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Helicopter parents: an examination of the correlates of over-parenting of college students

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine antecedents and consequences of parental involvement and over-parenting as it relates to college students' college experiences and workplace expectations.

Design/methodology/approach – An online survey was completed by 482 undergraduate college students; the survey contained questions about parenting behaviors, personality and demographic items, and workplace scenarios to which participants responded.

Findings – Statistical analyses revealed that over-parenting was more common when college students lived at home and had fewer siblings. Additionally, over-parenting (but not parental involvement) was associated with lower student self-efficacy as well as maladaptive responses to workplace scenarios.

Research limitations/implications – Data are correlational and were collected from students only. Future longitudinal research that includes the parent and employer perspective is needed.

Originality/value – This is one of the first studies to empirically examine the antecedents and outcomes associated with over-parenting. Over-parenting is assessed in relation to college and workplace outcomes.

Keywords Self-efficacy, Parenting, Helicopter parent, Over-parenting

Paper type Research paper

The US popular media is replete with discussions of overly protective "helicopter" parents – named for their tendency to hover over their offspring (Cline and Fay, 1990). Helicopter parenting has been discussed internationally (e.g. Gibbs, 2009; Nelson, 2010) in countries ranging from England to China (e.g. BBC News, 2008; Han and Dong, 2010). Early coverage of over-parenting focussed on parents of children in elementary, intermediate, and high school (e.g. Krache, 2008). More recently the discussion has moved to helicopter parenting in college and includes such anecdotes as parents writing term papers for their children or contacting college professors to argue about grades (e.g. Gibbs, 2009). Indeed, some universities now provide guidelines to staff for interacting with such parents (e.g. Carney-Hall, 2008; Keppler *et al.*, 2005). Today, media discussion has started to focus on over-parenting of grown children in the workplace and includes examples from human resource professionals where parents have attended job fairs (in lieu of grown children), called to complain about a poor performance evaluation or even attempted to negotiate a higher salary for their children (Manos, 2009; Tyler, 2007).

Although the popular literature abounds with anecdotes of over-parenting, there is very little empirical research in this domain. Indeed, Somers and Settle (2010) called academic research on the topic "anemic". Further, the exiguous empirical literature is mute with respect to helicopter parenting and student readiness for the workforce. This study is an exploratory empirical examination of the correlates of over-parenting with young adults who are nearing the completion of their college degree and heading

toward post-graduation employment. Specifically, this study examines three general questions: What are the demographic predictors of over-parenting? How does over-parenting relate to young adults' college experiences? How does over-parenting relate to young adults' responses to workplace scenarios that demonstrate personal responsibility, ethics, and accountability?

Previous research

Helicopter parenting is "a form of over-parenting in which parents apply overly involved and developmentally inappropriate tactics to their children" (Segrin *et al.*, 2012, p. 237). These "hyperinvolved" tactics are designed to protect offspring from potentially negative outcomes and to ensure success. Helicopter parents are involved to the point where they prevent children from assuming responsibility for their own choices (Segrin *et al.*, 2012). As such, the literature in this area primarily focusses on whether such parenting affects children's emotional well-being and ability to take responsibility. Bayer *et al.* (2006) found a positive relation between over-involved parenting and internalizing difficulties of two- and four-year-old children (e.g. anxiety, depression, low self-esteem). Similar results were found for a mid-childhood sample (Bayer *et al.*, 2010).

Regarding young adults, Montgomery (2010) found a correlation between helicopter parenting and neuroticism, lower openness to new experience, and dependency. Relatedly, in a study of college students, LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011) found that helicopter parenting was negatively associated with psychological well-being and positively associated with recreational pain pill use and taking prescription medications for anxiety and depression. An additional study of over 500 parent-young adult pairs showed a relation between over-parenting and young adults' sense of entitlement, or the extent to which young adults believe others should solve their problems (Segrin *et al.*, 2012).

While such research and the media suggest predominantly negative outcomes, some research indicates that over-parenting can result in neutral or positive consequences for young adults. The National Survey of Student Engagement (2007) found college students of helicopter parents reported higher satisfaction and engagement with the college experience. Yet, these students also reported lower grade point averages (GPA: a metric summarizing student performance throughout one's college career). Relatedly, a comprehensive survey by the University of California, Los Angeles Higher Education Research Institute (UCLA-HERI) suggested parent involvement is valued by the overwhelming majority of college students (Hoover, 2008). In contrast, Lampert (2009) did not find a positive or negative relation between helicopter parenting and GPA or adjustment to college; however, the sample size in Lampert's study was quite small. In sum, the limited literature on parental involvement with young adults is mixed with studies showing positive, negative, and neutral effects.

As limited as the literature is with respect to over-parenting and college-related outcomes, it is non-existent with respect to over-parenting and work-related variables as job search and work behavior. Yet, employers report they have witnessed parental involvement in early career work experiences (e.g. parents applying for jobs for their children; Gardner, 2007). As employers struggle with such parental behavior (e.g. Ludden, 2012), an important area for research includes identifying the potential work-related behavior of employees who were raised by helicopter parents.

Research questions and hypotheses
As this brief literature review illustrates, there is much we do not know about the antecedents and consequences of helicopter parenting. In the current study we distinguish parental involvement (which is thought to be beneficial: Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012) from over-parenting. We conceptualize the difference between parental involvement and over-parenting partly in terms of the degree of certain behaviors exhibited and partly in terms of qualitatively different behaviors being exhibited. For example, involved parents might ask their children how they performed on a big exam while helicopter parents might ask their children repeatedly about every assignment. Similarly, involved parents might suggest that their children talk to the professor about a questionable grade, while helicopter parents might call up the professor themselves. We anticipate that people who over-parent are also involved parents but that involved parents are not necessarily over-parenting.

Demographic factors
Our first research question concerns the factors that might be related to over-parenting. Identifying predictive factors would be helpful in understanding why some parents are more likely to adopt this style than others:

   RQ1. Are certain demographic characteristics associated with parental involvement and over-parenting?

Demographic variables hypothesized to be predictive of over-parenting and parental involvement included parental educational attainment, student age, number of siblings, and student living arrangements. With regard to parental educational attainment, prior research has established a relationship with parenting style and parental involvement (e.g. Attewell and Lavin, 2007; Domina and Roksa, 2012). Interviews with university staff have revealed that staff perceive that helicopter parenting is more common among students with college-educated parents than for first-generation college students (Somers and Settle, 2010); however, no research has directly examined whether these staff perceptions are accurate. We anticipated that parents with higher levels of educational attainment would engage in more parental involvement and over-parenting. Highly educated parents likely place great importance on education; thus, they might be likely to push their children in academic and professional domains. Additionally, parents with advanced degrees have been through the educational system themselves and might therefore be inclined to intervene on things like picking classes and studying for exams:

   H1. Parental educational attainment will be positively related to parental involvement and over-parenting.

Additionally, we anticipated that parents of younger college students will be more involved and likely to over-parent than will parents of older college students. Older students are more likely than younger students to have worked a full-time job or experienced the "real world." Parents of such students might feel that their children are mature and capable of handling their education without extensive parental guidance and involvement:

   H2. Student age will be negatively related to parental involvement and over-parenting.

We also expected that students who live with their parents will report higher levels of parental involvement and over-parenting than students who live alone or with a roommate. Parents who live with their children have more opportunity to become involved in their lives; moreover, people who are likely to over-parent might be more likely to pressure their children to live at home. Drawing from family differentiation theory (e.g. Gavazzi *et al.*, 1993), college students who live with their parents are more likely to have family interaction patterns that emphasize family intimacy to the detriment of students' independence:

H3. Over-parenting and parental involvement will be higher when the student lives with the parents than outside the parental home.

Finally, we expected that the fewer siblings a student has, the more likely the parents will be involved or engaged in over-parenting. Arguably, the parents of five children have less time and attention to devote to the intricacies of each child's social and educational pursuits than the parents of a single child (e.g. Somers and Settle, 2010):

H4. Number of siblings will be negatively related to parental involvement and over-parenting.

Reactions to over-parenting. Another issue that has not received much research attention is how young adults react to over-parenting. The UCLA-HERI survey found that most college students value parent involvement, but did not specifically examine their reactions to "over-involvement." How young adults respond to helicopter parenting may have important implications for how they develop their independence in the college setting and ultimately the workforce. This leads to our second research question:

R2. How does parental involvement and over-parenting relate to young adults' college experiences?

We did not develop specific hypotheses related to *R2* but conducted exploratory analyses on a variety of possibly relevant variables including self-efficacy, plans to attend graduate school, satisfaction with feedback from professors, peer evaluations on a class project, and self-reported GPA:

R3. How does parental involvement and over-parenting relate to young adults' responses to workplace scenarios?

Expected work-related behaviors. Finally, a particularly critical issue that has not received any empirical attention is the consequences of over-parenting for expected behavior in the work setting. The popular media presents examples of helicopter parents intervening in the workplace by calling bosses to negotiate salaries or complain about low-performance reviews. Indeed, employers are beginning to discuss how to handle such inquiries from parents (e.g. Ludden, 2012). However, the question remains as to whether the young adults' behavior on the job reflects this parenting style.

As noted earlier, the parenting literature characterizes over-parenting as when parents protect their offspring or intervene on their behalf in situations and contexts where they might encounter negative experiences (e.g. Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012). As such, this parenting approach prevents offspring from experiences that

are appropriate for developing autonomy at a given developmental stage. Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) note that over-parenting should be particularly problematic during "emerging adulthood" because the "very nature of the time period calls for greater amounts, not less, of autonomy granting by parents" (p. 1179). Without autonomy development, over-parenting might lead young adults to become dependent on the parent or other authority figures (e.g. workplace supervisors).

Similarly, family differentiation theory points to problems for young adults who have been over-parented. This theory is used to understand how family interactions lead to an age-appropriate balance of individuality and intimacy (e.g. Gavazzi *et al.*, 1993). In poorly differentiated patterns when interpersonal boundaries in the family are overly blurred – as with parents who are overly involved in their children's lives – the child loses a sense of individuality and independence. Over time, this pattern of family differentiation can create emotional, cognitive, and behavioral problems during adolescent development (e.g. Boszormenyi and Krasner, 1987). Adolescents continue to depend on their families for things that they should be responsible for handling on their own. When these adolescents become young adults and enter the workplace they might continue in their well-established patterns of interaction with the young adults continuing to rely on parents to solve problems for them.

A study by Segrin *et al.* (2012) did reveal that over-parenting was related to young adults' beliefs that someone else should solve their problems for them. Relatedly, Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) suggest that over-parenting during emerging adulthood may prevent the full development of decision-making skills and independence to succeed in early career development. Arguably, people who have had their parents intervene on their behalf their entire lives have learned to expect that others will handle their problems and will be less likely to have developed the resources to be independent and self-sufficient. As such, we arrived at *H5*:

H5. Over-parenting will be significantly related to maladaptive responses to workplace scenarios.

Method
Participants
Participants were recruited from management classes at a large US university. In total, 511 undergraduates participated in the study. A small minority did not complete the entire survey; these participants were included in the analyses for which they provided information. Given the nature of the research questions, we opted to eliminate data for 29 participants who were older than 34. Although this cut-off was rather arbitrary we presumed that parental involvement is different for older students who have likely already been in the workforce for a number of years. The final sample included 482 individuals, 55 percent of which was male. The mean age was 23.04 (SD = 2.98). Most participants (68 percent) were employed and the majority was of senior standing at the university and could be expected to complete degrees within the next six to 18 months. The participants' reported ethnicity included 19.5 percent Asian, 5.6 percent black, 30.7 percent Hispanic, 3.1 percent Native American, and 40.5 percent white.

Procedure and measures
The survey materials were administered online to students who chose to participate in the study. Students received course credit for participation and were able to complete alternatives if they did not wish to participate in the study.

Self-efficacy. General self-efficacy was measured using the 17-item scale developed by Sherer (1982). Social self-efficacy was measured using the six-item scale developed by Sherer (1982). Both scales utilized Likert-type response scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and demonstrated acceptable internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.86$ and 0.74, respectively).

Parental involvement. A nine-item parental involvement scale was developed for the current study. The items inquired about the frequency with which one's parents or guardians initiated involvement with one's school and social life (see Appendix 1) ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Exploratory factor analysis revealed that the scale was unidimensional; reliability was also acceptable ($\alpha = 0.86$).

Over-parenting. We designed items to assess whether students felt that their parents/ guardians were too involved in their lives and thus engaging in over-parenting. This scale included five items (see Appendix 2) with a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale is unidimensional with acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$). To ensure that the over-parenting scale was sufficiently distinct from the parental involvement scale, we submitted all items to an exploratory factor analysis which showed a two-factor solution with the parental involvement items loading on factor 1 and the over-parenting items loading on factor 2. There was a significant correlation between the scale scores ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$) but the factor analyses help support the distinction between the scales. Moreover, as observed in the results, the scales appear to demonstrate differential validity with other study variables.

Workplace scenarios. Four workplace scenarios (see Appendix 3 for an example) were created to assess how the student would respond to various career issues and problems. The premise of the scenarios was based on concerns raised in focus group meetings of business professionals who were asked to identify strengths and weaknesses of recent graduates who had been hired as employees by their organizations. These scenarios addressed situations such as job-seeking behaviors (i.e. attending a career fair), meeting deadlines (i.e. completing a task under short notice), and handling work commitments.

After reading each scenario, students rated the likelihood that they would take each of the actions listed on a scale from 1 (definitely would not do) to 5 (definitely would do). For analyses, a 12-item scale was developed for maladaptive responses; maladaptive responses were those in which the student failed to take responsibility, lacked initiative, or acted unethically (e.g. blaming others, lying, getting someone else to take care of the problem for them, ignoring or avoiding the problem). Scale reliability was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.67$).

Classroom outcomes. Participants were given the option of disclosing their names to the researchers. For participants who did provide this information, we obtained peer-evaluation ratings from other students who worked together on group projects throughout the semester. We also examined self-reported GPA.

Results

Demographic factors (RQ1 and H1-H4)

Analyses for *R1* were conducted using simple regression. Correlation coefficients between the *R1* variables can be found in Table I. Partially supporting *H1*, parental educational attainment predicted parental involvement ($r = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$ for mother; $r = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$ for father) but not over-parenting.

H2 was also partially supported: there was not a significant relationship between student age and over-parenting. However, student age did significantly predict

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Parental involvement													
2. Over-parenting	0.16**												
3. Mother education	0.19**	0.06											
4. Father education	0.18**	0.07	0.56**										
5. Student age	−0.27**	−0.04	−0.10*	−0.03									
6. Number of siblings	−0.05	−0.11*	−0.26**	−0.18**	0.07								
7. Live with parents (0 = no; 1 = yes)	−0.02	0.18**	0.10*	0.10*	0.20**	−0.08							
8. Biological parent is primary caregiver (0 = no; 1 = yes)	0.10*	0.05	0.08	0.13**	−0.03	−0.04	0.00						
9. Student gender (0 = male; 1 = female)	0.09*	−0.07	−0.06	−0.08	−0.05	0.06	0.02	−0.07					
10. Student ethnicity – African American	0.07	0.00	0.16**	0.07	0.00	0.04	0.05	0.04	−0.05				
11. Student ethnicity – Asian	0.03	0.13**	−0.14**	−0.06	0.02	0.16**	−0.18**	−0.06	0.04	–			
12. Student ethnicity – Caucasian	0.13**	0.01	0.36**	0.35**	−0.07	−0.26**	0.22**	0.05	−0.10*	–	–		
13. Student ethnicity – Hispanic	−0.15**	−0.09	−0.36**	−0.39**	0.06	0.11*	−0.10*	−0.04	0.07	–	–	–	–

Notes: *,**Correlations significance at the $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$, respectively

Table I.
Correlations for *RQ1*

parental involvement ($r = -0.11$, $p < 0.05$) with younger students reporting more involvement. Partially supporting *H3*, there was a significant relationship between living with parents and over-parenting ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$) but not with parental involvement. Similarly, *H4* was partially supported with number of siblings being inversely related to over-parenting ($r = -0.11$, $p < 0.05$) but not parental involvement.

We conducted exploratory analyses on several variables including primary caregiver, gender, and ethnicity. Students whose primary caregiver was their mother and/or father reported higher levels of involvement (but not over-parenting) than did students whose primary caregiver was not a parent ($r = 0.10$, $p < 0.05$). Moreover, students who reported that both their mother and father were the primary caregivers indicated higher levels of parental involvement (but not over-parenting) than students reporting a single parent as primary caregiver ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$). Female students reported higher levels of parental involvement ($r = 0.09$, $p < 0.05$) than male students. Asian students reported more over-parenting (but not parental involvement) than did non-Asian students ($r = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$). White students reported more parental involvement (but not over-parenting) than did non-white students ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$), and Hispanic students reported less parental involvement than non-Hispanic students ($r = -0.15$, $p < 0.001$). However, once mother and father educational attainment was controlled for, there was no association between White or Hispanic ethnicity and parental involvement.

Reactions to over-parenting (RQ2)

Exploratory analyses were conducted with simple regression (see Table II). Over-parenting was negatively related to student self-efficacy ($r = -0.32$, $p < 0.001$) and social self-efficacy ($r = -0.09$, $p = 0.05$). In contrast, parental involvement was positively related to social self-efficacy ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$) and intentions to go to graduate school ($r = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$). Parental involvement also predicted satisfaction with feedback from professors ($r = 0.10$, $p < 0.05$). Neither parental involvement nor over-parenting was related to peer evaluations on a class project (examined for those students who agreed to disclose their name to the researchers) or self-reported GPA. Students who reported higher levels of parent/guardian involvement were less likely to be employed ($r = -0.11$, $p < 0.05$); there was also a non-significant trend between over-parenting and student employment ($r = -0.08$, $p = 0.08$).

Expected work-related behaviors (H5)

Correlational analyses supported *H5*: over-parenting significantly predicted maladaptive responses to workplace scenarios ($r = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$). Notably, parental

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Parental involvement									
2. Over-parenting	0.16**								
3. Self-efficacy	0.03	−0.32**							
4. Social self-efficacy	0.18**	−0.09	0.44**						
5. Intentions to attend graduate school	0.12*	0.00	0.05	0.14**					
6. Satisfaction with professor feedback	0.10*	−0.02	0.11*	0.07	0.00				
7. Class peer evaluation rating	−0.03	−0.02	0.18*	0.14	0.05	0.22			
8. Self-reported GPA	0.00	−0.02	0.04	−0.02	0.07	−0.08	0.00		
9. Employed (number of hours per week)	−0.11*	−0.08	0.17	0.07	−0.09	−0.02	0.02	−0.08	

Notes: *,**Correlations significance at the $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$, respectively

Table II.
Correlations for *RQ2*

involvement did not predict maladaptive responses ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.17$). An exploratory test of mediation (using Baron and Kenny's (1986) steps for mediation) was conducted to determine if self-efficacy mediated the relationship between over-parenting and maladaptive responses to workplace scenarios. The first step showed a relationship between the independent variable (IV; over-parenting) and the dependent variable (DV; maladaptive responses to workplace scenarios): $r = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$. The second step showed that the IV predicted the mediator (self-efficacy): $r = -0.32$, $p < 0.001$. The third step was to show that the mediator predicts the DV by running a regression equation in which over-parenting and self-efficacy predict maladaptive workplace responses. This step was also supported ($\beta = -0.292$, $p < 0.001$). Also providing support for mediation is a Sobel test of the indirect effect ($z = 4.91$, $p < 0.001$) (Table III).

Discussion

The current study is an investigation of the role of parental involvement and over-parenting (or "helicopter parenting") in the lives of college students. We explored three general research questions related to:

(1) the demographic characteristics predicting parental involvement and over-parenting;

(2) the relationship between parental involvement and over-parenting and experiences in college; and

(3) the relationship between parental involvement and over-parenting and responses to workplace scenarios.

Our findings suggested that several demographic factors do predict parental involvement and over-parenting; moreover, the findings indicate that over-parenting might be detrimental to young adults in some regards.

Demographic factors

In the current study we differentiated parental involvement from over-parenting. We defined over-parenting as both an excessive amount of parental involvement and as different types of behaviors demonstrated. We note that our over-parenting measure is arguably a conservative measure of this construct in that it requires students are aware of the over-parenting. Supporting the differential validity of the two constructs, the items on the two scales loaded onto two separate factors and also were differentially related to other study variables. For example, with regard to *R1*, we found that parental involvement tends to be higher when the parents are more educated, when the guardians are the student's biological parents, and when the student is female and younger. In contrast, over-parenting was predicted by the student living at home with the parents, and having fewer siblings.

	1	2	3
1. Parental involvement			
2. Over-parenting	0.16**		
3. Maladaptive response to workplace scenarios	0.06	0.26**	
Notes: **Correlation significance at the $p < 0.01$			

Table III.
Correlations for *RQ3*

Of course, the analyses are correlational in nature, so it is not possible to determine the directionality or underlying mechanisms for the relationships observed. For example, while it would appear that living with one's parents might lead to over-parenting, it is also possible that parents who are inclined to over-parent might pressure their child to live at home. Alternatively, children who are more dependent might be more apt to live at home and foster over-parenting behaviors in their parents. The tendency to over-parent with fewer children makes sense both practically and evolutionarily speaking. Parents of one or two children have more time and attention to devote to each child than parents of more children. Moreover, evolutionary arguments would suggest that parents of few children have more at stake in the survival and well-being of each child. However, the above arguments do not do well at explaining why parental involvement was unrelated to number of siblings and living at home.

Exploratory analyses related to ethnicity revealed that Asian students were more likely to report over-parenting than were students of other ethnicities. Although we did not predict this finding, nor do we have any theoretical explanation for it, there are a few notable pop culture references suggestive of this theme (e.g. Chua, 2011). White students reported higher levels of parental involvement than did Hispanic students; however, this relationship appeared to be a by-product of parental educational attainment.

Reactions to over-parenting

Although we did not develop formal hypotheses related to this research question, we generally anticipated that parental involvement would be related to positive experiences in college and that over-parenting would be related to negative experiences. The clearest difference between parental involvement and over-parenting were the results related to self-efficacy. Exploratory analyses revealed that parental involvement was positively related to students' social self-efficacy but over-parenting was negatively related to students' social self-efficacy and general self-efficacy. While parental involvement might be the extra boost that students need to build their own confidence and abilities, over-parenting appears to do the converse in creating a sense that one cannot accomplish things socially or in general on one's own. Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility that over-parenting is the result of low self-efficacy. Parents of students with low self-efficacy might be more inclined to over-parent in the hopes of compensating for their child's lack of self-confidence.

Perhaps not surprisingly, parental involvement predicted students' intentions to attend graduate school. Parents who are highly involved in their child's education might be more likely to emphasize graduate school; additionally, students who feel supported by their parents might be more equipped financially and psychologically to tackle the demands of graduate school. We did consider whether the relationship between parental involvement and intentions to attend graduate school might simply be a by-product of the parents' own educational attainment; however, parental educational attainment was not related to intentions to attend graduate school.

Regarding academic performance, neither parental involvement nor over-parenting predicted self-reported GPA or peer-evaluations on a team project. Self-reported GPA is notorious for being a faulty proxy for actual GPA. While the peer-evaluations were not subject to self-reporting biases, there was some range restrictions in these ratings. Ideally, actual GPA and class performance would be assessed before concluding that parental involvement and over-parenting are truly unrelated to college performance. Students who reported higher levels of parent involvement were less likely to be

employed; there was also a non-significant negative trend between over-parenting and student employment.

These research findings suggest several possible practical implications for higher education. University officials might consider providing more guidance to parents and students during college visitations and orientations about expectations for student autonomy and appropriate types of parental involvement. Instructors and administrators might also wish to provide additional opportunities for students to develop greater autonomy and have students practice important "soft skills" (e.g. taking accountability, dealing with negative feedback) that can be negatively associated with over-parenting. Arguably, however, an extreme "employability agenda" might result in less time spent on important academic content in order to achieve employability goals (Sarson, 2013).

Expected work-related behaviors

Results from our final hypothesis provided additional evidence for the detriments of over-parenting. Specifically, over-parenting predicted maladaptive responses to workplace scenarios. Students who reported higher levels of over-parenting were more likely to endorse solutions that relied on others rather than taking responsibility oneself. This result is particularly intriguing because even though these participants were self-reporting that their parents over-parented, they still chose options reflecting dependence. Notably, parental involvement was not related to maladaptive responses to the workplace scenarios. As with self-efficacy, the results seem to indicate that over-parenting (but not parental involvement) is related to maladaptive workplace responses.

An exploratory test of mediation demonstrated that the relationship between over-parenting and maladaptive workplace responses was mediated by self-efficacy. Although not a longitudinal study, these findings indicate that the reason over-parenting is associated with maladaptive workplace responses is because of low self-efficacy. Without a strong sense of self-efficacy, or the belief that one can accomplish tasks and goals, young adults are likely to be dependent on others, engage in poor coping strategies, and fail to take accountability in the workplace. Even if these individuals possess the technical abilities to accomplish their work, their lack of self-efficacy hinders soft skills like responsibility and conscientiousness that employers value (Andrews and Higson, 2008). If parental interventions during the college years create a sense of dependency and lack of self-efficacy, this pattern might be difficult to break after college when young adults are transitioning more fully into the workforce.

In short, the current study's evidence linking over-parenting with maladaptive responses to work and job-search situations suggests that over-parenting might be more than a mere nuisance to employers. A practical implication of this finding is that employers might need to invest resources in training, orientations, and mentoring programs that will help young employees develop autonomy and other soft skills. Employers also might need to engage in explicit communications with young adults – and, if necessary, parents – to establish clear expectations for appropriate workplace behaviors.

Limitations and future directions

Several limitations have already been noted, particularly the issues associated with drawing causal inferences from correlational data. Longitudinal studies might mitigate these limitations and provide more information about how over-parenting impacts

young adults. Additionally, future studies should continue to track students as they enter the workplace. Although the current sample was largely comprised of seniors and students who were already employed (68 percent of the participants were employed, and 30 percent worked 30 or more hours per week), it would be beneficial to monitor the impact of parenting styles once students had completed their schooling and were fully enmeshed in work.

Other limitations relate to the way parental involvement and over-parenting were measured. Although the scales demonstrated acceptable factor structure and reliability, some items did suffer from range restriction. For example, only 1 percent of participants answered "Always" to an item assessing how frequently parents help with schoolwork. Such range restriction likely resulted in conservative testing of study hypotheses. Another measurement issue is that data were from the perspective of the student only – not the parent. Students might have a biased perspective of their parents' actions (e.g. one student might perceive that a parent asking about an exam grade is intrusive while another student might perceive it as thoughtful). Moreover, students might not be entirely aware of their parents' behaviors. For example, parents might contact professors on their children's behalf without them knowing it. Other researchers (e.g. Segrin *et al.*, 2012) have studied the issue from both the parent and student perspective; however, given the scant amount of research in this domain, further investigation would be beneficial.

Another limitation of the study is that the sample was all from a single public university with liberal admission standards. Parenting practices for students at very prestigious universities might differ. Anecdotally, helicopter parents often intervene with the intention of helping their children excel to the highest level possible; as such, helicopter parenting might be more prevalent and intense at highly competitive schools.

Conclusion
The popular media presents a plethora of examples of helicopter parenting in early childhood through college. Yet, "scholarly research on the topic is anemic" (Somers and Settle, 2010, p. 19). The current study contributes to the nascent empirical research by assessing research questions and hypotheses related to parental involvement and over-parenting of college students. The results indicated that over-parenting is distinct from parental involvement with respect to the demographic variables associated with them; namely, over-parenting is related to students with fewer siblings and students who live at home. Further, over-parenting is related to different college-related experiences for the student. Specifically, while parental involvement is related to more positive student outcomes such as higher social self-efficacy and graduate school intentions, over-parenting is related to more negative consequences such as lower self-efficacy. Finally, a particularly intriguing finding is that over-parenting relates to maladaptive job search and work behavior. These findings give credence to media claims about the dangers of helicopter parenting and underscore the need to address potential concerns at college and work through appropriate communication and training.

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Appendix 1. Parental involvement scale

1. How often do your parents/guardians ask you about school?
2. How often do your parents/guardians help you with schoolwork (e.g. studying for exams, proof-reading papers)?
3. How often do your parents/guardians ask you about your grades?
4. How often do your parents/guardians ask you about your social life?
5. How often do your parents/guardians ask you about your job and career plans?
6. How often do your parents/guardians give you advice or tell you what to do about school?
7. How often do your parents/guardians give you advice or tell you what to do in your social life?
8. With regard to your job and future career plans, how often do your parents/guardians give you advice or tell you what to do?
9. How often have your parents/guardians visited the university campus while you have been a student?

Response scale: never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, always

Appendix 2. Over-parenting scale

1. I think my parents/guardians are too overly involved in my life.
2. I feel like my parents/guardians sometimes smother me with their attention.
3. My parents/guardians have interfered in my life when I wish they wouldn't have.
4. I sometimes wish my parents/guardians would "back off" and stay out of my business.
5. My parents/guardians are too controlling of me and my life.

Response scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree

Appendix 3. Workplace scenario: example

Imagine that you started working for a new employer and your boss is giving you a hard time. You just had your three-month performance review and the boss criticized you and gave you a

bad rating that you think is unfair. Please read the actions below and indicate how likely you are to do the action listed.

I would listen to the criticisms and try to improve my performance using the suggestions my boss offered.

I would quit the job (maladaptive).

I would ask my parents/guardians to call my boss on my behalf to ask the manager to treat me better (maladaptive).

I would explain to the manager why the rating is unfair and demand that I be treated better (maladaptive).

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