

It is for your own good!

Child, Parent, and Relational Predictors of Helicopter Parenting

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Helicopter parenting in emerging adulthood is characterized by parents' overinvolvement in the lives of their children including such behaviors as solving problems and crises for children (Cullaty, 2011) and intervening in issues with roommates, friends, professors, or employers (Kennedy, 2009; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Helicopter parenting may be problematic for healthy development throughout the lifespan but especially so during emerging adulthood when young people should be exercising greater levels of autonomy as they make the transition to adulthood (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013). Indeed, helicopter parenting has been associated with various negative outcomes in emerging adulthood (e.g., low self-efficacy, low coping skills see Padilla-Walker & Nelson, in press).

Although there is growing evidence that helicopter parenting is linked to numerous indices of floundering in emerging adulthood, we know very little about factors that may predict parental use of helicopter parenting. In examining the bi-directional nature of parent-child relationships, there is evidence that children often elicit certain types of parenting from their parents. For example, in studying over-solicitous parenting in young children, it has been found that parents who perceive their children to be inhibited engage in more over-protective parenting (Rubin, Nelson, Hastings, & Asendorf, 1999). Hence, it is possible that there are various child characteristics that elicit helicopter parenting in emerging adulthood. These factors may include internalizing (i.e., anxiety & depression) and externalizing symptoms (i.e., aggression & delinquency), as well as other behaviors of the emerging adult (e.g., laziness, excessive media use) that may prompt the parent to engage in helicopter parenting in an attempt to motivate the

child. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine child factors that predict helicopter parenting during emerging adulthood.

Participants included 500 emerging adults (51% female, $M_{age} = 19.5$) from the western United States. Preliminary correlational analyses showed that higher levels of child anxiety ($r = .18, p < .001$) and depression ($r = .14, p < .01$) were associated with higher levels of maternal helicopter parenting while higher levels of aggression ($r = .11, p < .05$; $r = .13, p < .01$) and media use ($r = .13, p < .05$; $r = .16, p < .001$) were associated with increased helicopter parenting for both parents. Higher levels of emotional ($r = -.11, p < .05$; $r = -.22, p < .001$) and cognitive self-regulation ($r = -.11, p < .05$; $r = -.11, p < .05$) were associated with lower helicopter parenting.

These preliminary analyses suggest that it is important to examine child factors which may elicit helicopter parenting (i.e., emotional dysregulation, goals, and behaviors) and factors which protect against it (i.e., regulatory skills). Additional analyses will be conducted using structural equation modelling to also explore potential parent factors (e.g., beliefs, behaviors, and emotions) and relationship factors (e.g., trust, attachment, family resources, and other tensions in the home) which may be involved in predicting helicopter parenting.

	Father Helicopter	Mother Helicopter
Father Helicopter	--	
Mother Helicopter	0.59***	--
Child Aggression	0.11*	0.13**
Child Anxiety	0.02	0.18***
Child Depression	0.06	0.14**
Media Time	0.13*	0.16***
Child Emotion Regulation	-0.11*	-0.22***
Child Cognition Regulation	-0.11*	-0.11*

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$