%) were born in the United States.

On average, reported levels of helicopter parenting were relatively low, though they were slightly higher for mothers than fathers. The average score of perceived mother's helicopter parenting was 2.00 ($SD = .81$), and the average score of perceived father's helicopter parenting was 1.77 ($SD = .79$). The average score of self-efficacy reported by the students was 5.30 ($SD = .85$). Scores for mothers' helicopter parenting ranged from 1.00 to 4.60, and fathers' helicopter parenting ranged from 1.00 to 4.80. Self-efficacy level ranged from 2.81 to 7.00.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Characteristics (N = 175)

Variables	%
Gender (female) ^a	61.7
Race/Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	68.6
Hispanic/Latino/Latina	15.4
Multicultural	8.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.0
Black/African American	2.3
Other ^b	1.1
Underclass standing ^c	59.0
In a relationship	54.3
Married ^d	4.0
Living with parent(s) ^e	19.4
Employed (full or part time)	53.1

^aRemaining students were male ($n = 64$), or other ($n = 3$). ^bOther ($n = 2$). ^cRemaining students were Juniors ($n = 25$), Seniors ($n = 38$), or Post Bachelor/Graduate students ($n = 9$). ^dRemaining students were single ($n = 167$) or divorced ($n = 1$). ^eRemaining students were living alone ($n = 23$), living with a romantic partner ($n = 17$), living with other family ($n = 3$), living with roommates ($n = 97$).

Table 2

Parent Demographic Characteristics (N = 175)

Variables	%
Mother	
Biological mother ^a	96.6
An Associate's degree or more ^b	60.5
Born in the U.S.	86.9
Father	
Biological father ^c	96.0
An Associate degree or more ^d	53.7
Born in the U.S.	82.9

^aRemaining category was adoptive mother ($n = 6$). ^bRemaining categories were below high school ($n = 14$), high school/GED ($n = 55$), associate degree ($n = 42$), Bachelor's degree ($n = 37$), Master's degree ($n = 25$), or PhD or other professional degree ($n = 2$).

^cRemaining category was adoptive father ($n = 7$). ^dRemaining categories were below high school ($n = 16$), high school/GED ($n = 65$), associate degree ($n = 13$), Bachelor's degree ($n = 50$), Master's degree ($n = 23$), or PhD or other professional degree ($n = 8$).

Regression Analyses

Prior to conducting regression analyses, to examine the relations between mothers' and fathers' reports of parenting practices and self-efficacy, we conducted preliminary analyses to determine which demographic and/or contextual variables were significantly related to self-efficacy, and thus needed to be controlled. The following variables were considered: the student's age, class standing, gender, race/ethnicity,

relationship status, employment status, residential situation, parental education levels, and parental nativity. Independent samples *t*-tests found statistically significant differences in self-efficacy based on employment status. Part-time or full-time employed students had higher self-efficacy than those who were not employed, $t(171) = -3.02, p < .01$. Thus, this variable was controlled in the regression analyses. Other variables were not significantly related to differences in self-efficacy and were not included as controls.

As presented in Table 3, the first model included both mother's and father's levels of helicopter parenting. We found that participants' perception of maternal helicopter parenting was a significant negative predictor of self-efficacy ($B = -.32, p < .01$) such that greater perceived maternal helicopter parenting was associated with lower levels of self-efficacy. Student's employment status was a significant predictor of self-efficacy ($B = .37, p < .01$), however coefficients for the father's helicopter parenting were not statistically significant. The portion of variance in student's self-efficacy explained by the model overall was 11% ($F_{3,168} = 6.89, p < .001$).

To further understand why perceived paternal helicopter parenting was not a significant predictor of self-efficacy, we also evaluated the association between mother's and father's helicopter parenting. There was a strong positive correlation between students' perceptions of their mothers' helicopter parenting and students' perceptions of their fathers' helicopter parenting ($r = .71, p < .001$). In order to explore whether this strong association may be limiting our ability to detect a relationship between father's helicopter parenting and self-efficacy, we analyzed father's helicopter parenting in a separate regression model where mother's helicopter parenting was excluded (see Table 4 below).

Table 3

Perceptions of Mothers' and Fathers' Perceived Helicopter Parenting as a Predictor of Self-Efficacy (N = 175)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Working (full or part time)	.37**	.13
Mother's helicopter parenting	-.32**	.11
Father's helicopter parenting	.12	.11
$F_{3,168} = 6.89***$		
$R^2 = .11$		

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Results of this follow-up analysis are presented in Table 4, and indicated that participants' perception of paternal helicopter parenting was not a significant predictor of self-efficacy ($B = -.10$, $p = .22$). Student's employment status ($B = .36$, $p < .01$) continued to be a significant predictor of self-efficacy. The portion of variance in student's self-efficacy explained by this model was 6% ($F_{2,170} = 5.35$, $p < .01$). Results supported our hypothesis that there is an association between helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college. Furthermore, the results also supported the hypothesis that mothers' reported helicopter parenting is a stronger predictor of students' self-efficacy than fathers' reported helicopter parenting.

Table 4

Perceptions of Fathers' Perceived Helicopter Parenting as a Predictor of Self-Efficacy

(*N* = 175)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Working (full or part time)	.36**	.13
Father's helicopter parenting	-.10	.08
	$F_{2,170} = 5.35^{**}$	
	$R^2 = .059$	

** $p < .01$

Discussion

Results supported our hypothesis that there is an association between perceived helicopter parenting and self-efficacy among emerging adults in college. In support of the second hypothesis, emerging adults' reports of their mothers' helicopter parenting predicted self-efficacy whereas fathers' helicopter parenting did not. For mothers, higher levels of perceived helicopter parenting were associated with lower levels of self-efficacy; however no such association was found between fathers' perceived helicopter parenting and self-efficacy. Our results suggest that when emerging adult assesse that they have a mother who is highly involved in their lives, in ways that inhibit autonomy in developmentally inappropriate ways, they tend to show lower levels of self-efficacy.

It appears that parents who exhibit higher levels of helicopter parenting limit emerging adults' development of self-efficacy, particularly in two of the areas identified by Bandura (1977). Personal mastery experience contributes to one's performance accomplishments, which is the primary source of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). However, parents who engage in higher levels of helicopter parenting may prevent children from obtaining experiences of repeated success by placing themselves into their children's decision-making processes and performing tasks or solving problems on their behalf. When emerging adults perceive that they have parents who display higher levels of helicopter parenting, they do not get an opportunity to accomplish difficult tasks or make decisions through their own effort, thus they have fewer chances to reinforce their self-motivated persistence, compared with emerging adults whose parents engage in lower levels of helicopter parenting.

Though verbal persuasion was not measured in this study, it is also possible that parents who perform higher levels of helicopter parenting may be less likely to offer verbal persuasion or encouragement to their children because they are performing tasks or making decisions on behalf of their children rather than offering support or encouragement as children take on these responsibilities themselves. Verbal persuasion is another primary source of one's self-efficacy, which provides individuals with a belief that they can successfully cope with stressful situations through suggestions (Bandura, 1977). Given that verbal encouragement was not assessed in this study, future research is needed to explore this possibility.

Family Systems Theory also offers some insights as to the mechanisms underlying this association. Emotional interdependence in the family system promotes cohesiveness and cooperation to protect and connect the family members (Bowen, 1978). However, enmeshed families without clear interpersonal boundaries tend to fail to maintain appropriate degree of differentiation between parents and children (Kenny et al., 1991). Thus, when children leave home for college, these parents have a difficult time with detaching from their children and tend to be anxious about separation or independence from their children. When boundaries in the family system are too diffused and families experience extreme separation anxiety (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011), family members are more likely to be overinvolved with such parental behaviors that provide age inappropriate support to their emerging adult children (Kenny et al., 1991). As a result, higher levels of helicopter parenting functions to create a sense that students cannot achieve their goals without their parents' support and children believe that their ability to be independently successful is limited. As a result, emerging adults tend to rely on others

and have poor coping strategies (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). In order to foster emerging adults' identity development, parental instrumental and psychological supports need to be adapted as children develop, which allows parents and their children to renegotiate their relationships (Anderson & Sabatelli, 2007).

Although previous research has identified both positive and negative outcomes of helicopter parenting, our study's findings align with those that found associations with negative outcomes. For example, previous research found greater levels of helicopter parenting to be associated with poorer parent-child communication (Segrin et al., 2012), poor peer attachment, mistrust of peers, feelings of alienation from peers, and poor peer communication (van Ingen et al., 2015), anxiety and depression issues (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011), and lower levels of internal control (Kwon et al., 2016). The measure we used to investigate helicopter parenting included all three aspects of helicopter parenting; high control and involvement as well as low autonomy granting, which was more consistent with measures used in studies that found helicopter parenting to be associated with negative as opposed to positive outcomes. Future research should recognize the implications of differences in measurement and strive for more consistent operationalization of the concept.

Additionally, the differential relationship that mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting has with self-efficacy found in the current study parallels previous studies which suggested that mothers and fathers may play different roles in terms of parenting. Our results suggest that there was no association between emerging adults' perception of father's helicopter parenting and reported self-efficacy. This result was consistent with those of van Ingen et al. (2015), which indicated that mothers' helicopter parenting had a

stronger association with emerging adults' general self-efficacy than fathers' helicopter parenting. The current study also provides support to other studies that suggested mother's and father's parenting can have different associations with a variety of outcomes (Laible & Carlo, 2004; Swartz et al., 2011). Taken together with previous studies, our study suggests that it is important to recognize that mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting may have differential relations to self-efficacy, and that this should also be considered as a possibility with other outcomes of interest.

One potential explanation for mothers' and fathers' differential association between helicopter parenting and self-efficacy is that fathers' helicopter parenting might have been driven by mothers' emotions. Rousseau and Scharf (2017) found that mothers' emotions were significantly associated with fathers' helicopter parenting. Considering their findings, perceived fathers' levels of helicopter parenting might be an extension of mothers' emotions, rather than originating within fathers themselves, therefore it may be difficult to detect an independent influence of fathers' helicopter parenting on children's self-efficacy. It is possible that emerging adult children's sense of self-efficacy is shaped not only by parenting behaviors but also by the motivations for those parenting behaviors. For example, if fathers are employing helicopter parenting behaviors because they are responding to their spouse's emotions, as opposed to acting in accordance with their own anxiety over their children's risk of failure, the message their children receive through these behaviors may be qualitatively different. Further research is needed in order to assess whether parents' motivations for helicopter parenting play a role in the association with self-efficacy.

It is also important to note that our results showed that another important predictor of emerging adults' self-efficacy was their employment status. Results indicated that participants who did not have either a full or part time job tended to show lower levels of self-efficacy. This finding suggests that although parents still play significant roles in many aspects in emerging adults' lives, other life experiences also contribute to their self-efficacy levels. This is not surprising given that emerging adulthood is a developmental period of time when children should be separating from their family and gaining autonomy and independence.

In applying Bandura's (1977) framework for self-efficacy development, employment experiences can allow emerging adults to practice performance accomplishment. When emerging adults accomplish tasks at work with their effort, it will help them to strengthen self-motivated persistence and gain coping skills in stressful situations. Moreover, emerging adults can possibly witness their co-workers or supervisors mastering activities through their work, which leads them to infer that they can also be successful through intense and persistent efforts. At the same time, when they work with co-workers or supervisors who offer verbal encouragement, they may be persuaded into believing in their abilities to overcome obstacles. This suggests that healthy development of self-efficacy in emerging adults in college can be promoted by other experiences outside of family life as well as through appropriate levels of parental supports.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study are worth noting. First, the relationships between helicopter parenting variables and the outcome variable were relatively small, and a great

deal of the variance in self-efficacy was not explained by the regression models. Clearly other variables not measured in the current study also contribute to emerging adults' self-efficacy levels. However, it is inappropriate to minimize the role of helicopter parenting without conducting further research using a more representative sample. The sample size of the current study was relatively small, and participants in the study were disproportionately female. Participants were recruited in classrooms of a 4-year public university in northwestern area in the United States, therefore, a more representative sample is necessary to allow for generalizability to the U.S. college student population. In addition, our sample in the current study only included one family structure where parents were either biological or adoptive and were married to each other. Future research should give further attention to students from other types of family structures.

Furthermore, both mothers' and fathers' helicopter parenting were assessed based on emerging adults' perceptions, which may not reflect accurate levels of helicopter parenting. Finally, our study is cross-sectional, therefore, causality cannot be determined. There is also a possibility that the pattern of the correlation between helicopter parenting and emerging adults' self-efficacy is bidirectional. Parents may be responding to their children's low self-efficacy by intensifying their involvement. Therefore, future research should be conducted using longitudinal studies that involve parent-child dyads in order to establish temporal precedence of helicopter parenting and add support to the notion that parenting is antecedent to student's self-efficacy development. Given the relationship between employment status and self-efficacy evident in our findings, future studies should also consider other factors outside the family of origin that may contribute to self-efficacy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings in our study contribute to the understanding of emerging adults' perceptions of parent-child relationships. Helicopter parenting has been shown to be correlated with a wide range of negative outcomes with respect to emerging adults' well-being. Our study found that there was a negative association between helicopter parenting and emerging adults' self-efficacy; in particular, higher levels of perceived mothers' helicopter parenting was a predictor of lower levels of self-efficacy, but not perceived fathers' helicopter parenting. The results indicate that it is important for parents, and particularly mothers, to know that overinvolvement with their children in college could have a negative impact on their well-being. To promote their emerging adult children's self-efficacy, parents should know in what circumstances and how much support they should provide to promote a sense of self-reliance of their children.

The findings of our research can be put into practice by university administration to support parents in their emerging adult children's transition to college. When children leave for college, parents also go through a transition in terms of adjustments to the parent-child relationship. It is very important for parents (and perhaps in particular, mothers) to know how to adjust their parental involvement as they navigate separation with their children. University administrators, such as student orientation coordinators, can support families in this transition by teaching parents new methods of parent-child communication and strategies for how to adjust parental involvement, as well as inform parents that overinvolvement with their emerging adult children in college could be associated with delayed development of self-efficacy. In particular, to promote children's autonomy, we suggest that parents be involved in emerging adult children's lives in ways

that provide guidance or mentoring their children instead of inserting themselves into their emerging adult children's decision-making processes, acting on their behalf, or solving their problems for them.

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings in our study contribute to the understanding of emerging adults' perceptions of parent-child relationships. Helicopter parenting has been shown to be correlated with a wide range of negative outcomes with respect to emerging adults' well-being. Our study found that there was a negative association between helicopter parenting and emerging adults' self-efficacy; in particular, higher levels of perceived mothers' helicopter parenting was a predictor of lower levels of self-efficacy, but not perceived fathers' helicopter parenting. The results indicate that it is important for parents, and particularly mothers, to know that overinvolvement with their children in college could have a negative impact on their well-being. To promote their emerging adult children's self-efficacy, parents should know in what circumstances and how much support they should provide to promote a sense of self-reliance of their children.

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