The social phenomenon of *helicopter parenting* (HP) has been rapidly growing. Although HP is generally characterized as overly involved parents who “hover” over their college student children (Cline & Fay, 1990), and some research efforts have been made in recent years on understanding the construct of HP, an essential weakness of the majority of these studies is the inadequate conceptualization of HP, both theoretically and operationally. The current study was guided by three research questions: (1) How can the features of *helicopter parent controlling* (HPC) practices be classified? (2) What is the relationship between HPC practices and college students’ perceived stress? (3) How do the effects of HPC practices on college students’ perceived stress differ when accounting for parental acceptance/warmth (AW)?

The study was a cross-sectional survey research and the survey data were collected through self-reported online questionnaires. The convenient sampling approach was used to collect all the data at a large, public institution in the Midwest region of the United States. Due to the objectives of developing and testing a new scale to measure the HPC practices, two samples were used and both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted in Mplus (7.4, Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015). Structural
equation modeling (SEM) analyses were also performed in Mplus. The two samples included 755 and 551 college students respectively from the Millennial generation (18 ≤ 33 years) who were enrolled in fall 2015. The instruments included: Helicopter Parenting Scale, Helicopter Parenting and Autonomy Supportive Behaviors, Helicopter Parenting Instrument, Overparenting, Helicopter Parent Controlling Scale, Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory, and Perceived Stress Scale.

Findings revealed the multidimensional nature of the HPC construct. Using a three-factor solution, its features can be classified as: problem solving, precautionary actions, and physical concerns; while using a four-factor solution, the additional feature is: whereabouts concerns. Consistent with the HP literature, predictive relationships were found between precautionary actions and stress, and between problem solving and stress. When accounting for parental AW, precautionary actions no longer predicted stress, and problem solving became a stronger predictor. Further, AW served as a moderator on the link between problem solving and stress. The path coefficient was -.11 (p < .05) quantifying how the effect of problem solving on controllable stress changed when AW changed by one unit.

The multifaceted features of the HPC construct indicated that the HP phenomenon is more complex than the typical interpretation of “hovering”. Each HPC dimension had distinguished correlations with parental AW, suggesting possibly two HP styles: permissive and authoritarian. In addition, the intrusive nature of precautionary actions and problem solving did not counteract the importance of parental AW during the child’s college experience. Its moderation effect further suggested AW’s importance to Millennials. Limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for counseling and counselor education were also discussed.