So I'm Michelle Givertz and I'm just going to start, I'm going to present to you my research on the effects of over involved parenting on young adult identity and family satisfaction. And I collaborated on this project with Chris Segrin who is at the University of Arizona. He's my mentor, and we continue to work together. He's terrific.
Okay, so the term "helicopter parent" became popular in the early 21st century to describe parents who were overly involved in their children's lives and who attempt to prevent their children from experiencing harm and failure. There's ample, anecdotal evidence of parents interfering in their adult children's lives in educational settings as well as in the work place, however there's little scientific research into this phenomenon and its potential consequences for the emerging adult. Someone who's legally an adult, but who continues to be financially, emotionally, or otherwise dependent upon his or her parents. This study examines the influence of parenting styles and family environments that are consistent with the concept of helicopter parenting, on family satisfaction and the identity development of the emerging adult in self efficacy and entitlement attitudes. Healthy psychological functioning across the life span requires individuation. A degree of psychological distance from parents and family, as adolescents transition into adulthood, and that necessitate a reassignment of relationships with parents. Excessively involved, controlling, and rigid parenting that is developmentally inappropriate may impede that realignment and result in negative outcomes, despite good intentions on the part of the parent. The circumplex model of marital and family systems provides a typology for classifying families based on emotion bonding between family members and their ability to reorganization in response to situational or developmental needs.
Introduction

- Helicopter parent.
- Emergent adulthood.
- Individuation.
- Circumplex model of marital and family functioning (Olson, 1986).
- Aim of investigation: systematic examination of how parent-child communication patterns impact the identity development of the emergent adult.

The model proposes that too little or too much of either of these will lead to difficulties in functioning across the life cycle. Whereas a balance between the two extremes promotes optimal functioning. It's plausible that the over involved and sometimes rigid and controlling style of parenting that has come to be known as helicopter parenting is a reflection of an unbalanced family system. Of the dysfunction associated with the imbalance has the capacity to intrude upon and impede the individuation process and thus the emergent adult's development of psychological competence and self direction. By placing this popular culture term in a theoretical frame the aim of this investigation was to systemically examine how parent-child communication patterns impact the identity development of the emergent adult. Specifically, this study examined dietetic effects of a series of psychological and communication variables that are central to the parent-child relationship, and investigated their association with perceptions of self efficacy and attitudes of entitlement in the emergent adult. Soliciting information from both parent and child not only afforded a more holistic view of family functioning, it also permitted examination of the interdependence that exists in close, intimate, inescapable relationships that involve frequent interaction, such as the parent-child relationship.
The circumplex model of marital and family systems integrates three dimensions of family life. Cohesion, flexibility, and communication. Each of which has been found by theorists and clinicians to be critical to understanding relational and family life. Cohesion refers to emotional bonding between family members and includes factors such as boundaries, use of time and space, leisure activities, and so on. Cohesion focuses on how families balance separateness and togetherness. Come on in. Balanced cohesion is optimal for family functioning, as it allows family members to maintain both independence and interdependence. Flexibility refers to the amount of change in leadership, role relationships, and relationship rules and includes factors such as discipline, control, and negotiation styles. It involves how families balance stability and change. Again, balanced or moderate levels of flexibility are optimal for flexibility. Long term relationships require both stability and change, and balanced flexibility allows family members to negotiate stability and change in a functional way. The final dimension, communication, is conceptualized as a facilitating dimension and ranges from poor to very effective. Communication is what facilitates movement along the dimensions of cohesion and adaptability. As families respond to developmental changes and or situational needs, and positive communication skills, empathic intensive listening, speaking for one's self and not others, and staying on topic have been found to facilitate and maintain balance within the family system. Ultimately, balanced families function more effectively than unbalanced families. They have more positive communication and they experience higher levels of family satisfaction.
Just as families must strike a balance between interdependence and autonomy as well as between stability and change, parents must strike a change between supportive and controlling behaviors. Baumann's typology of parenting styles focuses on parent demandingness and responsiveness and identifies three distinct types of parents, authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. The research has consistently demonstrated that authoritative parenting is associated with the most positive outcomes for children and adolescents. Authoritative parenting has been associated with the development of an internal locus of control and a more positive self concept with the ability to self regulate and demonstrate social responsibility, and to demonstrate self actualization.
Based on theoretical conceptualizations of family environment and parenting, as well as prior empirical findings, we predicted family environments characterized by balanced cohesion, balanced flexibility, and positive communication will be associated with higher family satisfaction for both emergent adults and their parents. Similarly, we predicted that authoritative parenting will be positively associated with parent and emergent adult family satisfaction, whereas authoritarian and permissive parenting will be associated with lower family satisfaction.
Okay, parental control and child psychological outcomes. Just as families need to adapt based on developmental changes and situational needs, parenting styles need to be responsive to developmental changes in the child across the life span. This is particularly important during the adolescent period, as family communication effects both identity formation and role-taking ability. A critical aspect of identity formation during adolescents involves individuation or an emotional distancing from the family of origin and an increased attachment to and reliance on peers. Individuation requires a balance between support and control, and connectedness and separateness. As a child progresses through adolescence the ratio should increasingly favor supportiveness and separateness. Come on in, don't worry about it. Behavior that attempts to exert psychological control intrudes upon and even manipulates the psychological and emotional development of a child. His or her cognitions, perceptions, feelings, attachment relationships, and so on. Psychological control is associated with the disruption of the development of an independent self. It has been found to inhibit a child's ability to develop as a separate individual from the parent. Psychological control facilitates dependency and disrupts the development of psychological competence and self direction. Parental behavior that is psychologically controlling does not allow for self exploration and self discovery. It attempts to manipulate behavior through increasing anxiety and guilt while simultaneously withdrawing love, and it constrains and inhibits self expression.
Parental psychological control is widely associated with a child's diminished psychological self, with lower levels of self well being, lower levels of self esteem, self confidence, self worth, self reliance. And overall, has been found to disrupt the ego development. Parental psychological control often occurs in a context of high family cohesion to the point of enmeshment and intrudes upon a basic human drive of increased autonomy as individuals move through adolescence into adulthood. It interferes with the development of self efficacy, the belief that one can successfully perform a behavior. And as such, interferes with an individual's ability to problem solve, to make decisions, to meet needs, and to set goals and achieve them. At the same time to the extent that than individual becomes accustomed to having things done for them by a parent, that dependency may eventually facilitate the development of psychological entitlement. A stable and pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 31).

Parental Control and Child Psychological Outcomes

- Individuation: emotional distancing from the family of origin and an increased attachment to and reliance on peers.
- Self-efficacy: the belief that one can successfully perform a behavior.
- Psychological entitlement: “a stable and pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 31).
Based on these prior findings we predicted that elements of parental control, psychological control, authoritarian parenting, rigid family flexibility would be associated with diminished self-efficacy and an increased sense of entitlement in young adults.
Okay, so let's talk a little bit about the method. I'll tell you first about participants. We had a really nice sample size for this, 339 parent-child dyads. Okay? Everybody knows what a dyad is? In this case it's a parent and child. Parent-child dyads were solicited to participate in this study through classroom recruitment. And so this is a point in my talk when I can say thank you Dr. Briden for allowing me to go into your large lecture and solicit participants. He wanted to be here, but he's teaching at the moment. Students were offered extra credit toward their course grade in exchange for participation, a very small amount. A total of 362 students completed the questionnaire and provided contact information for a parent. Parents were then contacted through the mail. A total of 339 parents completed and returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 94%. The final sample consisted of 339 parent-child dyads. And the truth is that those parents who didn't respond weren't helicopter parents any way, so we didn't need them. That's a bit of a joke. We had -- everything was very normally distributed. But still we can infer. All right, so let me tell you about the students. Of the 339 students, 130 were male, 209 were female. Students' age ranged from 18 to 29, 29 was an outlier. The mean age was 19.93 with a standard deviation of 1.70. That's mean, not median. What else can I tell you about them -- the student sample was mostly white, 75% white, 12% Hispanic, 4% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian, 2% African American, and the remaining 6% didn't indicate or rated other or unknown.
So let's look at the parent participants now. Most of the parents, 81% were mothers. Parents' age ranged from 37 to 68, with a mean of 50.95, standard deviation, 5.15. Virtually all of the parents, 98%, were biologically related to the child participant with the remaining 2% being either step parents or adoptive parents. The highest level of education completed by parents was 9% had completed some high school or completed high school. 33% had completed some college or a two-year college. And I've indicated 34% completed a four-year college, and the 23% reported having an advanced degree. This is a highly educated sample. It's also a very wealthy sample. That was not a problem for this research. When annual household income was roughly divided into thirds, 28% earned less than 80,000, 38% earned between 80 and 160,000, and 31% earned more than 160,000. The remaining 3% of participants did not report their household income. As an aside, a majority of parent participants, 83%, indicated that their child had been raised by two biological parents, also not representative. 9% by a single parent, 7% by a parent and a step parent, and 1% by an adoptive parent.
In terms of procedure, at the time of recruitment students were provided with a consent form and a questionnaire. Upon completion of the questionnaire students were asked to provide contact information for a parent or a guardian who would be willing to participate in the study with them. Parent participants were then sent a packet in the mail containing a cover letter with instructions, a consent form, a questionnaire, and a prepaid envelop. Just as a quick aside, one of the parents included a two page, single-spaced letter to me with -- I had a lot of -- I had some interesting interactions with parents. At any rate, I'll tell you about that afterwards. There were two versions of the questionnaire. One for students and one for parents. Parents and students both completed measures of family adaptability and cohesion, family communication, family satisfaction, and parenting styles, and then students in addition to these other measures completed measures of parental autonomy versus control, parental psychological control, self efficacy, and entitlement. All right, so now I am going to go into the results.
And I'm going to share some of the numbers with you, but I want you to know I'll describe what you're going to see in the tables and the figure, and then in the discussion I will highlight the major study findings. So if you don't like numbers, don't worry. I'm going to present it in a couple different ways. First I'm going to talk about parent-child differences in perceptions of family, then I'll talk about family environment, parenting styles, and family satisfaction, and finally I'll talk about parental control and child psychological outcomes.
So parent child differences in perceptions of family. Because tests of the study's predictions are based on data from both parent and child it's useful to first understand the extent to which both members of the dyad share a similar appraisal of origin, of family of origin processes. And if not, what their relative biases might be. These were explored with paired T tests. As it evident from the table, there were significant differences in the parent child dyads. So all of the -- paired T tests, all of those with the exceptions of the ones who -- aren't indicated as significant, those are all significant differences in the parent child dyads for all variables except for flexibility and family satisfaction. Although their appraisals of flexibility were uncorrelated there were no significant differences in how parents and their children viewed the flexibility in their family. Similarly, parents and children had identical means for ratings of family satisfaction. Thus there were no significant differences there either. However, parents rated the family's cohesion and communication more highly than did their children. At the same time, not surprisingly, parents reported using lower levels of permissive parenting and authoritarian parenting, and higher levels of authoritative parenting relative to how their children rated the respective practices of their parents. The preponderance of significant parent child correlations coupled with significant parent child differences as indicated by the paired T tests suggests on the one hand that in a relative sense, parents and their children exhibit some degree of agreement in perceptions of their family environment and of parenting practices. In other words, a very flexible family would receive high scores from both parents and child, as was the case. However, at the same time there appear to be perceptual biases that are systemic as a function of role in the dyad, parent versus child, that impact these appraisals. Parents exaggerate their family's cohesion, children minimize their family's cohesion. All right, and I'll say more about this in the
discussion section.
Now looking at family environment parenting styles and family satisfaction. And I apologize that that's a little blurry in getting it to fit. Made it a little bit blurry. Okay, the role of family environment variables, family flexibility, family cohesion, and communication, and parenting styles, permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian in predicting family satisfaction was evaluated with a series of Actor Partner Interdependence Models. APIM. These analysis treat the dyad as the unit of analysis. So they make good use of dietetic data. The results of the APIMs indicate significant actor effects. So that's the middle column. For all three family environment variables the more balanced the family flexibility and cohesion and the more positive the family's communication, the higher the family member, whether it was parent or child, the higher the family member's satisfaction with the family. However, of these three family environment variables there were significant partner effects, the final column, for only family flexibility and family cohesion. To the extent the parent rated the family's flexibility as balanced, the child reported higher levels of family satisfaction. And vice versa. Similarly, to the extent the parent rated the family's cohesion as balanced, the child reported higher family satisfaction and vice versa. However, parents reports of family communication were unrelated to their children's reports of family satisfaction, and children's reports of family communication were unrelated to their parent's family satisfaction.
As you can see, the permissive parenting style was unrelated to the parent or the child's family satisfaction, regardless of whose result was considered as the predictor. However, there were significant actor effects for authoritative and authoritarian parenting. Dyad members reports of higher authoritative parenting and lower authoritarian parenting were predictive of higher levels of their own family satisfaction. Significant partner effects for authoritative parenting showed that parents reports of authoritative parenting were also associated with higher satisfaction as reported by the child. Also, children's reports of authoritative parenting were associated with their parents' reports of greater family satisfaction.

![Table 2](image)

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Okay, and this was for the third hypothesis. It was predicted that higher parental control strategies would be associated with a greater sense of entitlement and lower self efficacy in children. The first step in testing this prediction was the creation of a latent parental control variable, as you see in the middle of the model. There were multiple -- if you remember back to the measures, there were multiple assessments of variables that indicate parental control. And these were tested in a measurement model that included measures of parental psychological control, parental autonomy versus control, authoritarian parenting, only the child's report because remember, there was a discrepancy between the parents' report of their use of authoritarian parenting, as compared to the child's. So we only use the child's report of authoritarian parenting. And then finally, family flexibility. And if you recall, there was convergence between parents and children, gave similar reports of family flexibility. So it made sense to include both parent and child report in the measurement model. The hypothesis was tested in a structural model in which parental control was treated as a latent variable. Psychological entitlement, general self efficacy, and social self efficacy were each treated as observed variables. As predicted, indicated at the bottom of the model, higher parental control was associated with significantly higher psychological entitlement in the adult child. Higher parental control was also associated with significantly lower adult child general self efficacy, but not social self efficacy.
All right, now I'll give you the nitty-gritty in words. So the primary aim of this investigation was to test the prediction that family environment and parenting styles that are indicative of parental control would be associated with negative aspects of young adults' identity. Namely, self efficacy, diminished self efficacy and heightened entitlement. Results were generally supportive of this prediction. A secondary aim was to test the prediction that indicators of parental control would be negatively associated with family satisfaction for both parents and children. The results supported this prediction, but that support was largely limited to after effects and not partner effects. The results of dietetic analysis of family environment variables and family satisfaction are consistent with theoretical models, opposing that flexibility, cohesion, and communication are all associated with family satisfaction. The consistent and significant actor effects show that parents' ratings of these family processes are predictive of their own satisfaction. Of the same is true of children's reports. And children's satisfaction with the family. However, the partner effects were considerably weaker and not always statistically significant. Specifically, one dyad member's report of family communication were unrelated to the other dyad member's family satisfaction. Findings such as these question the extent to which these family processes are actually co-constructed and more importantly, shared experiences for all family members. However, there were significant partner effects for family flexibility and family cohesion. The higher, in other words, the more balanced the flexibility or the cohesion reported by one dyad member the higher the other's satisfaction with the family environment.
Results for parenting styles clearly showed the benefits of authoritative parenting with significant actor and partner effects, which is consistent with much of the existing literature. Greater enactment of authoritative parenting was associated with both parent and child satisfaction with the family. In contrast, authoritarian parenting had significant and negative actor effects – dyads who reported high levels of authoritarian parenting also reported lower levels of satisfaction with the family. However, this effect was not evident when one dyad member's report of authoritarian parenting was used to predict the other's satisfaction. Finally, permissive parenting was entirely unrelated to family satisfaction as reported by either parent or child.
We predicted that parental control would be positively associated with the child's psychological entitlement. The results of a structural equation model with parental control treated as the latent variable indicated by a number of related family processes confirmed this hypothesis. Parental control was positively associated with child psychological entitlement. However, at the same time parental control was significantly and negatively associated with the child's general sense of self-efficacy. Oh yeah, okay. At first it may appear unusual that the same parenting process that predicts psychological entitlement of the child also predicts lower self efficacy. One potential explanation for this pattern lies in a type of parental control where by the parent is excessively involved in provision of goods and services to the child to the point of intrusiveness. Parents that continually and excessively impose their will on their children, so long as it entails doing things and providing things for the child, could easily raise children with a strong sense of entitlement. However, the same parenting practice would diminish the child's self efficacy as they grow used to having someone else to provide for them to the exclusion of their own efforts. That [Inaudible] controlling intrusive parenting effectively forecloses opportunities for children to try to acquire things and make their own needs through their own efforts. This corrupts the foundational process in acquisition of self efficacy, trying successfully to solve problems, to achieve goals, to meet one's needs, et cetera, on one's own.
Parental control to the point of intrusiveness constitutes parental over involvement. The emergent adult no longer needs this level of parental directive, but the overzealous parent who often wants the best for his or her child may enact these behaviors due to enmeshment and projection of his or her own ideals on the child. As predicted, young adult children exposed to such parenting practices not only have diminished general self-efficacy they also report a greater sense of entitlement. Again, perhaps due to a learning history replete with parentally orchestrated outcomes. In conclusion, this investigation shows that both parents and young children are most satisfied with family environments Marked by balanced flexibility, balanced cohesion and higher levels positive communication. Both parents and young adult children were most satisfied when parenting was authoritative. In contrast, authoritarian parenting was associated with lower family satisfaction for both parent and child. A high level of parental control was associated with lower general self efficacy and higher psychological entitlement in young adult children. So ironically, the same family dynamics that engender a sense of entitlement in young adult children are simultaneously associated with lower satisfaction with the family. These findings add to the literature on family communication and parenting styles by showing how parent-child interactions that put excessive emphasis on controlling child outcomes actually have deleterious effects on young adults' self identity.
Okay, so these are dimensions, and cohesion is a dimension that reflects emotional bonding. As a dimension at one end of cohesion you've got disconnected, family members don't perceive themselves as connected. At the other end, I mean, it's more complex than that. At the other end of the dimension is enmeshed, where in fact -- boy, I tell you, if you think about this Venn diagrams are helpful here. If you think about disconnected, you know, you've got your circles completely apart. Family members don't perceive themselves or they haven't incorporated other family member's identities into their own identity. So really, you could say really week family identity. Enmeshed, on the other hand, is going to look something like overlapping circles, you know? Where there's a failure to acknowledge the other person as separate. And so what Olson and others have suggested and demonstrated is that somewhere in the middle, balanced cohesion is somewhere in the middle of the dimension, and what it is, is it's separately connected. So on the one hand we acknowledge our independence, but we simultaneously acknowledge our interdependence. However, your emotions are your emotions. They're not my emotions. I can respond to them, and can you see how the difference in being disconnected versus enmeshed might impact the way we respond to others? And in enmeshed systems there's a failure to recognize the other person as an independent individual.
Questions

Question 1: Is there a reason to believe that the children when they become parents will be similar?

Answer: You know, there's been some conjecturing that this is a reflection of the parent's attachment style, and that the parent is ultimately living vicariously through the child. There's also some literature that suggests that it's narcissism in the parent that leads to helicoptering of the child. But as far as I can tell, there's no scientific research on this. There's some related.

So thank you all for coming. It's lovely. It is so nice to have people to share your research with, right? Thanks.