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HELICOPTER PARENTING: EXPLORING THE MOTIVATIONS AND
DEFINING BEHAVIORS OF PARENTS WHO HOVER

by

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DEFINING BEHAVIORS OF PARENTS WHO HOVER

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ABSTRACT

HELICOPTER PARENTING: EXPLORING THE MOTIVATIONS AND DEFINING BEHAVIORS OF PARENTS WHO HOVER

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Helicopter parenting is defined by popular culture as a set of parenting practices characterized by overinvolvement which reduce child autonomy and are potentially associated with a host of negative child outcomes. However, empirical research has not adequately defined the construct, specifically with respect to linking motivations of these parents to specific parenting behaviors. The current study evaluates associations among parenting beliefs and behaviors of those higher in helicopter parenting. Participants included 325 caregivers from across the United States who completed a survey on their own parenting beliefs and behaviors. Hierarchical linear regression was used to examine associations between helicopter parenting beliefs and combinations of parenting behaviors (i.e., parental monitoring, parental involvement, the use of inconsistent discipline, and positive parenting practices). Three-way interactions suggested unique

combinations of parental involvement, positive parenting, and inconsistent discipline were associated with helicopter parenting beliefs (i.e., ensuring constant happiness, befriending, total score). Results hold promise for refining theoretical descriptions of helicopter parenting, as well as addressing specific parenting behaviors in parenting interventions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Outcomes Associated with Helicopter Parenting	3
Helicopter Parenting Relation to Parenting Styles.....	4
Helicopter Parenting Relation to Parenting Practices	5
Consistent Discipline	6
Parental Monitoring	7
Positive Parenting	9
Linking Parenting Practices to the Motivations of Helicopter Parenting	9
Current Study	11
CHAPTER II: METHOD	13
Participants.....	13
Procedures	13
Measures	14
Prescreening Questions.....	14
Demographics	14
Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ).....	14
Locke Parenting Scale (LPS).....	15
Data Analysis	15
CHAPTER III: RESULTS.....	17
Descriptive Statistics.....	17
Model 1: Involvement/Positive Parenting/Monitoring	17
Dependent Variable: Overall Helicopter Parenting	17
Dependent Variable: Befriending	18
Dependent Variable: Ensuring Constant Happiness	18
Model 2: Involvement/Positive Parenting/Inconsistent Discipline.....	19
Dependent Variable: Overall Helicopter Parenting	19
Dependent Variable: Befriending	20
Dependent Variable: Ensuring Constant Happiness	21
Model 3: Involvement/Monitoring/Inconsistent Discipline.....	22
Dependent Variable: Overall Helicopter Parenting	22
Dependent Variable: Befriending	23
Dependent Variable: Ensuring Constant Happiness	23
Model 4: Positive Parenting/Monitoring/Inconsistent Discipline.....	24
Dependent Variable: Overall Helicopter Parenting	24

Dependent Variable: Befriending	25
Dependent Variable: Ensuring Constant Happiness	25
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION	27
Implications for theory.....	28
Implications for practice	31
Limitations and Directions for Future Research	32
REFERENCES	34
APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS	43
APPENDIX B: VARIABLE DESCRIPTIVES	45
APPENDIX C: FIGURES FOR THREE-WAY AND TWO-WAY INTERACTIONS ..	47

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Demographic characteristics.....	43
Table 2.1 Helicopter parenting and parenting behaviors variables.....	45
Table 2.2 Pearson correlation for covariates.....	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	47
Figure 1.2 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	48
Figure 1.3 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	49
Figure 2.1 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	50
Figure 2.2 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	51
Figure 2.3 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	52
Figure 3.1 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	53
Figure 3.2 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	54
Figure 3.3 Model 2 three-way interaction.....	55
Figure 4.1 Model 3 two-way interaction.....	56

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The term helicopter parenting is often used to describe parents who “hover” over their children to ensure that their children are successful and avoid any harm (Locke, 2014). Parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting have been described as overly involved, overly attuned to their children’s needs, and participating in tasks for their children that are not developmentally appropriate (Cucchiara, 2013). In the few studies examining helicopter parenting behaviors, those higher in the construct demonstrate higher levels of communication and advice-giving (Locke, Kavanagh, & Campbell, 2016) and “micromanagement” of their child’s activities compared to those lower in the construct (Rubin, Hastings, Stewart, Henderson, & Chen, 1997). Research suggests motivations for helicopter parenting include helping their child meet their full potential by managing risks and attempting to intervene to improve child outcomes (Hays, 1996; Shirani, Hirani, & Coltart, 2012) and desires to ensure happiness and well-being (Locke, 2014). Although helicopter parenting is a commonly used term in pop culture, specific behaviors constituting helicopter parenting have not been clearly defined. This study aims to describe the construct of helicopter parenting through comparison to well-defined parenting behaviors (e.g., involvement, supervision, positive parenting, consistent discipline).

Defining the Construct of Helicopter Parenting

Relevant literature indicates that terms such as “overparenting,” “intrusive parenting,” and “hyperparenting” explore similar motivations and behaviors closely related to the construct of helicopter parenting. Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, & Montgomery (2013) describe overparenting as developmentally inappropriate levels of parental assistance and directiveness, involvement, monitoring, and problem solving.

Munich & Munich (2009) describe overparenting as excessive concern about the child's mental state and abilities, overinvolvement, and great difficulty for the parent separating from the child. The authors note difficulty separating as a possible reason these intensive parenting practices are seen in particularly high numbers among college-aged students and their parents. Intrusive parenting involves parents inhibiting the child performing independent behaviors (Taylor, Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Widaman, 2013), via excessive directedness and guidance of the child (Eisenberg, Taylor, Widaman, & Spinrad, 2015), and high levels of psychological control (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Smits, Lowet, & Goossens, 2007). In the literature, hyperparenting is described as an overarching term to describe a range of intensive parenting practices. Current studies describe helicopter parenting as a "branch" of hyperparenting practices, distinct from other forms of hyperparenting named in popular media (e.g., little emperor, tiger mom, concerted cultivation; Janssen, 2015; To, Kan, Tsoi, & Chan, 2013). Hyperparenting involves practices and combinations of parenting behaviors including: protecting and keeping the child from any harm, giving in to all of child's wants and desires, involving the child in excessive extracurricular activities in hopes that the child will be successful, and expecting high achievement from the child (Janssen, 2015). Priyadharsini, (2017) describes hyperparenting as trying to create the "perfect childhood" by overscheduling and making excessive decisions for the child. Throughout the literature, the terms overparenting, intrusive parenting, and hyperparenting are often used synonymously with helicopter parenting due to the similarities in motivations and goals consistent with helicopter parenting practices. Further research investigating the behaviors of helicopter parents can help distinguish whether helicopter parenting is distinct from these other parenting styles.

Outcomes Associated with Helicopter Parenting

Although parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting appear to come from a place of care and concern, research suggests helicopter parenting may produce negative outcomes for children. A majority of the helicopter parenting and overparenting literature has been conducted with undergraduate samples reporting about parenting in the context of the college experience. Students who report having parents who engage in helicopter parenting behaviors (e.g., heavy monitoring, high levels of intervention on their college schoolwork) showed greater levels of depression and reported less life satisfaction (Schiffrin, Godfrey, Liss, & Erchull, 2015), higher levels of narcissism (Segrin, et al., 2013), increased dependency on others (Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield & Weber, 2014), and decreased levels of self-efficacy (Bradley-Geist, Olson-Buchanan, 2014) compared to students whose parents do not engage in helicopter parenting behaviors. The results of a study by LeMoynes and Buchanan (2011) suggest that college-aged students with parents high in helicopter parenting not only show high levels of dependency on parents but are also more likely to use recreational painkillers and be prescribed antianxiety and depression medications.

A small body of studies has been conducted with parents of younger children, and findings suggest children of parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting show lower emotion regulation (Perry, Dollar, Calkins, Keane, & Shanahan, 2018), heightened entitlement (Segrin, et al., 2012), and poor child-parent communication (Leung & Busiol, 2016) when compared with children of parents who do not demonstrate helicopter parenting behaviors. Literature on helicopter parenting has been largely correlational at this point, but this research has suggested potential negative outcomes in youth exposed to helicopter parenting and parents who engage in these behaviors.

Helicopter Parenting Relation to Parenting Styles

Literature consistently supports strong associations among parenting behaviors and a child's overall wellbeing. Baumrind (1965) characterized parenting styles that can be generalized to most parents through different combinations of parental warmth and discipline strategies (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive). Later, these parenting styles were further developed by Maccoby and Martin (1983), who explained distinctions between neglectful and indulgent forms of permissive parenting and described the impact of different combinations of parental responsiveness and demandingness. Parental responsiveness refers to the amount of awareness a parent has about their child's needs, and demandingness refers to the parent's demands for their children to be mature and responsible (Locke, 2014). Children of authoritative parents, who show high responsiveness and high demandingness, appear to have better outcomes, overall, compared to children of parents who exhibit permissive, authoritarian, or neglectful parenting styles (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991).

In studies of helicopter parenting among the undergraduate population, the construct appears to be best defined by extreme levels of high responsiveness as well as both high and low demandingness (i.e., high demands for success paired with low demand that the child perform independently; Coccia, Darling, Rehm, Cui, & Sathe, 2012; Locke et al., 2012). However, a third factor identified in the literature, providing support to the growth of autonomy (i.e., child's ability and confidence to think, act, and make decisions on their own; Mattanah, 2001), appears to have important interactions with the domains of responsiveness and demandingness (Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob, & DeCoursey, 2002; Locke, 2014). Locke and colleagues (2012) suggested a model of possible causes and effects of helicopter parenting from these combinations of parenting beliefs and behaviors. Specifically, overinvestment in their child may increase parents'

awareness of events in their child's world and offer both prompts and opportunities for them to 'help' in tasks that are age-inappropriate for their child. These parental actions are related to beliefs about their child's inability to face challenges, risks of harm, potential for success, as well as beliefs about their child's unique needs. According to this model, children of parents high in helicopter parenting can subsequently show reduced self-efficacy and low sense of responsibility, increased anxiety, poorer life skills (e.g., social skills, self-care skills), and overall poor resilience to challenges.

While much of the helicopter parenting literature describes the potential negative influence of helicopter parenting, a small body of studies has shown that some level of more "intense" parenting can have positive effects on children. High levels of parental support and effort have been shown to decrease stress and increase motivation and achievement in older children (Coccia et al., 2012; Keith & Keith, 1993). This literature suggests that there may be a tipping point where parenting behaviors become defined as overparenting versus appropriately involved parenting (Borelli, Margolin, & Rasmussen, 2015; Locke, 2012). The literature has not yet identified the level of demandingness and responsiveness that creates positive versus negative outcomes (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015; Segrin, Givertz, Swaitkowski, & Montgomery, 2015). Understanding the motivations of "helicopter parents," and how those motivations lead to certain behaviors, is necessary for the creation of parenting interventions that could decrease negative outcomes and give parents that engage in helicoptering better, more helpful ways to handle their reactions to their own parental needs and beliefs.

Helicopter Parenting Relation to Parenting Practices

Parenting style may provide insight into the broad motivations and beliefs that encourage helicopter parenting practices (Luster, Rhoades, & Haas, 1989; Smetana, 2017). To better understand the specific motivations of parents higher in the construct of

helicopter parenting, it is important to understand the beliefs behind the practices parents are engaging in. To further investigate these associations, we considered two domains of parenting practices: behavioral control and parental support. These domains are most closely associated with the dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness defined by Baumrind (Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins, & Burchinal, 2005; Martínez & García, 2007). For the purposes of this paper, behavioral control consists of consistent discipline and parental monitoring, and parental support includes positive parenting practices and parental involvement (Barber, et al., 2005).

Consistent Discipline

Parental discipline is a key component of children learning to act in accordance with rules (Smith, 2004). However, not all parental discipline practices are equal. Parental discipline practices that are consistent in application, appropriate with child development, and fair, meaning they closely match the negative behavior displayed by the child, produce greater self-discipline and evolution of appropriate behaviors (Neiman & Shea, 2004). Ineffective parental discipline involves discipline practices that are inconsistent, lax, and over reactive (O'Leary, 1995). Effective discipline has been shown to promote better moral regulation, internalization of norms, and decrease externalizing behavior problems (Kerr, Lopez, Olson, & Sameroff, 2004). In contrast, inconsistent discipline practices have been shown to predict higher levels of delinquency and aggression in children (O'Leary, 1995). There is limited research on the relation between helicopter parenting and parental discipline strategies. However, literature suggests that parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting show higher levels of behavioral control compared to parents lower in the construct (Padilla-Walker, & Nelson, 2012). Behavioral control is involved in limit setting, supervision, and establishing and enforcing rules within the home. Since parents higher in the construct of helicopter

parenting show greater levels of behavioral control, this may suggest that parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting may also be more inclined to have more rules and guidelines and, therefore, more opportunities to engage in discipline practices. However, due to the limited research on discipline practices related to helicopter parenting, it is unclear whether parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting tend to engage in over-use of discipline (limit-setting), due to wanting their children to succeed, or more relaxed and inconsistent punishment, due to wanting to ensure happiness and avoid negative feelings in their child. Further investigation is required to understand the role of discipline in helicopter parenting practices.

Parental Monitoring

Parental monitoring/supervision has been shown to have positive effects on children and is considered to be a crucial parenting skill (Dishion & McMahon, 1998). Parental monitoring is the ongoing surveillance of a child's behavior and location. Appropriate monitoring relies on parents knowing information, as well as the child's accurate disclosure of their own behaviors (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Adolescents who are poorly monitored tend to engage in more delinquent behaviors, use illicit substances, and fare worse in school compared to adolescents whose parents engage in more parental monitoring practices (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; DiClemente, Crosby, Sionean, Cobb, Harrington, & Oh, 2001; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Among young children, parental monitoring has been shown to decrease a child's risk for accidents (Dishion & McMahon, 1998). However, parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting may engage in higher levels of monitoring/supervision than what is helpful and may tend to monitor their children in situations beyond what is developmentally appropriate, which can inhibit self-regulated learning in children (Hong, Hwang, Kuo, & Hsu, 2015). There is limited

research on the effects of overmonitoring; however, high levels of parental monitoring behaviors may be associated with helicopter parenting, which can have negative impacts on child outcomes (Bristow, 2014; Hong, et al., 2015; Vinson, 2012). Further research should be conducted to assess whether extremely high levels of monitoring are associated with negative outcomes or if parental monitoring is still a protective factor regardless of it occurring in very high levels.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is typically defined as some level of a parent's participation in their child's academic, social, and personal life (Fan, & Chen, 2001). High parental involvement is associated with greater child achievement, academic success, and social competence compared to parents who report low levels of involvement (Hill & Taylor, 2004; McNeal, 1999). While high parental involvement has benefits, it can become problematic when it becomes excessive (Schiffrin, et al., 2015), and research has suggested that parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting tend to engage in overinvolvement (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Segrin, et al., 2012). Research defines parental overinvolvement as parents over protecting and micromanaging various aspects of their child's life that are not developmentally appropriate (Bristow, 2014).

Overinvolvement can lead children to think their parents see them as incompetent, and they may begin to experience low self-efficacy and believe they cannot complete tasks without their parents' help (Locke, et al., 2016). Overinvolvement seen in parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting is likely well-intentioned and some authors suggest it may result from parental anxiety (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting may be more likely to view their child as vulnerable (Thomasgard, 1998) and may have heightened awareness to environmental dangers (Nelson, 2010) compared to parents lower in the construct of helicopter

parenting. As such, parental anxiety about the wellbeing of their child may be motivated by the need to ensure the safety of their child (Segrin, et al., 2013).

Positive Parenting

Positive parenting behaviors refer to encouragement, positive interactions, praise, and affection (Myers-Walls, 2004). The use of positive parenting skills has been associated with reduced violence and antisocial behaviors in youth (Knerr, Gardner, Cluver, 2013). Previous research suggests that positive parenting and parental involvement are highly correlated (e.g., $r = 0.45-0.85$; Essau, Sasagawa, & Frick, 2006; Shelton, Frick, & Wootton, 1996). Since helicopter parenting has been associated with high levels of parental involvement, this may suggest that those higher in helicopter parenting also engage in higher levels of positive parenting behaviors, in contrast to parents lower in helicopter parenting. However, there is a lack of literature about the direct relation between positive parenting and helicopter parenting. One notable study conducted by Odenweller, et al. (2014) found that helicopter parenting behaviors paired with reported maternal warmth were associated with lower levels of risky behaviors and higher feelings of self-worth compared to children of parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting who showed low warmth. These findings suggest that positive parenting may be a protective factor against some negative outcomes in children of parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting.

Linking Parenting Practices to the Motivations of Helicopter Parenting

The Locke Parenting Scale (LPS; Locke et al., 2012) was created to identify core parenting beliefs associated with the construct of helicopter parenting among parents of children ages 5-17. Across several factor analytic studies, Locke (2013; 2014) validated two main domains of helicopter parenting motivation. The first, befriending, is defined as action taken by parents due to wanting to be friends with their child, and the second,

ensuring constant happiness, is defined as the parent's constant effort to meet their child's demands to ensure they do not face difficult circumstances or negative affect.

When examining behaviors that constitute helicopter parenting, it is essential to consider the age and developmental level of the child. While extra parent support is necessary for younger children, helicopter parenting occurs when the support no longer matches the child's developmental needs. The LPS does not directly label developmentally appropriate levels of parental engagement. Locke (2012) states that parenting behaviors and their developmental appropriateness vary over time according to the child's age. Instead, Locke asserts that despite changes to parental behaviors over time, the beliefs and goals parents endorse on the LPS remain consistent over time. Thus, the measure should define helicopter motivations, no matter the age of the child measured.

Two studies to date have used this scale to link parenting beliefs to parenting behaviors among samples of parents of school-aged children. Locke (2014) reported that higher scores on the LPS were associated with higher responsibility taken by parents for their child's homework among a sample of teen girls in grades 8-12. Further, the findings indicated that parents high in helicopter parenting beliefs also attributed a high amount of responsibility to their child's teacher for their child's homework. Locke suggested that parents' expectations of their own, or their child's teachers', support may reduce requirements for the child to self-manage their homework responsibilities. The second study using the LPS examined the association between helicopter parenting beliefs and parental accommodation behaviors among a sample of children ages 5-11 with depressive, anxious, and ADHD symptomatology (Casillas, Elkins, Walther, Schanding, Short under review). Findings suggested that those higher in helicopter parenting beliefs tend to engage in increased levels of accommodations (i.e., participating with their child

to accomplish tasks and reduce negative behaviors) compared to those lower in helicopter parenting beliefs. Further, the association between helicopter parenting beliefs and accommodations was not moderated by age, which is consistent with Locke's (2012) assertion that these beliefs may remain stable across age. These results suggest that parents high in helicopter parenting may struggle to reduce their accommodations and to balance age-appropriate needs for autonomy exhibited in later childhood.

Current Study

While the literature provides support for possible motivations for helicopter parenting (Hays, 1996; Locke, 2014; Shirani et al., 2012), there has been relatively less attention given to the definition of the specific behaviors exhibited by these parents and how these behaviors may relate to beliefs. Since the majority of the helicopter parenting research has been conducted with undergraduate students (Schiffrin et al., 2015; Segrin, et al., 2013; Odenweller et al., 2014; LeMoyné & Buchanan, 2011), there is also a need for further research to define the construct in younger parent-child dynamics (Leung & Busiol, 2016; Locke, 2014). Parental involvement is an important factor in creating positive child outcomes, but it must be balanced with support for child autonomy. Defining the precise behaviors of helicopter parenting may be useful for understanding the difference between appropriate levels of involvement and "hovering."

In the current study, we examined whether certain combinations of parenting behaviors (i.e., consistent discipline, monitoring, involvement, positive parenting) are associated with helicopter parenting motivations (as measured on the Locke Parenting Scale). We hypothesized that helicopter parenting beliefs would be associated with higher levels of parental involvement, monitoring/supervision, and positive parenting compared to lower levels of these variables (Leung & Busiol, 2016; Odenweller, et al., 2014; Segrin et al., 2012). We did not make specific predictions about associations between

inconsistent discipline practices and helicopter parenting beliefs, as the research on discipline and helicopter parenting is extremely limited. It was expected that combinations of high levels of parenting behaviors such as involvement and monitoring would be positively, and strongly, correlated with high levels of parental ensuring motivations (LPS, “ensuring constant happiness”) and high levels of positive parenting behaviors would be closely related to befriending motivations (LPS, “befriending”) (Levine, 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). We expected that combinations of high involvement, monitoring, and positive parenting would show the highest association with helicopter parenting beliefs

CHAPTER II:

METHOD

Participants

The current study surveyed 400 parents of children between the ages of 4 and 11. Of these, 325 parents completed all study measures and are included in the analyses. Participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (69.7%) and snowball sampling (30.3%). The sample is comprised of primarily Caucasian (79%), female parents (83.3%). Ninety-three percent of those who completed the survey were biological parents. The majority of parents were between the ages of 35 and 44 (45.3%). The sample was balanced across child gender (52% female) and displayed variability across child age ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 4.62$). Sample sizes and percentages of demographic information collected for the participants are presented in Table 1.

Procedures

All data were obtained via self-report rating scales and collected through Qualtrics from March 2017 through November 2017. A link to the Qualtrics survey was distributed either through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) or “snowball” email method. Percentages of participants attained through both methods are reported in Table 1. Investigators had no contact with participants. In both methods, participant eligibility was first assessed via three prescreening questions, which are described in the measures. Eligible participants were given permission to take the survey and directed to a consent form and the Qualtrics link. If a participant’s answers did not qualify, the survey ended. Participants recruited through Amazon MTurk were given \$0.01 for completing the prescreening questions and \$0.25 for completing the full survey. Other participants recruited through the “snowball” email were able to enter their name into a raffle for one of two \$25 gift certificates.

Measures

Prescreening Questions

Three prescreening items were administered to determine eligibility to participate in the full survey. The items included “are you 18 years or older?” “are you the primary caregiver of a child?” “how old is this child?” If participants answered “yes” to both of the first two questions and endorsed having a child between the ages 4 to 11, they were qualified to continue to the full survey. Further, MTurk allowed geographical participant selection, and only participants currently residing in the United States were able to view and participate in the study.

Demographics

Participants were asked to provide information regarding their age, gender, and race and ethnicity. Participants were asked to include their own education level, the number of people living in their home, and estimated household income. Participants with more than one child in the qualifying age range were asked to answer questions in the survey for just one child. To ensure random selection, caregivers were asked to complete the survey for the child whose first initial appeared closest to the first letter of the alphabet.

Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ)

The APQ was chosen as a measure of parenting practices. The APQ (Frick, 1991) measures five different dimensions of parenting including: positive parenting, parental involvement, parental monitoring, inconsistent discipline, and corporal punishment. Only the first four domains were evaluated in the current study. The APQ is comprised of 42 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Internal reliability of subscales ranges from .55 - .75 and test-retest reliability estimates range from .62 - .96 (Dadds, Maujean, & Fraser, 2003). The APQ demonstrates good criterion

validity in differentiating clinical and nonclinical groups (Dadds, et al., 2003; Frick, Christian, & Wootton, 1999; Shelton et al., 1996). Further, Frick and colleagues (1999) demonstrated that the APQ successfully predicted child symptoms of ODD and CD (mean $R^2 = 0.24$ across its five scales).

Locke Parenting Scale (LPS)

The LPS is designed to assess helicopter parenting through the assessment of the parent's beliefs and attitudes about their role in the parent-child relationship (Locke et al., 2014). The LPS is comprised of 9 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). There are two main domains examined in the LPS, developed from literature of attitudes and beliefs previously associated with overparenting (Levine, 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). The first, *befriending*, is overparenting action due to a desire to be friends with their child. The second, *ensuring constant happiness*, reflects the parent's beliefs that their child should be happy at all times and that it is their role to ensure their child's happiness. The LPS has high stability over a 16-19 month interval ($r = .77$), and internal consistency of .73 for the total scale (Locke et al., 2015). Locke notes that because there is limited research on the effects of helicopter parenting, and the LPS is a new measure, further research will be required to establish the predictive validity of the LPS.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the study was to examine combinations of parenting behaviors associated with the motivations of helicopter parenting. Parental involvement, monitoring, positive parenting, and inconsistent discipline are continuous independent variables from the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire. The total score and subscale scores from the Locke Parenting Scale (i.e., *ensuring constant happiness* and *befriending*) serve as continuous dependent variables of helicopter parenting motivations.

Correlation analyses were conducted to assess the relations among helicopter parenting motivations and each of the APQ parenting behaviors. An examination of the correlations showed that none of the independent variables were highly correlated except positive parenting and parental involvement ($r = .627$). Additional collinearity tests of tolerance and VIF were within acceptable levels, indicating that rules of multicollinearity were met.

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted to assess whether certain parenting behaviors, or combinations of behaviors, are associated with helicopter parenting motivations after controlling for covariates. To examine the hypotheses, twelve separate eight stage hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted to predict helicopter parenting behaviors. Four hierarchical linear regression analysis tests were conducted with total helicopter parenting behaviors as the dependent variable. At stage one, demographics (child gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity) were entered into the model to control for demographics. At stages two, three, and four, main effects among the four parenting behaviors from the APQ (positive parenting, monitoring, involvement, and discipline) were examined in the model. Stages five, six, and seven examined paired cross-product terms of parenting behaviors entered at steps two, three, and four. For the final step, a cross-product term of all three parenting behaviors from steps two, three, and four was examined. These four tests were repeated with both *ensuring* and *befriending* helicopter parenting motivations as the dependent variable.

CHAPTER III:

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2.1 includes the means and standard deviations of the helicopter parenting variables (total helicopter parenting beliefs, helicopter parenting befriending beliefs, helicopter parenting ensuring beliefs) as well as the parenting behavior variables (involvement, monitoring, inconsistent discipline, positive parenting). Table 2.2 includes a correlation matrix of demographics, helicopter parenting variables, and parenting behavior variables. Correlations showed that parents with higher income displayed lower overall scores of helicopter parenting motivations ($r = -.27, p < .01$), and befriending motivations ($r = -.26, p < .01$), and higher scores of parental involvement ($r = .12, p < .05$). There were no significant correlations found between child age or ethnicity on either LPS variables or parenting variables.

Model 1: Involvement/Positive Parenting/Monitoring

Dependent Variable: Overall Helicopter Parenting

Demographic variables (child gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity) accounted for 8.2% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 10.09, p < .001$). Parental involvement explained an additional 2.5% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 9.30, p < .01$), and positive parenting explained an additional 5.5% of the variance in helicopter parenting ($F\text{-Change} = 22.18, p < .001$). Parental monitoring and interactions among parental involvement/positive parenting, involvement/monitoring, positive parenting/monitoring, and involvement/positive parenting/monitoring explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00-.01$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .08-2.90, p\text{'s} = .09-.77$). In

the regression analysis, there were no significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest (β 's = -2.10-2.47, p 's = .26-.56).

Dependent Variable: Befriending

Demographic variables accounted for 7.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 9.30, p < .001$). Parental involvement explained an additional .3% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors, but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = 1.01, p = .32$). Positive parenting explained an additional 1.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting ($F\text{-Change} = 5.76, p < .05$), and parental monitoring explained an additional 1.9% of the variance in helicopter parenting ($F\text{-Change} = 7.29, p < .01$).

Interactions among parental involvement/positive parenting, involvement/monitoring, positive parenting/monitoring, and involvement/positive parenting/monitoring explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .001\text{-.}01$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .45\text{--}1.90, p$'s = .17-.50). In the regression analysis, there were no significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest (β 's = -3.97-1.47, p 's = .08-.36).

Dependent Variable: Ensuring Constant Happiness

Demographic variables accounted for 5.4% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 6.43, p < .001$). Parental involvement explained an additional 4.2% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 15.76, p < .01$), and positive parenting explained an additional 7.4% of the variance in helicopter parenting ($F\text{-Change} = 29.78, p < .001$). Parental monitoring and interactions among parental involvement/positive parenting and involvement/monitoring explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00\text{-.}01$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .003\text{--}2.42, p$'s = .12-.96). The interaction among positive parenting/monitoring explained an additional 1.0% of the variance in helicopter parenting

behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 4.29, p < .05$). The interaction of involvement/positive parenting/monitoring did not explain additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00, F\text{-Change} = .003, p = .96$). In the regression analysis, there were no significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest (β 's = -1.47-1.34, p 's = .37-.97).

Model 2: Involvement/Positive Parenting/Inconsistent Discipline

Dependent Variable: Overall Helicopter Parenting

Demographic variables accounted for 8.2% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 10.09, p < .001$). Parental involvement explained an additional 2.5% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 9.30, p < .01$), and positive parenting explained an additional 5.5% of the variance in helicopter parenting ($F\text{-Change} = 22.18, p < .001$). Inconsistent discipline and interactions among parental involvement/positive parenting, involvement/inconsistent discipline, positive parenting/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00\text{-.}01$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .03\text{-.}2.75, p$'s = .10-.87). However, the interaction among involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline explained an additional 1.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 6.56, p < .05$). In the regression analysis, there were significant main effects for parental involvement ($\beta = 2.74, p < .05$), positive parenting ($\beta = 2.81, p < .01$), and inconsistent discipline ($\beta = 3.09, p < .05$). There were also significant two-way interactions among parental involvement/positive parenting ($\beta = -4.73, p < .05$), involvement/inconsistent discipline ($\beta = -4.84, p < .05$), and positive parenting/inconsistent discipline ($\beta = -4.60, p < .01$). The three-way interaction among involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline was also found to be significant ($\beta = 6.69, p < .05$). However, simple slope analysis indicated no significant slopes across

low, average, and high levels of the focal predictor (parental involvement) ($ps = .12 - .91$), though two trends emerged. The first revealed a marginal negative relation between involvement and overall helicopter parenting beliefs when positive parenting is low and inconsistent discipline is average ($\beta = -.13$, 95% CI $[-.28, .02]$, $t = -1.71$, $p = .09$). This finding indicates that low involvement may predict higher overall helicopter parenting beliefs when positive parenting is low and inconsistent discipline is average. The second trend revealed a negative relation between involvement and overall helicopter parenting beliefs when positive parenting is high and inconsistent discipline is low ($\beta = -.23$, 95% CI $[-.48, .02]$, $t = -1.79$, $p = .07$). This finding contradicts the other reported trend, indicating that low involvement may predict higher overall helicopter parenting beliefs when positive parenting is high and inconsistent discipline is low. See Figures 1.1-1.3.

Dependent Variable: Befriending

Demographic variables accounted for 7.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 9.30$, $p < .001$). Parental involvement explained an additional .3% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors, but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = 1.01$, $p = .32$). Positive parenting explained an additional 1.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting ($F\text{-Change} = 5.76$, $p < .05$), and inconsistent discipline explained an additional 1.4% of the variance in helicopter parenting ($F\text{-Change} = 5.35$, $p < .05$). Interactions among parental involvement/positive parenting, involvement/inconsistent discipline, and positive parenting/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00\text{-.}01$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .13\text{--}2.26$, $p\text{'s} = .13\text{--}.72$). However, the interaction among involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline explained an additional 1.1% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 4.21$, $p < .05$). In the regression analysis there was a significant main effect for inconsistent discipline ($\beta = 2.53$, $p < .05$). There

was also a significant two-way interaction among positive parenting/inconsistent discipline ($\beta = -3.68, p < .05$). The three-way interaction among involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline was also found to be significant ($\beta = 5.56, p < .05$). There were no further significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest (β 's = -4.25-2.07, p 's = .05-.12). Simple slope analysis indicated one significant slope and one trending slope, suggesting a negative relation between involvement and “befriending” helicopter parenting beliefs when positive parenting is low and inconsistent discipline is average ($\beta = -.09, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.16, -.01], t = -2.16, p < .05$) and when positive parenting is low and inconsistent discipline is high ($\beta = -.11, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.22, .01], t = -1.82, p = .07$). This finding indicates that low involvement may predict higher “befriending” helicopter parenting beliefs when positive parenting is low and inconsistent discipline is average or high. Other interactions of the different parenting variable levels were nonsignificant (p 's = .27-.97). See Figures 2.1-2.3.

Dependent Variable: Ensuring Constant Happiness

Demographic variables accounted for 5.4% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 6.43, p < .001$). Parental involvement explained an additional 4.2% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 15.76, p < .01$), and positive parenting explained an additional 7.4% of the variance in helicopter parenting ($F\text{-Change} = 29.78, p < .001$). Inconsistent discipline and interactions among parental involvement/positive parenting, involvement/inconsistent discipline, positive parenting/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00\text{-.}004$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .001\text{--}1.48, p$'s = .23-.98). However, the interaction among involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline explained an additional 1.3% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 5.46, p < .05$). In the regression analysis there were significant main effects

for parental involvement ($\beta = 2.67, p < .05$), positive parenting ($\beta = 2.89, p < .01$), and inconsistent discipline ($\beta = 2.84, p < .05$). There were also significant two-way interactions among parental involvement/positive parenting ($\beta = -4.72, p < .05$), involvement/inconsistent discipline ($\beta = -4.27, p < .05$), and positive parenting/inconsistent discipline ($\beta = -4.31, p < .01$). The three-way interaction among involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline was also found to be significant ($\beta = 6.10, p < .05$). Simple slope analysis indicated one significant slope, suggesting a negative relation between involvement and “ensuring constant happiness” helicopter parenting beliefs when positive parenting is high and inconsistent discipline is low ($\beta = -.17, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.32, -.01], t = -2.09, p < .05$). This finding indicates that low involvement may predict higher “ensuring constant happiness” helicopter parenting beliefs when positive parenting is high and inconsistent discipline is low. Other interactions of the different parenting variable levels were nonsignificant (p 's = .12-.86). See Figures 3.1-3.3.

Model 3: Involvement/Monitoring/Inconsistent Discipline

Dependent Variable: Overall Helicopter Parenting

Demographic variables accounted for 8.2% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 10.09, p < .001$). Parental involvement explained an additional 2.5% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 9.30, p < .01$). Monitoring and inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .001\text{-.}02$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .29\text{-.}3.77, p$'s = .05-.59). Interactions among parental involvement/monitoring explained an additional 1.5% of variance ($F\text{-Change} = 5.63, p < .05$). Interactions among involvement/inconsistent discipline, monitoring/inconsistent discipline, and involvement/monitoring/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in

helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .001\text{-.}004$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .04\text{--}1.56$, p 's = .21-.54). In the regression analysis there was a significant main effect for involvement ($\beta = 2.11$, $p < .05$). There was also a significant two-way interaction among involvement/monitoring ($\beta = -2.79$, $p < .05$). Simple slope analysis indicated one significant slope, suggesting a positive relation between involvement and overall helicopter parenting beliefs at low levels of monitoring ($\beta = .17$, 95% CI [.05, .29], $t = 2.84$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that high involvement paired with low monitoring may predict higher overall helicopter parenting beliefs. At average and high levels of monitoring, helicopter parenting motivations were not significantly associated with involvement (p 's=.19-.40; See Figure 4.1). There were no further significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest (β 's = -2.46-3.17, p 's = .072-.43).

Dependent Variable: Befriending

Demographic variables accounted for 7.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 9.30$, $p < .001$). Parental involvement, monitoring, inconsistent discipline, the interactions among parental involvement/monitoring, involvement/inconsistent discipline, monitoring/inconsistent discipline, and involvement/monitoring/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00\text{-.}01$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .00\text{--}3.48$, p 's = .06-.99). In the regression analysis, there was a significant main effect for inconsistent discipline ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .05$). There were no other significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest (β 's = -.04-.01, p 's = .07-.94).

Dependent Variable: Ensuring Constant Happiness

Demographic variables accounted for 5.4% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 6.43$, $p < .001$). Parental involvement explained an additional 4.2% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 15.76$, $p < .001$) and

monitoring explained an additional 1.5% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 5.60, p < .05$). Inconsistent discipline explained an additional .07% of variance in helicopter parenting, but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = 2.69, p = .10$). The interaction among parental involvement/monitoring explained an additional 1.8% of variance ($F\text{-Change} = 1.69, p < .01$). Interactions among involvement/inconsistent discipline, monitoring/inconsistent discipline, and involvement/monitoring/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .001\text{-.}004$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .33\text{--}1.69, p\text{'s} = .20\text{--}.57$). In the regression analysis, there were no significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest ($\beta\text{'s} = -2.11\text{--}1.57, p\text{'s} = .11\text{--}.99$).

Model 4: Positive Parenting/Monitoring/Inconsistent Discipline

Dependent Variable: Overall Helicopter Parenting

Demographic variables accounted for 8.2% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 10.09, p < .001$). Positive parenting explained an additional 7.9% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 31.78, p < .01$). Monitoring, inconsistent discipline, and interactions among positive parenting/monitoring, positive parenting/inconsistent discipline, monitoring/inconsistent discipline, and positive parenting/monitoring/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00\text{-.}01$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .01\text{--}2.96, p\text{'s} = .09\text{--}.94$). In the regression analysis, there were no significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest ($\beta\text{'s} = -1.82\text{--}2.13, p\text{'s} = .09\text{--}.53$).

Dependent Variable: Befriending

Demographic variables accounted for 7.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 9.30, p < .001$). Positive parenting explained an additional 1.7% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 6.23, p < .05$), and monitoring explained an additional 1.9% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 7.31, p < .01$). Inconsistent discipline and interactions among positive parenting/monitoring, positive parenting/inconsistent discipline, monitoring/inconsistent discipline, and positive parenting/monitoring/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .00\text{-.}01$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .03\text{-}2.69, p\text{'s} = .10\text{-.}86$). In the regression analysis, there were no significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest ($\beta\text{'s} = -3.78\text{-}4.17, p\text{'s} = .06\text{-}.26$).

Dependent Variable: Ensuring Constant Happiness

Demographic variables accounted for 5.4% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F(3,337) = 6.43, p < .001$). Positive parenting explained an additional 11.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 46.93, p < .01$). Monitoring and inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .002\text{-.}003$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .84\text{-}1.34, p\text{'s} = .25\text{-.}36$). The interaction among positive parenting/monitoring explained an additional 1.6% of the variance in helicopter parenting behaviors ($F\text{-Change} = 6.68, p < .05$). The interactions among positive parenting/inconsistent discipline, monitoring/inconsistent discipline, and positive parenting/monitoring/inconsistent discipline explained additional variance in helicopter parenting ($R^2\text{-Change} = .000\text{-.}002$), but this variance was not significant ($F\text{-Change} = .00\text{-.}87, p\text{'s} = .35\text{-.}99$). In the

regression analysis, there were no significant main effects or interactions among the variables of interest (β 's = -1.11-.99, p 's = .25-.99).

CHAPTER IV:

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper was to explore the motivations and behaviors of parents who engage in helicopter parenting practices. Despite the use of helicopter parenting as a household term, there is a lack of clear definition on what it means to engage in helicopter parenting. The goal was to better characterize helicopter parenting by examining how specific helicopter parenting motivations might be associated with unique combinations of parenting practices. Hierarchical linear regression was used to explain statistically significant variance in independent variables by accounting for other variables. Significant three-way interactions across total helicopter parenting beliefs as well as specific belief patterns (i.e., befriending and ensuring constant happiness) involved combinations of parental involvement, positive parenting, and inconsistent discipline behaviors. However, simple slope analyses suggested differences across combinations of low, average, and high levels of each of these variables. First, the combinations of involvement, positive parenting, and inconsistent discipline appear less clear when examining overall helicopter parenting beliefs, and it is possible that significant slopes are “washed out” (only trends emerged for these slopes) when collapsed across both types of helicopter parenting motivations. A more distinct pattern emerged across each form of helicopter parenting motivation. Specifically, it appears that a combination of low involvement, low positive parenting, and average to high inconsistent discipline was associated with “befriending” helicopter parenting beliefs. Thus, this finding suggests that a parent who is overreactive, shows low warmth, and low positive involvement maybe be motivated by beliefs associated with a desire to maintain a friendship with their child. In contrast, a combination of low involvement, high positive parenting, and low inconsistent discipline was associated with “ensuring constant

happiness” helicopter parenting beliefs. Thus, this finding suggests that a parent who is measured and consistent in setting limits, displays high warmth and reinforcement, yet, who has low positive involvement with their child may be motivated by beliefs associated with a desire to ensure their child’s happiness and avoidance of harm. These findings contradict our predictions and do not readily align with theory on helicopter parenting. Further, parental monitoring did not appear to be as relevant as predicted in relation to helicopter parenting. The only significant relation emerged in a two-way interaction with involvement, such that low monitoring paired with high involvement was associated with greater overall helicopter parenting beliefs. It appears these variables may indeed play a role in characterizing helicopter parenting; however, the significant overlap among these variables may necessitate further analysis to parse out the shared variance among them.

Implications for theory

Research beyond correlational studies of helicopter parenting are limited at this point. As reviewed in the introduction, studies have indicated that helicopter parenting may be related to higher levels of behaviors closely related to parental monitoring, parental involvement, and positive parenting practices. However, there is a lack of research on combinations of these variables and how beliefs are associated with behaviors among parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting. Further, there is research suggesting that parenting behaviors like parental monitoring and involvement are beneficial at some levels (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Hong, et al., 2015; (Schiffrin, et al., 2015; Stattin & Kerr, 2000) but become unhelpful in exaggerated amounts.

The results from this study do not reflect previous research which suggests parents high in the construct of helicopter parenting engage in high levels of parental monitoring (Bristow, 2014; Hong, et al., 2015; Vinson, 2012). It is worth further

exploration to examine specific monitoring behaviors that may predict helicopter parenting practices more than others. In contrast, the results from this study suggest that high levels of inconsistent discipline may be related to helicopter parenting beliefs, and this behavior was not previously linked to helicopter parenting in the literature. Parents higher in displays of inconsistent discipline are typically overreactive in their discipline practices and struggle to maintain a consistent approach to limit-setting. It is unclear why this parenting practice would align more closely in the current study with “befriending” motivations as compared to “ensuring constant happiness.” It may be useful to investigate whether specific forms of discipline are more closely aligned with helicopter parenting motivations. Second, results indicated that high levels of positive parenting were related to “ensuring constant happiness” helicopter parenting beliefs. Parents high in this form of helicopter parenting belief typically engage in developmentally inappropriate behaviors in order to support their child and help their child avoid harm. These motivations align with the parenting practices typically observed by parents high in positive parenting (i.e., combination of encouragement, positive interactions, praise, and affection; Myers-Walls, 2004). Finally, results indicated that lower levels of involvement were associated with “befriending” and “ensuring constant happiness” motivations. Again, this finding contradicts existing literature, yet, our study examines this variable in combination with other parenting practices and suggests a much more nuanced approach to interpretation than prior studies. Results suggest that it is low involvement in combination with high levels of other variables (e.g., inconsistent discipline) that may best characterize the transition from involved to “hovering.”

Lee, Bristow, Faircloth & Macvairsh (2014) suggest that even though there are more means for monitoring children in current times than there were in previous years (cell phones with tracking devices, more advanced baby monitors), these are not the

cause of increased intensive parenting practices. They argue that parents and society's view that children are vulnerable is the cause for the shift in more intense parenting practices. Parents during this current time are considered to be responsible for how their child develops and their future success. This mindset is held by society and parents themselves more so than in previous generations of parents (Lee et al., 2014). Wolf (2011) suggests that parents, mothers in particular, are being held responsible for keeping their children completely safe, and that there is a perception that mothers are wholly responsible for their child's development more so than what is actually possible. These studies suggest that cultural and societal pressures are likely contributing to parental anxiety which may cause parents to engage in helicopter parenting practices. Mothers who put forward intense effort and time into increasing their children's accomplishments are at increased risk for further anxiety, guilt, and stress (Wall, 2010). Research in this domain should further investigate whether parents' perception of their role as parents causes them anxiety which is increased by attempting to engage in the practices they feel are necessary to meet these roles. Thus, it is important to consider parental anxiety as a motivation for parental behaviors associated with helicopter parenting in future research.

This study focused only on parental motivations and behaviors. Future research should examine these specific parenting motivations and behaviors in the context of positive and negative effects on children. Additionally, previous research has shown that parenting practices and child behaviors affect each other through a bidirectional relationship (Lengua & Kovacs, 2005; Pardini, Fite, & Burke, 2008; Pettit & Arsiwalla, 2008). This suggests that helicopter parenting may be prompted by a child's behavior and may be better understood through the context of the child's behavior. Conceptualizing this through our results, we found that inconsistent discipline practices are related to helicopter parenting. Inconsistent discipline is typically described as both lax and/or

overreactive (O'Leary, 1995). If a child is engaging in excessive tantrumming or nonadherence to rules, a parent motivated either to befriend their child or ensure their child's constant happiness may be more likely to engage in inconsistent discipline practices (e.g., giving a harsh punishment in the moment then not following through later) to alleviate their child from experiencing harm or negative emotions. This cycle may become reinforcing due to the child realizing they will be able to get away with misbehavior (Patterson, 1976) leading to more negative behavior (and likely further inconsistent discipline from the parent) in the future. Thus, helicopter parenting practices are not only an antecedent but also a consequence of maladaptive child behavior (McLeod, Kruttschnitt, & Dornfeld, 1994; Neece, Green, & Baker, 2012). Future research on helicopter parenting should evaluate not only parent practices but also child behaviors that may elicit these responses.

Implications for practice

In addition to refining theory related to helicopter parenting, it is important to gain an understanding of the behaviors, motivations, and beliefs of parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting so that clinicians are better able to recognize and reduce potentially harmful parenting patterns. Studying helicopter parenting with a school-aged population can help create early intervention practices before negative effects of helicopter parenting evolve. The results of this study suggest it may be useful for clinicians working with parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting to engage in involved, consistent, and positive parenting practices. However, since it appears helicopter parents are already engaging in these behaviors, it is possible that they are doing so in a way that may not be helpful in the long term. Ramaekers and Suissa (2012) suggest that directing parents to “relax” their overinvolved parenting practices may not be helpful. Instead, involving the parents in helping build their child's resilience and

promoting their child's autonomy through different means of involvement may prove more effective. Bidirectional models which incorporate the child response and effect on parenting behavior may also help refine clinical timing of intervention, and inform the threshold for what constitutes "too much" involvement, monitoring, affection, or limit-setting at specific developmental periods. Finally, future research to reduce helicopter parenting may additionally consider the interaction of these variables with other factors examined in helicopter parenting literature, such as parental anxiety and parents' perception of their child's abilities (Locke, 2012; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, & Montgomery, 2013). It may be that targeting these factors in clinical intervention successfully reduces inappropriate levels of involvement and helps parents support the growth of child autonomy.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A number of limitations quantify the interpretations we are able to make from the current study. First, many of the parenting variables utilized in this study co-occur and may inform the manifestation of one another. For example, monitoring typically occurs in the context of an involved parent-child relationship. Though the specific parenting behaviors may differ, it is likely that shared variance across these variables may confound our ability to discern unique relationships between parenting practices and helicopter parenting beliefs. A future analysis of this question may be better answered by construction of structural models that account for the shared variance across parenting practices. Second, only parent report data was considered. It is possible and likely that parents and their children may not answer parenting practices in the same way, or that children did not perceive parenting behavior as inappropriate to their developmental needs. Further, we are unable to examine the full context of how parent-child behaviors affect each other over time, or examine child emotional and behavioral outcomes within

the current dataset. Future research may explore helicopter parenting by creating longitudinal structural models incorporating both parent and child reports.

Conclusions

The majority of research on helicopter parenting has been conducted with college-aged children. This study contributes to the helicopter parenting research in school-aged children, and highlights the importance of examining the unique combinations of beliefs and behaviors that define parents who “hover.” Gaining an understanding of the behaviors parents higher in the construct of helicopter parenting are engaging in is useful in both refining theory and clinical interventions for these populations. Future research should aim to further examine specific behaviors and beliefs of helicopter parenting by parsing out shared variance across parenting variables and by considering both parent and child factors.

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APPENDIX A:
DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1.1

Demographic characteristics

	N	%
Relationship to Child		
Biological Parent	299	92
Adoptive Parent	11	3
Step Parent	6	2
Legal Guardian	7	2
Other	2	1
Parent Race/Ethnicity		
Black (African American, Caribbean)	28	8.5
Latino	16	5.0
Caucasian (White, Not of Latino or Asian descent)	239	73.5
Asian	6	2
Native American	3	1.0
Biracial	29	9.0
Other	4	1
Parent Gender		
Female	279	86
Male	45	14
Other	1	0.3
Parent Age		
18-24	4	1
24-34	135	42
35-44	15	46
45-54	36	11
Parent Marital Status		
Never Married	44	13.5
Married	242	74.5
Divorced/Separated	30	9
Other	9	3
Annual Household Income		
<\$20,000	22	7
\$20,000-\$40,000	66	20
\$41,000-\$60,000	61	19
\$61,000-\$80,000	62	19

>\$80,000	114	35
Child Gender		
Female	163	49.5
Male	161	50.2
Other	1	0.3
Child Age		
4-5	95	29
6-7	85	26
8-9	71	22
10-11	74	23
Study Recruitment		
Amazon Mechanical Turk	244	75
Emailed Link/Facebook	81	25
<hr/>		
Note: N = 325		

APPENDIX B:
VARIABLE DESCRIPTIVES

Table 2.1

Helicopter parenting and parenting behaviors variables

	Mean	SD	N
Helicopter Parenting Variables			
LPS Total	29.57	5.84	325
LPS Befriending	9.21	3.7	325
LPS Ensuring Constant Happiness	20.36	2.97	325
Parenting Behaviors			
Parental Involvement	29.71	5.72	325
Parental Monitoring	37.21	4.97	325
Inconsistent Discipline	17.12	3.77	325
Positive Parenting	19.63	3.29	325

Table 2.2

Pearson correlations for covariates

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Child Age	-									
2. SES	0.02	-								
3. Ethnicity	-0.03	-0.04	-							
4. LPS Total	-0.07	-.27**	0.03	-						
5. LPS Befriending	-0.09	-.26**	0.01	.84**	-					
6. LPS Ensuring Constant Happiness	-0.03	-.22	0.04	.90**	.53**	-				
7. Parental Involvement	0.06	.12*	0.03	.12*	0.02	.18**	-			
8. Parental Monitoring	-0.06	0.07	-.02	0.05	0.1	.15**	.24**	-		
9. Inconsistent Discipline	-0.07	-.02	-.02	-0.04	-0.1	0.01	.20**	.38**	-	
10. Positive Parenting	-0.00	-.04	.05	.30**	.15*	.36**	.63**	.36**	.13*	-

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$

APPENDIX C:
FIGURES FOR THREE-WAY AND TWO-WAY INTERACTIONS

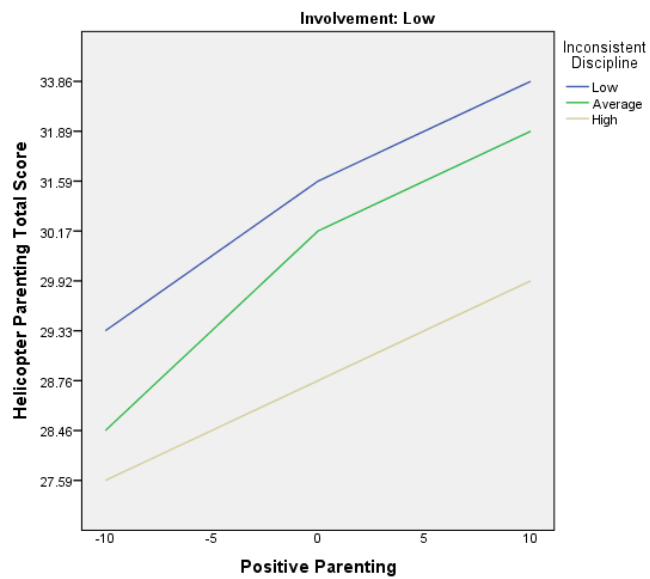


Figure 1.1

Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: total helicopter parenting score, low involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

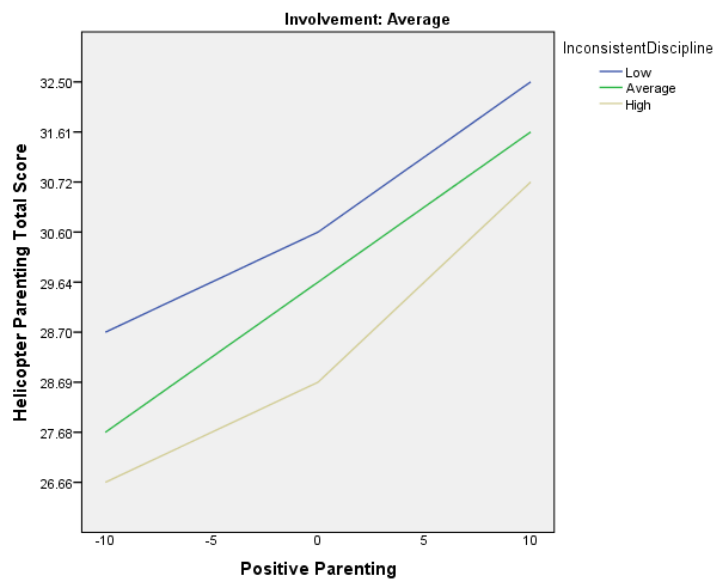


Figure 1.2

Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: total helicopter parenting score, average involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

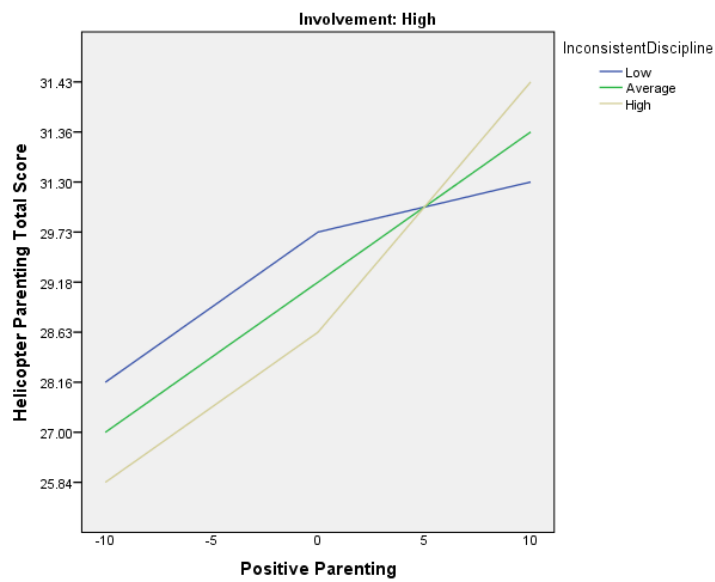


Figure 1.3

Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: total helicopter parenting score, high involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

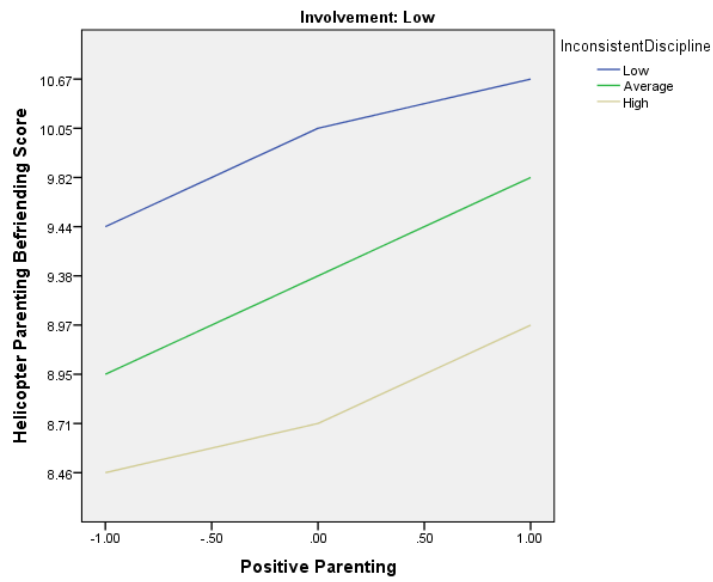


Figure 2.1

Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: befriending helicopter parenting score, low involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

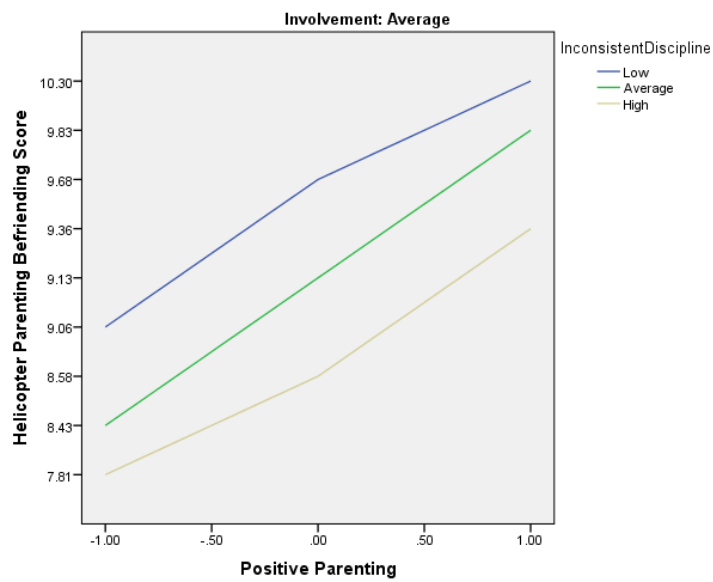


Figure 2.2

Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: befriending helicopter parenting score, average involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

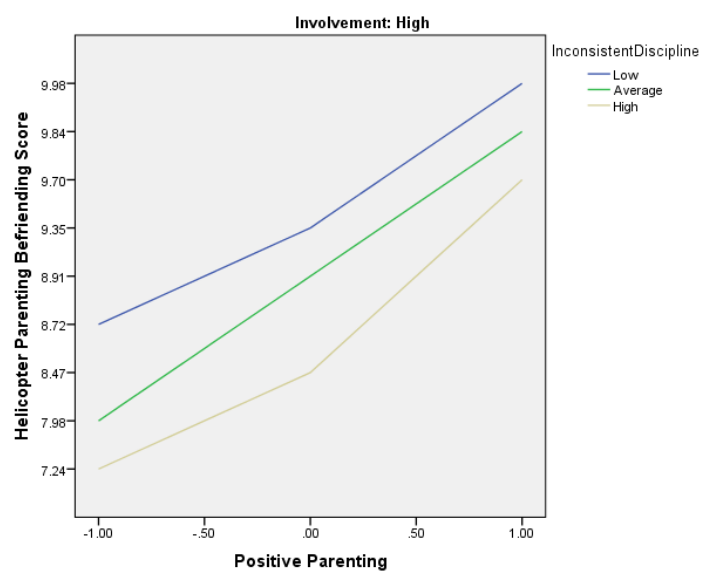


Figure 2.3

Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: befriending helicopter parenting score, high involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

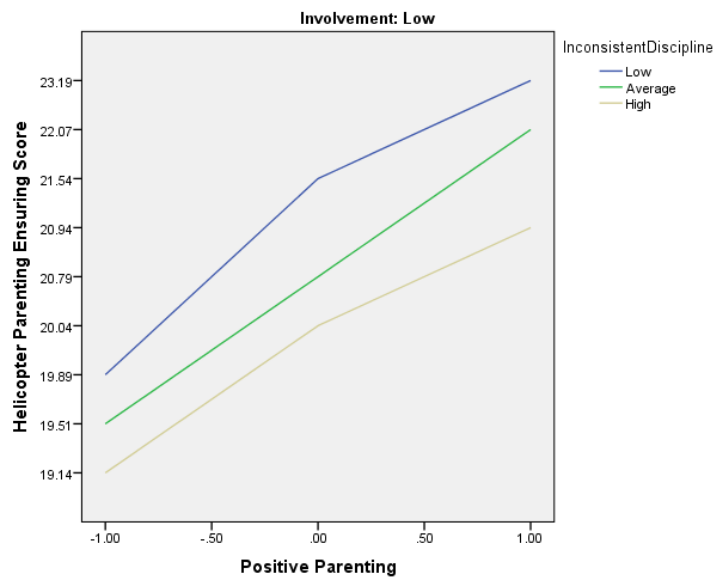


Figure 3.1

Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: ensuring helicopter parenting score, low involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

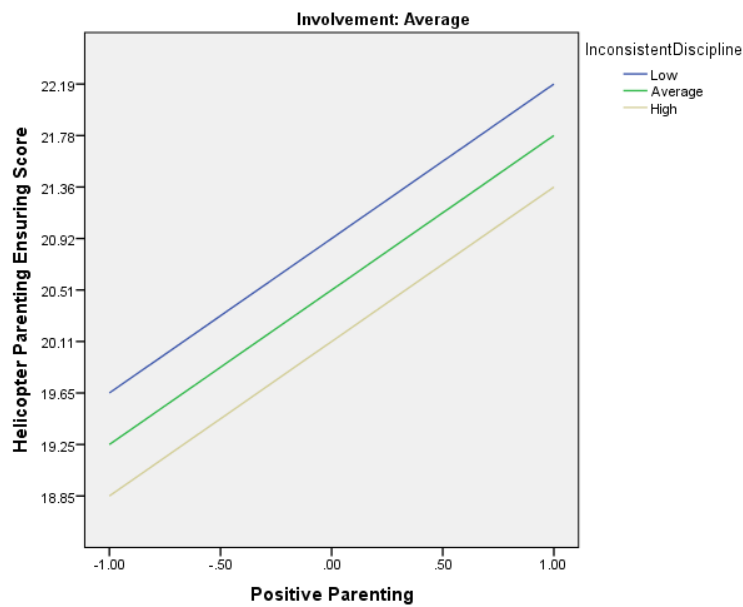


Figure 3.2
Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: ensuring helicopter parenting score, average involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

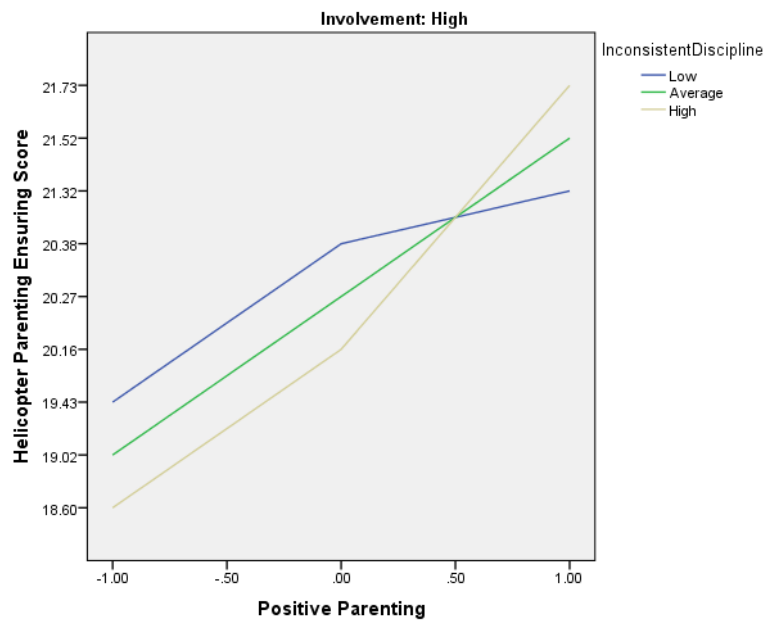


Figure 3.3
Model 2 three-way interaction

Three-way interaction: ensuring helicopter parenting score, high involvement/positive parenting/inconsistent discipline

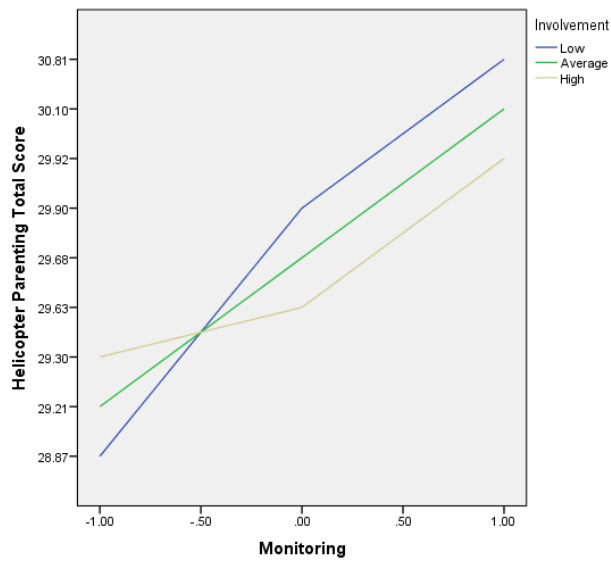


Figure 4.1
Model 3 two-way interaction

Two-way interaction: total helicopter parenting score, low involvement/monitoring