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**The relationship between helicopter parenting and  
risky sexual behavior in emerging adults**

Emily F. Olenik

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements  
for Honors in the Departments of Psychology and Sociology

Union College

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### **Abstract**

Prior research on helicopter parenting suggests a hovering style of parenting may lead to engagement in risky behaviors including problematic drinking and drug use and risky sexual behavior. The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between helicopter parenting during childhood and adolescence and later sexual behavior in emerging adults. Participants included 380 undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 26 who anonymously completed a survey where they were asked to report retrospectively about their parents' parenting behavior during the time they were growing up and their sexual health histories during the past six months, utilizing the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS), respectively. Findings did not support a significant relationship between the experience of helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior and were inconsistent with prior research. However, results show that there were some trends in the data with those who self-identified as part of the gender minority, Black or African American, and upper income groups exhibiting all positive correlation values and those who self-identified as part of the Hispanic or Latino and low income groups exhibiting all negative correlation values. These findings suggest a need for further research that seeks to better understand how demographic differences may influence the relationship between helicopter parenting and risky behaviors.

*Keywords:* helicopter parenting, emerging adulthood, risky sexual behavior, self-determination theory, attachment

**Table of Contents**

<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>7</b>
Helicopter Parenting	7
Helicopter Parenting and Health Behavior	13
Risky Sexual Behavior	15
Moderating Factors	17
A Theoretical Framework	20
Self-Determination Theory	20
Control Theories	21
Social Learning Theory	23
The Current Study	25
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHOD</b>	<b>26</b>
Participants	26
Procedure	27
Measures	28
Helicopter Parenting	28
Risky Sexual Behavior	28
Demographics	29
Statistical Analysis	29
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS</b>	<b>31</b>
Preliminary Analyses and Descriptive Statistics	31
Correlational Analyses	32
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>35</b>
Findings and Implications	35
Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions	42
<b>TABLES</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>61</b>
Appendix A: Items on the Helicopter Parenting Scale	61
Appendix B: Sexual Risk Survey	62
Appendix C: Demographics Questionnaire	64

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Many tend to agree with this proverb. Those who have seen a child of quiet parents shy away from social interactions or an adventurous child follow in the footsteps of an enterprising parent might observe the similarities between parents and their offspring. The question remains, though, why are parents and children so alike? Does the tree impact the way the apple falls, that is, do parents' actions influence the decisions children make on their own later in life? A great deal of research on the relationship between parenting practices and offspring adjustment has emerged. In particular, there is a growing body of research on helicopter parenting, defined generally in the literature as the overparenting or micromanaging of a child by his or her parents, and the impact it has on young adults (Darlow et al., 2017). These parents tend to hover over and then rescue their child when conflicts arise (Cline & Fay, 1990). While parents may intend for overparenting to be helpful to their offspring, research has shown that it can be maladaptive.

Many have sought out to better understand how helicopter parenting can impact emotional, social, and behavioral outcomes during different life stages. One particular area of research has focused on emerging adulthood because it is a noteworthy transitional period. Emerging adulthood, the developmental period that takes place between the ages of 18 and 25, has been of high interest in recent decades because of the autonomy and self-reliance individuals have during this period (Arnett, 2000 and Darlow et al., 2017). An area of interest in previous research has been the ways in which parenting influences emerging adult risk-taking behavior. One might expect that micromanaging children's behavior may reduce offsprings' risk taking behavior, but research has demonstrated that children who are raised under this parenting style may be at greater risk of engaging in risk-taking behaviors. For example, the literature suggests

that young adult children of helicopter parents tend to have higher rates of risky behaviors such as problematic drinking behaviors and higher rates of risky sexual behavior (McGinley & Davis, 2021 and Desderato & Crawford, 1995).

Sexual behavior is a noteworthy aspect of adjustment to study because it provides insight into whether a person is engaging in safe behaviors. Risky sexual behavior can include a wide range of behavior, such as engaging in unprotected sexual behavior, having sexual relations with more than one partner, and engaging in sexual relations with a high-risk partner, thereby increasing risk for transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and other negative health outcomes (Metzler et al., 1994). Because of the impact risky sexual behavior can have on health outcomes for emerging adults, it is important to understand those factors that may put young people at risk.

To help increase our understanding of the ways in which early parenting practices impact later sexual risk behavior, in this thesis, I will examine the relationship between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior in emerging adulthood. Participants in the current study consisted of college students, who were asked to complete a survey that asked about their parents' behavior during the time they were growing up and their current sexual practices. Unlike past research that has typically looked at helicopter parenting that takes place concurrently when a child is in college, the current study will look at helicopter parenting in the family of origin during the periods of childhood and adolescence and its relationship to current behavior in emerging adulthood.

Chapter two includes a literature review that incorporates previous studies that measured these constructs. This review is broken down into sections that will address helicopter parenting, how parenting shapes behavior, risky sexual behavior, moderating factors, and a theoretical

application. In chapter three I review the research methodology used for the current study. The surveys provide an understanding of the parenting styles people experienced while growing up as well as their current sexual practices. In chapter four I analyze data gathered from participants. Chapter five draws connections between the results from the current study and past research. This chapter explains how although findings were not significant, there were some noteworthy trends that support some aspects of prior literature. After this initial evaluation, chapter five will conclude with a mention of the study's strengths and limitations, as well as suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Helicopter Parenting**

The term helicopter parenting was coined in 1969 in Dr. Haim Ginott's book, where teenagers described their parents as "helicopters" that hover over them (Ginott, 1969). Helicopter parents step in when children face uncertain or unpleasant situations, typically becoming over involved in their child's life (Hunt, 2008). Helicopter parenting is a unique form of parental control because it involves both positive and negative aspects of parenting. This type of parenting is characterized by high involvement, warmth, guidance, and emotional support, but also low levels of child autonomy (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Examples of helicopter parenting may include a parent reaching out to a teacher on behalf of their child, a parent deciding who their children are allowed to be friends with, and a parent making decisions on behalf of their child. Although these behaviors may be intended to provide support to offspring, and may even be useful in these short-term situations, they can be harmful to a child's development because children will miss the opportunity to form autonomy. Having the freedom to make good and bad decisions in childhood and adolescence allows individuals to practice making choices in a low-stakes environment and become confident in making their own choices.

Parenting has been a focus of past work as researchers develop a more comprehensive understanding of how parents shape their children's behavior and adjustment. For the past several decades psychologists have used Baumrind's (1966) three parenting styles to explain different parent-child relationships and outcomes: permissive parenting, authoritarian parenting, and authoritative parenting. Permissive parents are warm and nurturing, but enforce few rules for their children creating a lack of structure (Baumrind, 1966). On the other hand, authoritarian parents are described as cold and harsh, typically imposing strict rules and failing to take their



child's feelings into consideration (Baumrind, 1966). Authoritative parents combine the best traits from each of these styles, they are warm and nurturing, but also guide their children in development by setting boundaries and giving them autonomy (Baumrind, 1966).

Using Baumrind's (1966) framework, helicopter parenting may be conceptualized as a form of authoritarian parenting because of the strict control parents place over their children. Helicopter parenting also resembles aspects of authoritative parenting because of the high levels of warmth and nurturance that these parents provide to their offspring. While warmth and connection are important aspects of parenting, they can quickly lead to overinvolvement and intrusion if parents begin to over insert themselves into their child's life (Levine, 2006). These controlling and intrusive behaviors can inhibit the formation of self efficacy and autonomy, leaving young adults ill-prepared for adulthood (Levine, 2006). Without the opportunity to experiment, make mistakes, and accept challenges, there will be a hesitancy to engage in these autonomous behaviors later in life (Levine, 2006).

Other parenting types have been also defined that attempt to explain and categorize parenting behaviors. For example, blackhawk, lawnmower, and satellite parents are some commonly known labels for intrusive types of parenting (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014). Like helicopter parents, these mothers and fathers tend to be overbearing in their childrens' lives. Blackhawk parents are described as going into attack mode when their child faces a conflict, disregarding the consequences of their actions or how they will affect anyone else (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014). Lawnmower parents take a different approach, paving paths to ensure their children are achieving the highest level of success possible (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014). Satellite parents are most similar to helicopter parents because they engage in helicopter parenting behaviors, but from a distance typically through phone contact (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014).

Research on helicopter parenting and related parenting domains suggests there may be reason to conceptualize different dimensions of helicopter parenting. In a study of emerging adults, researchers defined three common profiles of parenting between mothers and fathers including warm helicopter parents, controlling helicopter parents, and low-involvement parents (Padilla-Walker et al., 2021). Parents under the warm profile engage in average levels of helicopter parenting and show average levels of warmth (Padilla-Walker et al., 2021). Those in the controlling group displayed high control, low warmth, and average levels of helicopter parenting (Padilla-Walker et al., 2021). The low-involvement group had low overall involvement in their childrens' lives (Padilla-Walker et al., 2021). This group was included in the analysis to act as a direct contrast to helicopter parents who are known to be overly-involved. No helicopter parenting has been shown as adaptive, but it is clear that some of these parenting techniques may fare better than others. Padilla-Walker's (2021) study, for example, found that helicopter parenting dimensions that are higher on warmth showed more favorable outcomes, such as higher levels of school engagement. Other findings, however, show that dimensions that are high on control or low in involvement lead to high levels of delinquency and depressive symptoms among emerging adults (Padilla-Walker et al., 2021). Understanding differences in parenting styles can inform our understanding of helicopter parenting, especially since the literature suggests that low warmth and high control can lead to unfavorable outcomes.

As interest in parenting styles and their impact has grown, more research has been conducted on the influence helicopter parenting can have on offspring during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a particularly salient time to study because it is a formative period where young adults build skills to prepare them for later in life (Arnett, 2000). While much of the available literature focuses on helicopter parenting during this time

period, this style of parenting is not limited to emerging adulthood (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Helicopter parenting can happen at all ages during the time a child is growing up. College students, a subcategory of emerging adults, are a compelling group to study under the topic of helicopter parenting because the college years are typically a time where adult children are able to act more independently. For example, young adults tend to take on increased responsibilities such as managing their everyday life, including their diet, activities, and finances, during this time. Previous research has demonstrated the maladaptive impacts helicopter parenting has on college students, especially in regards to social and emotional outcomes (See, for example, Schiffrin et al., 2014).

Prior research has aimed to better understand the relationship between helicopter parenting and college students' psychological outcomes. To study this, researchers gathered survey responses from undergraduate students about parenting behaviors, needs satisfaction, life satisfaction, depression, and anxiety (Schiffrin et al., 2014). Results showed that helicopter parenting was associated with higher levels of depression and lower levels of overall life satisfaction (Schiffrin et al., 2014). These results exhibit how helicopter parenting can be a maladaptive parenting technique by preventing emerging adults from developing necessary skills of autonomy and competence that aid in the development of positive individual development (Schiffrin et al., 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Interestingly, Schiffrin's (2014) study did not find an association between helicopter parenting and anxiety, showing a need for further research to comprehensively understand the impacts helicopter parenting can have.

In addition, Kouros (2016) and her colleagues looked at the impact of overparenting on mental health, with a focus on social anxiety and overall well-being. Findings show consistency with Schiffrin's (2014) earlier work as helicopter parenting was significantly related to high

levels of social anxiety and lower levels of overall well being (Kouros et al., 2016). In another study looking at the impact of helicopter parenting on depression, anxiety, self-efficacy, and overall adjustment to college, results showed that helicopter parenting was associated with high levels of depression, and low levels of self-efficacy and social and academic adjustment (Darlow et al., 2017). Helicopter parenting affected depression, anxiety, and self-efficacy which, in turn, affected adjustment and GPA (Darlow et al., 2017). These results are important because they show how intrusive parenting behaviors can negatively affect offspring, showing strong support for the idea that helicopter parenting may be linked to maladaptive adjustment and negative mental health outcomes in college students.

Self-regulatory capacity has also become a necessary area of helicopter parenting research as researchers seek to understand how parenting can affect offspring. Recent works show the detrimental impacts parenting can have on social and emotional outcomes. Results of prior research show that there is a link between helicopter parenting and low mastery (the perceived power someone has over their life), self-regulation (the ability to adapt emotions in response to internal and external stimuli), and social competence (social skills that assist in social adaptation) and high levels of depression (Moilanen & Manuel, 2019). Findings also show that despite these negative outcomes, self-regulation or mastery could act as moderator between helicopter parenting and depression, social competence, or school burnout (Moilanen & Manuel, 2019 and Love et al., 2020). The concern with self-regulation moderating the nature of the relationship between these constructs is that helicopter parenting may also decrease aspects of emotion regulation such as self-control (Love et al., 2020). This may impact the ability of self-regulation to moderate helicopter parenting and negative outcomes, showing a need for interventions that target multiple facets related to this type of parenting.

As helicopter parenting itself develops and changes, there may be different ways for parents to exert control over their children. In the past children were given freedom to go out on their own, get into trouble, and learn from their mistakes (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014). Today, with changes in technology and societal norms, helicopter parenting has become more popular, as parents police their children and become involved in every aspect of their lives (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014). The introduction of cell phones, for example, is a way parents can stay connected to their children when they are away from home (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014; Kelly et al., 2017). Those with helicopter mothers reported more cell-phone conflict, greater levels of avoidance, and more rules about cell-phone contact (Kelly et al., 2017). Levels of father's helicopter parenting show slight differences with higher helicopter parenting showing greater reported phone contact and conflict, more rules about cell-phone contact, but also higher closeness (Kelly et al., 2017). Researchers also found that there was no difference in the frequency of calls between high, low, and moderate helicopter mothers, suggesting that the content of the calls may be a more important factor that affects autonomy development and control (Kelly et al., 2017). This line of research is noteworthy because it shows how helicopter parenting can continue even when an adult child is away from home.

Interestingly, helicopter parenting has also been found to have negative impacts on parents. In a study looking at the impacts of helicopter parenting on adult children and their parents, researchers found that parents who appraised the support they were giving to their adult child as too much also reported lower life satisfaction (Fingerman et al., 2012). These results are important because they show how helicopter parenting can also negatively affect the parents engaging in this form of parenting, suggesting an important relationship to parent adjustment. This study shows support for how helicopter parenting can be classified as an overall

maladaptive parenting strategy. This outcome shows a need for intervention strategies that aim to benefit both parents and their offspring during the college adjustment period.

### **Helicopter Parenting and Health Behavior**

In addition to the presence of negative social and emotional outcomes that may arise as a result of helicopter parenting, the literature suggests that offspring of helicopter parents may be more likely to engage in risk-taking and impulsive behaviors (See, for example, McGinley & Davis, 2021; Cui et al., 2019; Macias, 2019). These behavioral outcomes may include things such as alcohol or drug consumption, which can serve as an indicator of adjustment. Increased alcohol and drug use pose health concerns because of the negative effects they can have on mental and physical health and functioning (McGinley & Davis, 2021; LeMoyné & Buchanan, 2011; Pistella et al., 2022). Helicopter parenting may also negatively affect health behaviors such as diet and exercise (Macias, 2019). Like alcohol and drug use, decreased exercise and poorer diets are concerning because they can lead to poor health outcomes.

In a study intended to investigate the influence of helicopter parenting on alcohol consumption in college students, researchers found that those who came from families with higher incomes where helicopter parenting was present were more likely to show problematic drinking behaviors (McGinley & Davis, 2021). Studies about alcohol and college students have been an area of focus because of the accessibility most college students have to alcohol (Cui et al., 2019). For example, in a study of female college students, researchers found that helicopter parenting was associated with higher reported drinking and lower reported psychological needs satisfaction (Cui et al., 2019). Despite these initial findings, alcohol use and parenting may have a more complex relationship that exists on a continuum. In a study of adolescents, researchers found that both high and low levels of helicopter parenting led to higher levels of alcohol use

(Pistella et al., 2022). These opposite parenting behaviors, with similar outcomes, show how various parenting styles can impact alcohol use in adolescence. Few studies have looked at helicopter parenting as a quadratic equation, so this study contributes substantially to the field by showing how high levels of parental control is not the only reason an adolescent may be engaging in high alcohol use. The finding that high levels of alcohol use can be attributed to high levels of helicopter parenting is important to note because it may suggest that helicopter parenting may lead to other negative health behaviors. This is of particular interest in the current study because it lends support to the idea that high levels of helicopter parenting may lead to higher levels of risky sexual behavior.

LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011) found similar results in a study focused on how helicopter parenting is related to overall psychological well-being and prescription medication use. Findings suggest that helicopter parenting was negatively related to psychological well-being and positively related to the recreational consumption of pain pills (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). This study shows how individuals with over involved parents were more likely to be taking pain pills for reasons other than pain, suggesting a link between helicopter parenting and drug use. These findings are substantial because they bolster previous research that focuses on emotional or social outcomes by providing more information on the impacts of the overinvolvement of parents. In addition to drug and alcohol use in emerging adulthood, sexual risk-taking has also become an area of interest.

Overparenting can also have adverse outcomes on other health related behaviors such as diet and exercise. Results from a study of emerging adults show that helicopter parenting leads directly to unhealthy diet decisions and less exercise (Macias, 2019). These relationships indicate that helicopter parenting may leave emerging adults less prepared to make healthy decisions on

their own (Macias, 2019). Interestingly, the results of Macias's (2019) work found that parental warmth was a protective factor against these negative outcomes, adding an alternative perspective to earlier findings that stated too much warmth may turn into overparenting (Levine, 2006). Like alcohol and drug use, diet and exercise are important to examine in helicopter research because they pose a risk for later negative health outcomes.

### **Risky Sexual Behavior**

While much of the literature about how helicopter parenting and behavioral outcomes has focused on drug and alcohol use, there is a growing body of research on how this style of parenting influences risky sexual behavior. Normative sexual behavior can be difficult to define because the meaning behind what is appropriate is highly dependent on cultural and social contexts (Marmor, 1971). Ideas of marriage, sex, and sexuality have seen immense change over the last several centuries, and will continue to change as time goes on (Marmor, 1971). Because of this, it may be difficult to determine what exactly constitutes risky sexual behavior. Sexual behavior can be defined as risky based typically on what may occur after an individual engages in these behaviors, most notably the likelihood of transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or unintended pregnancy (Taylor-Seehafer & Rew, 2000). Prior research has defined the construct of risky sexual behavior as including becoming sexually active at a younger age, engaging in unprotected sexual activity, using protection inconsistently, engaging in sexual activity with high-risk partners, and engaging in sexual activity with multiple partners (Taylor-Seehafer & Rew, 2000). Risky sexual behavior represents a health concern to both the individual engaging in these interactions and to overall public health.

Sexual behavior is a topic of interest when discussing emerging adulthood because of the high rates of risky sexual behavior seen among this group (Brown & Venable, 2007). Both



previous and more recent research show that many college students and adolescents are engaging in behaviors that leave them at-risk for STIs and pregnancy, such as low condom use and sexual encounters with multiple partners (Desderato & Crawford, 1995; Shneyderman & Schwartz, 2013). This, mixed with other events that take place at relatively high rates on college campuses such as drug and alcohol use, has spurred research specific to the experiences of college students (Brown & Venable, 2007). Overall findings demonstrate that college students are likely to engage in high-risk sexual behaviors. In a study of high school students, researchers found that high levels of psychological control by parents led to more sexual risk taking in sexually active females, but high levels of behavioral control through parental monitoring decreased the likelihood of sexual risk taking in both male and female offspring (Rodgers, 1999). This finding suggests that different kinds of overparenting may influence a child's behavior in different ways for different genders. Understanding the differences in psychological and behavioral control may be useful in determining which parenting behaviors are most harmful. Although Rodgers' study may be outdated, the findings provide useful insight into exactly how specific parenting behaviors can influence risky sexual behavior in adolescence. This study was not conducted in an emerging adult population, but the findings continue to be substantial because they provide support for the idea that parenting can influence child behavioral outcomes.

Since Rodgers' (1999) study, there has been a growing body of work on parenting and sexual risk-taking that shows conflicting results. In an emerging adult population, researchers found that maternal and paternal overparenting can be protective against risky sexual behavior (Rogers & McKinney, 2018). A noteworthy factor that played a role in the interaction between overparenting and risky sexual behavior was peer alienation, which is known as the separation of or rejection of an individual from his or her peers (Rogers & McKinney, 2018). Overparenting

may lead to increased peer alienation which then leads to a decrease in engagement in risky sexual behavior (Rogers & McKinney, 2018). While this finding proposes that overparenting can decrease a common health-risk behavior seen in emerging adults, the mechanism by which this decrease happens, peer alienation, raises concern. This is because rejection from peers may have other adverse effects on an individual that can also affect healthy psychosocial development such as depressive symptoms and low academic performance (Fite et al., 2012). For this reason, the results of Rogers' (2018) study show a need for further research on helicopter parenting and outcomes to develop intervention strategies that lead to more positive adjustment.

### **Moderating Factors**

Many factors may influence the relationship between helicopter parenting and the impact it has on offspring. Demographic factors can play a role in shaping parenting behaviors and, in turn, child outcomes. It is believed that parents from a higher socioeconomic status may be more likely to become over involved in their children's lives because they have more time and space to worry about their children and assist them (Levine, 2006). For economically disadvantaged families this may not be the case. Because of their circumstances, parents with lower incomes may need to spend more time worrying about paying bills and may work multiple jobs, giving them less time with their children and less time to become overinvolved (Levine, 2006). Some parents may become over involved in their child's academic performance. As expectations of what children, adolescents, and emerging adults should be accomplishing increase, parents who have the time to do so may take on extra responsibilities, such as micromanaging homework assignments or calling teachers to speak on their child's behalf, preventing their children from handling situations on their own (Levine, 2006). As seen in previous research, taking on this responsibility can lead to negative social and emotional outcomes as well as unfavorable healthy

behaviors throughout emerging adulthood (See, for example, McGinley & Davis, 2021; Moilanen & Manuel, 2019; Rogers & McKinney, 2018; Schiffrin et al., 2014).

Some studies have looked at the role income may play in different parent-child interactions. The study McGinley and Davis (2021) conducted, emphasizes the role of family income in parent-child interactions. As previously mentioned, their results found that greater maternal and paternal helicopter parenting led to more problematic drinking behaviors among high-income students (McGinley & Davis, 2021). Interestingly, greater maternal and paternal helicopter parenting led to decreased drinking among low-income students (McGinley & Davis, 2021). These findings are substantial because they show how certain parenting behaviors may be maladaptive for one group, but adaptive for another. The role of income is noteworthy because the current study will be examining helicopter parenting in a college with a large percentage of students who come from middle, upper-middle, and upper-class families.

Various researchers have sought out to better understand how income and class shape the values that parents pass down to their children. In a study evaluating how family class differences operate in academic settings, it was found that middle and working-class parents had classroom expectations that were different from those of upper-class parents (Calarco, 2014). This finding is substantial because it shows how socialization may be a more active process than once originally thought. This example of parenting strategies being shaped by class leads to the further question of how class shapes other parenting styles, especially helicopter parenting. Concerted cultivation is a parenting strategy typically used by middle-class parents where children are put in organized activities to ensure they will have certain experiences that will set them ahead (Lareau, 2003). The issue with concerted cultivation is that parents often overstep to help their children. If a child is experiencing a problem, the parent will advocate on their behalf

in an effort to get their individualized needs met (Lareau, 2003). Through this process, middle-class children may be taught that they should go to any lengths necessary to have their needs met, leading to a sense of entitlement (Lareau, 2003). It can also be argued, however, that in certain cases parents stepping in too frequently can affect a child's development of autonomy.

Other demographics like race, ethnicity, and immigrant status may play a role in parenting behaviors and related outcomes. Results of studies using demographic analysis show that parents who are immigrants or who come from immigrant families were more likely to engage in helicopter parenting (Macias, 2019). There is also evidence to support the idea that foreign-born mothers show less emotional and cognitive support and exercise higher levels of control than their counterparts who were born in the U.S. (Gelatt et al., 2015). Something unique about this finding is that support was low which does not show consistency with past work that associated helicopter parenting with high levels of support and warmth (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Macias, 2019). This difference may be attributable to unique factors faced by immigrant parents such as income, educational attainment, and material hardship (Gelatt et al., 2015).

Race has become a topic of interest in research that focuses on parenting styles because the experiences that come with being a particular race can shape group and family outcomes. Similar to income, researchers have found that overinvolvement from parents may provide necessary support that is adaptive to some individuals but maladaptive to others (McGinley & Davis, 2021; Wolf et al., 2009). For example, Mexican American, Latino/Other Spanish, Japanese/Japanese American, and American Indian/Alaska Native college students report greater contact with their parents, but also report lower levels of involvement and engagement compared to their White counterparts (Wolf et al., 2009). These findings are important because they show

how group differences may exist in parenting behaviors, showing a need for continued research that aims to look specifically at these group differences.

## **A Theoretical Framework**

### ***Self-Determination Theory***

Theory lends support to how helicopter parenting can have a substantial influence on young adults. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory of motivation that posits humans have three innate psychological needs that foster positive development: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) explain how these traits are essential for achieving optimal growth, integration, social development, integrity, and personal well-being. Helicopter parenting acts as a challenge to the satisfaction of these innate needs. The importance of autonomy has been prominent in helicopter parenting research (Darlow et al., 2017). SDT is linked to different kinds of motivations that influence a person's behavior. Intrinsic motivation encourages a person to partake in an activity for the personal satisfaction of doing it whereas extrinsic motivation encourages a person to partake in an activity for some outside outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) describe extrinsic motivation using homework as an example: a student can be extrinsically motivated by the desire to learn the material and succeed, or extrinsically motivated by their parents who are controlling the behavior. Regulation plays an important role in this interaction, showing how autonomy, competence, and relatedness contribute to the successful development of an individual.

In the context of helicopter parenting, strict enforcement by parents can act as an extrinsic factor that regulates a child's actions. While extrinsic motivation can encourage people to achieve success for positive reasons, being forced to do something because of outside factors may have negative effects. For example, if a child wants to participate in theater classes, but their

parents forcibly choose to enroll them in sports instead, they are experiencing extrinsic pressure to participate in something but also denied the opportunity to pursue something they are interested in. Based on SDT, it can be argued that this decision will make a child doubt their desire to participate in theater and undermine their ability to make choices on their own. When parents step in to make decisions on behalf of their children, it strips the child of the opportunity to take ownership over their choices. Without the opportunity to make mistakes in low-stakes situations while growing up, individuals will have a more difficult time making decisions in higher-stakes situations. This raises concern about whether individuals will engage in risky sexual behavior, something that can be potentially detrimental to one's health.

### ***Control Theories***

Containment theory works similarly to SDT and acts as an explanation for why individuals engage in either conforming or deviant behavior. Containment theory suggests that there are inner and outer containments that prevent an individual from deviating outside of norms (Reckless, Dinitz, & Murray, 1956). Reckless (1961) and his colleagues define inner contaminants as aspects of the internal self such as positive self-concept, tolerance of frustration, and goal setting. These inner contaminants form because individuals internalize societal norms and feel a greater connection to society, making them less likely to deviate (Reckless, 1961). Inner containment is the first line of defense against delinquency, followed by outer containment (Reckless, 1961). Outer contaminants include external institutions such as family, schools, and neighborhoods (Reckless, Dinitz, & Murray, 1956). If a person does begin to deviate, outer contaminants work against this behavior to prevent it (Reckless, 1961). Inner controls are shaped by outer controls in this way because greater connection encourages the formation of positive inner contaminants which then works against deviance. In the context of the current work,

Reckless might suggest that children of helicopter parents may have strong outer containments, but this control failed to develop into a sense of self-concept, leading to participation in risky behaviors.

Travis Hirschi (1969) highlights these outer contaminants as social bonds. His belief was that social bonds prevent individuals from engaging in deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969). If a bond is weak or broken, an individual will be more likely to deviate and engage in risky or illegal behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi (1969) outlines four aspects of social bonds: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Attachment is the link that exists between an individual and others in society whereas commitment is how invested an individual is in these connections and relationships (Hirschi, 1969). Similar to commitment, involvement is the amount of time a person is spending in formal societal activities (Hirschi, 1969). More time spent in these activities will prevent a person from deviation because they will not have time to engage in deviant activities. Lastly, belief is the extent to which an individual accepts the morality of societal norms (Hirschi, 1969). Those who have stronger belief in these ideals are less likely to deviate outside of them.

In the context of helicopter parenting, family functioning, attachment, and involvement may contribute heavily to outcomes in emerging adults. Family functioning includes the interactions or relationships that take place in a family (Hirschi, 1969). Attachment plays a substantial role in family functioning because caring about family members' opinions will decrease the likelihood of deviation from normative behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Similarly, involvement can be looked at through a family lens because spending a lot of time in a particular family system will also decrease deviation (Hirschi, 1969). As an outer control, families work to discourage deviation from the norm, but the lack of direct contact college students have with

their families when they first go to college may act as a force that weakens the previously existing social bond. For those who grew up with parents who were over involved in their lives, this transition may be even more difficult because they are now expected to make their own decisions and exercise autonomy. Although these individuals may have had a high degree of attachment and involvement with family that strengthened their bond to their parents in childhood, they likely ultimately lacked belief in these connections and did not internalize these bonds.

The inner and out contaminants proposed by Reckless (1956), show congruency with internal and external loci of control. An internal locus of control is where an individual believes they are in control of the outcomes of their lives (Rotter, 1966). On the other hand, an external locus of control is where an individual believes their life outcomes are out of their control and determined by outside forces such as fate, luck, or other people (Rotter, 1966). It can be argued that helicopter parents act as an external locus of control. This raises the question of how children with highly involved parents act when their parents are no longer around to provide this control. Similar to how deviation occurs in social bond theory, college students are now expected to make their own decisions in emerging adulthood, something they did not previously do. In this case, it is believed that without parental control, these individuals will deviate, making the decision to engage in risky sexual behavior. This may be because despite the strong outer containment present through helicopter parenting, children of these parents failed to internalize and translate this control into a sense of strong self-concept.

### ***Social Learning Theory***

Social learning theory operates slightly differently, but is important in the context of helicopter parenting. Early theories of social learning explain that behavior is explained by goals,



as well as the expectation that these goals will be achieved (Rotter, 1954). This theory proposes that behavior is learned and can change with experience (Rotter, 1954). Social learning has developed to include a broader definition— behavior is learned through observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1977). This type of learning creates a feedback loop where a person observes a behavior in real-time, as a memory, or as an imagination, the behavior is internalized, the person takes part in that behavior, and then they receive a response that may then elicit a positive or negative response (Bandura, 1977).

This theory can be applied to behaviors associated with helicopter parenting because children may be missing out on a necessary part of learning when their parents step in to make decisions for them. Making mistakes and learning from the natural consequences associated with them is an important part of development that allows children to build confidence in their ability to make their own decisions, leading to skill development and to a sense of autonomy. Like SDT, not having the opportunity to explore the world in low-stakes situations may impact a person's ability to make good choices in higher-stakes situations later on. Helicopter parenting may also reduce the chances that a child is exposed to any conflict, if parents are stepping in to fix a situation before it gets worse, or even happens (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014). Social learning is important because it prepares individuals for later social interactions, especially those surrounding conflict. Having the initiative to come up with solutions to these issues as they arise is important as one enters adulthood and it is no longer appropriate for parents to be involved in decision-making. There is evidence to suggest that an inappropriate level of involvement in childhood and adolescence may also stunt this decision-making ability and interfere with how emerging adults make choices (Srivastav & Mathur, 2021).

**The Current Study**

Overall, previous findings suggest that helicopter parenting may be a maladaptive parenting behavior that can lead to negative outcomes in offspring. The purpose of the following study is to build upon previous research by examining the link between how helicopter parenting during childhood and adolescence influences later sexual risk taking during emerging adulthood, as well as how different demographic factors may shape this association. Findings from this study will hopefully help update previous research on this topic, while also providing new insight into the behaviors of emerging adults. Based on past findings, it is expected that higher reported levels of helicopter parenting while growing up will be positively associated with current engagement in risky sexual behaviors. This work will contribute to the field of helicopter parenting research by further analyzing how these parental behaviors impact risky sexual behavior in a sample of college students, a subgroup of emerging adults. The findings from this research may provide insight into intervention strategies that may be developed to help college students have a more successful transition to college, and reduce the possibility of engagement in behaviors that lead to negative health outcomes.

## CHAPTER 3: METHOD

### Participants

Of the 574 participants originally recruited to participate in the study, 194 were excluded from the final analysis because they failed to complete all necessary parts of the survey ( $N=193$ ) or, in one instance, did not consent to participate. The remaining participants included 380 undergraduate college students who attend a small liberal arts college in upstate New York. Out of the 380 total participants, 372 provided their age which ranged between 18 and 26 ( $M = 19.58$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). The sample included 213 participants who identified as female (56.1%), 139 participants who identified as male (36.6%), 15 participants who identified as non-binary (3.9%), two participants who identified as a transgender man (0.5%), three participants who identified as a transgender woman (0.8%), and eight participants who preferred not to report on their gender (2.1%). The racial and ethnic composition of the participants was: 68.7% White or Caucasian, 10.3% Asian, 7.9% Hispanic or Latino, 4.7% Multiracial or Biracial, 4.5% Black or African American, and 3.2% Other. Three participants chose not to provide their race or ethnicity. Participants were also asked to report their sexual orientation. Two hundred and fifty seven participants (68.2%) identified as Heterosexual or Straight, 71 participants (18.7%) identified as bisexual, 10 participants (2.6%) identified as lesbian, four participants (1.1%) identified as gay, 23 participants (6.1%) selected other, and 12 participants (3.2%) preferred not to answer. Three participants chose not to respond to this question. Class year was also recorded with answers ranging from first year to fifth year or other, including 141 (37.1%) first year students, 98 (25.8%) sophomore students, 66 (17.4%) junior students, 72 (18.9%) senior students, and 2 (0.5%) students who reported that they were fifth years or other. One participant did not complete this question. Participants were recruited by direct email using the college's survey

email listserv, which reaches all enrolled students, and posters that were displayed around campus that included a QR code linked to the survey. As an incentive to encourage participation, all participants were provided the option to enter a raffle to win one of three \$100 cash prizes.

The project was funded by the college's Student Research Grant Committee.

### **Procedure**

This study underwent review and was approved by the college's Human Subjects Review Committee. Participants individually completed an online survey on the platform Qualtrics using their personal devices. The survey asked participants to complete measures of helicopter parenting while growing up, current sexual behavior, and a demographics questionnaire in that order, respectively. As described above, a link to the study was sent out to all students on campus through an email Listserv used for survey research purposes. Flyers were also distributed around campus with a brief description of the study and a QR code that linked participants to the survey. Data were collected anonymously. For those who consented to participate and completed the survey, the end of survey message directed them to a separate google form link where participants were given the opportunity to submit their student ID number to enter into a raffle for one of the three available \$100 prizes. Raffle winners were chosen using an online random number generator. To ensure participant anonymity, once the three winners were selected, the student ID numbers were given to the Psychology Department's Administrative Assistant, who handled identification of raffle winners by ID number and payment of prize money. The intention behind doing this was so none of the principal investigators involved in the study would know who participated in the study. Those who failed to complete the survey or who opted out did not receive any penalty.

## Measures

### *Helicopter Parenting*

Helicopter parenting was assessed using the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS; LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011), which is used to measure the extent to which parents were controlling during the time an individual was growing up. Unlike other measures of helicopter parenting that focus on parenting during the time an individual is in college, the HPS intends to act as a global assessment of helicopter parenting by asking participants about parenting patterns and behaviors in the time leading up to their college years (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). The HPS consists of seven questions. Participants were asked to reflect on their agreement with various statements on a scale from 1 (“*Strongly Disagree*”) to 5 (“*Strongly Agree*”). Scores from each item are averaged to produce a final score ranging from one to five, with higher scores representing higher levels of perceived helicopter parenting. Items from the scale include, “My parents supervised my every move growing up” and “I sometimes felt that my parents didn’t feel I could make my own decisions,” for example (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Internal consistency (Cronbach’s Alpha) was 0.71 for the sample studied when the measure was created (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Internal consistency was 0.78 in the current study for the HPS.

### *Risky Sexual Behavior*

Risky sexual behavior was assessed using the Sexual Risk Survey (SRS; Turchik & Garske, 2009), which measures five factors of sexual risk taking including sexual risk taking with uncommitted partners, risky sex acts, impulsive sexual behaviors, intent to engage in risky sexual behaviors, and risky anal sex acts. The 23-item measure asks participants to indicate the number of times they have engaged in a particular behavior over the last six months. Example questions include, “How many partners have you had sex with?,” “How many times have you

had an unexpected and unanticipated sexual experience?,” and “How many partners have you engaged in sexual behavior with but not had sex with?” (Turchik & Garske, 2009). The values are recoded into ordinal categories to account for positive skewness. Scores are summed with the new categories to produce a score between 0 and 92, with high scores indicating higher levels of risky sexual behavior. Although the scale can be summed to produce a total score, for the purpose of this study four of the subscales were scored separately for the final analysis. Internal consistency (Cronbach’s Alpha) was 0.88 for the sample studied when the measure was created (Turchik & Garske, 2009). Internal consistency for the subscales has been shown to be 0.88 for sexual risk taking with uncommitted partners, 0.80 for risky sex acts, 0.78 for impulsive sexual behaviors, 0.89 for intent to engage in risky sexual behaviors, and 0.61 for risky anal sex acts (Turchik & Garske, 2009). Internal consistency was 0.91, 0.85, 0.80, and 0.66 for the respective scales in the current study.

### ***Demographics***

Demographic information was collected at the end of the survey to better understand the sample that participated. Participants were asked to self-report on their gender, class year, age, race, sexual orientation, parents’ marital status, and household income. A complete list of the demographic questionnaire included in the current study can be found in Appendix C.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Correlational analysis was conducted to determine the association between helicopter parenting and engagement in risky sexual behavior. Those who failed to complete all necessary parts of the HPS and SRS were excluded from the current analysis. Separate correlations were run for four of the five the different subscales of the SRS. An independent t-test of helicopter parenting scores was also run to compare the scores of individuals who filled out the entire

survey versus those who only filled out the HPS. Data was coded using google sheets and excel and all statistical analyses were run using SPSS. Post hoc analyses were also conducted to assess group differences in helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior scores between demographic groups.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses and Descriptive Statistics

Prior to analyses of the hypotheses, data were screened for missing data, outliers and normality. One hundred and ninety four total cases were excluded because participants either did not agree to participate (N=1) or did not complete all necessary parts of the survey (N=193). These cases were removed prior to conducting any statistical analyses. Before continuing, it is important to note that there was a procedural error in the creation of the final survey. Screening showed that two questions from the SRS were left off the version of the survey that was sent out to participants, meaning a total score could not be calculated for the SRS. Despite this, four of the five subscales were intact, so these subscales were used in the analyses.

Tests of skewness and kurtosis were run on the data collected from the HPS and subscales of the SRS to look at the normality of the distributions. The HPS was overall normally distributed with a skewness of 0.29 and kurtosis of  $-0.33$ . With regard to the SRS, three of the four subscales used were not normally distributed. Results from the subscales show that the *sexual risk taking with uncommitted partners* subscale, *impulsive sexual behaviors* subscale, and *intent to engage in risky sexual behaviors* subscale were all right skewed with respective values of 1.44, 1.15, and 1.86. The values produced for the *sexual risk taking with uncommitted partners* subscale and *intent to engage in risky sexual behaviors* subscale showed that both distributions were leptokurtik with values of 1.48 and 2.75. Despite the skewness of the *impulsive sexual behaviors* subscale, kurtosis was normal. All three of these subscales had outlier cases. The only SRS subscale with a normal distribution was the *risky sex acts* subscale. Outlier analyses were also run on the HPS and two outlier cases were identified. The outlier cases for the different scales and subscales were both included and excluded in the final analyses



to see how these cases affected the correlations. These results can be compared in Tables 3 and 4. For the final analyses run based on different demographic factors, however, the outliers were included because the outliers were different across the different scales and subscales, meaning more cases would have needed to be excluded, potentially affecting the already small sizes of some groups.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alphas of the HPS and SRS subscales with outlier cases included. The mean and standard deviation of the HPS was similar to that of the original values calculated by LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011). Table 2 was created to show the breakdown of means and standard deviations on the SRS subscales by gender, as shown in the original creation of the measure (Turchik & Garske, 2009). A third category, "Other" was added to account for other gender identities as reported by the current sample. Although participants were given the opportunity to self-identify on the original survey, their answers were grouped together here for the purpose of statistical power.

An independent sample t-test was used to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in helicopter parenting scores between the group that filled out necessary parts of the survey (including the HPS, SRS and demographic section) and those who did not. Those who filled out the entire survey reported slightly higher helicopter parenting scores ( $M = 2.77, SD = 0.75$ ) than those who did not ( $M = 2.763, SD = 0.74$ ), but, notably, results showed there was no significant difference between the group that filled out the entire survey versus those who did not,  $t(440) = 1.38, p = .756, d = 0.75$ . This suggests that deciding to fill out only part of the survey was not indicative of helicopter parenting scores.

### **Correlational Analyses**

Table 3 presents the correlations between helicopter parenting scores and scores from the four subscales taken from the SRS. As seen in columns 2, 3, and 4, the correlations between the four subscales used from the SRS were all significant. This is consistent with prior research on the SRS which also found that the different subscales were correlated (Turchik & Garske, 2009). With regard to the study hypothesis, correlational analysis examining the relationship between the HPS and each respective subscale of the SRS yielded no significant results. This indicated that helicopter parenting scores were not predictive of scores on any of the four measured subscales from the SRS used in the present study. Exploratory correlational analyses were conducted with outliers removed; results are presented in Table 4. As seen in Table 4, this analysis, which accounted for the possible influence of outliers, yields similar results to those shown in Table 3, and there appears to be no significant correlation between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior with all correlations falling at or around zero.

Post hoc analyses were conducted to explore possible influences of salient demographic factors. For the purpose of the following analyses, various groups were created based on the demographic information provided by participants. Some responses from the demographic questions were grouped together to create larger groups because in some cases, only a few participants fell into a particular demographic category. The purpose behind reassigning these categories was to increase statistical power for the analyses by analyzing larger groups, with the hope of understanding how these self-reported identities may contribute to differences in outcomes. Those who identified as non-binary, transgender man, transgender woman, other, or preferred not to answer were grouped into the “other” gender category. Similarly, those who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other were grouped into a “LGBQ/Other” category for the

analysis based on sexual orientation. The household income ranges provided on the survey were recategorized into “low income”, “middle income”, and “upper income” based on categories outlined by Pew Research Center (Bennett et al., 2020). Race categories were also reassigned, so those identifying as multiracial or biracial were included in the “other” category. Any other racial groups that were included in the original demographic survey, but not the final analysis were not present because participants did not report being a part of those categories. Lastly, groups were reorganized based on parents’ marital status. Those who reported their parents’ marital status as widowed, separated, or divorced were grouped into one category and those who selected “other” or “prefer not to answer” were grouped together. The original choices for the demographic questionnaire can be found in appendix c, but the final group categories can be seen in Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 below.

To further analyze the correlation between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior, separate correlations were run based on different demographic factors. The results of these analyses can be seen in Table 5. Although almost none of the correlations yielded significant results, the findings provide insight into trends in group differences that may offer helpful explanations about the current results. When looking at the impact of helicopter parenting on risky sexual behavior in different gender groups, the “other” group was the only one that had results in all categories trending positively, showing some consistency with original hypotheses. Similarly, those in the “low income” group had results trending negatively in all categories while those in the “upper income” group had results trending positively in all categories. Lastly, some of the race categories produced interesting trends. Correlations trended positively in all categories for those who identified as Black or African American and negatively in all categories for those who identified as Hispanic or Latino. Both of these groups also had the highest

correlation values out of the correlations run for race, though these correlations were still very weak or weak.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **Findings and Implications**

Evidence shows that although parents may engage in helicopter parenting with an intent to help their children, it can be a maladaptive parenting technique because it may lead to negative psychosocial outcomes (Schiffirin et al., 2014 and Darlow et al., 2017). While there is a growing body of research on the impacts of helicopter parenting, less is known about how this style of parenting influences engagement in risky sexual behaviors. Recent work on these topics has shown that college-aged individuals and adolescents are engaging in high-risk behaviors that leave them at a higher risk for STIs and unplanned pregnancies (Desderato & Crawford, 1995; Shneyderman & Schwartz, 2013). Findings about how parenting behaviors influence these outcomes have provided mixed results. Some researchers have found that psychological control by parents may lead to more sexual risk taking in certain adolescents, while behavioral control by parents may decrease these behaviors (Rodgers, 1999). More recent work suggests that parent overinvolvement may actually decrease engagement in risky sexual behavior, but through negative mechanisms such as peer alienation (Rogers & McKinney, 2018). These inconsistencies show a need for more research on parenting behaviors and potential outcomes.

While this prior work is substantial for furthering our understanding of these constructs, it is important to continue this research because changes over time may yield differences in the impacts parenting can have on offspring behavior from one cohort to another. For instance, changing findings in how helicopter parenting shapes behavior may be a direct result of generational differences. New patterns of helicopter parenting may have developed over the last several decades, shifting parent-child interactions and the impacts these interactions have on offspring. A possibility is that helicopter parenting has become more of a norm, so children are

more accustomed to having over involved parents. This may suggest that the narrative has flipped and those who do not have overly involved parents may be more likely to engage in deviant behavior, posing a need for future research. This idea suggests that helicopter parenting may not yield risky behavior or rebellion how it has previously.

The current study sought out to build on previous research about the impacts of helicopter parenting on risky sexual behavior in emerging adults. Contrary to the stated hypothesis which was based on prior research, helicopter parenting and engaging in risky sexual behavior are not significantly correlated in the present study. All correlations between the measure of helicopter parenting (HPS) and risky sexual behavior (SRS subscales) exhibited negligible values. When broken down by groups based on gender, income, race, sexual orientation, and parents' marital status there were some noteworthy trends, though these should be further analyzed because of the small sample size of many subgroups. For example, gender minorities had results trending positively, indicating a very weak correlation between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior. This trend is substantial, however, because compared to the female and male groups the correlation values are noticeably higher. A potential reason for this difference may be conflicts between parents and gender minority offspring about their gender identity. This may suggest that gender minorities are at a higher risk for risky sexual behavior as a result of helicopter parenting and that there may be differences between genders in this relationship.

Similar trends were apparent in other categories such as class, again suggesting that there are other factors that may be contributing to different correlation values. Differences in the trends of the low income group versus the high income group show that class differences may lead to different outcomes when helicopter parenting is present. While all of these values were close to zero, these trends are important because they show how class differences may be playing a role

in these correlations. These results from the current study show consistency with previous research that found helicopter parenting led to problematic drinking behaviors in college students from high-income families, but was protective against these same behaviors in students from low-income families (McGinley & Davis, 2021). Although not significant, the negative correlations for the low income group and positive correlations for the high income group suggest class differences may yield differences in the association between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior. One possible explanation might have to do with access to resources. For example, high income children may have financial resources and other supports that enable them to have access to extra academic support, private schooling, and extracurricular activities, ultimately setting them ahead and preparing them for future academic and career endeavors. Helicopter parenting may be maladaptive for this group because it provides too much regulation for children who already experience regulation in other areas like academics and extracurriculars. On the other hand, low income children who do not have access to these same resources may benefit from helicopter parenting because the support offered by parents makes up for a lack of financial resources. For example, if parents cannot afford extra tutoring, stepping in to help their children and reach out to teachers for extra support may be beneficial for the student. Another possibility is that there are cultural differences that develop between those of high income groups and low income groups that could impact the expectations parents have for their children and the overall parent-child relationship. If low-income parents have the expectation that their children will work hard to achieve success in academics in order to attain better job opportunities later in life, this goal may be instilled in the child, encouraging them to engage in behavior that aligns with this goal. In these cases, parental pressure may prevent deviance.

Like household income, race produced some noteworthy trends in the current analysis. This provides some evidence that some racial groups may have unique backgrounds and experiences that contribute to differences in parenting practices and the outcomes they produce. For instance, those who identified as Black or African American had correlations that trended positively across all categories, whereas those who identified as Hispanic or Latino had correlations that trended negatively across all categories. These findings are noteworthy because they show how race may impact the relationship between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior. This may suggest that helicopter parenting works to reduce engagement in risky sexual behavior in certain populations, but increase the occurrence of it in others. Prior research has found that uninvolved parents were more likely to influence negative outcomes in low income and high risk neighborhoods for African American and Latino youths (Roche et al., 2007). This may indicate that parenting styles with high control, such as authoritarian parenting, may be protective against negative outcomes. The current findings show how a helicopter parenting style may help prevent health risk behaviors in certain groups, providing insight into strategies that may reduce negative health outcomes in emerging adults (Wolf et al., 2009).

While it was helpful to run an analysis about potential group differences between those who filled out the entire survey versus those who did not, analysis showed that these groups did not have significant differences in helicopter parenting scores. These group differences could not be further analyzed based on different demographic factors since the demographic section of the questionnaire was at the end of the survey and not filled out by the group who stopped the survey after completing the HPS. This may suggest that there may be other reasons why a large proportion of the participants failed to complete the later half of the survey. One potential reason could be the structure of the SRS. Unlike the HPS which is a likert scale where



participants choose from a multiple choice answer, the SRS requires more thought because participants are asked to reflect back on their experience from the past six months. Answering this part of the survey is more mentally taxing and the fill-in-the-blank format may have discouraged participants from completing it after completing the HPS. Additionally, the nature of the SRS may have affected whether or not participants chose to respond to this section. This survey asks personal and specific questions related to sexual behavior, which some participants may have been uncomfortable answering.

The fact that there was no significant correlation found between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior in the current analysis could be for multiple reasons. For one, this sample overall did not have high levels of helicopter parenting. There were only a few cases of especially high reported helicopter parenting, meaning it is difficult to generalize findings from that group to a larger population of individuals who also engage in risky behaviors. Additionally, scores were highly skewed on the SRS showing that not many individuals were engaging in the behaviors included on the scale. This may be because of the content covered on the scale, but could also be because of larger societal trends that may be influencing how individuals engage in sexual behavior. Notably, the Covid-19 pandemic could be one reason for these low values. It is likely that during the pandemic people were engaging in less sexual behavior in general, possibly due to social distancing, meaning they were also engaging in less risky sexual behaviors. While it can be argued that Covid does not presently have the same impact on everyday life as it did at the beginning of the pandemic, this period may have had long-term impacts on the way individuals interact with one another as this time resulted in substantial changes in social functioning and health and safety regulations. This may include lower rates of sexual behavior among adolescents and emerging adults. Since participants were asked to reflect back on their

experiences from the last six months on the SRS, scores may be lower than anticipated because of new patterns where individuals are not engaging in as much sexual behavior. Ongoing research about the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will be especially useful in aiding our understanding of the short and long term effects this period may have on individuals.

Additionally, scores on the SRS may be lower because of a generational component that may yield lower scores on this measure over time. Recent research from a cross-sectional analysis of individuals between the ages of 18 to 44 from 2000 to 2018 shows that sexual activity decreased among men between the ages of 18 and 34 and women between the ages of 25 and 34 (Udea et al., 2020). Interestingly, results also showed that men and women who were students were more likely to be sexually inactive, which could explain the low rates of risky sexual behavior reported in the current study (Udea et al., 2020). Similarly, results from a study about sexual education programs show that comprehensive programs aid in reducing the teen birth rate (Mark & Wu, 2022). While these sexual education programs could be contributing to a decrease in teen births, findings from Udea and colleagues suggest that this drop in numbers may also just be because individuals are engaging in less sexual behavior. This would clearly affect scores on the SRS because if participants are not engaging in any sexual behavior, there is no way for them to engage in risky sexual behaviors.

In addition to the technical aspects that may be impacting the current results such as patterns of helicopter parenting and participating in sexual behavior, the results of this study can also be understood in the context of psychological and sociological theory. In the literature review section of the current paper, social learning theory was initially applied to explain how offspring will not be able to learn from their mistakes or practice autonomy when their parents step in to make decisions for them. It can be argued, however, that even when parents make

decisions for their children or assume an overinvolved role, children are still learning through a process called modeling (Bandura, 1977). Through modeling, children can learn by watching and following the actions of others. In the case of helicopter parenting, parents may be overinvolved, but if children are seeing the ways they are stepping in to solve problems they may still be able to internalize these skills via observational learning, facilitating their ability to make choices for themselves later.

Similarly, social control theories can be applied to the findings of the current study in a similar way. It was originally suggested in the review of literature and theory above that families act as an outer containment or social bond to prevent individuals from deviating, so engaging in risky sexual behavior may indicate that an individual did not internalize this connection with their family members (Reckless, 1961 and Hirschi, 1969). The findings of the present study make it difficult to extrapolate these theories in this way since overall results showed low levels of risky sexual behavior, indicating that participants either did internalize these bonds or were not engaging in any sexual behavior at all. However, the results may formulate the idea that despite this highly controlled type of parenting, somehow individuals do still form bonds and internalize their family values which may contribute a new perspective to the preexisting theory. Based on Hirschi and Reckless' theories, one could argue, however, that individuals will still have unhealthy attachments because of the way parent-child bonds and contaminants are formed, through high levels of control and over involvement.

Despite the current findings, it is clear based on prior research and theory that helicopter parenting can have negative impacts on adolescents and emerging adults. Based on prior research it was expected that, in the current study, higher reports of helicopter parenting would be related to greater risky behaviors (See, for example, McGinley & Davis, 2021; Moilanen & Manuel,

2019; Rogers & McKinney, 2018; Schiffrin et al., 2014). While the findings from the current study did not yield significant correlations between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior, the trends reveal that there may be other factors influencing this association that should be further explored. The mixed results between the current findings and prior results show the complexity of outcomes this style of parenting may produce.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

This study was one of the first to look at how a variety of demographic variables may be contributing to the interaction between helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior in emerging adults. While the results yielded from this work are inconsistent with expectations based on past research, this study provides a framework for future research that can continue to explore helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior. Based on the trends in findings for certain groups in the present study, there is evidence to suggest that demographic characteristics may contribute to different outcomes in emerging adults. Exploring the intersection of race, income, gender, sexual orientation, parent marital status, and parenting practices, in addition to the ways in which these factors may influence risk behavior in unique ways is an important area to explore because understanding group differences can provide insight into various intervention points that could potentially decrease health-risk behaviors in youths. Additionally, this knowledge could help professionals better understand helicopter parenting behaviors across multiple groups.

This study also provides information about how programs for emerging adults can address some of the issues associated with different parenting behaviors. Based on the trends for gender minorities, individuals from high-income families, and those who identified as Hispanic or Latino, there is evidence to suggest that certain groups are more likely to engage in risky

sexual behavior as a result of experiencing helicopter parenting. The current study took place in a college-aged population, so these findings may posit a need for interventions that address the unique needs of these groups during the transition to college. Universities can work on devising ongoing programs that seek to guide students in the transition to college, support underrepresented groups, and encourage healthy communication between students and their parents.

Despite these strengths, the current study did possess some limitations that could impact the current findings. This study was conducted using a sample of students from one private, liberal arts college, meaning these results may represent a specific population or a more narrow demographic and, thus, may not be generalizable to wider populations. Based on the demographic data provided, the sample was overall homogenous on factors such as race, sexual orientation, and household income, which may also contribute to the current findings. The overall low HPS and SRS scores pose a need for future work that looks at these constructs in a wide variety of emerging adult populations to fully understand how these constructs operate. Additionally, it will be important to conduct similar research in a population that has more variability in parenting practices and sexual behavior to more comprehensively understand the relationship between these variables. This is important because it will provide further insight into how different types of parenting may influence child outcomes. Having this information would be useful in broadening the scope of this research. Future studies can continue to evaluate the relationship between parenting practices and risky sexual behavior in addition to factors that may influence the interplay between these constructs such as gender, income, and race.

The suggestion that future research should focus on demographic variables is further emphasized by the correlations that were conducted to look at group differences. While it is

noteworthy that the current sample included individuals of various backgrounds and identities, the number of individuals from marginalized groups was overall very small. These results show a need for future research with a larger sample of underrepresented groups to further assess what role different identities may play in the influence of helicopter parenting on risky sexual behavior. The current study did identify some noteworthy trends based on gender, income, and race, but due to the small sample sizes of these groups and lack of significant results it may be difficult and unsuitable to identify a generalizable trend. We also recognize that in grouping different identities together, the current analysis fails to account for smaller individual differences that may be taking place. Future research should be conducted with large and diverse samples to more accurately explore what role these traits may play.

Due to human error, two questions were left off of the copy of the SRS that was available to students. This error meant that a total score on the SRS could not be calculated and, thus, correlational analysis could not be conducted between the HPS and a total SRS score. Had all the data been gathered, a different result may have been produced since the scale was intended to produce a total summed score of all items. It is possible that having this total score would more robustly explain a participant's involvement in risky sexual behavior. However, this is unlikely considering there were no significant correlations found between the HPS and measured SRS subscales. Since subscale scores were overall very low, it is likely that overall scores on the SRS would also be skewed, leading to a similar result.

Additionally, the SRS may produce a limitation in its' ability to holistically describe risky sexual behavior. The nature of the questions are about what most would consider more extreme sexual behaviors, failing to capture more normative sexual behaviors that emerging adults may also be engaging in. It is difficult to understand typical behavior when the questions focus to

such a great extent on non-normative behavior. This shortcoming is substantial because it may fail to provide enough variance in the data. It would be beneficial for future research to continue examining the validity and applicability of the SRS to various populations. Revisions that account for normative behavior may strengthen the scale by providing a comparison that will allow researchers to better understand the behavior individuals are engaging in. Future research can also replicate the current study, but utilize different measures of risky sexual behavior to determine if certain scales will yield different results.

Altogether, the current study was inconsistent with previous research on helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior, but did produce some trends that point to potential areas of focus in future research. This study contributed to the literature on this topic by looking at how demographic variables may play a role in the association of helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior in emerging adults. These noteworthy differences are important because they provide potential intervention points that can help researchers better understand how to decrease health risk behaviors and harmful parenting practices in certain groups. Despite the positives of this work, there is room to further develop research in this specific area of helicopter parenting research in order to better understand the factors that encourage youths to engage in risky behaviors. Because the correlation between these constructs may change over time, it is crucial to continue building on this research to gain a continual, comprehensive understanding of helicopter parenting and risky sexual behavior over time.

**TABLES**

Table 1. *Descriptive data, effect sizes, and Cronbach's alphas for helicopter parenting and sexual risk behavior.*

Factors/Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>
1. Helicopter Parenting Scale	2.77	0.75	0.78
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners	5.04	6.47	0.91
3. Risky Sex Acts	5.44	5.25	0.85
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors	3.39	4.01	0.80
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors	0.94	1.64	0.66

*Note.* Measures used were the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS)



Table 2. *Descriptive statistics for sexual risk behavior by gender.*

Factors/Scale	Female		Male		Other	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners	5.34	6.62	4.83	6.09	5.40	7.98
Risky Sex Acts	5.46	4.84	6.06	5.92	3.10	3.45
Impulsive Sexual Behaviors	3.90	4.16	2.80	3.64	3.20	4.65
Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors	1.09	1.73	0.76	1.49	0.90	1.77

*Note.* Measure used was the Sexual Risk Survey (SRS)

Table 3. *Correlations among helicopter parenting and sexual risk behavior.*

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.12	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.07	0.45**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.07	0.64**	0.20**	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.03	0.49**	0.12*	0.58**	1.00

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

*Note.* Measures used were the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS)

Table 4. *Correlations among helicopter parenting and sexual risk behavior adjusted for outliers.*

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.00	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.09	0.45**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.07	0.58**	0.15**	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.00	0.41**	0.08	0.54**	1.00

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

*Note.* Measures used were the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS)

Table 5. *Correlations among helicopter parenting and sexual risk behavior by gender.*

## Female

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	-0.06	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.04	0.44**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.10	0.65**	0.16*	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	-0.03	0.50**	0.09	0.56**	1.00

## Male

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.12	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.14	0.46**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.02	0.65**	0.25**	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.12	0.44**	0.13	0.53**	1.00

## Other

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.10	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	0.17	0.68**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.17	0.56*	0.49*	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.13	0.61**	0.48*	0.96**	1.00

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

*Note.* Measures used were the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS)

Table 6. *Correlations among helicopter parenting and sexual risk behavior by household income.*

## Low income

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	-0.12	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.15	0.52**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	-0.05	0.57**	0.26	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	-0.20	0.53**	0.12	0.52**	1.00

## Middle Income

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	-0.01	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.23*	0.37**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.10	0.57**	0.11	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.08	0.47**	0.06	0.62**	1.00

## Upper Income

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.06	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	0.02	0.42**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.12	0.69**	0.15	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.03	0.47**	0.12	0.58**	1.00

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

*Note.* Measures used were the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS)

Table 7. *Correlations among helicopter parenting and sexual risk behavior by race.*

## White/Caucasian

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.05	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.10	0.46**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.11	0.63**	0.17**	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.07	0.47**	0.11	0.58**	1.00

## Asian

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.15	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.02	0.40*	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.06	0.64**	0.26	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.15	0.65**	0.31	0.75**	1.00

## Hispanic/Latino

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	-0.30	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.15	0.42*	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	-0.14	0.76**	0.21	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	-0.17	0.59**	0.12	0.56**	1.00

## Black/African American

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.24	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	0.07	0.28	1.00	-	-

4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.27	0.82**	0.41	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.07	0.46	0.05	0.15	1.00
<b>Other</b>					
Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	-0.17	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	0.20	0.42*	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.00	0.62**	0.28	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	-0.14	0.53**	-0.06	0.71*	1.00

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

*Note.* Measures used were the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS)

Table 8. *Correlations among helicopter parenting and sexual risk behavior by parent marital status.*

## Married

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.05	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.07	0.43**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.10	0.63**	0.16**	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.05	0.51**	0.10	0.60**	1.00

## Widowed, Divorced, or Separated

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	-0.01	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.08	0.51**	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.06	0.77**	0.37**	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.01	0.52**	0.21	0.54**	1.00

## Other/Prefer Not to Answer

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	-0.21	1.00	-	-	-
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.02	0.47*	1.00	-	-
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	-0.22	0.52*	0.20	1.00	-
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	-0.37	0.38	0.05	0.49*	1.00

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .*Note.* Measures used were the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS)



Table 9. *Correlations among helicopter parenting and sexual risk behavior by sexual orientation.*

Factors/scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Helicopter Parenting (HPS)	-	-0.03	-0.08	0.09	-0.01
2. Sexual Risk Taking with Uncommitted Partners (SRS)	0.04	-	0.59**	0.71**	0.55**
3. Risky Sex Acts (SRS)	-0.07	0.40**	-	0.45**	0.28**
4. Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.07	0.61**	0.12	-	0.69**
5. Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (SRS)	0.05	0.47**	0.07	0.53**	-

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

*Note.* Measures used were the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) and Sexual Risk Survey (SRS). Correlations for those who identified as LGBQ or other ( $n=120$ ) displayed above the diagonal; correlations for those who identified as heterosexual or straight ( $n=257$ ) displayed below the diagonal.

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**APPENDICES****Appendix A: Items on the Helicopter Parenting Scale**

1. My parents supervised my every move growing up.
2. I sometimes felt that my parents didn't feel I could make my own decisions.
3. My parents let me figure things out independently (reverse-coded).
4. It was very important to my parents that I never fail in life.
5. My parents were not afraid to let me stumble in life (reverse-coded).
6. My parents often stepped in to solve life problems for me.
7. Growing up, I sometimes felt like I was my parents' project.

**Appendix B: Sexual Risk Survey**

Instructions: Please read the following statements and record the number that is true for you over the past 6 months for each question on the blank. If you do not know for sure how many times a behavior took place, try to estimate the number as close as you can. Thinking about the average number of times the behavior happened per week or per month might make it easier to estimate an accurate number, especially if the behavior happened fairly regularly.

If you've had multiple partners, try to think about how long you were with each partner, the number of sexual encounters you had with each, and try to get an accurate estimate of the total number of each behavior.

If the question does not apply to you or you have never engaged in the behavior in the question, put a "0" on the blank. Please do not leave items blank.

Remember that in the following questions "sex" includes oral, anal, and vaginal sex and that "sexual behavior" includes passionate kissing, making out, fondling, petting, oral-to-anal stimulation, and hand-to-genital stimulation.

Please consider only the last 6 months when answering and please be honest.

**In the past 6 months:**

1. How many partners have you engaged in sexual behavior with but not had sex with?
2. How many times have you left a social event with someone you just met?
3. How many times have you "hooked up" but not had sex with someone you didn't know or didn't know well?
4. How many times have you gone out to bars/parties/social events with the intent of "hooking up" and engaging in sexual behavior but not having sex with someone?
5. How many times have you gone out to bars/parties/social events with the intent of "hooking up" and having sex with someone?
6. How many times have you had an unexpected and unanticipated sexual experience?
7. How many times have you had a sexual encounter you engaged in willingly but later regretted?

**For the next set of questions, follow the same direction as before. However, if you have never had sex (oral, anal or vaginal), please put a "0" on each blank.**

8. How many partners have you had sex with?
9. How many times have you had vaginal intercourse without a latex or polyurethane condom? Note: Include times when you have used a lambskin or membrane condom.

10. How many times have you had vaginal intercourse without protection against pregnancy?
11. How many times have you given or received fellatio (oral sex on a man) without a condom?
12. How many times have you given or received cunnilingus (oral sex on a woman) without a dental dam or “adequate protection” (please see definition of dental dam for what is considered adequate protection)?
13. How many times have you had anal sex without a condom?
14. How many times have you or your partner engaged in anal penetration by a hand (“fisting”) or other object without a latex glove or condom followed by unprotected anal sex?
15. How many times have you given or received analingus (oral stimulation of the anal region, “rimming”) without a dental dam or “adequate protection”(please see definition of dental dam for what is considered adequate protection)?
16. How many people have you had sex with that you know but are not involved in any sort of relationship with (i.e., “friends with benefits”, “fuck buddies”)?
17. How many times have you had sex with someone you don’t know well or just met?
18. How many times have you or your partner used alcohol or drugs before or during sex?
19. How many times have you had sex with a new partner before discussing sexual history, IV drug use, disease status and other current sexual partners?
20. How many times (that you know of) have you had sex with someone who has had many sexual partners?
21. How many partners (that you know of) have you had sex with who had been sexually active before you were with them but had not been tested for STIs/HIV?
22. How many partners have you had sex with that you didn’t trust?
23. How many times (that you know of) have you had sex with someone who was also engaging in sex with others during the same time period?

**\*\*NOTE: questions 13 and 14 were accidentally left off of the SRS in the current study**



**Appendix C: Demographics Questionnaire**

Please answer the following questions

**Gender**

- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- Transgender Man
- Transgender Woman
- Other
- Prefer Not to Answer

**Class Year**

- First Year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Fifth Year / Other

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following best describes you?

- Asian
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian
- Multiracial or Biracial
- Other

Which of the following best describes you?

- Heterosexual / Straight
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other
- Prefer Not to Answer

What is your parents' marital status?

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Other
- Prefer Not to Answer

What is your household income?

- Less than \$15,000 per year
- Between \$15,000 and \$24,999 per year
- Between \$25,000 and \$34,999 per year
- Between \$35,000 and \$49,999 per year
- Between \$50,000 and \$74,999 per year
- Between \$75,000 and \$99,999 per year
- Between \$100,000 and \$149,999 per year
- Between \$150,000 and \$199,999 per year
- Over \$200,000 per year
- I don't know